

## US History II







# US History II

*PIMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE*





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PART I

# FACULTY RESOURCES







# I. Overview of Instructor Resources

This course comes with a collection of the best available OER instructor resources. All instructor resources for this course are tightly aligned with learning outcomes and content. Since they are openly licensed, you may use them as is or adapt them to your needs.

The collection is continuously updated with new materials from designated subject matter experts, faculty teaching the course, and Lumen Learning staff.

## **Now Available**

- PowerPoint decks
- Quizzes
- Resource on critical reading

## Share Your Favorite Resources

If you have sample resources you would like to share with other faculty teaching this course, please send them with an explanatory message to [share@lumenlearning.com](mailto:share@lumenlearning.com). Be sure to mention which learning outcome(s) they align with.



## 2. Powerpoints

The **links do not** work when you are in the editor view. Click “Preview”, then from this view of the page you can click on the links.

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### 3. Quiz Inventory

There are sixteen multiple choice quizzes with a total of 329 questions. Quizzes cover the following topics:

- The Era of Reconstruction, 1865–1877 (29 questions)
- Go West Young Man! Westward Expansion, 1840–1900 (27 questions)
- Industrialization and the Rise of Big Business, 1870–1900 (12 questions)
- The Growing Pains of Urbanization, 1870–1900 (9 questions)
- Politics in the Gilded Age, 1870–1900 (18 questions)
- Leading the Way: The Progressive Movement, 1890–1920 (29 questions)
- Age of Empire: American Foreign Policy, 1890–1914 (18 questions)
- Americans and the Great War, 1914–1919 (15 questions)
- The Jazz Age: Redefining the Nation, 1919–1929 (11 questions)
- Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? The Great Depression, 1929–1932 (12 questions)
- Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932–1941 (23 questions)
- Fighting the Good Fight in World War II, 1941–1945 (21 questions)
- Post-War Prosperity and Cold War Fears, 1945–1960 (36 questions)
- Contesting Futures: America in the 1960s (27 questions)
- Political Storms at Home and Abroad, 1968–1980 (24 questions)
- From Cold War to Culture Wars, 1980–2000 (18 questions)



## 4. How to Read the Textbook

This document is about how to *read critically*. Every piece of writing, no matter how simple, aims to convince its audience. It wants something from you: maybe something benevolent, maybe not. A wise reader needs not only to understand what the author is saying, but what he or she wants to accomplish. This requires reading closely, with an awareness of your own thought processes as you read, and an enhanced consideration of the writer's goals and strategy. Such skill will serve you well every time you read an advertisement, listen to a political speech, follow the news, or even just watch a TV drama. It is also especially important in history, where we must read documents from and about many different kinds of people and places.

In this course, we'll be reading two very different types of writing: *academic writing*, such as articles, textbooks or other secondary material that is written in a modern style, and *historical documents*, which may be written in older, unfamiliar styles. This document applies to academic writing.

It presents habits of mind (and eye and hand) you can develop to better comprehend an author's communication, purpose, and context.

### Looking for Cues

The first step in critical reading is to understand the author's words and ideas: the signal they are trying to transmit. Fortunately, most authors want you to understand them, and accordingly they have encoded their ideas in a structure that offers cues, visual or verbal, intended to orient you.



## Visual Cues

Modern academic and popular writing, such as your textbook, includes lots of visual cues. Almost all printed books today have titles, headings, and subheadings. Look at your textbook. Some parts of it are written in bigger, bolder letters. The size (and maybe color) of these headings is usually hierarchical: the more important titles are bigger, and the less important stuff is smaller. If you subtract all the regular text, and just leave these headings, you'll have an outline. This outline will give you important clues about how the author has organized their thoughts. As you read, keep track of where you are in the outline and how the part you're reading now connects to other parts of the writing.

## Structural Cues

In addition to graphic and design elements, modern non-fiction has developed certain conventions. Many familiar elements of writing that you know from English class are (ultimately) aids and cues, letting you know where they are in the author's overall argument. They are the verbal equivalent of visual cues, such as titles, headings and introductions.

*Introductions and Conclusions:* Most chapters (and articles) have a paragraph at the beginning that summarizes the whole argument, before it is presented, and end in a paragraph that sums everything up. These paragraphs serve as sign-posts: the introduction lets you know what's coming. The conclusion helps you remember what has come before. You may also see mini-introductions and mini-conclusions inside of subsections or chapter of larger pieces.

*Thesis statements:* A thesis statement is a one sentence summary of the author's whole argument. Authors usually put it at the end



(the last sentence) of their introduction. Here the author presents their most important idea; you should pay special attention to it.

*Paragraph divisions:* A paragraph by convention generally contains one related chunk of ideas. When an author makes a new paragraph, this is their way of telling you they have changed topic.

*Topic Sentences:* The first sentence of a paragraph usually summarizes the paragraph to follow. Again, it is another signal from the author, to you, the reader.

Once you know what to look for, these elements of writing help orient you. They tell you what authors think important, and reveal the architecture of their arguments.

## Using Cues

Conventions such as thesis statements, topic sentences, and so forth have evolved for a purpose. They aren't just the invention of English teachers to torment you. Use them to quickly identify the important ideas in your reading and to anticipate the flow of the author's presentation. If you get confused and bogged down in details, go back to the skeleton. See why the author is telling you these facts now, and how he or she intends them to fit into the bigger picture.

You can also use them to skim. Very often, just reading the first paragraph (introduction) or last sentence of the first paragraph (thesis statement) will tell you, in brief, what the whole piece of writing is about.

## Close Reading

One of the most important skills in critical reading (and one of the most difficult) is to *slow down*. In casual reading, we often skim and



skip. We jump to the author's main idea (or what we think the main idea is). Once we "know" what the author is saying, we ignore other details that don't quite fit. If we encounter a confusing sentence or statement, we just let our eye slide over it. This kind of fast reading is essential in our busy, information-filled lives. For familiar topics, using familiar cues, on familiar texts, it serves us well. But *fast reading is poison* when confronting a document that contains unfamiliar ideas, uses obscure words, or follows an unfamiliar style. In addition to skimming for structure and main ideas, you should also read the whole piece closely, paying careful attention to difficult sections.

## Slow Down

When reading critically, you need to slow down. Once you have decided to read a section closely, make your eye focus on every word. Make your brain process each thought. Don't skip ahead. One really good way of doing this is with a finger or a note card. (A technique I use.) Put the card under the line you're reading, so that it covers up everything else, and you can't skip ahead. Advance it slowly.

## Words, Words, Words

You will often encounter unfamiliar words. Don't just skip them. If an author is using an unfamiliar word often, chances are it is an important clue to their thinking:

*Use a dictionary.* Academic writing often contains words that are not part of everyday English. In everyday reading, you can afford to ignore an unfamiliar word or two. But that's very dangerous when reading critically. So look the words up in a dictionary. Perhaps



write the definition above the word in your book, so you don't forget between looking it up and rereading the sentence. (I do this when translating.) E-readers will let you highlight and post a note.

*Use a GOOD dictionary.* Your ordinary, Webster's dictionary isn't going to cut it. Historical documents may contain really unusual words, maybe ones that nobody has used for hundreds of years. They may also include words that look familiar, but have unfamiliar meanings. (For example, nowadays the word "minister" means "preacher" or "priest." But in older documents, it often means "government official," as in "prime minister." If you don't know this, you may think a document is about religion when it's about government business.) I suggest looking up truly obscure words in a big dictionary like the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which is particularly helpful in including historical meanings, and telling you when that meaning entered the language.

*Realize that Dictionaries are Fallible.* A dictionary only tells you how words have been used, by most people, most of the time. Sometimes a particular source or author may use a word in a way that is not standard. Perhaps the author is a scientist, and is using it in a specialized sense. Perhaps the artist is a lawyer, using a term of art, such as "guilt" which has a specific legal meaning. Perhaps, the word is used in a funny way in a particular culture or area. Perhaps the author is just eccentric. But you should be prepared to determine what a word might mean by its context, and use this to temper the "official" dictionary definition.

## Say What?

Some writing for this course may be in a more complex style than you are used to using. Academic writing uses more sub-clauses and employs longer sentences than popular writing. If you are having trouble following a sentence, break it down grammatically. What



is the main verb? What is the main subject? What sub-clauses are there? How do they relate to the main clause?

If you remember how to make sentence diagrams, you may find it useful to sketch out a troublesome sentence on some scratch paper.

Try rephrasing the sentence into modern English. How would someone express the same idea today?

Historical documents are even trickier. Styles of writing have changed over time. Nowadays, we favor short sentences that resemble ordinary speech. In *Ye Olden Times*™ people preferred sentences that resembled Latin. The Latin periodic sentence is one such abomination from the shambling past you may encounter. A periodic sentence presents a series of subordinate clauses, qualifiers, and conditions, culminating in a main verb somewhere near the end. When (or if) you encounter such a monster, you need to slow down and apply the techniques above.

## Circular Reading

When reading critically, you should circulate through these questions and techniques as you proceed. Normally, when we read casually, we start at the first word, read to the last word, and then put the writing away. But when reading critically, you will often need to read the writing several times: perhaps once to start, then again to identify cues. You may want to read any difficult portions again slowly, with a dictionary at hand.

Once you think you have a good idea what the author is saying, you should confirm that your theory is correct. Don't simply assume that your first impression is complete. Look at the source again. What have you missed? What doesn't fit with your understanding? What do you wish you knew? These are the areas to which you should pay extra attention. Particularly in historical sources, the author may be expressing a viewpoint which is radically different or alien to your own, one which it may take you several tries to process



and identify. You don't have to agree with the author, but you do need to understand what he or she actually says.

As you read and use these techniques, figure out which ones work for you and which ones do not. Not everyone's mind works in the same way. My favorite technique may simply annoy you, or vice versa. But the most important principle remains: keep returning to the writing, identify any gaps in your understanding, and puzzle them out.

## Reading as Judo

The *critical reading* skills you learn in this course can be applied to every message you encounter in life. Think of it as self-defense. If every author has a purpose, then every message they aim at you has a purpose too: whether they want you to buy something, to vote for someone, to believe something, or do something. You need to be able to clearly receive their message, and then to understand why it was sent and what it intends. Critical reading is a tool that enables you to process, comprehend, accept, and reject messages thoughtfully. If you can process the complex language and difficult viewpoints found in history, you can process anything.

## Textbook Checklist

Please use this checklist as you read, as a way of keeping these techniques in mind.



**Cues**

Have I identified any visual clues (headings, sub-headings, fonts and so forth) in the reading?

Have I identified the verbal clues in the reading?

Have I used the various cues to help determine the writing's argument and structure?

**Close Reading**

Have I read the writing slowly enough?

Have I identified those parts of the reading which I find most difficult?

Have I attempted to parse difficult sentences grammatically?

Have I looked up difficult words in a dictionary?

Have I checked the dictionary definition versus the use of the word in context?

**Circular Reading**

Have I reviewed the writing after my first reading?

Have I identified where my initial understanding was incorrect or inadequate?

Have I reread and corrected my understanding of these portions?

Have I made notes on items to remember?

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# 5. US History II Quiz Download

Use the link below to access a set of quizzes associated with this course. The link is **not active in this screen**, please follow the instructions included below.

The file can then be uploaded to your LMS (e.g., Canvas, Blackboard) in order to obtain all assessments for course.

<https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/oerfiles/US+History/OpenStax/US+History+II/US+History+II+quizzes.imscc>

There are sixteen multiple choice quizzes with a total of 329 questions. These quiz questions were created for a generic U.S. History textbook and may not align perfectly with this version of the text. Please review the questions before adding them to your course. Quizzes cover the following topics:

- The Era of Reconstruction, 1865–1877 (29 questions)
- Go West Young Man! Westward Expansion, 1840–1900 (27 questions)
- Industrialization and the Rise of Big Business, 1870–1900 (12 questions)
- The Growing Pains of Urbanization, 1870–1900 (9 questions)
- Politics in the Gilded Age, 1870–1900 (18 questions)
- Leading the Way: The Progressive Movement, 1890–1920 (29 questions)
- Age of Empire: American Foreign Policy, 1890–1914 (18 questions)
- Americans and the Great War, 1914–1919 (15 questions)
- The Jazz Age: Redefining the Nation, 1919–1929 (11 questions)
- Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? The Great Depression, 1929–1932 (12 questions)
- Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932–1941 (23 questions)



- Fighting the Good Fight in World War II, 1941–1945 (21 questions)
- Post-War Prosperity and Cold War Fears, 1945–1960 (36 questions)
- Contesting Futures: America in the 1960s (27 questions)
- Political Storms at Home and Abroad, 1968–1980 (24 questions)
- From Cold War to Culture Wars, 1980–2000 (18 questions)

**This link is not active in edit mode.** Please click on the “Preview” button to the right, in order to access the link, or you can copy and paste the link into your browser.

The screenshot shows a web-based quiz editor. The main content area contains a message: "This link is not active in edit mode. Please click on the 'Preview' button to the right, to access the working link, or copy and paste it in your browser." Below this message is a URL: <https://us-west-2.amazonaws.com/gripquiz/USHistory2/us-history-ii-sailing-lit-quiz-export.zip>. To the right of the main editor is a sidebar with a "Publish" section. A red arrow points from the text "Click on the Preview button to access the working link." to the "Preview" button in the "Publish" section. The "Publish" section also shows the status "Privately Published", visibility settings, and a list of revisions.



## 6. Midterm Paper #1

Write on **one** of the following questions:

1. Discuss the rise of American commercial and industrial power during the late 19th century? What were the factors contributing to this growth? How did the business leaders of the period drive this economic growth? Are they to be admired as great entrepreneurs of their time, or as the reputed “Robber Barons” of later years?
2. Explain U.S. entry into the Spanish-American War showing American responses to the revolt against Spanish rule in Cuba during 1895-1898. To what extent did public sympathy for the cause contribute to war, or was this more to do with self-interest?
3. Discuss the development of American culture during the post-Civil War decades of the 19th century in terms of art, science and literature. Cite examples of each.
4. How did World War I change America? How did the war transform the country both internally and externally? Do you think that this change would have eventually occurred without the war? Did the change benefit America or hurt it, in your estimation? Give your reasons.

In addition to course materials you should look into several additional sources of information. Your essay should be interpretive and analytical, seeking to explain the “whys” of your questions, and should be grounded in solid factual support and argument. You do not need to footnote your paper, but should include a bibliography. Maximum words = ca. 1500.

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## 7. Midterm Paper #2

Write **one** of the following:

1. How did the television debates of 1960 influence the election? What actions on Kennedy's part won him the race? How well did Nixon perform?

2. In the 1950s and 1960s, particularly, American society was under severe criticism from minorities, youth and women. What were the complaints? What proposals for reform were put forward? How realistic was each movement? What were some of the specific problems of each movement?

3. Why did the Warren Court receive so much criticism? What was behind the "Impeach Earl Warren" Movement of the 1960s? How does the U.S. Supreme Court of today resemble, or contrast, with that of this period. Is judicial activism a bad thing? Discuss.

4. Discuss the 1964 presidential election and the debate over Vietnam. The Republican candidate Barry Goldwater was perceived as more aggressive on this issue, even to the point of being labeled a "warmonger". Ironically, President Lyndon Johnson, who opposed United States escalation in the 1964 campaign, found it necessary to expand U.S. involvement soon afterward. What were the reasons for this sudden shift on the part of Johnson? Was this "statesmanship" or just "politics as usual"?

**Note: 100 points possible**

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PART II  
THE ERA OF  
RECONSTRUCTION,  
1865-1877





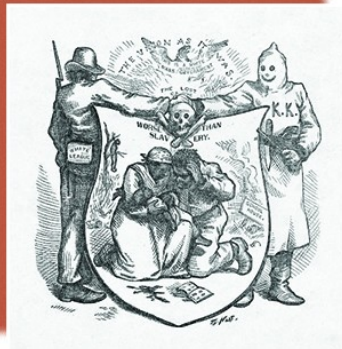


## 8. Introduction - The Reconstruction Era

Few times in U.S. history have been as turbulent and transformative as the Civil War and the twelve years that followed. Between 1865 and 1877, one president was murdered and another impeached. The Constitution underwent major revision with the addition of three amendments. The effort to impose Union control and create equality in the defeated South ignited a fierce backlash as various terrorist and vigilante organizations, most notably the Ku Klux Klan, battled to maintain a pre-Civil War society in which whites held complete power. These

groups unleashed a wave of violence, including lynching and arson, aimed at freed blacks and their white supporters. Historians refer to this era when an effort to remake the South faltered and ultimately failed as Reconstruction.

The above political cartoon expresses the anguish many Americans felt in the decade after the Civil War. The South, which had experienced catastrophic losses during the conflict, was reduced to political dependence and economic destitution. This humiliating condition led many southern whites to vigorously



*In this political cartoon by Thomas Nast, which appeared in Harper's Weekly in October 1874, the "White League" shakes hands with the Ku Klux Klan over a shield that shows a couple weeping over a baby. In the background, a schoolhouse burns, and a lynched freedman is shown hanging from a tree. Above the shield, which is labeled "Worse than Slavery," the text reads, "The Union as It Was: This Is a White Man's Government."*



challenge Union efforts to transform the South's racial, economic, and social landscape. Supporters of equality grew increasingly dismayed at Reconstruction's failure to undo the old system, which further compounded the staggering regional and racial inequalities in the United States.

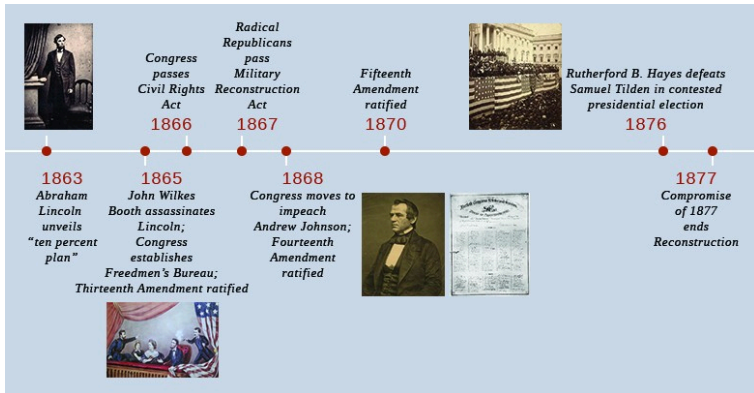


## 9. Restoring the Union

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe Lincoln's plan to restore the Union at the end of the Civil War
- Discuss the tenets of Radical Republicanism
- Analyze the success or failure of the Thirteenth Amendment



The end of the Civil War saw the beginning of the Reconstruction era, when former rebel Southern states were integrated back into the Union. President Lincoln moved quickly to achieve the war's ultimate goal: reunification of the country. He proposed a generous and non-punitive plan to return the former Confederate states



speedily to the United States, but some Republicans in Congress protested, considering the president's plan too lenient to the rebel states that had torn the country apart. The greatest flaw of Lincoln's plan, according to this view, was that it appeared to forgive traitors instead of guaranteeing civil rights to former slaves. President Lincoln oversaw the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, but he did not live to see its ratification.

## THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN

From the outset of the rebellion in 1861, Lincoln's overriding goal had been to bring the Southern states quickly back into the fold in order to restore the Union. In early December 1863, the president began the process of reunification by unveiling a three-part proposal known as the ten percent plan that outlined how the states would return. The ten percent plan gave a general pardon to all Southerners except high-ranking Confederate government and military leaders; required 10 percent of the 1860 voting population in the former rebel states to take a binding oath of future allegiance to the United States and the emancipation of slaves; and declared that once those voters took those oaths, the restored Confederate states would draft new state constitutions.





(a)



(b)

Thomas Le Mere took this albumen silver print (a) of Abraham Lincoln in April 1863. Le Mere thought a standing pose of Lincoln would be popular. In this political cartoon from 1865 (b), Lincoln and his vice president, Andrew Johnson, endeavor to sew together the torn pieces of the Union.

Lincoln hoped that the leniency of the plan—90 percent of the 1860 voters did not have to swear allegiance to the Union or to emancipation—would bring about a quick and long-anticipated resolution and make emancipation more acceptable everywhere. This approach appealed to some in the moderate wing of the Republican Party, which wanted to put the nation on a speedy course toward reconciliation. However, the proposal instantly drew fire from a larger faction of Republicans in Congress who did not want to deal moderately with the South. These members of Congress, known as Radical Republicans, wanted to remake the South and punish the rebels. Radical Republicans insisted on harsh terms for the defeated Confederacy and protection for former slaves, going far beyond what the president proposed.

In February 1864, two of the Radical Republicans, Ohio Senator Benjamin Wade and Maryland Representative Henry Winter Davis,



answered Lincoln with a proposal of their own. Among other stipulations, the Wade-Davis Bill called for a majority of voters and government officials in Confederate states to take an oath, called the Ironclad Oath, swearing that they had never supported the Confederacy or made war against the United States. Those who could not or would not take the oath would be unable to take part in the future political life of the South. Congress assented to the Wade-Davis Bill, and it went to Lincoln for his signature. The president refused to sign, using the pocket veto (that is, taking no action) to kill the bill. Lincoln understood that no Southern state would have met the criteria of the Wade-Davis Bill, and its passage would simply have delayed the reconstruction of the South.

## THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

Despite the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, the legal status of slaves and the institution of slavery remained unresolved. To deal with the remaining uncertainties, the Republican Party made the abolition of slavery a top priority by including the issue in its 1864 party platform. The platform read: “That as slavery was the cause, and now constitutes the strength of this Rebellion, and as it must be, always and everywhere, hostile to the principles of Republican Government, justice and the National safety demand its utter and complete extirpation from the soil of the Republic; and that, while we uphold and maintain the acts and proclamations by which the Government, in its own defense, has aimed a deathblow at this gigantic evil, we are in favor, furthermore, of such an amendment to the Constitution, to be made by the people in conformity with its provisions, as shall terminate and forever prohibit the existence of Slavery within the limits of the jurisdiction of the United States.” The platform left no doubt about the intention to abolish slavery.

The president, along with the Radical Republicans, made good on this campaign promise in 1864 and 1865. A proposed constitutional



amendment passed the Senate in April 1864, and the House of Representatives concurred in January 1865. The amendment then made its way to the states, where it swiftly gained the necessary support, including in the South. In December 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment was officially ratified and added to the Constitution. The first amendment added to the Constitution since 1804, it overturned a centuries-old practice by permanently abolishing slavery.

Explore a comprehensive collection of documents, images, and ephemera related to [Abraham Lincoln](#) and the [13th Amendment](#) on the Library of Congress website.

President Lincoln never saw the final ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. On April 14, 1865, the Confederate supporter and well-known actor John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln while he was attending a play, *Our American Cousin*, at Ford's Theater in Washington. The president died the next day. Booth had steadfastly defended the Confederacy and white supremacy, and his act was part of a larger conspiracy to eliminate the heads of the Union government and keep the Confederate fight going. One of Booth's associates stabbed and wounded Secretary of State William Seward the night of the assassination. Another associate abandoned the planned assassination of Vice President Andrew Johnson at the last moment. Although Booth initially escaped capture, Union troops shot and killed him on April 26, 1865, in a Maryland barn. Eight other conspirators were convicted by a military tribunal for participating in the conspiracy, and four were hanged. Lincoln's death earned him immediate martyrdom, and hysteria spread throughout the North. To many Northerners, the assassination suggested an even greater conspiracy than what was revealed, masterminded by the unrepentant leaders of the defeated Confederacy. Militant



Republicans would use and exploit this fear relentlessly in the ensuing months.



*In The Assassination of President Lincoln (1865), by Currier and Ives, John Wilkes Booth shoots Lincoln in the back of the head as he sits in the theater box with his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, and their guests, Major Henry R. Rathbone and Clara Harris.*

## ANDREW JOHNSON AND THE BATTLE OVER RECONSTRUCTION

Lincoln's assassination elevated Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Democrat, to the presidency. Johnson had come from very humble origins. Born into extreme poverty in North Carolina and having never attended school, Johnson was the picture of a self-made man. His wife had taught him how to read and he had worked as a tailor, a trade he had been apprenticed to as a child. In Tennessee, where he had moved as a young man, he gradually rose up the political



ladder, earning a reputation for being a skillful stump speaker and a staunch defender of poor southerners. He was elected to serve in the House of Representatives in the 1840s, became governor of Tennessee the following decade, and then was elected a U.S. senator just a few years before the country descended into war. When Tennessee seceded, Johnson remained loyal to the Union and stayed in the Senate. As Union troops marched on his home state of North Carolina, Lincoln appointed him governor of the then-occupied state of Tennessee, where he served until being nominated by the Republicans to run for vice president on a Lincoln ticket. The nomination of Johnson, a Democrat and a slaveholding southerner, was a pragmatic decision made by concerned Republicans. It was important for them to show that the party supported all loyal men, regardless of their origin or political persuasion. Johnson appeared an ideal choice, because his nomination would bring with it the support of both pro-Southern elements and the War Democrats who rejected the conciliatory stance of the Copperheads, the northern Democrats who opposed the Civil War.

Unexpectedly elevated to the presidency in 1865, this formerly impoverished tailor's apprentice and unwavering antagonist of the wealthy southern planter class now found himself tasked with administering the restoration of a destroyed South. Lincoln's position as president had been that the secession of the Southern states was never legal; that is, they had not succeeded in leaving the Union, therefore they still had certain rights to self-government as states. In keeping with Lincoln's plan, Johnson desired to quickly reincorporate the South back into the Union on lenient terms and heal the wounds of the nation. This position angered many in his own party. The northern Radical Republican plan for Reconstruction looked to overturn southern society and specifically aimed at ending the plantation system. President Johnson quickly disappointed Radical Republicans when he rejected their idea that the federal government could provide voting rights for freed slaves. The initial disagreements between the president and the Radical



Republicans over how best to deal with the defeated South set the stage for further conflict.

In fact, President Johnson's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction in May 1865 provided sweeping "amnesty and pardon" to rebellious Southerners. It returned to them their property, with the notable exception of their former slaves, and it asked only that they affirm their support for the Constitution of the United States. Those Southerners excepted from this amnesty included the Confederate political leadership, high-ranking military officers, and persons with taxable property worth more than \$20,000. The inclusion of this last category was specifically designed to make it clear to the southern planter class that they had a unique responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities. But it also satisfied Johnson's desire to exact vengeance on a class of people he had fought politically for much of his life. For this class of wealthy Southerners to regain their rights, they would have to swallow their pride and request a personal pardon from Johnson himself.

For the Southern states, the requirements for readmission to the Union were also fairly straightforward. States were required to hold individual state conventions where they would repeal the ordinances of secession and ratify the Thirteenth Amendment. By the end of 1865, a number of former Confederate leaders were in the Union capital looking to claim their seats in Congress. Among them was Alexander Stephens, the vice president of the Confederacy, who had spent several months in a Boston jail after the war. Despite the outcries of Republicans in Congress, by early 1866 Johnson announced that all former Confederate states had satisfied the necessary requirements. According to him, nothing more needed to be done; the Union had been restored.

Understandably, Radical Republicans in Congress did not agree with Johnson's position. They, and their northern constituents, greatly resented his lenient treatment of the former Confederate states, and especially the return of former Confederate leaders like Alexander Stephens to Congress. They refused to acknowledge the southern state governments he allowed. As a result, they would not



permit senators and representatives from the former Confederate states to take their places in Congress.

Instead, the Radical Republicans created a joint committee of representatives and senators to oversee Reconstruction. In the 1866 congressional elections, they gained control of the House, and in the ensuing years they pushed for the dismantling of the old southern order and the complete reconstruction of the South. This effort put them squarely at odds with President Johnson, who remained unwilling to compromise with Congress, setting the stage for a series of clashes.

## Section Summary

President Lincoln worked to reach his goal of reunifying the nation quickly and proposed a lenient plan to reintegrate the Confederate states. After his murder in 1865, Lincoln's vice president, Andrew Johnson, sought to reconstitute the Union quickly, pardoning Southerners en masse and providing Southern states with a clear path back to readmission. By 1866, Johnson announced the end of Reconstruction. Radical Republicans in Congress disagreed, however, and in the years ahead would put forth their own plan of Reconstruction.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/999>



## *Review Question*

1. What was the purpose of the Thirteenth Amendment? How was it different from the Emancipation Proclamation?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The Thirteenth Amendment officially and permanently banned the institution of slavery in the United States. The Emancipation Proclamation had freed only those slaves in rebellious states, leaving many slaves—most notably, those in the border states—in bondage; furthermore, it did not alter or prohibit the institution of slavery in general.

## *Glossary*

**Ironclad Oath** an oath that the Wade-Davis Bill required a majority of voters and government officials in Confederate states to take; it involved swearing that they had never supported the Confederacy



**Radical Republicans** northern Republicans who contested Lincoln's treatment of Confederate states and proposed harsher punishments

**Reconstruction** the twelve-year period after the Civil War in which the rebel Southern states were integrated back into the Union

**ten percent plan** Lincoln's Reconstruction plan, which required only 10 percent of the 1860 voters in Confederate states to take an oath of allegiance to the Union



# 10. Congress and the Remaking of the South, 1865–1866

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the efforts made by Congress in 1865 and 1866 to bring to life its vision of Reconstruction
- Explain how the Fourteenth Amendment transformed the Constitution

President Johnson and Congress's views on Reconstruction grew even further apart as Johnson's presidency progressed. Congress repeatedly pushed for greater rights for freed people and a far more thorough reconstruction of the South, while Johnson pushed for leniency and a swifter reintegration. President Johnson lacked Lincoln's political skills and instead exhibited a stubbornness and confrontational approach that aggravated an already difficult situation.

## THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

Freed people everywhere celebrated the end of slavery and



immediately began to take steps to improve their own condition by seeking what had long been denied to them: land, financial security, education, and the ability to participate in the political process. They wanted to be reunited with family members, grasp the opportunity to make their own independent living, and exercise their right to have a say in their own government.

However, they faced the wrath of defeated but un-reconciled southerners who were determined to keep blacks an impoverished and despised underclass. Recognizing the widespread devastation in the South and the dire situation of freed people, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in March 1865, popularly known as the Freedmen's Bureau. Lincoln had approved of the bureau, giving it a charter for one year.

The Freedmen's Bureau engaged in many initiatives to ease the transition from slavery to freedom. It delivered food to blacks and whites alike in the South. It helped freed people gain labor contracts, a significant step in the creation of wage labor in place of slavery. It helped reunite families of freedmen, and it also devoted much energy to education, establishing scores of public schools where freed people and poor whites could receive both elementary and higher education. Respected institutions such as Fisk University, Hampton University, and Dillard University are part of the legacy of the Freedmen's Bureau.

In this endeavor, the Freedmen's Bureau received support from Christian organizations that had long advocated for abolition, such as the American Missionary Association (AMA). The AMA used the knowledge and skill it had acquired while working in missions in Africa and with American Indian groups to establish and run schools for freed slaves in the postwar South. While men and women, white and black, taught in these schools, the opportunity was crucially important for participating women. At the time, many opportunities, including admission to most institutes of higher learning, remained closed to women. Participating in these schools afforded these women the opportunities they otherwise may have been denied. Additionally, the fact they often risked life and limb to



work in these schools in the South demonstrated to the nation that women could play a vital role in American civic life.

The schools that the Freedmen's Bureau and the AMA established inspired great dismay and resentment among the white populations in the South and were sometimes targets of violence. Indeed, the Freedmen's Bureau's programs and its very existence were sources of controversy. Racists and others who resisted this type of federal government activism denounced it as both a waste of federal money and a

foolish effort that encouraged laziness among blacks. Congress renewed the bureau's charter in 1866, but President Johnson, who steadfastly believed that the work of restoring the Union had been completed, vetoed the re-chartering. Radical Republicans continued to support the bureau, igniting a contest between Congress and the president that intensified during the next several years. Part of this dispute involved conflicting visions of the proper role of the federal government. Radical Republicans believed in the constructive power of the federal government to ensure a better day for freed people. Others, including Johnson, denied that the government had any such role to play.



*The Freedmen's Bureau, as shown in this 1866 illustration from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, created many schools for black elementary school students. Many of the teachers who provided instruction in these southern schools, though by no means all, came from northern states.*

## The Freedmen's Bureau

The image below shows a campaign poster for Hiester Clymer, who



ran for governor of Pennsylvania in 1866 on a platform of white supremacy.



The caption of this image reads, "The Freedman's Bureau! An agency to keep the Negro in idleness at the expense of the white man. Twice vetoed by the President, and made a law by Congress. Support Congress & you support the Negro. Sustain the President & you protect the white man."

The image in the foreground shows an indolent black man wondering, "Whar is de use for me to work as long as dey make dese appropriations." White men toil in the background, chopping wood and plowing a field. The text above them reads, "In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread. . . . The white man must work to keep his children and pay his taxes." In the middle background, the Freedmen's Bureau looks like the Capitol, and the pillars are inscribed with racist assumptions of things blacks value, like "rum," "idleness," and "white women." On the right are estimates of the costs of the Freedmen's Bureau and the bounties (fees for enlistment) given to both white and black Union soldiers.



What does this poster indicate about the political climate of the Reconstruction era? How might different people have received this image?

## BLACK CODES

In 1865 and 1866, as Johnson announced the end of Reconstruction, southern states began to pass a series of discriminatory state laws collectively known as black codes. While the laws varied in both content and severity from state to state, the goal of the laws remained largely consistent. In effect, these codes were designed to maintain the social and economic structure of racial slavery in the absence of slavery itself. The laws codified white supremacy by restricting the civic participation of freed slaves—depriving them of the right to vote, the right to serve on juries, the right to own or carry weapons, and, in some cases, even the right to rent or lease land.

A chief component of the black codes was designed to fulfill an important economic need in the postwar South. Slavery had been a pillar of economic stability in the region before the war. To maintain agricultural production, the South had relied on slaves to work the land. Now the region was faced with the daunting prospect of making the transition from a slave economy to one where labor was purchased on the open market. Not surprisingly, planters in the southern states were reluctant to make such a transition. Instead, they drafted black laws that would re-create the antebellum economic structure with the façade of a free-labor system.

Black codes used a variety of tactics to tie freed slaves to the land. To work, the freed slaves were forced to sign contracts with their employer. These contracts prevented blacks from working for more than one employer. This meant that, unlike in a free labor market, blacks could not positively influence wages and conditions by choosing to work for the employer who gave them the best



terms. The predictable outcome was that freed slaves were forced to work for very low wages. With such low wages, and no ability to supplement income with additional work, workers were reduced to relying on loans from their employers. The debt that these workers incurred ensured that they could never escape from their condition. Those former slaves who attempt to violate these contracts could be fined or beaten. Those who refused to sign contracts at all could be arrested for vagrancy and then made to work for no wages, essentially being reduced to the very definition of a slave.

The black codes left no doubt that the former breakaway Confederate states intended to maintain white supremacy at all costs. These draconian state laws helped spur the congressional Joint Committee on Reconstruction into action. Its members felt that ending slavery with the Thirteenth Amendment did not go far enough. Congress extended the life of the Freedmen's Bureau to combat the black codes and in April 1866 passed the first Civil Rights Act, which established the citizenship of African Americans. This was a significant step that contradicted the Supreme Court's 1857 Dred Scott decision, which declared that blacks could never be citizens. The law also gave the federal government the right to intervene in state affairs to protect the rights of citizens, and thus, of African Americans. President Johnson, who continued to insist that restoration of the United States had already been accomplished, vetoed the 1866 Civil Rights Act. However, Congress mustered the necessary votes to override his veto. Despite the Civil Rights Act, the black codes endured, forming the foundation of the racially discriminatory Jim Crow segregation policies that impoverished generations of African Americans.

## THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT

Questions swirled about the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act of 1866. The Supreme Court, in its 1857 decision forbidding



black citizenship, had interpreted the Constitution in a certain way; many argued that the 1866 statute, alone, could not alter that interpretation. Seeking to overcome all legal questions, Radical Republicans drafted another constitutional amendment with provisions that followed those of the 1866 Civil Rights Act. In July 1866, the Fourteenth Amendment went to state legislatures for ratification.

The Fourteenth Amendment stated, “All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.” It gave citizens equal protection under both the state and federal law, overturning the Dred Scott decision. It eliminated the three-fifths compromise of the 1787 Constitution, whereby slaves had been counted as three-fifths of a free white person, and it reduced the number of House representatives and Electoral College electors for any state that denied suffrage to any adult male inhabitant, black or white. As Radical Republicans had proposed in the Wade-Davis bill, individuals who had “engaged in insurrection or rebellion [against] . . . or given aid or comfort to the enemies [of]” the United States were barred from holding political (state or federal) or military office unless pardoned by two-thirds of Congress.

The amendment also answered the question of debts arising from the Civil War by specifying that all debts incurred by fighting to defeat the Confederacy would be honored. Confederate debts, however, would not: “[N]either the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.” Thus, claims by former slaveholders requesting compensation for slave property had no standing. Any state that ratified the Fourteenth Amendment would automatically be readmitted. Yet, all former Confederate states refused to ratify the amendment in 1866.

President Johnson called openly for the rejection of the



Fourteenth Amendment, a move that drove a further wedge between him and congressional Republicans. In late summer of 1866, he gave a series of speeches, known as the “swing around the circle,” designed to gather support for his mild version of Reconstruction. Johnson felt that ending slavery went far enough; extending the rights and protections of citizenship to freed people, he believed, went much too far. He continued to believe that blacks were inferior to whites. The president’s “swing around the circle” speeches to gain support for his program and derail the Radical Republicans proved to be a disaster, as hecklers provoked Johnson to make damaging statements. Radical Republicans charged that Johnson had been drunk when he made his speeches. As a result, Johnson’s reputation plummeted.

Read the text of the [Fourteenth Amendment](#) and then view the [original document](#) at Our Documents.

## Section Summary

The conflict between President Johnson and the Republican-controlled Congress over the proper steps to be taken with the defeated Confederacy grew in intensity in the years immediately following the Civil War. While the president concluded that all that needed to be done in the South had been done by early 1866, Congress forged ahead to stabilize the defeated



Confederacy and extend to freed people citizenship and equality before the law. Congress prevailed over Johnson's vetoes as the friction between the president and the Republicans increased.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1000>

### *Review Question*

1. What was the goal of the black codes?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The black codes in southern states had the goal of keeping blacks impoverished and in debt. Black codes outlawed vagrancy and required all black men to have an annual labor contract, which gave southern states an excuse to arrest those who failed to meet these requirements and put them to hard labor.



## *Glossary*

**black codes** laws some southern states designed to maintain white supremacy by keeping freed people impoverished and in debt

**Freedmen's Bureau** the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, which was created in 1865 to ease blacks' transition from slavery to freedom



## II. Radical Reconstruction, 1867–1872

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of the second phase of Reconstruction and some of the key legislation put forward by Congress
- Describe the impeachment of President Johnson
- Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the Fifteenth Amendment

During the Congressional election in the fall of 1866, Republicans gained even greater victories. This was due in large measure to the northern voter opposition that had developed toward President Johnson because of the inflexible and overbearing attitude he had exhibited in the White House, as well as his missteps during his 1866 speaking tour. Leading Radical Republicans in Congress included Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner (the same senator whom proslavery South Carolina representative Preston Brooks had thrashed with his cane in 1856 during the Bleeding Kansas crisis) and Pennsylvania representative Thaddeus Stevens. These men and their supporters envisioned a much more expansive change in the South. Sumner advocated integrating schools and giving black men the right to vote while disenfranchising many southern voters. For his part, Stevens considered that the southern states had forfeited their rights as states when they seceded, and were no more than



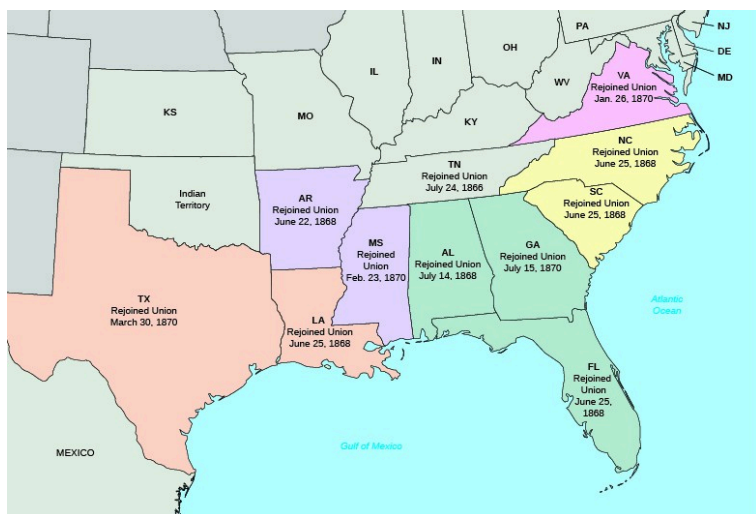
conquered territory that the federal government could organize as it wished. He envisioned the redistribution of plantation lands and U.S. military control over the former Confederacy.

Their goals included the transformation of the South from an area built on slave labor to a free-labor society. They also wanted to ensure that freed people were protected and given the opportunity for a better life. Violent race riots in Memphis, Tennessee, and New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1866 gave greater urgency to the second phase of Reconstruction, begun in 1867.

## THE RECONSTRUCTION ACTS

The 1867 Military Reconstruction Act, which encompassed the vision of Radical Republicans, set a new direction for Reconstruction in the South. Republicans saw this law, and three supplementary laws passed by Congress that year, called the Reconstruction Acts, as a way to deal with the disorder in the South. The 1867 act divided the ten southern states that had yet to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment into five military districts (Tennessee had already been readmitted to the Union by this time and so was excluded from these acts). Martial law was imposed, and a Union general commanded each district. These generals and twenty thousand federal troops stationed in the districts were charged with protecting freed people. When a supplementary act extended the right to vote to all freed men of voting age (21 years old), the military in each district oversaw the elections and the registration of voters. Only after new state constitutions had been written and states had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment could these states rejoin the Union. Predictably, President Johnson vetoed the Reconstruction Acts, viewing them as both unnecessary and unconstitutional. Once again, Congress overrode Johnson's vetoes, and by the end of 1870, all the southern states under military rule had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment and been restored to the Union.





The map above shows the five military districts established by the 1867 Military Reconstruction Act and the date each state rejoined the Union. Tennessee was not included in the Reconstruction Acts as it had already been readmitted to the Union at the time of their passage.

## THE IMPEACHMENT OF PRESIDENT JOHNSON

President Johnson's relentless vetoing of congressional measures created a deep rift in Washington, DC, and neither he nor Congress would back down. Johnson's prickly personality proved to be a liability, and many people found him grating. Moreover, he firmly believed in white supremacy, declaring in his 1868 State of the Union address, "The attempt to place the white population under the domination of persons of color in the South has impaired, if not destroyed, the kindly relations that had previously existed between them; and mutual distrust has engendered a feeling of animosity which leading in some instances to collision and bloodshed, has prevented that cooperation between the two races so essential to



the success of industrial enterprise in the southern states.” The president’s racism put him even further at odds with those in Congress who wanted to create full equality between blacks and whites.

The Republican majority in Congress by now despised the president, and they wanted to prevent him from interfering in congressional Reconstruction. To that end, Radical Republicans passed two laws of dubious constitutionality. The Command of the Army Act prohibited the president from issuing military orders except through the commanding general of the army, who could not be relieved or reassigned without the consent of the Senate. The Tenure of Office Act, which Congress passed in 1867, required the president to gain the approval of the Senate whenever he appointed or removed officials. Congress had passed this act to ensure that Republicans who favored Radical Reconstruction would not be barred or stripped of their jobs. In August 1867, President Johnson removed Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who had aligned himself with the Radical Republicans, without gaining Senate approval. He replaced Stanton with Ulysses S. Grant, but Grant resigned and sided with the Republicans against the president. Many Radical Republicans welcomed this blunder by the president as it allowed them to take action to remove Johnson from office, arguing that Johnson had openly violated the Tenure of Office Act. The House of Representatives quickly drafted a resolution to impeach him, a first in American history.



In impeachment proceedings, the House of Representatives serves as the prosecution and the Senate acts as judge, deciding whether the president should be removed from office. The House brought eleven counts against Johnson, all alleging his encroachment on the powers of Congress. In the Senate, Johnson barely survived. Seven Republicans joined the Democrats and independents



*This illustration by Theodore R. Davis, which was captioned “The Senate as a court of impeachment for the trial of Andrew Johnson,” appeared in Harper’s Weekly in 1868. Here, the House of Representatives brings its grievances against Johnson to the Senate during impeachment hearings.*

to support acquittal; the final vote was 35 to 19, one vote short of the required two-thirds majority. The Radicals then dropped the impeachment effort, but the events had effectively silenced President Johnson, and Radical Republicans continued with their plan to reconstruct the South.

## THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT

In November 1868, Ulysses S. Grant, the Union’s war hero, easily won the presidency in a landslide victory. The Democratic nominee was Horatio Seymour, but the Democrats carried the stigma of disunion. The Republicans, in their campaign, blamed the devastating Civil War and the violence of its aftermath on the rival party, a strategy that southerners called “waving the bloody shirt.”

Though Grant did not side with the Radical Republicans, his victory allowed the continuance of the Radical Reconstruction program. In the winter of 1869, Republicans introduced another constitutional amendment, the third of the Reconstruction era.



When Republicans had passed the Fourteenth Amendment, which addressed citizenship rights and equal protections, they were unable to explicitly ban states from withholding the franchise based on race. With the Fifteenth Amendment, they sought to correct this major weakness by finally extending to black men the right to vote. The amendment directed that “[t]he right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Unfortunately, the new amendment had weaknesses of its own. As part of a compromise to ensure the passage of the amendment with the broadest possible support, drafters of the amendment specifically excluded language that addressed literacy tests and poll taxes, the most common ways blacks were traditionally disenfranchised in both the North and the South. Indeed, Radical Republican leader Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, himself an ardent supporter of legal equality without exception to race, refused to vote for the amendment precisely because it did not address these obvious loopholes.

Despite these weaknesses, the language of the amendment did provide for universal manhood suffrage—the right of all men to vote—and crucially identified black men, including those who had been slaves, as deserving the right to vote. This, the third and final of the Reconstruction amendments, was ratified in 1870. With the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, many believed that the process of restoring the Union was safely coming to a close and that the rights of freed slaves were finally secure. African American communities expressed great hope as they celebrated what they understood to be a national confirmation of their unqualified citizenship.





The Fifteenth Amendment. Celebrated May 19th, 1870, a commemorative print by Thomas Kelly, celebrates the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment with a series of vignettes highlighting black rights and those who championed them. Portraits include Ulysses S. Grant, Abraham Lincoln, and John Brown, as well as black leaders Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and Hiram Revels. Vignettes include the celebratory parade for the amendment's passage, "The Ballot Box is open to us," and "Our representative Sits in the National Legislature."

Visit the [Library of Congress](https://www.loc.gov/rr/congress/exhibitions/exhibitions.html) to take a closer look at *The Fifteenth Amendment* by Thomas Kelly. Examine each individual vignette and the accompanying text. Why do you think Kelly chose these to highlight?



## WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

While the Fifteenth Amendment may have been greeted with applause in many corners, leading women's rights activists, who had been campaigning for decades for the right to vote, saw it as a major disappointment. More dispiriting still was the fact that many women's rights activists, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had played a large part in the abolitionist movement leading up to the Civil War. Following the war, women and men, white and black, formed the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) for the expressed purpose of securing "equal Rights to all American citizens, especially the right of suffrage, irrespective of race, color or sex." Two years later, with the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment, section 2 of which specifically qualified the liberties it extended to "male citizens," it seemed as though the progress made in support of civil rights was not only passing women by but was purposely codifying their exclusion. As Congress debated the language of the Fifteenth Amendment, some held out hope that it would finally extend the franchise to women. Those hopes were dashed when Congress adopted the final language.

The consequence of these frustrated hopes was the effective split of a civil rights movement that had once been united in support of African Americans and women. Seeing this split occur, Frederick Douglass, a great admirer of Stanton, struggled to argue for a piecemeal approach that should prioritize the franchise for black men if that was the only option. He insisted that his support for women's right to vote was sincere, but that getting black men the right to vote was "of the most urgent necessity." "The government of this country loves women," he argued. "They are the sisters, mothers, wives and daughters of our rulers; but the negro is loathed. . . . The negro needs suffrage to protect his life and property, and to ensure him respect and education."

These appeals were largely accepted by women's rights leaders and AERA members like Lucy Stone and Henry Browne Blackwell,



who believed that more time was needed to bring about female suffrage. Others demanded immediate action. Among those who pressed forward despite the setback were Stanton and Anthony. They felt greatly aggrieved at the fact that other abolitionists, with whom they had worked closely for years, did not demand that women be included in the language of the amendments. Stanton argued that the women's vote would be necessary to counter the influence of uneducated freedmen in the South and the waves of poor European immigrants arriving in the East.

In 1869, Stanton and Anthony helped organize the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), an organization dedicated to ensuring that women gained the right to vote immediately, not at some future, undetermined date. Some women, including Virginia Minor, a member of the NWSA, took action by trying to register to vote; Minor attempted this in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1872. When election officials turned her away, Minor brought the issue to the Missouri state courts, arguing that the Fourteenth Amendment ensured that she was a citizen with the right to vote. This legal effort to bring about women's suffrage eventually made its way to the Supreme Court, which declared in 1874 that "the constitution of the United States does not confer the right of suffrage upon any one," effectively dismissing Minor's claim.

## Constitution of the National Woman Suffrage Association

Despite the Fifteenth Amendment's failure to guarantee female suffrage, women did gain the right to vote in western territories, with the Wyoming Territory leading the way in 1869. One reason for this was a belief that giving women the right to vote would provide a moral compass to the otherwise lawless western frontier. Extending the right to vote in western territories also provided an incentive for white women to emigrate to the West, where they



were scarce. However, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others believed that immediate action on the national front was required, leading to the organization of the NWSA and its resulting constitution.

ARTICLE 1.—This organization shall be called the National Woman Suffrage Association.

ARTICLE 2.—The object of this Association shall be to secure STATE and NATIONAL protection for women citizens in the exercise of their right to vote.

ARTICLE 3.—All citizens of the United States subscribing to this Constitution, and contributing not less than one dollar annually, shall be considered members of the Association, with the right to participate in its deliberations.

ARTICLE 4.—The officers of this Association shall be a President, Vice-Presidents from each of the States and Territories, Corresponding and Recording Secretaries, a Treasurer, an Executive Committee of not less than five, and an Advisory Committee consisting of one or more persons from each State and Territory.

ARTICLE 5.—All Woman Suffrage Societies throughout the country shall be welcomed as auxiliaries; and their accredited officers or duly appointed representatives shall be recognized as members of the National Association. OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION.

PRESIDENT.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY, Rochester, N. Y.

How was the NWSA organized? How would the fact that it operated at the national level, rather than at the state or local level, help it to achieve its goals?

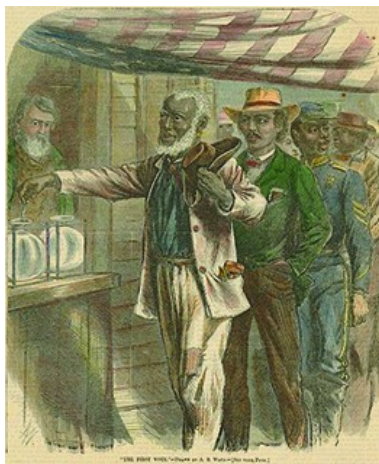


# BLACK POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Black voter registration in the late 1860s and the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment finally brought what Lincoln had characterized as “a new birth of freedom.” Union Leagues, fraternal groups founded in the North that promoted loyalty to the Union and the Republican Party during the Civil War, expanded into the South after the war and were transformed into political clubs that served both political and civic functions. As centers of the black communities in the South, the leagues became

vehicles for the dissemination of information, acted as mediators between members of the black community and the white establishment, and served other practical functions like helping to build schools and churches for the community they served. As extensions of the Republican Party, these leagues worked to enroll newly enfranchised black voters, campaign for candidates, and generally help the party win elections.

The political activities of the leagues launched a great many African Americans and former slaves into politics throughout the South. For the first time, blacks began to hold political office, and several were elected to the U.S. Congress. In the 1870s, fifteen members of the House of Representatives and two senators were black. The two senators, Blanche K. Bruce and Hiram Revels, were both from Mississippi, the home state of former U.S. senator and later Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Hiram Revels, was a



*The First Vote, by Alfred R. Waud, appeared in Harper's Weekly in 1867. The Fifteenth Amendment gave black men the right to vote for the first time.*



freeborn man from North Carolina who rose to prominence as a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and then as a Mississippi state senator in 1869. The following year he was elected by the state legislature to fill one of Mississippi's two U.S. Senate seats, which had been vacant since the war. His arrival in Washington, DC, drew intense interest: as the *New York Times* noted, when "the colored Senator from Mississippi, was sworn in and admitted to his seat this afternoon . . . there was not an inch of standing or sitting room in the galleries, so densely were they packed. . . . When the Vice-President uttered the words, 'The Senator elect will now advance and take the oath,' a pin might have been heard drop."



*Hiram Revels served as a preacher throughout the Midwest before settling in Mississippi in 1866. When he was elected by the Mississippi state legislature in 1870, he became the country's first African American senator.*



## Senator Revels on Segregated Schools in Washington, DC

Hiram R. Revels became the first African American to serve in the U.S. Senate in 1870. In 1871, he gave the following speech about Washington's segregated schools before Congress.

Will establishing such [desegregated] schools as I am now advocating in this District harm our white friends? . . . By some it is contended that if we establish mixed schools here a great insult will be given to the white citizens, and that the white schools will be seriously damaged. . . . When I was on a lecturing tour in the state of Ohio . . . [o]ne of the leading gentlemen connected with the schools in that town came to see me. . . . He asked me, "Have you been to New England, where they have mixed schools?" I replied, "I have sir." "Well," said he, "please tell me this: does not social equality result from mixed schools?" "No, sir; very far from it," I responded. "Why," said he, "how can it be otherwise?" I replied, "I will tell you how it can be otherwise, and how it is otherwise. Go to the schools and you see there white children and colored children seated side by side, studying their lessons, standing side by side and reciting their lessons, and perhaps in walking to school they may walk together; but that is the last of it. The white children go to their homes; the colored children go to theirs; and on the Lord's day you will see those colored children in colored churches, and the white family, you will see the white children there, and the colored children at entertainments given by persons of their color." I aver, sir, that mixed schools are very far from bringing about social equality."

According to Senator Revels's speech, what is "social equality" and why is it important to the issue of desegregated schools? Does



Revels favor social equality or social segregation? Did social equality exist in the United States in 1871?

Though the fact of their presence was dramatic and important, as the *New York Times* description above demonstrates, the few African American representatives and senators who served in Congress during Reconstruction represented only a tiny fraction of the many hundreds, possibly thousands, of blacks who served in a great number of capacities at the local and state levels. The South during the early 1870s brimmed with freed slaves and freeborn blacks serving as school board commissioners, county commissioners, clerks of court, board of education and city council members, justices of the peace, constables, coroners, magistrates, sheriffs, auditors, and registrars. This wave of local African American political activity contributed to and was accompanied by a new concern for the poor and disadvantaged in the South. The southern Republican leadership did away with the hated black codes, undid the work of white supremacists, and worked to reduce obstacles confronting freed people.

Reconstruction governments invested in infrastructure, paying special attention to the rehabilitation of the southern railroads. They set up public education systems that enrolled both white and black students. They established or increased funding for hospitals, orphanages, and asylums for the insane. In some states, the state and local governments provided the poor with basic necessities like firewood and even bread. And to pay for these new services and subsidies, the governments levied taxes on land and property, an action that struck at the heart of the foundation of southern economic inequality. Indeed, the land tax compounded the existing problems of white landowners, who were often cash-poor, and contributed to resentment of what southerners viewed as another northern attack on their way of life.

White southerners reacted with outrage at the changes imposed upon them. The sight of once-enslaved blacks serving in positions of authority as sheriffs, congressmen, and city council members



stimulated great resentment at the process of Reconstruction and its undermining of the traditional social and economic foundations of the South. Indignant southerners referred to this period of reform as a time of “negro misrule.” They complained of profligate corruption on the part of vengeful freed slaves and greedy northerners looking to fill their pockets with the South’s riches. Unfortunately for the great many honest reformers, southerners did have a handful of real examples of corruption they could point to, such as legislators using state revenues to buy hams and perfumes or giving themselves inflated salaries. Such examples, however, were relatively few and largely comparable to nineteenth-century corruption across the country. Yet these powerful stories, combined with deep-seated racial animosity toward blacks in the South, led to Democratic campaigns to “redeem” state governments. Democrats across the South leveraged planters’ economic power and wielded white vigilante violence to ultimately take back state political power from the Republicans. By the time President Grant’s attentions were being directed away from the South and toward the Indian Wars in the West in 1876, power in the South had largely been returned to whites and Reconstruction was effectively abandoned. By the end of 1876, only South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida still had Republican governments.

The sense that the South had been unfairly sacrificed to northern vice and black vengeance, despite a wealth of evidence to the contrary, persisted for many decades. So powerful and pervasive was this narrative that by the time D. W. Griffith released his 1915 motion picture, *The Birth of a Nation*, whites around the country were primed to accept the fallacy that white southerners were the frequent victims of violence and violation at the hands of unrestrained blacks. The reality is that the opposite was true. White southerners orchestrated a sometimes violent and generally successful counterrevolution against Reconstruction policies in the South beginning in the 1860s. Those who worked to change and modernize the South typically did so under the stern gaze of exasperated whites and threats of violence. Black Republican



officials in the South were frequently terrorized, assaulted, and even murdered with impunity by organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. When not ignoring the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments altogether, white leaders often used trickery and fraud at the polls to get the results they wanted. As Reconstruction came to a close, these methods came to define southern life for African Americans for nearly a century afterward.

## Section Summary

Though President Johnson declared Reconstruction complete less than a year after the Confederate surrender, members of Congress disagreed. Republicans in Congress began to implement their own plan of bringing law and order to the South through the use of military force and martial law. Radical Republicans who advocated for a more equal society pushed their program forward as well, leading to the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, which finally gave blacks the right to vote. The new amendment empowered black voters, who made good use of the vote to elect black politicians. It disappointed female suffragists, however, who had labored for years to gain women's right to vote. By the end of 1870, all the southern states under Union military control had satisfied the requirements of Congress and been readmitted to the Union.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1001>



## *Review Question*

1. What were the benefits and drawbacks of the Fifteenth Amendment?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The Fifteenth Amendment granted the vote to all black men, giving freed slaves and free blacks greater political power than they had ever had in the United States. Blacks in former Confederate states elected a handful of black U.S. congressmen and a great many black local and state leaders who instituted ambitious reform and modernization projects in the South. However, the Fifteenth Amendment continued to exclude women from voting. Women continued to fight for suffrage through the NWSA and AWSA.

## *Glossary*

**Union Leagues** fraternal groups loyal to the Union and the Republican Party that became political and civic centers for blacks in former Confederate states



## 12. The Collapse of Reconstruction

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the reasons for the collapse of Reconstruction
- Describe the efforts of white southern “redeemers” to roll back the gains of Reconstruction

The effort to remake the South generated a brutal reaction among southern whites, who were committed to keeping blacks in a subservient position. To prevent blacks from gaining economic ground and to maintain cheap labor for the agricultural economy, an exploitative system of sharecropping spread throughout the South. Domestic terror organizations, most notably the Ku Klux Klan, employed various methods (arson, whipping, murder) to keep freed people from voting and achieving political, social, or economic equality with whites.



## BUILDING BLACK COMMUNITIES

The degraded status of black men and women had placed them outside the limits of what antebellum southern whites considered appropriate gender roles and familial hierarchies. Slave marriages did not enjoy legal recognition. Enslaved men were humiliated and deprived of authority and of the ability to protect enslaved women, who were frequently exposed to the brutality and sexual domination of white masters and vigilantes alike. Slave parents could not



*After emancipation, many fathers who had been sold from their families as slaves—a circumstance illustrated in the engraving above, which shows a male slave forced to leave his wife and children—set out to find those lost families and rebuild their lives.*

protect their children, who could be bought, sold, put to work, brutally disciplined, and abused without their consent; parents, too, could be sold away from their children. Moreover, the division of labor idealized in white southern society, in which men worked the land and women performed the role of domestic caretaker, was null and void where slaves were concerned. Both slave men and women were made to perform hard labor in the fields.

In the Reconstruction era, African Americans embraced the right to enjoy the family bonds and the expression of gender norms they had been systematically denied. Many thousands of freed black men who had been separated from their families as slaves took to the road to find their long-lost spouses and children and renew their bonds. In one instance, a journalist reported having interviewed a freed slave who traveled over six hundred miles on foot in search of the family that was taken from him while in bondage. Couples that had been spared separation quickly set out to legalize their marriages, often by way of the Freedmen's Bureau, now that this



option was available. Those who had no families would sometimes relocate to southern towns and cities, so as to be part of the larger black community where churches and other mutual aid societies offered help and camaraderie.

## SHARECROPPING

Most freed people stayed in the South on the lands where their families and loved ones had worked for generations as slaves. They hungered to own and farm their own lands instead of the lands of white plantation owners. In one case, former slaves on the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina initially had hopes of owning the land they had worked for many decades after General Sherman directed that freed people be granted title to plots of forty acres.

The Freedmen's Bureau provided additional cause for such hopes by directing that leases and titles to lands in the South be made available to former slaves. However, these efforts ran afoul of President Johnson. In 1865, he ordered the return of land to white landowners, a setback for those freed people, such as those on the South Carolina Sea Islands, who had begun to cultivate the land as their own. Ultimately, there was no redistribution of land in the South.

The end of slavery meant the transition to wage labor. However, this conversion did not entail a new era of economic independence for former slaves. While they no longer faced relentless toil under the lash, freed people emerged from slavery without any money and needed farm implements, food, and other basic necessities to start their new lives. Under the crop-lien system, store owners extended credit to farmers under the agreement that the debtors would pay with a portion of their future harvest. However, the creditors charged high interest rates, making it even harder for freed people to gain economic independence.

Throughout the South, sharecropping took root, a crop-lien



system that worked to the advantage of landowners. Under the system, freed people rented the land they worked, often on the same plantations where they had been slaves. Some landless whites also became sharecroppers. Sharecroppers paid their landlords with the crops they grew, often as much as half their harvest. Sharecropping favored the landlords and ensured that freed people could not attain independent livelihoods. The year-to-year leases meant no incentive existed to substantially improve the land, and high interest payments siphoned additional money away from the farmers. Sharecroppers often became trapped in a never-ending cycle of debt, unable to buy their own land and unable to stop working for their creditor because of what they owed. The consequences of sharecropping affected the entire South for many generations, severely limiting economic development and ensuring that the South remained an agricultural backwater.

## THE “INVISIBLE EMPIRE OF THE SOUTH”

Paramilitary white-supremacist terror organizations in the South helped bring about the collapse of Reconstruction, using violence as their primary weapon. The “Invisible Empire of the South,” or Ku Klux Klan, stands as the most notorious. The Klan was founded in 1866 as an oath-bound fraternal order of Confederate veterans in Tennessee, with former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest as its first leader. The organization—its name likely derived from *kuklos*, a Greek word meaning circle—devised elaborate rituals and grandiose names for its ranking members: Grand Wizard, Grand Dragon, Grand Titan, and Grand Cyclops. Soon, however, this fraternal organization evolved into a vigilante terrorist group that vented southern whites’ collective frustration over the loss of the



war and the course of Radical Reconstruction through acts of intimidation and violence.

The Klan terrorized newly freed blacks to deter them from exercising their citizenship rights and freedoms. Other anti-black vigilante groups around the South began to adopt the Klan name and perpetrate acts of unspeakable violence against anyone they considered a tool of Reconstruction. Indeed, as historians have noted, Klan units around the South operated autonomously and with a variety of motives. Some may have sincerely believed they were righting wrongs, others merely satisfying their lurid desires for violence. Nor was the Klan the only racist vigilante organization. Other groups, like the Red Shirts from Mississippi and the Knights of the White Camelia and the White League, both from Louisiana, also sprang up at this time. The Klan and similar organizations also worked as an extension of the Democratic Party to win elections.

Despite the great variety in Klan membership, on the whole, the group tended to direct its attention toward persecuting freed people and people they considered carpetbaggers, a term of abuse applied to northerners accused of having come to the South to acquire wealth through political power at the expense of southerners. The colorful term captured the disdain of southerners for these people, reflecting the common assumption that these men, sensing great opportunity, packed up all their worldly possessions in carpetbags, a then-popular type of luggage, and made their way to the South. Implied in this definition is the notion that these men came from little and were thus shiftless wanderers motivated only by the desire for quick money. In reality, these northerners tended to be young, idealistic, often well-educated men who responded to northern campaigns urging them to lead the modernization of the South. But the image of them as swindlers taking advantage of the South at its time of need resonated with a white southern population aggrieved by loss and economic decline. Southern whites who supported Reconstruction, known as scalawags, also generated great hostility as traitors to the South. They, too, became targets of the Klan and similar groups.



The Klan seized on the pervasive but largely fictional narrative of the northern carpetbagger as a powerful tool for restoring white supremacy and overturning Republican state governments in the South. To preserve a white-dominated society, Klan members punished blacks for attempting to improve their station in life or acting “uppity.” To prevent freed people from attaining an education, the Klan burned public schools. In an effort to stop blacks from voting, the Klan murdered, whipped, and otherwise intimidated freed people and their white supporters. It wasn’t uncommon for Klan members to intimidate Union League members and Freedmen’s Bureau workers. The Klan even perpetrated acts of political assassination, killing a sitting U.S. congressman from Arkansas and three state congressmen from South Carolina.



# I AM COMMITTEE

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1st. No man shall squat negroes on his place unless they are all under his employ male and female.

2d. Negro women shall be employed by white persons

3d. All children shall be hired out for something.

4th. Negroes found in cabins to themselves shall suffer the penalty.

5th. Negroes shall not be allowed to hire negroes.

6th. Idle men, women or children, shall suffer the penalty.

7th. All white men found with negroes in secret places shall be dealt with and those that hire negroes must pay promptly and act with good faith to the negro. I will make the negro do his part, and the white must too.

8th. For the first offence is one hundred lashes—the second is looking up a sap lin.

9th. This I do for the benefit of all young or old, high and tall, black and white. Any one that may not like these rules can try their luck, and see whether or not I will be found doing my duty.

10th. Negroes found stealing from any one or taking from their employers to other negroes, death is the first penalty.

11th. Running about late of nights shall be strictly dealt with.

12th. White man and negro, I am everywhere. I have friends in every place, do your duty and I will have but little to do.

*The Ku Klux Klan posted circulars such as this 1867 West Virginia broadside to warn blacks and white sympathizers of the power and ubiquity of the Klan.*

Klan tactics included riding out to victims' houses, masked and armed, and firing into the homes or burning them down. Other tactics relied more on the threat of violence, such as happened in Mississippi when fifty masked Klansmen rode out to a local schoolteacher's house to express their displeasure with the school tax and to suggest that she consider leaving. Still other tactics



intimidated through imaginative trickery. One such method was to dress up as ghosts of slain Confederate soldiers and stage stunts designed to convince their victims of their supernatural abilities.



*This illustration by Frank Bellew, captioned "Visit of the Ku-Klux," appeared in Harper's Weekly in 1872. A hooded Klansman surreptitiously points a rifle at an unaware black family in their home.*

Regardless of the method, the general goal of reinstating white supremacy as a foundational principle and returning the South to a situation that largely resembled antebellum conditions remained a constant. The Klan used its power to eliminate black economic independence, decimate blacks' political rights, reclaim white dominance over black women's bodies and black men's masculinity, tear apart black communities, and return blacks to earlier patterns of economic and political subservience and social deference. In this, they were largely successful.



Visit [Freedmen's Bureau Online](#) to view digitized records of attacks on freed people that were reported in Albany, Georgia, between January 1 and October 31, 1868.

The president and Congress, however, were not indifferent to the violence, and they worked to bring it to an end. In 1870, at the insistence of the governor of North Carolina, President Grant told Congress to investigate the Klan. In response, Congress in 1871 created the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States. The committee took testimony from freed people in the South, and in 1872, it published a thirteen-volume report on the tactics the Klan used to derail democracy in the South through the use of violence.

## Abram Colby on the Methods of the Ku Klux Klan

The following statements are from the October 27, 1871, testimony of fifty-two-year-old former slave Abram Colby, which the joint select committee investigating the Klan took in Atlanta, Georgia. Colby had been elected to the lower house of the Georgia State legislature in 1868.

On the 29th of October, they came to my house and broke my door open, took me out of my bed and took me to the woods and whipped me three hours or more and left me in the woods for dead. They said to me, "Do you think you will ever vote another damned Radical ticket?" I said, "I will not tell you a lie." They said, "No; don't tell a lie." . . . I said, "If



there was an election to-morrow, I would vote the Radical ticket." They set in and whipped me a thousand licks more, I suppose. . . .

They said I had influence with the negroes of other counties, and had carried the negroes against them. About two days before they whipped me they offered me \$5,000 to turn and go with them, and said they would pay me \$2,500 cash if I would turn and let another man go to the legislature in my place. . . .

I would have come before the court here last week, but I knew it was no use for me to try to get Ku-Klux condemned by Ku-Klux, and I did not come. Mr. Saunders, a member of the grand jury here last week, is the father of one of the very men I knew whipped me. . . .

They broke something inside of me, and the doctor has been attending to me for more than a year. Sometimes I cannot get up and down off my bed, and my left hand is not of much use to me.

—Abram Colby testimony, Joint Select Committee Report, 1872

Why did the Klan target Colby? What methods did they use?

Congress also passed a series of three laws designed to stamp out the Klan. Passed in 1870 and 1871, the Enforcement Acts or "Force Acts" were designed to outlaw intimidation at the polls and to give the federal government the power to prosecute crimes against freed people in federal rather than state courts. Congress believed that this last step, a provision in the third Enforcement Act, also called the Ku Klux Klan Act, was necessary in order to ensure that trials would not be decided by white juries in southern states friendly to the Klan. The act also allowed the president to impose martial law in areas controlled by the Klan and gave President Grant the power to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, a continuation of the wartime power granted to President Lincoln. The suspension meant



individuals suspected of engaging in Klan activity could be jailed indefinitely.

President Grant made frequent use of the powers granted to him by Congress, especially in South Carolina, where federal troops imposed martial law in nine counties in an effort to derail Klan activities. However, the federal government faced entrenched local organizations and a white population firmly opposed to Radical Reconstruction. Changes came slowly or not at all, and disillusionment set in. After 1872, federal government efforts to put down paramilitary terror in the South waned.

## **“REDEEMERS” AND THE END OF RECONSTRUCTION**

While the president and Congress may have seen the Klan and other clandestine white supremacist, terrorist organizations as a threat to stability and progress in the South, many southern whites saw them as an instrument of order in a world turned upside down. Many white southerners felt humiliated by the process of Radical Reconstruction and the way Republicans had upended southern society, placing blacks in positions of authority while taxing large landowners to pay for the education of former slaves. Those committed to rolling back the tide of Radical Reconstruction in the South called themselves redeemers, a label that expressed their desire to redeem their states from northern control and to restore the antebellum social order whereby blacks were kept safely under the boot heel of whites. They represented the Democratic Party in the South and worked tirelessly to end what they saw as an era of “negro misrule.” By 1877, they had succeeded in bringing about the “redemption” of the South, effectively destroying the dream of Radical Reconstruction.

Although Ulysses S. Grant won a second term in the presidential



election of 1872, the Republican grip on national political power began to slip in the early 1870s. Three major events undermined Republican control. First, in 1873, the United States experienced the start of a long economic downturn, the result of economic instability in Europe that spread to the United States. In the fall of 1873, the bank of Jay Cooke & Company failed to meet its financial obligations and went bankrupt, setting off a panic in American financial markets. An economic depression ensued, which Democrats blamed on Republicans and which lasted much of the decade.

Second, the Republican Party experienced internal squabbles and divided into two factions. Some Republicans began to question the expansive role of the federal government, arguing for limiting the size and scope of federal initiatives. These advocates, known as Liberal Republicans because they followed classical liberalism in championing small government, formed their own breakaway party. Their ideas changed the nature of the debate over Reconstruction by challenging reliance on federal government help to bring about change in the South. Now some Republicans argued for downsizing Reconstruction efforts.

Third, the Grant administration became mired in scandals, further tarnishing the Republicans while giving Democrats the upper hand. One scandal arose over the siphoning off of money from excise taxes on whiskey. The “Whiskey Ring,” as it was called, involved people at the highest levels of the Grant administration, including the president’s personal secretary, Orville Babcock. Another scandal entangled Crédit Mobilier of America, a construction company and part of the important French Crédit Mobilier banking company. The Union Pacific Railroad company, created by the federal government during the Civil War to construct a transcontinental railroad, paid Crédit Mobilier to build the railroad. However, Crédit Mobilier used the funds it received to buy Union Pacific Railroad bonds and resell them at a huge profit. Some members of Congress, as well as Vice President Schuyler Colfax, had accepted funds from Crédit Mobilier in return for forestalling an inquiry. When the scam became known



in 1872, Democratic opponents of Reconstruction pointed to Cr dit Mobilier as an example of corruption in the Republican-dominated federal government and evidence that smaller government was better.

The Democratic Party in the South made significant advances in the 1870s in its efforts to wrest political control from the Republican-dominated state governments. The Ku Klux Klan, as well as other paramilitary groups in the South, often operated as military wings of the Democratic Party in former Confederate states. In one notorious episode following a contested 1872 gubernatorial election in Louisiana, as many as 150 freedmen loyal to the Republican Party were killed at



*In this illustration by Charles Harvey Weigall, captioned “The Louisiana Murders—Gathering the Dead and Wounded” and published in Harper’s Weekly in 1873, survivors of the Colfax Massacre tend to those involved in the conflict. The dead and wounded all appear to be black, and two white men on horses watch over them. Another man stands with a gun pointed at the survivors.*

the Colfax courthouse by armed members of the Democratic Party, even as many of them tried to surrender.

In other areas of the South, the Democratic Party gained control over state politics. Texas came under Democratic control by 1873, and in the following year Alabama and Arkansas followed suit. In national politics, too, the Democrats gained ground—especially during the 1874 elections, when they recaptured control of the House of Representatives for the first time since before the Civil War. Every other southern state, with the exception of Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana—the states where federal troops remained a force—also fell to the Democratic Party and the restoration of white supremacy. Southerners everywhere celebrated their “redemption” from Radical Republican rule.



## THE CONTESTED ELECTION OF 1876

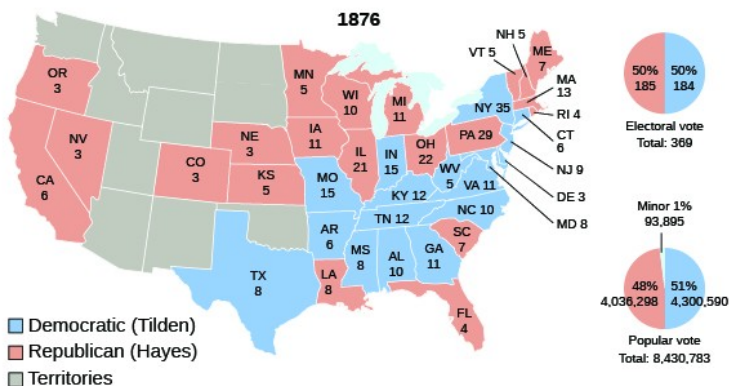
By the time of the 1876 presidential election, Reconstruction had come to an end in most southern states. In Congress, the political power of the Radical Republicans had waned, although some continued their efforts to realize the dream of equality between blacks and whites. One of the last attempts to do so was the passage of the 1875 Civil Rights Act, which required equality in public places and on juries. This law was challenged in court, and in 1883 the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional, arguing that the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments did not prohibit discrimination by private individuals. By the 1870s, the Supreme Court had also undercut the letter and the spirit of the Fourteenth Amendment by interpreting it as affording freed people only limited federal protection from the Klan and other terror groups.

The country remained bitterly divided, and this was reflected in the contested election of 1876. While Grant wanted to run for a third term, scandals and Democratic successes in the South dashed those hopes. Republicans instead selected Rutherford B. Hayes, the three-time governor of Ohio. Democrats nominated Samuel Tilden, the reform governor of New York, who was instrumental in ending the Tweed Ring and Tammany Hall corruption in New York City. The November election produced an apparent Democratic victory, as Tilden carried the South and large northern states with a 300,000-vote advantage in the popular vote. However, disputed returns from Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida, and Oregon, whose electoral votes totaled twenty, threw the election into doubt.

Hayes could still win if he gained those twenty electoral votes. As the Constitution did not provide a method to determine the validity of disputed votes, the decision fell to Congress, where Republicans controlled the Senate and Democrats controlled the House of Representatives. In late January 1877, Congress tried to break the deadlock by creating a special electoral commission composed of five senators, five representatives, and five justices of the Supreme



Court. The congressional delegation represented both parties equally, with five Democrats and five Republicans. The court delegation had two Democrats, two Republicans, and one independent—David Davis, who resigned from the Supreme Court (and from the commission) when the Illinois legislature elected him to the Senate. After Davis's resignation, President Grant selected a Republican to take his place, tipping the scales in favor of Hayes. The commission then awarded the disputed electoral votes and the presidency to Hayes, voting on party lines, 8 to 7. The Democrats called foul, threatening to hold up the commission's decision in the courts.



*This map illustrates the results of the presidential election of 1876. Tilden, the Democratic candidate, swept the South, with the exception of the contested states of Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina.*

In what became known as the Compromise of 1877, Republican Senate leaders worked with the Democratic leadership so they would support Hayes and the commission's decision. The two sides agreed that one Southern Democrat would be appointed to Hayes's cabinet, Democrats would control federal patronage (the awarding of government jobs) in their areas in the South, and there would be a commitment to generous internal improvements, including federal



aid for the Texas and Pacific Railway. Perhaps most important, all remaining federal troops would be withdrawn from the South, a move that effectively ended Reconstruction. Hayes believed that southern leaders would obey and enforce the Reconstruction-era constitutional amendments that protected the rights of freed people. His trust was soon proved to be misguided, much to his dismay, and he devoted a large part of his life to securing rights for freedmen. For their part, the Democrats took over the remaining southern states, creating what became known as the “Solid South”—a region that consistently voted in a bloc for the Democratic Party.

## Section Summary

The efforts launched by Radical Republicans in the late 1860s generated a massive backlash in the South in the 1870s as whites fought against what they considered “negro misrule.” Paramilitary terrorist cells emerged, committing countless atrocities in their effort to “redeem” the South from black Republican rule. In many cases, these organizations operated as an extension of the Democratic Party. Scandals hobbled the Republican Party, as did a severe economic depression. By 1875, Reconstruction had largely come to an end. The contested presidential election the following year, which was decided in favor of the Republican candidate, and the removal of federal troops from the South only confirmed the obvious: Reconstruction had failed to



achieve its primary objective of creating an interracial democracy that provided equal rights to all citizens.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1002>

### *Review Question*

1. Why was it difficult for southern free blacks to gain economic independence after the Civil War?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Southern blacks emerged from slavery with no money to begin their new lives, so they had to rely on the crop-lien and sharecropping systems. These systems enabled freed people to get tools and rent land to farm, but the high interest rate (paid in harvested crops) made it difficult for them to rise out of poverty.



## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. How do you think would history have been different if Lincoln had not been assassinated? How might his leadership after the war have differed from that of Andrew Johnson?
2. Was the Thirteenth Amendment a success or a failure? Discuss the reasons for your answer.
3. Consider the differences between the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. What does the Fourteenth Amendment do that the Thirteenth does not?
4. Consider social, political, and economic equality. In what ways did Radical Reconstruction address and secure these forms of equality? Where did it fall short?
5. Consider the problem of terrorism during Radical Reconstruction. If you had been an adviser to President Grant, how would you propose to deal with the problem?

## *Glossary*

**carpetbagger** a term used for northerners working in the South during Reconstruction; it implied that these were opportunists who came south for economic or political gain

**Compromise of 1877** the agreement between Republicans



and Democrats, after the contested election of 1876, in which Rutherford B. Hayes was awarded the presidency in exchange for withdrawing the last of the federal troops from the South

**crop-lien system** a loan system in which store owners extended credit to farmers for the purchase of goods in exchange for a portion of their future crops

**Ku Klux Klan** a white vigilante organization that engaged in terroristic violence with the aim of stopping Reconstruction

**redeemers** a term used for southern whites committed to rolling back the gains of Reconstruction

**scalawags** a pejorative term used for southern whites who supported Reconstruction

**sharecropping** a crop-lien system in which people paid rent on land they farmed (but did not own) with the crops they grew



## 13. Video: Reconstruction and 1876

This video teaches you about Reconstruction. After the divisive, destructive Civil War, Abraham Lincoln had a plan to reconcile the country and make it whole again. Then he got shot, Andrew Johnson took over, and the disagreements between Johnson and Congress ensured that Reconstruction would fail. The election of 1876 made the whole thing even more of a mess, and the country called it off, leaving the nation still very divided. This video will talk about the gains made by African-Americans in the years after the Civil War, and how they lost those gains almost immediately when Reconstruction stopped. You'll learn about the Freedman's Bureau, the 14th and 15th amendments, and the disastrous election of 1876. This video will explore the goals of Reconstruction, the successes and ultimate failure, and why his alma mater Kenyon College is better than Raoul's alma mater NYU.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=30#oembed-1>



# 14. Assignment: Reactions to Jim Crow

## Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois's Approaches to Jim Crow

Read the articles from the previous readings ([Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Exposition"](#) and [W.E.B. DuBois's "Souls of Black Folk."](#))

Write two paragraphs (one for each man/document). Each paragraph should address the following:

1. What is the author's argument concerning what black Americans should do in response to the onset of Jim Crow laws?
2. Briefly, summarize *why* each man feels that way. What are his reasons for suggesting what he does?







PART III  
RECONSTRUCTION  
READER







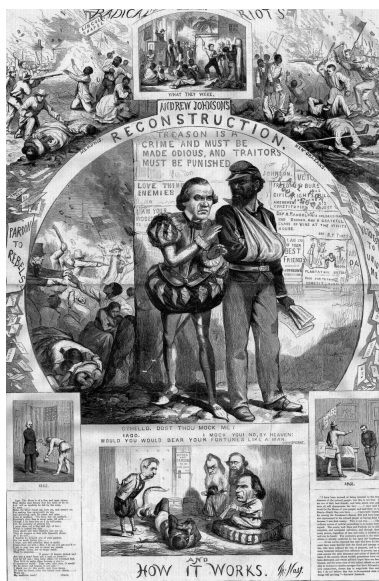
# 15. Primary Source Images: Reconstruction

## Introduction

After the Civil War, much of the South lay in ruins. How would these states be brought back into the Union? Would they be conquered territories or equal states? How would they rebuild their governments, economies, and social systems? What rights did freedom confer upon formerly enslaved people? The answers to many of Reconstruction's questions hinged upon the concepts of citizenship and equality. The era witnessed perhaps the most open and widespread discussions of citizenship since the nation's founding. It was a moment of revolutionary possibility and violent backlash. African Americans and Radical Republicans pushed the nation to finally realize the Declaration of Independence's promises that "all men were created equal" and had "certain, unalienable rights." Conservative white Democrats granted African Americans legal freedom but little more. When black Americans and their radical allies succeeded in securing citizenship for freedpeople, a new fight commenced to determine the legal, political, and social implications of American citizenship. Resistance continued, and Reconstruction eventually collapsed. In the South, limits on human freedom endured and would stand for nearly a century more. These sources gesture toward both the successes and failures of Reconstruction.



## Johnson and Reconstruction



Thomas Nast, "Reconstruction and How It Works," Harper's Weekly, 1866, via [HarpWeek](#).

This print mocks Reconstruction by making several allusions to Shakespeare. The center illustration shows a black soldier as Othello and President Andrew Johnson as Iago. Johnson's slogans "Treason is a crime and must be made odious" and "I am your Moses" are on the wall. The top left shows a riot in Memphis and at the top a riot in New Orleans. At the bottom, Johnson is trying to charm a Confederate Copperhead. General Benjamin Butler is at the bottom left, accepting the Confederate surrender of New Orleans in 1862. This scene is contrasted to the bottom right where General Philip Sheridan bows to Louisiana Attorney General Andrew Herron in 1866, implying a defeat for Reconstruction.

The text on the left side of the image reads:

Iago. The Moor is of a free and open nature,  
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;  
And will as tenderly be led by the nose,



As asses...

Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,  
For making him egregiously an ass,  
And practicing upon his peace and quiet  
Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confus'd;  
Knavery's plain face is never seen, till us'd...  
Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains,  
Yet, for necessity of present life,  
I must show out a flag and sign of love;  
Which is indeed but sign...

Then devils will their blackest sins put on,  
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,  
As I do now...

I humbly do beseech you of your pardon,  
For too much loving you...  
I hope, you will consider, what is spoke  
Comes from my love;-But, I do see you are mov'd:-  
I am to pray you, not to strain my speech  
To grosser issues, nor to larger reach  
Than to suspicion...

O grace! O heaven defend me!

Are you a man? Have you a soul, or sense?-  
God be wi' you; take mine office.-O wretched fool,  
That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice!-  
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world!  
To be direct and honest, is not safe.-  
I thank you for this profit; and, from hence,  
I'll love no friend, since love breeds such offense...  
Work on,  
My medicine, work!

Othello.

The text on the right side of the image reads:

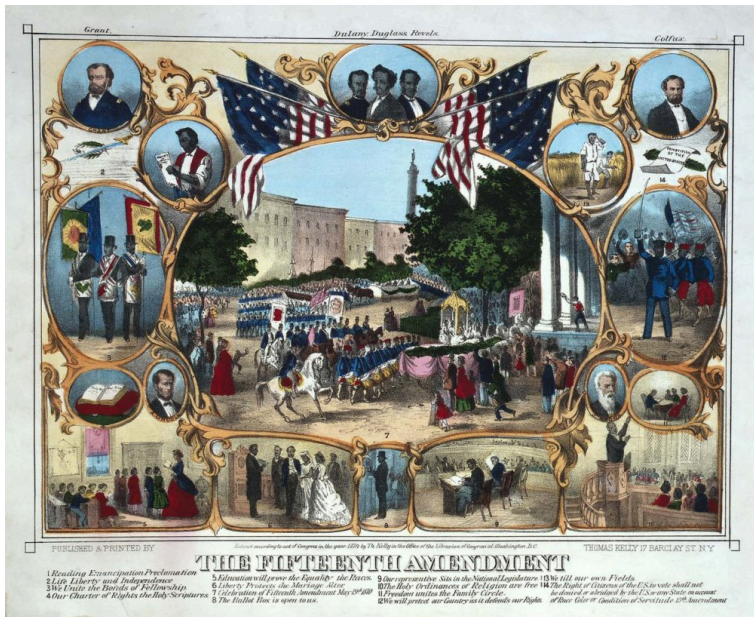
"I have been accused of being inimical to the true interests of the colored people' but this is not true. I am one of their best friends; and time, which tries and tests all, will demonstrate the



fact...I once said I would be the Moses of your people, and lead them on to liberty—liberty they now have...I have been blamed for vetoing the Freedmen's Bureau Bill, and have been also represented to the colored people as having done it because I was their enemy. This is not true...The ordinary course of judicial proceedings is no longer interrupted. The courts, both State and Federal, are in full, complete, and successful operation, and through them every person, regardless of race and color, is entitled to and can be heard. The protection granted to the white citizen is already conferred by law upon the freedman....It can not be expected that men who have for four years been made familiar with the blood and carnage of war, who have suffered the loss of property, and in so many instances reduced from affluence to poverty, can at once assume the calm demeanor and action of those citizens of the country whose worldly possessions have not been destroyed, and whose political hopes have not been blasted, and the worst view of this subject affords no parallel in violence to similar outrages that have followed all civil commotions, always less in magnitude than ours. But I do not believe that this to-be-regretted state of things will last long."—Andrew Johnson.



# Fifteenth Amendment



Thomas Kelley, "The Fifteenth Amendment," 1870, via [Wikimedia](https://www.wikimedia.org/).

This 1870 print celebrated the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Here we see several of the themes most important to black Americans during Reconstruction: The print celebrates the military achievements of black veterans, the voting rights protected by the amendment, the right to marry and establish families, the creation and protection of black churches, and the right to own and improve land. Unfortunately, many of these freedoms would be short-lived as the United States retreated from Reconstruction.



# 16. Primary Source: Charlotte Forten Teaches Freed Children in South Carolina (1864)

*Charlotte Forten was born into a wealthy black family in Philadelphia. After receiving an education in Salem, Massachusetts, Forten became the first black American hired to teach white students. She lent her educational expertise to the war effort by relocating to South Carolina in 1862 with the goal of educating former slaves. This excerpt from her diary explains her experiences during this time.*

The first day at school was rather trying. Most of my children were very small, and consequently restless. Some were too young to learn the alphabet. These little ones were brought to school because the older children — in whose care their parents leave them while at work — could not come without them. We were therefore willing to have them come, although they seemed to have discovered the secret of perpetual motion, and tried one's patience sadly. But after some days of positive, though not severe treatment, order was brought out of chaos, and I found but little difficulty in managing and quieting the tiniest and most restless spirits. I never before saw children so eager to learn, although I had had several years' experience in New England schools. Coming to school is a constant delight and recreation to them. They come here as other children go to play. The older ones, during the summer, work in the fields from early morning until eleven or twelve o'clock, and then come into school, after their hard toil in the hot sun, as bright and as anxious to learn as ever.

Of course there are some stupid ones, but these are the minority. The majority learn with wonderful rapidity. Many of the grown



people are desirous of learning to read. It is wonderful how a people who have been so long crushed to the earth, so imbruted as these have been, — and they are said to be among the most degraded negroes of the South, — can have so great a desire for knowledge, and such a capability for attaining it. One cannot believe that the haughty Anglo Saxon race, after centuries of such an experience as these people have had, would be very much superior to them. And one's indignation increases against those who, North as well as South, taunt the colored race with inferiority while they themselves use every means in their power to crush and degrade them, denying them every right and privilege, closing against them every avenue of elevation and improvement. Were they, under such circumstances, intellectual and refined, they would certainly be vastly superior to any other race that ever existed.

After the lessons, we used to talk freely to the children, often giving them slight sketches of some of the great and good men. Before teaching them the "John Brown" song, which they learned to sing with great spirit. Miss T. told them the story of the brave old man who had died for them. I told them about Toussaint, thinking it well they should know what one of their own color had done for his race. They listened attentively, and seemed to understand. We found it rather hard to keep their attention in school. It is not strange, as they have been so entirely unused to intellectual concentration. It is necessary to interest them every moment, in order to keep their thoughts from wandering. Teaching here is consequently far more fatiguing than at the North. In the church, we had of course but one room in which to hear all the children; and to make one's self heard, when there were often as many as a hundred and forty reciting at once, it was necessary to tax the lungs very severely.

My walk to school, of about a mile, was part of the way through a road lined with trees, — on one side stately pines, on the other noble live-oaks, hung with moss and canopied with vines. The ground was carpeted with brown, fragrant pine-leaves; and as I passed through in the morning, the woods were enlivened by the delicious songs of



mocking-birds, which abound here, making one realize the truthful felicity of the description in “Evangeline,” —

“The mocking-bird, wildest of singers,  
Shook from his little throat such floods of delirious music  
That the whole air and the woods and the waves seemed silent to listen.”

The hedges were all aglow with the brilliant scarlet berries of the cassena, and on some of the oaks we observed the mistletoe, laden with its pure white, pearl-like berries. Out of the woods the roads are generally bad, and we found it hard work plodding through the deep sand.

Charlotte Forten, “Life on the Sea Islands,” *Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics*, Volume XIII (Boston: 1864), 591-592.

[Available through Google Books](#)



## 17. Primary Source: Jourdon Anderson Writes his Former Master (1865)

*Black Americans hoped that the end of the Civil War would create an entirely new world, while white southerners tried to restore the antebellum order as much as they could. Most slave-owners sought to maintain control over their former slaves through sharecropping contracts. P.H. Anderson of Tennessee was one such former slave-owner. After the war, he contacted his former slave Jourdon Anderson, offering him a job opportunity. The following is Jourdon Anderson's reply.*

Dayton, Ohio, August 7, 1865.

To my old Master, Colonel P. H. Anderson, Big Spring, Tennessee.

Sir: I got your letter, and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jourdon, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this, for harboring Rebs they found at your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to Colonel Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again, and see Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green, and Lee. Give my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me that Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance.

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here. I get twenty-five dollars



a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable home for Mandy,—the folks call her Mrs. Anderson,—and the children—Milly, Jane, and Grundy—go to school and are learning well. The teacher says Grundy has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday school, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated. Sometimes we overhear others saying, “Them colored people were slaves” down in Tennessee. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks; but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Colonel Anderson. Many darkeys would have been proud, as I used to be, to call you master. Now if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again.

As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free papers in 1864 from the Provost-Marshall-General of the Department of Nashville. Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you were disposed to treat us justly and kindly; and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years. At twenty-five dollars a month for me, and two dollars a week for Mandy, our earnings would amount to eleven thousand six hundred and eighty dollars. Add to this the interest for the time our wages have been kept back, and deduct what you paid for our clothing, and three doctor’s visits to me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to. Please send the money by Adams’s Express, in care of V. Winters, Esq.,

Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past, we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here I draw my wages every Saturday night; but in Tennessee there was never any pay-day for the negroes any more than for the horses and cows. Surely there



will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his hire.

In answering this letter, please state if there would be any safety for my Milly and Jane, who are now grown up, and both good-looking girls. You know how it was with poor Matilda and Catherine. I would rather stay here and starve—and die, if it come to that—than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters. You will also please state if there has been any schools opened for the colored children in your neighborhood. The great desire of my life now is to give my children an education, and have them form virtuous habits.

Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me.

From your old servant,

Jourdon Anderson

“Letter from a freedman to his old master,” *The Freedmen’s Book*, Lydia Maria Child, ed. (Boston: 1865), 265-267.

[Available through Project Gutenberg](#)



## 18. Primary Source: Mississippi Black Code (1865)

*Many southern governments enacted legislation that reestablished antebellum power relationships. South Carolina and Mississippi passed laws known as Black Codes to regulate black behavior and impose social and economic control. While they granted some rights to African Americans – like the right to own property, to marry or to make contracts – they also denied other fundamental rights. Mississippi's vagrant law, excerpted here, required all freedmen to carry papers proving they had means of employment. If they had no proof, they could be arrested, fined, or even re-enslaved and leased out to their former master.*

### Vagrancy Law

Section 2. *Be it further enacted, that all freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes in this state over the age of eighteen years found on the second Monday in January 1866, or thereafter, with no lawful employment or business, or found unlawfully assembling themselves together either in the day or nighttime, and all white persons so assembling with freedmen, free Negroes, or mulattoes, or usually associating with freedmen, free Negroes, or mulattoes on terms of equality, or living in adultery or fornication with a freedwoman, free Negro, or mulatto, shall be deemed vagrants; and, on conviction thereof, shall be fined in the sum of not exceeding, in the case of a freedman, free Negro, or mulatto, 150, and a white man, \$200, and imprisoned at the discretion of the court, the free Negro not exceeding ten days, and the white man not exceeding six months....*



Section 7. *Be it further enacted*, that if any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto shall fail or refuse to pay any tax levied according to the provisions of the 6th Section of this act, it shall be prima facie evidence of vagrancy, and it shall be the duty of the sheriff to arrest such freedman, free Negro, or mulatto, or such person refusing or neglecting to pay such tax, and proceed at once to hire, for the shortest time, such delinquent taxpayer to anyone who will pay the said tax, with accruing costs, giving preference to the employer, if there be one.

Section 8. *Be it further enacted*, that any person feeling himself or herself aggrieved by the judgment of any justice of the peace, mayor, or alderman in cases arising under this act may, within five days, appeal to the next term of the county court of the proper county, upon giving bond and security in a sum not less than \$25 nor more than \$150, conditioned to appear and prosecute said appeal, and abide by the judgment of the county court, and said appeal shall be tried *de novo* in the county court, and the decision of said court shall be final.

## Civil Rights of Freedmen

Section 1. *Be it enacted by the legislature of the state of Mississippi*, that all freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes may sue and be sued, implead and be impleaded in all the courts of law and equity of this state, and may acquire personal property and choses in action, by descent or purchase, and may dispose of the same in the same manner and to the same extent that white persons may:

*Provided*, that the provisions of this section shall not be construed as to allow any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto to rent or lease any lands or tenements, except in incorporated towns or cities, in which places the corporate authorities shall control the same....

Section 7. *Be it further enacted*, that every civil officer shall, and every person may, arrest and carry back to his or her legal employer



any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto who shall have quit the service of his or her employer before the expiration of his or her term of service without good cause, and said officer and person shall be entitled to receive for arresting and carrying back every deserting employee aforesaid the sum of \$5, and 10 cents per mile from the place of arrest to the place of delivery, and the same shall be paid by the employer, and held as a setoff for so much against the wages of said deserting employee:

*Provided*, that said arrested party, after being so returned, may appeal to a justice of the peace or member of the board of police of the county, who, on notice to the alleged employer, shall try summarily whether said appellant is legally employed by the alleged employer and his good cause to quit said employer; either party shall have the right of appeal to the county court, pending which the alleged deserter shall be remanded to the alleged employer or otherwise disposed of as shall be right and just, and the decision of the county court shall be final.

## Penal Code

Section 1. *Be it enacted by the legislature of the state of Mississippi*, that no freedman, free Negro, or mulatto not in the military service of the United States government, and not licensed so to do by the board of police of his or her county, shall keep or carry firearms of any kind, or any ammunition, dirk, or Bowie knife; and, on conviction *thereof in the county court*, shall be punished by fine, not exceeding \$10, and pay the costs of such proceedings, and all such arms or ammunition shall be forfeited to the informer; and it shall be the duty of every civil and military officer to arrest any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto found with any such arms or ammunition, and cause him or her to be committed for trial in default of bail...

Section 4. *Be it further enacted*, that all the penal and criminal laws now in force in this state defining offenses and prescribing



the mode of punishment for crimes and misdemeanors committed by slaves, free Negroes, or mulattoes be and the same are hereby reenacted and declared to be in full force and effect against freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes, except so far m the mode and manner of trial and punishment have been changed or altered by law....

Section 5. *Be it further enacted*, that if any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto convicted of any of the misdemeanors provided against in this act shall fail-or refuse, for the space of five days after conviction, to pay the fine and costs imposed, such person shall be hired out by the sheriff or other officer, at public outcry, to any white person who will pay said fine and all costs and take such convict for the shortest time.

Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United Stats of America during the period known as Reconstruction....* (Washington D.C.: 1871), 80-82.

[Available through Google Books](#)



# 19. Primary Source: General Reynolds Describes Lawlessness in Texas (1868)

*Most histories of the Civil War claim that the war ended in the summer of 1865 when Confederate armies surrendered. However, violent resistance and terrorism continued in the South for over a decade. In this report, General J.J. Reynolds describes the lawlessness of Texas during Reconstruction.*

General: I have the honor to forward herewith annual tabular statement of expeditions and souts, and reports of movements of the various regiments serving in this district, for the year ending September 30, 1868.

Armed organizations, generally known as “Ku-Klux Klans,” exist, independently or in concert with other armed bands, in many parts of Texas, but are most numerous, bold, and aggressive east of Trinity River.

The precise objects of the organizations cannot be readily explained, but seems, in this state, to be to disarm, rob, and in many cases murder Union men and negroes, and as occasion may offer, murder United States officers and soldiers; also to intimidate every one who knows anything of the organization but who will not join it.

The civil law east of the Trinity River is almost a dead letter. In some counties the civil officers are all, or a portion of them, members of the Klan. In other counties where the civil officers will not join the Klan, or some other armed band, they have been compelled to leave their counties. Examples are Van Zandt, Smith, and Marion counties; (the county seat of the latter is Jefferson.)

In many counties where the county officers have not been driven off their influence is scarcely felt. What political end, if any, is aimed at by these bands I cannot say, but they attend in large bodies



the political meetings (barbecues) which have been and are still being held in various parts of this State under the auspices of the democratic clubs of the different counties.

The speakers encourage their attendance, and in several counties men have been indicated by name from the speaker's stand, as those selected for murder. The men thus pointed out have no course left them but to leave their homes or be murdered on the first convenient opportunity.

The murder of negroes is so common as to render it impossible to keep an accurate account of them.

Many of the members of these bands of outlaws are transient persons in the State; the absence of railroads and telegraphs and great length of time required to communicate between remote points facilitating their devilish purposes.

These organizations are evidently countenanced, or at least not discouraged, by a majority of the white people in the counties where the bands are most numerous. They could not otherwise exist.

I have given this matter close attention, and am satisfied that a remedy to be effective must be gradually applied and continued with the firm support of the army until these outlaws are punished or dispersed.

They cannot be punished by the civil courts until some examples by military commissions show that men can be punished in Texas for murder and kindred crimes. Perpetrators of such crimes have not heretofore, except in very rare instances, been punished in this state at all.

Free speech and a free press, as the terms are generally understood in other States, have never existed in Texas. In fact, the citizens of other states cannot appreciate the state of affairs in Texas without actually experiencing it. The official reports of lawlessness and crime, so far from being exaggerated, do not tell the whole truth.

Jefferson is the center from which most of the trade, travel, and lawlessness of eastern Texas radiate, and at this point or its vicinity there should be stationed about a regiment of troops. The recent



murder at Jefferson of Hon. G. W. Smith, a delegate to the constitutional convention, has made it necessary to order more troops to that point. This movement weakens the frontier posts to such an extent as to impair their efficiency for protection against Indians, but the bold, wholesale murdering in the interior of the state seems at present to present a more urgent demand for the troops than Indian depredations. The frontier posts should, however, be reinforced if possible, as it is not improbably that the Indians from the northwest, after having suffered defeat there, will make heavy incursions into Texas.

To restore measurable peace and quiet to Texas will require, for a long time, that troops be stationed at many county seats, until, by their presence, and aid if necessary, the civil law can be placed in the hands of reliable officers, and executed. This will be the work of years, and will be fully accomplished only by an increase of population.

“Report of Brevet Major General J. J. Reynolds, Commanding Fifth Military District” in *Annual Report of the Secretary of War* (Washington: 1868), 704-705.

[Available through Google Books](#)



## 20. Primary Source: Frederick Douglass on Remembering the Civil War (1877)

*Americans came together after the Civil War largely by collectively forgetting what the war was about. Celebrations honored the bravery of both armies, and the meaning of the war faded. Frederick Douglass and other black leaders engaged with Confederate sympathizers in a battle of historical memory. In this speech, Douglass calls on Americans to remember the war for what it was—a struggle between an army fighting to protect slavery and a nation reluctantly transformed into a force for liberation.*

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS: In this place, hallowed and made glorious by a statue of the best man, truest patriot, and wisest statesman of his time and country; I have been invited – I might say ordered – by the Lincoln Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, to say a few words to you in appropriate celebration of this annual national memorial day...

We tender you on this memorial day the homage of the loyal nation, and the heartfelt gratitude of emancipated millions. If the great work you undertook to accomplish is still incomplete; if a lawless and revolutionary spirit is still aboard in the country; if the principles for which you bravely fought are in any way compromised or threatened; if the Constitution and the laws are in any measure dishonored and disregarded; if duly elected State Governments are in any way overthrown by violence; if the elective franchise has been overborne by intimidation and fraud; if the Southern States, under the idea of local self-government, are endeavoring to paralyze the arm and shrivel the body of the National Government so that it cannot protect the humblest citizen in his rights, the fault is not yours. You, at least, were faithful and did your whole duty.



Fellow-citizens, I am not here to fan the flame of sectional animosity, to revive old issues, or to stir up strife between the races; but no candid man, looking at the political situation of the hour, can fail to see that we are still afflicted by the painful sequences both of slavery and of the late rebellion. In the spirit of the noble man whose image now looks down upon us we should have "charity toward all, and malice toward none." In the language of our greatest soldier, twice honored with the Presidency of the nation. "Let us have peace." Yes, let us have peace, but let us have liberty, law, and justice first. Let us have the Constitution, with its thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments, fairly interpreted, faithfully executed, and cheerfully obeyed in the fullness of their spirit and the completeness of their letter....

My own feeling toward the old master class of the South is well known. Though I have worn the yoke of bondage, and have no love for what are called the good old times of slavery, there is in my heart no taint of malice toward the ex-slaveholders. Many of them were not sinners above all others, but were in some sense the slaves of the slave system, for slavery was a power in the State greater than the State itself. With the aid of a few brilliant orators and plotting conspirators, it sundered the bonds of the Union and inaugurated war....

Nevertheless, we must not be asked to say that the South was right in the rebellion, or to say the North was wrong. We must not be asked to put no difference between those who fought for the Union and those who fought against it, or between loyalty and treason...

But the sectional character of this war was merely accidental and its least significant feature. It was a war of ideas, a battle of principles and ideas which united one section and divided the other; a war between the old and new, slavery and freedom, barbarism and civilization; between a government based upon the broadest and grandest declaration of human rights the world ever heard or read, and another pretended government, based upon an open, bold and shocking denial of all rights, except the right of the strongest.



Good, wise, and generous men at the North, is power and out of power, for whose good intentions and patriotism we must all have the highest respect, doubt the wisdom of observing this memorial day, and would have us forget and forgive, strew flowers alike and lovingly, on rebel and on loyal graves. This sentiment is noble and generous, worthy of all honor as such; but it is only a sentiment after all, and must submit to its own rational limitations. There was a right side and a wrong side in the late war, which no sentiment ought to cause us to forget, and while today we should have malice toward none, and charity toward all, it is no part of our duty to confound right with wrong, or loyalty with treason. If the observance of this memorial days has any apology, office, or significance, it is derived from the moral character of this war, from the far-reaching, unchangeable and eternal principles in dispute, and for which our sons and brothers encountered hardship, danger, and death....

... though freedom of speech and of the ballot have for the present fallen before the shot-guns of the South, and, the party of slavery is now in the ascendant, we need bate no jot of heart or hope. The American people will, in any great emergency, be true to themselves. The heart of the nation is still sound and strong, and as in the past, so in the future, patriotic millions, with able captains to lead them, will stand as a wall of fire around the Republic, and in the end see Liberty, Equality, and Justice triumphant.

Frederick Douglass, "Speech delivered in Madison Square, New York, Decoration Day." 1877. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division

[Available through the Library of Congress](#)



## 21. Primary Source: Atlanta Compromise Speech (1895)

### Booker T. Washington Delivers the 1895 Atlanta Compromise Speech

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Board of Directors and Citizens:

One-third of the population of the South is of the Negro race. No enterprise seeking the material, civil, or moral welfare of this section can disregard this element of our population and reach the highest success. I but convey to you, Mr. President and Directors, the sentiment of the masses of my race when I say that in no way have the value and manhood of the American Negro been more fittingly and generously recognized than by the managers of this magnificent Exposition at every stage of its progress. It is a recognition that will do more to cement the friendship of the two races than any occurrence since the dawn of our freedom.

Not only this, but the opportunity here afforded will awaken among us a new era of industrial progress. Ignorant and inexperienced, it is not strange that in the first years of our new life we began at the top instead of at the bottom; that a seat in Congress or the state legislature was more sought than real estate or industrial skill; that the political convention or stump speaking had more attractions than starting a dairy farm or truck garden.

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, water; send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down



your bucket where you are.” The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River. To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: “Cast down your bucket where you are”— cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man’s chance in the commercial world, and in nothing is this Exposition more eloquent than in emphasizing this chance. Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour, and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life; shall prosper in proportion as we learn to draw the line between the superficial and the substantial, the ornamental gewgaws of life and the useful. No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labour wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, and



brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth, and helped make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South. Casting down your bucket among my people, helping and encouraging them as you are doing on these grounds, and to education of head, hand, and heart, you will find that they will buy your surplus land, make blossom the waste places in your fields, and run your factories. While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one. In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.

There is no defense or security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all. If anywhere there are efforts tending to curtail the fullest growth of the Negro, let these efforts be turned into stimulating, encouraging, and making him the most useful and intelligent citizen. Effort or means so invested will pay a thousand per cent interest. These efforts will be twice blessed—blessing him that gives and him that takes. There is no escape through law of man or God from the inevitable:

The laws of changeless justice bind Oppressor with oppressed;  
And close as sin and suffering joined We march to fate abreast...

Nearly sixteen millions of hands will aid you in pulling the load upward, or they will pull against you the load downward. We shall constitute one-third and more of the ignorance and crime of the South, or one-third [of] its intelligence and progress; we shall contribute one-third to the business and industrial prosperity of



the South, or we shall prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic.

Gentlemen of the Exposition, as we present to you our humble effort at an exhibition of our progress, you must not expect overmuch. Starting thirty years ago with ownership here and there in a few quilts and pumpkins and chickens (gathered from miscellaneous sources), remember the path that has led from these to the inventions and production of agricultural implements, buggies, steam-engines, newspapers, books, statuary, carving, paintings, the management of drug stores and banks, has not been trodden without contact with thorns and thistles. While we take pride in what we exhibit as a result of our independent efforts, we do not for a moment forget that our part in this exhibition would fall far short of your expectations but for the constant help that has come to our educational life, not only from the Southern states, but especially from Northern philanthropists, who have made their gifts a constant stream of blessing and encouragement.

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.

In conclusion, may I repeat that nothing in thirty years has given us more hope and encouragement, and drawn us so near to you of the white race, as this opportunity offered by the Exposition; and here bending, as it were, over the altar that represents the results of the struggles of your race and mine, both starting practically empty-handed three decades ago, I pledge that in your effort to work out the great and intricate problem which God has laid at



the doors of the South, you shall have at all times the patient, sympathetic help of my race; only let this be constantly in mind, that, while from representations in these buildings of the product of field, of forest, of mine, of factory, letters, and art, much good will come, yet far above and beyond material benefits will be that higher good, that, let us pray God, will come, in a blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities and suspicions, in a determination to administer absolute justice, in a willing obedience among all classes to the mandates of law. This, coupled with our material prosperity, will bring into our beloved South a new heaven and a new earth.

**Source:** Louis R. Harlan, ed., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 3, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 583–587.



## 22. Primary Source: Souls of Black Folk (1903)

**W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963): *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)**

Chapter III.  
Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others

*From birth till death enslaved; in word, in deed, unmanned!*

. . . . .

*Hereditary bondsmen! Know ye not*

*Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?*

BYRON.

EASILY the most striking thing in the history of the American Negro since 1876 is the ascendancy of Mr. Booker T. Washington. It began at the time when war memories and ideals were rapidly passing; a day of astonishing commercial development was dawning; a sense of doubt and hesitation overtook the freedmen's sons,—then it was that his leading began. Mr. Washington came, with a simple definite programme, at the psychological moment when the nation was a little ashamed of having bestowed so much sentiment on Negroes, and was concentrating its energies on Dollars. His programme of industrial education, conciliation of the South, and submission and silence as to civil and political rights, was not wholly original; the Free Negroes from 1830 up to wartime had striven to build industrial schools, and the American Missionary Association had from the first taught various trades; and Price and others had sought a way of honorable alliance with the best of



the Southerners. But Mr. Washington first indissolubly linked these things; he put enthusiasm, unlimited energy, and perfect faith into this programme, and changed it from a by-path into a veritable Way of Life. And the tale of the methods by which he did this is a fascinating study of human life.

It startled the nation to hear a Negro advocating such a programme after many decades of bitter complaint; it startled and won the applause of the South, it interested and won the admiration of the North; and after a confused murmur of protest, it silenced if it did not convert the Negroes themselves.

To gain the sympathy and coöperation of the various elements comprising the white South was Mr. Washington's first task; and this, at the time Tuskegee was founded, seemed, for a black man, well-nigh impossible. And yet ten years later it was done in the word spoken at Atlanta: "In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." This "Atlanta Compromise" is by all odds the most notable thing in Mr. Washington's career. The South interpreted it in different ways: the radicals received it as a complete surrender of the demand for civil and political equality; the conservatives, as a generously conceived working basis for mutual understanding. So both approved it, and to-day its author is certainly the most distinguished Southerner since Jefferson Davis, and the one with the largest personal following.

Next to this achievement comes Mr. Washington's work in gaining place and consideration in the North. Others less shrewd and tactful had formerly essayed to sit on these two stools and had fallen between them; but as Mr. Washington knew the heart of the South from birth and training, so by singular insight he intuitively grasped the spirit of the age which was dominating the North. And so thoroughly did he learn the speech and thought of triumphant commercialism, and the ideals of material prosperity, that the picture of a lone black boy poring over a French grammar amid the weeds and dirt of a neglected home soon seemed to him the acme



of absurdities. One wonders what Socrates and St. Francis of Assisi would say to this.

And yet this very singleness of vision and thorough oneness with his age is a mark of the successful man. It is as though Nature must needs make men narrow in order to give them force. So Mr. Washington's cult has gained unquestioning followers, his work has wonderfully prospered, his friends are legion, and his enemies are confounded. To-day he stands as the one recognized spokesman of his ten million fellows, and one of the most notable figures in a nation of seventy millions. One hesitates, therefore, to criticise a life which, beginning with so little, has done so much. And yet the time is come when one may speak in all sincerity and utter courtesy of the mistakes and shortcomings of Mr. Washington's career, as well as of his triumphs, without being thought captious or envious, and without forgetting that it is easier to do ill than well in the world.

The criticism that has hitherto met Mr. Washington has not always been of this broad character. In the South especially has he had to walk warily to avoid the harshest judgments,—and naturally so, for he is dealing with the one subject of deepest sensitiveness to that section. Twice—once when at the Chicago celebration of the Spanish-American War he alluded to the color-prejudice that is “eating away the vitals of the South,” and once when he dined with President Roosevelt—has the resulting Southern criticism been violent enough to threaten seriously his popularity. In the North the feeling has several times forced itself into words, that Mr. Washington's counsels of submission overlooked certain elements of true manhood, and that his educational programme was unnecessarily narrow. Usually, however, such criticism has not found open expression, although, too, the spiritual sons of the Abolitionists have not been prepared to acknowledge that the schools founded before Tuskegee, by men of broad ideals and self-sacrificing spirit, were wholly failures or worthy of ridicule. While, then, criticism has not failed to follow Mr. Washington, yet the prevailing public opinion of the land has been but too willing to



deliver the solution of a wearisome problem into his hands, and say, "If that is all you and your race ask, take it."

Among his own people, however, Mr. Washington has encountered the strongest and most lasting opposition, amounting at times to bitterness, and even to-day continuing strong and insistent even though largely silenced in outward expression by the public opinion of the nation. Some of this opposition is, of course, mere envy; the disappointment of displaced demagogues and the spite of narrow minds. But aside from this, there is among educated and thoughtful colored men in all parts of the land a feeling of deep regret, sorrow, and apprehension at the wide currency and ascendancy which some of Mr. Washington's theories have gained. These same men admire his sincerity of purpose, and are willing to forgive much to honest endeavor which is doing something worth the doing. They coöperate with Mr. Washington as far as they conscientiously can; and, indeed, it is no ordinary tribute to this man's tact and power that, steering as he must between so many diverse interests and opinions, he so largely retains the respect of all.

But the hushing of the criticism of honest opponents is a dangerous thing. It leads some of the best of the critics to unfortunate silence and paralysis of effort, and others to burst into speech so passionately and intemperately as to lose listeners. Honest and earnest criticism from those whose interests are most nearly touched,—criticism of writers by readers, of government by those governed, of leaders by those led,—this is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society. If the best of the American Negroes receive by outer pressure a leader whom they had not recognized before, manifestly there is here a certain palpable gain. Yet there is also irreparable loss,—a loss of that peculiarly valuable education which a group receives when by search and criticism it finds and commissions its own leaders. The way in which this is done is at once the most elementary and the nicest problem of social growth. History is but the record of such group-leadership; and yet how infinitely changeable is its type and



character! And of all types and kinds, what can be more instructive than the leadership of a group within a group?—that curious double movement where real progress may be negative and actual advance be relative retrogression. All this is the social student's inspiration and despair.

Now in the past the American Negro has had instructive experience in the choosing of group leaders, founding thus a peculiar dynasty which in the light of present conditions is worth while studying. When sticks and stones and beasts form the sole environment of a people, their attitude is largely one of determined opposition to and conquest of natural forces. But when to earth and brute is added an environment of men and ideas, then the attitude of the imprisoned group may take three main forms,—a feeling of revolt and revenge; an attempt to adjust all thought and action to the will of the greater group; or, finally, a determined effort at self-realization and self-development despite environing opinion. The influence of all of these attitudes at various times can be traced in the history of the American Negro, and in the evolution of his successive leaders.

Before 1750, while the fire of African freedom still burned in the veins of the slaves, there was in all leadership or attempted leadership but the one motive of revolt and revenge,—typified in the terrible Maroons, the Danish blacks, and Cato of Stono, and veiling all the Americas in fear of insurrection. The liberalizing tendencies of the latter half of the eighteenth century brought, along with kindlier relations between black and white, thoughts of ultimate adjustment and assimilation. Such aspiration was especially voiced in the earnest songs of Phyllis, in the martyrdom of Attucks, the fighting of Salem and Poor, the intellectual accomplishments of Banneker and Derham, and the political demands of the Cuffes.

Stern financial and social stress after the war cooled much of the previous humanitarian ardor. The disappointment and impatience of the Negroes at the persistence of slavery and serfdom voiced itself in two movements. The slaves in the South, aroused undoubtedly by vague rumors of the Haytian revolt, made three



fierce attempts at insurrection,—in 1800 under Gabriel in Virginia, in 1822 under Vesey in Carolina, and in 1831 again in Virginia under the terrible Nat Turner. In the Free States, on the other hand, a new and curious attempt at self-development was made. In Philadelphia and New York color-prescription led to a withdrawal of Negro communicants from white churches and the formation of a peculiar socio-religious institution among the Negroes known as the African Church,—an organization still living and controlling in its various branches over a million of men.

Walker's wild appeal against the trend of the times showed how the world was changing after the coming of the cotton-gin. By 1830 slavery seemed hopelessly fastened on the South, and the slaves thoroughly cowed into submission. The free Negroes of the North, inspired by the mulatto immigrants from the West Indies, began to change the basis of their demands; they recognized the slavery of slaves, but insisted that they themselves were freemen, and sought assimilation and amalgamation with the nation on the same terms with other men. Thus, Forten and Purvis of Philadelphia, Shad of Wilmington, Du Bois of New Haven, Barbadoes of Boston, and others, strove singly and together as men, they said, not as slaves; as "people of color," not as "Negroes." The trend of the times, however, refused them recognition save in individual and exceptional cases, considered them as one with all the despised blacks, and they soon found themselves striving to keep even the rights they formerly had of voting and working and moving as freemen. Schemes of migration and colonization arose among them; but these they refused to entertain, and they eventually turned to the Abolition movement as a final refuge.

Here, led by Remond, Nell, Wells-Brown, and Douglass, a new period of self-assertion and self-development dawned. To be sure, ultimate freedom and assimilation was the ideal before the leaders, but the assertion of the manhood rights of the Negro by himself was the main reliance, and John Brown's raid was the extreme of its logic. After the war and emancipation, the great form of Frederick Douglass, the greatest of American Negro leaders, still led the host.



Self-assertion, especially in political lines, was the main programme, and behind Douglass came Elliot, Bruce, and Langston, and the Reconstruction politicians, and, less conspicuous but of greater social significance Alexander Crummell and Bishop Daniel Payne.

Then came the Revolution of 1876, the suppression of the Negro votes, the changing and shifting of ideals, and the seeking of new lights in the great night. Douglass, in his old age, still bravely stood for the ideals of his early manhood,—ultimate assimilation *through* self-assertion, and on no other terms. For a time Price arose as a new leader, destined, it seemed, not to give up, but to re-state the old ideals in a form less repugnant to the white South. But he passed away in his prime. Then came the new leader. Nearly all the former ones had become leaders by the silent suffrage of their fellows, had sought to lead their own people alone, and were usually, save Douglass, little known outside their race. But Booker T. Washington arose as essentially the leader not of one race but of two,—a compromiser between the South, the North, and the Negro. Naturally the Negroes resented, at first bitterly, signs of compromise which surrendered their civil and political rights, even though this was to be exchanged for larger chances of economic development. The rich and dominating North, however, was not only weary of the race problem, but was investing largely in Southern enterprises, and welcomed any method of peaceful coöperation. Thus, by national opinion, the Negroes began to recognize Mr. Washington's leadership; and the voice of criticism was hushed.

Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission; but adjustment at such a peculiar time as to make his programme unique. This is an age of unusual economic development, and Mr. Washington's programme naturally takes an economic cast, becoming a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life. Moreover, this is an age when the more advanced races are coming in closer contact with the less developed races, and the race-feeling is therefore intensified; and Mr. Washington's



programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races. Again, in our own land, the reaction from the sentiment of war time has given impetus to race-prejudice against Negroes, and Mr. Washington withdraws many of the high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens. In other periods of intensified prejudice all the Negro's tendency to self-assertion has been called forth; at this period a policy of submission is advocated. In the history of nearly all other races and peoples the doctrine preached at such crises has been that manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing.

In answer to this, it has been claimed that the Negro can survive only through submission. Mr. Washington distinctly asks that black people give up, at least for the present, three things,—

First, political power,

Second, insistence on civil rights,

Third, higher education of Negro youth,—

and concentrate all their energies on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South. This policy has been courageously and insistently advocated for over fifteen years, and has been triumphant for perhaps ten years. As a result of this tender of the palm-branch, what has been the return? In these years there have occurred:

1. The disfranchisement of the Negro.
2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro.
3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro.

These movements are not, to be sure, direct results of Mr. Washington's teachings; but his propaganda has, without a shadow of doubt, helped their speedier accomplishment. The question then comes: Is it possible, and probable, that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of



political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meagre chance for developing their exceptional men? If history and reason give any distinct answer to these questions, it is an emphatic No. And Mr. Washington thus faces the triple paradox of his career:

1. He is striving nobly to make Negro artisans business men and property-owners; but it is utterly impossible, under modern competitive methods, for workingmen and property-owners to defend their rights and exist without the right of suffrage.
2. He insists on thrift and self-respect, but at the same time counsels a silent submission to civic inferiority such as is bound to sap the manhood of any race in the long run.
3. He advocates common-school and industrial training, and depreciates institutions of higher learning; but neither the Negro common-schools, nor Tuskegee itself, could remain open a day were it not for teachers trained in Negro colleges, or trained by their graduates.

This triple paradox in Mr. Washington's position is the object of criticism by two classes of colored Americans. One class is spiritually descended from Toussaint the Savior, through Gabriel, Vesey, and Turner, and they represent the attitude of revolt and revenge; they hate the white South blindly and distrust the white race generally, and so far as they agree on definite action, think that the Negro's only hope lies in emigration beyond the borders of the United States. And yet, by the irony of fate, nothing has more effectually made this programme seem hopeless than the recent course of the United States toward weaker and darker peoples in the West Indies, Hawaii, and the Philippines,—for where in the world may we go and be safe from lying and brute force?

The other class of Negroes who cannot agree with Mr. Washington has hitherto said little aloud. They deprecate the sight of scattered counsels, of internal disagreement; and especially they dislike making their just criticism of a useful and earnest man an excuse for a general discharge of venom from small-minded



opponents. Nevertheless, the questions involved are so fundamental and serious that it is difficult to see how men like the Grimkes, Kelly Miller, J. W. E. Bowen, and other representatives of this group, can much longer be silent. Such men feel in conscience bound to ask of this nation three things:

1. The right to vote.
2. Civic equality.
3. The education of youth according to ability.

They acknowledge Mr. Washington's invaluable service in counselling patience and courtesy in such demands; they do not ask that ignorant black men vote when ignorant whites are debarred, or that any reasonable restrictions in the suffrage should not be applied; they know that the low social level of the mass of the race is responsible for much discrimination against it, but they also know, and the nation knows, that relentless color-prejudice is more often a cause than a result of the Negro's degradation; they seek the abatement of this relic of barbarism, and not its systematic encouragement and pampering by all agencies of social power from the Associated Press to the Church of Christ. They advocate, with Mr. Washington, a broad system of Negro common schools supplemented by thorough industrial training; but they are surprised that a man of Mr. Washington's insight cannot see that no such educational system ever has rested or can rest on any other basis than that of the well-equipped college and university, and they insist that there is a demand for a few such institutions throughout the South to train the best of the Negro youth as teachers, professional men, and leaders.

This group of men honor Mr. Washington for his attitude of conciliation toward the white South; they accept the "Atlanta Compromise" in its broadest interpretation; they recognize, with him, many signs of promise, many men of high purpose and fair judgment, in this section; they know that no easy task has been laid upon a region already tottering under heavy burdens. But,



nevertheless, they insist that the way to truth and right lies in straightforward honesty, not in indiscriminate flattery; in praising those of the South who do well and criticising uncompromisingly those who do ill; in taking advantage of the opportunities at hand and urging their fellows to do the same, but at the same time in remembering that only a firm adherence to their higher ideals and aspirations will ever keep those ideals within the realm of possibility. They do not expect that the free right to vote, to enjoy civic rights, and to be educated, will come in a moment; they do not expect to see the bias and prejudices of years disappear at the blast of a trumpet; but they are absolutely certain that the way for a people to gain their reasonable rights is not by voluntarily throwing them away and insisting that they do not want them; that the way for a people to gain respect is not by continually belittling and ridiculing themselves; that, on the contrary, Negroes must insist continually, in season and out of season, that voting is necessary to modern manhood, that color discrimination is barbarism, and that black boys need education as well as white boys.

In failing thus to state plainly and unequivocally the legitimate demands of their people, even at the cost of opposing an honored leader, the thinking classes of American Negroes would shirk a heavy responsibility,—a responsibility to themselves, a responsibility to the struggling masses, a responsibility to the darker races of men whose future depends so largely on this American experiment, but especially a responsibility to this nation,—this common Fatherland. It is wrong to encourage a man or a people in evil-doing; it is wrong to aid and abet a national crime simply because it is unpopular not to do so. The growing spirit of kindness and reconciliation between the North and South after the frightful differences of a generation ago ought to be a source of deep congratulation to all, and especially to those whose mistreatment caused the war; but if that reconciliation is to be marked by the industrial slavery and civic death of those same black men, with permanent legislation into a position of inferiority, then those black men, if they are really men, are called upon by every



consideration of patriotism and loyalty to oppose such a course by all civilized methods, even though such opposition involves disagreement with Mr. Booker T. Washington. We have no right to sit silently by while the inevitable seeds are sown for a harvest of disaster to our children, black and white.

First, it is the duty of black men to judge the South discriminatingly. The present generation of Southerners are not responsible for the past, and they should not be blindly hated or blamed for it. Furthermore, to no class is the indiscriminate endorsement of the recent course of the South toward Negroes more nauseating than to the best thought of the South. The South is not “solid”; it is a land in the ferment of social change, wherein forces of all kinds are fighting for supremacy; and to praise the ill the South is to-day perpetrating is just as wrong as to condemn the good. Discriminating and broad-minded criticism is what the South needs,—needs it for the sake of her own white sons and daughters, and for the insurance of robust, healthy mental and moral development.

To-day even the attitude of the Southern whites toward the blacks is not, as so many assume, in all cases the same; the ignorant Southerner hates the Negro, the workingmen fear his competition, the money-makers wish to use him as a laborer, some of the educated see a menace in his upward development, while others—usually the sons of the masters—wish to help him to rise. National opinion has enabled this last class to maintain the Negro common schools, and to protect the Negro partially in property, life, and limb. Through the pressure of the money-makers, the Negro is in danger of being reduced to semi-slavery, especially in the country districts; the workingmen, and those of the educated who fear the Negro, have united to disfranchise him, and some have urged his deportation; while the passions of the ignorant are easily aroused to lynch and abuse any black man. To praise this intricate whirl of thought and prejudice is nonsense; to inveigh indiscriminately against “the South” is unjust; but to use the same breath in praising Governor Aycock, exposing Senator Morgan, arguing with Mr.



Thomas Nelson Page, and denouncing Senator Ben Tillman, is not only sane, but the imperative duty of thinking black men.

In his failure to realize and impress this last point, Mr. Washington is especially to be criticised. His doctrine has tended to make the whites, North and South, shift the burden of the Negro problem to the Negro's shoulders and stand aside as critical and rather pessimistic spectators; when in fact the burden belongs to the nation, and the hands of none of us are clean if we bend not our energies to righting these great wrongs.

The South ought to be led, by candid and honest criticism, to assert her better self and do her full duty to the race she has cruelly wronged and is still wronging. The North—her co-partner in guilt—cannot salve her conscience by plastering it with gold. We cannot settle this problem by diplomacy and suaveness, by “policy” alone. If worse come to worst, can the moral fibre of this country survive the slow throttling and murder of nine millions of men?

The black men of America have a duty to perform, a duty stern and delicate,—a forward movement to oppose a part of the work of their greatest leader. So far as Mr. Washington preaches Thrift, Patience, and Industrial Training for the masses, we must hold up his hands and strive with him, rejoicing in his honors and glorying in the strength of this Joshua called of God and of man to lead the headless host. But so far as Mr. Washington apologizes for injustice, North or South, does not rightly value the privilege and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds,—so far as he, the South, or the Nation, does this,—we must unceasingly and firmly oppose them. By every civilized and peaceful method we must strive for the rights which the world accords to men, clinging unwaveringly to those great words which the sons of the Fathers would fain forget: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”







PART IV

GO WEST YOUNG MAN!  
WESTWARD EXPANSION,  
1840-1900







## 23. Introduction



*Widely held rhetoric of the nineteenth century suggested to Americans that it was their divine right and responsibility to settle the West with Protestant democratic values. Newspaper editor Horace Greely, who coined the phrase “Go west, young man,” encouraged Americans to fulfill this dream. Artists of the day depicted this western expansion in idealized landscapes that bore little resemblance to the difficulties of life on the trail.*

In the middle of the nineteenth century, farmers in the “Old West”—the land across the Allegheny Mountains in Pennsylvania—began to hear about the opportunities to be found in the “New West.” They had long believed that the land west of the Mississippi was a great desert, unfit for human habitation. But now, the federal government was encouraging them to join the migratory stream westward to this unknown land. For a variety of reasons, Americans increasingly felt compelled to fulfill their “Manifest Destiny,” a phrase that came to mean that they were expected to spread across the land given to them by God and, most importantly, spread predominantly American values to the frontier.

With great trepidation, hundreds, and then hundreds of



thousands, of settlers packed their lives into wagons and set out, following the Oregon, California, and Santa Fe Trails, to seek a new life in the West. Some sought open lands and greater freedom to fulfill the democratic vision originally promoted by Thomas Jefferson and experienced by their ancestors. Others saw economic opportunity. Still others believed it was their job to spread the word of God to the “heathens” on the frontier. Whatever their motivation, the great migration was underway. The American pioneer spirit was born.



## 24. The Loss of American Indian Life and Culture

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the methods that the U.S. government used to address the “Indian threat” during the settlement of the West
- Explain the process of “Americanization” as it applied to Indians in the nineteenth century

As American settlers pushed westward, they inevitably came into conflict with Indian tribes that had long been living on the land. Although the threat of Indian attacks was quite slim and nowhere proportionate to the number of U.S. Army actions directed against them, the occasional attack—often one of retaliation—was enough to fuel the popular fear of the “savage” Indians. The clashes, when they happened, were indeed brutal, although most of the brutality occurred at the hands of the settlers. Ultimately, the settlers, with the support of local militias and, later, with the federal government behind them, sought to eliminate the tribes from the lands they desired. The result was devastating for the Indian tribes, which lacked the weapons and group cohesion to fight back against such well-armed forces. The Manifest Destiny of the settlers spelled the end of the Indian way of life.



## CLAIMING LAND, RELOCATING LANDOWNERS

Back east, the popular vision of the West was of a vast and empty land. But of course this was an exaggerated depiction. On the eve of westward expansion, as many as 250,000 Indians, representing a variety of tribes, populated the Great Plains. Previous wars against these tribes in the early nineteenth century, as well as the failure of earlier treaties, had led to a general policy of the forcible removal of many tribes in the eastern United States. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the infamous “Trail of Tears,” which saw nearly fifty thousand Seminole, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek Indians relocated west of the Mississippi River to what is now Oklahoma between 1831 and 1838. Building upon such a history, the U.S. government was prepared, during the era of western settlement, to deal with tribes that settlers viewed as obstacles to expansion.

As settlers sought more land for farming, mining, and cattle ranching, the first strategy employed to deal with the perceived Indian threat was to negotiate settlements to move tribes out of the path of white settlers. In 1851, the chiefs of most of the Great Plains tribes agreed to the First Treaty of Fort Laramie. This agreement established distinct tribal borders, essentially codifying the reservation system. In return for annual payments of \$50,000 to the tribes (originally guaranteed for fifty years, but later revised to last for only ten) as well as the hollow promise of noninterference from westward settlers, Indians agreed to stay clear of the path of settlement. Due to government corruption, many annuity payments never reached the tribes, and some reservations were left destitute and near starving. In addition, within a decade, as the pace and number of western settlers increased, even designated reservations became prime locations for farms and mining. Rather than negotiating new treaties, settlers—oftentimes backed by local or state militia units—simply attacked the tribes out of fear or to force



them from the land. Some Indians resisted, only to then face massacres.

In 1862, frustrated and angered by the lack of annuity payments and the continuous encroachment on their reservation lands, Dakota Sioux Indians in Minnesota rebelled in what became known as the Dakota War, killing the white settlers who moved onto their tribal lands. Over one thousand white settlers were captured or killed in the attack, before an armed militia regained control. Of the four hundred Sioux captured by U.S. troops, 303 were sentenced to death, but President Lincoln intervened, releasing all but thirty-eight of the men. The thirty-eight who were found guilty were hanged in the largest mass execution in the country's history, and the rest of the tribe was banished. Settlers in other regions responded to news of this raid with fear and aggression. In Colorado, Arapahoe and Cheyenne tribes fought back against land encroachment; white militias then formed, decimating even some of the tribes that were willing to cooperate. One of the more vicious examples was near Sand Creek, Colorado, where Colonel John Chivington led a militia raid upon a camp in which the leader had already negotiated a peaceful settlement. The camp was flying both the American flag and the white flag of surrender when Chivington's troops murdered close to one hundred people, the majority of them women and children, in what became known as the Sand Creek Massacre. For the rest of his life, Chivington would proudly display his collection of nearly one hundred Indian scalps from that day. Subsequent investigations by the U.S. Army condemned Chivington's tactics and their results; however, the raid served as a model for some settlers who sought any means by which to eradicate the perceived Indian threat.

Hoping to forestall similar uprisings and all-out Indian wars, the U.S. Congress commissioned a committee to investigate the causes of such incidents. The subsequent report of their findings led to the passage of two additional treaties: the Second Treaty of Fort Laramie and the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, both designed to move the remaining tribes to even more remote reservations.



The Second Treaty of Fort Laramie moved the remaining Sioux to the Black Hills in the Dakota Territory and the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek moved the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche to “Indian Territory,” later to become the State of Oklahoma.

The agreements were short-lived, however. With the subsequent discovery of gold in the Black Hills, settlers seeking their fortune began to move upon the newly granted Sioux lands with support from U.S. cavalry troops. By the middle of 1875, thousands of white prospectors were illegally digging and panning in the area. The Sioux protested the invasion of their territory and the violation of sacred ground. The government offered to lease the Black Hills or to pay \$6 million if the Indians were willing to sell the land. When the tribes refused, the government imposed what it considered a fair price for the land, ordered the Indians to move, and in the spring of 1876, made ready to force them onto the reservation.



In the Battle of Little Bighorn, perhaps the most famous battle of the American West, a Sioux chieftain, Sitting Bull, urged Indians from all neighboring tribes to join his men in defense of their lands. At the Little Bighorn River, the U.S. Army's Seventh Cavalry, led by Colonel George Custer, sought a showdown. Driven by his own personal ambition, on June 25, 1876, Custer foolishly attacked what he thought was a minor Indian encampment. Instead, it turned out to be the main Sioux force. The Sioux warriors—nearly three thousand in strength—surrounded and killed Custer and 262 of his men and support units, in the single greatest loss of U.S. troops to an Indian attack in the era of westward expansion. Eyewitness reports of the attack indicated that the



*The iconic figure who led the battle at Little Bighorn River, Sitting Bull led Indians in what was their largest victory against American settlers. While the battle was a rout by the Sioux over Custer's troops, the ultimate outcome for his tribe and the men who had joined him was one of constant harassment, arrest, and death at the hands of federal troops.*

victorious Sioux bathed and wrapped Custer's body in the tradition of a chieftain burial; however, they dismembered many other soldiers' corpses in order for a few distant observers from Major Marcus Reno's wounded troops and Captain Frederick Benteen's company to report back to government officials about the ferocity of the Sioux enemy.



# AMERICAN INDIAN SUBMISSION

Despite their success at Little Bighorn, neither the Sioux nor any other Plains tribe followed this battle with any other armed encounter. Rather, they either returned to tribal life or fled out of fear of remaining troops, until the U.S. Army arrived in greater numbers and began to exterminate Indian encampments and force others to accept payment for forcible removal from their lands. Sitting Bull himself fled to Canada, although he later returned in 1881 and subsequently worked in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. In Montana, the Blackfoot and Crow were forced to leave their tribal lands. In Colorado, the Utes gave up their lands after a brief period of resistance. In Idaho, most of the Nez Perce gave up their lands peacefully, although in an incredible episode, a band of some eight hundred Indians sought to evade U.S. troops and escape into Canada.

## I Will Fight No More: Chief Joseph's Capitulation

Chief Joseph, known to his people as "Thunder Traveling to the Loftier Mountain Heights," was the chief of the Nez Perce tribe, and he had realized that they could not win against the whites. In order to avoid a war that would undoubtedly lead to the extermination of his people, he hoped to lead his tribe to Canada, where they could live freely. He led a full retreat of his people over fifteen hundred miles of mountains and harsh terrain, only to be caught within fifty miles of the Canadian border in late 1877. His speech has remained a poignant and vivid reminder of what the tribe had lost.

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before, I have it in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our Chiefs are killed; Looking Glass is dead, Ta Hool Hool Shute is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes



or no. He who led on the young men is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets; the little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my Chiefs! I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.

—Chief Joseph, 1877

The final episode in the so-called Indian Wars occurred in 1890, at the Battle of Wounded Knee in South Dakota. On their reservation, the Sioux had begun to perform the “Ghost Dance,” which told of an Indian Messiah who would deliver the tribe from its hardship, with such frequency that white settlers began to worry that another uprising would occur. The militia prepared to round up the Sioux. The tribe, after the death of Sitting Bull, who had been arrested, shot, and killed in 1890, prepared to surrender at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on December 29, 1890. Although the accounts are unclear, an apparent accidental rifle discharge by a young male Indian preparing to lay down his weapon led the U.S. soldiers to begin firing indiscriminately upon the Indians. What little resistance the Indians mounted with a handful of concealed rifles at the outset of the fight diminished quickly, with the troops eventually massacring between 150 and 300 men, women, and children. The U.S. troops suffered twenty-five fatalities, some of which were the result of their own crossfire. Captain Edward Godfrey of the Seventh Cavalry later commented, “I know the men did not aim deliberately and they were greatly excited. I don’t believe they saw their sights. They fired rapidly but it seemed to me only a few seconds till there was not a living thing before us; warriors, squaws, children, ponies, and dogs . . . went down before that unaimed fire.” With this last show of brutality, the Indian Wars came to a close. U.S. government officials had already begun the process of seeking



an alternative to the meaningless treaties and costly battles. A more effective means with which to address the public perception of the “Indian threat” was needed. Americanization provided the answer.

## AMERICANIZATION

Through the years of the Indian Wars of the 1870s and early 1880s, opinion back east was mixed. There were many who felt, as General Philip Sheridan (appointed in 1867 to pacify the Plains Indians) allegedly said, that the only good Indian was a dead Indian. But increasingly, several American reformers who would later form the backbone of the Progressive Era had begun to criticize the violence, arguing that the Indians should be helped through “Americanization” to become assimilated into American society. Individual land ownership, Christian worship, and education for children became the cornerstones of this new, and final, assault on Indian life and culture.



*Chiricahua Apache Children Four Months After Arriving at Carlisle Indian School*

Beginning in the 1880s, clergymen, government officials, and social workers all worked to assimilate Indians into American life. Adults were targeted by religious reformers, specifically evangelical Protestants as well as a number of Catholics, who sought to convince Indians to abandon their language, clothing, and social customs for a more Euro-

American lifestyle. One of the most egregious aspects of this period occurred with the government permitted reformers to remove Indian children from their homes and place them in boarding schools, such as the Carlisle Indian School or the Hampton Institute,



where they were forced to abandon their tribal traditions, including their language, cultures, and religion, and taught to embrace the tools of American productivity, modesty, and sanctity through total immersion. Such schools not only acculturated Indian boys and girls but also provided vocational training for males and domestic science classes for females. The grand idea of removing the Indian from the child was doomed to failure. While they could change a child's clothes, haircut, and language, they could not change the color of their skin. The inevitable result of Indian schools was that they created a group of young adults that rarely assimilated with American society, for they were still Indians. Additionally, having been removed as children and forced to abandon their cultures, they no longer quite fit within their Native cultures anymore either.

A vital part of the assimilation effort was land reform. During earlier negotiations, the government had respected that the Indian tribes used their land communally. Most Indian belief structures did not allow for the concept of individual land ownership; rather, land was available for all to use and required responsibility from all to protect it. As a part of their



*The federal government's policy towards the Indians shifted in the late 1880s from relocating them to assimilating them into the American ideal. Indians were given land in exchange for renouncing their tribe, traditional clothing, and way of life.*

plan to Americanize the tribes, reformers sought legislation to replace this concept with the popular Euro-American notion of real estate ownership and self-reliance. One such law was the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, named after a reformer and senator from Massachusetts, which struck a deadly blow to the Indian way of life. In what was essentially an Indian version of the original Homestead Act, the Dawes Act permitted the federal government to divide the lands of any tribe and grant 160 acres of farmland or 320 acres of grazing land to each head of family, with lesser amounts to others.



In a nod towards the paternal relationship with which whites viewed Indians—similar to the justification of the previous treatment of African American slaves—the Dawes Act permitted the federal government to hold an individual Indian's newly acquired land in trust for twenty-five years. Only then would he obtain full title and be granted the citizenship rights that land ownership entailed. It would not be until 1924 that formal citizenship was granted to all Native Americans. Under the Dawes Act, Indians were given the aridest, useless land. Further, inefficiencies and corruption in the government meant that much of the land due to be allotted to Indians was simply deemed “surplus” and claimed by settlers. Once all allotments were determined, the remaining tribal lands—as much as eighty million acres—were sold to white American settlers.

The final element of “Americanization” was the symbolic “last arrow” pageant, which often coincided with the formal redistribution of tribal lands under the Dawes Act. At these events, Indians were forced to assemble in their tribal garb, carrying a bow and arrow. They would then symbolically fire their “last arrow” into the air, enter a tent where they would strip away their Indian clothing, dress in a white farmer's coveralls, and emerge to take a plow and an American flag to show that they had converted to a new way of life. It was a seismic shift for the Indians, and one that left them bereft of their culture and history.

Take a look at the [Carlisle Industrial Indian School](#) where Indian students were “civilized” from 1879 to 1918. It is worth looking through the photographs and records of the school to see how this well-intended program obliterated Indian culture.



## Section Summary

The interaction of the American Indians with white settlers during the western expansion movement was a painful and difficult one. For settlers raised on the notion of Manifest Destiny and empty lands, the Indians added a terrifying element to what was already a difficult and dangerous new world. For the Indians, the arrival of the settlers meant nothing less than the end of their way of life. Rather than cultural exchange, contact led to the virtual destruction of Indian life and culture. While violent acts broke out on both sides, the greatest atrocities were perpetrated by whites, who had superior weapons and often superior numbers, as well as the support of the U.S. government.

The death of the Indian way of life happened as much at the hands of well-intentioned reformers as those who wished to see the Indians exterminated. Individual land ownership, boarding schools, and pleas to renounce Indian gods and culture were all elements of the reformers' efforts. With so much of their life stripped away, it was ever more difficult for the Indians to maintain their tribal integrity.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1003>



## *Glossary*

**Americanization** the process by which an Indian was “redeemed” and assimilated into the American way of life by changing his clothing to western clothing and renouncing his tribal customs in exchange for a parcel of land

**Battle of Wounded Knee** an attempt to disarm a group of Lakota Sioux Indians near Wounded Knee, South Dakota, which resulted in members of the Seventh Cavalry of the U.S. Army opening fire and killing over 150 Indians

**Sand Creek Massacre** a militia raid led by Colonel Chivington on an Indian camp in Colorado, flying both the American flag and the white flag of surrender; over one hundred men, women, and children were killed



## 25. The Impact of Expansion on Chinese Immigrants and Hispanic Citizens

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the treatment of Chinese immigrants and Hispanic citizens during the westward expansion of the nineteenth century

As white Americans pushed west, they not only collided with Indian tribes but also with Hispanic Americans and Chinese immigrants. Hispanics in the Southwest had the opportunity to become American citizens at the end of the Mexican-American war, but their status was markedly second-class. Chinese immigrants arrived en masse during the California Gold Rush and numbered in the hundreds of thousands by the late 1800s, with the majority living in California, working menial jobs. These distinct cultural and ethnic groups strove to maintain their rights and way of life in the face of persistent racism and entitlement. But the large number of white settlers and government-sanctioned land acquisitions left them at a profound disadvantage. Ultimately, both groups withdrew into homogenous communities in which their language and culture could survive.



## CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN THE AMERICAN WEST

The initial arrival of Chinese immigrants to the United States began as a slow trickle in the 1820s, with barely 650 living in the U.S. by the end of 1849. However, as gold rush fever swept the country, Chinese immigrants, too, were attracted to the notion of quick fortunes. By 1852, over 25,000 Chinese immigrants had arrived, and by 1880, over 300,000 Chinese lived in the United States, most in California. While they had dreams of finding gold, many instead found employment building the first transcontinental railroad. Some even traveled as far east as the former cotton plantations of the Old South, which they helped to farm after the Civil War. Several thousand of these immigrants booked their passage to the United States using a “credit-ticket,” in which their passage was paid in advance by American businessmen to whom the immigrants were then indebted for a period of work. Most arrivals were men: Few wives or children ever traveled to the United States. As late as 1890, less than 5 percent of the Chinese population in the U.S. was female. Regardless of gender, few Chinese immigrants intended to stay permanently in the United States, although many were reluctantly forced to do so, as they lacked the financial resources to return home.



Prohibited by law since 1790 from obtaining U.S. citizenship through naturalization, Chinese immigrants faced harsh discrimination and violence from American settlers in the West. Despite hardships like the special tax that Chinese miners had to pay to take part in the Gold Rush, or their subsequent forced relocation into Chinese districts, these immigrants continued to arrive in the United States seeking a better life for the families they left behind. Only when the



*Building the railroads was dangerous and backbreaking work. On the western railroad line, Chinese migrants, along with other nonwhite workers, were often given the most difficult and dangerous jobs of all.*

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 forbade further immigration from China for a ten-year period did the flow stop. The was renewed in 1892 under the Geary Act and was made permanent in 1902.

The Chinese community banded together in an effort to create social and cultural centers in cities such as San Francisco. In a haphazard fashion, they sought to provide services ranging from social aid to education, places of worship, health facilities, and more to their fellow Chinese immigrants. But only American Indians suffered greater discrimination and racial violence, legally sanctioned by the federal government, than did Chinese immigrants at this juncture in American history. As Chinese workers began competing with white Americans for jobs in California cities, the latter began a system of built-in discrimination. In the 1870s, white Americans formed “anti-coolie clubs” (“coolie” being a racial slur directed towards people of any Asian descent), through which they organized boycotts of Chinese-produced products and lobbied for anti-Chinee laws. Some protests turned violent, as in 1885 in Rock Springs, Wyoming, where tensions between white and Chinese



immigrant miners erupted in a riot, resulting in over two dozen Chinese immigrants being murdered and many more injured.

Slowly, racism and discrimination became law. The new California constitution of 1879 denied naturalized Chinese citizens the right to vote or hold state employment. Additionally, in 1882, the U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which forbade further Chinese immigration into the United States for ten years. The ban was later extended on multiple occasions until its repeal in 1943. Eventually, some Chinese immigrants returned to China. Those who remained were stuck in the lowest-paying, most menial jobs. Several found assistance through the creation of benevolent associations designed to both support Chinese communities and defend them against political and legal discrimination; however, the history of Chinese immigrants to the United States remained largely one of deprivation and hardship well into the twentieth century.

**Exploring the Nation's Documents:** Legislation like the [Chinese Exclusion Act](#) tells a story of racism in the United States. Explore elements of [Chinese heritage using these primary documents](#). Delving into the resources and stories of the National Archives and Library of Congress is a wonderful way to learn more about US History.

## The Backs that Built the Railroad

Below is a description of the construction of the railroad in 1867. Note the way it describes the scene, the laborers, and the effort.

The cars now (1867) run nearly to the summit of the Sierras. . . four thousand laborers were at work—one-tenth Irish, the



rest Chinese. They were a great army laying siege to Nature in her strongest citadel. The rugged mountains looked like stupendous ant-hills. They swarmed with Celestials, shoveling, wheeling, carting, drilling and blasting rocks and earth, while their dull, moony eyes stared out from under immense basket-hats, like umbrellas. At several dining camps we saw hundreds sitting on the ground, eating soft boiled rice with chopsticks as fast as terrestrials could with soup-ladles. Irish laborers received thirty dollars per month (gold) and board; Chinese, thirty-one dollars, boarding themselves. After a little experience the latter were quite as efficient and far less troublesome.

—Albert D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*

Several great American advancements of the nineteenth century were built with the hands of many other nations. It is interesting to ponder how much these immigrant communities felt they were building their own fortunes and futures, versus the fortunes of others. Is it likely that the Chinese laborers, many of whom died due to the harsh conditions, considered themselves part of “a great army”? Certainly, this account reveals the unwitting racism of the day, where workers were grouped together by their ethnicity, and each ethnic group was labeled monolithically as “good workers” or “troublesome,” with no regard for individual differences among the hundreds of Chinese or Irish workers.

The [Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum](#) provides a context for the role of the Chinese who helped build the railroads. What does the site celebrate, and what, if anything, does it condemn?



## HISPANIC AMERICANS IN THE AMERICAN WEST

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War in 1848, promised U.S. citizenship to the nearly seventy-five thousand Hispanics now living in the American Southwest; approximately 90 percent accepted the offer and chose to stay in the United States despite their immediate relegation to second-class citizenship status. Relative to the rest of Mexico, these lands were sparsely populated and had been so ever since the country achieved its freedom from Spain in 1821. In fact, New Mexico—not Texas or California—was the center of settlement in the region in the years immediately preceding the war with the United States, containing nearly fifty thousand Mexicans. However, those who did settle the area were proud of their heritage and ability to develop *rancheros* of great size and success. Despite promises made in the treaty, these Californios—as they came to be known—quickly lost their land to white settlers who simply displaced the rightful landowners, by force if necessary. Repeated efforts at legal redress mostly fell upon deaf ears. In some instances, judges and lawyers would permit the legal cases to proceed through an expensive legal process only to the point where Hispanic landowners who insisted on holding their ground were rendered penniless for their efforts.

Much like Chinese immigrants, Hispanic citizens were relegated to the worst-paying jobs under the most terrible working conditions. They worked as *peóns* (manual laborers similar to slaves), *vaqueros* (cattle herders), and cartmen (transporting food and supplies) on the cattle ranches that white landowners possessed, or undertook the most hazardous mining tasks.



In a few instances, frustrated Hispanic citizens fought back against the white settlers who dispossessed them of their belongings. In 1889–1890 in New Mexico, several hundred Mexican Americans formed *las Gorras Blancas* (the White Caps) to try and reclaim their land and intimidate white Americans, preventing further land seizures. White Caps conducted raids of white farms,



*Mexican ranchers had worked the land in the American Southwest long before American “cowboys” arrived. In what ways might the Mexican vaquero pictured above have influenced the American cowboy?*

burning homes, barns, and crops to express their growing anger and frustration. However, their actions never resulted in any fundamental changes. Several White Caps were captured, beaten, and imprisoned, whereas others eventually gave up, fearing harsh reprisals against their families. Some White Caps adopted a more political strategy, gaining election to local offices throughout New Mexico in the early 1890s, but growing concerns over the potential impact on the territory’s quest for statehood led several citizens to heighten their repression of the movement. Other laws passed in the United States intended to deprive Mexican Americans of their heritage as much as their lands. “Sunday Laws” prohibited “noisy amusements” such as bullfights, cockfights, and other cultural gatherings common to Hispanic communities at the time. “Greaser Laws” permitted the imprisonment of any unemployed Mexican American on charges of vagrancy. Although Hispanic Americans held tightly to their cultural heritage as their remaining form of self-identity, such laws did take a toll.

In California and throughout the Southwest, the massive influx of Anglo-American settlers simply overran the Hispanic populations that had been living and thriving there, sometimes for generations. Despite being U.S. citizens with full rights, Hispanics quickly found themselves outnumbered, outvoted, and, ultimately, outcasts.



Corrupt state and local governments favored whites in land disputes, and mining companies and cattle barons discriminated against them, as with the Chinese workers, in terms of pay and working conditions. In growing urban areas such as Los Angeles, *barrios*, or clusters of working-class homes, grew more isolated from the white American centers. Hispanic Americans, like the Native Americans and Chinese, suffered the fallout of the white settlers' relentless push west.

## Section Summary

In the nineteenth century, the Hispanic, Chinese, and white populations of the country collided. Whites moved further west in search of land and riches, bolstered by government subsidies and an inherent and unshakable belief that the land and its benefits existed for their use. In some ways, it was a race to the prize: White Americans believed that they deserved the best lands and economic opportunities the country afforded and did not consider prior claims to be valid.

Neither Chinese immigrants nor Hispanic Americans could withstand the assault on their rights by the tide of white settlers. Sheer numbers, matched with political backing, gave the whites the power they needed to overcome any resistance. Ultimately, both ethnic groups retreated into urban enclaves, where their language and traditions could survive.



### *Review Question*

1. Compare and contrast the treatment of Chinese immigrants and Hispanic citizens to that of Indians during the period of western settlement.

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. In all three cases, white settlers felt that they were superior to these ethnic groups and morally correct in their exploitation of the groups' land and labor. Whether mining sacred Sioux reservation lands for gold or forcing Chinese immigrants to pay a special fine to mine for gold, white settlers were confident that their goal of Manifest Destiny gave them the right to do as they wished. Hispanic Americans, unlike Chinese immigrants and Indians, were allowed citizenship rights, although racist laws and corrupt judges severely curtailed these rights. Chinese immigrants were ultimately denied entry to the United States through the Chinese Exclusion Act.



## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. Describe the philosophy of Manifest Destiny. What effect did it have on Americans' westward migration? How might the different groups that migrated have sought to apply this philosophy to their individual circumstances?
2. Compare the myth of the "Wild West" with its reality. What elements of truth would these stories have contained, and what was fabricated or left out? What was life actually like for cowboys, ranchers, and the few women present in mining towns or along the cattle range?
3. What were the primary methods that the U.S. government, as well as individual reformers, used to deal with the perceived Indian threat to westward settlement? In what ways were these methods successful and unsuccessful? What were their short-term and long-term effects on Native Americans?
4. Describe the ways in which the U.S. government, local governments, and/or individuals attempted to interfere with the specific cultural traditions and customs of Indians, Hispanics, and Chinese immigrants. What did these efforts have in common? How did each group respond?
5. In what ways did westward expansion provide new opportunities for women and African Americans? In what ways did it limit these opportunities?



## *Glossary*

**las Gorras Blancas** the Spanish name for White Caps, the rebel group of Hispanic Americans who fought back against the appropriation of Hispanic land by whites; for a period in 1889–1890, they burned farms, homes, and crops to express their growing anger at the injustice of the situation

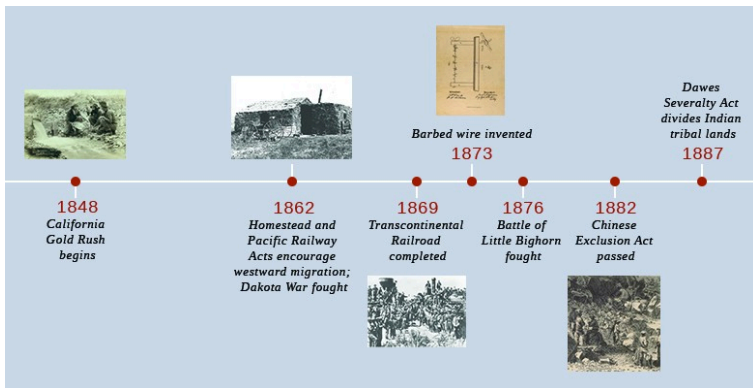


## 26. The Westward Spirit

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the evolution of American views about westward migration in the mid-nineteenth century
- Analyze the ways in which the federal government facilitated Americans' westward migration in the mid-nineteenth century



(credit "barbed wire": modification of work by the U.S. Department of Commerce)

While a small number of settlers had pushed westward before the mid-nineteenth century, the land west of the Mississippi was largely unexplored. Most Americans, if they thought of it at all, viewed this



territory as an arid wasteland suitable only for Indians whom the federal government had displaced from eastern lands in previous generations. The reflections of early explorers who conducted scientific treks throughout the West tended to confirm this belief. Major Stephen Harriman Long, who commanded an expedition through Missouri and into the Yellowstone region in 1819–1820, frequently described the Great Plains as a arid and useless region, suitable as nothing more than a “great American desert.” But, beginning in the 1840s, a combination of economic opportunity and ideological encouragement changed the way Americans thought of the West. The federal government offered a number of incentives, making it viable for Americans to take on the challenge of seizing these rough lands from others and subsequently taming them. Still, most Americans who went west needed some financial security at the outset of their journey; even with government aid, the truly poor could not make the trip. The cost of moving an entire family westward, combined with the risks as well as the questionable chances of success, made the move prohibitive for most. While the economic Panic of 1837 led many to question the promise of urban America, and thus turn their focus to the promise of commercial farming in the West, the Panic also resulted in many lacking the financial resources to make such a commitment. For most, the dream to “Go west, young man” remained unfulfilled.

While much of the basis for westward expansion was economic, there was also a more philosophical reason, which was bound up in the American belief that the country—and the “heathens” who populated it—was destined to come under the civilizing rule of Euro-American settlers and their superior technology, most notably railroads and the telegraph. While the extent to which that belief was a heartfelt motivation held by most Americans, or simply a rationalization of the conquests that followed, remains debatable, the clashes—both physical and cultural—that followed this western migration left scars on the country that are still felt today.



# MANIFEST DESTINY

The concept of Manifest Destiny found its roots in the long-standing traditions of territorial expansion upon which the nation itself was founded. This phrase, which implies divine encouragement for territorial expansion, was coined by magazine editor John O'Sullivan in 1845, when he wrote in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* that "it was our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our multiplying millions." Although the context of O'Sullivan's original article was to encourage expansion into the newly acquired Texas territory, the spirit it invoked would subsequently be used to encourage westward settlement throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. Land developers, railroad magnates, and other investors capitalized on the notion to encourage westward settlement for their own financial benefit. Soon thereafter, the federal government encouraged this inclination as a means to further develop the West during the Civil War, especially at its outset, when concerns over the possible expansion of slavery deeper into western territories was a legitimate fear.

The idea was simple: Americans were destined—and indeed divinely ordained—to expand democratic institutions throughout the continent. As they spread their culture, thoughts, and customs, they would, in the process, "improve" the lives of the native inhabitants who might otherwise resist Protestant institutions and, more importantly, economic development of the land. O'Sullivan may have coined the phrase, but the concept had preceded him: Throughout the 1800s, politicians and writers had stated the belief that the United States was destined to rule the continent. O'Sullivan's words, which resonated in the popular press, matched the economic and political goals of a federal government increasingly committed to expansion.



Manifest Destiny justified in Americans' minds their right and duty to govern any other groups they encountered during their expansion, as well as absolved them of any questionable tactics they employed in the process. While the commonly held view of the day was of a relatively empty frontier, waiting for the arrival of the settlers who could properly exploit the vast resources for economic gain, the reality was quite different.

Hispanic communities in the

Southwest, diverse Indian tribes throughout the western states, as well as other settlers from Asia and Western Europe already lived in many parts of the country. American expansion would necessitate a far more complex and involved exchange than simply filling empty space.

Still, in part as a result of the spark lit by O'Sullivan and others, waves of Americans and recently arrived immigrants began to move west in wagon trains. They travelled along several identifiable trails: first the Oregon Trail, then later the Santa Fe and California Trails, among others. The Oregon Trail is the most famous of these western routes. Two thousand miles long and barely passable on foot in the early nineteenth century, by the 1840s, wagon trains were a common sight. Between 1845 and 1870, considered to be the height of migration along the trail, over 400,000 settlers followed this path west from Missouri.



*Hundreds of thousands of people travelled west on the Oregon, California, and Santa Fe Trails, but their numbers did not ensure their safety. Illness, starvation, and other dangers—both real and imagined—made survival hard. (credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)*



## Who Will Set Limits to Our Onward March?

America is destined for better deeds. It is our unparalleled glory that we have no reminiscences of battle fields, but in defense [sic] of humanity, of the oppressed of all nations, of the rights of conscience, the rights of personal enfranchisement. Our annals describe no scenes of horrid carnage, where men were led on by hundreds of thousands to slay one another, dupes and victims to emperors, kings, nobles, demons in the human form called heroes. We have had patriots to defend our homes, our liberties, but no aspirants to crowns or thrones; nor have the American people ever suffered themselves to be led on by wicked ambition to depopulate the land, to spread desolation far and wide, that a human being might be placed on a seat of supremacy. . . .

The expansive future is our arena, and for our history. We are entering on its untrodden space, with the truths of God in our minds, beneficent objects in our hearts, and with a clear conscience unsullied by the past. We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us, and no earthly power can.

—John O’Sullivan, 1839

Think about how this quotation resonated with different groups of Americans at the time. When looked at through today’s lens, the actions of the westward-moving settlers were fraught with brutality and racism. At the time, however, many settlers felt they were at the pinnacle of democracy, and that with no aristocracy or ancient history, America was a new world where anyone could succeed. Even then, consider how the phrase “anyone” was restricted by race, gender, and nationality.



Visit [Across the Plains in '64](#) to follow one family making their way westward from Iowa to Oregon. Click on a few of the entries and see how the author describes their journey, from the expected to the surprising.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

To assist the settlers in their move westward and transform the migration from a trickle into a steady flow, Congress passed two significant pieces of legislation in 1862: the Homestead Act and the Pacific Railway Act. Born largely out of President Abraham Lincoln's growing concern that a potential Union defeat in the early stages of the Civil War might result in the expansion of slavery westward, Lincoln hoped that such laws would encourage the expansion of a "free soil" mentality across the West.

The Homestead Act allowed any head of household, or individual over the age of twenty-one—including unmarried women—to receive a parcel of 160 acres for only a nominal filing fee. All that recipients were required to do in exchange was to "improve the land" within a period of five years of taking possession. The standards for improvement were minimal: Owners could clear a few acres, build small houses or barns, or maintain livestock. Under this act, the government transferred over 270 million acres of public domain land to private citizens.

The Pacific Railway Act was pivotal in helping settlers move west more quickly, as well as move their farm products, and later cattle and mining deposits, back east. The first of many railway initiatives, this act commissioned the Union Pacific Railroad to build new track



west from Omaha, Nebraska, while the Central Pacific Railroad moved east from Sacramento, California. The law provided each company with ownership of all public lands within two hundred feet on either side of the track laid, as well as additional land grants and payment through land bonds, prorated on the difficulty of the terrain it crossed. Because of these provisions, both companies made a significant profit, whether they were crossing hundreds of miles of open plains, or working their way through the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. As a result, the nation's first transcontinental railroad was completed when the two companies connected their tracks at Promontory Point, Utah, in the spring of 1869. Other tracks, including lines radiating from this original one, subsequently created a network that linked all corners of the nation.

In addition to legislation designed to facilitate western settlement, the U.S. government assumed an active role on the ground, building numerous forts throughout the West to protect and assist settlers during their migration. Forts such as Fort Laramie in Wyoming (built in 1834) and Fort Apache in Arizona (1870) served as protection from nearby Indians as well as maintained peace between



*The “Golden Spike” connecting the country by rail was driven into the ground in Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869. The completion of the first transcontinental railroad dramatically changed the tenor of travel in the country, as people were able to complete in a week a route that had previously taken months.*

potential warring tribes. Others located throughout Colorado and Wyoming became important trading posts for miners and fur trappers. Those built in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas served primarily to provide relief for farmers during times of drought or related hardships. Forts constructed along the California coastline provided protection in the wake of the Mexican-American War as well as during the American Civil War. These locations subsequently



served the U.S. Navy and provided important support for growing Pacific trade routes. Whether as army posts constructed for the protection of white settlers and to maintain peace among Indian tribes, or as trading posts to further facilitate the development of the region, such forts proved to be vital contributions to westward migration.

## WHO WERE THE SETTLERS?

In the nineteenth century, as today, it took money to relocate and start a new life. Due to the initial cost of relocation, land, and supplies, as well as months of preparing the soil, planting, and subsequent harvesting before any produce was ready for market, the original wave of western settlers along the Oregon Trail in the 1840s and 1850s consisted of moderately prosperous, white, native-born farming families of the East. But the passage of the Homestead Act and completion of the first transcontinental railroad meant that, by 1870, the possibility of western migration was opened to Americans of more modest means. What started as a trickle became a steady flow of migration that would last until the end of the century.

Nearly 400,000 settlers had made the trek westward by the height of the movement in 1870. The vast majority were men, although families also migrated, despite incredible hardships for women with young children. More recent immigrants also migrated west, with the largest numbers coming from Northern Europe and Canada. Germans, Scandinavians, and Irish were among the most common. These ethnic groups tended to settle close together, creating strong rural communities that mirrored the way of life they had left behind. According to U.S. Census Bureau records, the number of Scandinavians living in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century exploded, from barely 18,000 in 1850 to over 1.1 million in 1900. During that same time period, the



German-born population in the United States grew from 584,000 to nearly 2.7 million and the Irish-born population grew from 961,000 to 1.6 million. As they moved westward, several thousand immigrants established homesteads in the Midwest, primarily in Minnesota and Wisconsin, where, as of 1900, over one-third of the population was foreign-born, and in North Dakota, whose immigrant population stood at 45 percent at the turn of the century. Compared to European immigrants, those from China were much less numerous, but still significant. More than 200,000 Chinese arrived in California between 1876 and 1890, albeit for entirely different reasons related to the Gold Rush.

In addition to a significant European migration westward, several thousand African Americans migrated west following the Civil War, as much to escape the racism and violence of the Old South as to find new economic opportunities. They were known as exodusters, referencing the biblical flight from Egypt, because they fled the racism of the South, with most of them headed to Kansas from Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Over twenty-five thousand exodusters arrived in Kansas in 1879–1880 alone. By 1890, over 500,000 blacks lived west of the Mississippi River. Although the majority of black migrants became farmers, approximately twelve thousand worked as cowboys during the Texas cattle drives. Some also became “Buffalo Soldiers” in the wars against Indians. “Buffalo Soldiers” were African Americans allegedly so-named by various Indian tribes who equated their black, curly hair with that of the buffalo. Many had served in the Union army in the Civil War and were now organized into six, all-black cavalry and infantry units whose primary duties were to protect settlers from Indian attacks during the westward migration, as well as to assist in building the infrastructure required to support western settlement.





*“Buffalo Soldiers,” the first peacetime all-black regiments in the U.S. Army, protected settlers from Indian attacks. These soldiers also served as some of the country’s first national park rangers.*

The [Oxford African American Studies Center](#) features photographs and stories about black homesteaders. From exodusters to all-black settlements, the essay describes the largely hidden role that African Americans played in western expansion.

While white easterners, immigrants, and African Americans were moving west, several hundred thousand Hispanics had already settled in the American Southwest prior to the U.S. government seizing the land during its war with Mexico (1846–1848). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war in 1848, granted American citizenship to those who chose to stay in the United States, as the land switched from Mexican to U.S. ownership. Under the conditions of the treaty, Mexicans retained the right to their language, religion, and culture, as well as the property they held. As for citizenship, they could choose one of three options: 1) declare



their intent to live in the United States but retain Mexican citizenship; 2) become U.S. citizens with all rights under the constitution; or 3) leave for Mexico. Despite such guarantees, within one generation, these new Hispanic American citizens found their culture under attack, and legal protection of their property all but non-existent.

## Section Summary

While a few bold settlers had moved westward before the middle of the nineteenth century, they were the exception, not the rule. The “great American desert,” as it was called, was considered a vast and empty place, unfit for civilized people. In the 1840s, however, this idea started to change, as potential settlers began to learn more from promoters and land developers of the economic opportunities that awaited them in the West, and Americans extolled the belief that it was their Manifest Destiny—their divine right—to explore and settle the western territories in the name of the United States.

Most settlers in this first wave were white Americans of means. Whether they sought riches in gold, cattle, or farming, or believed it their duty to spread Protestant ideals to native inhabitants, they headed west in wagon trains along paths such as the Oregon Trail. European immigrants, particularly those from Northern Europe, also made the trip, settling in close-knit ethnic enclaves



out of comfort, necessity, and familiarity. African Americans escaping the racism of the South also went west. In all, the newly settled areas were neither a fast track to riches nor a simple expansion into an empty land, but rather a clash of cultures, races, and traditions that defined the emerging new America.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1005>

### *Review Question*

1. Why and how did the U.S. government promote western migration in the midst of fighting the Civil War?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. During the first two years of the Civil War—when it appeared that the Confederacy was a formidable opponent—President Lincoln grew concerned that a Union defeat could result in the westward expansion of slavery. Thus, he hoped to facilitate the westward movement of white settlers who promoted the concept of free soil, which would populate the region



with allies who opposed slavery. To encourage this process, Congress passed the Homestead Act and the Pacific Railway Act in 1862. The government also constructed and maintained forts that assisted in the process of westward expansion.

## *Glossary*

**Manifest Destiny** the phrase, coined by journalist John O'Sullivan, which came to stand for the idea that white Americans had a calling and a duty to seize and settle the American West with Protestant democratic values

**exodusters** a term used to describe African Americans who moved to Kansas from the Old South to escape the racism there



## 27. Video: Westward Expansion

This video teaches you about the Wild, Wild, West, which as it turns out, wasn't as wild as it seemed in the movies. When we think of the western expansion of the United States in the 19th century, we're conditioned to imagine the loner. The self-reliant, unattached cowpoke roaming the prairie in search of wandering calves, or the half-addled prospector who has broken from reality thanks to the solitude of his single-minded quest for gold dust. While there may be a grain of truth to these classic Hollywood stereotypes, it isn't a very big grain of truth. Many of the pioneers who settled the west were family groups. Many were immigrants. Many were major corporations. The big losers in the westward migration were Native Americans, who were killed or moved onto reservations. Not cool, American pioneers.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=46#oembed-1>



## 28. Homesteading: Dreams and Realities

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the challenges that farmers faced as they settled west of the Mississippi River
- Describe the unique experiences of women who participated in westward migration

As settlers and homesteaders moved westward to improve the land given to them through the Homestead Act, they faced a difficult and often insurmountable challenge. The land was difficult to farm, there were few building materials, and harsh weather, insects, and inexperience led to frequent setbacks. The prohibitive prices charged by the first railroad lines made it expensive to ship crops to market or have goods sent out. Although many farms failed, some survived and grew into large “bonanza” farms that hired additional labor and were able to benefit enough from economies of scale to grow profitable. Still, small family farms, and the settlers who worked them, were hard-pressed to do more than scrape out a living in an unforgiving environment that comprised arid land, violent weather shifts, and other challenges.





This map shows the trails (orange) used in westward migration and the development of railroad lines (blue) constructed after the completion of the first transcontinental railroad.

## THE DIFFICULT LIFE OF THE PIONEER FARMER

Of the hundreds of thousands of settlers who moved west, the vast majority were homesteaders. These pioneers, like the Ingalls family of *Little House on the Prairie* book and television fame (see inset below), were seeking land and opportunity. Popularly known as “sodbusters,” these men and women in the Midwest faced a difficult life on the frontier. They settled throughout the land that now makes up the Midwestern states of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. The weather and environment were bleak, and settlers struggled to eke out a living. A few unseasonably



rainy years had led would-be settlers to believe that the “great desert” was no more, but the region’s typically low rainfall and harsh temperatures made crop cultivation hard. Irrigation was a requirement, but finding water and building adequate systems proved too difficult and expensive for many farmers. It was not until 1902 and the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act that a system finally existed to set aside funds from the sale of public lands to build dams for subsequent irrigation efforts. Prior to that, farmers across the Great Plains relied primarily on dry-farming techniques to grow corn, wheat, and sorghum, a practice that many continued in later years. A few also began to employ windmill technology to draw water, although both the drilling and construction of windmills became an added expense that few farmers could afford.

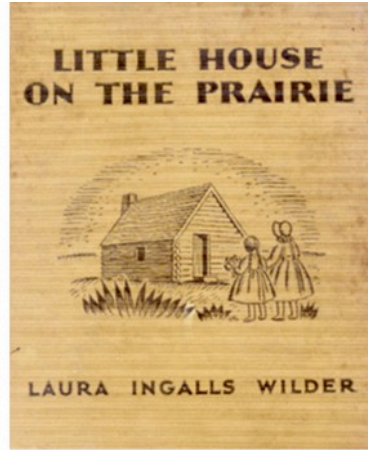
## The Enduring Appeal of *Little House on the Prairie*

The story of western migration and survival has remained a touchstone of American culture, even today. The television show *Frontier Life* on PBS is one example, as are countless other modern-day evocations of the settlers. Consider the enormous popularity of the *Little House* series. The books, originally published in the 1930s and 1940s, have been in print continuously. The television show, *Little House on the Prairie*, ran for over a decade and was hugely successful (and was said to be President Ronald Reagan’s favorite show). The books, although fictional, were based on Laura Ingalls Wilder’s own childhood, as she travelled west with her family via covered wagon, stopping in Kansas, Wisconsin, South Dakota, and beyond.





(a)



(b)

*Laura Ingalls Wilder (a) is the celebrated author of the Little House series, which began in 1932 with the publication of Little House in the Big Woods. The third, and best known, book in the series, Little House on the Prairie (b), was published just three years later.*

Wilder wrote of her stories, “As you read my stories of long ago I hope you will remember that the things that are truly worthwhile and that will give you happiness are the same now as they were then. Courage and kindness, loyalty, truth, and helpfulness are always the same and always needed.” While Ingalls makes the point that her stories underscore traditional values that remain the same over time, this is not necessarily the only thing that made these books so popular. Perhaps part of their appeal is that they are adventure stories, with wild weather, wild animals, and wild Indians all playing a role. Does this explain their ongoing popularity? What other factors might make these stories appealing so long after they were originally written?

The first houses built by western settlers were typically made of mud and sod with thatch roofs, as there was little timber for building. Rain, when it arrived, presented constant problems for



these sod houses, with mud falling into food, and vermin, most notably lice, scampering across bedding. Weather patterns not only left the fields dry, they also brought tornadoes, droughts, blizzards, and insect swarms. Tales of swarms of locusts were commonplace, and the crop-eating insects would at times cover the ground six to twelve inches deep. One frequently quoted Kansas newspaper reported a locust swarm in 1878 during which the insects devoured “everything green, stripping the foliage off the bark and from the tender twigs of the fruit trees, destroying every plant that is good for food or pleasant to the eye, that man has planted.”

Farmers also faced the ever-present threat of debt and farm foreclosure by the banks. While land was essentially free under the Homestead Act, all other farm necessities cost money and were initially difficult to obtain in the newly settled parts of the country where market economies did not yet fully reach. Horses, livestock, wagons, wells, fencing, seed, and fertilizer were all critical to



*Sod houses were common in the Midwest as settlers moved west. There was no lumber to gather and no stones with which to build. These mud homes were vulnerable to weather and vermin, making life incredibly hard for the newly arrived homesteaders.*

survival, but often hard to come by as the population initially remained sparsely settled across vast tracts of land. Railroads charged notoriously high rates for farm equipment and livestock, making it difficult to procure goods or make a profit on anything sent back east. Banks also charged high interest rates, and, in a cycle that replayed itself year after year, farmers would borrow from the bank with the intention of repaying their debt after the harvest. As the number of farmers moving westward increased, the market price of their produce steadily declined, even as the value of the actual land increased. Each year, hard-working farmers produced ever-larger crops, flooding the markets and subsequently driving



prices down even further. Although some understood the economics of supply and demand, none could overtly control such forces.

Eventually, the arrival of a more extensive railroad network aided farmers, mostly by bringing much-needed supplies such as lumber for construction and new farm machinery. While John Deere sold a steel-faced plow as early as 1838, it was James Oliver's improvements to the device in the late 1860s that transformed life for homesteaders. His new, less expensive "chilled plow" was better equipped to cut through the shallow grass roots of the Midwestern terrain, as well as withstand damage from rocks just below the surface. Similar advancements in hay mowers, manure spreaders, and threshing machines greatly improved farm production for those who could afford them. Where capital expense became a significant factor, larger commercial farms—known as "bonanza farms"—began to develop. Farmers in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota hired migrant farmers to grow wheat on farms in excess of twenty thousand acres each. These large farms were succeeding by the end of the century, but small family farms continued to suffer. Although the land was nearly free, it cost close to \$1000 for the necessary supplies to start up a farm, and many would-be landowners lured westward by the promise of cheap land became migrant farmers instead, working other peoples' land for a wage. The frustration of small farmers grew, ultimately leading to a revolt of sorts, discussed in a later chapter.

[Frontier House](#) includes information on the logistics of moving across the country as a homesteader. Take a look at the list of supplies and gear. It is easy to understand why, even when the government gave the land away for free, it still took significant resources to make such a journey.



## AN EVEN MORE CHALLENGING LIFE: A PIONEER WIFE

Although the West was numerically a male-dominated society, homesteading in particular encouraged the presence of women, families, and a domestic lifestyle, even if such a life was not an easy one. Women faced all the physical hardships that men encountered in terms of weather, illness, and danger, with the added complication of childbirth. Often, there was no doctor or midwife providing assistance, and many women died from treatable complications, as did their newborns. While some women could find employment in the newly settled towns as teachers, cooks, or seamstresses, they originally did not enjoy many rights. They could not sell property, sue for divorce, serve on juries, or vote. And for the vast majority of women, their work was not in towns for money, but on the farm. As late as 1900, a typical farm wife could expect to devote nine hours per day to chores such as cleaning, sewing, laundering, and preparing food. Two additional hours per day were spent cleaning the barn and chicken coop, milking the cows, caring for the chickens, and tending the family garden. One wife commented in 1879, “[We are] not much better than slaves. It is a weary, monotonous round of cooking and washing and mending and as a result the insane asylum is a third filled with wives of farmers.”

Despite this grim image, the challenges of farm life eventually empowered women to break through some legal and social barriers. Many lived more equitably as partners with their husbands than did their eastern counterparts, helping each other through both hard times and good. If widowed, a wife typically took over responsibility for the farm, a level of management that was very rare back east, where the farm would fall to a son or other male relation. Pioneer women made important decisions and were considered by their husbands to be more equal partners in the success of the homestead, due to the necessity that all members had to work



hard and contribute to the farming enterprise for it to succeed. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first states to grant women's rights, including the right to vote, were those in the Pacific Northwest and Upper Midwest, where women pioneers worked the land side by side with men. Some women seemed to be well suited to the challenges that frontier life presented them. Writing to her Aunt Martha from their homestead in Minnesota in 1873, Mary Carpenter refused to complain about the hardships of farm life: "I try to trust in God's promises, but we can't expect him to work miracles nowadays. Nevertheless, all that is expected of us is to do the best we can, and that we shall certainly endeavor to do. Even if we do freeze and starve in the way of duty, it will not be a dishonorable death."

## Section Summary

The concept of Manifest Destiny and the strong incentives to relocate sent hundreds of thousands of people west across the Mississippi. The rigors of this new way of life presented many challenges and difficulties to homesteaders. The land was dry and barren, and homesteaders lost crops to hail, droughts, insect swarms, and more. There were few materials with which to build, and early homes were made of mud, which did not stand up to the elements. Money was a constant concern, as the cost of railroad freight was exorbitant, and banks were unforgiving of bad harvests. For women, life was difficult in the extreme. Farm wives



worked at least eleven hours per day on chores and had limited access to doctors or midwives. Still, they were more independent than their eastern counterparts and worked in partnership with their husbands.

As the railroad expanded and better farm equipment became available, by the 1870s, large farms began to succeed through economies of scale. Small farms still struggled to stay afloat, however, leading to a rising discontent among the farmers, who worked so hard for so little success.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1006>

### *Review Questions*

1. What accounts for the success of large, commercial “bonanza farms?” What benefits did they enjoy over their smaller family-run counterparts?
2. How did everyday life in the American West hasten equality for women who settled the land?

### *Answers to Review Questions*

1. Farmers who were able to invest a significant



amount of capital in starting up large farms could acquire necessary supplies with ease. They also had access to new, technologically advanced farm machinery, which greatly improved efficiency and output. Such farmers hired migrant farmers to work their huge amounts of land. These “bonanza farms” were often quite successful, whereas family farms—unable to afford the supplies they needed for success, let alone take advantage of the technological innovations that would make their farms competitive—often failed.

2. Women who settled the West were considered by their husbands to be more equitable partners in the success or failure of the homestead. Because resources were so limited and the area so sparsely settled, women participated in work that was typically done only by men. Due in part to these efforts, women were able to inherit and run farms if they became widowed, rather than passing the farms along to male relations as they would in the East. The first states to begin granting rights to women, including the right to vote, were in the Pacific Northwest and Upper Midwest, where women homesteaders worked side by side with men to tame the land.



## *Glossary*

**bonanza farms** large farms owned by speculators who hired laborers to work the land; these large farms allowed their owners to benefit from economies of scale and prosper, but they did nothing to help small family farms, which continued to struggle

**sod house** a frontier home constructed of dirt held together by thick-rooted prairie grass that was prevalent in the Midwest; sod, cut into large rectangles, was stacked to make the walls of the structure, providing an inexpensive, yet damp, house for western settlers



## 29. Making a Living in Gold and Cattle

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the major discoveries and developments in western gold, silver, and copper mining in the mid-nineteenth century
- Explain why the cattle industry was paramount to the development of the West and how it became the catalyst for violent range wars

Although homestead farming was the primary goal of most western settlers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a small minority sought to make their fortunes quickly through other means. Specifically, gold (and, subsequently, silver and copper) prospecting attracted thousands of miners looking to “get rich quick” before returning east. In addition, ranchers capitalized on newly available railroad lines to move longhorn steers that populated southern and western Texas. This meat was highly sought after in eastern markets, and the demand created not only wealthy ranchers but an era of cowboys and cattle drives that in many ways defines how we think of the West today. Although neither miners nor ranchers intended to remain permanently in the West, many individuals from both groups ultimately stayed and settled there, sometimes due to the success of their gamble, and other times due to their abject failure.



# THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH AND BEYOND

The allure of gold has long sent people on wild chases; in the American West, the possibility of quick riches was no different. The search for gold represented an opportunity far different from the slow plod that homesteading farmers faced. The discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, California, set a pattern for such strikes that was repeated again and again for the next decade, in what collectively became known as the California Gold Rush. In what became typical, a sudden disorderly rush of prospectors descended upon a new discovery site, followed by the arrival of those who hoped to benefit from the strike by preying off the newly rich. This latter group of camp followers included saloonkeepers, prostitutes, store owners, and criminals, who all arrived in droves. If the strike was significant in size, a town of some magnitude might establish itself, and some semblance of law and order might replace the vigilante justice that typically grew in the small and short-lived mining outposts.

The original Forty-Niners were individual prospectors who sifted gold out of the dirt and gravel through "panning" or by diverting a stream through a sluice box. To varying degrees, the original California Gold Rush repeated itself throughout Colorado and Nevada for the next two decades. In 1859, Henry T. P. Comstock, a Canadian-born fur trapper, began gold mining in Nevada with other prospectors but then quickly found a blue-colored vein that proved to be the first significant silver discovery in the United States. Within twenty years, the Comstock Lode, as it was called, yielded more than \$300 million in shafts that reached hundreds of feet into the mountain. Subsequent mining in Arizona and Montana yielded copper, and, while it lacked the glamour of gold, these deposits created huge wealth for those who exploited them, particularly with the advent of copper wiring for the delivery of electricity and telegraph communication.





(a)



(b)

*The first gold prospectors in the 1850s and 1860s worked with easily portable tools that allowed anyone to follow their dream and strike it rich (a). It didn't take long for the most accessible minerals to be stripped, making way for large mining operations, including hydraulic mining, where high-pressure water jets removed sediment and rocks (b).*

By the 1860s and 1870s, however, individual efforts to locate precious metals were less successful. The lowest-hanging fruit had been picked, and now it required investment capital and machinery to dig mine shafts that could reach remaining ore. With a much larger investment, miners needed a larger strike to be successful. This shift led to larger businesses underwriting mining operations, which eventually led to the development of greater urban stability and infrastructure. Denver, Colorado, was one of several cities that became permanent settlements, as businesses sought a stable environment to use as a base for their mining ventures.

For miners who had not yet struck it rich, this development was not a good one. They were now paid a daily or weekly wage to work underground in very dangerous conditions. They worked in shafts where the temperature could rise to above one hundred degrees Fahrenheit, and where poor ventilation might lead to long-term lung disease. They coped with shaft fires, dynamite explosions, and frequent cave-ins. By some historical accounts, close to eight thousand miners died on the frontier during this period, with over three times that number suffering crippling injuries. Some miners organized into unions and led strikes for better conditions, but these efforts were usually crushed by state militias.



Eventually, as the ore dried up, most mining towns turned into ghost towns. Even today, a visit through the American West shows old saloons and storefronts, abandoned as the residents moved on to their next shot at riches. The true lasting impact of the early mining efforts was the resulting desire of the U.S. government to bring law and order to the “Wild West” in order to more efficiently extract natural resources and encourage stable growth in the region. As more Americans moved to the region to seek permanent settlement, as opposed to brief speculative ventures, they also sought the safety and support that government order could bring. Nevada was admitted to the Union as a state in 1864, with Colorado following in 1876, then North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington in 1889; and Idaho and Wyoming in 1890.

## THE CATTLE KINGDOM

While the cattle industry lacked the romance of the Gold Rush, the role it played in western expansion should not be underestimated. For centuries, wild cattle roamed the Spanish borderlands. At the end of the Civil War, as many as five million longhorn steers could be found along the Texas frontier, yet few settlers had capitalized on the opportunity to claim them, due to the difficulty of transporting them to eastern markets. The completion of the first transcontinental railroad and subsequent railroad lines changed the game dramatically. Cattle ranchers and eastern businessmen realized that it was profitable to round up the wild steers and transport them by rail to be sold in the East for as much as thirty to fifty dollars per head. These ranchers and businessmen began the rampant speculation in the cattle industry that made, and lost, many fortunes.

So began the impressive cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s. The famous Chisholm Trail provided a quick path from Texas to railroad terminals in Abilene, Wichita, and Dodge City, Kansas, where



cowboys would receive their pay. These “cowtowns,” as they became known, quickly grew to accommodate the needs of cowboys and the cattle industry. Cattlemen like Joseph G. McCoy, born in Illinois, quickly realized that the railroad offered a perfect way to get highly sought beef from Texas to the East. McCoy chose Abilene as a locale that would offer cowboys a convenient place to drive the cattle, and went about building stockyards, hotels, banks, and more to support the business. He promoted his services and encouraged cowboys to bring their cattle through Abilene for good money; soon, the city had grown into a bustling western city, complete with ways for the cowboys to spend their hard-earned pay.

Between 1865 and 1885, as many as forty thousand cowboys roamed the Great Plains, hoping to work for local ranchers. They were all men, typically in their twenties, and close to one-third of them were Hispanic or African American. It is worth noting that the stereotype of the American cowboy—and indeed the cowboys themselves—borrowed much



*Cattle drives were an integral part of western expansion. Cowboys worked long hours in the saddle, driving hardy longhorns to railroad towns that could ship the meat back east.*

from the Mexicans who had long ago settled those lands. The saddles, lassos, chaps, and lariats that define cowboy culture all arose from the Mexican ranchers who had used them to great effect before the cowboys arrived.

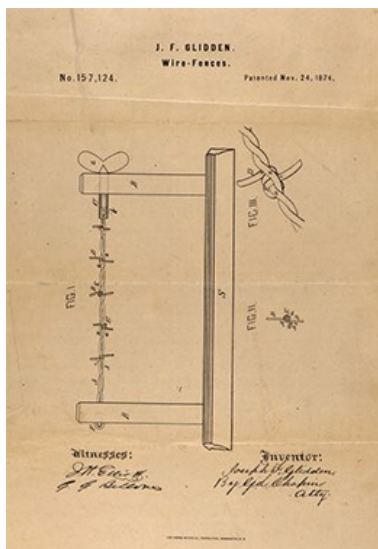
Life as a cowboy was dirty and decidedly unglamorous. The terrain was difficult; conflicts with Native Americans, especially in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), were notoriously deadly. But the longhorn cattle were hardy stock, and could survive and thrive while grazing along the long trail, so cowboys braved the trip for the promise of steady employment and satisfying wages. Eventually,



however, the era of the free range ended. Ranchers developed the land, limiting grazing opportunities along the trail, and in 1873, the new technology of barbed wire allowed ranchers to fence off their lands and cattle claims. With the end of the free range, the cattle industry, like the mining industry before it, grew increasingly dominated by eastern businessmen. Capital investors from the East expanded rail lines and invested in ranches, ending the reign of the cattle drives.

## Barbed Wire and a Way of Life Gone

Called the “devil’s rope” by Indians, barbed wire had a profound impact on the American West. Before its invention, settlers and ranchers alike were stymied by a lack of building materials to fence off land. Communal grazing and long cattle drives were the norm. But with the invention of barbed wire, large cattle ranchers and their investors were able to cheaply and easily parcel off the land they wanted—whether or not it was legally theirs to contain. As with many other inventions, several people “invented” barbed wire around the same time. In 1873, it was Joseph Glidden, however, who claimed the winning design and patented it. Not only did it spell the end of the free range for settlers and cowboys, it kept more land



Joseph Glidden's invention of barbed wire in 1873 made him rich, changing the face of the American West forever. (credit: modification of work by the U.S. Department of Commerce)



away from Indian tribes, who had never envisioned a culture that would claim to own land.

In the early twentieth century, songwriter Cole Porter would take a poem by a Montana poet named Bob Fletcher and convert it into a cowboy song called, “Don’t Fence Me In.” As the lyrics below show, the song gave voice to the feeling that, as the fences multiplied, the ethos of the West was forever changed:

Oh, give me land, lots of land, under starry skies above  
Don’t fence me in  
Let me ride thru the wide-open country that I love  
Don’t fence me in . . .  
Just turn me loose  
Let me straddle my old saddle underneath the western skies  
On my cayuse  
Let me wander over yonder till I see the mountains rise  
I want to ride to the ridge where the west commences  
Gaze at the moon until I lose my senses  
I can’t look at hobbles and I can’t stand fences  
Don’t fence me in.

## **VIOLENCE IN THE WILD WEST: MYTH AND REALITY**

The popular image of the Wild West portrayed in books, television, and film has been one of violence and mayhem. The lure of quick riches through mining or driving cattle meant that much of the West did indeed consist of rough men living a rough life, although the violence was exaggerated and even glorified in the dime store novels of the day. The exploits of Wyatt Earp, Doc Holiday, and others made for good stories, but the reality was that western violence was more isolated than the stories might suggest. These clashes often occurred as people struggled for the scarce resources



that could make or break their chance at riches, or as they dealt with the sudden wealth or poverty that prospecting provided.

Where sporadic violence did erupt, it was concentrated largely in mining towns or during range wars among large and small cattle ranchers. Some mining towns were indeed as rough as the popular stereotype. Men, money, liquor, and disappointment were a recipe for violence. Fights were frequent, deaths were commonplace, and frontier justice reigned. The notorious mining town of Bodie, California, had twenty-nine



*The towns that sprouted up around gold strikes existed first and foremost as places for the men who struck it rich to spend their money. Stores, saloons, and brothels were among the first businesses to arrive. The combination of lawlessness, vice, and money often made for a dangerous mix.*

murders between 1877 and 1883, which translated to a murder rate higher than any other city at that time, and only one person was ever convicted of a crime. The most prolific gunman of the day was John Wesley Hardin, who allegedly killed over twenty men in Texas in various gunfights, including one victim he killed in a hotel for snoring too loudly.

Ranching brought with it its own dangers and violence. In the Texas cattle lands, owners of large ranches took advantage of their wealth and the new invention of barbed wire to claim the prime grazing lands and few significant watering holes for their herds. Those seeking only to move their few head of cattle to market grew increasingly frustrated at their inability to find even a blade of grass for their meager herds. Eventually, frustration turned to violence, as several ranchers resorted to vandalizing the barbed wire fences to gain access to grass and water for their steers. Such vandalism quickly led to cattle rustling, as these cowboys were not averse to leading a few of the rancher's steers into their own herds as they left.



One example of the violence that bubbled up was the infamous Fence Cutting War in Clay County, Texas (1883–1884). There, cowboys began destroying fences that several ranchers erected along public lands: land they had no right to enclose. Confrontations between the cowboys and armed guards hired by the ranchers resulted in three deaths—hardly a “war,” but enough of a problem to get the governor’s attention. Eventually, a special session of the Texas legislature addressed the problem by passing laws to outlaw fence cutting and force ranchers to remove fences illegally erected along public lands, as well as to place gates for passage where public areas adjoined private lands.

An even more violent confrontation occurred between large ranchers and small farmers in Johnson County, Wyoming, where cattle ranchers organized a “lynching bee” in 1891–1892 to make examples of cattle rustlers. Hiring twenty-two “invaders” from Texas to serve as hired guns, the ranch owners and their foremen hunted and subsequently killed the two rustlers best known for organizing the owners of the smaller Wyoming farms. Only the intervention of federal troops, who arrested and then later released the invaders, allowing them to return to Texas, prevented a greater massacre.

While there is much talk—both real and mythical—of the rough men who lived this life, relatively few women experienced it. While homesteaders were often families, gold speculators and cowboys tended to be single men in pursuit of fortune. The few women who went to these wild outposts were typically prostitutes, and even their numbers were limited. In 1860, in the Comstock Lode region of Nevada, for example, there were reportedly only thirty women total in a town of twenty-five hundred men. Some of the “painted ladies” who began as prostitutes eventually owned brothels and emerged as businesswomen in their own right; however, life for these young women remained a challenging one as western settlement progressed. A handful of women, numbering no more than six hundred, braved both the elements and male-dominated culture to become teachers in several of the more established cities



in the West. Even fewer arrived to support husbands or operate stores in these mining towns.

As wealthy men brought their families west, the lawless landscape began to change slowly. Abilene, Kansas, is one example of a lawless town, replete with prostitutes, gambling, and other vices, transformed when middle-class women arrived in the 1880s with their cattle baron husbands. These women began to organize churches, school, civic clubs, and other community programs to promote family values. They fought to remove opportunities for prostitution and all the other vices that they felt threatened the values that they held dear. Protestant missionaries eventually joined the women in their efforts, and, while they were not widely successful, they did bring greater attention to the problems. As a response, the U.S. Congress passed both the Comstock Law (named after its chief proponent, anti-obscenity crusader Anthony Comstock) in 1873 to ban the spread of “lewd and lascivious literature” through the mail and the subsequent Page Act of 1875 to prohibit the transportation of women into the United States for employment as prostitutes. However, the “houses of ill repute” continued to operate and remained popular throughout the West despite the efforts of reformers.

Take a look at the [National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum](#) to determine whether this site’s portrayal of cowboy culture matches or contradicts the history shared in this chapter.



## Section Summary

While homesteading was the backbone of western expansion, mining and cattle also played significant roles in shaping the West. Much rougher in character and riskier in outcomes than farming, these two opportunities brought forward a different breed of settler than the homesteaders. Many of the long-trail cattle riders were Mexican American or African American, and most of the men involved in both pursuits were individuals willing to risk what little they had in order to strike it rich.

In both the mining and cattle industries, however, individual opportunities slowly died out, as resources—both land for grazing and easily accessed precious metals—disappeared. In their place came big business, with the infrastructure and investments to make a profit. These businesses built up small towns into thriving cities, and the influx of middle-class families sought to drive out some of the violence and vice that characterized the western towns. Slowly but inexorably, the “American” way of life, as envisioned by the eastern establishment who initiated and promoted the concept of Manifest Destiny, was spreading west.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1007>



## *Review Question*

1. How did mining and cattle ranching transform individual “get rich quick” efforts into “big business” efforts when the nineteenth century came to a close?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. In the cases of both mining and cattle ranching, diminishing resources played a key role. In mining, the first prospectors were able to pan for gold with crude and inexpensive materials, and therefore, almost anyone could head west and try his luck. Similarly, the quantity of cattle and the amount of grazing land meant that cowboys and would-be cattle barons had ample room to spread out. But as the easiest minerals were stripped away and large-scale ranchers purchased, developed, and fenced off grazing land, opportunities diminished. It took significantly more resources to tunnel down into a mine than it did to pan for gold; instead of individual prospectors, companies would assess a site’s potential and then seek investment to hire workers and drill deep into the earth. Likewise, as the cattle trails were over-grazed, ranchers needed to purchase and privatize large swaths of land to prepare their cattle for market.



## *Glossary*

**California Gold Rush** the period between 1848 and 1849 when prospectors found large strikes of gold in California, leading others to rush in and follow suit; this period led to a cycle of boom and bust through the area, as gold was discovered, mined, and stripped

**Comstock Lode** the first significant silver find in the country, discovered by Henry T. P. Comstock in 1859 in Nevada

**Fence Cutting War** this armed conflict between cowboys moving cattle along the trail and ranchers who wished to keep the best grazing lands for themselves occurred in Clay County, Texas, between 1883 and 1884







PART V

# WESTWARD EXPANSION READER







## 30. Primary Source Images: Conquering the West

### Introduction

Native Americans long dominated the vastness of the American West. Indigenous Americans had lived in North America for over ten millennia and, into the late-nineteenth century, perhaps as many as 250,000 natives still inhabited the American West. But then unending waves of American settlers, the American military, and the unstoppable onrush of American capital conquered all. The United States removed native groups to ever-shrinking reservations, incorporated the West first as territories and then as states, and, for the first time in its history, controlled the enormity of land between the two oceans. The history of the late-nineteenth-century West is many-sided. Tragedy for some, triumph for others, the many intertwined histories of the American West marked a pivotal transformation in the history of the United States. The following sources explore the long American “conquest” of the West.



## Tom Torlino, 1882 to 1885



Tom Torlino  
in 1882 and  
1885. Source:  
Carlisle  
Indian  
School  
Digital  
Resource  
Center.

Tom Torlino, a member of the Navajo Nation, entered the Carlisle Indian School, a Native American boarding school founded by the United States government in 1879, on October 21, 1882 and departed on August 28, 1886. Torlino's student file contained photographs from 1882 and 1885.

## Frances Densmore and Mountain Chief



Mountain  
Chief is  
interviewed  
by Frances  
Desmore. So  
urce: Library  
of Congress.



American anthropologist and ethnographer Frances Densmore records the Blackfoot chief Mountain Chief in 1916 for the Bureau of American Ethnology.



## 31. Primary Source: Chief Joseph on Indian Affairs (1877, 1879)

*A branch of the Nez Percé tribe, from the Pacific Northwest, refused to be moved to a reservation and attempted to flee to Canada but were pursued by the U.S. Cavalry, attacked, and forced to return. The following is a transcript of Chief Joseph's surrender, as recorded by Lieutenant Wood, Twenty-first Infantry, acting aide-de-camp and acting adjutant-general to General Oliver O. Howard, in 1877.*

I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Too-hul-hul-sote is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led on the young men is dead. It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food; no one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.

*In 1879, Chief Joseph was invited to Washington D.C. He made the following report.*

I am glad I came [to Washington D.C.]. I have shaken hands with a good many friends, but there are some things I want to know which no one seems able to explain. I cannot understand how the Government sends a man out to fight us, as it did General Miles, and then breaks his word. Such a government has something wrong about it. I cannot understand why so many chiefs are allowed to talk so many different ways, and promise so many different things. I have seen the Great Father Chief [President Hayes]; the Next Great Chief [Secretary of the Interior]; the Commissioner Chief [Commissioner



of Indian Affairs]; the Law Chief [General Butler]; and many other law chiefs [Congressmen] and they all say they are my friends, and that I shall have justice, but while all their mouths talk right I do not understand why nothing is done for my people. I have heard talk and talk but nothing is done. Good words do not last long unless they amount to something. Words do not pay for my dead people. They do not pay for my country now overrun by white men. They do not protect my father's grave. They do not pay for my horses and cattle. Good words do not give me back my children. Good words will not make good the promise of your war chief, General Miles. Good words will not give my people a home where they can live in peace and take care of themselves. I am tired of talk that comes to nothing. It makes my heart sick when I remember all the good words and all the broken promises. There has been too much talking by men who had no right to talk. Too many misinterpretations have been made; too many misunderstandings have come up between the white men and the Indians. If the white man wants to live in peace with the Indian he can live in peace. There need be no trouble. Treat all men alike. Give them the same laws. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers. The earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it. You might as well expect all rivers to run backward as that any man who was born a free man should be contented penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases. If you tie a horse to a stake, do you expect he will grow fat? If you pen an Indian up on a small spot of earth and compel him to stay there, he will not be contented nor will he grow and prosper. I have asked some of the Great White Chiefs where they get their authority to say to the Indian that he shall stay in one place, while he sees white men going where they please. They cannot tell me.

...

When I think of our condition, my heart is heavy. I see men of my own race treated as outlaws and driven from country to country, or shot down like animals.

I know that my race must change. We cannot hold our own with



the white men as we are. We only ask an even chance to live as other men live. We ask to be recognized as men. We ask that the same law shall work alike on all men. If an Indian breaks the law, punish him by the law. If a white man breaks the law, punish him also.

Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to talk, think and act for myself — and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty.

Whenever the white man treats the Indian as they treat each other then we shall have no more wars. We shall be all alike — brothers of one father and mother, with one sky above us and one country around us and one government for all. Then the Great Spirit Chief who rules above will smile upon this land and send rain to wash out the bloody spots made by brothers' hands upon the face of the earth. For this time the Indian race is waiting and praying. I hope no more groans of wounded men and women will ever go to the ear of the Great Spirit Chief above, and that all people may be one people.

In-mut-too-yah-lat-lat has spoken for his people.

*Sources: Report of the Secretary Of War, Being Part Of The Message And Documents Communicated To The Two Houses Of Congress, Beginning Of The Second Session Of The Forty-Fifth Congress. Volume I (Washington: Government Printing Office 1877), 630; Joseph, "An Indian's View of Indian Affairs," The North American Review.*



## 32. Primary Source: Chester A. Arthur on American Indian Policy (1881)

*The following is extracted from President Chester A. Arthur's First Annual Message to Congress, delivered December 6, 1881.*

Prominent among the matters which challenge the attention of Congress at its present session is the management of our Indian affairs. While this question has been a cause of trouble and embarrassment from the infancy of the Government, it is but recently that any effort has been made for its solution at once serious, determined, consistent, and promising success.

It has been easier to resort to convenient makeshifts for tiding over temporary difficulties than to grapple with the great permanent problem, and accordingly the easier course has almost invariably been pursued.

It was natural, at a time when the national territory seemed almost illimitable and contained many millions of acres far outside the bounds of civilized settlements, that a policy should have been initiated which more than aught else has been the fruitful source of our Indian complications.

I refer, of course, to the policy of dealing with the various Indian tribes as separate nationalities, of relegating them by treaty stipulations to the occupancy of immense reservations in the West, and of encouraging them to live a savage life, undisturbed by any earnest and well-directed efforts to bring them under the influences of civilization.

The unsatisfactory results which have sprung from this policy are becoming apparent to all.

As the white settlements have crowded the borders of the reservations, the Indians, sometimes contentedly and sometimes



against their will, have been transferred to other hunting grounds, from which they have again been dislodged whenever their new-found homes have been desired by the adventurous settlers.

These removals and the frontier collisions by which they have often been preceded have led to frequent and disastrous conflicts between the races.

It is profitless to discuss here which of them has been chiefly responsible for the disturbances whose recital occupies so large a space upon the pages of our history.

We have to deal with the appalling fact that though thousands of lives have been sacrificed and hundreds of millions of dollars expended in the attempt to solve the Indian problem, it has until within the past few years seemed scarcely nearer a solution than it was half a century ago. But the Government has of late been cautiously but steadily feeling its way to the adoption of a policy which has already produced gratifying results, and which, in my judgment, is likely, if Congress and the Executive accord in its support, to relieve us ere long from the difficulties which have hitherto beset us.

For the success of the efforts now making to introduce among the Indians the customs and pursuits of civilized life and gradually to absorb them into the mass of our citizens, sharing their rights and holden to their responsibilities, there is imperative need for legislative action.

My suggestions in that regard will be chiefly such as have been already called to the attention of Congress and have received to some extent its consideration.

First. I recommend the passage of an act making the laws of the various States and Territories applicable to the Indian reservations within their borders and extending the laws of the State of Arkansas to the portion of the Indian Territory not occupied by the Five Civilized Tribes.

The Indian should receive the protection of the law. He should be allowed to maintain in court his rights of person and property. He



has repeatedly begged for this privilege. Its exercise would be very valuable to him in his progress toward civilization.

Second. Of even greater importance is a measure which has been frequently recommended by my predecessors in office, and in furtherance of which several bills have been from time to time introduced in both Houses of Congress. The enactment of a general law permitting the allotment in severalty, to such Indians, at least, as desire it, of a reasonable quantity of land secured to them by patent, and for their own protection made inalienable for twenty or twenty-five years, is demanded for their present welfare and their permanent advancement.

In return for such considerate action on the part of the Government, there is reason to believe that the Indians in large numbers would be persuaded to sever their tribal relations and to engage at once in agricultural pursuits. Many of them realize the fact that their hunting days are over and that it is now for their best interests to conform their manner of life to the new order of things. By no greater inducement than the assurance of permanent title to the soil can they be led to engage in the occupation of tilling it.

The well-attested reports of their increasing interest in husbandry justify the hope and belief that the enactment of such a statute as I recommend would be at once attended with gratifying results. A resort to the allotment system would have a direct and powerful influence in dissolving the tribal bond, which is so prominent a feature of savage life, and which tends so strongly to perpetuate it.

Third. I advise a liberal appropriation for the support of Indian schools, because of my confident belief that such a course is consistent with the wisest economy. ... They are doubtless much more potent for good than the day schools upon the reservation, as the pupils are altogether separated from the surroundings of savage life, and brought into constant contact with civilization.

Source: Benjamin Perley Poore, editor, *Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1881).







### 33. Primary Source: William T. Hornady on the Extermination of the American Bison (1889)

*William T. Hornady, Superintendent of the National Zoological Park, wrote a detailed account of the near-extinction of the American bison in the late-nineteenth century.*

Of all the quadrupeds that have lived upon the earth, probably no other species has ever marshaled such innumerable hosts as those of the American bison. It would have been as easy to count or to estimate the number of leaves in a forest as to calculate the number of buffaloes living at any given time during the history of the species previous to 1870. Even in South Central Africa, which has always been exceedingly prolific in great herds of game, it is probable that all its quadrupeds taken together on an equal area would never have more than equaled the total number of buffalo in this country forty years ago.

...

Between the Rocky Mountains and the States lying along the Mississippi River on the west, from Minnesota to Louisiana, the whole country was one vast buffalo range, inhabited by millions of buffaloes. One could fill a volume with the records of plainsmen and pioneers who penetrated or crossed that vast region between 1800 and 1870, and were in turn surprised, astounded, and frequently dismayed by the tens of thousands of buffaloes they observed, avoided, or escaped from. They lived and moved as no other quadrupeds ever have, in great multitudes, like grand armies in review, covering scores of square miles at once. They were so numerous they frequently stopped boats in the rivers, threatened



to overwhelm travelers on the plains, and in later years derailed locomotives and cars, until railway engineers learned by experience the wisdom of stopping their trains whenever there were buffaloes crossing the track. ...

...

No wonder that the men of the West of those days, both white and red, thought it would be impossible to exterminate such a mighty multitude. The Indians of some tribes believed that the buffaloes issued from the earth continually, and that the supply was necessarily inexhaustible. And yet, in four short years the southern herd was almost totally annihilated.

...

It will be doubly deplorable if the remorseless slaughter we have witnessed during the last twenty years carries with it no lessons for the future. A continuation of the record we have lately made as wholesome game butchers will justify posterity in dating us back with the mound-builders and cave-dwellers, when man's only known function was to slay and eat.

The primary cause of the buffalo's extermination, and the one which embraced all others, was the descent of civilization, with all its elements of destructiveness, upon the whole of the country inhabited by that animal. From the Great Slave Lake to the Rio Grande the home of the buffalo was everywhere overrun by the man with a gun; and, as has ever been the case, the wild creatures were gradually swept away, the largest and most conspicuous forms being the first to go.

The secondary causes of the extermination of the buffalo may be catalogued as follows:

(1) Man's reckless greed, his wanton destructiveness, and improvidence in not husbanding such resources as come to him from the hand of nature ready made.

(2) The total and utterly inexcusable absence of protective measures and agencies on the part of the National Government and of the Western States and Territories.

(3) The fatal preference on the part of hunters generally, both



white and red, for the robe and flesh of the cow over that furnished by the bull.

(4) The phenomenal stupidity of the animals themselves, and their indifference to man.

(5) The perfection of modern breech-loading rifles and other sporting fire-arms in general.

Each of these causes acted against the buffalo with its full force, to offset which there was *not even one* restraining or preserving influence, and it is not to be wondered at that the species went down before them. Had any one of these conditions been eliminated the result would have been reached far less quickly. Had the buffalo, for example, possessed one-half the fighting qualities of the grizzly bear he would have fared very differently, but his inoffensiveness and lack of courage almost leads one to doubt the wisdom of the economy of nature so far as it relates to him.

...

The buffalo supplied the Indian with food, clothing, shelter, bedding, saddles, ropes, shields, and innumerable smaller articles of use and ornament. In the United States a paternal government takes the place of the buffalo in supplying all these wants of the red man, and it costs several millions of dollars annually to accomplish the task.

...

The Indians of what was once the buffalo country are not starving and freezing, for the reason that the United States Government supplies them regularly with beef and blankets in lieu of buffalo. Does any one imagine that the Government could not have regulated the killing of buffaloes, and thus maintained the supply, for far less money than it now costs to feed and clothe those 54,758 Indians?

...

There is reason to fear that unless the United States Government takes the matter in hand and makes a special effort to prevent it, the pure-blood bison will be lost irretrievably....



*Source: Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1889).*



## 34. Primary Source: Frederick Jackson Turner, “Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893)

*Perhaps the most influential essay by an American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner’s address to the American Historical Association on “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” defined for many Americans the relationship between the frontier and American culture and contemplated what might follow “the closing of the frontier.”*

In a recent bulletin of the Superintendent of the Census for 1890 appear these significant words: “Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports.” This brief official statement marks the closing of a great historic movement. Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.

Behind institutions, behind constitutional forms and modifications, lie the vital forces that call these organs into life and shape them to meet changing conditions. The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people—to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive



economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life. Said Calhoun in 1817, “We are great, and rapidly—I was about to say fearfully—growing!” So saying, he touched the distinguishing feature of American life. All peoples show development; the germ theory of politics has been sufficiently emphasized. In the case of most nations, however, the development has occurred in a limited area; and if the nation has expanded, it has met other growing peoples whom it has conquered. But in the case of the United States we have a different phenomenon. Limiting our attention to the Atlantic coast, we have the familiar phenomenon of the evolution of institutions in a limited area, such as the rise of representative government; the differentiation of simple colonial governments into complex organs; the progress from primitive industrial society, without division of labor, up to manufacturing civilization. But we have in addition to this a recurrence of the process of evolution in each western area reached in the process of expansion. Thus American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West. ...

In this advance, the frontier is the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization. Much has been written about the frontier from the point of view of border warfare and the chase, but as a field for the serious study of the economist and the historian it has been neglected.

...

From the conditions of frontier life came intellectual traits of profound importance. The works of travelers along each frontier from colonial days onward describe certain common traits, and



these traits have, while softening down, still persisted as survivals in the place of their origin, even when a higher social organization succeeded. The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has even been forced upon them. He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise. But never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves. For a moment, at the frontier, the bonds of custom are broken and unrestraint is triumphant. There is not *tabula rasa*. The stubborn American environment is there with its imperious summons to accept its conditions; the inherited ways of doing things are also there; and yet, in spite of environment, and in spite of custom, each frontier did indeed furnish a new field of opportunity, a gate of escape from the bondage of the past; and freshness, and confidence, and scorn of older society, impatience of its restraints and its ideas, and indifference to its lessons, have accompanied the frontier. What the Mediterranean Sea was to the Greeks, breaking the bond of custom, offering new experiences, calling out new institutions and activities, that, and more, the ever retreating frontier has been to the United States directly, and to the nations of Europe more remotely. And now, four centuries from the discovery



of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history.

Source: Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 1919.



PART VI

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND  
THE RISE OF BIG BUSINESS,  
1870-1900







## 35. Introduction



*The Electrical Building, constructed in 1892 for the World's Columbian Exposition, included displays from General Electric and Westinghouse, and introduced the American public to alternating current and neon lights. The Chicago World's Fair, as the universal exposition was more commonly known, featured architecture, inventions, and design, serving as both a showcase for and an influence on the country's optimism about the Industrial Age.*

“The electric age was ushered into being in this last decade of the nineteenth century today when President Cleveland, by pressing a button, started the mighty machinery, rushing waters and revolving wheels in the World's Columbian exhibition.” With this announcement about the official start of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, the *Salt Lake City Herald* captured the excitement and optimism of the machine age. “In the previous expositions,” the editorial continued, “the possibilities of electricity had been limited to the mere starting of the engines in the machinery hall, but in this it made thousands of servants do its bidding . . . the magic of electricity did the duty of the hour.”



The fair, which commemorated the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's journey to America, was a potent symbol of the myriad inventions that changed American life and contributed to the significant economic growth of the era, as well as the new wave of industrialization that swept the country. While businessmen capitalized upon such technological innovations, the new industrial working class faced enormous challenges. Ironically, as the World's Fair welcomed its first visitors, the nation was spiraling downward into the worst depression of the century. Subsequent frustrations among working-class Americans laid the groundwork for the country's first significant labor movement.

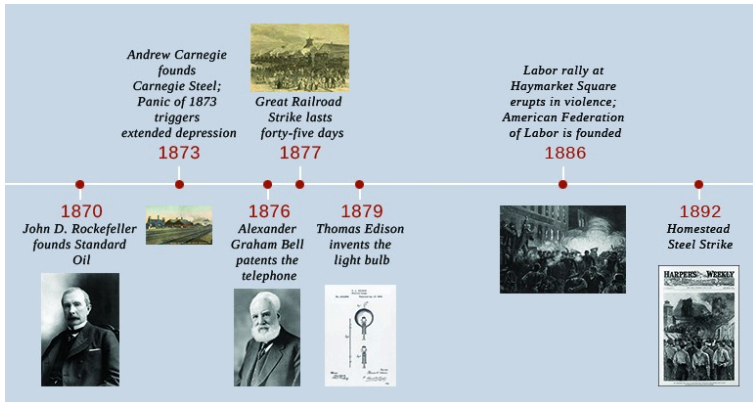


## 36. Inventors of the Age

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how the ideas and products of late nineteenth-century inventors contributed to the rise of big business
- Explain how the inventions of the late nineteenth century changed everyday American life



The late nineteenth century was an energetic era of inventions and entrepreneurial spirit. Building upon the mid-century Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, as well as answering the increasing call from Americans for efficiency and comfort, the country found itself in the grip of invention fever, with more people working on their big



ideas than ever before. In retrospect, harnessing the power of steam and then electricity in the nineteenth century vastly increased the power of man and machine, thus making other advances possible as the century progressed.

Facing an increasingly complex everyday life, Americans sought the means by which to cope with it. Inventions often provided the answers, even as the inventors themselves remained largely unaware of the life-changing nature of their ideas. To understand the scope of this zeal for creation, consider the U.S. Patent Office, which, in 1790—its first decade of existence—recorded only 276 inventions. By 1860, the office had issued a total of 60,000 patents. But between 1860 and 1890, that number exploded to nearly 450,000, with another 235,000 in the last decade of the century. While many of these patents came to naught, some inventions became lynchpins in the rise of big business and the country's move towards an industrial-based economy, in which the desire for efficiency, comfort, and abundance could be more fully realized by most Americans.

## AN EXPLOSION OF INVENTIVE ENERGY

From corrugated rollers that could crack hard, homestead-grown wheat into flour to refrigerated train cars and garment-sewing machines, new inventions fueled industrial growth around the country. As late as 1880, fully one-half of all Americans still lived and worked on farms, whereas fewer than one in seven—mostly men, except for long-established textile factories in which female employees tended to dominate—were employed in factories. However, the development of commercial electricity by the close of the century, to complement the steam engines that already existed in many larger factories, permitted more industries to concentrate



in cities, away from the previously essential water power. In turn, newly arrived immigrants sought employment in new urban factories. Immigration, urbanization, and industrialization coincided to transform the face of American society from primarily rural to significantly urban. From 1880 to 1920, the number of industrial workers in the nation quadrupled from 2.5 million to over 10 million, while over the same period urban populations doubled, to reach one-half of the country's total population.



In offices, worker productivity benefited from the typewriter, invented in 1867, the cash register, invented in 1879, and the adding machine, invented in 1885. These tools made it easier than ever to keep up with the rapid pace of business growth. Inventions also slowly transformed home life. The vacuum cleaner arrived during this era, as well as the flush toilet. These indoor “water closets” improved public health through the reduction in contamination associated with outhouses and their proximity to water supplies and homes. Tin cans and, later, Clarence Birdseye’s experiments with frozen food, eventually changed how women shopped for, and prepared, food for their families, despite initial health concerns over preserved foods. With the advent of more easily prepared food, women gained valuable time in their daily schedules, a step that partially laid the groundwork for the modern women’s movement. Women who had the means to purchase such items could use

their time to seek other employment outside of the home, as well as broaden their knowledge through education and reading. Such a



*Advertisements of the late nineteenth century promoted the higher quality and lower prices that people could expect from new inventions. Here, a knitting factory promotes the fact that its machines make seamless hose, while still acknowledging the traditional role of women in the garment industry, from grandmothers who used to sew by hand to young women who now used machines.*



transformation did not occur overnight, as these inventions also increased expectations for women to remain tied to the home and their domestic chores; slowly, the culture of domesticity changed.

Perhaps the most important industrial advancement of the era came in the production of steel. Manufacturers and builders preferred steel to iron, due to its increased strength and durability. After the Civil War, two new processes allowed for the creation of furnaces large enough and hot enough to melt the wrought iron needed to produce large quantities of steel at increasingly cheaper prices. The Bessemer process, named for English inventor Henry Bessemer, and the open-hearth process, changed the way the United States produced steel and, in doing so, led the country into a new industrialized age. As the new material became more available, builders eagerly sought it out, a demand that steel mill owners were happy to supply.

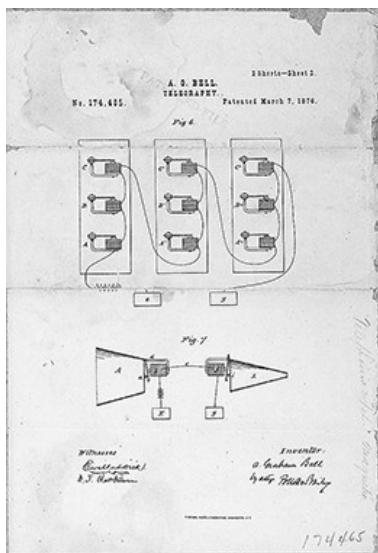
In 1860, the country produced thirteen thousand tons of steel. By 1879, American furnaces were producing over one million tons per year; by 1900, this figure had risen to ten million. Just ten years later, the United States was the top steel producer in the world, at over twenty-four million tons annually. As production increased to match the overwhelming demand, the price of steel dropped by over 80 percent. When quality steel became cheaper and more readily available, other industries relied upon it more heavily as a key to their growth and development, including construction and, later, the automotive industry. As a result, the steel industry rapidly became the cornerstone of the American economy, remaining the primary indicator of industrial growth and stability through the end of World War II.



# ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL AND THE TELEPHONE

Advancements in communications matched the pace of growth seen in industry and home life. Communication technologies were changing quickly, and they brought with them new ways for information to travel. In 1858, British and American crews laid the first transatlantic cable lines, enabling messages to pass between the United States and Europe in a matter of hours, rather than waiting the few weeks it could take for a letter to arrive by steamship. Although these initial cables worked for barely a month, they generated great interest in developing a more efficient telecommunications industry. Within twenty years, over 100,000 miles of cable crisscrossed the ocean floors, connecting all the continents. Domestically, Western Union, which controlled 80 percent of the country's telegraph lines, operated nearly 200,000 miles of telegraph routes from coast to coast. In short, people were connected like never before, able to relay messages in minutes and hours rather than days and weeks.

One of the greatest advancements was the telephone, which Alexander Graham Bell patented in 1876. While he was not the first



Alexander Graham Bell's patent of the telephone was one of almost 700,000 U.S. patents issued between 1850 and 1900. Although the patent itself was only six pages long, including two pages of illustrations, it proved to be one of the most contested and profitable of the nineteenth century. (credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)



to invent the concept, Bell was the first one to capitalize on it; after securing the patent, he worked with financiers and businessmen to create the National Bell Telephone Company. Western Union, which had originally turned down Bell's machine, went on to commission Thomas Edison to invent an improved version of the telephone. It is actually Edison's version that is most like the modern telephone used today. However, Western Union, fearing a costly legal battle they were likely to lose due to Bell's patent, ultimately sold Edison's idea to the Bell Company. With the communications industry now largely in their control, along with an agreement from the federal government to permit such control, the Bell Company was transformed into the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, which still exists today as AT&T. By 1880, fifty thousand telephones were in use in the United States, including one at the White House. By 1900, that number had increased to 1.35 million, and hundreds of American cities had obtained local service for their citizens. Quickly and inexorably, technology was bringing the country into closer contact, changing forever the rural isolation that had defined America since its beginnings.

Visit the [Library of Congress](#) to examine the controversy over the invention of the telephone. While Alexander Graham Bell is credited with the invention, several other inventors played a role in its development; however, Bell was the first to patent the device.



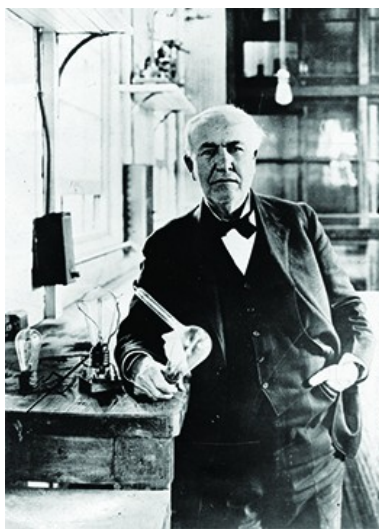
# THOMAS EDISON AND ELECTRIC LIGHTING

Although Thomas Alva Edison is best known for his contributions to the electrical industry, his experimentation went far beyond the light bulb. Edison was quite possibly the greatest inventor of the turn of the century, saying famously that he “hoped to have a minor invention every ten days and a big thing every month or so.” He registered 1,093 patents over his lifetime and ran a world-famous laboratory, Menlo Park, which housed a rotating group of up to twenty-five scientists from around the globe.

Edison became interested in the telegraph industry as a boy, when he worked aboard trains selling candy and newspapers. He soon began tinkering with

telegraph technology and, by 1876, had devoted himself full time to lab work as an inventor. He then proceeded to invent a string of items that are still used today: the phonograph, the mimeograph machine, the motion picture projector, the dictaphone, and the storage battery, all using a factory-oriented assembly line process that made the rapid production of inventions possible.

In 1879, Edison invented the item that has led to his greatest fame: the incandescent light bulb. He allegedly explored over six thousand different materials for the filament, before stumbling upon tungsten



*Thomas Alva Edison was the quintessential inventor of the era, with a passion for new ideas and over one thousand patents to his name. Seen here with his incandescent light bulb, which he invented in 1879, Edison produced many inventions that subsequently transformed the country and the world.*



as the ideal substance. By 1882, with financial backing largely from financier J. P. Morgan, he had created the Edison Electric Illuminating Company, which began supplying electrical current to a small number of customers in New York City. Morgan guided subsequent mergers of Edison's other enterprises, including a machine works firm and a lamp company, resulting in the creation of the Edison General Electric Company in 1889.

The next stage of invention in electric power came about with the contribution of George Westinghouse. Westinghouse was responsible for making electric lighting possible on a national scale. While Edison used "direct current" or DC power, which could only extend two miles from the power source, in 1886, Westinghouse invented "alternating current" or AC power, which allowed for delivery over greater distances due to its wavelike patterns. The Westinghouse Electric Company delivered AC power, which meant that factories, homes, and farms—in short, anything that needed power—could be served, regardless of their proximity to the power source. A public relations battle ensued between the Westinghouse and Edison camps, coinciding with the invention of the electric chair as a form of prisoner execution. Edison publicly proclaimed AC power to be best adapted for use in the chair, in the hope that such a smear campaign would result in homeowners becoming reluctant to use AC power in their houses. Although Edison originally fought the use of AC power in other devices, he reluctantly adapted to it as its popularity increased.

Not all of Edison's ventures were successful. Read about [Edison's Folly](#) to learn the story behind his greatest failure. Was there some benefit to his efforts? Or was it wasted time and money?



## Section Summary

Inventors in the late nineteenth century flooded the market with new technological advances. Encouraged by Great Britain's Industrial Revolution, and eager for economic development in the wake of the Civil War, business investors sought the latest ideas upon which they could capitalize, both to transform the nation as well as to make a personal profit. These inventions were a key piece of the massive shift towards industrialization that followed. For both families and businesses, these inventions eventually represented a fundamental change in their way of life. Although the technology spread slowly, it did spread across the country. Whether it was a company that could now produce ten times more products with new factories, or a household that could communicate with distant relations, the old way of doing things was disappearing.

Communication technologies, electric power production, and steel production were perhaps the three most significant developments of the time. While the first two affected both personal lives and business development, the latter influenced business growth first and foremost, as the ability to produce large steel elements efficiently and cost-effectively led to permanent changes in the direction of industrial growth.



### *Review Question*

1. How did the burst of new inventions during this era fuel the process of urbanization?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. New inventions fueled industrial growth, and the development of commercial electricity—along with the use of steam engines—allowed industries that had previously situated themselves close to sources of water power to shift away from those areas and move their production into cities. Immigrants sought employment in these urban factories and settled nearby, transforming the country's population from mostly rural to largely urban.



## 37. From Invention to Industrial Growth

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how the inventions of the late nineteenth century contributed directly to industrial growth in America
- Identify the contributions of Andrew Carnegie, John Rockefeller, and J. P. Morgan to the new industrial order emerging in the late nineteenth century
- Describe the visions, philosophies, and business methods of the leaders of the new industrial order

As discussed previously, new processes in steel refining, along with inventions in the fields of communications and electricity, transformed the business landscape of the nineteenth century. The exploitation of these new technologies provided opportunities for tremendous growth, and business entrepreneurs with financial backing and the right mix of business acumen and ambition could make their fortunes. Some of these new millionaires were known in their day as robber barons, a negative term that connoted the belief that they exploited workers and bent laws to succeed. Regardless of how they were perceived, these businessmen and the companies they created revolutionized American industry.



## RAILROADS AND ROBBER BARONS

Earlier in the nineteenth century, the first transcontinental railroad and subsequent spur lines paved the way for rapid and explosive railway growth, as well as stimulated growth in the iron, wood, coal, and other related industries. The railroad industry quickly became the nation's first "big business." A powerful, inexpensive, and consistent form of transportation, railroads accelerated the development of virtually every other industry in the country. By 1890, railroad lines covered nearly every corner of the United States, bringing raw materials to industrial factories and finished goods to consumer markets. The amount of track grew from 35,000 miles at the end of the Civil War to over 200,000 miles by the close of the century. Inventions such as car couplers, air brakes, and Pullman passenger cars allowed the volume of both freight and people to increase steadily. From 1877 to 1890, both the amount of goods and the number of passengers traveling the rails tripled.

Financing for all of this growth came through a combination of private capital and government loans and grants. Federal and state loans of cash and land grants totaled \$150 million and 185 million acres of public land, respectively. Railroads also listed their stocks and bonds on the New York Stock Exchange to attract investors from both within the United States and Europe. Individual investors consolidated their power as railroads merged and companies grew in size and power. These individuals became some of the wealthiest Americans the country had ever known. Midwest farmers, angry at large railroad owners for their exploitative business practices, came to refer to them as "robber barons," as their business dealings were frequently shady and exploitative. Among their highly questionable tactics was the practice of differential shipping rates, in which larger business enterprises received discounted rates to transport their goods, as opposed to local producers and farmers whose higher rates essentially subsidized the discounts.

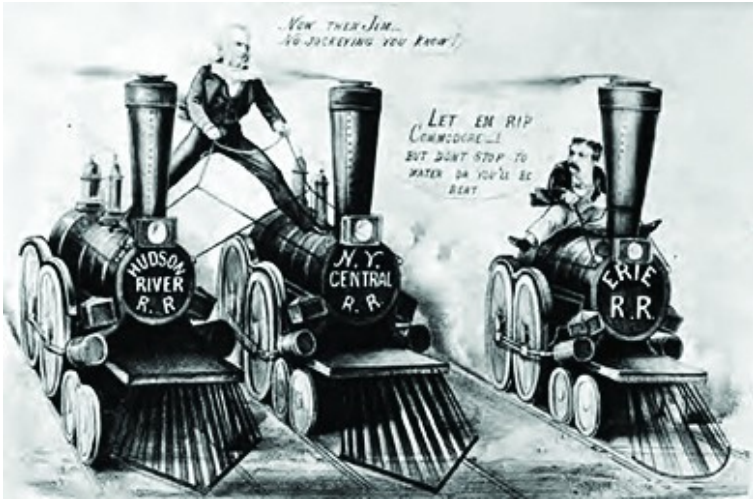
Jay Gould was perhaps the first prominent railroad magnate to



be tarred with the “robber baron” brush. He bought older, smaller, rundown railroads, offered minimal improvements, and then capitalized on factory owners’ desires to ship their goods on this increasingly popular and more cost-efficient form of transportation. His work with the Erie Railroad was notorious among other investors, as he drove the company to near ruin in a failed attempt to attract foreign investors during a takeover attempt. His model worked better in the American West, where the railroads were still widely scattered across the country, forcing farmers and businesses to pay whatever prices Gould demanded in order to use his trains. In addition to owning the Union Pacific Railroad that helped to construct the original transcontinental railroad line, Gould came to control over ten thousand miles of track across the United States, accounting for 15 percent of all railroad transportation. When he died in 1892, Gould had a personal worth of over \$100 million, although he was a deeply unpopular figure.

In contrast to Gould’s exploitative business model, which focused on financial profit more than on tangible industrial contributions, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt was a “robber baron” who truly cared about the success of his railroad enterprise and its positive impact on the American economy. Vanderbilt consolidated several smaller railroad lines, called trunk lines, to create the powerful New York Central Railroad Company, one of the largest corporations in the United States at the time. He later purchased stock in the major rail lines that would connect his company to Chicago, thus expanding his reach and power while simultaneously creating a railroad network to connect Chicago to New York City. This consolidation provided more efficient connections from Midwestern suppliers to eastern markets. It was through such consolidation that, by 1900, seven major railroad tycoons controlled over 70 percent of all operating lines. Vanderbilt’s personal wealth at his death (over \$100 million in 1877), placed him among the top three wealthiest individuals in American history.





"The Great Race for the Western Stakes," a Currier & Ives lithograph from 1870, depicts one of Cornelius Vanderbilt's rare failed attempts at further consolidating his railroad empire, when he lost his 1866–1868 battle with James Fisk, Jay Gould, and Daniel Drew for control of the Erie Railway Company.

## GIANTS OF WEALTH: CARNEGIE, ROCKEFELLER, AND MORGAN

The post-Civil War inventors generated ideas that transformed the economy, but they were not big businessmen. The evolution from technical innovation to massive industry took place at the hands of the entrepreneurs whose business gambles paid off, making them some of the richest Americans of their day. Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, and business financier J. P. Morgan were all businessmen who grew their respective businesses to a scale and scope that were unprecedented. Their companies changed how Americans lived and worked, and they themselves greatly influenced the growth of the country.



## Andrew Carnegie and *The Gospel of Wealth*

Andrew Carnegie, steel magnate, has the prototypical rags-to-riches story. Although such stories resembled more myth than reality, they served to encourage many Americans to seek similar paths to fame and fortune. In Carnegie, the story was one of few derived from fact. Born in Scotland, Carnegie immigrated with his family to Pennsylvania in 1848. Following a brief stint as a “bobbin boy,” changing spools of thread at a Pittsburgh clothing manufacturer at age thirteen, he subsequently became a telegram messenger boy. As a messenger, he spent much of his time around the Pennsylvania Railroad office and developed parallel interests in railroads, bridge building, and, eventually, the steel industry.

Ingratiating himself to his supervisor and future president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Tom Scott, Carnegie worked his way into a position of management for the company and subsequently began to invest some of his earnings, with Scott's guidance. One particular investment, in the booming oil fields of northwest Pennsylvania in 1864, resulted in Carnegie earning over \$1 million in cash dividends, thus



Andrew Carnegie made his fortune in steel at such factories as the Carnegie Steel Works located in Youngstown, Ohio, where new technologies allowed the strong metal to be used in far more applications than ever before. Carnegie's empire grew to include iron ore mines, furnaces, mills, and steel works companies.

providing him with the capital necessary to pursue his ambition to modernize the iron and steel industries, transforming the United States in the process. Having seen firsthand during the Civil War, when he served as Superintendent of Military Railways and telegraph coordinator for the Union forces, the importance of industry, particularly steel, to the future growth of the country, Carnegie was convinced of his strategy. His first company was the J.



Edgar Thompson Steel Works, and, a decade later, he bought out the newly built Homestead Steel Works from the Pittsburgh Bessemer Steel Company. By the end of the century, his enterprise was running an annual profit in excess of \$40 million.

Although not a scientific expert in steel, Carnegie was an excellent promoter and salesman, able to locate financial backing for his enterprise. He was also shrewd in his calculations on consolidation and expansion, and was able to capitalize on smart business decisions. Always thrifty with the profits he earned, a trait owed to his upbringing, Carnegie saved his profits during prosperous times and used them to buy out other steel companies at low prices during the economic recessions of the 1870s and 1890s. He insisted on up-to-date machinery and equipment, and urged the men who worked at and managed his steel mills to constantly think of innovative ways to increase production and reduce cost.

Carnegie, more than any other businessman of the era, championed the idea that America's leading tycoons owed a debt to society. He believed that, given the circumstances of their successes, they should serve as benefactors to the less fortunate public. For Carnegie, poverty was not an abstract concept, as his family had been a part of the struggling masses. He desired to set an example of philanthropy for all other prominent industrialists of the era to follow. Carnegie's famous essay, *The Gospel of Wealth*, featured below, expounded on his beliefs. In it, he borrowed from Herbert Spencer's theory of social Darwinism, which held that society developed much like plant or animal life through a process of evolution in which the most fit and capable enjoyed the greatest material and social success.

## Andrew Carnegie on Wealth

Carnegie applauded American capitalism for creating a society where, through hard work, ingenuity, and a bit of luck, someone



like himself could amass a fortune. In return for that opportunity, Carnegie wrote that the wealthy should find proper uses for their wealth by funding hospitals, libraries, colleges, the arts, and more. *The Gospel of Wealth* spelled out that responsibility.

Poor and restricted are our opportunities in this life; narrow our horizon; our best work most imperfect; but rich men should be thankful for one inestimable boon. They have it in their power during their lives to busy themselves in organizing benefactions from which the masses of their fellows will derive lasting advantage, and thus dignify their own lives. . . .

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of Wealth: First, to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community—the man of wealth thus becoming the mere agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves. . . .

In bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to use the aids by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all. Neither the individual nor the race is improved by alms-giving. Those worthy of assistance, except in rare cases, seldom require assistance. The really valuable men of the race never do, except in cases of accident or sudden change. Every one has, of course, cases of individuals brought to his own knowledge



where temporary assistance can do genuine good, and these he will not overlook. But the amount which can be wisely given by the individual for individuals is necessarily limited by his lack of knowledge of the circumstances connected with each. He is the only true reformer who is as careful and as anxious not to aid the unworthy as he is to aid the worthy, and, perhaps, even more so, for in alms-giving more injury is probably done by rewarding vice than by relieving virtue.

—Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth*

Social Darwinism added a layer of pseudoscience to the idea of the self-made man, a desirable thought for all who sought to follow Carnegie's example. The myth of the rags-to-riches businessman was a potent one. Author Horatio Alger made his own fortune writing stories about young enterprising boys who beat poverty and succeeded in business through a combination of "luck and pluck." His stories were immensely popular, even leading to a board game where players could hope to win in the same way that his heroes did.





Based on a book by Horatio Alger, *District Messenger Boy* was a board game where players could achieve the ultimate goal of material success. Alger wrote hundreds of books on a common theme: A poor but hardworking boy can get ahead and make his fortune through a combination of “luck and pluck.”



## John D. Rockefeller and Business Integration Models

Like Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller was born in 1839 of modest means, with a frequently absent traveling salesman of a father who sold medicinal elixirs and other wares. Young Rockefeller helped his mother with various chores and earned extra money for the family through the sale of family farm products. When the family moved to a suburb of Cleveland in 1853, he had an opportunity to take accounting and bookkeeping courses while in high school and developed a career interest in business. While living in Cleveland in 1859, he learned of Colonel Edwin Drake who had struck “black gold,” or oil, near Titusville, Pennsylvania, setting off a boom even greater than the California Gold Rush of the previous decade. Many sought to find a fortune through risky and chaotic “wildcatting,” or drilling exploratory oil wells, hoping to strike it rich. But Rockefeller chose a more certain investment: refining crude oil into kerosene, which could be used for both heating and lamps. As a more efficient source of energy, as well as less dangerous to produce, kerosene quickly replaced whale oil in many businesses and homes. Rockefeller worked initially with family and friends in the refining business located in the Cleveland area, but by 1870, Rockefeller ventured out on his own, consolidating his resources and creating the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, initially valued at \$1 million.

Rockefeller was ruthless in his pursuit of total control of the oil refining business. As other entrepreneurs flooded the area seeking a quick fortune, Rockefeller developed a plan to crush his competitors and create a true monopoly in the refining industry. Beginning in 1872, he forged agreements with several large railroad companies to obtain discounted freight rates for shipping his product. He also used the railroad companies to gather information on his competitors. As he could now deliver his kerosene at lower prices, he drove his competition out of business, often offering to buy them out for pennies on the dollar. He hounded those who refused to



sell out to him, until they were driven out of business. Through his method of growth via mergers and acquisitions of similar companies—known as horizontal integration—Standard Oil grew to include almost all refineries in the area. By 1879, the Standard Oil Company controlled nearly 95 percent of all oil refining businesses in the country, as well as 90 percent of all the refining businesses in the world. Editors of the *New York World* lamented of Standard Oil in 1880 that, “When the nineteenth century shall have passed into history, the impartial eyes of the reviewers will be amazed to find that the U.S. . . . tolerated the presence of the most gigantic, the most cruel, impudent, pitiless and grasping monopoly that ever fastened itself upon a country.”

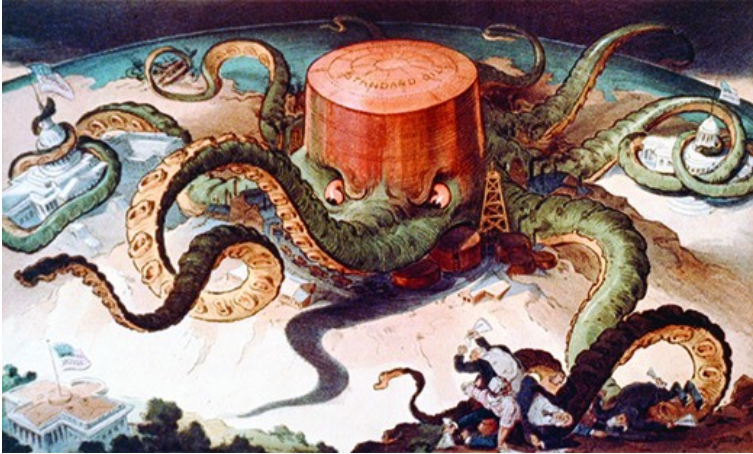
Seeking still more control, Rockefeller recognized the advantages of controlling the transportation of his product. He next began to grow his company through vertical integration, wherein a company handles all aspects of a product’s lifecycle, from the creation of raw materials through the production process to the delivery of the final product. In Rockefeller’s case, this model required investment and acquisition of companies involved in everything from barrel-making to pipelines, tanker cars to railroads. He came to own almost every type of business and used his vast power to drive competitors from the market through intense price wars. Although vilified by competitors who suffered from his takeovers and considered him to be no better than a robber baron, several observers lauded Rockefeller for his ingenuity in integrating the oil refining industry and, as a result, lowering kerosene prices by as much as 80 percent by the end of the century. Other industrialists quickly followed suit, including Gustavus Swift, who used vertical integration to dominate the U.S. meatpacking industry in the late nineteenth century.

In order to control the variety of interests he now maintained in industry, Rockefeller created a new legal entity, known as a trust. In this arrangement, a small group of trustees possess legal ownership of a business that they operate for the benefit of other investors. In 1882, all thirty-seven stockholders in the various Standard Oil enterprises gave their stock to nine trustees who were to control



and direct all of the company's business ventures. State and federal challenges arose, due to the obvious appearance of a monopoly, which implied sole ownership of all enterprises composing an entire industry. When the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the Standard Oil Company must dissolve, as its monopoly control over all refining operations in the U.S. was in violation of state and federal statutes, Rockefeller shifted to yet another legal entity, called a holding company model. The holding company model created a central corporate entity that controlled the operations of multiple companies by holding the majority of stock for each enterprise. While not technically a "trust" and therefore not vulnerable to anti-monopoly laws, this consolidation of power and wealth into one entity was on par with a monopoly; thus, progressive reformers of the late nineteenth century considered holding companies to epitomize the dangers inherent in capitalistic big business, as can be seen in the political cartoon below. Impervious to reformers' misgivings, other businessmen followed Rockefeller's example. By 1905, over three hundred business mergers had occurred in the United States, affecting more than 80 percent of all industries. By that time, despite passage of federal legislation such as the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1890, 1 percent of the country's businesses controlled over 40 percent of the nation's economy.





*John D. Rockefeller, like Carnegie, grew from modest means to a vast fortune. Unlike Carnegie, however, his business practices were often predatory and aggressive. This cartoon from the era shows how his conglomerate, Standard Oil, was perceived by progressive reformers and other critics.*

The PBS video on [Robber Barons or Industrial Giants](#) presents a lively discussion of whether the industrialists of the nineteenth century were really “robber barons” or if they were “industrial giants.”

## J. Pierpont Morgan

Unlike Carnegie and Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan was no rags-to-riches hero. He was born to wealth and became much wealthier as an investment banker, making wise financial decisions in support of the hard-working entrepreneurs building their fortunes. Morgan's father was a London banker, and Morgan the son moved to New



York in 1857 to look after the family's business interests there. Once in America, he separated from the London bank and created the J. Pierpont Morgan and Company financial firm. The firm bought and sold stock in growing companies, investing the family's wealth in those that showed great promise, turning an enormous profit as a result. Investments from firms such as his were the key to the success stories of up-and-coming businessmen like Carnegie and Rockefeller. In return for his investment, Morgan and other investment bankers demanded seats on the companies' boards, which gave them even greater control over policies and decisions than just investment alone. There were many critics of Morgan and these other bankers, particularly among members of a U.S. congressional subcommittee who investigated the control that financiers maintained over key industries in the country. The subcommittee referred to Morgan's enterprise as a form of "money trust" that was even more powerful than the trusts operated by Rockefeller and others. Morgan argued that his firm, and others like it, brought stability and organization to a hypercompetitive capitalist economy, and likened his role to a kind of public service.

Ultimately, Morgan's most notable investment, and greatest consolidation, was in the steel industry, when he bought out Andrew Carnegie in 1901. Initially, Carnegie was reluctant to sell, but after repeated badgering by Morgan, Carnegie named his price: an outrageously inflated sum of \$500 million. Morgan agreed without hesitation, and then consolidated Carnegie's holdings with several smaller steel firms to create the U.S. Steel Corporation. U.S. Steel was subsequently capitalized at \$1.4 billion. It was the country's first billion-dollar firm. Lauded by admirers for the efficiency and modernization he brought to investment banking practices, as well as for his philanthropy and support of the arts, Morgan was also criticized by reformers who subsequently blamed his (and other bankers') efforts for contributing to the artificial bubble of prosperity that eventually burst in the Great Depression of the 1930s. What none could doubt was that Morgan's financial aptitude and savvy business dealings kept him in good stead. A subsequent



U.S. congressional committee, in 1912, reported that his firm held 341 directorships in 112 corporations that controlled over \$22 billion in assets. In comparison, that amount of wealth was greater than the assessed value of all the land in the United States west of the Mississippi River.

## Section Summary

As the three tycoons profiled in this section illustrate, the end of the nineteenth century was a period in history that offered tremendous financial rewards to those who had the right combination of skill, ambition, and luck. Whether self-made millionaires like Carnegie or Rockefeller, or born to wealth like Morgan, these men were the lynchpins that turned inventors' ideas into industrial growth. Steel production, in particular, but also oil refining techniques and countless other inventions, changed how industries in the country could operate, allowing them to grow in scale and scope like never before.

It is also critical to note how these different men managed their businesses and ambition. Where Carnegie felt strongly that it was the job of the wealthy to give back in their lifetime to the greater community, his fellow tycoons did not necessarily agree. Although he contributed to many philanthropic efforts, Rockefeller's financial success was built on the backs of ruined and bankrupt companies, and he came to be



condemned by progressive reformers who questioned the impact on the working class as well as the dangers of consolidating too much power and wealth into one individual's hands. Morgan sought wealth strictly through the investment in, and subsequent purchase of, others' hard work. Along the way, the models of management they adopted—horizontal and vertical integration, trusts, holding companies, and investment brokerages—became commonplace in American businesses. Very quickly, large business enterprises fell under the control of fewer and fewer individuals and trusts. In sum, their ruthlessness, their ambition, their generosity, and their management made up the workings of America's industrial age.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1009>

### *Review Questions*

1. Why was Rockefeller's use of horizontal integration such an effective business tool at this time? Were his choices legal? Why or why not?
2. What differentiated a "robber baron" from other "captains of industry" in late nineteenth-century America?



## *Answers to Review Questions*

1. Horizontal integration enabled Rockefeller to gain tremendous control over the oil industry and use that power to influence vendors and competitors. For example, he could pressure railroads into giving him lower rates because of the volume of his products. He undercut competitors, forcing them to set their prices so low that they could barely stay in business—at which point he could buy them out. Through horizontal integration, he was able to create a virtual monopoly and set the terms for business. While his business model of a holding company was technically legal, it held as much power as a monopoly and did not allow for other businesses to grow and compete.
2. “Captains of industry” (such as Carnegie or Rockefeller) are noted for their new business models, entrepreneurial approaches, and, to varying degrees, philanthropic efforts, all of which transformed late nineteenth-century America. “Robber barons” (such as Gould) are noted for their self-centered drive for profit at the expense of workers and the general public, who seldom benefitted to any great degree. The terms, however, remain a gray area, as one could characterize the ruthless business practices of Rockefeller, or some of Carnegie’s tactics with regard to workers’ efforts to organize, as similar to the methods of robber barons. Nevertheless, “captains of industry” are noted for contributions that fundamentally changed and typically improved the



nation, whereas “robber barons” can seldom point to such concrete contributions.

## *Glossary*

**holding company** a central corporate entity that controls the operations of multiple companies by holding the majority of stock for each enterprise

**horizontal integration** method of growth wherein a company grows through mergers and acquisitions of similar companies

**monopoly** the ownership or control of all enterprises comprising an entire industry

**robber baron** a negative term for the big businessmen who made their fortunes in the massive railroad boom of the late nineteenth century

**social Darwinism** Herbert Spencer's theory, based upon Charles Darwin's scientific theory, which held that society developed much like plant or animal life through a process of evolution in which the most fit and capable enjoyed the greatest material and social success

**trust** a legal arrangement where a small group of trustees have legal ownership of a business that they operate for the benefit of other investors

**vertical integration** a method of growth where a company acquires other companies that include all aspects



of a product's lifecycle from the creation of the raw materials through the production process to the delivery of the final product



## 38. Video: The Industrial Economy

This video teaches you about the Industrial Economy that arose in the United States after the Civil War. You know how when you're studying history, and you're reading along and everything seems safely in the past, and then BOOM you think, "Man, this suddenly seems very modern." For the person in this video, that moment in US History is the post-Reconstruction expansion of industrialism in America. After the Civil War, many of the changes in technology and ideas gave rise to this new industrialism. You'll learn about the rise of Captains of Industry (or Robber Barons) like Cornelius Vanderbilt, Andrew Carnegie, John D Rockefeller, and JP Morgan. You'll learn about trusts, combinations, and how the government responded to these new business practices. All this, plus the video will cover how workers reacted to the changes in society and the early days of the labor movement. You'll learn about the Knights of Labor and Terence Powderly, and Samuel Gompers and the AFL. As a special bonus, someone gets beaten with a cane. AGAIN. What is it with American History and people getting beaten with canes?



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=59#oembed-1>



# 39. Building Industrial America on the Backs of Labor

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the qualities of industrial working-class life in the late nineteenth century
- Analyze both workers' desire for labor unions and the reasons for unions' inability to achieve their goals

The growth of the American economy in the last half of the nineteenth century presented a paradox. The standard of living for many American workers increased. As Carnegie said in *The Gospel of Wealth*, “the poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford. What were the luxuries have become the necessities of life. The laborer has now more comforts than the landlord had a few generations ago.” In many ways, Carnegie was correct. The decline in prices and the cost of living meant that the industrial era offered many Americans relatively better lives in 1900 than they had only decades before. For some Americans, there were also increased opportunities for upward mobility. For the multitudes in the working class, however, conditions in the factories and at home remained deplorable. The difficulties they faced led many workers to question an industrial order in which a handful of wealthy Americans built their fortunes on the backs of workers.



## WORKING-CLASS LIFE

Between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the century, the American workforce underwent a transformative shift. In 1865, nearly 60 percent of Americans still lived and worked on farms; by the early 1900s, that number had reversed itself, and only 40 percent still lived in rural areas, with the remainder living and working in urban and early suburban areas. A significant number of these urban and suburban dwellers earned their wages in factories. Advances in farm machinery allowed for greater production with less manual labor, thus leading many Americans to seek job opportunities in the burgeoning factories in the cities. Not surprisingly, there was a concurrent trend of a decrease in American workers being self-employed and an increase of those working for others and being dependent on a factory wage system for their living.

Yet factory wages were, for the most part, very low. In 1900, the average factory wage was approximately twenty cents per hour, for an annual salary of barely six hundred dollars. According to some historical estimates, that wage left approximately 20 percent of the population in industrialized cities at, or below, the poverty level. An average factory workweek was sixty hours, ten hours per day, six days per week, although, in steel mills, the workers put in twelve hours per day, seven days a week. Factory owners had little concern for workers' safety. According to one of the few available accurate measures, as late as 1913, nearly 25,000 Americans lost their lives on the job, while another 700,000 workers suffered injuries that resulted in at least one missed month of work. Another element of hardship for workers was the increasingly dehumanizing nature of their work. Factory workers executed repetitive tasks throughout the long hours of their shifts, seldom interacting with coworkers or supervisors. This solitary and repetitive work style was a difficult adjustment for those used to more collaborative and skill-based work, whether on farms or in crafts shops. Managers embraced



Fredrick Taylor's principles of scientific management, also called "stop-watch management," where he used stop-watch studies to divide manufacturing tasks into short, repetitive segments. A mechanical engineer by training, Taylor encouraged factory owners to seek efficiency and profitability over any benefits of personal interaction. Owners adopted this model, effectively making workers cogs in a well-oiled machine.

One result of the new breakdown of work processes was that factory owners were able to hire women and children to perform many of the tasks. From 1870 through 1900, the number of women working outside the home tripled. By the end of this period, five million American women were wage earners, with one-quarter of them working factory jobs. Most were young, under twenty-five, and either immigrants themselves or the daughters of immigrants. Their foray into the working world was not seen as a step towards empowerment or equality, but rather a hardship born of financial necessity. Women's factory work tended to be in clothing or textile factories, where their appearance was less offensive to men who felt that heavy industry was their purview. Other women in the workforce worked in clerical positions as bookkeepers and secretaries, and as salesclerks. Not surprisingly, women were paid less than men, under the pretense that they should be under the care of a man and did not require a living wage.

Factory owners used the same rationale for the exceedingly low wages they paid to children. Children were small enough to fit easily among the machines and could be hired for simple work for a fraction of an adult man's pay. The image below shows children working the night shift in a glass factory. From 1870 through 1900, child labor in factories tripled. Growing concerns among progressive reformers over the safety of women and children in the workplace would eventually result in the development of political lobby groups. Several states passed legislative efforts to ensure a safe workplace, and the lobby groups pressured Congress to pass protective legislation. However, such legislation would not be forthcoming until well into the twentieth century. In the meantime,



many working-class immigrants still desired the additional wages that child and women labor produced, regardless of the harsh working conditions.



*A photographer took this image of children working in a New York glass factory at midnight. There, as in countless other factories around the country, children worked around the clock in difficult and dangerous conditions.*

## WORKER PROTESTS AND VIOLENCE

Workers were well aware of the vast discrepancy between their lives and the wealth of the factory owners. Lacking the assets and legal protection needed to organize, and deeply frustrated, some working communities erupted in spontaneous violence. The coal mines of eastern Pennsylvania and the railroad yards of western Pennsylvania, central to both respective industries and home to large, immigrant, working enclaves, saw the brunt of these outbursts. The combination of violence, along with several other factors, blunted any significant efforts to organize workers until well into the twentieth century.



Business owners viewed organization efforts with great mistrust, capitalizing upon widespread anti-union sentiment among the general public to crush unions through open shops, the use of strikebreakers, yellow-dog contracts (in which the employee agrees to not join a union as a pre-condition of employment), and other means. Workers also faced obstacles to organization associated with race and ethnicity, as questions arose on how to address the increasing number of low-paid African American workers, in addition to the language and cultural barriers introduced by the large wave of southeastern European immigration to the United States. But in large part, the greatest obstacle to effective unionization was the general public's continued belief in a strong work ethic and that an individual work ethic—not organizing into radical collectives—would reap its own rewards. As violence erupted, such events seemed only to confirm widespread popular sentiment that radical, un-American elements were behind all union efforts.

In the 1870s, Irish coal miners in eastern Pennsylvania formed a secret organization known as the Molly Maguires, named for the famous Irish patriot. Through a series of scare tactics that included kidnappings, beatings, and even murder, the Molly Maguires sought to bring attention to the miners' plight, as well as to cause enough damage and concern to the mine owners that the owners would pay attention to their concerns. Owners paid attention, but not in the way that the protesters had hoped. They hired detectives to pose as miners and mingle among the workers to obtain the names of the Molly Maguires. By 1875, they had acquired the names of twenty-four suspected Maguires, who were subsequently convicted of murder and violence against property. All were convicted and ten were hanged in 1876, at a public "Day of the Rope." This harsh reprisal quickly crushed the remaining Molly Maguires movement. The only substantial gain the workers had from this episode was the knowledge that, lacking labor organization, sporadic violent protest would be met by escalated violence.

Public opinion was not sympathetic towards labor's violent



methods as displayed by the Molly Maguires. But the public was further shocked by some of the harsh practices employed by government agents to crush the labor movement, as seen the following year in the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. After incurring a significant pay cut earlier that year, railroad workers in West Virginia spontaneously went on strike and blocked the tracks. As word spread of the event, railroad workers across the country joined in sympathy, leaving their jobs and committing acts of vandalism to show their frustration with the ownership. Local citizens, who in many instances were relatives and friends, were largely sympathetic to the railroad workers' demands.

The most significant violent outbreak of the railroad strike occurred in Pittsburgh, beginning on July 19. The governor ordered militiamen from Philadelphia to the Pittsburgh roundhouse to protect railroad property. The militia opened fire to disperse the angry crowd and killed twenty individuals while wounding another twenty-



*This engraving of the "Blockade of Engines at Martinsburg, West Virginia" appeared on the front cover of Harper's Weekly on August 11, 1877, while the Great Railroad Strike was still underway.*

nine. A riot erupted, resulting in twenty-four hours of looting, violence, fire, and mayhem, and did not die down until the rioters wore out in the hot summer weather. In a subsequent skirmish with strikers while trying to escape the roundhouse, militiamen killed another twenty individuals. Violence erupted in Maryland and Illinois as well, and President Hayes eventually sent federal troops into major cities to restore order. This move, along with the impending return of cooler weather that brought with it the need for food and fuel, resulted in striking workers nationwide returning to the railroad. The strike had lasted for forty-five days, and they had gained nothing but a reputation for violence and aggression



that left the public less sympathetic than ever. Dissatisfied laborers began to realize that there would be no substantial improvement in their quality of life until they found a way to better organize themselves.

## **WORKER ORGANIZATION AND THE STRUGGLES OF UNIONS**

Prior to the Civil War, there were limited efforts to create an organized labor movement on any large scale. With the majority of workers in the country working independently in rural settings, the idea of organized labor was not largely understood. But, as economic conditions changed, people became more aware of the inequities facing factory wage workers. By the early 1880s, even farmers began to fully recognize the strength of unity behind a common cause.

### **Models of Organizing: The Knights of Labor and American Federation of Labor**

In 1866, seventy-seven delegates representing a variety of different occupations met in Baltimore to form the National Labor Union (NLU). The NLU had ambitious ideas about equal rights for African Americans and women, currency reform, and a legally mandated eight-hour workday. The organization was successful in convincing Congress to adopt the eight-hour workday for federal employees, but their reach did not progress much further. The Panic of 1873 and the economic recession that followed as a result of overspeculation on railroads and the subsequent closing of several banks—during which workers actively sought any employment regardless of the



conditions or wages—as well as the death of the NLU's founder, led to a decline in their efforts.

A combination of factors contributed to the debilitating Panic of 1873, which triggered what the public referred to at the time as the “Great Depression” of the 1870s. Most notably, the railroad boom that had occurred from 1840 to 1870 was rapidly coming to a close. Overinvestment in the industry had extended many investors' capital resources in the form of railroad bonds. However, when several economic developments in Europe affected the value of silver in America, which in turn led to a de facto gold standard that shrunk the U.S. monetary supply, the amount of cash capital available for railroad investments rapidly declined. Several large business enterprises were left holding their wealth in all but worthless railroad bonds. When Jay Cooke & Company, a leader in the American banking industry, declared bankruptcy on the eve of their plans to finance the construction of a new transcontinental railroad, the panic truly began. A chain reaction of bank failures culminated with the New York Stock Exchange suspending all trading for ten days at the end of September 1873. Within a year, over one hundred railroad enterprises had failed; within two years, nearly twenty thousand businesses had failed. The loss of jobs and wages sent workers throughout the United States seeking solutions and clamoring for scapegoats.

Although the NLU proved to be the wrong effort at the wrong time, in the wake of the Panic of 1873 and the subsequent frustration exhibited in the failed Molly Maguires uprising and the national railroad strike, another, more significant, labor organization emerged. The Knights of Labor (KOL) was more able to attract a sympathetic following than the Molly Maguires and others by widening its base and appealing to more members. Philadelphia tailor Uriah Stephens grew the KOL from a small presence during the Panic of 1873 to an organization of national importance by 1878. That was the year the KOL held their first general assembly, where they adopted a broad reform platform, including a renewed call for an eight-hour workday, equal pay regardless of gender, the

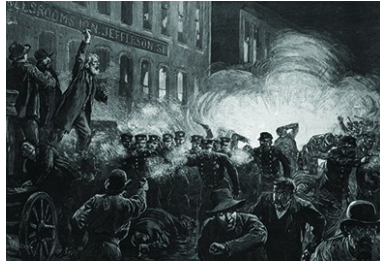


elimination of convict labor, and the creation of greater cooperative enterprises with worker ownership of businesses. Much of the KOL's strength came from its concept of "One Big Union"—the idea that it welcomed all wage workers, regardless of occupation, with the exception of doctors, lawyers, and bankers. It welcomed women, African Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants, of all trades and skill levels. This was a notable break from the earlier tradition of craft unions, which were highly specialized and limited to a particular group. In 1879, a new leader, Terence V. Powderly, joined the organization, and he gained even more followers due to his marketing and promotional efforts. Although largely opposed to strikes as effective tactics, through their sheer size, the Knights claimed victories in several railroad strikes in 1884–1885, including one against notorious "robber baron" Jay Gould, and their popularity consequently rose among workers. By 1886, the KOL had a membership in excess of 700,000.

In one night, however, the KOL's popularity—and indeed the momentum of the labor movement as a whole—plummeted due to an event known as the Haymarket affair, which occurred on May 4, 1886, in Chicago's Haymarket Square. There, an anarchist group had gathered in response to a death at an earlier nationwide demonstration for the eight-hour workday. At the earlier demonstration, clashes between police and strikers at the International Harvester Company of Chicago led to the death of a striking worker. The anarchist group decided to hold a protest the following night in Haymarket Square, and, although the protest was quiet, the police arrived armed for conflict. Someone in the crowd threw a bomb at the police, killing one officer and injuring another. The seven anarchists speaking at the protest were arrested and charged with murder. They were sentenced to death, though two were later pardoned and one committed suicide in prison before his execution.



The press immediately blamed the KOL as well as Powderly for the Haymarket affair, despite the fact that neither the organization nor Powderly had anything to do with the demonstration. Combined with the American public's lukewarm reception to organized labor as a whole, the damage was done. The KOL saw its membership decline to barely 100,000 by the end of 1886. Nonetheless, during its brief success, the Knights illustrated the potential for success with their model of "industrial unionism," which welcomed workers from all trades.



*The Haymarket affair, as it was known, began as a rally for the eight-hour workday. But when police broke it up, someone threw a bomb into the crowd, causing mayhem. The organizers of the rally, although not responsible, were sentenced to death. The affair and subsequent hangings struck a harsh blow against organized labor.*

## The Haymarket Rally

On May 1, 1886, recognized internationally as a day for labor celebration, labor organizations around the country engaged in a national rally for the eight-hour workday. While the number of striking workers varied around the country, estimates are that between 300,000 and 500,000 workers protested in New York, Detroit, Chicago, and beyond. In Chicago, clashes between police and protesters led the police to fire into the crowd, resulting in fatalities. Afterward, angry at the deaths of the striking workers, organizers quickly organized a "mass meeting," per the poster below.





*This poster invited workers to a meeting denouncing the violence at the labor rally earlier in the week. Note that the invitation is written in both English and German, evidence of the large role that the immigrant population played in the labor movement.*

While the meeting was intended to be peaceful, a large police presence made itself known, prompting one of the event organizers to state in his speech, “There seems to prevail the opinion in some quarters that this meeting has been called for the purpose of inaugurating a riot, hence these warlike preparations on the part of so-called ‘law and order.’ However, let me tell you at the beginning that this meeting has not been called for any such purpose. The object of this meeting is to explain the general situation of the



eight-hour movement and to throw light upon various incidents in connection with it.” The mayor of Chicago later corroborated accounts of the meeting, noted that it was a peaceful rally, but as it was winding down, the police marched into the crowd, demanding they disperse. Someone in the crowd threw a bomb, killing one policeman immediately and wounding many others, some of whom died later. Despite the aggressive actions of the police, public opinion was strongly against the striking laborers. The *New York Times*, after the events played out, reported on it with the headline “Rioting and Bloodshed in the Streets of Chicago: Police Mowed Down with Dynamite.” Other papers echoed the tone and often exaggerated the chaos, undermining organized labor’s efforts and leading to the ultimate conviction and hanging of the rally organizers. Labor activists considered those hanged after the Haymarket affair to be martyrs for the cause and created an informal memorial at their gravesides in Park Forest, Illinois.

This article about the [“Rioting and Bloodshed in the Streets of Chicago”](#) reveals how the *New York Times* reported on the Haymarket affair. Assess whether the article gives evidence of the information it lays out. Consider how it portrays the events, and how different, more sympathetic coverage might have changed the response of the general public towards immigrant workers and labor unions.

During the effort to establish industrial unionism in the form of the KOL, craft unions had continued to operate. In 1886, twenty different craft unions met to organize a national federation of autonomous craft unions. This group became the American Federation of Labor (AFL), led by Samuel Gompers from its inception until his death in 1924. More so than any of its predecessors, the AFL focused almost all of its efforts on economic



gains for its members, seldom straying into political issues other than those that had a direct impact upon working conditions. The AFL also kept a strict policy of not interfering in each union's individual business. Rather, Gompers often settled disputes between unions, using the AFL to represent all unions of matters of federal legislation that could affect all workers, such as the eight-hour workday.

By 1900, the AFL had 500,000 members; by 1914, its numbers had risen to one million, and by 1920 they claimed four million working members. Still, as a federation of craft unions, it excluded many factory workers and thus, even at its height, represented only 15 percent of the nonfarm workers in the country. As a result, even as the country moved towards an increasingly industrial age, the majority of American workers still lacked support, protection from ownership, and access to upward mobility.

## **The Decline of Labor: The Homestead and Pullman Strikes**

While workers struggled to find the right organizational structure to support a union movement in a society that was highly critical of such worker organization, there came two final violent events at the close of the nineteenth century. These events, the Homestead Steel Strike of 1892 and the Pullman Strike of 1894, all but crushed the labor movement for the next forty years, leaving public opinion of labor strikes lower than ever and workers unprotected.

At the Homestead factory of the Carnegie Steel Company, workers represented by the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers enjoyed relatively good relations with management until Henry C. Frick became the factory manager in 1889. When the union contract was up for renewal in 1892, Carnegie—long a champion of living wages for his employees—had left for Scotland



and trusted Frick—noted for his strong anti-union stance—to manage the negotiations. When no settlement was reached by June 29, Frick ordered a lockout of the workers and hired three hundred Pinkerton detectives to protect company property. On July 6, as the Pinkertons arrived on barges on the river, union workers along the shore engaged them in a gunfight that resulted in the deaths of three Pinkertons and six workers. One week later, the Pennsylvania militia arrived to escort strike-breakers into the factory to resume production. Although the lockout continued until November, it ended with the union defeated and individual workers asking for their jobs back. A subsequent failed assassination attempt by anarchist Alexander Berkman on Frick further strengthened public animosity towards the union.

Two years later, in 1894, the Pullman Strike was another disaster for unionized labor. The crisis began in the company town of Pullman, Illinois, where Pullman “sleeper” cars were manufactured for America’s railroads. When the depression of 1893 unfolded in the wake of the failure of several northeastern railroad companies, mostly due to overconstruction and poor financing, company owner George Pullman fired three thousand of the factory’s six thousand employees, cut the remaining workers’ wages by an average of 25 percent, and then continued to charge the same high rents and prices in the company homes and store where workers were required to live and shop. Workers began the strike on May 11, when Eugene V. Debs, the president of the American Railway Union, ordered rail workers throughout the country to stop handling any trains that had Pullman cars on them. In practicality, almost all of the trains fell into this category, and, therefore, the strike created a nationwide train stoppage, right on the heels of the depression of 1893. Seeking justification for sending in federal troops, President Grover Cleveland turned to his attorney general, who came up with a solution: Attach a mail car to every train and then send in troops to ensure the delivery of the mail. The government also ordered the strike to end; when Debs refused, he was arrested and imprisoned for his interference with the delivery of U.S. mail. The image



below shows the standoff between federal troops and the workers. The troops protected the hiring of new workers, thus rendering the strike tactic largely ineffective. The strike ended abruptly on July 13, with no labor gains and much lost in the way of public opinion.



*In this photo of the Pullman Strike of 1894, the Illinois National Guard and striking workers face off in front of a railroad building.*

## George Estes on the Order of Railroad Telegraphers

The following excerpt is a reflection from George Estes, an organizer and member of the Order of Railroad Telegraphers, a labor organization at the end of the nineteenth century. His perspective on the ways that labor and management related to each other illustrates the difficulties at the heart of their negotiations. He notes that, in this era, the two groups saw each other as enemies and that any gain by one was automatically a loss by the other.



I have always noticed that things usually have to get pretty bad before they get any better. When inequities pile up so high that the burden is more than the underdog can bear, he gets his dander up and things begin to happen. It was that way with the telegraphers' problem. These exploited individuals were determined to get for themselves better working conditions—higher pay, shorter hours, less work which might not properly be classed as telegraphy, and the high and mighty Mr. Fillmore [railroad company president] was not going to stop them. It was a bitter fight. At the outset, Mr. Fillmore let it be known, by his actions and comments, that he held the telegraphers in the utmost contempt.

With the papers crammed each day with news of labor strife—and with two great labor factions at each other's throats, I am reminded of a parallel in my own early and more active career. Shortly before the turn of the century, in 1898 and 1899 to be more specific, I occupied a position with regard to a certain class of skilled labor, comparable to that held by the Lewises and Greens of today. I refer, of course, to the telegraphers and station agents. These hard-working gentlemen—servants of the public—had no regular hours, performed a multiplicity of duties, and, considering the service they rendered, were sorely and inadequately paid. A telegrapher's day included a considerable number of chores that present-day telegraphers probably never did or will do in the course of a day's work. He used to clean and fill lanterns, block lights, etc. Used to do the janitor work around the small town depot, stoke the pot-bellied stove of the waiting-room, sweep the floors, picking up papers and waiting-room litter. . . .

Today, capital and labor seem to understand each other better than they did a generation or so ago. Capital is out to make money. So is labor—and each is willing to grant the other a certain amount of tolerant leeway, just so he



doesn't go too far. In the old days there was a breach as wide as the Pacific separating capital and labor. It wasn't money altogether in those days, it was a matter of principle. Capital and labor couldn't see eye to eye on a single point. Every gain that either made was at the expense of the other, and was fought tooth and nail. No difference seemed ever possible of amicable settlement. Strikes were riots. Murder and mayhem was common. Railroad labor troubles were frequent. The railroads, in the nineties, were the country's largest employers. They were so big, so powerful, so perfectly organized themselves—I mean so in accord among themselves as to what treatment they felt like offering the man who worked for them—that it was extremely difficult for labor to gain a single advantage in the struggle for better conditions.

—George Estes, interview with Andrew Sherbert, 1938

## Section Summary

After the Civil War, as more and more people crowded into urban areas and joined the ranks of wage earners, the landscape of American labor changed. For the first time, the majority of workers were employed by others in factories and offices in the cities. Factory workers, in particular, suffered from the inequity of their positions. Owners had no legal restrictions on exploiting employees with long hours in dehumanizing and poorly paid work. Women and children were hired for the



lowest possible wages, but even men's wages were barely enough upon which to live.

Poor working conditions, combined with few substantial options for relief, led workers to frustration and sporadic acts of protest and violence, acts that rarely, if ever, gained them any lasting, positive effects. Workers realized that change would require organization, and thus began early labor unions that sought to win rights for all workers through political advocacy and owner engagement. Groups like the National Labor Union and Knights of Labor both opened their membership to any and all wage earners, male or female, black or white, regardless of skill. Their approach was a departure from the craft unions of the very early nineteenth century, which were unique to their individual industries. While these organizations gained members for a time, they both ultimately failed when public reaction to violent labor strikes turned opinion against them. The American Federation of Labor, a loose affiliation of different unions, grew in the wake of these universal organizations, although negative publicity impeded their work as well. In all, the century ended with the vast majority of American laborers unrepresented by any collective or union, leaving them vulnerable to the power wielded by factory ownership.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1010>



## *Review Question*

1. What were the core differences in the methods and agendas of the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The Knights of Labor (KOL) had a broad and open base, inviting all types of workers, including women and African Americans, into their ranks. The KOL also sought political gains for workers throughout the country, regardless of their membership. In contrast, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was a loose affiliation of separate unions, with each group remaining intact and distinct. The AFL did not advocate for national labor issues, but restricted its efforts to helping improve economic conditions for its members.

## *Glossary*

**Haymarket affair** the rally and subsequent riot in which



several policemen were killed when a bomb was thrown at a peaceful workers rights rally in Chicago in 1866

**Molly Maguires** a secret organization made up of Pennsylvania coal miners, named for the famous Irish patriot, which worked through a series of scare tactics to bring the plight of the miners to public attention

**scientific management** mechanical engineer Fredrick Taylor's management style, also called "stop-watch management," which divided manufacturing tasks into short, repetitive segments and encouraged factory owners to seek efficiency and profitability over any benefits of personal interaction



## 40. A New American Consumer Culture

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the characteristics of the new consumer culture that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century

Despite the challenges workers faced in their new roles as wage earners, the rise of industry in the United States allowed people to access and consume goods as never before. The rise of big business had turned America into a culture of consumers desperate for time-saving and leisure commodities, where people could expect to find everything they wanted in shops or by mail order. Gone were the days where the small general store was the only option for shoppers; at the end of the nineteenth century, people could take a train to the city and shop in large department stores like Macy's in New York, Gimbel's in Philadelphia, and Marshall Fields in Chicago. Chain stores, like A&P and Woolworth's, both of which opened in the 1870s, offered options to those who lived farther from major urban areas and clearly catered to classes other than the wealthy elite. Industrial advancements contributed to this proliferation, as new construction techniques permitted the building of stores with higher ceilings for larger displays, and the production of larger sheets of plate glass lent themselves to the development of larger store windows, glass countertops, and display cases where



shoppers could observe a variety of goods at a glance. L. Frank Baum, of *Wizard of Oz* fame, later founded the National Association of Window Trimmers in 1898, and began publishing *The Store Window* journal to advise businesses on space usage and promotion.

Even families in rural America had new opportunities to purchase a greater variety of products than ever before, at ever decreasing prices. Those far from chain stores could benefit from the newly developed business of mail-order catalogs, placing orders by telephone. Aaron Montgomery Ward established the first significant mail-order business in 1872, with Sears, Roebuck & Company following in 1886. Sears distributed over 300,000 catalogs annually by 1897, and later broke the one million annual mark in 1907. Sears in particular understood that farmers and rural Americans sought alternatives to the higher prices and credit purchases they were forced to endure at small-town country stores. By clearly stating the prices in his catalog, Richard Sears steadily increased his company's image of their catalog serving as "the consumer's bible." In the process, Sears, Roebuck & Company supplied much of America's hinterland with products ranging from farm supplies to bicycles, toilet paper to automobiles, as seen below in a page from the catalog.



The tremendous variety of goods available for sale required businesses to compete for customers in ways they had never before imagined. Suddenly, instead of a single option for clothing or shoes, customers were faced with dozens, whether ordered by mail, found at the local chain store, or lined up in massive rows at department stores. This new level of competition made advertising a vital component of all businesses. By 1900, American businesses were spending almost \$100 million annually on advertising. Competitors offered “new and



*This page from the Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalog illustrates how luxuries that would only belong to wealthy city dwellers were now available by mail order to those all around the country.*

improved” models as frequently as possible in order to generate interest. From toothpaste and mouthwash to books on entertaining guests, new goods were constantly offered. Newspapers accommodated the demand for advertising by shifting their production to include full-page advertisements, as opposed to the traditional column width, agate-type advertisements that dominated mid-nineteenth century newspapers (similar to classified advertisements in today’s publications). Likewise, professional advertising agencies began to emerge in the 1880s, with experts in consumer demand bidding for accounts with major firms.

It may seem strange that, at a time when wages were so low, people began buying readily; however, the slow emergence of a middle class by the end of the century, combined with the growing practice of buying on credit, presented more opportunities to take part in the new consumer culture. Stores allowed people to open



accounts and purchase on credit, thus securing business and allowing consumers to buy without ready cash. Then, as today, the risks of buying on credit led many into debt. As advertising expert Roland Marchand described in his *Parable on the Democracy of Goods*, in an era when access to products became more important than access to the means of production, Americans quickly accepted the notion that they could live a better lifestyle by purchasing the right clothes, the best hair cream, and the shiniest shoes, regardless of their class. For better or worse, American consumerism had begun.

## Advertising in the Industrial Age: Credit, Luxury, and the Advent of “New and Improved”

Before the industrial revolution, most household goods were either made at home or purchased locally, with limited choices. By the end of the nineteenth century, factors such as the population's move towards urban centers and the expansion of the railroad changed how Americans shopped for, and perceived, consumer goods. As mentioned above, advertising took off, as businesses competed for customers.

Many of the elements used widely in nineteenth-century advertisements are familiar.

Companies sought to sell luxury, safety, and, as the ad for the



This typewriter advertisement, like others of the era, tried to lure customers by offering a new model.



typewriter below shows, the allure of the new-and-improved model. One advertising tactic that truly took off in this era was the option to purchase on credit. For the first time, mail order and mass production meant that the aspiring middle class could purchase items that could only be owned previously by the wealthy. While there was a societal stigma for buying everyday goods on credit, certain items, such as fine furniture or pianos, were considered an investment in the move toward entry into the middle class.

Additionally, farmers and housewives purchased farm equipment and sewing machines on credit, considering these items investments rather than luxuries. For women, the purchase of a sewing machine meant that a shirt could be made in one hour, instead of fourteen. The Singer Sewing Machine Company was one of the most aggressive at pushing purchase on credit. They advertised widely, and their “Dollar Down, Dollar a Week” campaign made them one of the fastest-growing companies in the country.

For workers earning lower wages, these easy credit terms meant that the middle-class lifestyle was within their reach. Of course, it also meant they were in debt, and changes in wages, illness, or other unexpected expenses could wreak havoc on a household’s tenuous finances. Still, the opportunity to own new and luxurious products was one that many Americans, aspiring to improve their place in society, could not resist.

## Section Summary

While tensions between owners and workers continued to grow, and wage earners struggled with the



challenges of industrial work, the culture of American consumerism was changing. Greater choice, easier access, and improved goods at lower prices meant that even lower-income Americans, whether rural and shopping via mail order, or urban and shopping in large department stores, had more options. These increased options led to a rise in advertising, as businesses competed for customers. Furthermore, the opportunity to buy on credit meant that Americans could have their goods, even without ready cash. The result was a population that had a better standard of living than ever before, even as they went into debt or worked long factory hours to pay for it.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1011>

### *Review Question*

1. Briefly explain Roland Marchand's argument in the *Parable of the Democracy of Goods*.

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Marchand argues that in the new era of



consumerism, workers' desire for access to consumer goods replaces their desire for access to the means of production of those goods. So long as Americans could buy products that advertisers convinced them would make them look and feel wealthy, they did not need to fight for access to the means of wealth.

### *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. Consider the fact that the light bulb and the telephone were invented only three years apart. Although it took many more years for such devices to find their way into common household use, they eventually wrought major changes in a relatively brief period of time. What effects did these inventions have on the lives of those who used them? Are there contemporary analogies in your lifetime of significant changes due to inventions or technological innovations?
2. Industrialization, immigration, and urbanization all took place on an unprecedented scale during this era. What were the relationships of these processes to one another? How did each process serve to catalyze and fuel the others?
3. Describe the various attempts at labor organization in this era, from the Molly Maguires to the Knights of Labor and American Federation of Labor. How were the goals, philosophies, and tactics of these groups



similar and different? How did their agendas represent the concerns and grievances of their members and of workers more generally?

4. How did the new industrial order represent both new opportunities and new limitations for rural and working-class urban Americans?
5. How did the emergent consumer culture change what it meant to be “American” at the turn of the century?



# 4I. Assignment: The Gospel of Wealth

You just read the excerpt from Andrew Carnegie's [Gospel of Wealth](#). Now let's put it to use and see if you truly understand his basic principle. Read the following news [article about the recent minimum wage hike in Seattle](#). Then answer the following question:

- **Based on Carnegie's writing** (not your opinion on the matter), would Carnegie support or oppose the wage hike in Seattle? Why/why not?

Be sure to use specific quotes and passages from *Gospel of Wealth* in your explanation.



PART VII  
INDUSTRIALIZATION  
READER







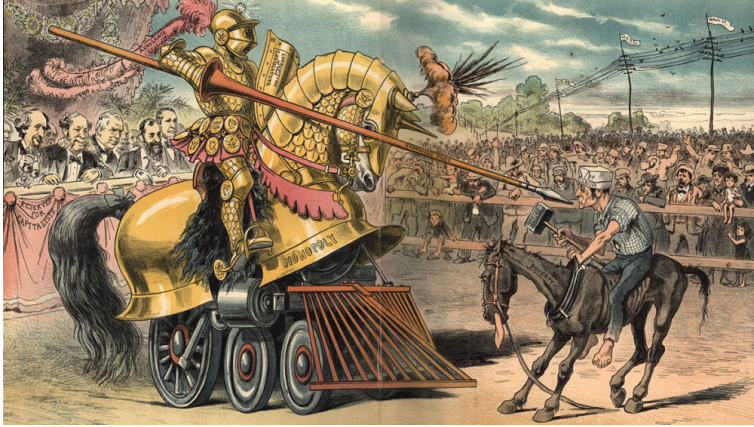
# 42. Primary Source Images: Capital and Labor

## Introduction

Industrialization remade the United States. At the turn of the twentieth century, powerful capitalists, middle class managers, and industrial and agricultural labors confronted a new world of work and labor in the United States. While many benefited from the material gains of technological progress, others found themselves trapped in cycles of poverty and hopelessness and strikes, protests, and political warfare rocked American life as workers adjusted themselves to a new industrial order. The following sources explore the mindsets of American suddenly confronted with a new world of concentrated capital and industrial labor.



## The Tournament of Today – A Set-To Between Labor and Monopoly



Friedrich Graetz, "The Tournament of Today – A Set-To Between Labor and Monopoly." August 1, 1883. Via Library of Congress (LC-DIG-ppmsca-28412).

This print shows a jousting tournament between an oversized knight riding horse-shaped armor labeled "Monopoly" over a locomotive, with a long plume labeled "Arrogance", and carrying a shield labeled "Corruption of the Legislature" and a lance labeled "Subsidized Press", and a barefoot man labeled "Labor" riding an emaciated horse labeled "Poverty", and carrying a sledgehammer labeled "Strike". On the left is seating "Reserved for Capitalists" where Cyrus W. Field, William H. Vanderbilt, John Roach, Jay Gould, and Russell Sage are sitting. On the right, behind the labor section, are telegraph lines flying monopoly banners that are labeled "Wall St., W.U.T. Co., [and] N.Y.C. RR".



## Lawrence Textile Strike (1912)



*Lawrence Textile Strike, 1912. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-23725.*

In 1912, The International Workers of the World (the IWW, or the “Wobblies”) organized textile workers in Lawrence and Lowell, Massachusetts. This photo shows strikers, carrying American flags, confronting strikebreakers and militia bayonets.



## 43. Primary Source: Henry George, Progress and Poverty, Selections (1879)

*In 1879, the economist Henry George penned a massive bestseller exploring the contradictory rise of both rapid economic growth and crippling poverty.*

This association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times. It is the central fact from which spring industrial, social, and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship and philanthropy and education grapple in vain. From it come the clouds that overhang the future of the most progressive and self-reliant nations. It is the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts to our civilization, and which not to answer is to be destroyed. So long as all the increased wealth which modern progress brings goes but to build up great fortunes, to increase luxury and make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want, progress is not real and cannot be permanent. The reaction must come. The tower leans from its foundations, and every new story but hastens the final catastrophe. To educate men who must be condemned to poverty, is but to make them restive; to base on a state of most glaring social inequality political institutions under which men are theoretically equal, is to stand a pyramid on its apex.

...

... the evils arising from the unjust and unequal distribution of wealth, which are becoming more and more apparent as modern civilization goes on, are not incidents of progress, but tendencies which must bring progress to a halt; that they will not cure themselves, but, on the contrary, must, unless their cause is removed, grow greater and greater, until they sweep us back into



barbarism by the road every previous civilization has trod. But it also shows that these evils are not imposed by natural laws; that they spring solely from social mal-adjustments which ignore natural laws, and that in removing their cause we shall be giving an enormous impetus to progress.

...

Equality of political rights will not compensate for the denial of the equal right to the bounty of nature. Political liberty, when the equal right to land is denied, becomes, as population increases and invention goes on, merely the liberty to compete for employment at starvation wages. This is the truth that we have ignored. And so there come beggars in our streets and tramps on our roads; and poverty enslaves men whom we boast are political sovereigns; and want breeds ignorance that our schools cannot enlighten; and citizens vote as their masters dictate; and the demagogue usurps the part of the statesman; and gold weighs in the scales of justice; and in high places sit those who do not pay to civic virtue even the compliment of hypocrisy; and the pillars of the republic that we thought so strong already bend under an increasing strain.

We honor Liberty in name and in form. We set up her statues and sound her praises. But we have not fully trusted her. And with our growth so grow her demands. She will have no half service!

Liberty! it is a word to conjure with, not to vex the ear in empty boastings. For Liberty means Justice, and Justice is the natural law—the law of health and symmetry and strength, of fraternity and co-operation.

They who look upon Liberty as having accomplished her mission when she has abolished hereditary privileges and given men the ballot, who think of her as having no further relations to the everyday affairs of life, have not seen her real grandeur—to them the poets who have sung of her must seem rhapsodists, and her martyrs fools! As the sun is the lord of life, as well as of light; as his beams not merely pierce the clouds, but support all growth, supply all motion, and call forth from what would otherwise be a cold and inert mass, all the infinite diversities of being and beauty, so is



liberty to mankind. It is not for an abstraction that men have toiled and died; that in every age the witnesses of Liberty have stood forth, and the martyrs of Liberty have suffered.

...

The fiat has gone forth! With steam and electricity, and the new powers born of progress, forces have entered the world that will either compel us to a higher plane or overwhelm us, as nation after nation, as civilization after civilization, have been overwhelmed before. It is the delusion which precedes destruction that sees in the popular unrest with which the civilized world is feverishly pulsing only the passing effect of ephemeral causes. Between democratic ideas and the aristocratic adjustments of society there is an irreconcilable conflict. Here in the United States, as there in Europe, it may be seen arising. We cannot go on permitting men to vote and forcing them to tramp. We cannot go on educating boys and girls in our public schools and then refusing them the right to earn an honest living. We cannot go on prating of the inalienable rights of man and then denying the inalienable right to the bounty of the Creator. Even now, in old bottles the new wine begins to ferment, and elemental forces gather for the strife!

Source: Henry George, *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth: The Remedy* (1879).



## 44. Primary Source: Andrew Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth (June 1889)

*Andrew Carnegie, the American steel titan, explains his vision for the proper role of wealth in American society.*

The problem of our age is the administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship. The conditions of human life have not only been changed, but revolutionized, within the past few hundred years. In former days there was little difference between the dwelling, dress, food, and environment of the chief and those of his retainers. . . . The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us today measures the change which has come with civilization.

This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is well, nay, essential for the progress of the race, that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that none should be so. Much better this great irregularity than universal squalor. Without wealth there can be no Maecenas. The "good old times" were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as to day. A relapse to old conditions would be disastrous to both-not the least so to him who serves-and would sweep away civilization with it. ...

...

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still, for it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train. But, whether the law be



benign or not, we must say of it, as we say of the change in the conditions of men to which we have referred: It is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment, the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race. ...

...

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of Wealth: ... becoming the mere agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.

...

The laws of accumulation should be left free; the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue. But the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor; entrusted for a season with a part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it did, or would have done, of itself. The best in minds will thus have reached a stage in the development of the race in which it is clearly seen that there is no mode of disposing of surplus wealth creditable to thoughtful and earnest men into whose hands it flows save by using it year-by-year for the general good. This day already dawns.

Source: Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," *North American Review* 148 (June, 1889), 653–665.



PART VIII

# THE GROWING PAINS OF URBANIZATION, 1870-1920







## 45. Introduction

“We saw the big woman with spikes on her head.” So begins Sadie Frowne’s first memory of arriving in the United States. Many Americans experienced in their new home what the thirteen-year-old Polish girl had seen in the silhouette of the Statue of Liberty: a wondrous world of new opportunities fraught with dangers. Sadie and her mother, for instance, had left Poland after her father’s death. Her mother died shortly thereafter, and Sadie had to find her own way in New York, working in factories and slowly assimilating to life in a vast multinational metropolis. Her story is similar to millions of others, as people came to the United States seeking a better future than the one they had at home.

The future they found, however, was often grim. While many believed in the land of opportunity, the reality of urban life in the United States was more chaotic and difficult than people expected. In addition to the challenges of language, class, race, and ethnicity, these new arrivals dealt with low wages, overcrowded buildings, poor sanitation, and widespread disease. The land of opportunity, it seemed, did not always deliver on its promises.



*For the millions of immigrants arriving by ship in New York City’s harbor, the sight of the Statue of Liberty, as in *Unveiling the Statue of Liberty* (1886) by Edward Moran, stood as a physical representation of the new freedoms and economic opportunities they hoped to find.*

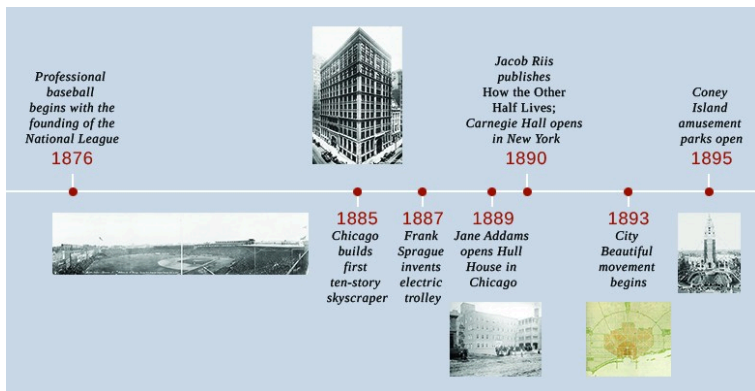


# 46. Urbanization and Its Challenges

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the growth of American cities in the late nineteenth century
- Identify the key challenges that Americans faced due to urbanization, as well as some of the possible solutions to those challenges



Urbanization occurred rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States for a number of reasons. The new technologies of the time led to a massive leap in industrialization,



requiring large numbers of workers. New electric lights and powerful machinery allowed factories to run twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Workers were forced into grueling twelve-hour shifts, requiring them to live close to the factories.

While the work was dangerous and difficult, many Americans were willing to leave behind the declining prospects of preindustrial agriculture in the hope of better wages in industrial labor. Furthermore, problems ranging from famine to religious persecution led a new wave of immigrants to arrive from central, eastern, and southern Europe, many of whom settled and found work near the cities where they first arrived. Immigrants sought solace and comfort among others who shared the same language and customs, and the nation's cities became an invaluable economic and cultural resource.

Although cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York sprang up from the initial days of colonial settlement, the explosion in urban population growth did not occur until the mid-nineteenth century. At this time, the attractions of city life, and in particular, employment opportunities, grew exponentially due to rapid changes in industrialization. Before the mid-1800s, factories, such as the early textile mills, had to be located near rivers and seaports, both for the transport of goods and the necessary water power. Production became dependent upon seasonal water flow, with cold, icy winters all but stopping river transportation entirely. The development of the steam engine transformed this need, allowing businesses to locate their factories near urban centers. These factories encouraged more and more people to move to urban areas where jobs were plentiful, but hourly wages were often low and the work was routine and grindingly monotonous.



Rural and Urban Populations in the United States, 1860–1920		
Year	Rural	Urban
1860	25,226,803	6,216,518
1870	28,656,010	9,902,361
1880	36,059,474	14,129,735
1890	40,873,501	22,106,265
1900	45,997,336	30,214,832
1910	50,164,495	42,064,001
1920	51,768,255	54,253,282
Source: Bureau of the Census		

(a)

Populations of Major Cities in the United States, 1860–1900			
City	1860	1880	1900
New York	1,174,800	1,912,000	3,437,000
Philadelphia	565,500	847,000	1,294,000
Boston	177,800	363,000	561,000
Baltimore	212,400	332,000	509,000
Cincinnati	161,000	255,000	326,000
St. Louis	160,800	350,000	575,000
Chicago	109,300	503,000	1,698,000

(b)

*As these panels illustrate, the population of the United States grew rapidly in the late 1800s (a). Much of this new growth took place in urban areas (defined by the census as twenty-five hundred people or more), and this urban population, particularly that of major cities (b), dealt with challenges and opportunities that were unknown in previous generations.*

Eventually, cities developed their own unique characters based on the core industry that spurred their growth. In Pittsburgh, it was steel; in Chicago, it was meat packing; in New York, the garment and financial industries dominated; and Detroit, by the mid-twentieth century, was defined by the automobiles it built. But all cities at this time, regardless of their industry, suffered from the universal problems that rapid expansion brought with it, including concerns over housing and living conditions, transportation, and communication. These issues were almost always rooted in deep class inequalities, shaped by racial divisions, religious differences, and ethnic strife, and distorted by corrupt local politics.

This [1884 Bureau of Labor Statistics report](#) from Boston looks in detail at the wages, living conditions, and moral code of the girls who worked in the clothing



factories there.

## THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL URBANIZATION

As the country grew, certain elements led some towns to morph into large urban centers, while others did not. The following four innovations proved critical in shaping urbanization at the turn of the century: electric lighting, communication improvements, intracity transportation, and the rise of skyscrapers. As people migrated for the new jobs, they often struggled with the absence of basic urban infrastructures, such as better transportation, adequate housing, means of communication, and efficient sources of light and energy. Even the basic necessities, such as fresh water and proper sanitation—often taken for granted in the countryside—presented a greater challenge in urban life.

### Electric Lighting

Thomas Edison patented the incandescent light bulb in 1879. This development quickly became common in homes as well as factories, transforming how even lower- and middle-class Americans lived. Although slow to arrive in rural areas of the country, electric power became readily available in cities when the first commercial power plants began to open in 1882. When Nikola Tesla subsequently developed the AC (alternating current) system for the Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company, power supplies for lights and



other factory equipment could extend for miles from the power source. AC power transformed the use of electricity, allowing urban centers to physically cover greater areas. In the factories, electric lights permitted operations to run twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This increase in production required additional workers, and this demand brought more people to cities.

Gradually, cities began to illuminate the streets with electric lamps to allow the city to remain alight throughout the night. No longer did the pace of life and economic activity slow substantially at sunset, the way it had in smaller towns. The cities, following the factories that drew people there, stayed open all the time.

## Communications Improvements

The telephone, patented in 1876, greatly transformed communication both regionally and nationally. The telephone rapidly supplanted the telegraph as the preferred form of communication; by 1900, over 1.5 million telephones were in use around the nation, whether as private lines in the homes of some middle- and upper-class Americans, or jointly used “party lines” in many rural areas. By allowing instant communication over larger distances at any given time, growing telephone networks made urban sprawl possible.

In the same way that electric lights spurred greater factory production and economic growth, the telephone increased business through the more rapid pace of demand. Now, orders could come constantly via telephone, rather than via mail-order. More orders generated greater production, which in turn required still more workers. This demand for additional labor played a key role in urban growth, as expanding companies sought workers to handle the increasing consumer demand for their products.



## Intracity Transportation

As cities grew and sprawled outward, a major challenge was efficient travel within the city—from home to factories or shops, and then back again. Most transportation infrastructure was used to connect cities to each other, typically by rail or canal. Prior to the 1880s, the most common form of transportation within cities was the omnibus. This was a large, horse-drawn carriage, often placed on iron or steel tracks to provide a smoother ride. While omnibuses worked adequately in smaller, less congested cities, they were not equipped to handle the larger crowds that developed at the close of the century. The horses had to stop and rest, and horse manure became an ongoing problem.

In 1887, Frank Sprague invented the electric trolley, which worked along the same concept as the omnibus, with a large wagon on tracks, but was powered by electricity rather than horses. The electric trolley could run throughout the day and night, like the factories and the workers who fueled them. But it also modernized less important industrial centers, such as the southern city of Richmond, Virginia. As early as 1873, San Francisco engineers adopted pulley technology from the mining industry to introduce cable cars and turn the city's steep hills into elegant middle-class communities. However, as crowds continued to grow in the largest cities, such as Chicago and New York, trolleys were unable to move efficiently through the crowds of pedestrians. To avoid this challenge, city planners elevated the trolley lines above the streets, creating elevated trains, or L-trains, as early as 1868 in New York City, and quickly spreading to Boston in 1887 and Chicago in 1892. Finally, as skyscrapers began to dominate the air, transportation evolved one step further to move underground as subways. Boston's subway system began operating in 1897, and was quickly followed by New York and other cities.





(a)



(b)

Although trolleys were far more efficient than horse-drawn carriages, populous cities such as New York experienced frequent accidents, as depicted in this 1895 illustration from *Leslie's Weekly* (a). To avoid overcrowded streets, trolleys soon went underground, as at the Public Gardens Portal in Boston (b), where three different lines met to enter the Tremont Street Subway, the oldest subway tunnel in the United States, opening on September 1, 1897.



## The Rise of Skyscrapers

The last limitation that large cities had to overcome was the ever-increasing need for space. Eastern cities, unlike their midwestern counterparts, could not continue to grow outward, as the land surrounding them was already settled. Geographic limitations such as rivers or the coast also hampered sprawl. And in all cities, citizens needed to be close enough to urban centers to conveniently access work, shops, and other core institutions of urban life. The increasing cost of real estate made upward growth attractive, and so did the prestige that towering buildings carried for the businesses that occupied them.

Workers completed the first

skyscraper in Chicago, the ten-story Home Insurance Building, in 1885. Although engineers had the capability to go higher, thanks to new steel construction techniques, they required another vital invention in order to make taller buildings viable: the elevator. In 1889, the Otis Elevator Company, led by inventor James Otis, installed the first electric elevator. This began the skyscraper craze, allowing developers in eastern cities to build and market prestigious real estate in the hearts of crowded eastern metropolises.



*While the technology existed to engineer tall buildings, it was not until the invention of the electric elevator in 1889 that skyscrapers began to take over the urban landscape. Shown here is the Home Insurance Building in Chicago, considered the first modern skyscraper.*



## Jacob Riis and the Window into “How the Other Half Lives”

Jacob Riis was a Danish immigrant who moved to New York in the late nineteenth century and, after experiencing poverty and joblessness first-hand, ultimately built a career as a police reporter. In the course of his work, he spent much of his time in the slums and tenements of New York’s working poor. Appalled by what he found there, Riis began documenting these scenes of squalor and sharing them through lectures and ultimately through the publication of his book, *How the Other Half Lives*, in 1890.





*In photographs such as *Bandit's Roost* (1888), taken on Mulberry Street in the infamous Five Points neighborhood of Manhattan's Lower East Side, Jacob Riis documented the plight of New York City slums in the late nineteenth century.*

By most contemporary accounts, Riis was an effective storyteller, using drama and racial stereotypes to tell his stories of the ethnic slums he encountered. But while his racial thinking was very much



a product of his time, he was also a reformer; he felt strongly that upper and middle-class Americans could and should care about the living conditions of the poor. In his book and lectures, he argued against the immoral landlords and useless laws that allowed dangerous living conditions and high rents. He also suggested remodeling existing tenements or building new ones. He was not alone in his concern for the plight of the poor; other reporters and activists had already brought the issue into the public eye, and Riis's photographs added a new element to the story.

To tell his stories, Riis used a series of deeply compelling photographs. Riis and his group of amateur photographers moved through the various slums of New York, laboriously setting up their tripods and explosive chemicals to create enough light to take the photographs. His photos and writings shocked the public, made Riis a well-known figure both in his day and beyond, and eventually led to new state legislation curbing abuses in tenements.

## THE IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES OF URBAN LIFE

Congestion, pollution, crime, and disease were prevalent problems in all urban centers; city planners and inhabitants alike sought new solutions to the problems caused by rapid urban growth. Living conditions for most working-class urban dwellers were atrocious. They lived in crowded tenement houses and cramped apartments with terrible ventilation and substandard plumbing and sanitation. As a result, disease ran rampant, with typhoid and cholera common. Memphis, Tennessee, experienced waves of cholera (1873) followed by yellow fever (1878 and 1879) that resulted in the loss of over ten thousand lives. By the late 1880s, New York City, Baltimore, Chicago, and New Orleans had all introduced sewage pumping systems to provide efficient waste management. Many cities were also serious



fire hazards. An average working-class family of six, with two adults and four children, had at best a two-bedroom tenement. By one 1900 estimate, in the New York City borough of Manhattan alone, there were nearly fifty thousand tenement houses. The photographs of these tenement houses are seen in Jacob Riis's book, *How the Other Half Lives*, discussed in the feature above. Citing a study by the New York State Assembly at this time, Riis found New York to be the most densely populated city in the world, with as many as eight hundred residents per square acre in the Lower East Side working-class slums, comprising the Eleventh and Thirteenth Wards.

Visit [New York City, Tenement Life](#) to get an impression of the everyday life of tenement dwellers on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Churches and civic organizations provided some relief to the challenges of working-class city life. Churches were moved to intervene through their belief in the concept of the social gospel. This philosophy stated that all Christians, whether they were church leaders or social reformers, should be as concerned about the conditions of life in the secular world as the afterlife, and the Reverend Washington Gladden was a major advocate. Rather than preaching sermons on heaven and hell, Gladden talked about social changes of the time, urging other preachers to follow his lead. He advocated for improvements in daily life and encouraged Americans of all classes to work together for the betterment of society. His sermons included the message to “love thy neighbor” and held that all Americans had to work together to help the masses. As a result of his influence, churches began to include gymnasiums and libraries as well as offer evening classes on hygiene and health care. Other religious organizations like the Salvation Army and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) expanded their reach in American cities at this time as well. Beginning in the 1870s, these



organizations began providing community services and other benefits to the urban poor.

In the secular sphere, the settlement house movement of the 1890s provided additional relief. Pioneering women such as Jane Addams in Chicago and Lillian Wald in New York led this early progressive reform movement in the United States, building upon ideas originally fashioned by social reformers in England. With no particular religious bent, they worked to create settlement houses in urban centers where they could help the working class, and in particular, working-class women, find aid. Their help included child daycare, evening classes, libraries, gym facilities, and free health care. Addams opened her now-famous Hull House in Chicago in 1889, and Wald's Henry Street Settlement opened in New York six years later. The movement spread quickly to other cities, where they not only provided relief to working-class women but also offered employment opportunities for women graduating college in the growing field of social work. Oftentimes, living in the settlement houses among the women they helped, these college graduates experienced the equivalent of living social classrooms in which to practice their skills, which also frequently caused friction with immigrant women who had their own ideas of reform and self-improvement.

The success of the settlement house movement later became the basis of a political agenda that included pressure for housing laws, child labor laws, and worker's compensation laws, among others. Florence Kelley, who originally worked with Addams in Chicago, later joined Wald's efforts in New York; together, they created the National Child Labor Committee and advocated for the subsequent



*Jane Addams opened Hull House in Chicago in 1889, offering services and support to the city's working poor.*



creation of the Children's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor in 1912. Julia Lathrop—herself a former resident of Hull House—became the first woman to head a federal government agency, when President William Howard Taft appointed her to run the bureau. Settlement house workers also became influential leaders in the women's suffrage movement as well as the antiwar movement during World War I.

## Jane Addams Reflects on the Settlement House Movement

Jane Addams was a social activist whose work took many forms. She is perhaps best known as the founder of Hull House in Chicago, which later became a model for settlement houses throughout the country. Here, she reflects on the role that the settlement played.

Life in the Settlement discovers above all what has been called 'the extraordinary pliability of human nature,' and it seems impossible to set any bounds to the moral capabilities which might unfold under ideal civic and educational conditions. But in order to obtain these conditions, the Settlement recognizes the need of cooperation, both with the radical and the conservative, and from the very nature of the case the Settlement cannot limit its friends to any one political party or economic school.

The Settlement casts aside none of those things which cultivated men have come to consider reasonable and goodly, but it insists that those belong as well to that great body of people who, because of toilsome and underpaid labor, are unable to procure them for themselves. Added to this is a profound conviction that the common stock of intellectual enjoyment should not be difficult of access because of the economic position of him who would



approach it, that those ‘best results of civilization’ upon which depend the finer and freer aspects of living must be incorporated into our common life and have free mobility through all elements of society if we would have our democracy endure.

The educational activities of a Settlement, as well its philanthropic, civic, and social undertakings, are but differing manifestations of the attempt to socialize democracy, as is the very existence of the Settlement itself.

In addition to her pioneering work in the settlement house movement, Addams also was active in the women’s suffrage movement as well as an outspoken proponent for international peace efforts. She was instrumental in the relief effort after World War I, a commitment that led to her winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

## Section Summary

Urbanization spread rapidly in the mid-nineteenth century due to a confluence of factors. New technologies, such as electricity and steam engines, transformed factory work, allowing factories to move closer to urban centers and away from the rivers that had previously been vital sources of both water power and transportation. The growth of factories—as well as innovations such as electric lighting, which allowed them to run at all hours of the day and night—created a massive need for workers, who poured in from both



rural areas of the United States and from eastern and southern Europe. As cities grew, they were unable to cope with this rapid influx of workers, and the living conditions for the working class were terrible. Tight living quarters, with inadequate plumbing and sanitation, led to widespread illness. Churches, civic organizations, and the secular settlement house movement all sought to provide some relief to the urban working class, but conditions remained brutal for many new city dwellers.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1012>

### *Review Question*

1. What technological and economic factors combined to lead to the explosive growth of American cities at this time?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. At the end of the nineteenth century, a confluence of events made urban life more desirable and more possible. Technologies such as electricity and the



telephone allowed factories to build and grow in cities, and skyscrapers enabled the relatively small geographic areas to continue expanding. The new demand for workers spurred a massive influx of job-seekers from both rural areas of the United States and from eastern and southern Europe. Urban housing—as well as services such as transportation and sanitation—expanded accordingly, though cities struggled to cope with the surging demand. Together, technological innovations and an exploding population led American cities to grow as never before.

## *Glossary*

**settlement house movement** an early progressive reform movement, largely spearheaded by women, which sought to offer services such as childcare and free healthcare to help the working poor

**social gospel** the belief that the church should be as concerned about the conditions of people in the secular world as it was with their afterlife



## 47. The African American “Great Migration” and New European Immigration

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the factors that prompted African American and European immigration to American cities in the late nineteenth century
- Explain the discrimination and anti-immigration legislation that immigrants faced in the late nineteenth century

New cities were populated with diverse waves of new arrivals, who came to the cities to seek work in the businesses and factories there. While a small percentage of these newcomers were white Americans seeking jobs, most were made up of two groups that had not previously been factors in the urbanization movement: African Americans fleeing the racism of the farms and former plantations in the South, and southern and eastern European immigrants. These new immigrants supplanted the previous waves of northern and western European immigrants, who had tended to move west to purchase land. Unlike their predecessors, the newer immigrants lacked the funds to strike out to the western lands and instead remained in the urban centers where they arrived, seeking any work that would keep them alive.



# THE AFRICAN AMERICAN “GREAT MIGRATION”

Between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Great Depression, nearly two million African Americans fled the rural South to seek new opportunities elsewhere. While some moved west, the vast majority of this Great Migration, as the large exodus of African Americans leaving the South in the early twentieth century was called, traveled to the Northeast and Upper Midwest. The following cities were the primary destinations for these African Americans: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Indianapolis. These eight cities accounted for over two-thirds of the total population of the African American migration.

A combination of both “push” and “pull” factors played a role in this movement. Despite the end of the Civil War and the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution (ensuring freedom, the right to vote regardless of race, and equal protection under the law, respectively), African Americans were still subjected to intense racial hatred. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War led to increased death threats, violence, and a wave of lynchings. Even after the formal dismantling of the Klan in the late 1870s, racially motivated violence continued. According to researchers at the Tuskegee Institute, there were thirty-five hundred racially motivated lynchings and other murders committed in the South between 1865 and 1900. For African Americans fleeing this culture of violence, northern and midwestern cities offered an opportunity to escape the dangers of the South.

In addition to this “push” out of the South, African Americans were also “pulled” to the cities by factors that attracted them, including job opportunities, where they could earn a wage rather than be tied to a landlord, and the chance to vote (for men, at least), supposedly free from the threat of violence. Although many



lacked the funds to move themselves north, factory owners and other businesses that sought cheap labor assisted the migration. Often, the men moved first then sent for their families once they were ensconced in their new city life. Racism and a lack of formal education relegated these African American workers to many of the lower-paying unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. More than 80 percent of African American men worked menial jobs in steel mills, mines, construction, and meat packing. In the railroad industry, they were often employed as porters or servants. In other businesses, they worked as janitors, waiters, or cooks. African American women, who faced discrimination due to both their race and gender, found a few job opportunities in the garment industry or laundries, but were more often employed as maids and domestic servants. Regardless of the status of their jobs, however, African Americans earned higher wages in the North than they did for the same occupations in the South, and typically found housing to be more available.





(a)



(b)

African American men who moved north as part of the Great Migration were often consigned to menial employment, such as working in construction or as porters on the railways (a), such as in the celebrated Pullman dining and sleeping cars (b).

However, such economic gains were offset by the higher cost of living in the North, especially in terms of rent, food costs, and other essentials. As a result, African Americans often found themselves living in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, much like the tenement slums in which European immigrants lived in the cities. For newly arrived African Americans, even those who sought out the cities for the opportunities they provided, life in these urban centers was exceedingly difficult. They quickly learned that racial discrimination did not end at the Mason-Dixon Line, but continued to flourish in the North as well as the South. European immigrants, also seeking a better life in the cities of the United States, resented the arrival of the African Americans, whom they feared would compete for the same jobs or offer to work at lower wages. Landlords frequently discriminated against them; their rapid influx



into the cities created severe housing shortages and even more overcrowded tenements. Homeowners in traditionally white neighborhoods later entered into covenants in which they agreed not to sell to African American buyers; they also often fled neighborhoods into which African Americans had gained successful entry. In addition, some bankers practiced mortgage discrimination, later known as “redlining,” in order to deny home loans to qualified buyers. Such pervasive discrimination led to a concentration of African Americans in some of the worst slum areas of most major metropolitan cities, a problem that remained ongoing throughout most of the twentieth century.

So why move to the North, given that the economic challenges they faced were similar to those that African Americans encountered in the South? The answer lies in noneconomic gains. Greater educational opportunities and more expansive personal freedoms mattered greatly to the African Americans who made the trek northward during the Great Migration. State legislatures and local school districts allocated more funds for the education of both blacks and whites in the North, and also enforced compulsory school attendance laws more rigorously. Similarly, unlike the South where a simple gesture (or lack of a deferential one) could result in physical harm to the African American who committed it, life in larger, crowded northern urban centers permitted a degree of anonymity—and with it, personal freedom—that enabled African Americans to move, work, and speak without deferring to every white person with whom they crossed paths. Psychologically, these gains more than offset the continued economic challenges that black migrants faced.



# THE CHANGING NATURE OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION

Immigrants also shifted the demographics of the rapidly growing cities. Although immigration had always been a force of change in the United States, it took on a new character in the late nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1880s, the arrival of immigrants from mostly southern and eastern European countries rapidly increased while the flow from northern and western Europe remained relatively constant.

Cumulative Total of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States, 1870–1910 (by major country of birth and European region)					
Region Country	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
Northern and Western Europe	4,845,679	5,499,889	7,288,917	7,204,649	7,306,325
Germany	1,690,533	1,966,742	2,784,894	2,663,418	2,311,237
Ireland	1,855,827	1,854,571	1,871,509	1,615,459	1,352,251
England	550,924	662,676	908,141	840,513	877,719
Sweden	97,332	194,337	478,041	582,014	665,207
Austria	30,508	38,663	123,271	275,907	626,341
Norway	114,246	181,729	322,665	336,388	403,877
Scotland	140,835	170,136	242,231	233,524	261,076
Southern and Eastern Europe	93,824	248,620	728,851	1,674,648	4,500,932
Italy	17,157	44,230	182,580	484,027	1,343,125
Russia	4,644	35,722	182,644	423,726	1,184,412
Poland	14,436	48,557	147,440	383,407	937,884
Hungary	3,737	11,526	62,435	145,714	495,609
Czechoslovakia	40,289	85,361	118,106	156,891	219,214

The previous waves of immigrants from northern and western Europe, particularly Germany, Great Britain, and the Nordic



countries, were relatively well off, arriving in the country with some funds and often moving to the newly settled western territories. In contrast, the newer immigrants from southern and eastern European countries, including Italy, Greece, and several Slavic countries including Russia, came over due to “push” and “pull” factors similar to those that influenced the African Americans arriving from the South. Many were “pushed” from their countries by a series of ongoing famines, by the need to escape religious, political, or racial persecution, or by the desire to avoid compulsory military service. They were also “pulled” by the promise of consistent, wage-earning work.

Whatever the reason, these immigrants arrived without the education and finances of the earlier waves of immigrants, and settled more readily in the port towns where they arrived, rather than setting out to seek their fortunes in the West. By 1890, over 80 percent of the population of New York would be either foreign-born or children of foreign-born parentage. Other cities saw huge spikes in foreign populations as well, though not to the same degree, due in large part to Ellis Island in New York City being the primary port of entry for most European immigrants arriving in the United States.

The number of immigrants peaked between 1900 and 1910, when over nine million people arrived in the United States. To assist in the processing and management of this massive wave of immigrants, the Bureau of Immigration in New York City, which had become the official port of entry, opened Ellis Island in 1892. Today, nearly half of all Americans have ancestors who, at some point in time, entered the



*This photo shows newly arrived immigrants at Ellis Island in New York. Inspectors are examining them for contagious health problems, which could require them to be sent back. (credit: NIAID)*

country through the portal at Ellis Island. Doctors or nurses



inspected the immigrants upon arrival, looking for any signs of infectious diseases. Most immigrants were admitted to the country with only a cursory glance at any other paperwork. Roughly 2 percent of the arriving immigrants were denied entry due to a medical condition or criminal history. The rest would enter the country by way of the streets of New York, many unable to speak English and totally reliant on finding those who spoke their native tongue.

Seeking comfort in a strange land, as well as a common language, many immigrants sought out relatives, friends, former neighbors, townspeople, and countrymen who had already settled in American cities. This led to a rise in ethnic enclaves within the larger city. Little Italy, Chinatown, and many other communities developed in which immigrant groups could find everything to remind them of home, from local language newspapers to ethnic food stores. While these enclaves provided a sense of community to their members, they added to the problems of urban congestion, particularly in the poorest slums where immigrants could afford housing.

This Library of Congress exhibit on [the history of Jewish immigration](#) to the United States illustrates the ongoing challenge immigrants felt between the ties to their old land and a love for America.

The demographic shift at the turn of the century was later confirmed by the Dillingham Commission, created by Congress in 1907 to report on the nature of immigration in America; the commission reinforced this ethnic identification of immigrants and their simultaneous discrimination. The report put it simply: These newer immigrants looked and acted differently. They had darker skin tone, spoke languages with which most Americans were unfamiliar, and practiced unfamiliar religions, specifically Judaism and Catholicism. Even the foods they sought out at butchers and



grocery stores set immigrants apart. Because of these easily identifiable differences, new immigrants became easy targets for hatred and discrimination. If jobs were hard to find, or if housing was overcrowded, it became easy to blame the immigrants. Like African Americans, immigrants in cities were blamed for the problems of the day.

Growing numbers of Americans resented the waves of new immigrants, resulting in a backlash. The Reverend Josiah Strong fueled the hatred and discrimination in his bestselling book, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, published in 1885. In a revised edition that reflected the 1890 census records, he clearly identified undesirable immigrants—those from southern and eastern European countries—as a key threat to the moral fiber of the country, and urged all good Americans to face the challenge. Several thousand Americans answered his call by forming the American Protective Association, the chief political activist group to promote legislation curbing immigration into the United States. The group successfully lobbied Congress to adopt both an English language literacy test for immigrants, which eventually passed in 1917, and the Chinese Exclusion Act (discussed in a previous chapter). The group's political lobbying also laid the groundwork for the subsequent Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924, as well as the National Origins Act.

The [global timeline of immigration](#) at the Library of Congress offers a summary of immigration policies and the groups affected by it, as well as a compelling overview of different ethnic groups' immigration stories. Browse through to see how different ethnic groups made their way in the United States.



## Section Summary

For both African Americans migrating from the postwar South and immigrants arriving from southeastern Europe, a combination of “push” and “pull” factors influenced their migration to America’s urban centers. African Americans moved away from the racial violence and limited opportunities that existed in the rural South, seeking wages and steady work, as well as the opportunity to vote safely as free men; however, they quickly learned that racial discrimination and violence were not limited to the South. For European immigrants, famine and persecution led them to seek a new life in the United States, where, the stories said, the streets were paved in gold. Of course, in northeastern and midwestern cities, both groups found a more challenging welcome than they had anticipated. City residents blamed recent arrivals for the ills of the cities, from overcrowding to a rise in crime. Activist groups pushed for anti-immigration legislation, seeking to limit the waves of immigrants that sought a better future in the United States.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1013>



## *Review Question*

1. What made recent European immigrants the ready targets of more established city dwellers? What was the result of this discrimination?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Newer immigrants often had different appearances, spoke unfamiliar languages, and lived their lives—from the religions they practiced to the food they ate—in ways that were alien to many Americans. In all of city life's more challenging aspects, from competition for jobs to overcrowding in scarce housing, immigrants became easy scapegoats. The Reverend Josiah Strong's bestselling book, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, fueled this discrimination. The American Protective Association, the chief political activist group promoting anti-immigration legislation, formed largely in response to Strong's call.



## *Glossary*

**Great Migration** the name for the large wave of African Americans who left the South after the Civil War, mostly moving to cities in the Northeast and Upper Midwest



## 48. Relief from the Chaos of Urban Life

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify how each class of Americans—working class, middle class, and upper class—responded to the challenges associated with urban life
- Explain the process of machine politics and how it brought relief to working-class Americans

Settlement houses and religious and civic organizations attempted to provide some support to working-class city dwellers through free health care, education, and leisure opportunities. Still, for urban citizens, life in the city was chaotic and challenging. But how that chaos manifested and how relief was sought differed greatly, depending on where people were in the social caste—the working class, the upper class, or the newly emerging professional middle class—in addition to the aforementioned issues of race and ethnicity. While many communities found life in the largest American cities disorganized and overwhelming, the ways they answered these challenges were as diverse as the people who lived there. Broad solutions emerged that were typically class specific: The rise of machine politics and popular culture provided relief to the working class, higher education opportunities and suburbanization benefitted the professional middle class, and reminders of their elite status gave comfort to the upper class. And



everyone, no matter where they fell in the class system, benefited from the efforts to improve the physical landscapes of the fast-growing urban environment.

## THE LIFE AND STRUGGLES OF THE URBAN WORKING CLASS

For the working-class residents of America's cities, one practical way of coping with the challenges of urban life was to take advantage of the system of machine politics, while another was to seek relief in the variety of popular culture and entertainment found in and around cities. Although neither of these forms of relief was restricted to the working class, they were the ones who relied most heavily on them.

### Machine Politics

The primary form of relief for working-class urban Americans, and particularly immigrants, came in the form of machine politics. This phrase referred to the process by which every citizen of the city, no matter their ethnicity or race, was a ward resident with an alderman who spoke on their behalf at city hall. When everyday challenges arose, whether sanitation problems or the need for a sidewalk along a muddy road, citizens would approach their alderman to find a solution. The aldermen knew that, rather than work through the long bureaucratic process associated with city hall, they could work within the "machine" of local politics to find a speedy, mutually beneficial solution. In machine politics, favors were exchanged for votes, votes were given in exchange for fast solutions, and the price of the solutions included a kickback to the boss. In the short term,



everyone got what they needed, but the process was neither transparent nor democratic, and it was an inefficient way of conducting the city's business.

One example of a machine political system was the Democratic political machine Tammany Hall in New York, run by machine boss William Tweed with assistance from George Washington Plunkitt. There, citizens knew their immediate problems would be addressed in return for their promise of political support in future elections. In this way, machines provided timely solutions for citizens and votes for the politicians. For example, if in Little Italy there was a desperate need for sidewalks in order to improve traffic to the stores on a particular street, the request would likely get bogged down in the bureaucratic red tape at city hall. Instead, store owners would approach the machine. A district captain would approach the "boss" and make him aware of the problem. The boss would contact city politicians and strongly urge them to appropriate the needed funds for the sidewalk in exchange for the promise that the boss would direct votes in their favor in the upcoming election. The boss then used the funds to pay one of his friends for the sidewalk construction, typically at an exorbitant cost, with a financial kickback to the boss, which was known as graft. The sidewalk was built more quickly than anyone hoped, in exchange for the citizens' promises to vote for machine-supported candidates in the next elections. Despite its corrupt nature, Tammany Hall essentially ran New York politics from the 1850s until the 1930s. Other large cities, including Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Kansas City, made use of political machines as well.





This political cartoon depicts the control of Boss Tweed, of Tammany Hall, over the election process in New York. Why were people willing to accept the corruption involved in machine politics?



## Popular Culture and Entertainment

Working-class residents also found relief in the diverse and omnipresent offerings of popular culture and entertainment in and around cities. These offerings provided an immediate escape from the squalor and difficulties of everyday life. As improved means of internal transportation developed, working-class residents could



*The Dreamland Amusement Park tower was just one of Coney Island's amusements.*

escape the city and experience one of the popular new forms of entertainment—the amusement park. For example, Coney Island on the Brooklyn shoreline consisted of several different amusement parks, the first of which opened in 1895. At these parks, New Yorkers enjoyed wild rides, animal attractions, and large stage productions designed to help them forget the struggles of their working-day lives. Freak “side” shows fed the public’s curiosity about physical deviance. For a mere ten cents, spectators could watch a high-diving horse, take a ride to the moon to watch moon maidens eat green cheese, or witness the electrocution of an elephant, a spectacle that fascinated the public both with technological marvels and exotic wildlife. The treatment of animals in many acts at Coney Island and other public amusement parks drew the attention of middle-class reformers such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Despite questions regarding the propriety of many of the acts, other cities quickly followed New York’s lead with similar, if smaller, versions of Coney Island’s attractions.



The [American Experience Timeline of Coney Island](#) shows a timeline, photo gallery, and other elements of Coney Island. Look to see what elements of American culture, from the hot dog to the roller coaster, debuted there.

Another common form of popular entertainment was vaudeville—large stage variety shows that included everything from singing, dancing, and comedy acts to live animals and magic. The vaudeville circuit gave rise to several prominent performers, including magician Harry Houdini, who began his career in these variety shows before his fame propelled him to solo acts. In addition to live theater shows, it was primarily working-class citizens who enjoyed the advent of the nickelodeon, a forerunner to the movie theater. The first nickelodeon opened in Pittsburgh in 1905, where nearly one hundred visitors packed into a storefront theater to see a traditional vaudeville show interspersed with one-minute film clips. Several theaters initially used the films as “chasers” to indicate the end of the show to the live audience so they would clear the auditorium. However, a vaudeville performers’ strike generated even greater interest in the films, eventually resulting in the rise of modern movie theaters by 1910.

One other major form of entertainment for the working class was professional baseball. Club teams transformed into professional baseball teams with the Cincinnati Red Stockings, now the Cincinnati Reds, in 1869. Soon, professional teams sprang up in several major American cities. Baseball games provided an inexpensive form of entertainment, where for less than a dollar, a person could enjoy a double-header, two hot dogs, and a beer. But more importantly, the teams became a way for newly relocated Americans and immigrants of diverse backgrounds to develop a unified civic identity, all cheering for one team. By 1876, the National



League had formed, and soon after, cathedral-style ballparks began to spring up in many cities. Fenway Park in Boston (1912), Forbes Field in Pittsburgh (1909), and the Polo Grounds in New York (1890) all became touch points where working-class Americans came together to support a common cause.



*Boston's Fenway Park opened in 1912 and was a popular site for working-class Bostonians to spend their leisure time. The "Green Monster," the iconic, left field wall, makes it one of the most recognizable stadiums in baseball today.*

Other popular sports included prize-fighting, which attracted a predominantly male, working- and middle-class audience who lived vicariously through the triumphs of the boxers during a time where opportunities for individual success were rapidly shrinking, and college football, which paralleled a modern corporation in its team hierarchy, divisions of duties, and emphasis on time management.

## THE UPPER CLASS IN THE CITIES

The American financial elite did not need to crowd into cities to find work, like their working-class counterparts. But as urban centers were vital business cores, where multi-million-dollar financial deals were made daily, those who worked in that world wished to remain close to the action. The rich chose to be in the midst of the chaos of the cities, but they were also able to provide significant measures of comfort, convenience, and luxury for themselves.

Wealthy citizens seldom attended what they considered the crass



entertainment of the working class. Instead of amusement parks and baseball games, urban elites sought out more refined pastimes that underscored their knowledge of art and culture, preferring classical music concerts, fine art collections, and social gatherings with their peers. In New York, Andrew Carnegie built Carnegie Hall in 1891, which quickly became the center of classical music performances in the country. Nearby, the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its doors in 1872 and still remains one of the largest collections of fine art in the world. Other cities followed suit, and these cultural pursuits became a way for the upper class to remind themselves of their elevated place amid urban squalor.

As new opportunities for the middle class threatened the austerity of upper-class citizens, including the newer forms of transportation that allowed middle-class Americans to travel with greater ease, wealthier Americans sought unique ways to further set themselves apart in society. These included more expensive excursions, such as vacations in Newport, Rhode Island, winter relocation to sunny Florida, and frequent trips aboard steamships to Europe. For those who were not of the highly respected “old money,” but only recently obtained their riches through business ventures, the relief they sought came in the form of one book—the annual *Social Register*. First published in 1886 by Louis Keller in New York City, the register became a directory of the wealthy socialites who populated the city. Keller updated it annually, and people would watch with varying degrees of anxiety or complacency to see their names appear in print. Also called the *Blue Book*, the register was instrumental in the planning of society dinners, balls, and other social events. For those of newer wealth, there was relief found simply in the notion that they and others witnessed their wealth through the publication of their names in the register.



## A NEW MIDDLE CLASS

While the working class were confined to tenement houses in the cities by their need to be close to their work and the lack of funds to find anyplace better, and the wealthy class chose to remain in the cities to stay close to the action of big business transactions, the emerging middle class responded to urban challenges with their own solutions. This group included the managers, salesmen, engineers, doctors, accountants, and other salaried professionals who still worked for a living, but were significantly better educated and compensated than the working-class poor. For this new middle class, relief from the trials of the cities came through education and suburbanization.

In large part, the middle class responded to the challenges of the city by physically escaping it. As transportation improved and outlying communities connected to urban centers, the middle class embraced a new type of community—the suburbs. It became possible for those with adequate means to work in the city and escape each evening, by way of a train or trolley, to a house in the suburbs. As the number of people moving to the suburbs grew, there also grew a perception among the middle class that the farther one lived from the city and the more amenities one had, the more affluence one had achieved.

Although a few suburbs existed in the United States prior to the 1880s (such as Llewellyn Park, New Jersey), the introduction of the electric railway generated greater interest and growth during the last decade of the century. The ability to travel from home to work on a relatively quick and cheap mode of transportation encouraged more Americans of modest means to consider living away from the chaos of the city. Eventually, Henry Ford's popularization of the automobile, specifically in terms of a lower price, permitted more families to own cars and thus consider suburban life. Later in the twentieth century, both the advent of the interstate highway system, along with federal legislation designed to allow families

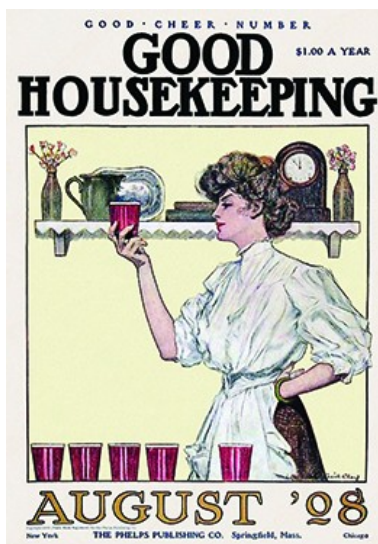


to construct homes with low-interest loans, further sparked the suburban phenomenon.

## New Roles for Middle-Class Women

Social norms of the day encouraged middle-class women to take great pride in creating a positive home environment for their working husbands and school-age children, which reinforced the business and educational principles that they practiced on the job or in school. It was at this time that the magazines *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* began distribution, to tremendous popularity.

While the vast majority of middle-class women took on the expected role of housewife and homemaker, some women were finding paths to college. A small number of men's colleges began to open their doors to women in the mid-1800s, and co-education became an option. Some of the most elite universities created affiliated women's colleges, such as Radcliffe College with Harvard, and Pembroke College with Brown University. But more importantly, the



The middle-class family of the late nineteenth century largely embraced a separation of gendered spheres that had first emerged during the market revolution of the antebellum years. Whereas the husband earned money for the family outside the home, the wife oversaw domestic chores, raised the children, and tended to the family's spiritual, social, and cultural needs. The magazine *Good Housekeeping*, launched in 1885, capitalized on the middle-class woman's focus on maintaining a pride-worthy home.



first women's colleges opened at this time. Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Smith, and Wellesley Colleges, still some of the best known women's schools, opened their doors between 1865 and 1880, and, although enrollment was low (initial class sizes ranged from sixty-one students at Vassar to seventy at Wellesley, seventy-one at Smith, and up to eighty-eight at Mount Holyoke), the opportunity for a higher education, and even a career, began to emerge for young women. These schools offered a unique, all-women environment in which professors and a community of education-seeking young women came together. While most college-educated young women still married, their education offered them new opportunities to work outside the home, most frequently as teachers, professors, or in the aforementioned settlement house environments created by Jane Addams and others.

## Education and the Middle Class

Since the children of the professional class did not have to leave school and find work to support their families, they had opportunities for education and advancement that would solidify their position in the middle class. They also benefited from the presence of stay-at-home mothers, unlike working-class children, whose mothers typically worked the same long hours as their fathers. Public school enrollment exploded at this time, with the number of students attending public school tripling from seven million in 1870 to twenty-one million in 1920. Unlike the old-fashioned one-room schoolhouses, larger schools slowly began the practice of employing different teachers for each grade, and some even began hiring discipline-specific instructors. High schools also grew at this time, from one hundred high schools nationally in 1860 to over six thousand by 1900.



The federal government supported the growth of higher education with the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. These laws set aside public land and federal funds to create land-grant colleges that were affordable to middle-class families, offering courses and degrees useful in the professions, but also in trade, commerce, industry, and agriculture.

Land-grant colleges stood in contrast to the expensive, private Ivy League universities such as Harvard and Yale, which still

catered to the elite. Iowa became the first state to accept the provisions of the original Morrill Act, creating what later became Iowa State University. Other states soon followed suit, and the availability of an affordable college education encouraged a boost in enrollment, from 50,000 students nationwide in 1870 to over 600,000 students by 1920.

College curricula also changed at this time. Students grew less likely to take traditional liberal arts classes in rhetoric, philosophy, and foreign language, and instead focused on preparing for the modern work world. Professional schools for the study of medicine, law, and business also developed. In short, education for the children of middle-class parents catered to class-specific interests and helped ensure that parents could establish their children comfortably in the middle class as well.



*This rendering of Kansas State University in 1878 shows an early land-grant college, created by the Morrill Act. These newly created schools allowed many more students to attend college than the elite Ivy League system, and focused more on preparing them for professional careers in business, medicine, and law, as well as business, agriculture, and other trades.*



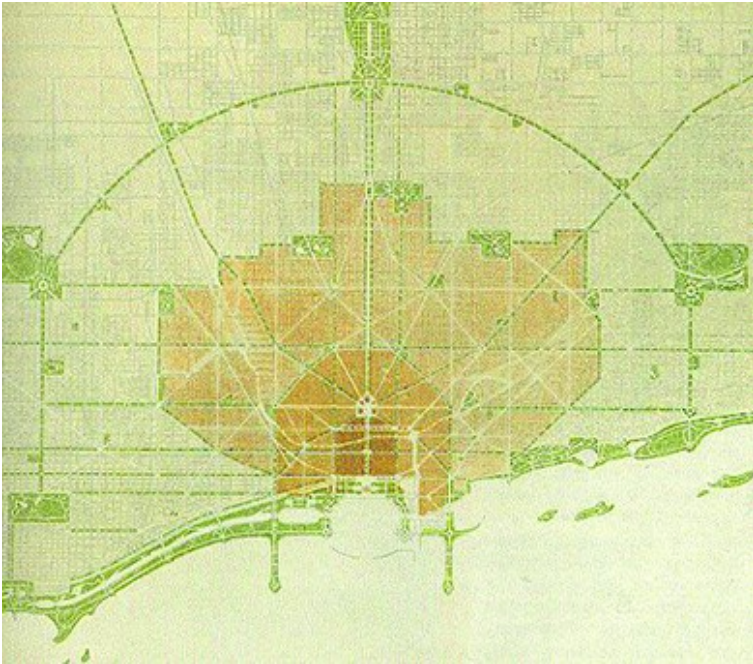
## “CITY BEAUTIFUL”

While the working poor lived in the worst of it and the wealthy elite sought to avoid it, all city dwellers at the time had to deal with the harsh realities of urban sprawl. Skyscrapers rose and filled the air, streets were crowded with pedestrians of all sorts, and, as developers worked to meet the always-increasing demand for space, the few remaining green spaces in the city quickly disappeared. As the U.S. population became increasingly centered in urban areas while the century drew to a close, questions about the quality of city life—particularly with regard to issues of aesthetics, crime, and poverty—quickly consumed many reformers’ minds. Those middle-class and wealthier urbanites who enjoyed the costlier amenities presented by city life—including theaters, restaurants, and shopping—were free to escape to the suburbs, leaving behind the poorer working classes living in squalor and unsanitary conditions. Through the City Beautiful movement, leaders such as Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham sought to champion middle- and upper-class progressive reforms. They improved the quality of life for city dwellers, but also cultivated middle-class-dominated urban spaces in which Americans of different ethnicities, racial origins, and classes worked and lived.

Olmsted, one of the earliest and most influential designers of urban green space, and the original designer of Central Park in New York, worked with Burnham to introduce the idea of the City Beautiful movement at the Columbian Exposition in 1893. There, they helped to design and construct the “White City”—so named for the plaster of Paris construction of several buildings that were subsequently painted a bright white—an example of landscaping and architecture that shone as an example of perfect city planning. From wide-open green spaces to brightly painted white buildings, connected with modern transportation services and appropriate sanitation, the “White City” set the stage for American urban city planning for the next generation, beginning in 1901 with the



modernization of Washington, DC. This model encouraged city planners to consider three principal tenets: First, create larger park areas inside cities; second, build wider boulevards to decrease traffic congestion and allow for lines of trees and other greenery between lanes; and third, add more suburbs in order to mitigate congested living in the city itself. As each city adapted these principles in various ways, the City Beautiful movement became a cornerstone of urban development well into the twentieth century.



*This blueprint shows Burnham's vision for Chicago, an example of the City Beautiful movement. His goal was to preserve much of the green space along the city's lakefront, and to ensure that all city dwellers had access to green space.*



## Section Summary

The burgeoning cities brought together both rich and poor, working class and upper class; however, the realities of urban dwellers' lives varied dramatically based on where they fell in the social chain.

Entertainment and leisure-time activities were heavily dependent on one's status and wealth. For the working poor, amusement parks and baseball games offered inexpensive entertainment and a brief break from the squalor of the tenements. For the emerging middle class of salaried professionals, an escape to the suburbs kept them removed from the city's chaos outside of working hours. And for the wealthy, immersion in arts and culture, as well as inclusion in the *Social Register*, allowed them to socialize exclusively with those they felt were of the same social status. The City Beautiful movement benefitted all city dwellers, with its emphasis on public green spaces, and more beautiful and practical city boulevards. In all, these different opportunities for leisure and pleasure made city life manageable for the citizens who lived there.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1014>



## *Review Question*

1. In what way did education play a crucial role in the emergence of the middle class?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Better public education and the explosion of high schools meant that the children of the middle class were better educated than any previous generation. While college had previously been mostly restricted to children of the upper class, the creation of land-grant colleges made college available on a wide scale. The curricula at these new colleges matched the needs of the middle class, offering practical professional training rather than the liberal arts focus that the Ivy League schools embraced. Thus, children of the emerging middle class were able to access the education and training needed to secure their place in the professional class for generations to come.



## *Glossary*

**City Beautiful** a movement begun by Daniel Burnham and Fredrick Law Olmsted, who believed that cities should be built with three core tenets in mind: the inclusion of parks within city limits, the creation of wide boulevards, and the expansion of more suburbs

**graft** the financial kickback provided to city bosses in exchange for political favors

**machine politics** the process by which citizens of a city used their local ward alderman to work the “machine” of local politics to meet local needs within a neighborhood

**Social Register** a de facto directory of the wealthy socialites in each city, first published by Louis Keller in 1886

**Tammany Hall** a political machine in New York, run by machine boss William Tweed with assistance from George Washington Plunkitt



## 49. Video: Growth, Cities, and Immigration

This video teaches you about the massive immigration to the United States during the late 19th and early 20th century. Immigrants flocked to the US from all over the world in this time period. Millions of Europeans moved to the US where they drove the growth of cities and manned the rapid industrialization that was taking place. In the western US many, many Chinese immigrants arrived to work on the railroad and in mines. As is often the case in the United States, the people who already lived in the US reacted kind of badly to this flood of immigrants. Some legislators tried to stem the flow of new arrivals, with mixed success. Grover Cleveland vetoed a general ban on immigration, but the leadership at the time did manage to get together to pass an anti-Chinese immigration law. Immigrants did win some important Supreme Court decisions upholding their rights, but in many ways, immigrants were treated as second-class citizens. At the same time, the country was rapidly urbanizing. Cities were growing rapidly, and industrial technology was developing new wonders all the time. This video will cover all this upheaval and change and hearken back to a time when racial profiling did in fact boil down to analyzing the side of someone's face.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=72#oembed-1>



## 50. Change Reflected in Thought and Writing

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how American writers, both fiction and nonfiction, helped Americans to better understand the changes they faced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- Identify some of the influential women and African American writers of the era

In the late nineteenth century, Americans were living in a world characterized by rapid change. Western expansion, dramatic new technologies, and the rise of big business drastically influenced society in a matter of a few decades. For those living in the fast-growing urban areas, the pace of change was even faster and harder to ignore. One result of this time of transformation was the emergence of a series of notable authors, who, whether writing fiction or nonfiction, offered a lens through which to better understand the shifts in American society.



# UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL PROGRESS

One key idea of the nineteenth century that moved from the realm of science to the murkier ground of social and economic success was Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin was a British naturalist who, in his 1859 work *On the Origin of Species*, made the case that species develop and evolve through natural selection, not through divine intervention. The idea quickly drew fire from the Anglican Church (although a liberal branch of Anglicans embraced the notion of natural selection being part of God's plan) and later from many others, both in England and abroad, who felt that the theory directly contradicted the role of God in the earth's creation. Although biologists, botanists, and most of the scientific establishment widely accepted the theory of evolution at the time of Darwin's publication, which they felt synthesized much of the previous work in the field, the theory remained controversial in the public realm for decades.

Political philosopher Herbert Spencer took Darwin's theory of evolution further, coining the actual phrase "survival of the fittest," and later helping to popularize the phrase social Darwinism to posit that society evolved much like a natural organism, wherein some individuals will succeed due to racially and ethnically inherent traits, and their ability to adapt. This model allowed that a collection of traits and skills, which could include intelligence, inherited wealth, and so on, mixed with the ability to adapt, would let all Americans rise or fall of their own accord, so long as the road to success was accessible to all. William Graham Sumner, a sociologist at Yale, became the most vocal proponent of social Darwinism. Not surprisingly, this ideology, which Darwin himself would have rejected as a gross misreading of his scientific discoveries, drew great praise from those who made their wealth at this time. They saw their success as proof of biological fitness, although critics of this theory were quick to point out that those who did not succeed



often did not have the same opportunities or equal playing field that the ideology of social Darwinism purported. Eventually, the concept fell into disrepute in the 1930s and 1940s, as eugenicists began to utilize it in conjunction with their racial theories of genetic superiority.

Other thinkers of the day took Charles Darwin's theories in a more nuanced direction, focusing on different theories of realism that sought to understand the truth underlying the changes in the United States. These thinkers believed that ideas and social constructs must be proven to work before they could be accepted. Philosopher William James was one of the key proponents of the closely related concept of pragmatism, which held that Americans needed to experiment with different ideas and perspectives to find the truth about American society, rather than assuming that there was truth in old, previously accepted models. Only by tying ideas, thoughts, and statements to actual objects and occurrences could one begin to identify a coherent truth, according to James. His work strongly influenced the subsequent avant-garde and modernist movements in literature and art, especially in understanding the role of the observer, artist, or writer in shaping the society they attempted to observe. John Dewey built on the idea of pragmatism to create a theory of instrumentalism, which advocated the use of education in the search for truth. Dewey believed that education, specifically observation and change through the scientific method, was the best tool by which to reform and improve American society as it continued to grow ever more complex. To that end, Dewey strongly encouraged educational reforms designed to create an informed American citizenry that could then form the basis for other, much-needed progressive reforms in society.

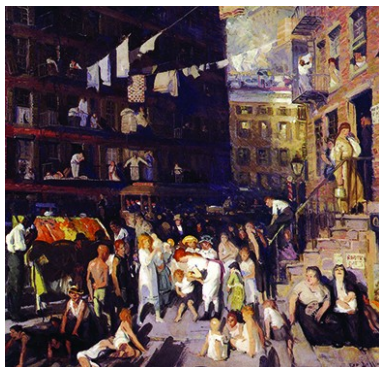
In addition to the new medium of photography, popularized by Riis, novelists and other artists also embraced realism in their work. They sought to portray vignettes from real life in their stories, partly in response to the more sentimental works of their predecessors. Visual artists such as George Bellows, Edward Hopper, and Robert Henri, among others, formed the Ashcan School of Art, which was



interested primarily in depicting the urban lifestyle that was quickly gripping the United States at the turn of the century. Their works typically focused on working-class city life, including the slums and tenement houses, as well as working-class forms of leisure and entertainment.

Novelists and journalists also popularized realism in literary works. Authors such as Stephen Crane, who wrote stark stories about life in the slums or during the Civil War, and Rebecca Harding Davis, who in 1861 published *Life in the Iron Mills*, embodied this popular style. Mark Twain also sought realism in his books, whether it was the reality of the pioneer spirit, seen in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published in 1884, or the issue of corruption

in *The Gilded Age*, co-authored with Charles Dudley Warner in 1873. The narratives and visual arts of these realists could nonetheless be highly stylized, crafted, and even fabricated, since their goal was the effective portrayal of social realities they thought required reform. Some authors, such as Jack London, who wrote *Call of the Wild*, embraced a school of thought called naturalism, which concluded that the laws of nature and the natural world were the only truly relevant laws governing humanity.

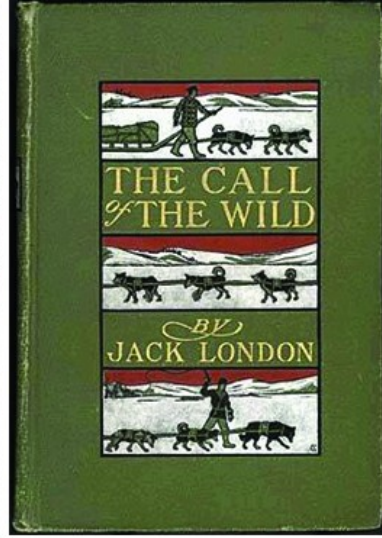


Like most examples of works by Ashcan artists, *The Cliff Dwellers*, by George Wesley Bellows, depicts the crowd of urban life realistically. (credit: Los Angeles County Museum of Art)





(a)



(b)

Jack London poses with his dog Rollo in 1885 (a). The cover of Jack London's *Call of the Wild* (b) shows the dogs in the brutal environment of the Klondike. The book tells the story of Buck, a dog living happily in California until he is sold to be a sled dog in Canada. There, he must survive harsh conditions and brutal behavior, but his innate animal nature takes over and he prevails. The story clarifies the struggle between humanity's nature versus the nurturing forces of society.

Kate Chopin, widely regarded as the foremost woman short story writer and novelist of her day, sought to portray a realistic view of women's lives in late nineteenth-century America, thus paving the way for more explicit feminist literature in generations to come. Although Chopin never described herself as a feminist per se, her reflective works on her experiences as a southern woman introduced a form of creative nonfiction that captured the struggles of women in the United States through their own individual experiences. She also was among the first authors to openly address the race issue of miscegenation. In her work *Desiree's Baby*, Chopin specifically explores the Creole community of her native Louisiana



in depths that exposed the reality of racism in a manner seldom seen in literature of the time.

African American poet, playwright, and novelist of the realist period, Paul Laurence Dunbar dealt with issues of race at a time when most reform-minded Americans preferred to focus on other issues. Through his combination of writing in both standard English and black dialect, Dunbar delighted readers with his rich portrayals of the successes and struggles associated with African American life. Although he initially struggled to find the patronage and financial support required to develop a full-time literary career, Dunbar's subsequent professional relationship with literary critic and *Atlantic Monthly* editor William Dean Howells helped to firmly cement his literary credentials as the foremost African American writer of his generation. As with Chopin and Harding, Dunbar's writing highlighted parts of the American experience that were not well understood by the dominant demographic of the country. In their work, these authors provided readers with insights into a world that was not necessarily familiar to them and also gave hidden communities—be it iron mill workers, southern women, or African American men—a sense of voice.

Mark Twain's [lampoon of author Horatio Alger](#) demonstrates Twain's commitment to realism by mocking the myth set out by Alger, whose stories followed a common theme in which a poor but honest boy goes from rags to riches through a combination of "luck and pluck." See how Twain twists Alger's hugely popular storyline in this piece of satire.



## Kate Chopin: An Awakening in an Unpopular Time

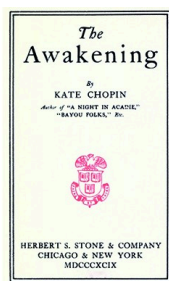
Author Kate Chopin grew up in the American South and later moved to St. Louis, where she began writing stories to make a living after the death of her husband. She published her works throughout the late 1890s, with stories appearing in literary magazines and local papers. It was her second novel, *The Awakening*, which gained her notoriety and criticism in her lifetime, and ongoing literary fame after her death.

*The Awakening*, set in the New Orleans society that Chopin knew well, tells the story of a woman struggling with the constraints of marriage who ultimately seeks her own fulfillment over the needs of her family. The book deals far more openly than most novels of the day with questions of women's sexual desires. It also flouted nineteenth-century conventions by looking at the protagonist's struggles with the traditional role expected of women.

While a few contemporary reviewers saw merit in the book, most criticized it as immoral and unseemly. It was censored, called “pure poison,” and critics railed against Chopin herself. While Chopin wrote squarely in the tradition of realism that was popular at this time, her work covered ground that was considered “too real” for comfort. After the negative reception of the novel, Chopin retreated from public life and discontinued writing. She died five years after



(a)



(b)

Critics railed against Kate Chopin, the author of the 1899 novel *The Awakening*, criticizing its stark portrayal of a woman struggling with societal confines and her own desires. In the twentieth century, scholars rediscovered Chopin's work and *The Awakening* is now considered part of the canon of American literature.



its publication. After her death, Chopin's work was largely ignored, until scholars rediscovered it in the late twentieth century, and her books and stories came back into print. *The Awakening* in particular has been recognized as vital to the earliest edges of the modern feminist movement.

Excerpts from [interviews](#) with David Chopin, Kate Chopin's grandson, and a scholar who studies her work provide interesting perspectives on the author and her views.

## CRITICS OF MODERN AMERICA

While many Americans at this time, both everyday working people and theorists, felt the changes of the era would lead to improvements and opportunities, there were critics of the emerging social shifts as well. Although less popular than Twain and London, authors such as Edward Bellamy, Henry George, and Thorstein Veblen were also influential in spreading critiques of the industrial age. While their critiques were quite distinct from each other, all three believed that the industrial age was a step in the wrong direction for the country.

In the 1888 novel *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*, Edward Bellamy portrays a utopian America in the year 2000, with the country living in peace and harmony after abandoning the capitalist model and moving to a socialist state. In the book, Bellamy predicts the future advent of credit cards, cable entertainment, and “super-store” cooperatives that resemble a modern day Wal-Mart. *Looking Backward* proved to be a popular bestseller (third only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Ben Hur* among late nineteenth-century



publications) and appealed to those who felt the industrial age of big business was sending the country in the wrong direction. Eugene Debs, who led the national Pullman Railroad Strike in 1894, later commented on how Bellamy's work influenced him to adopt socialism as the answer to the exploitative industrial capitalist model. In addition, Bellamy's work spurred the publication of no fewer than thirty-six additional books or articles by other writers, either supporting Bellamy's outlook or directly criticizing it. In 1897, Bellamy felt compelled to publish a sequel, entitled *Equality*, in which he further explained ideas he had previously introduced concerning educational reform and women's equality, as well as a world of vegetarians who speak a universal language.

Another author whose work illustrated the criticisms of the day was nonfiction writer Henry George, an economist best known for his 1879 work *Progress and Poverty*, which criticized the inequality found in an industrial economy. He suggested that, while people should own that which they create, all land and natural resources should belong to all equally, and should be taxed through a "single land tax" in order to disincentivize private land ownership. His thoughts influenced many economic progressive reformers, as well as led directly to the creation of the now-popular board game, Monopoly.

Another critique of late nineteenth-century American capitalism was Thorstein Veblen, who lamented in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) that capitalism created a middle class more preoccupied with its own comfort and consumption than with maximizing production. In coining the phrase "conspicuous consumption," Veblen identified the means by which one class of nonproducers exploited the working class that produced the goods for their consumption. Such practices, including the creation of business trusts, served only to create a greater divide between the haves and have-nots in American society, and resulted in economic inefficiencies that required correction or reform.



## Section Summary

Americans were overwhelmed by the rapid pace and scale of change at the close of the nineteenth century. Authors and thinkers tried to assess the meaning of the country's seismic shifts in culture and society through their work. Fiction writers often used realism in an attempt to paint an accurate portrait of how people were living at the time. Proponents of economic developments and cultural changes cited social Darwinism as an acceptable model to explain why some people succeeded and others failed, whereas other philosophers looked more closely at Darwin's work and sought to apply a model of proof and pragmatism to all ideas and institutions. Other sociologists and philosophers criticized the changes of the era, citing the inequities found in the new industrial economy and its negative effects on workers.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1015>

### *Review Question*

1. In what ways did writers, photographers, and visual



artists begin to embrace more realistic subjects in their work? How were these responses to the advent of the industrial age and the rise of cities?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The growth of the industrial economy and the dramatic growth of cities created new, harsh realities that were often hidden from the public eye. Writers and artists, responding both to this fact and to the sentimentalism that characterized the writing and art of their predecessors, began to depict subjects that reflected the new truth. Photographers like Jacob Riis sought to present to the public the realities of working-class life and labor. Novelists began to portray true-to-life vignettes in their stories. Visual artists such as George Bellows, Edward Hopper, and Robert Henri formed the Ashcan School of Art, which depicted the often gritty realities of working-class city life, leisure, and entertainment.



## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. What triumphs did the late nineteenth century witness in the realms of industrial growth, urbanization, and technological innovation? What challenges did these developments pose for urban dwellers, workers, and recent immigrants? How did city officials and everyday citizens respond to these challenges?
2. What were the effects of urbanization on the working, middle, and elite classes of American society? Conversely, how did the different social classes and their activities change the scope, character, and use of urban spaces?
3. How do you think that different classes of city dwellers would have viewed the City Beautiful movement? What potential benefits and drawbacks of this new direction in urban planning might members of each class have cited?
4. How was Darwin's work on the evolution of species exploited by proponents of the industrial age? Why might they have latched on to this idea in particular?
5. Historians often mine the arts for clues to the social, cultural, political, and intellectual shifts that characterized a given era. How do the many works of visual art, literature, and social philosophy that emerged from this period reflect the massive changes that were taking place? How were Americans—both those who created these works and those who read or viewed them—struggling to understand the new reality through art, literature, and scholarship?



## *Glossary*

**instrumentalism** a theory promoted by John Dewey, who believed that education was key to the search for the truth about ideals and institutions

**naturalism** a theory of realism that states that the laws of nature and the natural world were the only relevant laws governing humanity

**pragmatism** a doctrine supported by philosopher William James, which held that Americans needed to experiment and find the truth behind underlying institutions, religions, and ideas in American life, rather than accepting them on faith

**realism** a collection of theories and ideas that sought to understand the underlying changes in the United States during the late nineteenth century



# 51. Assignment: How the Other Half Lives

Journalist Jacob Riis wrote a famous book, *How the Other Half Lives*, to shed light on just how bad conditions were in the slums and poorest areas of America's rapidly growing cities.

After reading the [excerpt](#), be prepared to discuss the following:

- Riis identifies three major factors that led to the development of the New York Slums. What are they?
- For each factor provide two separate passages from the text in which Riis discusses that factor and its role in creating slums.

Note: Give me the *causes* of the slums, not the *consequences* of the slums.



PART IX

# URBANIZATION READER







## 52. Primary Source Images: Life in Industrial America

The turn of the twentieth century witnessed the triumph of American industrialization and the rise of “big business,” large corporations, run by trained bureaucrats and salaried managers, doing national and international business. Sweeping changes washed over the country as new industrial modes of production revolutionized American life. The rise of cities, the evolution of American immigration, the transformation of American labor, the further making of a mass culture, the creation of great concentrated wealth, the growth of vast city slums, the conquest of the West, the emergence of a middle class, the problem of poverty, the triumph of big business, widening inequalities, battles between capital and labor, the final destruction of independent farming, breakthrough technologies, environmental destruction: industrialization created a new America. The following documents depict some of that radical change.



## Mulberry Street, New York City (ca. 1900)



"Mulberry Street, New York City," ca. 1900, Library of Congress

At the turn of the century, New York City's Lower East Side became the most densely packed urban area in the world. This colorized photomechanical print from the Detroit Photographic depicts daily life on Mulberry Street, the area's central artery.

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## Luna Park



Visitors to Coney Island's Luna Park, ca.1910-1915. Via Library of Congress (LC-B2- 2240-13).

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Amusement-hungry Americans flocked to new entertainments at the turn of the twentieth century. In this early-twentieth century photograph, visitors enjoy Luna Park, one of the original amusement parks on Brooklyn's famous Coney Island.



## 53. Primary Source: Andrew Carnegie on “The Triumph of America” (1885)

*Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie celebrated and explored American economic progress in this 1885 article, later reprinted in his 1886 book, Triumphant Democracy.*

The old nations of the earth creep on at a snail's pace; the Republic thunders past with the rush of the express. The United States, the growth of a single century, has already reached the foremost rank among nations, and is destined soon to out-distance all others in the race. In population, in wealth, in annual savings, and in public credit; in freedom from debt, in agriculture, and in manufactures, America already leads the civilized world.

...

Into the distant future of this giant nation we need not seek to peer; but if we cast a glance forward, as we have done backward, for only fifty years, and assume that in that short interval no serious change will occur, the astounding fact startles us that in 1935, fifty years from now, when many in manhood will still be living, one hundred and eighty millions of English-speaking republicans will exist under one flag and possess more than two hundred and fifty thousand millions of dollars, or fifty thousand millions sterling of national wealth. Eighty years ago the whole of America and Europe did not contain so many people; and, if Europe and America continue their normal growth, it will be little more than another eighty years ere the mighty Republic may boast as many loyal citizens as all the rulers of Europe combined, for before the year 1980 Europe and America will each have a population of about six hundred millions.

The causes which have led to the rapid growth and



aggrandizement of this latest addition to the family of nations constitute one of the most interesting problems in the social history of mankind. What has brought about such stupendous results — so unparalleled a development of a nation within so ethnic character of the people, the topographical and climatic conditions under which they developed, and the influence of political institutions founded upon the equality of the citizen.

Certain writers in the past have maintained that the ethnic type of a people has less influence upon its growth as a nation than the conditions of life under which it is developing. The modern ethnologist knows better. We have only to imagine what America would be today if she had fallen, in the beginning, into the hands of any other people than the colonizing British, to see how vitally important is this question of race. ...

The second, and perhaps equally important factor in the problem of the rapid advancement of this branch of the British race, is the superiority of the conditions under which it has developed. The home which has fallen to its lot, a domain more magnificent than has cradled any other race in the history of the world ...

The unity of the American people is further powerfully promoted by the foundation upon which the political structure rests, the equality of the citizen. There is not one shred of privilege to be met with anywhere in all the laws. One man's right is every man's right. The flag is the guarantor and symbol of equality. The people are not emasculated by being made to feel that their own country decrees their inferiority, and holds them unworthy of privileges accorded to others. No ranks, no titles, no hereditary dignities, and therefore no classes. Suffrage is universal, and votes are of equal weight. Representatives are paid, and political life and usefulness thereby thrown open to all. Thus there is brought about a community of interests and aims which a Briton, accustomed to monarchical and aristocratic institutions, dividing the people into classes with separate interests, aims, thoughts, and feelings, can only with difficulty understand.

The free common school system of the land is probably, after all,



the greatest single power in the unifying process which is producing the new American race. Through the crucible of a good common English education, furnished free by the State, pass the various racial elements — children of Irishmen, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and Swedes, side by side with the native American, all to be fused into one, in language, in thought, in feeling, and in patriotism. The Irish boy loses his brogue, and the German child learns English. The sympathies suited to the feudal systems of Europe, which they inherit from their fathers, pass off as dross, leaving behind the pure gold of the only noble political creed: "All men are created free and equal." Taught now to live and work for the common weal, and not for the maintenance of a royal family or an overbearing aristocracy, not for the continuance of a social system which ranks them beneath an arrogant class of drones, children of Russian and German serfs, of Irish evicted tenants, Scotch crofters, and other victims of feudal tyranny, are translated into republican Americans, and are made in one love for a country which provides equal rights and privileges for all her children. There is no class so intensely patriotic, so wildly devoted to the Republic as the naturalized citizen and his child, for little does the native-born citizen know of the value of rights which have never been denied. Only the man born abroad, like myself, under institutions which insult him at his birth, can know the full meaning of Republicanism.

...

It is these causes which render possible the growth of a great homogeneous nation, alike in race, language, literature, interest, patriotism — an empire of such overwhelming power and proportions as to require neither army nor navy to ensure its safety, and a people so educated and advanced as to value the victories of peace.

Source: Andrew Carnegie, *Triumphant Democracy: Or, Fifty Years' March of the Republic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 1-22.



## 54. Primary Source: Henry Grady on the New South (1886)

*Atlanta newspaperman and apostle of the “New South,” Henry Grady, won national recognition for his December 21, 1886 speech to the New England Society in New York City.*

“There was a South of slavery and secession — that South is dead. There is a South of union and freedom — that South, thank God, is living, breathing, growing every hour.” These words, delivered from the immortal lips of Benjamin H. Hill, at Tammany Hall, in 1866, true then and truer now, I shall make my text to-night.

...

The old South rested everything on slavery and agriculture, unconscious that these could neither give nor maintain healthy growth. The new South presents a perfect democracy, the oligarchs leading in the popular movement; a social system compact and closely knitted, less splendid on the surface, but stronger at the core; a hundred farms for every plantation, fifty homes for every palace; and a diversified industry that meets the complex needs of this complex age.

The new South is enamored of her new work. Her soul is stirred with the breath of a new life. The light of a grander day is falling fair on her face. She is thrilling with the consciousness of growing power and prosperity. As she stands upright, full-statured and equal among the people of the earth, breathing the keen air and looking out upon the expanded horizon, she understands that her emancipation came because, through the inscrutable wisdom of God, her honest purpose was crossed and her brave armies were beaten.

This is said in no spirit of time-serving or apology. The South has



nothing for which to apologize. She believes that the late struggle between the States was war and not rebellion, revolution and not conspiracy, and that her convictions were as honest as yours. I should be unjust to the dauntless spirit of the South and to my own convictions if I did not make this plain in this presence. The South has nothing to take back.

In my native town of Athens is a monument that crowns its central hill — a plain, white shaft. Deep cut into its shining side is a name dear to me above the names of men — that of a brave and simple man who died in brave and simple faith. Not for all the glories of New England, from Plymouth Rock all the way, would I exchange the heritage he left me in his soldier's death. To the foot of that shaft I shall send my children's children to reverence him who ennobled their name with his heroic blood. But, sir, speaking from the shadow of that memory which I honor as I do nothing else on earth, I say that the cause in which he suffered and for which he gave his life was adjudged by a higher and fuller wisdom than his or mine, and I am glad that the omniscient God held the balance of battle in His Almighty hand, and that human slavery was swept forever from American soil — that the American Union was saved from the wreck of war.

This message, Mr. President, comes to you from consecrated ground. Every foot of soil about the city in which I live is sacred as a battle ground of the Republic. Every hill that invests it is hallowed to you by the blood of your brothers who died for your victory, and doubly hallowed to us by the blood of those who died hopeless, but undaunted, in defeat — sacred soil to all of us, rich with memories that make us purer and stronger and better, silent but stanch witnesses in its red desolation of the matchless valor of American hearts and the deathless glory of American arms, speaking an eloquent witness in its white peace and prosperity to the indissoluble union of American States and the imperishable brotherhood of the American people.

*Source: Life and Labors of Henry W. Grady, His Speeches, Writings, Etc. (Atlanta: J. C. Hudgins & Co., 1890), 99-116.*



# 55. Primary Source: The Gospel of Wealth, 1889

**Andrew Carnegie “The Gospel of Wealth” (1889)**

## I. THE PROBLEM OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF WEALTH

The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship. The conditions of human life have not only been changed, but revolutionized, within the past few hundred years. In former days there was little difference between the dwelling, dress, food, and environment of the chief and those of his retainers. . . . The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us to-day measures the change which has come with civilization. This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is well, say, essential, for the progress of the race that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that none should be so. Much better this great irregularity than universal squalor. Without wealth there can be no Meccenas.

[T]o-day the world obtains commodities of excellent quality at prices which even the preceding generation would have deemed incredible. In the commercial world similar causes have produced similar results, and the race is benefited thereby. The poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford. What were the luxuries have become the necessities of life. . . .



Objections to the foundations upon which society is based are not in order, because the condition of the race is better with these than it has been with any other which has been tried. . . . No evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have had the ability and energy to produce it. . . .

We start, then, with a condition of affairs under which the best interests of the race are promoted, but which inevitably gives wealth to the few. . . . What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few? . . .

There are but three modes in which surplus wealth can be disposed of. It can be left to the families of the decedents; or it can be bequeathed for public purposes; or, finally, it can be administered by its possessors during their lives. Under the first and second modes most of the wealth of the world that has reached the few has hitherto been applied. . . .

There remains, then, only one mode of using great fortunes; but in this we have the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth, the reconciliation of the rich and the poor—a reign of harmony, another ideal, differing, indeed, from that of the Communist in requiring only the further evolution of existing conditions, not the total overthrow of our civilization. It is founded upon the most intense Individualism. . . . Under its sway we shall have an ideal State, in which the surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, property of the many, because administering for the common good; and this wealth, passes through the hands of the few, can be made much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if distributed in small sums to the people themselves. Even the poorest can be made to see this, and to agree that great sums gathered by some of their fellow-citizens—spent for public purposes, from which masses reap the principal benefit, are more valuable to them than if scattered among themselves in trifling amounts through the course of many years.

If we consider the results which flow from the Cooper Institute, for instance. . . , and compare these with those who would have



ensured for the good of the man form an equal sum distributed by Mr. Cooper in his lifetime in the form of wages, which the highest form of distributing, being work done and not for charity, we can estimate of the possibilities for the improvement of the race which lie embedded in the present law of the accumulation of wealth. . . .

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth: To set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and, after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community—the man of wealth thus becoming the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for them selves. . . .

In bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to rise the aids by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all. Neither the individual nor the race is improved by alms giving. Those worthy of assistance, except in rare cases, seldom require assistance. . . .

The rich man is thus almost restricted to following the examples of Peter Cooper, Enoch Pratt of Baltimore, Mr. Pratt of Brooklyn, Senator Stanford, and others, who know that the best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise—free libraries, parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain to give pleasure and improve the general condition of the people; in this manner returning their surplus wealth to the mass of their fellows in the forms best calculated to do them lasting good.

Thus is the problem of rich and poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free, the laws of distribution free.



Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor, intrusted for a season with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself. The best minds will thus have reached a stage in the development of the race in which it is clearly seen that there is no mode of disposing of surplus wealth creditable to thoughtful and earnest men into whose hands it flows, save by using it year by year for the general good. . . .

Such, in my opinion, is the true gospel concerning wealth, obedience to which is destined some day to solve the problem of the rich and the poor, and to bring "Peace on earth, among men good will."



## 56. Primary Source: Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “Lynch Law in America” (1900)

*Ida B. Wells-Barnett, born a slave in Mississippi, was a pioneering activist and journalist. She did much to expose the epidemic of lynching in the United States and her writing and research exploded many of the justifications—particularly the rape of white women by black men—commonly offered to justify the practice.*

Our country's national crime is lynching. It is not the creature of an hour, the sudden outburst of uncontrolled fury, or the unspeakable brutality of an insane mob. It represents the cool, calculating deliberation of intelligent people who openly avow that there is an “unwritten law” that justifies them in putting human beings to death without complaint under oath, without trial by jury, without opportunity to make defense, and without right of appeal.

...

... During the last ten years a new statute has been added to the “unwritten law.” This statute proclaims that for certain crimes or alleged crimes no negro shall be allowed a trial; that no white woman shall be compelled to charge an assault under oath or to submit any such charge to the investigation of a court of law. The result is that many men have been put to death whose innocence was afterward established; and to-day, under this reign of the “unwritten law,” no colored man, no matter what his reputation, is safe from lynching if a white woman, no matter what her standing or motive, cares to charge him with insult or assault.

It is considered a sufficient excuse and reasonable justification to put a prisoner to death under this “unwritten law” for the frequently repeated charge that these lynching horrors are necessary to prevent crimes against women. The sentiment of the country has



been appealed to, in describing the isolated condition of white families in thickly populated negro districts; and the charge is made that these homes are in as great danger as if they were surrounded by wild beasts. And the world has accepted this theory without let or hindrance. ... No matter that our laws presume every man innocent until he is proved guilty; no matter that it leaves a certain class of individuals completely at the mercy of another class; ... no matter that mobs make a farce of the law and a mockery of justice; no matter that hundreds of boys are being hardened in crime and schooled in vice by the repetition of such scenes before their eyes—if a white woman declares herself insulted or assaulted, some life must pay the penalty, with all the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition and all the barbarism of the Middle Ages. The world looks on and says it is well.

Not only are two hundred men and women put to death annually, on the average, in this country by mobs, but these lives are taken with the greatest publicity. In many instances the leading citizens aid and abet by their presence when they do not participate, and the leading journals inflame the public mind to the lynching point with scare-head articles and offers of rewards. Whenever a burning is advertised to take place, the railroads run excursions, photographs are taken, and the same jubilee is indulged in that characterized the public hangings of one hundred years ago. There is, however, this difference: in those old days the multitude that stood by was permitted only to gully or jeer. The nineteenth century lynching mob cuts off ears, toes, and fingers, strips off flesh, and distributes portions of the body as souvenirs among the crowd. If the leaders of the mob are so minded, coal-oil is poured over the body and the victim is then roasted to death. This has been done in Texarkana and Paris, Tex., in Bardswell, Ky., and in Newman, Ga. In Paris the officers of the law delivered the prisoner to the mob. The mayor gave the school children a holiday and the railroads ran excursion trains so that the people might see a human being burned to death. In Texarkana, the year before, men and boys amused themselves by cutting off strips of flesh and thrusting knives into their helpless



victim. At Newman, Ga., of the present year, the mob tried every conceivable torture to compel the victim to cry out and confess, before they set fire to the faggots that burned him. But their trouble was all in vain—he never uttered a cry, and they could not make him confess.

This condition of affairs were brutal enough and horrible enough if it were true that lynchings occurred only because of the commission of crimes against women—as is constantly declared by ministers, editors, lawyers, teachers, statesmen, and even by women themselves. ... [T]hey publish at every possible opportunity this excuse for lynching, hoping thereby not only to palliate their own crime but at the same time to prove the negro a moral monster and unworthy of the respect and sympathy of the civilized world. But this alleged reason adds to the deliberate injustice of the mob's work. Instead of lynchings being caused by assaults upon women, the statistics show that not one-third of the victims of lynchings are even charged with such crimes. ... Quite a number of the one-third alleged cases of assault that have been personally investigated by the writer have shown that there was no foundation in fact for the charges; yet the claim is not made that there were no real culprits among them. The negro has been too long associated with the white man not to have copied his vices as well as his virtues. But the negro resents and utterly repudiates the effort to blacken his good name by asserting that assaults upon women are peculiar to his race. The negro has suffered far more from the commission of this crime against the women of his race by white men than the white race has ever suffered through his crimes. Very scant notice is taken of the matter when this is the condition of affairs. What becomes a crime deserving capital punishment when the tables are turned is a matter of small moment when the negro woman is the accusing party. ...

Source: Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "Lynch Law in America," *The Arena* 23 (January 1900), 15-24. [Google Books](#).



## 57. Primary Source: Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918)

*Henry Adams, the great grandson of President John Adams, the grandson of President John Quincy Adams, the son of a major American diplomat, and an accomplished Harvard historian, writing in the third person, describes his experience at the Great Exposition in Paris in 1900 and writes of his encounter with “forces totally new.”*

Until the Great Exposition closed its doors in November, Adams haunted it, aching to absorb knowledge, and helpless to find it. He would have liked to know how much of it could have been grasped by the best-informed man in the world. While he was thus meditating chaos, Langley came by, and showed it to him. ... He led his pupil directly to the forces. His chief interest was in new motors to make his airship feasible, and he taught Adams the astonishing complexities of the new Daimler motor, and of the automobile, which, since 1893, had become a night-mare at a hundred kilometres an hour, almost as destructive as the electric tram which was only ten years older; and threatening to become as terrible as the locomotive steam-engine itself, which was almost exactly Adams's own age.

Then he showed his scholar the great hall of dynamos, and explained how little he knew about electricity or force of any kind, even of his own special sun, which spouted heat in inconceivable volume ... As he grew accustomed to the great gallery of machines, he began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross. The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within arm's-length at some vertiginous speed, and barely murmuring... Before the end,



one began to pray to it; inherited instinct taught the natural expression of man before silent and infinite force. ...

...

Historians undertake to arrange sequences,—called stories, or histories,—assuming in silence a relation of cause and effect. These assumptions, hidden in the depths of dusty libraries, have been astounding, but commonly unconscious and childlike; so much so, that if any captious critic were to drag them to light, historians would probably reply, with one voice, that they had never supposed themselves required to know what they were talking about. ... He found himself lying in the Gallery of Machines at the Great Exposition of 1900, his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new.

Source: Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1918).



## 58. Primary Source: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper” (1913)

*Charlotte Perkins Gilman won much attention in 1892 for publishing “The Yellow Wallpaper,” a semi-autobiographical short story dealing with mental health and contemporary social expectations for women. In the following piece, Gilman reflected on writing and publishing the piece.*

Many and many a reader has asked that. When the story first came out, in the *New England Magazine* about 1891, a Boston physician made protest in *The Transcript*. Such a story ought not to be written, he said; it was enough to drive anyone mad to read it.

Another physician, in Kansas I think, wrote to say that it was the best description of incipient insanity he had ever seen, and—begging my pardon—had I been there?

Now the story of the story is this:

For many years I suffered from a severe and continuous nervous breakdown tending to melancholia—and beyond. During about the third year of this trouble I went, in devout faith and some faint stir of hope, to a noted specialist in nervous diseases, the best known in the country. This wise man put me to bed and applied the rest cure, to which a still-good physique responded so promptly that he concluded there was nothing much the matter with me, and sent me home with solemn advice to “live as domestic a life as far as possible,” to “have but two hours’ intellectual life a day,” and “never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again” as long as I lived. This was in 1887.

I went home and obeyed those directions for some three months,



and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin that I could see over.

Then, using the remnants of intelligence that remained, and helped by a wise friend, I cast the noted specialist's advice to the winds and went to work again—work, the normal life of every human being; work, in which is joy and growth and service, without which one is a pauper and a parasite—ultimately recovering some measure of power.

Being naturally moved to rejoicing by this narrow escape, I wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*, with its embellishments and additions, to carry out the ideal (I never had hallucinations or objections to my mural decorations) and sent a copy to the physician who so nearly drove me mad. He never acknowledged it.

The little book is valued by alienists and as a good specimen of one kind of literature. It has, to my knowledge, saved one woman from a similar fate—so terrifying her family that they let her out into normal activity and she recovered.

But the best result is this. Many years later I was told that the great specialist had admitted to friends of his that he had altered his treatment of neurasthenia since reading *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

It was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked.

Source: *The Forerunner* (October, 1913).



## 59. Primary Source: Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)

*Jacob Riis, a Danish immigrant, combined photography and journalism into a powerful indictment of poverty in America. His 1890, How the Other Half Lives shocked Americans with its raw depictions of urban slums. Here, he describes poverty in New York.*

Long ago it was said that “one half of the world does not know how the other half lives.” That was true then. It did not know because it did not care. The half that was on top cared little for the struggles, and less for the fate of those who were underneath, so long as it was able to hold them there and keep its own seat. There came a time when the discomfort and crowding below were so great, and the consequent upheavals so violent, that it was no longer an easy thing to do, and then the upper half fell to inquiring what was the matter. Information on the subject has been accumulating rapidly since, and the whole world has had its hands full answering for its old ignorance.

In New York ... the boundary line of the Other Half lies through the tenements. ... To-day three-fourths of its people live in the tenements, and the nineteenth century drift of the population to the cities is sending ever-increasing multitudes to crowd them. The fifteen thousand tenant houses that were the despair of the sanitarian in the past generation have swelled into thirty-seven thousand, and more than twelve hundred thousand persons call them home. The one way out he saw—rapid transit to the suburbs—has brought no relief. We know now that there is no way out; that the “system” that was the evil offspring of public neglect and private greed has come to stay, a storm-centre forever of our civilization. Nothing is left but to make the best of a bad bargain.



What the tenements are and how they grow to what they are, we shall see hereafter. The story is dark enough, drawn from the plain public records, to send a chill to any heart. If it shall appear that the sufferings and the sins of the "other half," and the evil they breed, are but as a just punishment upon the community that gave it no other choice, it will be because that is the truth. The boundary line lies there because, while the forces for good on one side vastly outweigh the bad—it were not well otherwise—in the tenements all the influences make for evil; because they are the hot-beds of the epidemics that carry death to rich and poor alike; the nurseries of pauperism and crime that fill our jails and police courts; that throw off a scum of forty thousand human wrecks to the island asylums and workhouses year by year; that turned out in the last eight years a round half million beggars to prey upon our charities; that maintain a standing army of ten thousand tramps with all that that implies; because, above all, they touch the family life with deadly moral contagion. This is their worst crime, inseparable from the system. That we have to own it the child of our own wrong does not excuse it, even though it gives it claim upon our utmost patience and tenderest charity.

What are you going to do about it? is the question of to-day. It was asked once of our city in taunting defiance by a band of political cutthroats, the legitimate outgrowth of life on the tenement-house level. Law and order found the answer then and prevailed. With our enormously swelling population held in this galling bondage, will that answer always be given? It will depend on how fully the situation that prompted the challenge is grasped. Forty per cent of the distress among the poor, said a recent official report, is due to drunkenness. But the first legislative committee ever appointed to probe this sore went deeper down and uncovered its roots. The "conclusion forced itself upon it that certain conditions and associations of human life and habitation are the prolific parents of corresponding habits and morals," and it recommended "the prevention of drunkenness by providing for every man a clean and comfortable home. Years after, a sanitary inquiry brought to light



the fact that “more than one-half of the tenements with two-thirds of their population were held by owners who made the keeping of them a business, generally a speculation. The owner was seeking a certain percentage on his outlay, and that percentage very rarely fell below fifteen per cent., and frequently exceeded thirty. . . . The complaint was universal among the tenants that they were entirely smeared for, and that the only answer to their requests to have the place put in order by repairs and necessary improvements was that they must pay their rent or leave. The agent’s instructions were simple but emphatic: ‘Collect the rent in advance, or, failing, eject the occupants.’” Upon such a stock grew this upas-tree. Small wonder the fruit is bitter. The remedy that shall be an effective answer to the coming appeal for justice must proceed from the public conscience. Neither legislation nor charity can cover the ground. The greed of capital that wrought the evil must itself undo it, as far as it can now be undone. Homes must be built for the working masses by those who employ their labor; but tenements must cease to be “good property” in the old, heartless sense. “Philanthropy and five per cent.” is the penance exacted.

If this is true from a purely economic point of view, what then of the outlook from the Christian standpoint? Not long ago a great meeting was held in this city, of all denominations of religious faith, to discuss the question how to lay hold of these teeming masses in the tenements with Christian influences, to which they are now too often strangers. Might not the conference have found in the warning of one Brooklyn builder, who has invested his capital on this plan and made it pay more than a money interest, a hint worth heeding: “How shall the love of God be understood by those who have been nurtured in sight only of the greed of man?”

[Source: Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890).]



PART X

# POLITICS IN THE GILDED AGE, 1870-1900







## 60. Introduction



L. Frank Baum's story of a Kansas girl and the magical land of Oz has become a classic of both film and screen, but it may have originated in part as an allegory of late nineteenth-century politics and the rise of the Populist movement.

L. Frank Baum was a journalist who rose to prominence at the end of the nineteenth century. Baum's most famous story, *The Wizard of Oz*, was published in 1900, but "Oz" first came into being years earlier, when he told a story to a group of schoolchildren visiting his newspaper office in South Dakota. He made up a tale of a wonderful land, and, searching for a name, he allegedly glanced down at his file cabinet, where the bottom drawer was labeled "O-Z." Thus was born the world of Oz, where a girl from struggling Kansas hoped to get help from a "wonderful wizard" who proved to be a fraud. Since then, many have speculated that the story reflected Baum's political sympathies for the Populist Party, which galvanized midwestern



and southern farmers' demands for federal reform. Whether he intended the story to act as an allegory for the plight of farmers and workers in late nineteenth-century America, or whether he simply wanted to write an "American fairy tale" set in the heartland, Populists looked for answers much like Dorothy did. And the government in Washington proved to be meek rather than magical.

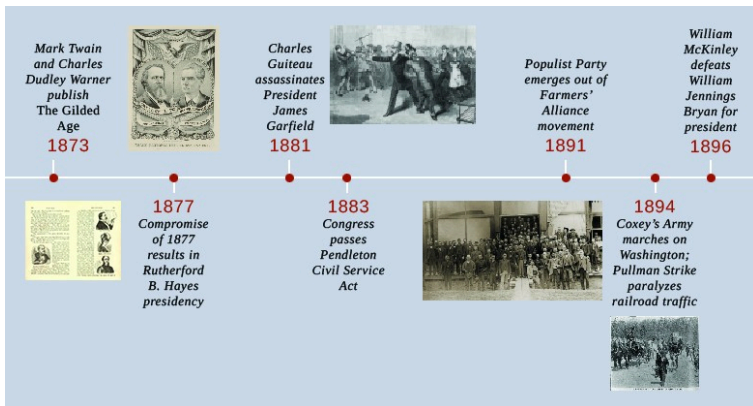


# 6I. Political Corruption in Postbellum America

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the national political scene during the Gilded Age
- Analyze why many critics considered the Gilded Age a period of ineffective national leadership



The challenges Americans faced in the post-Civil War era extended far beyond the issue of Reconstruction and the challenge of an economy without slavery. Political and social repair of the nation was paramount, as was the correlative question of race relations in



the wake of slavery. In addition, farmers faced the task of cultivating arid western soils and selling crops in an increasingly global commodities market, while workers in urban industries suffered long hours and hazardous conditions at stagnant wages.

Farmers, who still composed the largest percentage of the U.S. population, faced mounting debts as agricultural prices spiraled downward. These lower prices were due in large part to the cultivation of more acreage using more productive farming tools and machinery, global market competition, as well as price manipulation by commodity traders, exorbitant railroad freight rates, and costly loans upon which farmers depended. For many, their hard work resulted merely in a continuing decline in prices and even greater debt. These farmers, and others who sought leaders to heal the wounds left from the Civil War, organized in different states, and eventually into a national third-party challenge, only to find that, with the end of Reconstruction, federal political power was stuck in a permanent partisan stalemate, and corruption was widespread at both the state and federal levels.

As the Gilded Age unfolded, presidents had very little power, due in large part to highly contested elections in which relative popular majorities were razor-thin. Two presidents won the Electoral College without a popular majority. Further undermining their efficacy was a Congress comprising mostly politicians operating on the principle of political patronage. Eventually, frustrated by the lack of leadership in Washington, some Americans began to develop their own solutions, including the establishment of new political parties and organizations to directly address the problems they faced. Out of the frustration wrought by war and presidential political impotence, as well as an overwhelming pace of industrial change, farmers and workers formed a new grassroots reform movement that, at the end of the century, was eclipsed by an even larger, mostly middle-class, Progressive movement. These reform efforts did bring about change—but not without a fight.



## THE GILDED AGE

Mark Twain coined the phrase “Gilded Age” in a book he co-authored with Charles Dudley Warner in 1873, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*. The book satirized the corruption of post-Civil War society and politics. Indeed, popular excitement over national growth and industrialization only thinly glossed over the stark economic inequalities and various degrees of corruption of the era. Politicians of the time largely catered to business interests in exchange for political support and wealth. Many participated in graft and bribery, often justifying their actions with the excuse that corruption was too widespread for a successful politician to resist. The machine politics of the cities, specifically Tammany Hall in New York, illustrate the kind of corrupt, but effective, local and national politics that dominated the era.



had, too bad! Oh, it is bound to be found out—nothing can prevent it—nothing!”

Then he threw himself into his chair and said:

“My dear Mr. Brewster, this is dreadful—perfectly dreadful. It will be found out. It is bound to tarnish the good name of the company; our credit will be seriously, most seriously impaired. How could you be so thoughtless—the men ought to have been paid though it beggared us all!”

“They ought, ought they? Then why the devil—my name is not Hyerston, by the way—why the mischief didn’t the company—why what in the nation ever become of the appropriation? Where is that appropriation?—if a stockholder may make so bold as to ask.”

“The appropriation?—that paltry \$200,000, do you mean?”

“Of course—but I didn’t know that \$200,000 was so very paltry. Though I grant, of course, that it is not a large sum, strictly speaking. But where is it?”

“My dear sir, you surprise me. You surely cannot have had a large acquaintance with this sort of thing. Otherwise you would not have expected much of a result from a mere *indirect* appropriation like that. It was never intended for anything but a mere nest egg for the future and *real* appropriations to cluster around.”

“Indeed? Well, was it a myth, or was it a reality? Whatever become of it?”

“Why the matter is simple enough. A Congressional appropriation costs money. Just reflect, for instance. A majority of the House Committee, say \$10,000 apiece—\$40,000; a majority of the Senate Committee, the same each



CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE, \$10,000.

—say \$40,000; a little extra to one or two claimers of one or two such committees, say \$10,000 each—\$20,000; and there’s \$100,000 of the money gone, to begin with. Then, seven male lobbyists, at \$5,000 each—\$35,000; one female lobbyist, \$10,000; a high moral Congressman or Senator here and there—the high moral ones cost more, because they give tone to a measure—say ten of these at \$3,000 each, is \$30,000; then a lot of small fry country members who won’t vote for anything whatever without pay—say twenty at \$500 apiece, is \$10,000; a lot of dinners to members—say \$10,000 altogether; lot of jinnicks for Congressmen’s wives and children—those go a long way—you can’t spend too much money in that line—well, those things cost in all, say \$10,000—along there somewhere;—and then comes your printed documents—your maps, your tinted engravings, your pamphlets, your illuminated show cards, your advertisements in a hundred and fifty papers at ever so much a line—because you’ve got to keep the papers all right or



MALE LOBBYIST \$5,000.



FEMALE LOBBYIST \$10,000.



HIGH MORAL SENATOR \$3,000.

Pages from Mark Twain’s *The Gilded Age*, published in 1873. The illustrations in this chapter reveal the cost of doing business in Washington in this new age of materialism and corruption, with the cost of obtaining a female lobbyist’s support set at \$10,000, while that of a male lobbyist or a “high moral” senator can be had for \$3,000.

Nationally, between 1872 and 1896, the lack of clear popular mandates made presidents reluctant to venture beyond the interests of their traditional supporters. As a result, for nearly a quarter of a century, presidents had a weak hold on power, and legislators were reluctant to tie their political agendas to such weak leaders. On the contrary, weakened presidents were more susceptible to support various legislators’ and lobbyists’ agendas, as they owed tremendous favors to their political parties, as well as to key financial contributors, who helped them garner just enough votes to squeak into office through the Electoral College. As a result of this relationship, the rare pieces of legislation passed were largely



responses to the desires of businessmen and industrialists whose support helped build politicians' careers.

What was the result of this political malaise? Not surprisingly, almost nothing was accomplished on the federal level. However, problems associated with the tremendous economic growth during this time continued to mount. More Americans were moving to urban centers, which were unable to accommodate the massive numbers of working poor. Tenement houses with inadequate sanitation led to widespread illness. In rural parts of the country, people fared no better. Farmers were unable to cope with the challenges of low prices for their crops and exorbitant costs for everyday goods. All around the country, Americans in need of solutions turned further away from the federal government for help, leading to the rise of fractured and corrupt political groups.

## Mark Twain and the Gilded Age

Mark Twain wrote *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* with his neighbor, Charles Dudley Warner, as a satire about the corrupt politics and lust for power that he felt characterized American society at the time. The book, the only novel Twain ever co-authored, tells of the characters' desire to sell their land to the federal government and become rich. It takes aim at both the government in Washington and those Americans, in the South and elsewhere, whose lust for money and status among the newly rich in the nation's capital leads them to corrupt and foolish choices.





Mark Twain was a noted humorist, recognized by most Americans as the greatest writer of his day. He co-wrote the novel *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* with Charles Dudley Warner in 1873.

In the following conversation from Chapter Fifty-One of the book, Colonel Sellers instructs young Washington Hawkins on the routine practices of Congress:

“Now let’s figure up a little on, the preliminaries. I think Congress always tries to do as near right as it can, according to its lights. A man can’t ask any fairer than that. The first preliminary it always starts out on, is to clean itself, so to speak. It will arraign two or three dozen of its members, or



maybe four or five dozen, for taking bribes to vote for this and that and the other bill last winter.”

“It goes up into the dozens, does it?”

“Well, yes; in a free country likes ours, where any man can run for Congress and anybody can vote for him, you can’t expect immortal purity all the time—it ain’t in nature. Sixty or eighty or a hundred and fifty people are bound to get in who are not angels in disguise, as young Hicks the correspondent says; but still it is a very good average; very good indeed. . . . Well, after they have finished the bribery cases, they will take up cases of members who have bought their seats with money. That will take another four weeks.”

“Very good; go on. You have accounted for two-thirds of the session.”

“Next they will try each other for various smaller irregularities, like the sale of appointments to West Point cadetships, and that sort of thing— . . . ”

“How long does it take to disinfect itself of these minor impurities?”

“Well, about two weeks, generally.”

“So Congress always lies helpless in quarantine ten weeks of a session. That’s encouraging.”

The book was a success, in part because it amused people even as it excoriated the politics of the day. For this humor, as well as its astute analysis, Twain and Warner’s book still offers entertainment and insight today.

Visit the [PBS Scrap Book](#) for information on Mark Twain’s life and marriage at the time he wrote *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*.

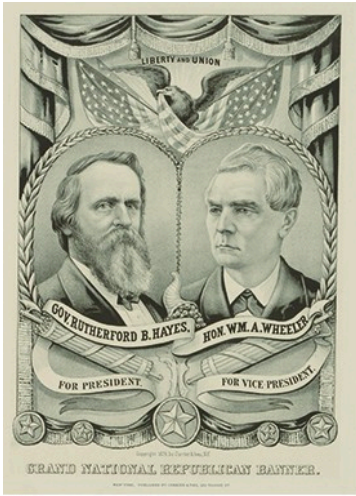


## THE ELECTION OF 1876 SETS THE TONE

In many ways, the presidential election of 1876 foreshadowed the politics of the era, in that it resulted in one of the most controversial results in all of presidential history. The country was in the middle of the economic downturn caused by the Panic of 1873, a downturn that would ultimately last until 1879, all but assuring that Republican incumbent Ulysses S. Grant would not be reelected. Instead, the Republican Party nominated a three-time governor from Ohio, Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes was a popular candidate who advocated for both “hard money”—an economy based upon gold currency transactions—to protect against inflationary pressures and civil service reform, that is, recruitment based upon merit and qualifications, which was to replace the practice of handing out government jobs as “spoils.” Most importantly, he had no significant political scandals in his past, unlike his predecessor Grant, who suffered through the *Crédit Mobilier of America* scandal. In this most notorious example of Gilded Age corruption, several congressmen accepted cash and stock bribes in return for appropriating inflated federal funds for the construction of the transcontinental railroad.

The Democrats likewise sought a candidate who could champion reform against growing political corruption. They found their man in Samuel J. Tilden, governor of New York and a self-made millionaire, who had made a successful political career fighting corruption in New York City, including spearheading the prosecution against Tammany Hall Boss William Tweed, who was later jailed. Both parties tapped into the popular mood of the day, each claiming to champion reform and promising an end to the corruption that had become rampant in Washington. Likewise, both parties promised an end to post-Civil War Reconstruction.





(a)



(b)

These campaign posters for Rutherford B. Hayes (a) and Samuel Tilden (b) underscore the tactics of each party, which remained largely unchanged, regardless of the candidates. The Republican placard highlights the party's role in preserving "liberty and union" in the wake of the Civil War, hoping to tap into the northern voters' pride in victory over secession. The Democratic poster addresses the economic turmoil and corruption of the day, specifically that of the Grant administration, promising "honesty, reform, and prosperity" for all.

The campaign was a typical one for the era: Democrats shone a spotlight on earlier Republican scandals, such as the Cr dit Mobilier affair, and Republicans relied upon the bloody shirt campaign, reminding the nation of the terrible human toll of the war against southern confederates who now reappeared in national politics under the mantle of the Democratic Party. President Grant previously had great success with the "bloody shirt" strategy in the 1868 election, when Republican supporters attacked Democratic candidate Horatio Seymour for his sympathy with New York City draft rioters during the war. In 1876, true to the campaign style of the day, neither Tilden nor Hayes actively campaigned for office,



instead relying upon supporters and other groups to promote their causes.

Fearing a significant African American and white Republican voter turnout in the South, particularly in the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which further empowered African Americans with protection in terms of public accommodations, Democrats relied upon white supremacist terror organizations to intimidate blacks and Republicans, including physically assaulting many while they attempted to vote. The Redshirts, based in Mississippi and the Carolinas, and the White League in Louisiana, relied upon intimidation tactics similar to the Ku Klux Klan but operated in a more open and organized fashion with the sole goal of restoring Democrats to political predominance in the South. In several instances, Redshirts would attack freedmen who attempted to vote, whipping them openly in the streets while simultaneously hosting barbecues to attract Democratic voters to the polls. Women throughout South Carolina began to sew red flannel shirts for the men to wear as a sign of their political views; women themselves began wearing red ribbons in their hair and bows about their waists.

The result of the presidential election, ultimately, was close. Tilden won the popular vote by nearly 300,000 votes; however, he had only 184 electoral votes, with 185 needed to proclaim formal victory. Three states, Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina were in dispute due to widespread charges of voter fraud and miscounting. Questions regarding the validity of one of the three electors in Oregon cast further doubt on the final vote; however, that state subsequently presented evidence to Congress confirming all three electoral votes for Hayes.

As a result of the disputed election, the House of Representatives established a special electoral commission to determine which candidate won the challenged electoral votes of these three states. In what later became known as the Compromise of 1877, Republican Party leaders offered southern Democrats an enticing deal. The offer was that if the commission found in favor of a Hayes victory, Hayes would order the withdrawal of the remaining U.S. troops



from those three southern states, thus allowing the collapse of the radical Reconstruction governments of the immediate post-Civil War era. This move would permit southern Democrats to end federal intervention and control their own states' fates in the wake of the end of slavery.

After weeks of deliberation, the electoral commission voted eight to seven along straight party lines, declaring Hayes the victor in each of the three disputed states. As a result, Hayes defeated Tilden in the electoral vote by a count of 185–184 and became the next president. By April of that year,



*Titled “A Truce not a Compromise,” this cartoon suggests the lack of consensus after the election of 1876 could have ended in another civil war.*

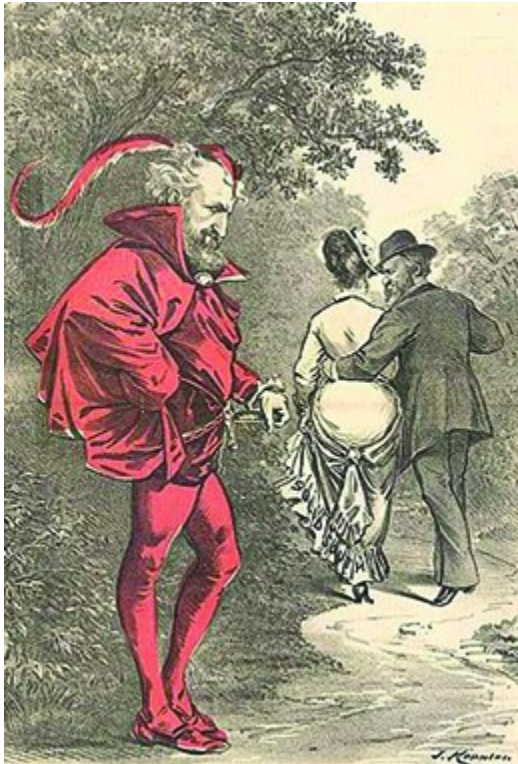
radical Reconstruction ended as promised, with the removal of federal troops from the final two Reconstruction states, South Carolina and Louisiana. Within a year, Redeemers—largely Southern Democrats—had regained control of the political and social fabric of the South.

Although unpopular among the voting electorate, especially among African Americans who referred to it as “The Great Betrayal,” the compromise exposed the willingness of the two major political parties to avoid a “stand-off” via a southern Democrat filibuster, which would have greatly prolonged the final decision regarding the election. Democrats were largely satisfied to end Reconstruction and maintain “home rule” in the South in exchange for control over the White House. Likewise, most realized that Hayes would likely be a one-term president at best and prove to be as ineffectual as his pre-Civil War predecessors.

Perhaps most surprising was the lack of even greater public outrage over such a transparent compromise, indicative of how little Americans expected of their national government. In an era where voter turnout remained relatively high, the two major



political parties remained largely indistinguishable in their agendas as well as their propensity for questionable tactics and backroom deals. Likewise, a growing belief in laissez-faire principles as opposed to reforms and government intervention (which many Americans believed contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War) led more Americans to accept the nature of an inactive federal government.



Powerful Republican Party leader Roscoe Conkling is shown here as the devil. Hayes walks off with the prize of the 1876 election, the South, personified as a woman. The cartoon, drawn by Joseph Keppler, has a caption that quotes Goethe: "Unto that Power he doth belong Which only doeth Right while ever willing Wrong."



## Section Summary

In the years following the Civil War, American politics were disjointed, corrupt, and, at the federal level, largely ineffective in terms of addressing the challenges that Americans faced. Local and regional politics, and the bosses who ran the political machines, dominated through systematic graft and bribery. Americans around the country recognized that solutions to the mounting problems they faced would not come from Washington, DC, but from their local political leaders. Thus, the cycle of federal ineffectiveness and machine politics continued through the remainder of the century relatively unabated.

Meanwhile, in the Compromise of 1877, an electoral commission declared Rutherford B. Hayes the winner of the contested presidential election in exchange for the withdrawal of federal troops from South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida. As a result, Southern Democrats were able to reestablish control over their home governments, which would have a tremendous impact on the direction of southern politics and society in the decades to come.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1016>



## *Review Question*

1. What accounted for the relative weakness of the federal government during this era?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The contested elections of the Gilded Age, in which margins were slim and two presidents were elected without winning the popular vote, meant that incumbent presidents often had only a weak hold on their power and were able to achieve little on the federal level. Some Americans began to establish new political parties and organizations to address their concerns, undermining the federal government further. Meanwhile, despite the widespread corruption that kept them running, urban political machines continued to achieve results for their constituents and maintain political strongholds on many cities.



## *Glossary*

**bloody shirt campaign** the strategy of Republican candidates to stress the sacrifices that the nation had to endure in its Civil War against Democratic southern secessionists

**civil service** the contrast to the spoils system, where political appointments were based on merit, not favoritism

**Gilded Age** the period in American history during which materialism, a quest for personal gain, and corruption dominated both politics and society



## 62. The Key Political Issues: Patronage, Tariffs, and Gold

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the difference between the spoils system and civil service, and discuss the importance of this issue in the period from 1872 to 1896
- Recognize the ways in which the issue of tariffs impacted different sectors of the economy in late nineteenth-century America
- Explain why Americans were split on the issue of a national gold standard versus free coinage of silver
- Explain why political patronage was a key issue for political parties in the late nineteenth century

Although Hayes' questionable ascendancy to the presidency did not create political corruption in the nation's capital, it did set the stage for politically motivated agendas and widespread inefficiency in the White House for the next twenty-four years. Weak president after weak president took office, and, as mentioned above, not one incumbent was reelected. The populace, it seemed, preferred the devil they *didn't* know to the one they did. Once elected, presidents had barely enough power to repay the political favors they owed to the individuals who ensured their narrow victories in cities and regions around the country. Their four years in office were spent repaying favors and managing the powerful relationships that put



them in the White House. Everyday Americans were largely left on their own. Among the few political issues that presidents routinely addressed during this era were ones of patronage, tariffs, and the nation's monetary system.

## PATRONAGE: THE SPOILS SYSTEM VS CIVIL SERVICE

At the heart of each president's administration was the protection of the spoils system, that is, the power of the president to practice widespread political patronage. Patronage, in this case, took the form of the president naming his friends and supporters to various political posts. Given the close calls in presidential elections during the era, the maintenance of political machinery and repaying favors with patronage was important to all presidents, regardless of party affiliation. This had been the case since the advent of a two-party political system and universal male suffrage in the

Jacksonian era. For example, upon assuming office in March 1829, President Jackson immediately swept employees from over nine hundred political offices, amounting to 10 percent of all federal appointments. Among the hardest-hit was the U.S. Postal Service,



*This political cartoon shows Andrew Jackson riding a pig, which is walking over “fraud,” “bribery,” and “spoils,” and feeding on “plunder.”*



which saw Jackson appoint his supporters and closest friends to over four hundred positions in the service.

As can be seen in the table below, every single president elected from 1876 through 1892 won despite receiving less than 50 percent of the popular vote. This established a repetitive cycle of relatively weak presidents who owed many political favors, which could be repaid through one prerogative power: patronage. As a result, the spoils system allowed those with political influence to ascend to powerful positions within the government, regardless of their level of experience or skill, thus compounding both the inefficiency of government as well as enhancing the opportunities for corruption.



### U.S. Presidential Election Results (1876–1896)

Year	Candidates	Popular Vote	Percentage	Electoral Vote
1876	Rutherford B. Hayes	4,034,132	47.9%	185
	Samuel Tilden	4,286,808	50.9%	184
	Others	97,709	1.2%	0
1880	James Garfield	4,453,337	48.3%	214
	Winfield Hancock	4,444,267	48.2%	155
	Others	319,806	3.5%	0
1884	Grover Cleveland	4,914,482	48.8%	219
	James Blaine	4,856,903	48.3%	182
	Others	288,660	2.9%	0
1888	Benjamin Harrison	5,443,663	47.8%	233
	Grover Cleveland	5,538,163	48.6%	168
	Others	407,050	3.6%	0
1892	Grover Cleveland	5,553,898	46.0%	277
	Benjamin Harrison	5,190,799	43.0%	145
	Others	1,323,330	11.0%	22
1896	William McKinley	7,112,138	51.0%	271
	William Jennings Bryan	6,510,807	46.7%	176
	Others	315,729	2.3%	0

At the same time, a movement emerged in support of reforming the practice of political appointments. As early as 1872, civil service reformers gathered to create the Liberal Republican Party in an effort to unseat incumbent President Grant. Led by several midwestern Republican leaders and newspaper editors, this party provided the impetus for other reform-minded Republicans to break free from the party and actually join the Democratic Party ranks. With newspaper editor Horace Greeley as their candidate, the party called for a “thorough reform of the civil service as one the most pressing necessities” facing the nation. Although easily



defeated in the election that followed, the work of the Liberal Republican Party set the stage for an even stronger push for patronage reform.

Clearly owing favors to his Republican handlers for his surprise compromise victory by the slimmest of margins in 1876, President Hayes was ill-prepared to heed those cries for reform, despite his own stated preference for a new civil service system. In fact, he accomplished little during his four years in office other than granting favors, as dictated by Republican Party handlers. Two powerful Republican leaders attempted to control the president. The first was Roscoe Conkling, Republican senator from New York and leader of the Stalwarts, a group that strongly supported continuation of the current spoils system. Long supporting former President Grant, Conkling had no sympathy for some of Hayes' early appeals for civil service reform. The other was James G. Blaine, Republican senator from Maine and leader of the Half-Breeds. The Half-Breeds, who received their derogatory nickname from Stalwart supporters who considered Blaine's group to be only "half-Republican," advocated for some measure of civil service reform.

With his efforts towards ensuring African American civil rights stymied by a Democratic Congress, and his decision to halt the coinage of silver merely adding to the pressures of the economic Panic of 1873, Hayes failed to achieve any significant legislation during his presidency. However, he did make a few overtures towards civil service reform. First, he adopted a new patronage rule, which held that a person appointed to an office could be dismissed only in the interest of efficient government operation but not for



*This cartoon shows Roscoe Conkling playing a popular puzzle game of the day with the heads of potential Republican presidential candidates, illustrating his control over the picks of the party.*



overtly political reasons. Second, he declared that party leaders could have no official say in political appointments, although Conkling sought to continue his influence. Finally, he decided that government appointees were ineligible to manage campaign elections. Although not sweeping reforms, these were steps in a civil service direction.

Hayes' first target in his meager reform effort was to remove Chester A. Arthur, a strong Conkling man, from his post as head of the New York City Customs House. Arthur had been notorious for using his post as customs collector to gain political favors for Conkling. When Hayes forcibly removed him from the position, even Half-Breeds questioned the wisdom of the move and began to distance themselves from Hayes. The loss of his meager public support due to the Compromise of 1877 and the declining Congressional faction together sealed Hayes fate and made his reelection impossible.

## AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET SETS THE STAGE FOR CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

In the wake of President Hayes' failure, Republicans began to battle over a successor for the 1880 presidential election. Initially, Stalwarts favored Grant's return to the White House, while Half-Breeds promoted their leader, James Blaine. Following an expected convention deadlock, both factions agreed to a compromise presidential candidate, Senator James A. Garfield of Ohio, with Chester Arthur as his vice-presidential running mate. The Democratic Party turned to Winfield Scott Hancock, a former Union commander who was a hero of the Battle of Gettysburg, as their candidate.

Garfield won a narrow victory over Hancock by forty thousand votes, although he still did not win a majority of the popular vote.



But less than four months into his presidency, events pushed civil service reform on the fast track. On July 2, 1881, Charles Guiteau shot and killed Garfield, allegedly uttering at the time, “I am a Stalwart of Stalwarts!” Guiteau himself had wanted to be rewarded for his political support—he had written a speech for the Garfield campaign—with an ambassadorship to France. His actions at the time were largely blamed on the spoils system, prompting more urgent cries for change.



*Garfield's shooting and the subsequent capture of the assassin, Charles Guiteau, are depicted in this illustration for a newspaper of the day. The president clung to life for another two months after the assassination.*

## The Assassination of a President

I executed  
the Divine command.  
And Garfield did remove,  
To save my party,  
and my country



From the bitter fate of War.—Charles Guiteau

Charles Guiteau was a lawyer and supporter of the Republican Party, although not particularly well known in either area. But he gave a few speeches, to modest crowds, in support of the Republican nominee James Garfield, and ultimately deluded himself that his speeches influenced the country enough to cause Garfield's victory. After the election, Guiteau immediately began pressuring the new president, requesting a post as ambassador. When his queries went unanswered, Guiteau, out of money and angry that his supposed help had been ignored, planned to kill the president.

He spent significant time planning his attack and considered weapons as diverse as dynamite and a stiletto before deciding on a gun, stating, "I wanted it done in an American manner." He followed the president around the Capitol and let several opportunities pass, unwilling to kill Garfield in front of his wife or son. Frustrated with himself, Guiteau recommitted to the plan and wrote a letter to the White House, explaining how this act would "unite the Republican Party and save the Republic."

Guiteau shot the president from behind and continued to shoot until police grabbed him and hauled him away. He went to jail, and, the following November after Garfield had died, he stood trial for murder. His poor mental health, which had been evident for some time, led to eccentric courtroom behavior that the newspapers eagerly reported and the public loved. He defended his case with a poem that used religious imagery and suggested that God had ordered him to commit the murder. He defended himself in court by saying, "The doctors killed Garfield, I just shot him." While this, in fact, was true, it did not save him. Guiteau was convicted and hanged in the summer of 1882.

Take a look at [America's Story](#) from the Library of Congress, which highlights the fact that Guiteau, in fact,



did not kill the president, but rather an infection from his medical treatment did.

Surprising both his party and the Democrats when he assumed the office of president, Chester Arthur immediately distanced himself from the Stalwarts. Although previously a loyal party man, Arthur understood that he owed his current position to no particular faction or favor. He was in the unique position to usher in a wave of civil service reform unlike any other political candidate, and he chose to do just that. In 1883, he signed into law the Pendleton Civil Service Act, the first significant piece of antipatronage legislation. This law created the Civil Service Commission, which listed all government patronage jobs and then set aside 15 percent of the list as appointments to be determined through a competitive civil service examination process. Furthermore, to prevent future presidents from undoing this reform, the law declared that future presidents could enlarge the list but could never shrink it by moving a civil service job back into the patronage column.

## TARIFFS IN THE GILDED AGE

In addition to civil service, President Arthur also carried the reformist spirit into the realm of tariffs, or taxes on international imports to the United States. Tariffs had long been a controversial topic in the United States, especially as the nineteenth century came to a close. Legislators appeared to be bending to the will of big businessmen who desired higher tariffs in order to force Americans to buy their domestically produced goods rather than higher-priced imports. Lower tariffs, on the other hand, would reduce prices and lower the average American's cost of living, and were therefore



avored by many working-class families and farmers, to the extent that any of them fully understood such economic forces beyond the prices they paid at stores. Out of growing concern for the latter group, Arthur created the U.S. Tariff Commission in 1882 to investigate the propriety of increasingly high tariffs. Despite his concern, along with the commission's recommendation for a 25 percent rollback in most tariffs, the most Arthur could accomplish was the "Mongrel Tariff" of 1883, which lowered tariff rates by barely 5 percent.

Such bold attempts at reform further convinced Republican Party leaders, as the 1884 election approached, that Arthur was not their best option to continue in the White House. Arthur quickly found himself a man without a party. As the 1884 election neared, the Republican Party again searched their ranks for a candidate who could restore some semblance of the spoils system while maintaining a reformist image. Unable to find such a man, the predominant Half-Breeds again turned to their own leader, Senator Blaine. However, when news of his many personal corrupt bargains began to surface, a significant portion of the party chose to break from the traditional Stalwarts-versus-Half-Breeds debate and form their own faction, the Mugwumps, a name taken from the Algonquin phrase for "great chief."

Anxious to capitalize on the disarray within the Republican Party, as well as to return to the White House for the first time in nearly thirty years, the Democratic Party chose to court the Mugwump vote by nominating Grover Cleveland, the reform governor from New York who had built a reputation by attacking machine politics in New York City. Despite several personal charges against him for having fathered a child out of wedlock, Cleveland managed to hold on for a close victory with a margin of fewer than thirty thousand votes.

Cleveland's record on civil service reform added little to the initial blows struck by President Arthur. After electing the first Democratic president since 1856, the Democrats could actually make great use of the spoils system. Cleveland was, however, a notable reform



president in terms of business regulation and tariffs. When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1886 that individual states could not regulate interstate transportation, Cleveland urged Congress to pass the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887. Among several other powers, this law created the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to oversee railroad prices and ensure that they remained reasonable to all customers. This was an important shift. In the past, railroads had granted special rebates to big businesses, such as John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil, while charging small farmers with little economic muscle exorbitant rates. Although the act eventually provided for real regulation of the railroad industry, initial progress was slow due to the lack of enforcement power held by the ICC. Despite its early efforts to regulate railroad rates, the U.S. Supreme Court undermined the commission in *Interstate Commerce Commission v. Cincinnati, New Orleans, and Texas Pacific Railway Cos.* in 1897. Rate regulations were limits on profits that, in the opinion of a majority of the justices, violated the Fourteenth Amendment protection against depriving persons of their property without due process of the law.

As for tariff reform, Cleveland agreed with Arthur's position that tariffs remained far too high and were clearly designed to protect big domestic industries at the expense of average consumers who could benefit from international competition. While the general public applauded Cleveland's efforts at both civil service and tariff reform, influential businessmen and industrialists remained adamant that the next president must restore the protective tariffs at all costs.

To counter the Democrats' re-nomination of Cleveland, the Republican Party turned to Benjamin Harrison, grandson of former president William Henry Harrison. Although Cleveland narrowly won the overall popular vote, Harrison rode the influential coattails of several businessmen and party bosses to win the key electoral states of New York and New Jersey, where party officials stressed Harrison's support for a higher tariff, and thus secure the White House. Not surprisingly, after Harrison's victory, the United States



witnessed a brief return to higher tariffs and a strengthening of the spoils system. In fact, the McKinley Tariff raised some rates as much as 50 percent, which was the highest tariff in American history to date.

Some of Harrison's policies were intended to offer relief to average Americans struggling with high costs and low wages but remained largely ineffective. First, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 sought to prohibit business monopolies as "conspiracies in restraint of trade," but it was seldom enforced during the first decade of its existence. Second, the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of the same year required the U.S. Treasury to mint over four million ounces of silver into coins each month to circulate more cash into the economy, raise prices for farm goods, and help farmers pay their way out of debt. But the measure could not undo the previous "hard money" policies that had deflated prices and pulled farmers into well-entrenched cycles of debt. Other measures proposed by Harrison intended to support African Americans, including a Force Bill to protect voters in the South, as well as an Education Bill designed to support public education and improve literacy rates among African Americans, also met with defeat.

## MONETARY POLICIES AND THE ISSUE OF GOLD VS SILVER

Although political corruption, the spoils system, and the question of tariff rates were popular discussions of the day, none were more relevant to working-class Americans and farmers than the issue of the nation's monetary policy and the ongoing debate of gold versus silver. There had been frequent attempts to establish a bimetallic standard, which in turn would have created inflationary pressures and placed more money into circulation that could have subsequently benefitted farmers. But the government remained



committed to the gold standard, including the official demonetizing of silver altogether in 1873. Such a stance greatly benefitted prominent businessmen engaged in foreign trade while forcing more farmers and working-class Americans into greater debt.



*This cartoon illustrates the potential benefits of a bi-metal system, but the benefits did not actually extend to big business, which preferred the gold standard and worked to keep it.*

As farmers and working-class Americans sought the means by which to pay their bills and other living expenses, especially in the wake of increased tariffs as the century came to a close, many saw adherence to a strict gold standard as their most pressing problem. With limited gold reserves, the money supply remained constrained. At a minimum, a return to a bimetallic policy that would include the production of silver dollars would provide some relief. However, the aforementioned Sherman Silver Purchase Act was largely ineffective to combat the growing debts that many Americans faced. Under the law, the federal government purchased 4.5 million ounces of silver on a monthly basis in order to mint silver dollars. However, many investors exchanged the bank notes with which the government purchased the silver for gold, thus severely depleting the nation's



gold reserve. Fearing the latter, President Grover Cleveland signed the act's repeal in 1893. This lack of meaningful monetary measures from the federal government would lead one group in particular who required such assistance—American farmers—to attempt to take control over the political process itself.

## Section Summary

All told, from 1872 through 1892, Gilded Age politics were little more than political showmanship. The political issues of the day, including the spoils system versus civil service reform, high tariffs versus low, and business regulation, all influenced politicians more than the country at large. Very few measures offered direct assistance to Americans who continued to struggle with the transformation into an industrial society; the inefficiency of a patronage-driven federal government, combined with a growing laissez-faire attitude among the American public, made the passage of effective legislation difficult. Some of Harrison's policies, such as the Sherman Anti-Trust Act and the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, aimed to provide relief but remained largely ineffective.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1017>



## *Review Question*

1. Why were U.S. presidents (with few exceptions) so adamant about protecting the spoils system of patronage during the late nineteenth century?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Politics of the day were fiercely fought and won with razor-thin margins. While presidents may have wanted to see the system change, few were in a position to effect such change. They owed their presidencies to the various party leaders and political operatives who had gotten them there, and they were expected to repay the favors with political positions. Any candidate who spoke out firmly against patronage virtually guaranteed that he would not receive the support of local or regional politicians, or machine bosses. Without such support, a candidate's chances of being elected were virtually nonexistent. Therefore, they continued to work within the system.



## *Glossary*

**Half-Breeds** the group of Republicans led by James G. Blaine, named because they supported some measure of civil service reform and were thus considered to be only “half Republican”

**Mugwumps** a portion of the Republican Party that broke away from the Stalwart-versus-Half-Breed debate due to disgust with their candidate’s corruption

**Stalwarts** the group of Republicans led by Roscoe Conkling who strongly supported the continuation of the patronage system



## 63. Farmers Revolt in the Populist Era

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Understand how the economic and political climate of the day promoted the formation of the farmers' protest movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century
- Explain how the farmers' revolt moved from protest to politics

The challenges that many American farmers faced in the last quarter of the nineteenth century were significant. They contended with economic hardships born out of rapidly declining farm prices, prohibitively high tariffs on items they needed to purchase, and foreign competition. One of the largest challenges they faced was overproduction, where the glut of their products in the marketplace drove the price lower and lower.

Overproduction of crops occurred in part due to the westward expansion of homestead farms and in part because industrialization led to new farm tools that dramatically increased crop yields. As farmers fell deeper into debt, whether it be to the local stores where they bought supplies or to the railroads that shipped their produce, their response was to increase crop production each year in the hope of earning more money with which to pay back their debt. The more they produced, the lower prices dropped. To a hard-working



farmer, the notion that their own overproduction was the greatest contributing factor to their debt was a completely foreign concept.

In addition to the cycle of overproduction, tariffs were a serious problem for farmers. Rising tariffs on industrial products made purchased items more expensive, yet tariffs were not being used to keep farm prices artificially high as well. Therefore, farmers were paying inflated prices but not receiving them. Finally, the issue of gold versus silver as the basis of U.S. currency was a



*This North Dakota sod hut, built by a homesteading farmer for his family, was photographed in 1898, two years after it was built. While the country was quickly industrializing, many farmers still lived in rough, rural conditions.*

very real problem to many farmers. Farmers needed more money in circulation, whether it was paper or silver, in order to create inflationary pressure. Inflationary pressure would allow farm prices to increase, thus allowing them to earn more money that they could then spend on the higher-priced goods in stores. However, in 1878, federal law set the amount of paper money in circulation, and, as mentioned above, Harrison's Sherman Silver Act, intended to increase the amount of silver coinage, was too modest to do any real good, especially in light of the unintended consequence of depleting the nation's gold reserve. In short, farmers had a big stack of bills and wanted a big stack of money—be it paper or silver—to pay them. Neither was forthcoming from a government that cared more about issues of patronage and how to stay in the White House for more than four years at a time.



## FARMERS BEGIN TO ORGANIZE

The initial response by increasingly frustrated and angry farmers was to organize into groups that were similar to early labor unions. Taking note of how the industrial labor movement had unfolded in the last quarter of the century, farmers began to understand that a collective voice could create significant pressure among political leaders and produce substantive change. While farmers had their own challenges, including that of geography and diverse needs among different types of farmers, they believed this model to be useful to their cause.

One of the first efforts to organize farmers came in 1867 with Oliver Hudson Kelly's creation of the Patrons of Husbandry, more popularly known as the Grange. In the wake of the Civil War, the Grangers quickly grew to over 1.5 million members in less than a decade. Kelly believed that farmers could best help themselves by creating farmers' cooperatives in which they could pool resources and obtain better shipping rates, as well as prices on seeds, fertilizer, machinery, and other

necessary inputs. These cooperatives, he believed, would let them self-regulate production as well as collectively obtain better rates from railroad companies and other businesses.

At the state level, specifically in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa, the Patrons of Husbandry did briefly succeed in urging the passage of Granger Laws, which regulated some railroad rates



*This print from the early 1870s, with scenes of farm life, was a promotional poster for the Grangers, one of the earliest farmer reform groups.*



along with the prices charged by grain elevator operators. The movement also created a political party—the Greenback Party, so named for its support of print currency (or “greenbacks”) not based upon a gold standard—which saw brief success with the election of fifteen congressmen. However, such successes were short-lived and had little impact on the lives of everyday farmers. In the Wabash case of 1886, brought by the Wabash, St. Louis, and Pacific Railroad Company, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the State of Illinois for passing Granger Laws controlling railroad rates; the court found such laws to be unconstitutional. Their argument held that states did not have the authority to control interstate commerce. As for the Greenback Party, when only seven delegates appeared at an 1888 national convention of the group, the party faded from existence.

Explore [Rural Life in the Late Nineteenth Century](#) to study photographs, firsthand reports, and other information about how farmers lived and struggled at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Farmers' Alliance, a conglomeration of three regional alliances formed in the mid-1880s, took root in the wake of the Grange movement. In 1890, Dr. Charles Macune, who led the Southern Alliance, which was based in Texas and had over 100,000 members by 1886, urged the creation of a national alliance between his organization, the Northwest Alliance, and the Colored



*The Farmers' Alliance flag displays the motto: “The most good for the most PEOPLE,” clearly a sentiment they hoped that others would believe.*



Alliance, the largest African American organization in the United States. Led by Tom Watson, the Colored Alliance, which was founded in Texas but quickly spread throughout the Old South, counted over one million members. Although they originally advocated for self-help, African Americans in the group soon understood the benefits of political organization and a unified voice to improve their plight, regardless of race. While racism kept the alliance splintered among the three component branches, they still managed to craft a national agenda that appealed to their large membership. All told, the Farmers' Alliance brought together over 2.5 million members, 1.5 million white and 1 million black.

The alliance movement, and the subsequent political party that emerged from it, also featured prominent roles for women. Nearly 250,000 women joined the movement due to their shared interest in the farmers' worsening situation as well as the promise of being a full partner with political rights within the group, which they saw as an important step towards advocacy for women's suffrage on a national level. The ability to vote and stand for office within the organization encouraged many women who sought similar rights on the larger American political scene. Prominent alliance spokeswoman, Mary Elizabeth Lease of Kansas, often spoke of membership in the Farmers' Alliance as an opportunity to "raise less corn and more hell!"

The [Conner Prairie Interactive History Park](#) discusses the role of women in rural America and how it changed throughout the end of the nineteenth century.

The alliance movement had several goals similar to those of the original Grange, including greater regulation of railroad prices and the creation of an inflationary national monetary policy. However, most creative among the solutions promoted by the Farmers' Alliance was the call for a subtreasury plan. Under this plan, the



federal government would store farmers' crops in government warehouses for a brief period of time, during which the government would provide loans to farmers worth 80 percent of the current crop prices. Thus, farmers would have immediate cash on hand with which to settle debts and purchase goods, while their crops sat in warehouses and farm prices increased due to this control over supply at the market. When market prices rose sufficiently high enough, the farmer could withdraw his crops, sell at the higher price, repay the government loan, and still have profit remaining.

Economists of the day thought the plan had some merit; in fact, a greatly altered version would subsequently be adopted during the Great Depression of the 1930s, in the form of the Agricultural Adjustment Act. However, the federal government never seriously considered the plan, as congressmen questioned the propriety of the government serving as a rural creditor making loans to farmers with no assurance that production controls would result in higher commodity prices. The government's refusal to act on the proposal left many farmers wondering what it would take to find solutions to their growing indebtedness.

## FROM ORGANIZATION TO POLITICAL PARTY

Angry at the federal government's continued unwillingness to substantively address the plight of the average farmer, Charles Macune and the Farmers' Alliance chose to create a political party whose representatives—if elected—could enact real change. Put simply, if the government would not address the problem, then it was time to change those elected to power.

In 1891, the alliance formed the Populist Party, or People's Party, as it was more widely known. Beginning with nonpresidential-year elections, the Populist Party had modest success, particularly in



Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, where they succeeded in electing several state legislators, one governor, and a handful of congressmen. As the 1892 presidential election approached, the Populists chose to model themselves after the Democratic and Republican Parties in the hope that they could shock the country with a “third-party” victory.

At their national convention that summer in Omaha, Nebraska, they wrote the Omaha Platform to more fully explain to all Americans the goals of the new party. Written by Ignatius Donnelly, the platform statement vilified railroad owners, bankers, and big businessmen as all being part of a widespread conspiracy to control farmers. As for policy changes, the platform called for adoption of the subtreasury plan, government control over railroads, an end to the national bank system, the creation of a federal income tax, the direct election of U.S. senators, and several other measures, all of which aimed at a more proactive federal government that would support the economic and social welfare of all Americans. At the close of the convention, the party nominated James B. Weaver as its presidential candidate.



*The People's Party gathered for its nominating convention in Nebraska, where they wrote the Omaha Platform to state their concerns and goals.*



In a rematch of the 1888 election, the Democrats again nominated Grover Cleveland, while Republicans went with Benjamin Harrison. Despite the presence of a third-party challenger, Cleveland won another close popular vote to become the first U.S. president to be elected to nonconsecutive terms. Although he finished a distant third, Populist candidate Weaver polled a respectable one million votes. Rather than being disappointed, several Populists applauded their showing—especially for a third party with barely two years of national political experience under its belt. They anxiously awaited the 1896 election, believing that if the rest of the country, in particular, industrial workers, experienced hardships similar to those that farmers already faced, a powerful alliance of the two groups could carry the Populists to victory.

## Section Summary

Factors such as overproduction and high tariffs left the country's farmers in increasingly desperate straits, and the federal government's inability to address their concerns left them disillusioned and worried. Uneven responses from state governments had many farmers seeking an alternative solution to their problems. Taking note of the labor movements growing in industrial cities around the country, farmers began to organize into alliances similar to workers' unions; these were models of cooperation where larger numbers could offer more bargaining power with major players such as railroads. Ultimately, the alliances were unable to initiate



widespread change for their benefit. Still, drawing from the cohesion of purpose, farmers sought to create change from the inside: through politics. They hoped the creation of the Populist Party in 1891 would lead to a president who put the people—and in particular the farmers—first.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1018>

### *Review Question*

1. What were women's roles within the Farmer's Alliance?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Women were able to play key roles in the alliance movement. The alliance provided them with political rights, including the ability to vote and hold office within the organization, which many women hoped would be a positive step in their struggle for national women's rights and suffrage. In the end, nearly 250,000 women joined the movement.



## *Glossary*

**Farmers' Alliance** a national conglomeration of different regional farmers' alliances that joined together in 1890 with the goal of furthering farmers' concerns in politics

**Grange** a farmers' organization, launched in 1867, which grew to over 1.5 million members in less than a decade

**Populist Party** a political party formed in 1890 that sought to represent the rights of primarily farmers but eventually all workers in regional and federal elections

**subtreasury plan** a plan that called for storing crops in government warehouses for a brief period of time, during which the federal government would provide loans to farmers worth 80 percent of the current crop prices, releasing the crops for sale when prices rose



## 64. Social and Labor Unrest in the 1890s

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how the Depression of 1893 helped the Populist Party to grow in popularity in the 1890s
- Understand the forces that contributed to the Populist Party's decline following the 1896 presidential election

Insofar as farmers wanted the rest of the country to share their plight, they got their wish. Soon after Cleveland's election, the nation catapulted into the worst economic depression in its history to date. As the government continued to fail in its efforts to address the growing problems, more and more Americans sought relief outside of the traditional two-party system. To many industrial workers, the Populist Party began to seem like a viable solution.

### **FROM FARMERS' HARDSHIPS TO A NATIONAL DEPRESSION**

The late 1880s and early 1890s saw the American economy slide precipitously. As mentioned above, farmers were already struggling



with economic woes, and the rest of the country followed quickly. Following a brief rebound from the speculation-induced Panic of 1873, in which bank investments in railroad bonds spread the nation's financial resources too thin—a rebound due in large part to the protective tariffs of the 1880s—a greater economic catastrophe hit the nation, as the decade of the 1890s began to unfold.

The causes of the Depression of 1893 were manifold, but one major element was the speculation in railroads over the previous decades. The rapid proliferation of railroad lines created a false impression of growth for the economy as a whole. Banks and investors fed the growth of the railroads with fast-paced investment in industry and related businesses, not realizing that the growth they were following was built on a bubble. When the railroads began to fail due to expenses outpacing returns on their construction, the supporting businesses, from banks to steel mills, failed also.

Beginning with the closure of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad Company in 1893, several railroads ceased their operations as a result of investors cashing in their bonds, thus creating a ripple effect throughout the economy. In a single year, from 1893 to 1894, unemployment estimates increased from 3 percent to nearly 19 percent of all working-class Americans. In some states, the unemployment rate soared even higher: over 35 percent in New York State and 43 percent in Michigan. At the height of this depression, over three million American workers were unemployed. By 1895, Americans living in cities grew accustomed to seeing the homeless on the streets or lining up at soup kitchens.

Immediately following the economic downturn, people sought relief through their elected federal government. Just as quickly, they learned what farmers had been taught in the preceding decades: A weak, inefficient government interested solely in patronage and the spoils system in order to maintain its power was in no position to help the American people face this challenge. The federal government had little in place to support those looking for work or to provide direct aid to those in need. Of course, to be fair, the



government had seldom faced these questions before. Americans had to look elsewhere.

A notable example of the government's failure to act was the story of Coxey's Army. In the spring of 1894, businessman Jacob Coxey led a march of unemployed Ohioans from Cincinnati to Washington, DC, where leaders of the group urged Congress to pass public works legislation for the federal government to hire unemployed workers to build roads and other public projects. From the original one hundred protesters, the march grew five hundred strong as others joined along the route to the nation's capital. Upon their arrival, not only were their cries for federal relief ignored, but Coxey and several other marchers were arrested for trespassing on the grass outside the U.S. Capitol. Frustration over the event led many angry workers to consider supporting the Populist Party in subsequent elections.

## **L. Frank Baum: Did Coxey's Army inspire Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz?**

Scholars, historians, and economists have long argued inconclusively that L. Frank Baum intended the story of *The Wizard of Oz* as an allegory for the politics of the day. Whether that actually was Baum's intention is up for debate, but certainly the story could be read as support for the Populist Party's crusade on behalf of American farmers. In 1894, Baum witnessed Coxey's Army's march firsthand, and some feel it may have influenced the story.





*This image of Coxey's Army marching on Washington to ask for jobs may have helped inspire L. Frank Baum's story of Dorothy and her friends seeking help from the Wizard of Oz.*

According to this theory, the Scarecrow represents the American farmer, the Tin Woodman is the industrial worker, and the Cowardly Lion is William Jennings Bryan, a prominent “Silverite” (strong supporters of the Populist Party who advocated for the free coinage of silver) who, in 1900 when the book was published, was largely criticized by the Republicans as being cowardly and indecisive. In the story, the characters march towards Oz, much as Coxey's Army marched to Washington. Like Dorothy and her companions, Coxey's Army gets in trouble, before being turned away with no help.

Following this reading, the seemingly powerful but ultimately impotent Wizard of Oz is a representation of the president, and Dorothy only finds happiness by wearing the silver slippers—they



only became ruby slippers in the later movie version—along the Yellow Brick Road, a reference to the need for the country to move from the gold standard to a two-metal silver and gold plan. While no literary theorists or historians have proven this connection to be true, it is possible that Coxey's Army inspired Baum to create Dorothy's journey on the yellow brick road.

Several strikes also punctuated the growing depression, including a number of violent uprisings in the coal regions of Ohio and Pennsylvania. But the infamous Pullman Strike of 1894 was most notable for its nationwide impact, as it all but shut down the nation's railroad system in the middle of the depression. The strike began immediately on the heels of the Coxey's Army march when, in the summer of 1894, company owner George Pullman fired over two thousand employees at Pullman Co.—which made railroad cars, such as Pullman sleeper cars—and reduced the wages of the remaining three thousand workers. Since the factory operated in the company town of Pullman, Illinois, where workers rented homes from George Pullman and shopped at the company store owned by him as well, unemployment also meant eviction. Facing such harsh treatment, all of the Pullman workers went on strike to protest the decisions. Eugene V. Debs, head of the American Railway Union, led the strike.

In order to bring the plight of Pullman, Illinois, to Americans all around the country, Debs adopted the strike strategy of ordering all American Railroad Union members to refuse to handle any train that had Pullman cars on it. Since virtually every train in the United States operated with Pullman cars, the strike truly brought the transportation industry to its knees. Fearful of his ability to end the economic depression with such a vital piece of the economy at a standstill, President Cleveland turned to his attorney general for the answer. The attorney general proposed a solution: use federal troops to operate the trains under the pretense of protecting the delivery of the U.S. mail that was typically found on all trains. When Debs and the American Railway Union refused to obey the court



injunction prohibiting interference with the mail, the troops began operating the trains, and the strike quickly ended. Debs himself was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to six months in prison for disobeying the court injunction. The American Railway Union was destroyed, leaving workers even less empowered than before, and Debs was in prison, contemplating alternatives to a capitalist-based national economy. The Depression of 1893 left the country limping towards the next presidential election with few solutions in sight.

## THE ELECTION OF 1896

As the final presidential election of the nineteenth century unfolded, all signs pointed to a possible Populist victory. Not only had the ongoing economic depression convinced many Americans—farmers and factory workers alike—of the inability of either major political party to address the situation, but also the Populist Party, since the last election, benefited from four more years of experience and numerous local victories. As they prepared for their convention in St. Louis that summer, the Populists watched with keen interest as the Republicans and Democrats hosted their own conventions.

The Republicans remained steadfast in their defense of a gold-based standard for the American economy, as well as high protective tariffs. They turned to William McKinley, former



*Republicans portrayed presidential candidate Bryan as a grasping politician whose Populist leanings could swallow the Democratic Party. Bryan was in fact not a Populist at all, but a Democrat whose views aligned with the Populists on some issues. He was formally nominated by the Democratic Party, the Populist Party, and the Silver Republican Party for the 1896 presidential election.*



congressman and current governor of Ohio, as their candidate. At their convention, the Democrats turned to William Jennings Bryan—a congressman from Nebraska. Bryan defended the importance of a silver-based monetary system and urged the government to coin more silver. Furthermore, being from farm country, he was very familiar with the farmers' plight and saw some merit in the subtreasury system proposal. In short, Bryan could have been the ideal Populist candidate, but the Democrats got to him first. The Populist Party subsequently endorsed Bryan as well, with their party's nomination three weeks later.

Browse through the cartoons and commentary at [1896](#) at Vassar College, a site that contains a wealth of information about the major players and themes of the presidential election of 1896.

As the Populist convention unfolded, the delegates had an important decision to make: either locate another candidate, even though Bryan would have been an excellent choice, or join the Democrats and support Bryan as the best candidate but risk losing their identity as a third political party as a result. The Populist Party chose the latter and endorsed Bryan's candidacy. However, they also nominated their own vice-presidential candidate, Georgia Senator Tom Watson, as opposed to the Democratic nominee, Arthur Sewall, presumably in an attempt to maintain some semblance of a separate identity.

The race was a heated one, with McKinley running a typical nineteenth-century style “front porch” campaign, during which he espoused the long-held Republican Party principles to visitors who would call on him at his Ohio home. Bryan, to the contrary, delivered speeches all throughout the country, bringing his message to the people that Republicans “shall not crucify mankind on a cross of gold.”



## William Jennings Bryan and the “Cross of Gold”

William Jennings Bryan was a politician and speechmaker in the late nineteenth century, and he was particularly well known for his impassioned argument that the country move to a bimetal or silver standard. He received the Democratic presidential nomination in 1896, and, at the nominating convention, he gave his most famous speech. He sought to argue against Republicans who stated that the gold standard was the only way to ensure stability and prosperity for American businesses. In the speech he said:

We say to you that you have made the definition of a business man too limited in its application. The man who is employed for wages is as much a business man as his employer; the attorney in a country town is as much a business man as the corporation counsel in a great metropolis; the merchant at the cross-roads store is as much a business man as the merchant of New York; the farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day, who begins in spring and toils all summer, and who by the application of brain and muscle to the natural resources of the country creates wealth, is as much a business man as the man who goes upon the Board of Trade and bets upon the price of grain; . . . We come to speak of this broader class of business men.

This defense of working Americans as critical to the prosperity of the country resonated with his listeners, as did his passionate ending when he stated, “Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: ‘You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.’”

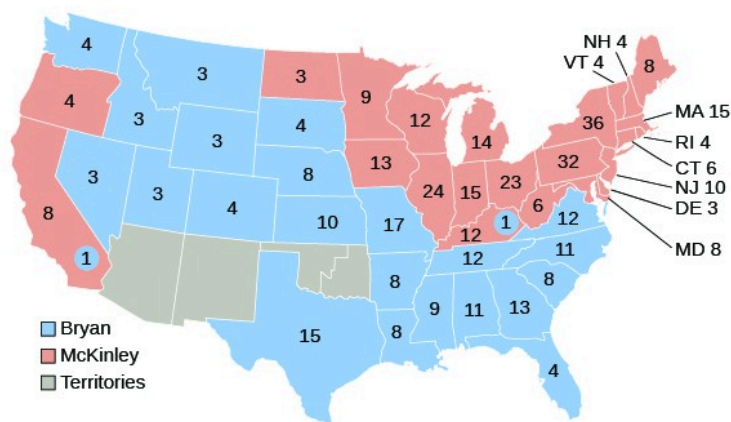


The speech was an enormous success and played a role in convincing the Populist Party that he was the candidate for them.

The result was a close election that finally saw a U.S. president win a majority of the popular vote for the first time in twenty-four years. McKinley defeated Bryan by a popular vote of 7.1 million to 6.5 million. Bryan's showing was impressive by any standard, as his popular vote total exceeded that of any other presidential candidate in American history to that date—winner or loser. He polled nearly one million more votes than did the previous Democratic victor, Grover Cleveland; however, his campaign also served to split the Democratic vote, as some party members remained convinced of the propriety of the gold standard and supported McKinley in the election.

Amid a growing national depression where Americans truly recognized the importance of a strong leader with sound economic policies, McKinley garnered nearly two million more votes than his Republican predecessor Benjamin Harrison. Put simply, the American electorate was energized to elect a strong candidate who could adequately address the country's economic woes. Voter turnout was the largest in American history to that date; while both candidates benefitted, McKinley did more so than Bryan.





*The electoral vote map of the 1896 election illustrates the stark divide in the country between the industry-rich coasts and the rural middle.*

In the aftermath, it is easy to say that it was Bryan’s defeat that all but ended the rise of the Populist Party. Populists had thrown their support to the Democrats who shared similar ideas for the economic rebound of the country and lost. In choosing principle over distinct party identity, the Populists aligned themselves to the growing two-party American political system and would have difficulty maintaining party autonomy afterwards. Future efforts to establish a separate party identity would be met with ridicule by critics who would say that Populists were merely “Democrats in sheep’s clothing.”

But other factors also contributed to the decline of Populism at the close of the century. First, the discovery of vast gold deposits in Alaska during the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896–1899 (also known as the “Yukon Gold Rush”) shored up the nation’s weakening economy and made it possible to thrive on a gold standard. Second, the impending Spanish-American War, which began in 1898, further fueled the economy and increased demand for American farm products. Still, the Populist spirit remained, although it lost some



momentum at the close of the nineteenth century. As will be seen in a subsequent chapter, the reformist zeal took on new forms as the twentieth century unfolded.

## Section Summary

As the economy worsened, more Americans suffered; as the federal government continued to offer few solutions, the Populist movement began to grow. Populist groups approached the 1896 election anticipating that the mass of struggling Americans would support their movement for change. When Democrats chose William Jennings Bryan for their candidate, however, they chose a politician who largely fit the mold of the Populist platform—from his birthplace of Nebraska to his advocacy of the silver standard that most farmers desired. Throwing their support behind Bryan as well, Populists hoped to see a candidate in the White House who would embody the Populist goals, if not the party name. When Bryan lost to Republican William McKinley, the Populist Party lost much of its momentum. As the country climbed out of the depression, the interest in a third party faded away, although the reformist movement remained intact.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1019>



## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. How does the term “Gilded Age” characterize American society in the late nineteenth century? In what ways is this characterization accurate or inaccurate?
2. With farmers still representing a significant segment of American society, why did government officials—Democrats and Republicans alike—prove unwilling to help find solutions to farmers’ problems?
3. Upon reflection, did the Populist Party make a wise decision in choosing to support the Democratic Party’s candidate in the 1896 presidential election? Why or why not?
4. Despite its relative weakness during this period, the federal government made several efforts to provide a measure of relief for struggling Americans. What were these initiatives? In what ways were they more or less successful?

## *Glossary*

**Coxey’s Army** an 1894 protest, led by businessman Jacob Coxey, to advocate for public works jobs for the unemployed by marching on Washington, DC



## 65. Video: Gilded Age Politics

This video teaches you about the Gilded Age and its politics. What, you may ask, is the Gilded Age? The term comes from a book by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner titled, “The Gilded Age.” You may see a pattern emerging here. It started in the 1870s and continued on until the turn of the 20th century. The era is called Gilded because of the massive inequality that existed in the United States. Gilded Age politics were marked by a number of phenomena, most of them having to do with corruption. On the local and state level, political machines wielded enormous power. This video gets into details about the most famous political machine, Tammany Hall. Tammany Hall ran New York City for a long, long time, notably under Boss Tweed. Graft, kickbacks, and voter fraud were rampant, but not just at the local level. Ulysses S. Grant ran one of the most scandalous presidential administrations in U.S. history, and you will hear about two of the best-known scandals, the Credit Mobilier scandal and the Whiskey Ring. There were a few attempts at reform during this time, notably the Civil Service Act of 1883 and the Sherman Anti-trust act of 1890. This video will also get into the Grange Movement of the western farmers, and the Populist Party that arose from that movement. The Populists, who threw in their lot with William Jennings Bryan, never managed to get it together and win a presidency, and they faded after 1896.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=90#oembed-1>



# 66. Assignment: Social Darwinism

Why is it that in every society some are successful and other are not? Some become fabulously rich, some do well, some do “ok,” and some just can’t get ahead? William Graham Sumner suggest one reason: Social Darwinism. Read this brief excerpt from “[William Graham Sumner on Social Darwinism](#).” After reading, answer the following in a short paragraph for each:

1. What exactly is Social Darwinism? Explain it by using or making up some kind of example of the concept.
2. How does Sumner explain the existence of poverty and social inequality (what is his answer to my question about some succeeding and others failing)?

Be sure to use specific evidence from the document in support of your answer.







PART XI

# THE GILDED AGE READER







## 67. Primary Source: William Graham Sumner on Social Darwinism (ca.1880s)

*William Graham Sumner, a sociologist at Yale University, penned several pieces associated with the philosophy of Social Darwinism. In the following, Sumner explains his vision of nature and liberty in a just society.*

The struggle for existence is aimed against nature. It is from her niggardly hand that we have to wrest the satisfaction for our needs, but our fellow-men are our competitors for the meager supply. Competition, therefore, is a law of nature. Nature is entirely neutral; she submits to him who most energetically and resolutely assails her. She grants her rewards to the fittest, therefore, without regard to other considerations of any kind. If, then, there be liberty, men get from her just in proportion to their works, and their having and enjoying are just in proportion to their being and their doing. Such is the system of nature. If we do not like it, and if we try to amend it, there is only one way in which we can do it. We can take from the better and give to the worse. We can deflect the penalties of those who have done ill and throw them on those who have done better. We can take the rewards from those who have done better and give them to those who have done worse. We shall thus lessen the inequalities. We shall favor the survival of the unfittest, and we shall accomplish this by destroying liberty. Let it be understood that we cannot go outside of this alternative; liberty, inequality, survival of the fittest; not-liberty, equality, survival of the unfittest. The former carries society forward and favors all its best members; the latter carries society downwards and favors all its worst members.

For three hundred years now men have been trying to understand and realize liberty. ... What we mean by liberty is civil liberty, or



liberty under law; and this means the guarantees of law that a man shall not be interfered with while using his own powers for his own welfare. It is, therefore, a civil and political status; and that nation has the freest institutions in which the guarantees of peace for the laborer and security for the capitalist are the highest. Liberty, therefore, does not by any means do away with the struggle for existence. We might as well try to do away with the need of eating, for that would, in effect, be the same thing. What civil liberty does is to turn the competition of man with man from violence and brute force into an industrial competition under which men vie with one another for the acquisition of material goods by industry, energy, skill, frugality, prudence, temperance, and other industrial virtues. Under this changed order of things the inequalities are not done away with. Nature still grants her rewards of having and enjoying, according to our being and doing, but it is now the man of the highest training and not the man of the heaviest fist who gains the highest reward. It is impossible that the man with capital and the man without capital should be equal. To affirm that they are equal would be to say that a man who has no tool can get as much food out of the ground as the man who has a spade or a plough; or that the man who has no weapon can defend himself as well against hostile beasts or hostile men as the man who has a weapon. If that were so, none of us would work any more. We work and deny ourselves to get capital just because, other things being equal, the man who has it is superior, for attaining all the ends of life, to the man who has it not. Considering the eagerness with which we all seek capital and the estimate we put upon it, either in cherishing it if we have it, or envying others who have it while we have it not, it is very strange what platitudes pass current about it in our society so soon as we begin to generalize about it. If our young people really believed some of the teachings they hear, it would not be amiss to preach them a sermon once in a while to reassure them, setting forth that it is not wicked to be rich, nay even, that it is not wicked to be richer than your neighbor.

It follows from what we have observed that it is the utmost folly to



denounce capital. To do so is to under- mine civilization, for capital is the first requisite of every social gain, educational, ecclesiastical, political, aesthetic, or other.

Source: William Graham Sumner, *The Challenge of Facts and Other Essays*, edited by Albert Galloway Keller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914).



## 68. Primary Source: Grover Cleveland's Veto of the Texas Seed Bill (February 16, 1887)

*Amid a crushing drought that devastated many Texas farmers, Grover Cleveland vetoed a bill designed to help farmers recover by supplying them with seed. In his veto message, Cleveland explained his vision of proper government.*

...

It is represented that a long-continued and extensive drought has existed in certain portions of the State of Texas, resulting in a failure of crops and consequent distress and destitution.

Though there has been some difference in statements concerning the extent of the people's needs in the localities thus affected, there seems to be no doubt that there has existed a condition calling for relief; and I am willing to believe that, notwithstanding the aid already furnished, a donation of seed grain to the farmers located in this region, to enable them to put in new crops, would serve to avert a continuance or return of an unfortunate blight.

And yet I feel obliged to withhold my approval of the plan, as proposed by this bill, to indulge a benevolent and charitable sentiment through the appropriation of public funds for that purpose.

I can find no warrant for such an appropriation in the Constitution, and I do not believe that the power and duty of the General Government ought to be extended to the relief of individual suffering which is in no manner properly related to the public service or benefit. A prevalent tendency to disregard the limited mission of this power and duty should, I think, be steadfastly resisted, to the end that the lesson should be constantly enforced



that though the people support the Government the Government should not support the people.

The friendliness and charity of our countrymen can always be relied upon to relieve their fellow-citizens in misfortune. This has been repeatedly and quite lately demonstrated. Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the Government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character, while it prevents the indulgence among our people of that kindly sentiment and conduct which strengthens the bonds of a common brotherhood.

It is within my personal knowledge that individual aid has to some extent already been extended to the sufferers mentioned in this bill. The failure of the proposed appropriation of \$10,000 additional to meet their remaining wants will not necessarily result in continued distress if the emergency is fully made known to the people of the country.

It is here suggested that the Commissioner of Agriculture is annually directed to expend a large sum of money for the purchase, propagation, and distribution of seeds and other things of this description, two-thirds of which are, upon the request of Senators, Representatives, and Delegates in Congress, supplied to them for distribution among their constituents.

The appropriation of the current year for this purpose is \$100,000, and it will probably be no less in the appropriation for the ensuing year. I understand that a large quantity of grain is furnished for such distribution, and it is supposed that this free apportionment among their neighbors is a privilege which may be waived by our Senators and Representatives.

If sufficient of them should request the Commissioner of Agriculture to send their shares of the grain thus allowed them to the suffering farmers of Texas, they might be enabled to sow their crops, the constituents for whom in theory this grain is intended could well bear the temporary deprivation, and the donors would experience the satisfaction attending deeds of charity.



Source: Journal of the House of Representatives, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1886), 634-635.

[The Miller Center](#)



## 69. Primary Source: The “Omaha Platform” of the People’s Party (1892)

*In 1892, the People’s, or Populist, Party crafted a platform that indicted the corruptions of the Gilded Age and promised government policies to aid “the people.”*

### PREAMBLE

The conditions which surround us best justify our co-operation; we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the States have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling places to prevent universal intimidation and bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced, business prostrated, homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrating in the hands of capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right to organize for self-protection, imported pauperized labor beats down their wages, a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating into European conditions. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of those, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires.



The national power to create money is appropriated to enrich bondholders; a vast public debt payable in legal tender currency has been funded into gold-bearing bonds, thereby adding millions to the burdens of the people.

Silver, which has been accepted as coin since the dawn of history, has been demonetized to add to the purchasing power of gold by decreasing the value of all forms of property as well as human labor, and the supply of currency is purposely abridged to fatten usurers, bankrupt enterprise, and enslave industry. A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism.

We have witnessed for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influences dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them. Neither do they now promise us any substantial reform. They have agreed together to ignore, in the coming campaign, every issue but one. They propose to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar of a sham battle over the tariff, so that capitalists, corporations, national banks, rings, trusts, watered stock, the demonetization of silver and the oppressions of the usurers may all be lost sight of. They propose to sacrifice our homes, lives, and children on the altar of mammon; to destroy the multitude in order to secure corruption funds from the millionaires.

Assembled on the anniversary of the birthday of the nation, and filled with the spirit of the grand general and chief who established our independence, we seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of "the plain people," with which class it originated. We assert our purposes to be identical with the purposes of the National Constitution; to form a more perfect union and establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the



common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.

We declare that this Republic can only endure as a free government while built upon the love of the whole people for each other and for the nation; that it cannot be pinned together by bayonets; that the civil war is over, and that every passion and resentment which grew out of it must die with it, and that we must be in fact, as we are in name, one united brotherhood of free men.

Our country finds itself confronted by conditions for which there is no precedent in the history of the world; our annual agricultural productions amount to billions of dollars in value, which must, within a few weeks or months, be exchanged for billions of dollars' worth of commodities consumed in their production; the existing currency supply is wholly inadequate to make this exchange; the results are falling prices, the formation of combines and rings, the impoverishment of the producing class. We pledge ourselves that if given power we will labor to correct these evils by wise and reasonable legislation, in accordance with the terms of our platform.

We believe that the power of government—in other words, of the people—should be expanded (as in the case of the postal service) as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land.

While our sympathies as a party of reform are naturally upon the side of every proposition which will tend to make men intelligent, virtuous, and temperate, we nevertheless regard these questions, important as they are, as secondary to the great issues now pressing for solution, and upon which not only our individual prosperity but the very existence of free institutions depend; and we ask all men to first help us to determine whether we are to have a republic to administer before we differ as to the conditions upon which it is to be administered, believing that the forces of reform this day organized will never cease to move forward until every wrong is



remedied and equal rights and equal privileges securely established for all the men and women of this country.

## PLATFORM

We declare, therefore—

*First.*—That the union of the labor forces of the United States this day consummated shall be permanent and perpetual; may its spirit enter into all hearts for the salvation of the Republic and the uplifting of mankind.

*Second.*—Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery. “If any will not work, neither shall he eat.” The interests of rural and civic labor are the same; their enemies are identical.

*Third.*—We believe that the time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads, and should the government enter upon the work of owning and managing all railroads, we should favor an amendment to the Constitution by which all persons engaged in the government service shall be placed under a civil-service regulation of the most rigid character, so as to prevent the increase of the power of the national administration by the use of such additional government employes.

*FINANCE.*—We demand a national currency, safe, sound, and flexible, issued by the general government only, a full legal tender for all debts, public and private, and that without the use of banking corporations, a just, equitable, and efficient means of distribution direct to the people, at a tax not to exceed 2 per cent. per annum, to be provided as set forth in the sub-treasury plan of the Farmers’ Alliance, or a better system; also by payments in discharge of its obligations for public improvements.

1. We demand free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the



present legal ratio of 16 to 1.

2. We demand that the amount of circulating medium be speedily increased to not less than \$50 per capita.
3. We demand a graduated income tax.
4. We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people, and hence we demand that all State and national revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government, economically and honestly administered.
5. We demand that postal savings banks be established by the government for the safe deposit of the earnings of the people and to facilitate exchange.

TRANSPORTATION—Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people. The telegraph, telephone, like the post-office system, being a necessity for the transmission of news, should be owned and operated by the government in the interest of the people.

LAND.—The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people, and should not be monopolized for speculative purposes, and alien ownership of land should be prohibited. All land now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs, and all lands now owned by aliens should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

## EXPRESSION OF SENTIMENTS

Your Committee on Platform and Resolutions beg leave unanimously to report the following:

*Whereas*, Other questions have been presented for our consideration, we hereby submit the following, not as a part of the



Platform of the People's Party, but as resolutions expressive of the sentiment of this Convention.

1. RESOLVED, That we demand a free ballot and a fair count in all elections and pledge ourselves to secure it to every legal voter without Federal Intervention, through the adoption by the States of the unperturbed Australian or secret ballot system.
2. RESOLVED, That the revenue derived from a graduated income tax should be applied to the reduction of the burden of taxation now levied upon the domestic industries of this country.
3. RESOLVED, That we pledge our support to fair and liberal pensions to ex-Union soldiers and sailors.
4. RESOLVED, That we condemn the fallacy of protecting American labor under the present system, which opens our ports to the pauper and criminal classes of the world and crowds out our wage-earners; and we denounce the present ineffective laws against contract labor, and demand the further restriction of undesirable emigration.
5. RESOLVED, That we cordially sympathize with the efforts of organized workingmen to shorten the hours of labor, and demand a rigid enforcement of the existing eight-hour law on Government work, and ask that a penalty clause be added to the said law.
6. RESOLVED, That we regard the maintenance of a large standing army of mercenaries, known as the Pinkerton system, as a menace to our liberties, and we demand its abolition. . . .
7. RESOLVED, That we commend to the favorable consideration of the people and the reform press the legislative system known as the initiative and referendum.
8. RESOLVED, That we favor a constitutional provision limiting the office of President and Vice-President to one term, and providing for the election of Senators of the United States by a direct vote of the people.
9. RESOLVED, That we oppose any subsidy or national aid to any



private corporation for any purpose.

10. RESOLVED, That this convention sympathizes with the Knights of Labor and their righteous contest with the tyrannical combine of clothing manufacturers of Rochester, and declare it to be a duty of all who hate tyranny and oppression to refuse to purchase the goods made by the said manufacturers, or to patronize any merchants who sell such goods.

Source: *Edward McPherson, A Handbook of Politics for 1892* (Washington D.C.: James J. Chapman, 1892), 269-271.

Via [Google Books](#)







PART XII

LEADING THE WAY: THE  
PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT,  
1890-1920







## 70. Introduction to the Progressive Movement



*The western states were the first to allow women the right to vote, a freedom that grew out of the less deeply entrenched gendered spheres in the region. This illustration, from 1915, shows a suffragist holding a torch over the western states and inviting the beckoning women from the rest of the country to join her.*

Women's suffrage was one of many causes that emerged in the Progressive Era, as Americans confronted the numerous challenges of the late nineteenth century. Starting in the late 1800s, women increasingly were working outside the home—a task almost always done for money, not empowerment—as well as pursuing higher education, both at universities that were beginning to allow women to enroll and at female-only schools. Often, it was educated middle-class women with more time and resources that took up causes such as child labor and family health. As more women led new organizations or institutions, such as the settlement houses, they



grew to have a greater voice on issues of social change. By the turn of the century, a strong movement had formed to advocate for a woman's right to vote. For three decades, suffragist groups pushed for legislation to give women the right to vote in every state. As the illustration above shows, the western states were the first to grant women the right to vote; it would not be until 1920 that the nation would extend that right to all women.

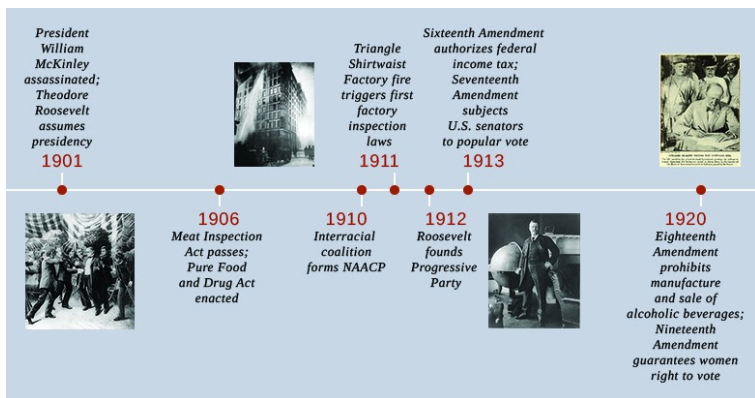


# 7I. The Origins of the Progressive Spirit in America

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the role that muckrakers played in catalyzing the Progressive Era
- Explain the main features of Progressivism



The Progressive Era was a time of wide-ranging causes and varied movements, where activists and reformers from diverse backgrounds and with very different agendas pursued their goals of a better America. These reformers were reacting to the challenges that faced the country at the end of the nineteenth century: rapid



urban sprawl, immigration, corruption, industrial working conditions, the growth of large corporations, women's rights, and surging anti-black violence and white supremacy in the South. Investigative journalists of the day uncovered social inequality and encouraged Americans to take action. The campaigns of the Progressives were often grassroots in their origin. While different causes shared some underlying elements, each movement largely focused on its own goals, be it the right of women to vote, the removal of alcohol from communities, or the desire for a more democratic voting process.

## THE MUCKRAKERS

A group of journalists and writers collectively known as muckrakers provided an important spark that ignited the Progressive movement. Unlike the “yellow journalists” who were interested only in sensationalized articles designed to sell newspapers, muckrakers exposed problems in American society and urged the public to identify solutions. Whether those problems were associated with corrupt machine politics, poor working conditions in factories, or the questionable living conditions of the working class (among others), muckrakers shined a light on the problem and provoked outraged responses from Americans. President Theodore Roosevelt knew many of these investigative journalists well and considered himself a Progressive. Yet, unhappy with the way they forced agendas into national politics, he was the one who first gave them the disparaging nickname “muckrakers,” invoking an ill-spirited character obsessed with filth from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a 1678 Christian allegory written by John Bunyan.



Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, these Progressive journalists sought to expose critical social problems and exhort the public to take action. In his book, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), journalist and photographer Jacob Riis used photojournalism to capture the dismal and dangerous living conditions in working-class tenements in New York City. Ida Tarbell,



*Jacob Riis's images of New York City slums in the late nineteenth century, such as this 1890 photograph of children sleeping in Mulberry Street, exposed Americans all over the country to the living conditions of the urban poor.*

perhaps the most well-known female muckraker, wrote a series of articles on the dangers of John D. Rockefeller's powerful monopoly, Standard Oil. Her articles followed Henry Demarest Lloyd's book, *Wealth Against Commonwealth*, published in 1894, which examined the excesses of Standard Oil. Other writers, like Lincoln Steffens, explored corruption in city politics, or, like Ray Standard Baker, researched unsafe working conditions and low pay in the coal mines.

The work of the muckrakers not only revealed serious problems in American society, but also agitated, often successfully, for change. Their articles, in magazines such as *McClure's*, as well as books garnered attention for issues such as child labor, anti-trust, big business break-ups, and health and safety. Progressive activists took up these causes and lobbied for legislation to address some of the ills troubling industrial America.

To learn more about one of the most influential muckrakers of the late nineteenth century, peruse the photographs, writings, and more at the [Ida M. Tarbell](#)



[archives](#) that are housed at Tarbell's alma mater, Allegheny College, where she matriculated in 1876 as the only woman in her class.

## THE FEATURES OF PROGRESSIVISM

Muckrakers drew public attention to some of the most glaring inequities and scandals that grew out of the social ills of the Gilded Age and the hands-off approach of the federal government since the end of Reconstruction. These writers by and large addressed a white, middle-class and elite, native-born audience, even though Progressive movements and organizations involved a diverse range of Americans. What united these Progressives beyond their different backgrounds and causes was a set of unifying principles, however. Most strove for a perfection of democracy, which required the expansion of suffrage to worthy citizens and the restriction of political participation for those considered “unfit” on account of health, education, or race. Progressives also agreed that democracy had to be balanced with an emphasis on efficiency, a reliance on science and technology, and deference to the expertise of professionals. They repudiated party politics but looked to government to regulate the modern market economy. And they saw themselves as the agents of social justice and reform, as well as the stewards and guides of workers and the urban poor. Often, reformers’ convictions and faith in their own expertise led them to dismiss the voices of the very people they sought to help.

The expressions of these Progressive principles developed at the grassroots level. It was not until Theodore Roosevelt unexpectedly became president in 1901 that the federal government would engage



in Progressive reforms. Before then, Progressivism was work done by the people, for the people. What knit Progressives together was the feeling that the country was moving at a dangerous pace in a dangerous direction and required the efforts of everyday Americans to help put it back on track.

## Section Summary

In its first decade, the Progressive Era was a grassroots effort that ushered in reforms at state and local levels. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Progressive endeavors captured the attention of the federal government. The challenges of the late nineteenth century were manifold: fast-growing cities that were ill-equipped to house the working poor, hands-off politicians shackled into impotence by their system of political favors, and rural Americans struggling to keep their farms afloat. The muckraking journalists of the era published books and articles highlighting the social inequities of the day and extolling everyday Americans to help find solutions. Educated, middle-class, Anglo-Saxon Protestants dominated the movement, but Progressives were not a homogenous group: The movement counted African Americans, both women and men, and urban as well as rural dwellers among its ranks. Progressive causes ranged from anti-liquor campaigns to fair pay. Together, Progressives sought to advance the spread of democracy, improve



efficiency in government and industry, and promote social justice.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1020>

### *Review Question*

1. How did muckrakers help initiate the Progressive Era?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The muckrakers played a pivotal role in initiating the Progressive Era, because they spurred everyday Americans to action. Unlike earlier sensationalist journalists, the muckrakers told their stories with the explicit goal of galvanizing their readers and encouraging them to take steps to address the issues. With photographs and descriptions of real-life scenarios of which many Americans were unaware, the muckrakers brought the tribulations of child factory workers, the urban poor, and others into the living rooms of the middle class.



## *Glossary*

**muckrakers** investigative journalists and authors who wrote about social ills, from child labor to the corrupt business practices of big businesses, and urged the public to take action

**Progressivism** a broad movement between 1896 and 1916 led by white, middle-class professionals for legal, scientific, managerial, and institutional solutions to the ills of urbanization, industrialization, and corruption



## 72. Video: The Progressive Era

This video teaches you about the Progressive Era in the United States. In the late 19th and early 20th century in America, there was a sense that things could be improved upon. A sense that reforms should be enacted. A sense that progress should be made. As a result, we got the Progressive Era, which has very little to do with automobile insurance, but a little to do with automobiles. All this overlapped with the Gilded Age, and is a little confusing, but here we have it. Basically, people were trying to solve some of the social problems that came with the benefits of industrial capitalism. To oversimplify, there was a competition between the corporations' desire to keep wages low and workers' desire to have a decent life. Improving food safety, reducing child labor, and unions were all on the agenda in the Progressive Era. While progress was being made, and people were becoming more free, these gains were not equally distributed. Jim Crow laws were put in place in the south, and immigrant rights were restricted as well. So once again on Crash Course, things aren't so simple.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=99#oembed-1>



## 73. Progressivism at the Grassroots Level

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify specific examples of grassroots Progressivism relating to the spread of democracy, efficiency in government, and social justice
- Describe the more radical movements associated with the Progressive Era

A wide variety of causes fell under the Progressive label. For example, Wisconsin's Robert M. ("Fighting Bob") La Follette, one of the most Progressive politicians of his day, fought hard to curb the power of special interests in politics and reform the democratic process at state and local levels. Others sought out safer working conditions for factory workers. Different groups prioritized banning the sale of alcohol, which, they believed, was the root of much of the trouble for the working poor. No matter what the cause, Progressive campaigns often started with issues brought to the public's attention by muckraking journalists.



## EXPANDING DEMOCRACY

One of the key ideals that Progressives considered vital to the growth and health of the country was the concept of a perfected democracy. They felt, quite simply, that Americans needed to exert more control over their government. This shift, they believed, would ultimately lead to a system of government that was better able to address the needs of its citizens. Grassroots Progressives pushed forward their agenda of direct democracy through the passage of three state-level reforms.

The first law involved the creation of the direct primary. Prior to this time, the only people who had a hand in selecting candidates for elections were delegates at conventions. Direct primaries allowed party members to vote directly for a candidate, with the nomination going to the one with the most votes. This was the beginning of the current system of holding a primary election before a general election. South Carolina adopted this system for statewide elections in 1896; in 1901, Florida became the first state to use the direct primary in nominations for the presidency. It is the method currently used in three-quarters of U.S. states.

Another series of reforms pushed forward by Progressives that sought to sidestep the power of special interests in state legislatures and restore the democratic political process were three election innovations—the initiative, referendum, and recall. The first permitted voters to enact legislation by petitioning to place an idea, or initiative, on the ballot. In 1898, South Dakota became the first state to allow initiatives to appear on a ballot. By 1920, twenty states had adopted the procedure. The second innovation allowed voters to counteract legislation by holding a referendum—that is, putting an existing law on the ballot for voters to either affirm or reject. Currently twenty-four states allow some form of initiative and referendum. The third element of this direct democracy agenda was the recall. The recall permitted citizens to remove a public official from office through a process of petition and vote, similar to



the initiative and referendum. While this measure was not as widely adopted as the others, Oregon, in 1910, became the first state to allow recalls. By 1920, twelve states had adopted this tool. It has only been used successfully a handful of times on the statewide level, for example, to remove the governor of North Dakota in 1921, and, more recently, the governor of California in 2003.

Progressives also pushed for democratic reform that affected the federal government. In an effort to achieve a fairer representation of state constituencies in the U.S. Congress, they lobbied for approval of the Seventeenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which mandated the direct election of U.S. senators. The Seventeenth Amendment replaced the previous system of having state legislatures choose senators. William Jennings Bryan, the 1896 Democratic presidential candidate who received significant support from the Populist Party, was among the leading Progressives who championed this cause.

## EXPERTISE AND EFFICIENCY

In addition to making government more directly accountable to the voters, Progressives also fought to rid politics of inefficiency, waste, and corruption. Progressives in large cities were particularly frustrated with the corruption and favoritism of machine politics, which wasted enormous sums of taxpayer money and ultimately stalled the progress of cities for the sake of entrenched politicians, like the notorious Democratic Party Boss William Tweed in New York's Tammany Hall. Progressives sought to change this corrupt system and had success in places like Galveston, Texas, where, in 1901, they pushed the city to adopt a commission system. A hurricane the previous year had led to the collapse of the old city government, which had proved incapable of leading the city through the natural disaster. The storm claimed over eight thousand lives—the highest death toll from a natural disaster in the history



of the country—and afterwards, the community had no faith that the existing government could rebuild. The commission system involved the election of a number of commissioners, each responsible for one specific operation of the city, with titles like water commissioner, fire commissioner, police commissioner, and so on. With no single political “boss” in charge, the prevalence of graft and corruption greatly decreased. The commissioner system is widely used in modern cities throughout the United States.

Another model of municipal government reform took shape in Staunton, Virginia, in 1908, where the citizens switched to the city manager form of government. Designed to avoid the corruption inherent in political machines, the city manager system separated the daily operations of the city from both the electoral process and political parties. In this system, citizens elected city councilors who would pass laws and handle all legislative issues. However, their first job was to hire a city manager to deal with



*The 1900 hurricane in Galveston, Texas, claimed more lives than any other natural disaster in American history. In its wake, fearing that the existing corrupt and inefficient government was not up to the job of rebuilding, the remaining residents of the town adopted the commission system of local government.*

the daily management operation of the city. This person, unlike the politicians, was an engineer or businessman who understood the practical elements of city operations and oversaw city workers. Currently, over thirty-seven hundred cities have adopted the city manager system, including some of the largest cities in the country, such as Austin, Dallas, and Phoenix.

At the state level, perhaps the greatest advocate of Progressive government was Robert La Follette. During his time as governor, from 1901 through 1906, La Follette introduced the Wisconsin Idea,



wherein he hired experts to research and advise him in drafting legislation to improve conditions in his state. “Fighting Bob” supported numerous Progressive ideas while governor: He signed into law the first workman’s compensation system, approved a minimum wage law, developed a progressive tax law, adopted the direct election of U.S. senators before the subsequent constitutional amendment made it mandatory, and advocated for women’s suffrage. La Follette subsequently served as a popular U.S. senator from Wisconsin from 1906 through 1925, and ran for president on the Progressive Party ticket in 1924.

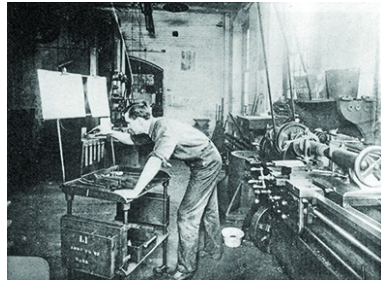


*An energetic speaker and tireless Progressive, Governor Robert “Fighting Bob” La Follette turned the state of Wisconsin into a flagship for democratic reform.*



Read how [Robert La Follette's legacy](#) still inspires progressives in Wisconsin.

Many Progressive reformers were also committed to the principle of efficiency in business as well as in government. The growth of large corporations at the time fostered the emergence of a class of professional managers. Fredrick Winslow Taylor, arguably the first American management consultant, laid out his argument of increased industrial efficiency through improvements in human



*This machinist works alone in a factory that adopted Taylorism, the scientific time management principle that sought to bring ultimate efficiency to factories. Many workers found the focus on repetitive tasks to be dehumanizing and unpleasant.*

productivity in his book *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911). Through time-motion studies and the principles of standardization, Taylor sought to place workers in the most efficient positions of the industrial process. Management, he argued, should determine the work routine, leaving workers to simply execute the task at hand. The image below shows a machinist in a factory where Taylor had consulted; he is alone and focused solely on his job. Progressive in its emphasis on efficiency, the use of science, and the reliance on experts, Taylorism, as scientific management became known, was not widely popular among workers who resented managerial authority and the loss of autonomy over their work. Many workers went on strikes in response, although some favored Taylor's methods, since their pay was directly linked to the productivity increases that his methods



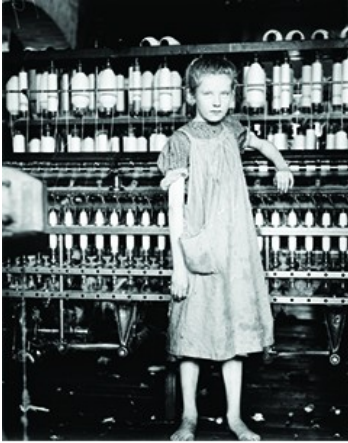
achieved and since increased efficiency allowed companies to charge consumers lower prices.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

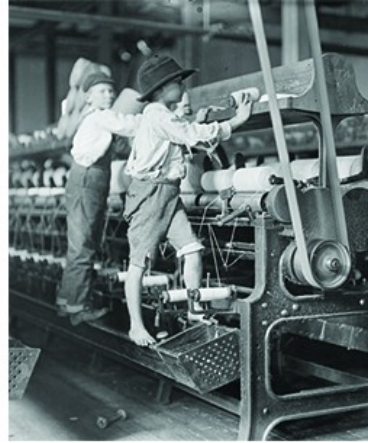
The Progressives' work towards social justice took many forms. In some cases, it was focused on those who suffered due to pervasive inequality, such as African Americans, other ethnic groups, and women. In others, the goal was to help those who were in desperate need due to circumstance, such as poor immigrants from southern and eastern Europe who often suffered severe discrimination, the working poor, and those with ill health. Women were in the vanguard of social justice reform. Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, and Ellen Gates Starr, for example, led the settlement house movement of the 1880s (discussed in a previous chapter). Their work to provide social services, education, and health care to working-class women and their children was among the earliest Progressive grassroots efforts in the country.

Building on the successes of the settlement houses, social justice reformers took on other, related challenges. The National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), formed in 1904, urged the passage of labor legislation to ban child labor in the industrial sector. In 1900, U.S. census records indicated that one out of every six children between the ages of five and ten were working, a 50-percent increase over the previous decade. If the sheer numbers alone were not enough to spur action, the fact that managers paid child workers noticeably less for their labor gave additional fuel to the NCLC's efforts to radically curtail child labor. The committee employed photographer Lewis Hine to engage in a decade-long pictorial campaign to educate Americans on the plight of children working in factories.





(a)



(b)

*As part of the National Child Labor Committee's campaign to raise awareness about the plight of child laborers, Lewis Hine photographed dozens of children in factories around the country, including Addie Card (a), a twelve-year-old spinner working in a mill in Vermont in 1910, and these young boys working at Bibb Mill No. 1 in Macon, Georgia in 1909 (b). Working ten- to twelve-hour shifts, children often worked large machines where they could reach into gaps and remove lint and other debris, a practice that caused plenty of injuries. (credit a/b: modification of work by Library of Congress)*

Although low-wage industries fiercely opposed any federal restriction on child labor, the NCLC did succeed in 1912, urging President William Howard Taft to sign into law the creation of the U.S. Children's Bureau. As a branch of the Department of Labor, the bureau worked closely with the NCLC to bring greater awareness to the issue of child labor. In 1916, the pressure from the NCLC and the general public resulted in the passage of the Keating-Owen Act, which prohibited the interstate trade of any goods produced with child labor. Although the U.S. Supreme Court later declared the law unconstitutional, Keating-Owen reflected a significant shift in the public perception of child labor. Finally, in 1938, the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act signaled the victory of supporters of



Keating-Owen. This new law outlawed the interstate trade of any products produced by children under the age of sixteen.

Florence Kelley, a Progressive supporter of the NCLC, championed other social justice causes as well. As the first general secretary of the National Consumers League, which was founded in 1899 by Jane Addams and others, Kelley led one of the original battles to try and secure safety in factory working conditions. She particularly opposed sweatshop labor and urged the passage of an eight-hour-workday law in order to specifically protect women in the workplace. Kelley's efforts were initially met with strong resistance from factory owners who



*On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. Despite the efforts of firefighters, 146 workers died in the fire, mostly because the owners had trapped them on the sweatshop floors.*

exploited women's labor and were unwilling to give up the long hours and low wages they paid in order to offer the cheapest possible product to consumers. But in 1911, a tragedy turned the tide of public opinion in favor of Kelley's cause. On March 25 of that year, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company on the eighth floor of the Asch building in New York City, resulting in the deaths of 146 garment workers, most of them young, immigrant women. Management had previously blockaded doors and fire escapes in an effort to control workers and keep out union organizers; in the blaze, many died due to the crush of bodies trying to evacuate the building. Others died when they fell off the flimsy fire escape or jumped to their deaths to escape the flames. This tragedy provided the National Consumers League with the moral argument to



convince politicians of the need to pass workplace safety laws and codes.

## William Shepherd on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

The tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire was a painful wake-up call to a country that was largely ignoring issues of poor working conditions and worker health and safety. While this fire was far from the only instance of worker death, the sheer number of people killed—almost one hundred fifty—and the fact they were all young women, made a strong impression. Furthering the power of this tragedy was the first-hand account shared by William Shepherd, a United Press reporter who was on the scene, giving his eyewitness account over a telephone. His account appeared, just two days later, in the *Milwaukee Journal*, and word of the tragedy spread from there. Public outrage over their deaths was enough to give the National Consumers League the power it needed to push politicians to get involved.

I saw every feature of the tragedy visible from outside the building. I learned a new sound—a more horrible sound than description can picture. It was the thud of a speeding, living body on a stone sidewalk.

Thud-dead, thud-dead, thud-dead, thud-dead. Sixty-two thud-deads. I call them that, because the sound and the thought of death came to me each time, at the same instant. There was plenty of chance to watch them as they came down. The height was eighty feet.

The first ten thud-deads shocked me. I looked up—saw that there were scores of girls at the windows. The flames from the floor below were beating in their faces. Somehow I knew that they, too, must come down. . . .



A policeman later went about with tags, which he fastened with wires to the wrists of the dead girls, numbering each with a lead pencil, and I saw him fasten tag no. 54 to the wrist of a girl who wore an engagement ring. A fireman who came downstairs from the building told me that there were at least fifty bodies in the big room on the seventh floor. Another fireman told me that more girls had jumped down an air shaft in the rear of the building. I went back there, into the narrow court, and saw a heap of dead girls. . . .

The floods of water from the firemen's hose that ran into the gutter were actually stained red with blood. I looked upon the heap of dead bodies and I remembered these girls were the shirtwaist makers. I remembered their great strike of last year in which these same girls had demanded more sanitary conditions and more safety precautions in the shops. These dead bodies were the answer.

What do you think about William Shepherd's description? What effect do you think it had on newspaper readers in the Midwest?

Another cause that garnered support from a key group of Progressives was the prohibition of liquor. This crusade, which gained followers through the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Anti-Saloon League, directly linked Progressivism with morality and Christian reform initiatives, and saw in alcohol both a moral vice and a practical concern, as workingmen spent their wages on liquor and saloons, often turning violent towards each other or their families at home. The WCTU and Anti-Saloon League moved the efforts to eliminate the sale of alcohol from a bar-to-bar public opinion campaign to one of city-to-city and state-by-state votes. Through local option votes and subsequent statewide initiatives and referendums, the Anti-Saloon League succeeded in urging 40 percent of the nation's counties to "go dry" by 1906, and a full dozen states to do the same by 1909. Their political pressure culminated in the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S.



Constitution, ratified in 1919, which prohibited the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages nationwide.



*This John R. Chapin illustration shows the women of the temperance movement holding an open-air prayer meeting outside an Ohio saloon. (credit: Library of Congress)*

## RADICAL PROGRESSIVES

The Progressive Era also witnessed a wave of radicalism, with leaders who believed that America was beyond reform and that only a complete revolution of sorts would bring about the necessary changes. The radicals had early roots in the labor and political movements of the mid-nineteenth century but soon grew to feel that the more moderate Progressive ideals were inadequate. Conversely, one reason mainstream why Progressives felt the need to succeed on issues of social inequity was because radicals offered remedies that middle-class Americans considered far more



dangerous. The two most prominent radical movements to emerge at the beginning of the century were the Socialist Party of America (SPA), founded in 1901, and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), founded in 1905, whose emphasis on worker empowerment deviated from the more paternalistic approach of Progressive reformers.

Labor leader Eugene Debs, disenchanted with the failures of the labor movement, was a founding member and prominent leader of the SPA. Advocating for change via the ballot box, the SPA sought to elect Socialists to positions at the local, state, and federal levels in order to initiate change from within. Between 1901 and 1918, the SPA enjoyed tremendous success, electing over seventy Socialist mayors,



*This image of Eugene Debs speaking to a crowd in Canton, Ohio, in 1918, illustrates the passion and intensity that made him such a compelling figure to the more radical Progressives.*

over thirty state legislators, and two U.S. congressmen, Victor Berger from Wisconsin and Meyer London from New York. Debs himself ran for president as the SPA candidate in five elections between 1900 and 1920, twice earning nearly one million votes.

As had been true for the Populist and Progressive movements, the radical movement suffered numerous fissures. Although Debs established a tenuous relationship with Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor, some within the Socialist Party favored a more radical political stance than Debs's craft union structure. As a result, William "Big Bill" Haywood formed the more radical IWW, or Wobblies, in 1905. Although he remained an active member of the Socialist Party until 1919, Haywood appreciated the outcry of the more radical arm of the party that desired an industrial union approach to labor organization. The IWW advocated for direct action and, in particular, the general strike, as the most



effective revolutionary method to overthrow the capitalist system. By 1912, the Wobblies had played a significant role in a number of major strikes, including the Paterson Silk Strike, the Lawrence Textile Strike, and the Mesabi Range Iron Strike. The government viewed the Wobblies as a significant threat, and in a response far greater than their actions warranted, targeted them with arrests, tar-and-featherings, shootings, and lynchings.

Both the Socialist Party and the IWW reflected elements of the Progressive desire for democracy and social justice. The difference was simply that for this small but vocal minority in the United States, the corruption of government at all levels meant that the desire for a better life required a different approach. What they sought mirrored the work of all grassroots Progressives, differing only in degree and strategy.

## Section Summary

Progressive campaigns stretched from the hurricane-ruined townships of Texas to the slums of New York, from the factory floor to the saloon door. But what tied together these disparate causes and groups was the belief that the country was in dire need of reform, and that answers were to be found within the activism and expertise of predominantly middle-class Americans on behalf of troubled communities. Some efforts, such as the National Child Labor Committee, pushed for federal legislation; however, most Progressive initiatives took place at the state and local levels, as Progressives sought



to harness public support to place pressure on politicians.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a more radical, revolutionary breed of Progressivism began to evolve. While these radical Progressives generally shared the goals of their more mainstream counterparts, their strategies differed significantly. Mainstream Progressives and many middle-class Americans feared groups such as the Socialist Party of America and the Industrial Workers of the World, which emphasized workers' empowerment and direct action.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1021>

## *Glossary*

**direct primary** a political reform that allowed for the nomination of candidates through a direct vote by party members, rather than by the choice of delegates at conventions; in the South, this strengthened all-white solidarity within the Democratic Party

**initiative** a proposed law, or initiative, placed on the ballot by public petition

**recall** to remove a public official from office by virtue of a petition and vote process

**referendum** a process that allows voters to counteract



legislation by putting an existing law on the ballot for voters to either affirm or reject

**Taylorism** a system named for Fredrick Winslow Taylor, aimed at improving factory efficiency rates through the principle of standardization; Taylor's model limited workers to repetitive tasks, reducing human contact and opportunities to think or collaborate

**Wisconsin Idea** a political system created by Robert La Follette, governor of Wisconsin, that embodied many progressive ideals; La Follette hired experts to advise him on improving conditions in his state

**Wobblies** a nickname for the Industrial Workers of the World, a radical Progressive group that grew out of the earlier labor movement and desired an industrial union model of labor organization



## 74. New Voices for Women and African Americans

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Understand the origins and growth of the women's rights movement
- Identify the different strands of the early African American civil rights movement

The Progressive drive for a more perfect democracy and social justice also fostered the growth of two new movements that attacked the oldest and most long-standing betrayals of the American promise of equal opportunity and citizenship—the disfranchisement of women and civil rights for African Americans. African Americans across the nation identified an agenda for civil rights and economic opportunity during the Progressive Era, but they disagreed strongly on how to meet these goals in the face of universal discrimination and disfranchisement, segregation, and racial violence in the South. And beginning in the late nineteenth century, the women's movement cultivated a cadre of new leaders, national organizations, and competing rationales for women's rights—especially the right to vote.

### LEADERS EMERGE IN THE WOMEN'S



## MOVEMENT

Women like Jane Addams and Florence Kelley were instrumental in the early Progressive settlement house movement, and female leaders dominated organizations such as the WCTU and the Anti-Saloon League. From these earlier efforts came new leaders who, in their turn, focused their efforts on the key goal of the Progressive Era as it pertained to women: the right to vote.

Women had first formulated their demand for the right to vote in the Declaration of Sentiments at a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, and saw their first opportunity of securing suffrage during Reconstruction when legislators—driven by racial animosity—sought to enfranchise women to counter the votes of black men following the ratification of the



*Women suffragists in Ohio sought to educate and convince men that they should support a woman's rights to vote. As the feature below on the backlash against suffragists illustrates, it was a far from simple task.*

Fifteenth Amendment. By 1900, the western frontier states of Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming had already responded to women's movements with the right to vote in state and local elections, regardless of gender. They conceded to the suffragists' demands, partly in order to attract more women to these male-dominated regions. But women's lives in the West also rarely fit with the nineteenth-century ideology of "separate spheres" that had legitimized the exclusion of women from the rough-and-tumble party competitions of public politics. In 1890, the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) organized several hundred state and local chapters to urge the passage of a federal amendment to guarantee a woman's right to vote. Its leaders, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, were veterans of the women's



suffrage movement and had formulated the first demand for the right to vote at Seneca Falls in 1848. Under the subsequent leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt, beginning in 1900, the group decided to make suffrage its first priority. Soon, its membership began to grow. Using modern marketing efforts like celebrity endorsements to attract a younger audience, the NAWSA became a significant political pressure group for the passage of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

For some in the NAWSA, however, the pace of change was too slow. Frustrated with the lack of response by state and national legislators, Alice Paul, who joined the organization in 1912, sought to expand the scope of the organization as well as to adopt more direct protest tactics to draw greater media attention. When others in the group were unwilling to move in her direction, Paul split from the NAWSA to create the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, later renamed the National Woman's Party, in 1913. Known as the Silent Sentinels, Paul and her group picketed outside the White House for nearly two years, starting in 1917. In the latter stages of their protests, many women, including Paul, were arrested and thrown in jail, where they staged a hunger strike as self-proclaimed political prisoners. Prison guards ultimately force-fed Paul to keep her alive. At a time—during World War I—when women volunteered as army nurses, worked in vital defense industries, and supported Wilson's campaign to “make the world safe for democracy,” the scandalous mistreatment of Paul embarrassed President Woodrow Wilson. Enlightened to the injustice toward all American women, he changed his position in support of a woman's constitutional right to vote.





*Alice Paul and her Silent Sentinels picketed outside the White House for almost two years, and, when arrested, went on hunger strike until they were force-fed in order to save their lives.*

While Catt and Paul used different strategies, their combined efforts brought enough pressure to bear for Congress to pass the Nineteenth Amendment, which prohibited voter discrimination on the basis of sex, during a special session in the summer of 1919. Subsequently, the required thirty-six states approved its adoption, with Tennessee doing so in August of 1920, in time for that year's presidential election.



## The Anti-Suffragist Movement

The early suffragists may have believed that the right to vote was a universal one, but they faced waves of discrimination and ridicule from both men and women. The image below shows one of the organizations pushing back against the suffragist movement, but much of the anti-suffrage campaign was carried out through ridiculing postcards and signs that



*The anti-suffrage group used ridicule and embarrassment to try and sway the public away from supporting a woman's right to vote.*

showed suffragists as sexually wanton, grasping, irresponsible, or impossibly ugly. Men in anti-suffragist posters were depicted as henpecked, crouching to clean the floor, while their suffragist wives marched out the door to campaign for the vote. They also showed cartoons of women gambling, drinking, and smoking cigars, that is, taking on men's vices, once they gained voting rights.

Other anti-suffragists believed that women could better influence the country from outside the realm of party politics, through their clubs, petitions, and churches. Many women also opposed women's suffrage because they thought the dirty world of politics was a morass to which ladies should not be exposed. The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage formed in 1911; around the country, state representatives used the organization's speakers, funds, and literature to promote the anti-suffragist cause. As the link below illustrates, the suffragists endured much prejudice and backlash in their push for equal rights.



Browse this [collection of anti-suffragist cartoons](#) to see examples of the stereotypes and fear-mongering that the anti-suffragist campaign promoted.

## LEADERS EMERGE IN THE EARLY CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Racial mob violence against African Americans permeated much of the “New South”—and, to a lesser extent, the West, where Mexican Americans and other immigrant groups also suffered severe discrimination and violence—by the late nineteenth century. The Ku Klux Klan and a system of Jim Crow laws governed much of the South (discussed in a previous chapter). White middle-class reformers were appalled at the violence of race relations in the nation but typically shared the belief in racial characteristics and the superiority of Anglo-Saxon whites over African Americans, Asians, “ethnic” Europeans, Indians, and Latin American populations. Southern reformers considered segregation a Progressive solution to racial violence; across the nation, educated middle-class Americans enthusiastically followed the work of eugenicists who identified virtually all human behavior as inheritable traits and issued awards at county fairs to families and individuals for their “racial fitness.” It was against this tide that African American leaders developed their own voice in the Progressive Era, working along diverse paths to improve the lives and conditions of African Americans throughout the country.

Born into slavery in Virginia in 1856, Booker T. Washington became an influential African American leader at the outset of the Progressive Era. In 1881, he became the first principal for the



Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama, a position he held until he died in 1915. Tuskegee was an all-black “normal school”—an old term for a teachers’ college—teaching African Americans a curriculum geared towards practical skills such as cooking, farming, and housekeeping. Graduates would often then travel through the South, teaching new farming and industrial techniques to rural communities. Washington extolled the school’s graduates to focus on the black community’s self-improvement and prove that they were productive members of society even in freedom—something white Americans throughout the nation had always doubted.

In a speech delivered at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta in 1895, which was meant to promote the economy of a “New South,” Washington proposed what came to be known as the Atlanta Compromise. Speaking to a racially mixed audience, Washington called upon African Americans to work diligently for their own uplift and prosperity rather than



*In Booker T. Washington's speech at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, he urged his audience to “cast down your bucket where you are” and make friends with the people around them.*

preoccupy themselves with political and civil rights. Their success and hard work, he implied, would eventually convince southern whites to grant these rights. Not surprisingly, most whites liked Washington’s model of race relations, since it placed the burden of change on blacks and required nothing of them. Wealthy industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller provided funding for many of Washington’s self-help programs, as did Sears, Roebuck & Co. co-founder Julius Rosenwald, and Washington was the first African American invited to the White House by President Roosevelt in 1901. At the same time, his message also appealed to many in the black community, and some attribute



this widespread popularity to his consistent message that social and economic growth, even within a segregated society, would do more for African Americans than an all-out agitation for equal rights on all fronts.

Visit George Mason University's History Matters website for the text and audio of Booker T. Washington's famous [Atlanta Compromise](#) speech.

Yet, many African Americans disagreed with Washington's approach. Much in the same manner that Alice Paul felt the pace of the struggle for women's rights was moving too slowly under the NAWSA, some within the African American community felt that immediate agitation for the rights guaranteed under the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, established during the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, was necessary. In 1905, a group of prominent civil rights leaders, led by W. E. B. Du Bois, met in a small hotel on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls—where segregation laws did not bar them from hotel accommodations—to discuss what immediate steps were needed for equal rights. Du Bois, a professor at the all-black Atlanta University and the first African American with a doctorate from Harvard, emerged as the prominent spokesperson for what would later be dubbed the Niagara Movement. By 1905, he had grown wary of Booker T. Washington's calls for African Americans to accommodate white racism and focus solely on self-improvement. Du Bois, and others alongside him, wished to carve a more direct path towards equality that drew on the political leadership and litigation skills of the black, educated elite, which he termed the “talented tenth.”



At the meeting, Du Bois led the others in drafting the “Declaration of Principles,” which called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans. These rights included universal suffrage, compulsory education, and the elimination of the convict lease system in which tens of thousands of blacks had endured slavery-like conditions in southern road construction, mines, prisons, and penal farms since the end of Reconstruction. Within a year, Niagara chapters had sprung up in twenty-one states across the country. By 1908, internal fights over the role of



*This photo of the Niagara Movement shows W. E. B. Du Bois seated in the second row, center, in the white hat. The proud and self-confident postures of this group stood in marked contrast to the humility that Booker T. Washington urged of blacks.*

women in the fight for African American equal rights lessened the interest in the Niagara Movement. But the movement laid the groundwork for the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909. Du Bois served as the influential director of publications for the NAACP from its inception until 1933. As the editor of the journal *The Crisis*, Du Bois had a platform to express his views on a variety of issues facing African Americans in the later Progressive Era, as well as during World War I and its aftermath.

In both Washington and Du Bois, African Americans found leaders to push forward the fight for their place in the new century, each with a very different strategy. Both men cultivated ground for a new generation of African American spokespeople and leaders who would then pave the road to the modern civil rights movement after World War II.



## Section Summary

The Progressive commitment to promoting democracy and social justice created an environment within which the movements for women's and African American rights grew and flourished. Emergent leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Alice Paul spread the cause of woman suffrage, drawing in other activists and making the case for a constitutional amendment ensuring a woman's right to vote. African Americans—guided by leaders such as Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois—strove for civil rights and economic opportunity, although their philosophies and strategies differed significantly. In the women's and civil rights movements alike, activists both advanced their own causes and paved the way for later efforts aimed at expanding equal opportunity and citizenship.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1022>

### *Review Question*

1. Describe the philosophy and strategies of the



Niagara Movement. How did it differ from Washington's way of thinking?

## *Review Question*

1. W. E. B. Du Bois sought to push for civil rights directly, through legal and political channels, drawing on the education and skills of the “talented tenth” to advance the Niagara Movement’s agenda. The movement’s Declaration of Principles called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans, including universal suffrage, education, and an end to the convict-lease system. This represented, in many ways, a rejection of Booker T. Washington’s advocacy of accommodation and self-improvement.

## *Glossary*

**Atlanta Compromise** Booker T. Washington’s speech, given at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895, where he urged African Americans to work hard and get along with others in their white communities, so as to earn the goodwill of the country



**NAACP** the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a civil rights organization formed in 1909 by an interracial coalition including W. E. B. Du Bois and Florence Kelley

**Niagara Movement** a campaign led by W. E. B. Du Bois and other prominent African American reformers that departed from Booker T. Washington's model of accommodation and advocated for a "Declaration of Principles" that called for immediate political, social, and economic equality for African Americans

**Silent Sentinels** women protesters who picketed the White House for years to protest for women's right to vote; they went on a hunger strike after their arrest, and their force-feeding became a national scandal



## 75. Video: Women's Suffrage

This video teaches you about American women in the Progressive Era and, well, the progress they made. So the big deal is, of course, the right to vote women gained when the 19th amendment was passed and ratified. But women made a lot of other gains in the 30 years between 1890 and 1920. More women joined the workforce, they acquired lots of other legal rights related to property, and they also became key consumers in the industrial economy. Women also continued to play a vital role in reform movements. Sadly, they got Prohibition enacted in the US, but they did a lot of good stuff, too. The field of social work emerged as women like Jane Addams created settlement houses to assist immigrants in their integration into the United States. Women also began to work to make birth control widely available. You'll learn about famous reformers and activists like Alice Paul, Margaret Sanger, and Emma Goldman, among others.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=102#oembed-1>



# 76. Progressivism in the White House

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the key features of Theodore Roosevelt’s “Square Deal”
- Explain the key features of William Howard Taft’s Progressive agenda
- Identify the main pieces of legislation that Woodrow Wilson’s “New Freedom” agenda comprised

Progressive groups made tremendous strides on issues involving democracy, efficiency, and social justice. But they found that their grassroots approach was ill-equipped to push back against the most powerful beneficiaries of growing inequality, economic concentration, and corruption—big business. In their fight against the trusts, Progressives needed the leadership of the federal government, and they found it in Theodore Roosevelt in 1901, through an accident of history.

In 1900, a sound economic recovery, a unifying victory in the Spanish-American War, and the annexation of the Philippines had helped President William McKinley secure his reelection with the first solid popular majority since 1872. His new vice president was former New York Governor and Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt. But when an assassin shot and killed President McKinley in 1901 at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New



York, Theodore Roosevelt unexpectedly became the youngest president in the nation's history. More importantly, it ushered in a new era of progressive national politics and changed the role of the presidency for the twentieth century.



(a)



(b)

*President William McKinley's assassination (a) at the hands of an anarchist made Theodore Roosevelt (b) the country's youngest president.*

## BUSTING THE TRUSTS

Roosevelt's early career showed him to be a dynamic leader with a Progressive agenda. Many Republican Party leaders disliked Roosevelt's Progressive ideas and popular appeal and hoped to end his career with a nomination to the vice presidency—long considered a dead end in politics. When an assassin's bullet toppled this scheme, Mark Hanna, a prominent Republican senator and party leader, lamented, "Now look! That damned cowboy is now president!"

As the new president, however, Roosevelt moved cautiously with his agenda while he finished out McKinley's term. Roosevelt kept much of McKinley's cabinet intact, and his initial message to



Congress gave only one overriding Progressive goal for his presidency: to eliminate business trusts. In the three years prior to Roosevelt's presidency, the nation had witnessed a wave of mergers and the creation of mega-corporations. To counter this trend, Roosevelt created the Department of Commerce and Labor in 1903, which included the Bureau of Corporations, whose job it was to investigate trusts. He also asked the Department of Justice to resume prosecutions under the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890. Intended to empower federal prosecutors to ban monopolies as conspiracies against interstate trade, the law had run afoul of a conservative Supreme Court.

In 1902, Roosevelt launched his administration's first antitrust suit against the Northern Securities Trust Company, which included powerful businessmen, like John D. Rockefeller and J. P. Morgan, and controlled many of the large midwestern railroads. The suit wound through the judicial system, all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1904, the highest court in the land ultimately affirmed the ruling to break up the trust in a narrow five-to-four vote. For Roosevelt, that was enough of a mandate; he immediately moved against other corporations as well, including the American Tobacco Company and—most significantly—Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company.

Although Roosevelt enjoyed the nickname “the Trustbuster,” he did not consider all trusts dangerous to the public welfare. The “good trusts,” Roosevelt reasoned, used their power in the marketplace and economies of scale to deliver goods and services to customers more cheaply. For example, he allowed Morgan's U.S. Steel Corporation to continue its operations and let it take over smaller steel companies. At the same time, Roosevelt used the presidency as a “bully pulpit” to publicly denounce “bad trusts”—those corporations that exploited their market positions for short-term gains—before he ordered prosecutions by the Justice Department. In total, Roosevelt initiated over two dozen successful anti-trust suits, more than any president before him.

Roosevelt also showed in other contexts that he dared to face the



power of corporations. When an anthracite coal strike gripped the nation for much of the year in 1902, Roosevelt directly intervened in the dispute and invited both sides to the White House to negotiate a deal that included minor wage increases and a slight improvement in working hours. For Roosevelt, his intervention in the matter symbolized his belief that the federal government should adopt a more proactive role and serve as a steward of all Americans. This stood in contrast to his predecessors, who had time and again bolstered industrialists in their fight against workers' rights with the deployment of federal troops.



THE WASHINGTON SCHOOLMASTER  
From the *Chronicle* (Chicago)

This cartoon shows President Roosevelt disciplining coal barons like J. P. Morgan, threatening to beat them with a stick labeled "Federal Authority." It illustrates Roosevelt's new approach to business.



## THE SQUARE DEAL

Roosevelt won his second term in 1904 with an overwhelming 57 percent of the popular vote. After the election, he moved quickly to enact his own brand of Progressivism, which he called a Square Deal for the American people. Early in his second term, Roosevelt read muckraker Upton Sinclair's 1905 novel and exposé on the meatpacking industry, *The Jungle*. Although Roosevelt initially questioned the book due to Sinclair's professed Socialist leanings, a subsequent presidential commission investigated the industry and corroborated the deplorable conditions under which Chicago's meatpackers processed meats for American consumers. Alarmed by the results and under pressure from an outraged public disgusted with the revelations, Roosevelt moved quickly to protect public health. He urged the passage of two laws to do so. The first, the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, established a system of government inspection for meat products, including grading the meat based on its quality. This standard was also used for imported meats. The second was the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, which required labels on all food and drug products that clearly stated the materials in the product. The law also prohibited any "adulterated" products, a measure aimed at some specific, unhealthy food preservatives. For Sinclair, this outcome was a disappointment nonetheless, since he had sought to draw attention to the plight of workers in the slaughterhouses, not the poor quality of the meat products. "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach," he concluded with frustration.

Another key element of Roosevelt's Progressivism was the protection of public land. Roosevelt was a longtime outdoorsman, with an interest that went back to his childhood and college days, as well as his time cattle ranching in the West, and he chose to appoint his good friend Gifford Pinchot as the country's first chief of the newly created U.S. Forestry Service. Under Pinchot's supervision, the department carved out several nature habitats on federal land in



order to preserve the nation's environmental beauty and protect it from development or commercial use. Apart from national parks like Oregon's Crater Lake or Colorado's Mesa Verde, and monuments designed for preservation, Roosevelt conserved public land for regulated use for future generations. To this day, the 150 national forests created under Roosevelt's stewardship carry the slogan "land of many uses." In all, Roosevelt established eighteen national monuments, fifty-one federal bird preserves, five national parks, and over one hundred fifty national forests, which amounted to about 230 million acres of public land.



*Theodore Roosevelt's interest in the protection of public lands was encouraged by conservationists such as John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, with whom he toured Yosemite National Park in California, ca. 1906.*

In his second term in office, Roosevelt signed legislation on Progressive issues such as factory inspections, child labor, and business regulation. He urged the passage of the Elkins Act of 1903 and the Hepburn Act of 1906, both of which strengthened the



position of the Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate railroad prices. These laws also extended the Commission's authority to regulate interstate transportation on bridges, ferries, and even oil pipelines.

As the 1908 election approached, Roosevelt was at the height of popularity among the American public, if not among the big businesses and conservative leaders of his own Republican Party. Nonetheless, he promised on the night of his reelection in 1904 that he would not seek a third term. Roosevelt stepped aside as the election approached, but he did hand-pick a successor—Secretary of War and former Governor General of the Philippines William Howard Taft of Ohio—a personal friend who, he assured the American public, would continue the path of the “Square Deal.” With such a ringing endorsement, Taft easily won the 1908 presidential election, defeating three-time Democratic presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan, whose ideas on taxes and corporate regulations reminded voters of the more far-reaching Populist platforms of Bryan's past candidacies.





(a)



(b)

This photograph (a) of Theodore Roosevelt (left) and his hand-picked successor William Howard Taft (right) just before Taft's inauguration in 1909, was echoed in a Puck magazine cartoon (b) where “cowboy” Roosevelt hands off his “Policies” baby to “nurse-maid” Taft. Taft was seen, initially at least, as being a president who would continue Roosevelt's same policies.

Explore [American Experience: TR](#) at PBS for a wealth of information on Theodore Roosevelt, including details of his early life before the presidency and transcripts from several of his speeches.

## THE TAFT PRESIDENCY

Although six feet tall and nearly 340 pounds, as Roosevelt's successor, Taft had big shoes to fill. The public expected much from



Roosevelt's hand-picked replacement, as did Roosevelt himself, who kept a watchful eye over Taft's presidency.

The new president's background suggested he would be a strong administrator. He had previously served as the governor of the Philippines following the Spanish-American War, had a distinguished judicial career, and served as Roosevelt's Secretary of War from 1904 to 1908. Republican leaders, however, were anxious to reestablish tighter control over the party after Roosevelt's departure, and they left Taft little room to maneuver. He stayed the course of his predecessor by signing the Mann-Elkins Act of 1910, which extended the authority of the Interstate Commerce Commission over telephones and telegraphs. Additionally, during his tenure, Congress proposed constitutional amendments to authorize a federal income tax and mandate the direct election of U.S. senators. But even though Taft initiated twice as many antitrust suits against big business as Roosevelt, he lacked the political negotiating skills and focus on the public good of his predecessor, who felt betrayed when Taft took J.P. Morgan's U.S. Steel Corporation to court over an acquisition that Roosevelt had promised Morgan would not result in a prosecution.

Political infighting within his own party exposed the limitations of Taft's presidential authority, especially on the issue of protective tariffs. When House Republicans passed a measure to significantly reduce tariffs on several imported goods, Taft endorsed the Senate version, later known as the Payne-Aldrich Act of 1909, which raised tariff rates on over eight hundred products in the original bill. Taft also angered Progressives in his own party when he created the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 1912, viewed by many as an attempt to offset the growing influence of the labor union movement at the time. The rift between Taft and his party's Progressives widened when the president supported conservative party candidates for the 1910 House and Senate elections.

Taft's biggest political blunder came in the area of land conservation. In 1909, Taft's Secretary of the Interior, Richard Ballinger, approved the sale of millions of acres of federal land to a



company for which he had previously worked over Gifford Pinchot's objections. Pinchot publicly criticized the secretary for violating the principle of conservation and for his conflict of interest—a charge that in the public debate also reflected on the president. Taft fired Pinchot, a move that widened the gap between him and the former president. Upon his return from Africa, Roosevelt appeared primed to attack. He referred to the sitting president as a “fathead” and a “puzzlewit,” and announced his intention to “throw my hat in the ring for the 1912 presidential election.”

## THE 1912 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

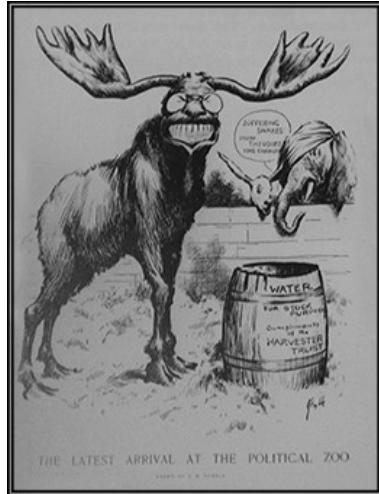
Although not as flamboyant or outwardly progressive as Roosevelt, Taft's organizational skills and generally solid performance as president aligned with the party leadership's concerns over another Roosevelt presidency and secured for him the Republican Party's nomination. Angry over this snub, in 1912, Roosevelt and the other Progressive Republicans bolted the Republican Party and formed the Progressive Party. His popularity had him hoping to win the presidential race as a third-party candidate. When he survived an assassination attempt in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in October 1912—the assassin's bullet hit his eyeglass case and only injured him superficially—he turned the near-death experience into a political opportunity. Insisting upon delivering the speech before seeking medical attention, he told the crowd, “It takes more than a bullet to kill a bull moose!” The moniker stuck, and Roosevelt's Progressive Party would be known as the Bull Moose Party for the remainder of the campaign.



The Democrats realized that a split Republican Party gave them a good chance of regaining the White House for the first time since 1896. They found their candidate in the Progressive governor of New Jersey, Woodrow Wilson. A former history professor and president at Princeton University, Wilson had an academic demeanor that appealed to many Progressive reformers. Many Democrats also viewed Wilson as a Washington outsider who had made far fewer political enemies than Roosevelt and Taft.

Taft never truly campaigned for the post, did not deliver a single speech, and did not seem like a serious contender. In their campaigns, Roosevelt and Wilson formulated competing Progressive platforms. Wilson described his more moderate approach as one of New Freedom, which stood for a smaller federal government to protect public interests from the evils associated with big businesses and banks. Roosevelt campaigned on the promise of New Nationalism, a charge that he said required a vigorous and powerful federal government to protect public interests. He sought to capitalize on the stewardship approach that he had made famous during his previous administration.

Wilson won the 1912 election with over six million votes, with four million votes going to Roosevelt and three and one-half million for Taft. The internal split among Republicans not only cost them the White House but control of the Senate as well—and Democrats had



*Theodore Roosevelt, now running as the Progressive Party, or Bull Moose Party, candidate, created an unprecedented moment in the country's history, where a former president was running against both an incumbent president and a future president.*



already won a House majority in 1910. Wilson won the presidency with just 42 percent of the popular vote, which meant that he would have to sway a large number of voters should he have any aspirations for a second term.

## The Unprecedented Election of 1912

In his 2002 article on the 1912 election, historian Sidney M. Milkis writes,

The Progressive Party's "compromise" with public opinion in the United States points to its legacy for American politics and government. Arguably, the failure of the 1912 experiment and the Progressive Party's demise underscore the incoherence of the Progressive movement. Nevertheless, it was neither the Democrats, nor the Republicans, nor the Socialists who set the tone of the 1912 campaign. It was the Progressives. Beyond the 1912 election, their program of political and social reform has been an enduring feature of American political discourse and electoral struggle. The Progressive Party forged a path of reform that left both social democracy and conservatism—Taft's constitutional sobriety—behind. Similarly, T.R.'s celebrity, and the popularity of the Progressive doctrine of the people's right to rule, tended to subordinate the more populist to the more plebiscitary schemes in the platform, such as the initiative, the referendum, and the direct primary, which exalted not the "grass roots" but mass opinion. Indeed, in the wake of the excitement aroused by the Progressive Party, Wilson, whose New Freedom campaign was far more sympathetic to the decentralized state of courts and parties than T.R.'s, felt compelled, as president, to govern as a New Nationalist Progressive.



It is interesting to think of how this most unusual election—one with three major candidates that pitted a former president against an incumbent and a major party contender—related to the larger Progressive movement. The cartoon below is only one of many cartoons of that era that sought to point out the differences between the candidates. While Roosevelt and the Progressive Party ultimately lost the election, they required the dialogue of the campaign to remain on the goals of Progressivism, particularly around more direct democracy and business regulation. The American public responded with fervor to Roosevelt's campaign, partly because of his immense popularity, but partly also because he espoused a kind of direct democracy that gave people a voice in federal politics. Although Wilson and his New Freedom platform won the election, his presidency undertook a more activist role than his campaign suggested. The American public had made clear that, no matter who sat in the White House, they were seeking a more progressive America.





*This cartoon, from the 1912 election, parodies how the voters might perceive the three major candidates. As can be seen, Taft was never a serious contender.*

## WILSON'S NEW FREEDOM

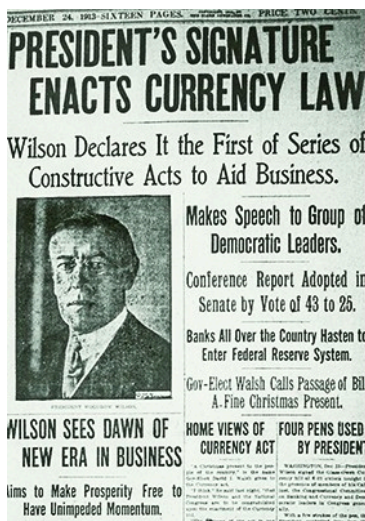
When Wilson took office in March 1913, he immediately met with Congress to outline his New Freedom agenda for how progressive interests could be best preserved. His plan was simple: regulate the banks and big businesses, and lower tariff rates to increase international trade, increasing competition in the interest of consumers. Wilson took the unusual step of calling a special session of Congress in April 1913 to tackle the tariff question, which resulted in the Revenue Act of 1913, also known as the Underwood Tariff Act. This legislation lowered tariff rates across the board by approximately 15 percent and completely eliminated tariffs on



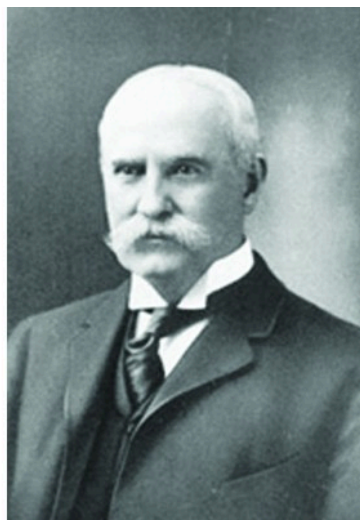
several imports, including steel, iron ore, woolen products, and farm tools. To offset the potential loss of federal revenue, this new law reinstituted the federal income tax, which followed the ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment. This first income tax required married couples who earned \$4000 or more, and single people who earned \$3000 or more, to pay a 1-percent, graduated income tax, with the tax rate getting progressively higher for those who earned more.

Late in 1913, Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act to regulate the banking industry and establish a federal banking system. Designed to remove power over interest rates from the hands of private bankers, the new system created twelve privately owned regional reserve banks regulated by a presidentially appointed Federal Reserve Board. The Board, known informally as the Fed, regulated the interest rate at which reserve banks loaned or distributed money to other banks around the country. Thus, when economic times were challenging, such as during a recession, the Fed could lower this “discount rate” and encourage more borrowing, which put more currency in circulation for people to spend or invest. Conversely, the Fed could curb inflationary trends with interest hikes that discouraged borrowing. This system is still the basis for the country’s modern banking model.





(a)



(b)

With the creation of the Federal Reserve Board, President Wilson set the stage for the modern banking system (a). This restructuring of the American financial system, which included the authorization of a federal income tax, was supported in large part by an influential Republican senator from Rhode Island, Nelson Aldrich (b), co-author of the Payne-Aldrich Act of 1909.

The [history of the Federal Reserve Act](#) is explored in *The Washington Post*, reflecting back on the act one hundred years later.

In early 1914, Wilson completed his New Freedom agenda with the passage of the Clayton Antitrust Act. This law expanded the power of the original Sherman Antitrust Act in order to allow the investigation and dismantling of more monopolies. The new act also took on the “interlocking directorates”—competing companies that still operated together in a form of oligopoly or conspiracy to



restrain trade. His New Freedom agenda complete, Wilson turned his attention to foreign affairs, as war was quickly encompassing Europe.

## THE FINAL VESTIGES OF PROGRESSIVISM

As the 1916 election approached, Wilson's focus on foreign affairs, as well as the natural effect of his small government agenda, left the 60 percent of the American public who had not voted for him the first time disinclined to change their minds and keep him in office. Realizing this, Wilson began a flurry of new Progressive reforms that impressed the voting public and ultimately proved to be the last wave of the Progressive Era. Some of the important measures that Wilson undertook to pass included the Federal Farm Act, which provided oversight of low-interest loans to millions of farmers in need of debt relief; the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act, which, although later deemed unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, prohibited the interstate distribution of products by child workers under the age of fourteen; and the Adamson Act, which put in place the first federally mandated eight-hour workday for railroad workers.

Wilson also gained significant support from Jewish voters with his 1916 appointment of the first Jewish U.S. Supreme Court justice, Louis D. Brandeis. Popular among social justice Progressives, Brandeis went on to become one of the most renowned justices on the court for his defense of freedom of speech and right to privacy issues. Finally, Wilson gained the support of many working-class voters with his defense of labor and union rights during a violent coal strike in Ludlow, Colorado, as well as his actions to forestall a potential railroad strike with the passage of the aforementioned Adamson Act.



Wilson's actions in 1916 proved enough, but barely. In a close presidential election, he secured a second term by defeating former New York governor Charles Evans Hughes by a scant twenty-three electoral votes, and less than 600,000 popular votes. Influential states like Minnesota and New Hampshire were decided by less than four hundred votes.

Despite the fact that he ran for reelection with the slogan, "He Kept Us Out of the War," Wilson could not avoid the reach of World War I much longer. For Wilson and the American public, the Progressive Era was rapidly winding down. Although a few Progressive achievements were still to come in the areas of women's suffrage and prohibition, the country would soon be gripped by the war that Wilson had tried to avoid during his first term in office. When he took the oath for his second term, on March 4, 1917, Wilson was barely five weeks away from leading the United States in declaring war on Germany, a move that would put an end to the Progressive Era.

## Section Summary

Theodore Roosevelt became president only by historical accident, but his activism in the executive branch spoke to the Progressive spirit in the nation and transformed the president's office for the twentieth century. The courage he displayed in his confrontation of big business and willingness to side with workers in capital-labor disputes, as well as his commitment to the preservation of federal lands, set an agenda his



successors had to match. Like Roosevelt, William Howard Taft pushed antitrust rulings and expanded federal oversight of interstate commerce. But estrangement from his predecessor and mentor left Taft in a difficult position for reelection. Roosevelt's third-party challenge as a Progressive split the Republican vote and handed Woodrow Wilson the presidency in 1912.

A Progressive like his predecessors, Wilson was also a political creature who understood the need to do more in order to ensure his reelection. He, too, sought to limit the power of big businesses and stabilize the economy, and he ushered in a wave of Progressive legislation that grassroots Progressives had long called for. The nation's entanglement in World War I, however, soon shunted the Progressive goals of democracy, efficiency, regulation, and social justice to the back burner. The nation's new priorities included national security and making the world "safe for democracy."

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1023>

### *Review Questions*

1. Explain the fundamental differences between Roosevelt's "New Nationalism" and Wilson's "New Freedom."
2. Why did Wilson's "New Freedom" agenda come in



two distinct phases (1913 and 1916)?

### *Answers to Review Questions*

1. The major difference between Roosevelt's New Nationalism and Wilson's New Freedom concerned the candidates' beliefs about the necessary size of the federal government. Wilson believed that a small federal government could keep bad businesses in check while allowing the country to grow. Roosevelt, in contrast, believed that the country required a large and involved federal government to safeguard the interests of the American people.
2. Wilson's actions were limited by his belief in his New Freedom platform, which promised voters a small government. Still, he took a number of steps in the first year of his presidency to shore up the economy and push back against destructive trusts. With those goals accomplished, he largely left the Progressive agenda alone. As the 1916 election season approached, however, Wilson realized that his hands-off policy was not endearing him to voters, and he ended his first term in a flurry of Progressive legislation that reminded the voting public of all he could do for them.



## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. Which of the primary features of grassroots Progressivism was the most essential to the continued growth and success of the reformist movement? Why?
2. Describe the multiple groups and leaders that emerged in the fight for the Progressive agenda, including women's rights, African American rights, and workers' rights. How were the philosophies, agendas, strategies, and approaches of these leaders and organizations similar and different? What made it difficult for all Progressive activists to present a united front?
3. How did President Theodore Roosevelt's "Square Deal" epitomize the notion that the federal government should serve as a steward protecting the public's interests?
4. How did the goals and reform agenda of the Progressive Era manifest themselves during the presidential administrations of Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson?
5. What vestiges of Progressivism can we see in our modern lives—politically, economically, and socially? Which of our present-day political processes, laws, institutions, and attitudes have roots in this era? Why have they had such staying power?
6. question



## *Glossary*

**New Freedom** Woodrow Wilson's campaign platform for the 1912 election that called for a small federal government to protect public interests from the evils associated with bad businesses

**New Nationalism** Theodore Roosevelt's 1912 campaign platform, which called for a powerful federal government to protect the American public

**Progressive Party** a political party started by Roosevelt and other Progressive Republicans who were unhappy with Taft and wanted Roosevelt to run for a nonconsecutive third term in 1912

**Square Deal** Theodore Roosevelt's name for the kind of involved, hands-on government he felt the country needed



## 77. Video: Progressive Presidents

This video teaches you about the Progressive Presidents, who are not a super-group of former presidents who create complicated, symphonic, rock soundscapes that transport you into a fantasy fugue state. Although that would be awesome. The presidents most associated with the Progressive Era are Theodore Roosevelt, William Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. During the times these guys held office, trusts were busted, national parks were founded, social programs were enacted, and tariffs were lowered. It wasn't all positive though, as their collective tenure also saw Latin America invaded A LOT, a split in the Republican party that resulted in a Bull Moose, all kinds of other international intervention, and the end of the Progressive Era saw the United States involved in World War. If all this isn't enough to entice, two people get shot in this video. Violence sells, they say.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=104#oembed-1>



## 78. Assignment: The Jungle

One of the most famous books in American history was published during the Progressive Era and played a huge role in Progressive Ideology; Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. It's famous for its graphic description and exposure of what goes on in the Chicago meat-packing industry. After reading the [excerpt](#), answer the following:

- Sinclair once told an interviewer “I aimed at the public's heart and by accident hit it in the stomach.” What exactly does he mean? What was he trying to accomplish with the book and how did he expect *The Jungle* to accomplish it?

Be sure to use specific examples and quotes from the document in support of your answer.







PART XIII

# THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT READER







# 79. Primary Source Images: The Progressive Era

## Introduction

The many problems associated with the Gilded Age—the rise of unprecedented fortunes and unprecedented poverty, controversies over imperialism, urban squalor, a near-war between capital and labor, loosening social mores, unsanitary food production, the onrush of foreign immigration, environmental destruction, and the outbreak of political radicalism—confronted Americans with fierce urgency. Terrible forces seemed out of control and the nation seemed imperiled. Farmers and workers had been waging political war against capitalists and political conservatives for decades, but then, slowly, toward the end of the nineteenth century a new generation of middle class Americans interjected themselves into public life and advocated new reforms to tame the runaway world of the Gilded Age.

Widespread dissatisfaction with new trends in American society spurred the Progressive Era, named for the various “progressive” movements that attracted various constituencies around various reforms. Whatever their goals, “reform” became the word of the age. These sources attempt to shed light upon the many aspects of American life in the Progressive Era.



## “Next!” (1904)



Udo Keppler, “Next!” (1904). Via Library of Congress (LC-USZCN4-122).

Illustration shows a “Standard Oil” storage tank as an octopus with many tentacles wrapped around the steel, copper, and shipping industries, as well as a state house, the U.S. Capitol, and one tentacle reaching for the White House. The only building not yet within reach of the octopus is the White House—President Teddy Roosevelt had won a reputation as a “trust buster.”





*Women protesting for suffrage. Via Library of Congress (LC-USZ62-31799).*

Women protested silently in front of the White House for over two years before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Here, women represent their colleges as they picket the White House in support of women's suffrage. 1917.



## 80. Primary Source: Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois on Black Progress (1895, 1903)

*Booker T. Washington, born a slave in Virginia in 1856, founded the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in 1881 and became a leading advocate of African American progress. Introduced as “a representative of Negro enterprise and Negro civilization,” Washington delivered the following remarks, sometimes called the “Atlanta Compromise” speech, at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta in 1895.*

...

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, “Water, water; we die of thirst!” The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” A second time the signal, “Water, water; send us water!” ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River. To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbour, I would say: “Cast down your bucket where you are” — cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic



service, and in the professions. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man's chance in the commercial world, and in nothing is this Exposition more eloquent than in emphasizing this chance. Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life; shall prosper in proportion as we learn to draw the line between the superficial and the substantial, the ornamental gewgaws [sic] of life and the useful. No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits of the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race: "Cast down your bucket where you are." Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labour wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded [sic] your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth, and helped make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South. Casting down your bucket among my people, helping and encouraging them as you are doing on these grounds, and to education of head, hand, and heart, you will find that they will buy your surplus land, make blossom the waste places in your fields, and run your factories. While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in



the past, nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defence of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one. In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.

...

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized [sic]. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercises of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.

...

W.E.B. DuBois, *a leading black intellectual and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), agitated against discrimination and authored several noteworthy pieces on the black experience in the United States. The following, from his seminal, The Souls of Black Folk, argues against Booker T. Washington's calls for compromise.*

Easily the most striking thing in history of the American Negro since 1876 is the ascendancy of Mr. Booker T. Washington. ... Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission; but adjustment at such a peculiar time as to make his programme unique. This is an age of unusual economic development, and Mr. Washington's programme naturally takes an economic cast, becoming a gospel of Work and Money to



such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life. Moreover, this is an age when the more advanced races are coming in closer contact with the less developed races, and the race-feeling is therefore intensified; and Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races. Again, in our own land, the reaction from the sentiment of war time has given impetus to race-prejudice against Negroes, and Mr. Washington withdraws many of the high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens. In other periods of intensified prejudice all the Negro's tendency to self-assertion has been called forth; at this period a policy of submission is advocated. In the history of nearly all other races and peoples the doctrine preached at such crises has been that manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing.

In answer to this, it has been claimed that the Negro can survive only through submission. Mr. Washington distinctly asks that black people give up, at least for the present, three things, —

First, political power,

Second, insistence on civil rights,

Third, higher education of Negro youth,—

and concentrate all of their energies on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South. This policy has been courageously and insistently advocated for over fifteen years, and has been triumphant for perhaps ten years. As a result of this tender of the palm-beach, what has been the return? In these years there have occurred:

1. The disfranchisement of the Negro
2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro.
3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro.

These movements are not, to be sure, direct results of Mr.



Washington's teachings; but his propaganda has, without a shadow of doubt, helped their speedier accomplishment. The question then comes: Is it possible, and probable, that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meagre chance for developing their exceptional men? If history and reason give any distinct answer to these questions, it is an emphatic No.

[Sources: Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, Chapter XIV; W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*.]



# 81. Primary Source: Jane Addams, “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements” (1892)

*Hull House, Chicago’s famed “settlement house,” was designed to uplift urban populations. Here, Addams explains why she believes reformers must “add the social function to democracy.” As Addams explained, Hull House “was opened on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal.”*

It is not difficult to see that although America is pledged to the democratic ideal, the view of democracy has been partial, and that its best achievement thus far has been pushed along the line of the franchise. Democracy has made little attempt to assert itself in social affairs. We have refused to move beyond the position of its eighteenth-century leaders, who believed that political equality alone would secure all good to all men. We conscientiously followed the gift of the ballot hard upon the gift of freedom to the negro, but we are quite unmoved by the fact that he lives among us in a practical social ostracism. We hasten to give the franchise to the immigrant from a sense of justice, from a tradition that he ought to have it, while we dub him with epithets deriding his past life or present occupation ....

... Our consciences are becoming tender in regard to the lack of democracy in social affairs. We are perhaps entering upon the second phase of democracy .... The social organism has broken down through large districts of our great cities. Many of the people living there are very poor, the majority of them without leisure or energy for anything but the gain of subsistence. ... Practically nothing is done to remedy this. ... Their ideas and resources are



cramped. The desire for higher social pleasure is extinct. They have no share in the traditions and social energy which make for progress. Too often their only place of meeting is a saloon, their only host a bartender; a local demagogue forms their public opinion. Men of ability and refinement, of social power and university cultivation, stay away from them. Personally, I believe the men who lose most are those who thus stay away. But the paradox is here: when cultivated people do stay away from a certain portion of the population, when all social advantages are persistently withheld, it may be for years, the result itself is pointed at as a reason, is used as an argument, for the continued withholding.

...

It is inevitable that those who feel most keenly this insincerity and partial living should be our young people, our so-called educated young people who accomplish little toward the solution of this social problem, and who bear the brunt of being cultivated into unnourished, oversensitive lives. They have been shut off from the common labor by which they live and which is a great source of moral and physical health. They feel a fatal want of harmony between their theory and their lives, a lack of co-ordination between thought and action. I think it is hard for us to realize how seriously many of them are taking to the notion of human brotherhood, how eagerly they long to give tangible expression to the democratic ideal. These young men and women, longing to socialize their democracy, are animated by certain hopes.

These hopes may be loosely formulated thus: that if in a democratic country nothing can be permanently achieved save through the masses of the people, it will be impossible to establish a higher political life than the people themselves crave; that it is difficult to see how the notion of a higher civic life can be fostered save through common intercourse; that the blessings which we associate with a life of refinement and cultivation can be made universal and must be made universal if they are to be permanent; that the good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain,



is floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.

...

... I have seen young girls suffer and grow sensibly lowered in vitality in the first years after they leave school. In our attempt then to give a girl pleasure and freedom from care we succeed, for the most part, in making her pitifully miserable. She finds "life" so different from what she expected it to be. She is besotted with innocent little ambitions, and does not understand this apparent waste of herself, this elaborate preparation, if no work is provided for her. There is a heritage of noble obligation which young people accept and long to perpetuate. The desire for action, the wish to right wrong and alleviate suffering, haunts them daily. ...

We have in America a fast-growing number of cultivated young people who have no recognized outlet for their active faculties. They bear constantly of the great social maladjustment, but no way is provided for them to change it, and their uselessness bangs about them heavily. ... We are fast feeling the pressure of the need and meeting the necessity for Settlements in America. Our young people feel nervously the need of putting theory into action, and respond quickly to the Settlement form of activity. ...

The Settlement then, is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. ...

[Source: Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," in *Twenty Years at Hull House*.]



## 82. Primary Source: Eugene Debs, “How I Became a Socialist” (April, 1902)

*A native of Terre Haute, Indiana, Eugene V. Debs began working as a locomotive fireman (tending the fires of a train’s steam engine) as a youth in the 1870s. His experience in the American labor movement later led him to socialism. In the early-twentieth century, as the Socialist Party of America’s candidate, he ran for the presidency five times and twice earned nearly one-million votes. He was America’s most prominent socialist. In 1902, a New York paper asked Debs how he became a socialist. This is his answer.*

I rode on the engines over mountain and plain, slept in the cabooses and bunks, and was fed from their pails by the swarthy stokers who still nestle close to my heart, and will until it is cold and still.

Through all these years I was nourished at Fountain Proletaire. I drank deeply of its waters and every particle of my tissue became saturated with the spirit of the working class. I had fired an engine and been stung by the exposure and hardship of the rail. I was with the boys in their weary watches, at the broken engine’s side and often helped to bear their bruised and bleeding bodies back to wife and child again. How could I but feel the burden of their wrongs? How the seed of agitation fail to take deep root in my heart?

...

In 1894 the American Railway Union was organized and a braver body of men never fought the battle of the working class.

Up to this time I had heard but little of Socialism, knew practically nothing about the movement, and what little I did know was not calculated to impress me in its favor. I was bent on thorough and complete organization of the railroad men and ultimately the whole



working class, and all my time and energy were given to that end. My supreme conviction was that if they were only organized in every branch of the service and all acted together in concert they could redress their wrongs and regulate the conditions of their employment. The stockholders of the corporation acted as one, why not the men? It was such a plain proposition—simply to follow the example set before their eyes by their masters—surely they could not fail to see it, act as one, and solve the problem.

It is useless to say that I had yet to learn the workings of the capitalist system, the resources of its masters and the weakness of its slaves. Indeed, no shadow of a “system” fell athwart my pathway; no thought of ending wage-misery marred my plans. I was too deeply absorbed in perfecting wage-servitude and making it a “thing of beauty and a joy forever.”

It all seems very strange to me now, taking a backward look, that my vision was so focalized on a single objective point that I utterly failed to see what now appears as clear as the noonday sun—so clear that I marvel that any workingman, however dull, uncomprehending, can resist it.

But perhaps it was better so. I was to be baptized in Socialism in the roar of conflict and I thank the gods for reserving to this fitful occasion the fiat, “Let there be light!”—the light that streams in steady radiance upon the broadway to the Socialist republic.

The skirmish lines of the A. R. U. were well advanced. A series of small battles were fought and won without the loss of a man. A number of concessions were made by the corporations rather than risk an encounter. Then came the fight on the Great Northern, short sharp, and decisive. The victory was complete—the only railroad strike of magnitude ever won by an organization in America.

Next followed the final shock—the Pullman strike—and the American Railway Union again won, clear and complete. The combined corporations were paralyzed and helpless. At this juncture there were delivered, from wholly unexpected quarters, a swift succession of blows that blinded me for an instant and then opened wide my eyes—and in the gleam of every bayonet and the



flash of every rifle *the class struggle was revealed*. This was my first practical lesson in Socialism, though wholly unaware that it was called by that name.

An army of detectives, thugs and murderers were equipped with badge and beer and bludgeon and turned loose; old hulks of cars were fired; the alarm bells tolled; the people were terrified; the most startling rumors were set afloat; the press volleyed and thundered, and over all the wires sped the news that Chicago's white throat was in the clutch of a red mod; injunctions flew thick and fast, arrests followed, and our office and headquarters, the heart of the strike, was sacked, torn out and nailed up by the "lawful" authorities of the federal government; and when in company with my loyal comrades I found myself in Cook county jail at Chicago with the whole press screaming conspiracy, treason and murder....

...

The Chicago jail sentences were followed by six months at Woodstock and it was here that Socialism gradually laid hold of me in its own irresistible fashion. Books and pamphlets and letters from socialists came by every mail and I began to read and think and dissect the anatomy of the system in which workingmen, however organized, could be shattered and battered and splintered at a single stroke. The writings of Bellamy and Blanchford early appealed to me. The "Cooperative Commonwealth" of Gronlund also impressed me, but the writings of Kautsky were so clear and conclusive that I readily grasped, not merely his argument, but also caught the spirit of his socialist utterance—and I thank him and all who helped me out of darkness into light.

[Source: Eugene V. Debs, "How I Became a Socialist." *The Comrade*, April 1902.]



## 83. Primary Source: The Jungle (1906)

*The Jungle is a 1906 novel written by the American journalist and novelist Upton Sinclair (1878–1968). Sinclair wrote the novel to portray the harsh conditions and exploited lives of immigrants in the United States in Chicago and similar industrialized cities. However, most readers were more concerned with his exposure of health violations and unsanitary practices in the American meatpacking industry during the early 20th century, based on an investigation he did for a socialist newspaper.*

*The book depicts working class poverty, the lack of social supports, harsh and unpleasant living and working conditions, and a hopelessness among many workers. These elements are contrasted with the deeply rooted corruption of people in power.*

### Selection from Chapter 14

With one member trimming beef in a cannery, and another working in a sausage factory, the family had a first-hand knowledge of the great majority of Packingtown swindles. For it was the custom, as they found, whenever meat was so spoiled that it could not be used for anything else, either to can it or else to chop it up into sausage. With what had been told them by Jonas, who had worked in the pickle rooms, they could now study the whole of the spoiled-meat industry on the inside, and read a new and grim meaning into that old Packingtown jest—that they use everything of the pig except the squeal.

Jonas had told them how the meat that was taken out of pickle would often be found sour, and how they would rub it up with



soda to take away the smell, and sell it to be eaten on free-lunch counters; also of all the miracles of chemistry which they performed, giving to any sort of meat, fresh or salted, whole or chopped, any color and any flavor and any odor they chose. In the pickling of hams they had an ingenious apparatus, by which they saved time and increased the capacity of the plant—a machine consisting of a hollow needle attached to a pump; by plunging this needle into the meat and working with his foot, a man could fill a ham with pickle in a few seconds. And yet, in spite of this, there would be hams found spoiled, some of them with an odor so bad that a man could hardly bear to be in the room with them. To pump into these the packers had a second and much stronger pickle which destroyed the odor—a process known to the workers as “giving them thirty per cent.” Also, after the hams had been smoked, there would be found some that had gone to the bad. Formerly these had been sold as “Number Three Grade,” but later on some ingenious person had hit upon a new device, and now they would extract the bone, about which the bad part generally lay, and insert in the hole a white-hot iron. After this invention there was no longer Number One, Two, and Three Grade—there was only Number One Grade. The packers were always originating such schemes—they had what they called “boneless hams,” which were all the odds and ends of pork stuffed into casings; and “California hams,” which were the shoulders, with big knuckle joints, and nearly all the meat cut out; and fancy “skinned hams,” which were made of the oldest hogs, whose skins were so heavy and coarse that no one would buy them—that is, until they had been cooked and chopped fine and labeled “head cheese!”

It was only when the whole ham was spoiled that it came into the department of Elzbieta. Cut up by the two-thousand-revolutions-a-minute flyers, and mixed with half a ton of other meat, no odor that ever was in a ham could make any difference. There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white—it would be dosed with



borax and glycerine, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit. There was no place for the men to wash their hands before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage. There were the butt-ends of smoked meat, and the scraps of corned beef, and all the odds and ends of the waste of the plants, that would be dumped into old barrels in the cellar and left there. Under the system of rigid economy which the packers enforced, there were some jobs that it only paid to do once in a long time, and among these was the cleaning out of the waste barrels. Every spring they did it; and in the barrels would be dirt and rust and old nails and stale water—and cartload after cartload of it would be taken up and dumped into the hoppers with fresh meat, and sent out to the public's breakfast. Some of it they would make into "smoked" sausage—but as the smoking took time, and was therefore expensive, they would call upon their chemistry department, and preserve it with borax and color it with gelatine to make it brown. All of their sausage came out of the same bowl, but when they came to wrap it they would stamp some of it "special," and for this they would charge two cents more a pound.

Such were the new surroundings in which Elzbieta was placed,



and such was the work she was compelled to do. It was stupefying, brutalizing work; it left her no time to think, no strength for anything. She was part of the machine she tended, and every faculty that was not needed for the machine was doomed to be crushed out of existence. There was only one mercy about the cruel grind—that it gave her the gift of insensibility. Little by little she sank into a torpor—she fell silent. She would meet Jurgis and Ona in the evening, and the three would walk home together, often without saying a word. Ona, too, was falling into a habit of silence—Ona, who had once gone about singing like a bird. She was sick and miserable, and often she would barely have strength enough to drag herself home. And there they would eat what they had to eat, and afterward, because there was only their misery to talk of, they would crawl into bed and fall into a stupor and never stir until it was time to get up again, and dress by candlelight, and go back to the machines. They were so numbed that they did not even suffer much from hunger, now; only the children continued to fret when the food ran short.



## 84. Primary Source: Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis (1907)

*Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist minister and theologian, advocated for a “social gospel.” Here, he explains why he believes Christianity must address social questions.*

Western civilization is passing through a social revolution unparalleled in history for scope and power. Its coming was inevitable. The religious, political, and intellectual revolutions of the past five centuries, which together created the modern world, necessarily had to culminate in an economic and social revolution such as is now upon us.

By universal consent, this social crisis is the overshadowing problem of our generation. The industrial and commercial life of the advanced nations are in the throes of it. In politics all issues and methods are undergoing upheaval and re-alignment as the social movement advances. In the world of thought all the young and serious minds are absorbed in the solution of the social problems. Even literature and art point like compass-needles to this magnetic pole of all our thought.

... The vastness and the free sweep of our concentrated wealth on the one side, the independence, intelligence, moral vigor, and political power of the common people on the other side, promise a long-drawn grapple of contesting forces which may well make the heart of every American patriot sink within him.

It is realized by friend and foe that religion can play, and must play, a momentous part in this irrepressible conflict.

The Church, the organized expression of the religious life of the past, is one of the most potent institutions and forces in Western civilization. Its favor and moral influence are wooed by all parties. It



cannot help throwing its immense weight on one side or the other. If it tries not to act, it thereby acts; and in any case its choice will be decisive for its own future.

Apart from the organized Church, the religious spirit is a factor of incalculable power in the making of history. ... Under the warm breath of religious faith, all social institutions become plastic. ... It follows that the relation between Christianity and the social crisis is one of the most pressing questions for all intelligent men who realize the power of religion, and most of all for the religious leaders of the people who give direction to the forces of religion.

...

The question has, in fact, been discussed frequently and earnestly, but it is plain to any thoughtful observer that the common mind of the Christian Church in America has not begun to arrive at any solid convictions or any permanent basis of action. The conscience of Christendom is halting and groping, perplexed by contradicting voices, still poorly informed on essential questions, justly reluctant to part with the treasured maxims of the past, and yet conscious of the imperious call of the future.

...

The essential purpose of Christianity was to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconstituting them in accordance with the will of God.

...

... No man shares his life with God whose religion does not flow out, naturally and without effort, into all relations of his life and reconstructs everything that it touches. Whoever uncouples the religious and the social life has not understood Jesus. Whoever sets any bounds for the reconstructive power of the religious life over the social relations and institutions of men, to that extent denies the faith of the Master.

...

The fundamental purpose of Jesus was the establishment of the kingdom of God, which involved a thorough regeneration and reconstitution of social life. Primitive Christianity cherished an



ardent hope of a radically new era, and within its limits sought to realize a social life on a new moral basis.

Thus Christianity as an historical movement was launched with all the purpose and hope, all the impetus and power, of a great revolutionary movement, pledged to change the world-as-it-is into the world-as-it-ought-to-be.

...

In general, the Church has often rendered valuable aid by joining the advanced public conscience of any period in its protest against some single intolerable evil, but it has accepted as inevitable the general social system under which the world was living at the time, and has not undertaken any thoroughgoing social reconstruction in accordance with Christian principles.

[Source: Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907)]



## 85. Primary Source: Woodrow Wilson on the New Freedom (1912)

*Woodrow Wilson campaigned for the presidency in 1912 as a progressive democrat. Wilson argued that changing economic conditions demanded new and aggressive government policies—he called his political program “the New Freedom”—to preserve traditional American liberties.*

I have long had an image in my mind of what constitutes liberty. Suppose that I were building a great piece of powerful machinery, and suppose that I should so awkwardly and unskillfully assemble the parts of it that every time one part tried to move it would be interfered with by the others, and the whole thing would buckle up and be checked. Liberty for the several parts would consist in the best possible assembling and adjustment of them all, would it not? If you want the great piston of the engine to run with absolute freedom, give it absolutely perfect alignment and adjustment with the other parts of the machine, so that it is free, not because it is let alone or isolated, but because it has been associated most skillfully and carefully with the other parts of the great structure.

What is liberty? You say of the locomotive that it runs free. What do you mean? You mean that its parts are so assembled and adjusted that friction is reduced to a minimum, and that it has perfect adjustment. We say of a boat skimming the water with light foot, “How free she runs,” when we mean, how perfectly she is adjusted to the force of the wind, how perfectly she obeys the great breath out of the heavens that fills her sails. Throw her head up into the wind and see how she will halt and stagger, how every sheet will shiver and her whole frame be shaken, how instantly she is “in irons,” in the expressive phrase of the sea. She is free only when you have let her



fall off again and have recovered once more her nice adjustment to the forces she must obey and cannot defy.

Human freedom consists in perfect adjustments of human interests and human activities and human energies.

Now, the adjustments necessary between individuals, between individuals and the complex institutions amidst which they live, and between those institutions and the government, are infinitely more intricate to-day than ever before. No doubt this is a tiresome and roundabout way of saying the thing, yet perhaps it is worthwhile to get somewhat clearly in our mind what makes all the trouble to-day. Life has become complex; there are many more elements, more parts, to it than ever before. And, therefore, it is harder to keep everything adjusted,—and harder to find out where the trouble lies when the machine gets out of order.

You know that one of the interesting things that Mr. Jefferson said in those early days of simplicity which marked the beginnings of our government was that the best government consisted in as little governing as possible. And there is still a sense in which that is true. It is still intolerable for the government to interfere with our individual activities except where it is necessary to interfere with them in order to free them. But I feel confident that if Jefferson were living in our day he would see what we see: that the individual is caught in a great confused nexus of all sorts of complicated circumstances, and that to let him alone is to leave him helpless as against the obstacles with which he has to contend; and that, therefore, law in our day must come to the assistance of the individual. It must come to his assistance to see that he gets fair play; that is all, but that is much. Without the watchful interference, the resolute interference, of the government, there can be no fair play between individuals and such powerful institutions as the trusts. Freedom to-day is something more than being let alone. The program of a government of freedom must in these days be positive, not negative merely.

[Source: Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom* (New York, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1913).]



[Project Gutenberg Link.](#)



## 86. Primary Source: Alice Stone Blackwell, Answering Objections to Women's Suffrage (1917)

*Alice Stone Blackwell was a feminist activist and writer. In an edited volume published in 1917, Blackwell responded to popular anti-women's-suffrage arguments.*

### **Why Should Women Vote?**

The reasons why women should vote are the same as the reasons why men should vote are the same as the reasons for having a republic rather than a monarchy. It is fair and right that the people who must obey the laws should have a voice in choosing the law-makers, and that those who must pay the taxes should have a voice as to the amount of the tax, and the way in which the money shall be spent.

Roughly stated, the fundamental principle of a republic is this: In deciding what is to be done, we take everybody's opinion, and then go according to the wish of the majority. As we cannot suit everybody, we do what will suit the greatest number. That seems to be, on the whole, the fairest way. A vote is simply a written expression of opinion.

In thus taking a vote to get at the wish of the majority, certain classes of persons are passed over, whose opinions for one reason or another are thought not to be worth counting. In most of our states, these classes are children, aliens, idiots, lunatics, criminals and women. There are good and obvious reasons for making all these exceptions but the last. Of course no account ought to be taken of the opinions of children, insane persons, or criminals. Is there any equally good reason why no account should be taken



of the opinions of women? Let us consider the reasons commonly given, and see if they are sound.

...

### **The Question of Chivalry**

*It will destroy chivalry.*

Justice would be worth more to women than chivalry, if they could not have both. A working girl put the case in a nutshell when she said: "I would gladly stand for twenty minutes in the street car going home if by doing so I could get the same pay that a man would have had for doing my day's work." But women do not have to stand in the street cars half as often in Denver as in Boston or in New York. Justice and chivalry are not in the least incompatible. Women have more freedom and equality in America than in Europe, yet American men are the most chivalrous in the world.

...

### **Too Emotional**

*Women are too emotional and sentimental to be trusted with the ballot.*

Mrs. E. T. Brown, at a meeting of the Georgia State Federation of Women's Clubs, read a paper, in which she said:

"You tell us that women are not fitted for dealing with the problems of government, being too visionary and too much controlled by sentiment.

"Now it is very true of women that they are largely controlled by sentiment, and, as a matter of fact, men are largely controlled by sentiment also, in spite of their protesting blushes. Was it logic that swept like a wave over this country and sent our army to protect the Cubans when their suffering grew too intense to be endured even in the hearing? Is it shrewd business calculation that sends thousands of dollars out of this country to feed a starving people during the ever-recurring famines in unhappy India? Was it hard common sense that sent thousands of American soldiers into what looked like the death-trap of China in the almost baseless hope of rescuing a few hundred American citizens? Do not men like Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson and Lee live in the hearts of



American men, not alone for what they did, but still more for what they dreamed of? The man who is not controlled by sentiment betrays his friends, sells his vote, is a traitor to his country, or wrecks himself, body and soul, with immoralities; for nothing but sentiment prevents any of these things. The sense of honor is pure sentiment. The sentiment of loyalty is the only thing that makes truth and honesty desirable, or a vote a non-salable commodity.

“Government would be a poor affair without sentiment, and is not likely to be damaged by a slightly increased supply.”

...

### **Would Unsex Women**

*It will turn women into men.*

The differences between men and women are natural; they are not the result of disfranchisement. The fact that all men have equal rights before the law does not wipe out natural differences of character and temperament between man and man. Why should it wipe out the natural differences between men and women? The women of England, Scotland, Canada, Yucatan, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, the Scandinavian countries and our own equal suffrage States are not perceptibly different in looks or manners from women elsewhere, although they have been voting for years.

...

### **Suffrage and Feminism**

*Suffrage is a branch of Feminism and Feminism includes free love.*

Feminism merely means the general movement for woman's rights. The word is used in this sense in England and Europe, and is coming into use in America. There is no more authority for saying that Feminism means free love than that the woman's rights movement means free love—an accusation often made against it without warrant. Mrs. Beatrice Forbes Robertson Hale (a strong opponent of free love) says in her book, “What Women Want”:

“Feminism is that part of the progress of democratic freedom which applies to women. It is a century-old struggle conducted by large groups of people in different parts of the world to bring about



the removal of all artificial barriers to the physical, mental, moral and economic development of the female half of the race.”

In this sense the woman suffrage movement, of course, is a part of it.

### **Suffrage and Marriage**

*Suffragists and Feminists are the enemies of marriage and the home.*

The National American Woman Suffrage Association at its annual convention in Washington in December, 1915, passed the following resolution by a unanimous vote:

“That we believe the home is the foundation of the State; we believe in the sanctity of the marriage relation; and, furthermore, we believe that woman’s ballot will strengthen the power of the home, and sustain the dignity and sacredness of marriage; and we denounce as a gross slander the charges made by opponents of equal suffrage that its advocates as a class entertain opinions to the contrary.”

Source: Alice Stone Blackwell, “Answering Objections,” in *“The Blue Book”: Woman Suffrage, History, Arguments and Results*, edited by Frances Maule and Annie Gertrude Porritt (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company, 1917), 144-145, 168-170, 185-186, 188.

[Google Books.](#)



PART XIV

AGE OF EMPIRE:  
AMERICAN FOREIGN  
POLICY, 1890-1914







## 87. Introduction



*This poster advertises a minstrel show wherein an actor playing Theodore Roosevelt reenacts his leadership of the Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War and illustrates the American public's zeal for tales of American expansionist glory.*

As he approached the rostrum to speak before historians gathered in Chicago in 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner appeared nervous. He was presenting a conclusion that would alarm all who believed that westward expansion had fostered the nation's principles of democracy. His conclusion: The frontier—the encounter between European traditions and the native wilderness—had played a fundamental role in shaping American character, but the American frontier no longer existed. Turner's statement raised questions. How would Americans maintain their unique political culture and



innovative spirit in the absence of the frontier? How would the nation expand its economy if it could no longer expand its territory?

Later historians would see Turner's Frontier Thesis as deeply flawed, a gross mischaracterization of the West. But the young historian's work greatly influenced politicians and thinkers of the day. Like a muckraker, Turner exposed the problem; others found a solution by seeking out new frontiers in the creation of an American empire. The above advertisement for a theater reenactment of the Spanish-American War shows the American appetite for expansion. Many Americans felt that it was time for their nation to offer its own brand of international leadership and dominance as an alternative to the land-grabbing empires of Europe.

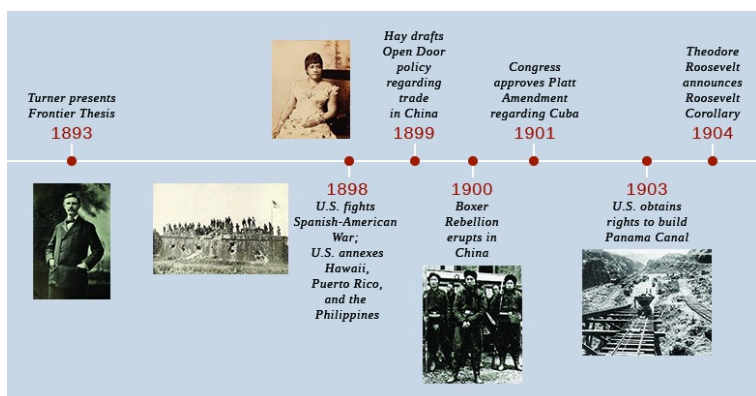


# 88. Turner, Mahan, and the Roots of Empire

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the evolution of American interest in foreign affairs from the end of the Civil War through the early 1890s
- Identify the contributions of Frederick Jackson Turner and Alfred Thayer Mahan to the conscious creation of an American empire



During the time of Reconstruction, the U.S. government showed no significant initiative in foreign affairs. Western expansion and



the goal of Manifest Destiny still held the country's attention, and American missionaries proselytized as far abroad as China, India, the Korean Peninsula, and Africa, but reconstruction efforts took up most of the nation's resources. As the century came to a close, however, a variety of factors, from the closing of the American frontier to the country's increased industrial production, led the United States to look beyond its borders. Countries in Europe were building their empires through global power and trade, and the United States did not want to be left behind.

## AMERICA'S LIMITED BUT AGGRESSIVE PUSH OUTWARD

On the eve of the Civil War, the country lacked the means to establish a strong position in international diplomacy. As of 1865, the U.S. State Department had barely sixty employees and no ambassadors representing American interests abroad. Instead, only two dozen American foreign ministers were located in key countries, and those often gained their positions not through diplomatic skills or expertise in foreign affairs but through bribes. Further limiting American potential for foreign impact was the fact that a strong international presence required a strong military—specifically a navy—which the United States, after the Civil War, was in no position to maintain. Additionally, as late as 1890, with the U.S. Navy significantly reduced in size, a majority of vessels were classified as “Old Navy,” meaning a mixture of iron hulled and wholly wooden ships. While the navy had introduced the first all-steel, triple-hulled steam engine vessels seven years earlier, they had only thirteen of them in operation by 1890.

Despite such widespread isolationist impulses and the sheer inability to maintain a strong international position, the United States moved ahead sporadically with a modest foreign policy



agenda in the three decades following the Civil War. Secretary of State William Seward, who held that position from 1861 through 1869, sought to extend American political and commercial influence in both Asia and Latin America. He pursued these goals through a variety of actions. A treaty with Nicaragua set the early course for the future construction of a canal across Central America. He also pushed through the annexation of the Midway Islands in the Pacific Ocean, which subsequently opened a more stable route to Asian markets. In frequent conversations with President Lincoln, among others, Seward openly spoke of his desire to obtain British Columbia, the Hawaiian Islands, portions of the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and other territories. He explained his motives to a Boston audience in 1867, when he professed his intention to give the United States “control of the world.”

Most notably, in 1867, Seward obtained the Alaskan Territory from Russia for a purchase price of \$7.2 million. Fearing future loss of the territory through military conflict, as well as desiring to create challenges for Great Britain (which they had fought in the Crimean War), Russia had happily accepted the American purchase offer. In the United States, several newspaper editors openly questioned the purchase and labeled it “Seward’s Folly.” They highlighted the lack of Americans to populate the vast region and lamented the challenges in attempting to govern the native peoples in that territory. Only if gold were to be found, the editors decried, would the secretive purchase be justified. That is exactly what happened. Seward’s purchase added an enormous territory to the country—nearly 600,000 square miles—and also gave the United States access to the rich mineral resources of the region, including the gold that triggered the Klondike Gold Rush at the close of the century. As was the case elsewhere in the American borderlands, Alaska’s industrial development wreaked havoc on the region’s indigenous and Russian cultures.



Seward's successor as Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, held the position from 1869 through 1877. Fish spent much of his time settling international disputes involving American interests, including claims that British assistance to the Confederates prolonged the Civil War for about two years. In these so-called Alabama claims, a U.S. senator charged



*Although mocked in the press at the time as “Seward’s Folly,” Secretary of State William Seward’s acquisition of Alaska from Russia was a strategic boon to the United States.*

that the Confederacy won a number of crucial battles with the help of one British cruiser and demanded \$2 billion in British reparations. Alternatively, the United States would settle for the rights to Canada. A joint commission representing both countries eventually settled on a British payment of \$15 million to the United States. In the negotiations, Fish also suggested adding the Dominican Republic as a territorial possession with a path towards statehood, as well as discussing the construction of a transoceanic canal with Columbia. Although neither negotiation ended in the desired result, they both expressed Fish's intent to cautiously build an American empire without creating any unnecessary military entanglements in the wake of the Civil War.

## BUSINESS, RELIGIOUS, AND SOCIAL INTERESTS SET THE STAGE FOR EMPIRE

While the United States slowly pushed outward and sought to absorb the borderlands (and the indigenous cultures that lived there), the country was also changing how it functioned. As a new



industrial United States began to emerge in the 1870s, economic interests began to lead the country toward a more expansionist foreign policy. By forging new and stronger ties overseas, the United States would gain access to international markets for export, as well as better deals on the raw materials needed domestically. The concerns raised by the economic depression of the early 1890s further convinced business owners that they needed to tap into new markets, even at the risk of foreign entanglements.

As a result of these growing economic pressures, American exports to other nations skyrocketed in the years following the Civil War, from \$234 million in 1865 to \$605 million in 1875. By 1898, on the eve of the Spanish-American War, American exports had reached a height of \$1.3 billion annually. Imports over the same period also increased substantially, from \$238 million in 1865 to \$616 million in 1898. Such an increased investment in overseas markets in turn strengthened Americans' interest in foreign affairs.

Businesses were not the only ones seeking to expand. Religious leaders and Progressive reformers joined businesses in their growing interest in American expansion, as both sought to increase the democratic and Christian influences of the United States abroad. Imperialism and Progressivism were compatible in the minds of many reformers who thought the Progressive impulses for democracy at home translated overseas as well. Editors of such magazines as *Century*, *Outlook*, and *Harper's* supported an imperialistic stance as the democratic responsibility of the United States. Several Protestant faiths formed missionary societies in the years after the Civil War, seeking to expand their reach, particularly in Asia. Influenced by such works as Reverend Josiah Strong's *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (1885), missionaries sought to spread the gospel throughout the country and abroad. Led by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, among several other organizations, missionaries conflated Christian ethics with American virtues and began to spread both gospels with zeal. This was particularly true among women missionaries, who composed over 60 percent of the overall missionary force. By



1870, missionaries abroad spent as much time advocating for the American version of a modern civilization as they did teaching the Bible.

Social reformers of the early Progressive Era also performed work abroad that mirrored the missionaries. Many were influenced by recent scholarship on race-based intelligence and embraced the implications of social Darwinist theory that alleged inferior races were destined to poverty on account of their lower evolutionary status. While certainly, not all reformers espoused a racist view of intelligence and civilization, many of these reformers believed that the Anglo-Saxon race was mentally superior to others and owed the presumed less evolved populations their stewardship and social uplift—a service the British writer Rudyard Kipling termed “the white man’s burden.”

By trying to help people in less industrialized countries achieve a higher standard of living and a better understanding of the principles of democracy, reformers hoped to contribute to a noble cause, but their approach suffered from the same paternalism that hampered Progressive reforms at home. Whether reformers and missionaries worked with native communities in the borderlands such as New Mexico; in the inner cities, like the Salvation Army; or overseas, their approaches had much in common. Their good intentions and willingness to work in difficult conditions shone through in the letters and articles they wrote from the field. Often in their writing, it was clear that they felt divinely empowered to change the lives of other, less fortunate, and presumably, less enlightened, people. Whether overseas or in the urban slums, they benefitted from the same passions but expressed the same paternalism.

## Lottie Moon, Missionary

Lottie Moon was a Southern Baptist missionary who spent more



than forty years living and working in China. She began in 1873 when she joined her sister in China as a missionary, teaching in a school for Chinese women. Her true passion, however, was to evangelize and minister, and she undertook a campaign to urge the Southern Baptist missionaries to allow women to work beyond the classroom. Her letter campaign back to the head of the Mission Board provided a vivid picture of life in China and exhorted the Southern Baptist women to give more generously of their money and their time. Her letters appeared frequently in religious publications, and it was her suggestion—that the week before Christmas be established as a time to donate to foreign missions—that led to the annual Christmas giving tradition. Lottie's rhetoric caught on, and still today, the annual Christmas offering is done in her name.

We had the best possible voyage over the water—good weather, no headwinds, scarcely any rolling or pitching—in short, all that reasonable people could ask. . . . I spent a week here last fall and of course feel very natural to be here again. I do so love the East and eastern life! Japan fascinated my heart and fancy four years ago, but now I honestly believe I love China the best, and actually, which is stranger still, like the Chinese best.

—Charlotte “Lottie” Moon, 1877

Lottie remained in China through famines, the Boxer Rebellion, and other hardships. She fought against foot binding, a cultural tradition where girls' feet were tightly bound to keep them from growing, and shared her personal food and money when those around her were suffering. But her primary goal was to evangelize her Christian beliefs to the people in China. She won the right to minister and personally converted hundreds of Chinese to Christianity. Lottie's combination of moral certainty and selfless service was emblematic of the missionary zeal of the early American empire.

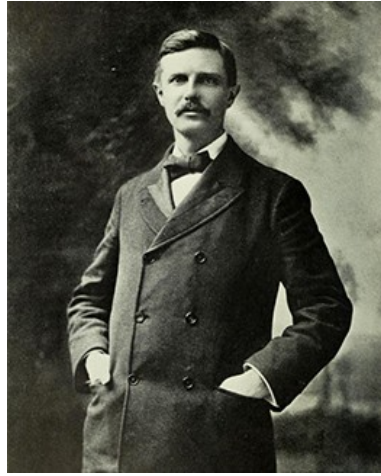


## TURNER, MAHAN, AND THE PLAN FOR EMPIRE

The initial work of businesses, missionaries, and reformers set the stage by the early 1890s for advocates of an expanded foreign policy and a vision of an American empire. Following decades of an official stance of isolationism combined with relatively weak presidents who lacked the popular mandate or congressional support to undertake substantial overseas commitments, a new cadre of American leaders—many of whom were too young to fully comprehend the damage inflicted by the Civil War—assumed leadership roles. Eager to be tested in international conflict, these new leaders hoped to prove America's might on a global stage. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, was one of these leaders who sought to expand American influence globally, and he advocated for the expansion of the U.S. Navy, which at the turn of the century was the only weapons system suitable for securing overseas expansion.



Turner and naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan were instrumental in the country's move toward foreign expansion, and writer Brooks Adams further dramatized the consequences of the nation's loss of its frontier in his *The Law of Civilization and Decay* in 1895. As mentioned in the chapter opening, Turner announced his Frontier Thesis—that American democracy was largely formed by the American frontier—at the Chicago World's Colombian Exposition. He noted that “for nearly three centuries the dominant fact in American life has been expansion.” He continued: “American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise.”



*Historian Fredrick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis stated explicitly that the existence of the western frontier forged the very basis of the American identity.*

Although there was no more room for these forces to proceed domestically, they would continue to find an outlet on the international stage. Turner concluded that “the demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon our seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries are indications that the forces [of expansion] will continue.” Such policies would permit Americans to find new markets. Also mindful of the mitigating influence of a frontier—in terms of easing pressure from increased immigration and population expansion in the eastern and midwestern United States—he encouraged new outlets for further population growth, whether as lands for further American settlement or to accommodate more immigrants. Turner's thesis was enormously influential at the time but has subsequently been

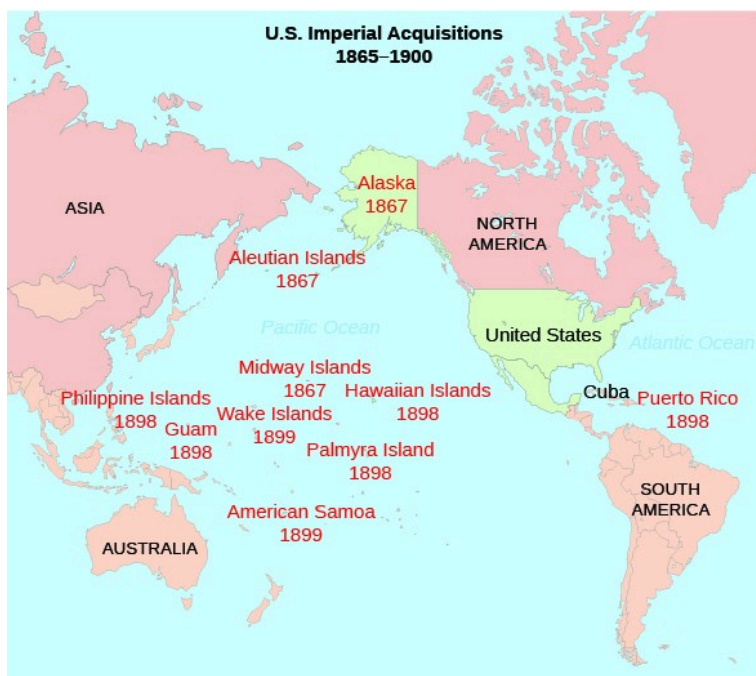


widely criticized by historians. Specifically, the thesis underscores the pervasive racism and disregard for the indigenous communities, cultures, and individuals in the American borderlands and beyond.

Explore the [controversy associated with Turner's Frontier Thesis](#) at U.S. History Scene.

While Turner provided the idea for an empire, Mahan provided the more practical guide. In his 1890 work, *The Influence of Seapower upon History*, he suggested three strategies that would assist the United States in both constructing and maintaining an empire. First, noting the sad state of the U.S. Navy, he called for the government to build a stronger, more powerful version. Second, he suggested establishing a network of naval bases to fuel this expanding fleet. Seward's previous acquisition of the Midway Islands served this purpose by providing an essential naval coaling station, which was vital, as the limited reach of steamships and their dependence on coal made naval coaling stations imperative for increasing the navy's geographic reach. Future acquisitions in the Pacific and Caribbean increased this naval supply network. Finally, Mahan urged the future construction of a canal across the isthmus of Central America, which would decrease by two-thirds the time and power required to move the new navy from the Pacific to the Atlantic oceans. Heeding Mahan's advice, the government moved quickly, passing the Naval Act of 1890, which set production levels for a new, modern fleet. By 1898, the government had succeeded in increasing the size of the U.S. Navy to an active fleet of 160 vessels, of which 114 were newly built of steel. In addition, the fleet now included six battleships, compared to zero in the previous decade. As a naval power, the country catapulted to the third strongest in world rankings by military experts, trailing only Spain and Great Britain.





*American imperial acquisitions as of the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Note how the spread of island acquisitions across the Pacific Ocean fulfills Alfred Mahan's call for more naval bases in order to support a larger and more effective U.S. Navy rather than mere territorial expansion.*

The United States also began to expand its influence to other Pacific Islands, most notably Samoa and Hawaii. With regard to the latter, American businessmen were most interested in the lucrative sugar industry that lay at the heart of the Hawaiian Islands' economy. By 1890, through a series of reciprocal trade agreements, Hawaiians exported nearly all of their sugar production to the United States, tariff-free. When Queen Liliuokalani tapped into a strong anti-American resentment among native Hawaiians over the economic and political power of exploitative American sugar companies between 1891 and 1893, worried businessmen worked with the American minister to Hawaii, John Stevens, to stage a quick, armed



revolt to counter her efforts and seize the islands as an American protectorate. Following five more years of political wrangling, the United States annexed Hawaii in 1898, during the Spanish-American War.



(a)



(b)

*Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii (a) was unhappy with the one-sided trade agreement Hawaii held with the United States (b), but protests were squashed by an American-armed revolt.*

The United States had similar strategic interests in the Samoan Islands of the South Pacific, most notably, access to the naval refueling station at Pago Pago where American merchant vessels as well as naval ships could take on food, fuel, and supplies. In 1899, in an effort to mitigate other foreign interests and still protect their own, the United States joined Great Britain and Germany in a three-party protectorate over the islands, which assured American access to the strategic ports located there.



## Section Summary

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, after the Civil War, the United States pivoted from a profoundly isolationist approach to a distinct zeal for American expansion. The nation's earlier isolationism originated from the deep scars left by the Civil War and its need to recover both economically and mentally from that event. But as the industrial revolution changed the way the country worked and the American West reached its farthest point, American attitudes toward foreign expansion shifted. Businesses sought new markets to export their factory-built goods, oil, and tobacco products, as well as generous trade agreements to secure access to raw materials. Early social reformers saw opportunities to spread Christian gospel and the benefits of American life to those in less developed nations. With the rhetoric of Fredrick J. Turner and the strategies of Alfred Mahan underpinning the desire for expansion abroad, the country moved quickly to ready itself for the creation of an American empire.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1024>



## *Review Question*

1. Why were the Midway Islands important to American expansion?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The Midway Islands provided a more stable path to Asian markets and a vital naval coaling station, which steamships needed in order to travel further afield.

## *Glossary*

**Frontier Thesis** an idea proposed by Fredrick Jackson Turner, which stated that the encounter of European traditions and a native wilderness was integral to the development of American democracy, individualism, and innovative character

**Seward's Folly** the pejorative name given by the press to Secretary of State Seward's acquisition of Alaska in 1867



# 89. The Spanish-American War and Overseas Empire

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the origins and events of the Spanish-American War
- Analyze the different American opinions on empire at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War
- Describe how the Spanish-American War intersected with other American expansions to solidify the nation's new position as an empire

The Spanish-American War was the first significant international military conflict for the United States since its war against Mexico in 1846; it came to represent a critical milestone in the country's development as an empire. Ostensibly about the rights of Cuban rebels to fight for freedom from Spain, the war had, for the United States at least, a far greater importance in the country's desire to expand its global reach.

The Spanish-American War was notable not only because the United States succeeded in seizing territory from another empire, but also because it caused the global community to recognize that the United States was a formidable military power. In what Secretary of State John Hay called “a splendid little war,” the United States significantly altered the balance of world power, just as the twentieth century began to unfold.



LA FATLERA DEL ONCLE SAM (per M. MOUTRIÉ).



Guardarse l'isla porque no 's perdi.

Whereas Americans thought of the Spanish colonial regime in Cuba as a typical example of European imperialism, this 1896 Spanish cartoon depicts the United States as a land-grabbing empire. The caption, written in Catalan, states “Keep the island so it won’t get lost.”

## THE CHALLENGE OF DECLARING WAR

Despite its name, the Spanish-American War had less to do with the foreign affairs between the United States and Spain than Spanish control over Cuba and its possessions in the Far East. Spain had dominated Central and South America since the late fifteenth century. But, by 1890, the only Spanish colonies that had not yet acquired their independence were Cuba and Puerto Rico. On several occasions prior to the war, Cuban independence fighters in the



Cuba Libre movement had attempted unsuccessfully to end Spanish control of their lands. In 1895, a similar revolt for independence erupted in Cuba; again, Spanish forces under the command of General Valeriano Weyler repressed the insurrection. Particularly notorious was their policy of re-concentration in which Spanish troops forced rebels from the countryside into military-controlled camps in the cities, where many died from harsh conditions.

As with previous uprisings, Americans were largely sympathetic to the Cuban rebels' cause, especially as the Spanish response was notably brutal. Evoking the same rhetoric of independence with which they fought the British during the American Revolution, several people quickly rallied to the Cuban fight for freedom. Shippers and other businessmen, particularly in the sugar industry, supported American intervention to safeguard their own interests in the region. Likewise, the "Cuba Libre" movement founded by José Martí, who quickly established offices in New York and Florida, further stirred American interest in the liberation cause. The difference in this uprising, however, was that supporters saw in the renewed U.S. Navy a force that could be a strong ally for Cuba. Additionally, the late 1890s saw the height of yellow journalism, in which newspapers such as the *New York Journal*, led by William Randolph Hearst, and the *New York World*, published by Joseph Pulitzer, competed for readership with sensationalistic stories. These publishers, and many others who printed news stories for maximum drama and effect, knew that war would provide sensational copy.

However, even as sensationalist news stories fanned the public's desire to try out their new navy while supporting freedom, one key figure remained unmoved. President William McKinley, despite commanding a new, powerful navy, also recognized that the new fleet—and soldiers—were untested. Preparing for a reelection bid in 1900, McKinley did not see a potential war with Spain, acknowledged to be the most powerful naval force in the world, as a good bet. McKinley did publicly admonish Spain for its actions against the rebels, and urged Spain to find a peaceful solution in



Cuba, but he remained resistant to public pressure for American military intervention.

McKinley's reticence to involve the United States changed in February 1898. He had ordered one of the newest navy battleships, the USS *Maine*, to drop anchor off the coast of Cuba in order to observe the situation, and to prepare to evacuate American citizens from Cuba if necessary. Just days after it arrived, on February 15, an explosion destroyed the *Maine*, killing over 250 American sailors. Immediately, yellow journalists jumped on the headline that the explosion was the result of a Spanish attack, and that all Americans should rally to war. The newspaper battle cry quickly emerged, "Remember the Maine!" Recent examinations of the evidence of that time have led many historians to conclude that the explosion was likely an accident due to the storage of gun powder close to the very hot boilers. But in 1898, without ready evidence, the newspapers called for a war that would sell papers, and the American public rallied behind the cry.







McKinley made one final effort to avoid war, when late in March, he called on Spain to end its policy of concentrating the native population in military camps in Cuba, and to formally declare Cuba's independence. Spain refused, leaving McKinley little choice but to request a declaration of war from Congress. Congress received McKinley's war message, and on April 19, 1898, they officially recognized Cuba's independence and authorized McKinley to use military force to remove Spain from the island. Equally important, Congress passed the Teller Amendment to the resolution, which stated that the United States would not annex Cuba following the war.

## WAR: BRIEF AND DECISIVE

The Spanish-American War lasted approximately ten weeks, and the outcome was clear: The United States triumphed in its goal of helping liberate Cuba from Spanish control. Despite the positive result, the conflict did present significant challenges to the United States military. Although the new navy was powerful, the ships were, as McKinley feared, largely untested. Similarly untested were the American soldiers. The country had fewer than thirty thousand soldiers and sailors, many of whom were unprepared to do battle with a formidable opponent. But volunteers sought to make up the difference. Over one million American men—many lacking a uniform and coming equipped with their own guns—quickly answered McKinley's call for able-bodied men. Nearly ten thousand African American men also volunteered for service, despite the segregated conditions and additional hardships they faced, including violent uprisings at a few American bases before they departed for Cuba. The government, although grateful for the volunteer effort, was still unprepared to feed and supply such a force, and many suffered malnutrition and malaria for their sacrifice.

To the surprise of the Spanish forces who saw the conflict as a



clear war over Cuba, American military strategists prepared for it as a war for empire. More so than simply the liberation of Cuba and the protection of American interests in the Caribbean, military strategists sought to further Mahan's vision of additional naval bases in the Pacific Ocean, reaching as far as mainland Asia. Such a strategy would also benefit American industrialists who sought to expand their markets into China. Just before leaving his post for volunteer service as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. cavalry, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt ordered navy ships to attack the Spanish fleet in the Philippines, another island chain under Spanish control. As a result, the first significant military confrontation took place not in Cuba but halfway around the world in the Philippines. Commodore George Dewey led the U.S. Navy in a decisive victory, sinking all of the Spanish ships while taking almost no American losses. Within a month, the U.S. Army landed a force to take the islands from Spain, which it succeeded in doing by mid-August 1899.

The victory in Cuba took a little longer. In June, seventeen thousand American troops landed in Cuba. Although they initially met with little Spanish resistance, by early July, fierce battles ensued near the Spanish stronghold in Santiago. Most famously, Theodore Roosevelt led his Rough Riders, an all-volunteer cavalry unit made up of adventure-seeking college graduates, and veterans and cowboys from the Southwest, in a charge up Kettle Hill, next to San Juan Hill, which resulted in American forces surrounding Santiago. The victories of the Rough Riders are the best known part of the battles, but in fact, several African American regiments, made up of veteran soldiers, were instrumental to their success. The Spanish fleet made a last-ditch effort to escape to the sea but ran into an American naval blockade that resulted in total destruction, with every Spanish vessel sunk. Lacking any naval support, Spain quickly lost control of Puerto Rico as well, offering virtually no resistance to advancing American forces. By the end of July, the fighting had ended and the war was over. Despite its short duration and limited number of casualties—fewer than 350 soldiers died in combat, about



1,600 were wounded, while almost 3,000 men died from disease—the war carried enormous significance for Americans who celebrated the victory as a reconciliation between North and South.

## “Smoked Yankees”: Black Soldiers in the Spanish-American War

The most popular image of the Spanish-American War is of Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders, charging up San Juan Hill. But less well known is that the Rough Riders struggled mightily in several battles and would have sustained far more serious casualties, if not for the experienced black veterans—over twenty-five hundred of them—who joined them in battle. These soldiers, who had been fighting the Indian wars on the American frontier for many years, were instrumental in the U.S. victory in Cuba.



*The decision to fight or not was debated in the black community, as some felt they owed little to a country that still granted them citizenship in name only, while others believed that proving their patriotism would enhance their opportunities. (credit: Library of Congress)*

The choice to serve in the Spanish-American War was not a simple one. Within the black community, many spoke out both for and against involvement in the war. Many black Americans felt that because they were not offered the true rights of citizenship it was not their burden to volunteer for war. Others, in contrast, argued that participation in the war offered an opportunity for black Americans to prove themselves to the rest of the country. While their presence was welcomed by the military which desperately



needed experienced soldiers, the black regiments suffered racism and harsh treatment while training in the southern states before shipping off to battle.

Once in Cuba, however, the “Smoked Yankees,” as the Cubans called the black American soldiers, fought side-by-side with Roosevelt’s Rough Riders, providing crucial tactical support to some of the most important battles of the war. After the Battle of San Juan, five black soldiers received the Medal of Honor and twenty-five others were awarded a certificate of merit. One reporter wrote that “if it had not been for the Negro cavalry, the Rough Riders would have been exterminated.” He went on to state that, having grown up in the South, he had never been fond of black people before witnessing the battle. For some of the soldiers, their recognition made the sacrifice worthwhile. Others, however, struggled with American oppression of Cubans and Puerto Ricans, feeling kinship with the black residents of these countries now under American rule.

## ESTABLISHING PEACE AND CREATING AN EMPIRE

As the war closed, Spanish and American diplomats made arrangements for a peace conference in Paris. They met in October 1898, with the Spanish government committed to regaining control of the Philippines, which they felt were unjustly taken in a war that was solely about Cuban independence. While the Teller Amendment ensured freedom for Cuba, President McKinley was reluctant to relinquish the strategically useful prize of the Philippines. He certainly did not want to give the islands back to Spain, nor did he want another European power to step in to seize them. Neither the Spanish nor the Americans considered giving the islands their independence, since, with the pervasive racism and cultural

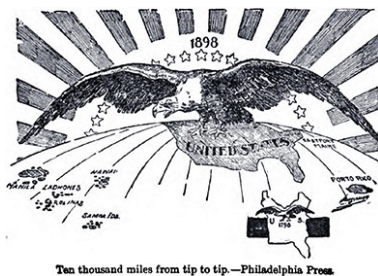


stereotyping of the day, they believed the Filipino people were not capable of governing themselves. William Howard Taft, the first American governor-general to oversee the administration of the new U.S. possession, accurately captured American sentiments with his frequent reference to Filipinos as “our little brown brothers.”

As the peace negotiations unfolded, Spain agreed to recognize Cuba’s independence, as well as recognize American control of Puerto Rico and Guam. McKinley insisted that the United States maintain control over the Philippines as an annexation, in return for a \$20 million payment to Spain. Although Spain was reluctant, they were in no position militarily to deny the American demand. The two sides finalized the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898. With it came the international recognition that there was a new American empire that included the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The American press quickly glorified the nation’s new reach, as expressed in the cartoon below, depicting the glory of the American eagle reaching from the Philippines to the Caribbean.

Domestically, the country was neither unified in their support of the treaty nor in the idea of the United States building an empire at all. Many prominent Americans, including Jane Addams, former President Grover Cleveland, Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain, and Samuel Gompers, felt strongly that the country should not be

pursuing an empire, and, in 1898, they formed the Anti-Imperialist League to oppose this expansionism. The reasons for their opposition were varied: Some felt that empire building went against the principles of democracy and freedom upon which the country was founded, some worried about competition from foreign workers, and some held the xenophobic viewpoint that the



Ten thousand miles from tip to tip.—Philadelphia Press.

*This cartoon from the Philadelphia Press, showed the reach of the new American empire, from Puerto Rico to the Philippines.*



assimilation of other races would hurt the country. Regardless of their reasons, the group, taken together, presented a formidable challenge. As foreign treaties require a two-thirds majority in the U.S. Senate to pass, the Anti-Imperialist League's pressure led them to a clear split, with the possibility of defeat of the treaty seeming imminent. Less than a week before the scheduled vote, however, news of a Filipino uprising against American forces reached the United States. Undecided senators were convinced of the need to maintain an American presence in the region and preempt the intervention of another European power, and the Senate formally ratified the treaty on February 6, 1899.

The newly formed American empire was not immediately secure, as Filipino rebels, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, fought back against American forces stationed there. The Filipinos' war for independence lasted three years, with over four thousand American and twenty thousand Filipino combatant deaths; the civilian death toll is estimated as high as 250,000. Finally, in 1901, President McKinley appointed William Howard Taft as the civil governor of the Philippines in an effort to disengage the American military from direct confrontations with the Filipino people. Under Taft's leadership, Americans built a new transportation infrastructure, hospitals, and schools, hoping to win over the local population. The rebels quickly lost influence, and Aguinaldo was captured by American forces and forced to swear allegiance to the United States. The Taft Commission, as it became known, continued to introduce reforms to modernize and improve daily life for the country despite pockets of resistance that continued to fight through the spring of 1902. Much of the commission's rule centered on legislative reforms to local government structure and national agencies, with the commission offering appointments to resistance leaders in exchange for their support. The Philippines continued under American rule until they became self-governing in 1946.



After the conclusion of the Spanish-American War and the successful passage of the peace treaty with Spain, the United States continued to acquire other territories. Seeking an expanded international presence, as well as control of maritime routes and naval stations, the United States grew to include Hawaii, which was granted territorial status in 1900, and Alaska, which, although purchased from Russia decades earlier, only



*Philippine president Emilio Aguinaldo was captured after three years of fighting with U.S. troops. He is seen here boarding the USS Vicksburg after taking an oath of loyalty to the United States in 1901.*

became a recognized territory in 1912. In both cases, their status as territories granted U.S. citizenship to their residents. The Foraker Act of 1900 established Puerto Rico as an American territory with its own civil government. It was not until 1917 that Puerto Ricans were granted American citizenship. Guam and Samoa, which had been taken as part of the war, remained under the control of the U.S. Navy. Cuba, which after the war was technically a free country, adopted a constitution based on the U.S. Constitution. While the Teller Amendment had prohibited the United States from annexing the country, a subsequent amendment, the Platt Amendment, secured the right of the United States to interfere in Cuban affairs if threats to a stable government emerged. The Platt Amendment also guaranteed the United States its own naval and coaling station on the island's southern Guantanamo Bay and prohibited Cuba from making treaties with other countries that might eventually threaten their independence. While Cuba remained an independent nation on paper, in all practicality the United States governed Cuba's foreign policy and economic agreements.



Explore the resources at U.S. History Scene to better understand the long and involved [history of Hawaii](#) with respect to its intersection with the United States.

## Section Summary

In the wake of the Civil War, American economic growth combined with the efforts of Evangelist missionaries to push for greater international influence and overseas presence. By confronting Spain over its imperial rule in Cuba, the United States took control of valuable territories in Central America and the Pacific. For the United States, the first step toward becoming an empire was a decisive military one. By engaging with Spain, the United States was able to gain valuable territories in Latin America and Asia, as well as send a message to other global powers. The untested U.S. Navy proved superior to the Spanish fleet, and the military strategists who planned the war in the broader context of empire caught the Spanish by surprise. The annexation of the former Spanish colonies of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, combined with the acquisition of Hawaii, Samoa, and Wake Island, positioned the United States as the predominant world power in the South Pacific and the Caribbean. While



some prominent figures in the United States vehemently disagreed with the idea of American empire building, their concerns were overruled by an American public—and a government—that understood American power overseas as a form of prestige, prosperity, and progress.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1025>

### *Review Questions*

1. What was the role of the Taft Commission?
2. What challenges did the U.S. military have to overcome in the Spanish-American War? What accounted for the nation's eventual victory?

### *Answers to Review Questions*

1. The Taft Commission introduced reforms to modernize and improve daily life in the Philippines. Many of these reforms were legislative in nature, impacting the structure and composition of local governments. In exchange for the support of resistance leaders, for example, the commission



offered them political appointments.

2. The Spanish-American War posed a series of challenges to the United States' military capacities. The new U.S. Navy, while impressive, was still untested, and no one was certain how the new ships would perform. Further, the country had a limited army, with fewer than thirty thousand soldier and sailors. While over one million men ultimately volunteered for service, they were untrained, and the army was ill-prepared to house, arm, and feed them all. Eventually, American naval strength, combined with the proximity of American supplies relative to the distance Spanish forces traveled, made the decisive difference. In a war upon the sea, the U.S. Navy proved superior in both the Philippines and the blockade of Cuba.

## *Glossary*

**Anti-Imperialist League** a group of diverse and prominent Americans who banded together in 1898 to protest the idea of American empire building

**Rough Riders** Theodore Roosevelt's cavalry unit, which fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American War

**yellow journalism** sensationalist newspapers who sought to manufacture news stories in order to sell more papers



# 90. Economic Imperialism in East Asia

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how economic power helped to expand America's empire in China
- Describe how the foreign partitioning of China in the last decade of the nineteenth century influenced American policy

While American forays into empire building began with military action, the country concurrently grew its scope and influence through other methods as well. In particular, the United States used its economic and industrial capacity to add to its empire, as can be seen in a study of the China market and the “Open Door notes” discussed below.

## WHY CHINA?

Since the days of Christopher Columbus's westward journey to seek a new route to the East Indies (essentially India and China, but loosely defined as all of Southeast Asia), many westerners have dreamt of the elusive “China Market.” With the defeat of the Spanish



navy in the Atlantic and Pacific, and specifically with the addition of the Philippines as a base for American ports and coaling stations, the United States was ready to try and make the myth a reality. Although China originally accounted for only a small percentage of American foreign trade, captains of American industry dreamed of a vast market of Asian customers desperate for manufactured goods they could not yet produce in large quantities for themselves.

American businesses were not alone in seeing the opportunities. Other countries—including Japan, Russia, Great Britain, France, and Germany—also hoped to make inroads in China. Previous treaties between Great Britain and China in 1842 and 1844 during the Opium Wars, when the British Empire militarily coerced the Chinese empire to accept the import of Indian opium in exchange for its tea, had forced an “open door” policy on China, in which all foreign nations had free and equal access to Chinese ports. This was at a time when Great Britain maintained the strongest economic relationship with China; however, other western nations used the new arrangement to send Christian missionaries, who began to work across inland China. Following the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 over China’s claims to Korea, western countries hoped to exercise even greater influence in the region. By 1897, Germany had obtained exclusive mining rights in northern coastal China as reparations for the murder of two German missionaries. In 1898, Russia obtained permission to build a railroad across northeastern Manchuria. One by one, each country carved out their own sphere of influence, where they could control markets through tariffs and transportation, and thus ensure their share of the Chinese market.

Alarmed by the pace at which foreign powers further divided China into pseudo-territories, and worried that they had no significant piece for themselves, the United States government intervened. In contrast to European nations, however, American businesses wanted the whole market, not just a share of it. They wanted to do business in China with no artificially constructed spheres or boundaries to limit the extent of their trade, but without the territorial entanglements or legislative responsibilities that

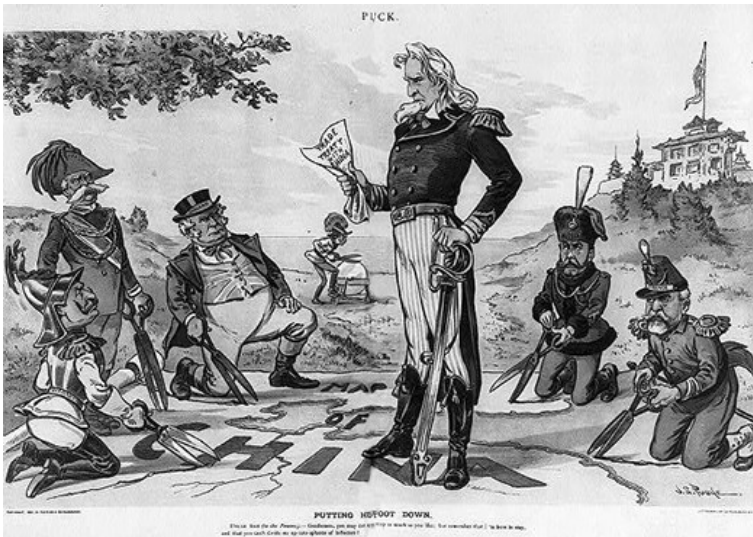


anti-imperialists opposed. With the blessing and assistance of Secretary of State John Hay, several American businessmen created the American Asiatic Association in 1896 to pursue greater trade opportunities in China.

## THE OPEN DOOR NOTES

In 1899, Secretary of State Hay made a bold move to acquire China's vast markets for American access by introducing Open Door notes, a series of circular notes that Hay himself drafted as an expression of U.S. interests in the region and sent to the other competing powers. These notes, if agreed to by the other five nations maintaining spheres of influences in China, would erase all spheres and essentially open all doors to free trade, with no special tariffs or transportation controls that would give unfair advantages to one country over another. Specifically, the notes required that all countries agree to maintain free access to all treaty ports in China, to pay railroad charges and harbor fees (with no special access), and that only China would be permitted to collect any taxes on trade within its borders. While on paper, the Open Door notes would offer equal access to all, the reality was that it greatly favored the United States. Free trade in China would give American businesses the ultimate advantage, as American companies were producing higher-quality goods than other countries, and were doing so more efficiently and less expensively. The "open doors" would flood the Chinese market with American goods, virtually squeezing other countries out of the market.





*This political cartoon shows Uncle Sam standing on a map of China, while Europe's imperialist nations (from left to right: Germany, Spain, Great Britain, Russia, and France) try to cut out their "sphere of influence."*

Although the foreign ministers of the other five nations sent half-hearted replies on behalf of their respective governments, with some outright denying the viability of the notes, Hay proclaimed them the new official policy on China, and American goods were unleashed throughout the nation. China was quite welcoming of the notes, as they also stressed the U.S. commitment to preserving the Chinese government and territorial integrity.

The notes were invoked barely a year later, when a group of Chinese insurgents, the Righteous and Harmonious Fists—also known as the Boxer Rebellion—fought to expel all western nations and their influences from China. The United States, along with Great Britain and Germany, sent over two thousand troops to withstand the rebellion. The troops signified American commitment to the territorial integrity of China, albeit one flooded with American products. Despite subsequent efforts, by Japan in



particular, to undermine Chinese authority in 1915 and again during the Manchurian crisis of 1931, the United States remained resolute in defense of the open door principles through World War II. Only when China turned to communism in 1949 following an intense civil war did the principle become relatively meaningless. However, for nearly half a century, U.S. military involvement and a continued relationship with the Chinese government cemented their roles as preferred trading partners, illustrating how the country used economic power, as well as military might, to grow its empire.





*The Boxer Rebellion in China sought to expel all western influences, including Christian missionaries and trade partners. The Chinese government appreciated the American, British, and German troops that helped suppress the rebellion.*

Browse the U.S. State Department's [Milestones: 1899–1913](#) to learn more about Secretary of State John



Hay and the strategy and thinking behind the Open Door notes.

## Section Summary

The United States shifted from isolationism to empire building with its involvement—and victory—in the Spanish-American War. But at the same time, the country sought to expand its reach through another powerful tool: its economic clout. The Industrial Revolution gave American businesses an edge in delivering high-quality products at lowered costs, and the pursuit of an “open door” policy with China opened new markets to American goods. This trade agreement allowed the United States to continue to build power through economic advantage.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1026>

### *Review Question*

1. How does the “Open Door notes” episode represent



a new, nonmilitary tactic in the expansion of the American empire?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The Open Door notes and the American foray into China revealed the power of economic clout. Given the unprecedented technological advances of the industrial revolution, American goods were often less expensive and of better quality than those produced in other countries, and they were highly sought after in Asia. Therefore, when Hay derided the spheres of influence model, wherein each country had its own room to maneuver in China, he was able to flood Chinese markets with American trade. Through these maneuvers, the United States was able to augment its global standing considerably without the use of its military forces.

### *Glossary*

**Open Door notes** the circular notes sent by Secretary of State Hay claiming that there should be “open doors” in China, allowing all countries equal and total access to all



markets, ports, and railroads without any special considerations from the Chinese authorities; while ostensibly leveling the playing field, this strategy greatly benefited the United States

**sphere of influence** the goal of foreign countries such as Japan, Russia, France, and Germany to carve out an area of the Chinese market that they could exploit through tariff and transportation agreements



# 91. Roosevelt’s “Big Stick” Foreign Policy

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of “big stick” foreign policy
- Describe Theodore Roosevelt’s use of the “big stick” to construct the Panama Canal
- Explain the role of the United States in ending the Russo-Japanese War

While President McKinley ushered in the era of the American empire through military strength and economic coercion, his successor, Theodore Roosevelt, established a new foreign policy approach, allegedly based on a favorite African proverb, “speak softly, and carry a big stick, and you will go far.” At the crux of his foreign policy was a thinly veiled threat. Roosevelt believed that in light of the country’s recent military successes, it was unnecessary to use force to achieve foreign policy goals, so long as the military could *threaten* force. This rationale also rested on the young president’s philosophy, which he termed the “strenuous life,” and that prized challenges overseas as opportunities to instill American men with the resolve and vigor they allegedly had once acquired in the Trans-Mississippi West.





*Roosevelt was often depicted in cartoons wielding his “big stick” and pushing the U.S. foreign agenda, often through the power of the U.S. Navy.*

Roosevelt believed that while the coercive power wielded by the United States could be harmful in the wrong hands, the Western Hemisphere’s best interests were also the best interests of the United States. He felt, in short, that the United States had the right and the obligation to be the policeman of the hemisphere. This belief, and his strategy of “speaking softly and carrying a big stick,” shaped much of Roosevelt’s foreign policy.



# THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PANAMA CANAL

As early as the mid-sixteenth century, interest in a canal across the Central American isthmus began to take root, primarily out of trade interests. The subsequent discovery of gold in California in 1848 further spurred interest in connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and led to the construction of the Panama Railway, which began operations in 1855. Several attempts by France to construct a canal between 1881 and 1894 failed due to a combination of financial crises and health hazards, including malaria and yellow fever, which led to the deaths of thousands of French workers.

Upon becoming president in 1901, Roosevelt was determined to succeed where others had failed. Following the advice that Mahan set forth in his book *The Influence of Seapower upon History*, he sought to achieve the construction of a canal across Central America, primarily for military reasons associated with empire, but also for international trade considerations. The most strategic point for the construction was across the fifty-mile isthmus of Panama, which, at the turn of the century, was part of the nation of Colombia. Roosevelt negotiated with the government of Colombia, sometimes threatening to take the project away and build through Nicaragua, until Colombia agreed to a treaty that would grant the United States a lease on the land across Panama in exchange for a payment of \$10 million and an additional \$250,000 annual rental fee. The matter was far from settled, however. The Colombian people were outraged over the loss of their land to the United States, and saw the payment as far too low. Influenced by the public outcry, the Colombian Senate rejected the treaty and informed Roosevelt there would be no canal.

Undaunted, Roosevelt chose to now wield the “big stick.” In comments to journalists, he made it clear that the United States would strongly support the Panamanian people should they choose to revolt against Colombia and form their own nation. In November



1903, he even sent American battleships to the coast of Colombia, ostensibly for practice maneuvers, as the Panamanian revolution unfolded. The warships effectively blocked Colombia from moving additional troops into the region to quell the growing Panamanian uprising. Within a week, Roosevelt immediately recognized the new country of Panama, welcoming them to the world community and offering them the same terms—\$10 million plus the annual \$250,000 rental fee—he had previously offered Colombia. Following the successful revolution, Panama became an American protectorate, and remained so until 1939.

Once the Panamanian victory was secured, with American support, construction on the canal began in May 1904. For the first year of operations, the United States worked primarily to build adequate housing, cafeterias, warehouses, machine shops, and other elements of infrastructure that previous French efforts had failed to consider. Most importantly, the introduction of fumigation systems and mosquito nets following Dr. Walter Reed's discovery of the role of mosquitoes in the spread of malaria and yellow fever reduced the death rate and restored the fledgling morale among workers and American-born supervisors. At the same time, a new wave of American engineers planned for the construction of the canal. Even though they decided to build a lock-system rather than a sea-level canal, workers still had to excavate over 170 million cubic yards of earth with the use of over one hundred new rail-mounted steam shovels. Excited by the work, Roosevelt became the first sitting U.S. president to leave the country while in office. He traveled to Panama where he visited the construction site, taking a turn at the steam shovel and removing dirt. The canal opened in 1914, permanently changing world trade and military defense patterns.





*Recurring landslides made the excavation of the Culebra Cut one of the most technically challenging elements in the construction of the Panama Canal.*

This [timeline of the Panama Canal](#) illustrates the efforts involved in both the French and U.S. canal projects.

## THE ROOSEVELT COROLLARY

With the construction of the canal now underway, Roosevelt next wanted to send a clear message to the rest of the world—and in



particular to his European counterparts—that the colonization of the Western Hemisphere had now ended, and their interference in the countries there would no longer be tolerated. At the same time, he sent a message to his counterparts in Central and South America, should the United States see problems erupt in the region, that it would intervene in order to maintain peace and stability throughout the hemisphere.

Roosevelt articulated this seeming double standard in a 1904 address before Congress, in a speech that became known as the Roosevelt Corollary. The Roosevelt Corollary was based on the original Monroe Doctrine of the early nineteenth century, which warned European nations of the consequences of their interference in the Caribbean. In this addition, Roosevelt states that the United States would use military force “as an international police power” to correct any “chronic wrongdoing” by any Latin American nation that might threaten stability in the region. Unlike the Monroe Doctrine, which proclaimed an American policy of noninterference with its neighbors’ affairs, the Roosevelt Corollary loudly proclaimed the right and obligation of the United States to involve itself whenever necessary.

Roosevelt immediately began to put the new corollary to work. He used it to establish protectorates over Cuba and Panama, as well as to direct the United States to manage the Dominican Republic’s custom service revenues. Despite growing resentment from neighboring countries over American intervention in their internal affairs, as well as European concerns from afar, knowledge of Roosevelt’s previous actions in Colombia concerning acquisition of land upon which to build the Panama Canal left many fearful of American reprisals should they resist. Eventually, Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt softened American rhetoric regarding U.S. domination of the Western Hemisphere, with the latter proclaiming a new “Good Neighbor Policy” that renounced American intervention in other nations’ affairs. However, subsequent presidents would continue to reference aspects of the Roosevelt Corollary to justify American involvement in Haiti,



Nicaragua, and other nations throughout the twentieth century. The map below shows the widespread effects of Roosevelt's policies throughout Latin America.



*From underwriting a revolution in Panama with the goal of building a canal to putting troops in Cuba, Roosevelt vastly increased the U.S. impact in Latin America.*

## The Roosevelt Corollary and Its Impact

In 1904, Roosevelt put the United States in the role of the “police power” of the Western Hemisphere and set a course for the U.S. relationship with Central and Latin America that played out over the next several decades. He did so with the Roosevelt Corollary, in which he stated:

It is not true that the United States feels any land hunger or entertains any projects as regards the other nations of the Western Hemisphere save as such are for their welfare. All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty



friendship. . . . Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however, reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.”

In the twenty years after he made this statement, the United States would use military force in Latin America over a dozen times. The Roosevelt Corollary was used as a rationale for American involvement in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Haiti, and other Latin American countries, straining relations between Central America and its dominant neighbor to the north throughout the twentieth century.

## AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Although he supported the Open Door notes as an excellent economic policy in China, Roosevelt lamented the fact that the United States had no strong military presence in the region to enforce it. Clearly, without a military presence there, he could not as easily use his “big stick” threat credibly to achieve his foreign policy goals. As a result, when conflicts did arise on the other side of the Pacific, Roosevelt adopted a policy of maintaining a balance of power among the nations there. This was particularly evident when the Russo-Japanese War erupted in 1904.



In 1904, angered by the massing of Russian troops along the Manchurian border, and the threat it represented to the region, Japan launched a surprise naval attack upon the Russian fleet. Initially, Roosevelt supported the Japanese position. However, when the Japanese fleet quickly achieved victory after victory, Roosevelt grew concerned over the growth of Japanese influence in the region and the continued threat that it represented to China and American access to those markets. Wishing to maintain



*Japan's defense against Russia was supported by President Roosevelt, but when Japan's ongoing victories put the United States' own Asian interests at risk, he stepped in.*

the aforementioned balance of power, in 1905, Roosevelt arranged for diplomats from both nations to attend a secret peace conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The resultant negotiations secured peace in the region, with Japan gaining control over Korea, several former Russian bases in Manchuria, and the southern half of Sakhalin Island. These negotiations also garnered the Nobel Peace Prize for Roosevelt, the first American to receive the award.

When Japan later exercised its authority over its gains by forcing American business interests out of Manchuria in 1906–1907, Roosevelt felt he needed to invoke his “big stick” foreign policy, even though the distance was great. He did so by sending the U.S. Great White Fleet on maneuvers in the western Pacific Ocean as a show of force from December 1907 through February 1909. Publicly described as a goodwill tour, the message to the Japanese government regarding American interests was equally clear. Subsequent negotiations reinforced the Open Door policy throughout China and the rest of Asia. Roosevelt had, by both the



judicious use of the “big stick” and his strategy of maintaining a balance of power, kept U.S. interests in Asia well protected.

Browse the [Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery](#) to follow Theodore Roosevelt from Rough Rider to president and beyond.

## Section Summary

When Roosevelt succeeded McKinley as president, he implemented a key strategy for building an American empire: the threat, rather than the outright use, of military force. McKinley had engaged the U.S. military in several successful skirmishes and then used the country’s superior industrial power to negotiate beneficial foreign trade agreements. Roosevelt, with his “big stick” policy, was able to keep the United States out of military conflicts by employing the legitimate threat of force. Nonetheless, as negotiations with Japan illustrated, the maintenance of an empire was fraught with complexity. Changing alliances, shifting economic needs, and power politics all meant that the United States would need to tread carefully to maintain its status as a world power.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1027>



### *Review Question*

1. Compare Roosevelt's foreign policy in Latin America and Asia. Why did he employ these different methods?

### *Review Question*

1. Roosevelt's strategy of "speaking softly and carrying a big stick" worked well in Latin America, where the United States had a strong military presence and could quickly and easily act on any threat of military action. Roosevelt's threat of force was therefore credible in that region, and he was able to wield it effectively. In Asia, however, the United States had less of a military presence. Instead, Roosevelt sought to maintain a balance of power, wherein the various Asian countries kept each other in check and no single player grew too powerful. When the power balance tipped, Roosevelt acted to broker a peace deal between Russia and Japan as a means of restoring balance.



## *Glossary*

**Roosevelt Corollary** a statement by Theodore Roosevelt that the United States would use military force to act as an international police power and correct any chronic wrongdoing by any Latin American nation threatening the stability of the region



## 92. Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy"

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how William Howard Taft used American economic power to protect the nation's interests in its new empire

When William Howard Taft became president in 1909, he chose to adapt Roosevelt's foreign policy philosophy to one that reflected American economic power at the time. In what became known as "dollar diplomacy," Taft announced his decision to "substitute dollars for bullets" in an effort to use foreign policy to secure markets and opportunities for American businessmen. Not unlike Roosevelt's threat of force, Taft used the threat of American economic clout to coerce countries into agreements to benefit the United States.



Of key interest to Taft was the debt that several Central American nations still owed to various countries in Europe. Fearing that the debt holders might use the monies owed as leverage to use military intervention in the Western Hemisphere, Taft moved quickly to pay off these debts with U.S. dollars. Of course, this move made the Central American countries indebted to the United States, a situation that not all nations wanted. When a Central American nation resisted this arrangement, however, Taft responded with military force to achieve the objective. This



*Although William Howard Taft was Theodore Roosevelt's hand-picked successor to the presidency, he was less inclined to use Roosevelt's "big stick," choosing instead to use the economic might of the United States to influence foreign affairs.*

occurred in Nicaragua when the country refused to accept American loans to pay off its debt to Great Britain. Taft sent a warship with marines to the region to pressure the government to agree. Similarly, when Mexico considered the idea of allowing a Japanese corporation to gain significant land and economic advantages in its country, Taft urged Congress to pass the Lodge Corollary, an addendum to the Roosevelt Corollary, stating that no foreign corporation—other than American ones—could obtain strategic lands in the Western Hemisphere.

In Asia, Taft's policies also followed those of Theodore Roosevelt. He attempted to bolster China's ability to withstand Japanese interference and thereby maintain a balance of power in the region. Initially, he experienced tremendous success in working with the Chinese government to further develop the railroad industry in that country through arranging international financing. However,



efforts to expand the Open Door policy deeper into Manchuria met with resistance from Russia and Japan, exposing the limits of the American government's influence and knowledge about the intricacies of diplomacy. As a result, he reorganized the U.S. State Department to create geographical divisions (such as the Far East Division, the Latin American Division, etc.) in order to develop greater foreign policy expertise in each area.

Taft's policies, although not as based on military aggression as his predecessors, did create difficulties for the United States, both at the time and in the future. Central America's indebtedness would create economic concerns for decades to come, as well as foster nationalist movements in countries resentful of American's interference. In Asia, Taft's efforts to mediate between China and Japan served only to heighten tensions between Japan and the United States. Furthermore, it did not succeed in creating a balance of power, as Japan's reaction was to further consolidate its power and reach throughout the region.

As Taft's presidency came to a close in early 1913, the United States was firmly entrenched on its path towards empire. The world perceived the United States as the predominant power of the Western Hemisphere—a perception that few nations would challenge until the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. Likewise, the United States had clearly marked its interests in Asia, although it was still searching for an adequate approach to guard and foster them. The development of an American empire had introduced with it several new approaches to American foreign policy, from military intervention to economic coercion to the mere threat of force.

The playing field would change one year later in 1914 when the United States witnessed the unfolding of World War I, or “the Great War.” A new president would attempt to adopt a new approach to diplomacy—one that was well-intentioned but at times impractical. Despite Woodrow Wilson's best efforts to the contrary, the United States would be drawn into the conflict and subsequently attempt to reshape the world order as a result.



Read this [brief biography of President Taft](#) to understand his foreign policy in the context of his presidency.

## Section Summary

All around the globe, Taft sought to use U.S. economic might as a lever in foreign policy. He relied less on military action, or the threat of such action, than McKinley or Roosevelt before him; however, he both threatened and used military force when economic coercion proved unsuccessful, as it did in his bid to pay off Central America's debts with U.S. dollars. In Asia, Taft tried to continue to support the balance of power, but his efforts backfired and alienated Japan. Increasing tensions between the United States and Japan would finally explode nearly thirty years later, with the outbreak of World War II.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1028>



## *Review Question*

1. What problems did Taft's foreign policy create for the United States?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Taft's policies created some troubles that were immediate, and others that would not bear fruit until decades later. The tremendous debts in Central America created years of economic instability there and fostered nationalist movements driven by resentment of America's interference in the region. In Asia, Taft's efforts at China-Japan mediation heightened tensions between Japan and the United States—tensions that would explode, ultimately, with the outbreak of World War II—and spurred Japan to consolidate its power throughout the region.

## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. Describe the United States' movement from isolationism to expansion-mindedness in the final



decades of the nineteenth century. What ideas and philosophies underpinned this transformation?

2. What specific forces or interests transformed the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world between 1865 and 1890?
3. How did Taft's "dollar diplomacy" differ from Roosevelt's "big stick" policy? Was one approach more or less successful than the other? How so?
4. What economic and political conditions had to exist for Taft's "dollar diplomacy" to be effective?
5. What factors conspired to propel the United States to emerge as a military and economic powerhouse prior to World War II?

## *Glossary*

**dollar diplomacy** Taft's foreign policy, which involved using American economic power to push for favorable foreign policies



## 93. Video: American Imperialism

This video teaches you about Imperialism. In the late 19th century, the great powers of Europe were running around the world obtaining colonial possessions, especially in Africa and Asia. The United States, which as a young country was especially susceptible to peer pressure, followed along and snapped up some colonies of its own. The US saw that Spain's hold on its empire was weak, and like some kind of expansionist predator, it jumped into the Cuban War for Independence and turned it into the Spanish-Cuban-Phillipino-American War, which usually just gets called the Spanish-American War. This video will tell you how America turned this war into colonial possessions like Puerto Rico, The Philippines, and almost even got to keep Cuba. The US was busy in the Pacific as well, wresting control of Hawaii from the Hawaiians.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=122#oembed-1>



## 94.

Frederick Jackson Turner was a famous American historian in the 1890s. He wrote a very influential article called “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” It quickly became known as the “[Turner Thesis](#).” Read the Turner Thesis and in a paragraph or two (250-300 words) answer the following:

1. What is the Turner Thesis? (What is the frontier and why is it significant to the development of American history?)
2. What specific quotes, passages, and lines from the document led you to that conclusion?



## 95. Assignment: White Man's Burden

After the United States acquired the Philippines in the wake of the Spanish-American War, the famous British poet Rudyard Kipling (the same man who wrote the *Jungle Book*), wrote *The White Man's Burden* to the American people. After reading [The White Man's Burden](#) write a paragraph or two that answers the following:

1. What exactly is the burden?
2. Why is it a burden (why does Kipling call it a burden instead of "duty," "privilege," or "right")?
3. What is the tone of the poem? Is it cheerful ("Hey America, welcome to the club, now let's go exploit some non-whites!")? Is it a somber warning ("America, do you have any idea what you've just got yourself into")? Is it disappointment ("Oh, great, another country trying to copy Britain and get in on the empire game")? Or is it something else?
4. Who seems to suffer more, the empire or the colony?

Remember to use specific passages and quotes from the poem in support of your answers. It's a short poem so be thorough in your reading, thinking, and writing.







PART XV

# AGE OF EMPIRE READER







## 96. Primary Source Images: American Empire

In the decades after the American Civil War, the United States exerted itself in the service of American interests around the world. In the Pacific, Latin America, and the Middle East, and most explicitly in the Spanish-American War and under the foreign policy of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, the United States expanded upon a long history of exploration, trade, and cultural exchange to practice something that looked remarkably like empire. Meanwhile, as the United States asserted itself abroad, it received ever more numbers of foreign peoples at home. European and Asian immigrants poured into the United States. In a sense, imperialism and immigration raised similar questions about American identity: who was an “American,” and who wasn’t? What were the nation’s obligations to foreign powers and foreign peoples? And how accessible—and how fluid—should American identity be for newcomers? Such questions confronted late-nineteenth-century Americans with unprecedented urgency, and the following sources attempt to shed light on how they were approached by contemporary Americans.



“School Begins,” Puck, January 25, 1899.



"School Begins," *Puck*, January 25, 1899.

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In this 1899 cartoon published, Uncle Sam lectures his new students: The Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and, Cuba. Past and potentially future U.S. acquisitions fill the rest of the classroom.

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## School Begins (1899)



John S. Pughe, “Declined With Thanks,” in *Puck* (September 5, 1900).  
Wikimedia.

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In this political cartoon, tailor President McKinley measures an obese Uncle Sam for larger clothing, while Anti-Expansionists like Joseph Pulitzer unsuccessfully offer Sam a weight-loss elixir. As the nation increased its imperialistic presence and mission, many like Pulitzer worried that America would grow too big for its own good.



## 97. Primary Source: William McKinley on American Expansionism (1903)

*After the surrender of the Spanish in the Spanish-American War, the United States assumed control of the Philippines but struggled to contain an anti-American insurgency.*

... I would like to say just a word about the Philippine business. I have been criticized a good deal about the Philippines, but don't deserve it. The truth is I didn't want the Philippines, and when they came to us, as a gift from the gods, I did not know what to do with them. When the Spanish War broke out Dewey was at Hongkong, and I ordered him to go to Manila and to capture or destroy the Spanish fleet, and he had to; because, if defeated, he had no place to refit on that side of the globe, and if the Dons were victorious they would likely cross the Pacific and ravage our Oregon and California coasts. And so he had to destroy the Spanish fleet, and did it! But that was as far as I thought then.

When I next realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess I did not know what to do with them. I sought counsel from all sides—Democrats as well as Republicans—but got little help. I thought first we would take only Manila; then Luzon; then other islands perhaps also. I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to



themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly, and the next morning I sent for the chief engineer of the War Department (our map-maker), and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States (pointing to a large map on the wall of his office), and there they are, and there they will stay while I am President!

Source: General James Rusling, "Interview with President William McKinley," *The Christian Advocate* 22 January 1903, 17. Reprinted in Charles Sumner Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley, Volume 2* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 109-111.

Via [Google Books](#).



## 98. Primary Source: Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” (1899)

*As the United States waged war against Filipino insurgents, the British writer and poet Rudyard Kipling urged the Americans to take up “the white man’s burden.”*

Take up the White Man’s burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go send your sons to exile  
To serve your captives’ need  
To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child  
Take up the White Man’s burden  
In patience to abide  
To veil the threat of terror  
And check the show of pride;  
By open speech and simple  
An hundred times made plain  
To seek another’s profit  
And work another’s gain  
Take up the White Man’s burden—  
And reap his old reward:  
The blame of those ye better  
The hate of those ye guard—  
The cry of hosts ye humour  
(Ah slowly) to the light:  
“Why brought ye us from bondage,  
“Our loved Egyptian night?”



Take up the White Man's burden-  
Have done with childish days-  
The lightly proffered laurel,  
The easy, ungrudged praise.  
Comes now, to search your manhood  
Through all the thankless years,  
Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom,  
The judgment of your peers!

Source: Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *Literature* (February 4, 1890), 115.

Via [Google Books](#).



# 99. Primary Source: White Man's Burden (1899)

## **The White Man's Burden (1899) by Rudyard Kipling**

*This famous poem, written by Britain's imperial poet, was a response to the American take over of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War.*

Take up the White Man's burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
In patience to abide,  
To veil the threat of terror  
And check the show of pride;  
By open speech and simple,  
An hundred times made plain  
To seek another's profit,  
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
The savage wars of peace—  
Fill full the mouth of Famine  
And bid the sickness cease;  
And when your goal is nearest  
The end for others sought,



Watch sloth and heathen Folly  
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
No tawdry rule of kings,  
But toil of serf and sweeper—  
The tale of common things.  
The ports ye shall not enter,  
The roads ye shall not tread,  
Go mark them with your living,  
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
And reap his old reward:  
The blame of those ye better,  
The hate of those ye guard—  
The cry of hosts ye humour  
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:—  
“Why brought he us from bondage,  
Our loved Egyptian night?”

Take up the White Man's burden—  
Ye dare not stoop to less—  
Nor call too loud on Freedom  
To cloke your weariness;  
By all ye cry or whisper,  
By all ye leave or do,  
The silent, sullen peoples  
Shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
Have done with childish days—  
The lightly proffered laurel,  
The easy, ungrudged praise.  
Comes now, to search your manhood  
Through all the thankless years  
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,  
The judgment of your peers!



## 100. Primary Source: James D. Phelan, “Why the Chinese Should Be Excluded” (1901)

*James D. Phelan, the mayor of San Francisco, penned the following article to drum up support for the extension of laws prohibiting Chinese immigration.*

[The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, and again in 1892.] The Exclusion Acts then passed were limited to ten years' duration. In May next the latest act will expire by limitation, and Congress will be asked to renew it, because, until now, Chinese exclusion has been regarded in diplomatic circles and elsewhere as the settled policy of the country. Has there been any change in the nature of the evil, or in the sentiments of the people? Certainly not on the Pacific Coast, where the lapse of time has made still more evident the non-assimilative character of the Chinese and their undesirability as citizens.

The Exclusion Act has been reasonably effective, although the Chinese, with more or less success, have employed their well-known cunning in evading its provisions by surreptitiously and fraudulently entering the United States. The law, however, has opposed a barrier to the great volume of immigration which threatened this country for many years prior to 1880....

The influx having been checked, the danger to California has been averted, and, consequently, during the last decade industrial conditions indicate comparative prosperity; whereas it is well known that prior to the Exclusion Laws the State of California suffered acutely from labor troubles and business derangement. Unemployed men, hungry from want of work, marched the streets of the cities, inaugurated political parties, disturbed the peace of communities by riotous outbreaks which threatened at times the



foundations of law and order; and these facts gave to James Bryce a fruitful theme for speculation on democracy in his excellent work, "The American Commonwealth." He devoted two chapters to the anti-Chinese crusade in California and looked upon it as a race, labor and political question, which sooner or later, unless solved, would menace American institutions. Accusations were made at that time, which Ho Yow repeats, that the opposition to the Chinese came from demagogues alone. To show the unanimity of the people, I may point out that the Legislature submitted by referendum the question of Chinese immigration to a popular vote. For Chinese immigration 883 votes were polled, and against Chinese immigration 154,638 votes. In the City of San Francisco, representing the wealth and intelligence and containing the skilled-labor organizations of the State, only 224 votes were cast in favor of the immigration and 41,258 votes against it. This result demonstrated clearly that the resident population of California, taking the broad ground of self-preservation, refused to suffer themselves to be dispossessed of their inheritance by Chinese coolies. That is what the verdict meant.

A select committee of Congress, after investigating the question and taking testimony in California, reported in favor of Chinese exclusion, and that policy has been regarded ever since as a peaceful preventive of serious disorders affecting the body politic which would have inevitably ensued had the National Legislature failed to protect the white population of the country. ...

...

The Chinese, by putting a vastly inferior civilization in competition with our own, tend to destroy the population, on whom the perpetuity of free government depends. Without homes and families; patronizing neither school, library, church nor theatre; lawbreakers, addicted to vicious habits; indifferent to sanitary regulations and breeding disease; taking no holidays, respecting no traditional anniversaries, but laboring incessantly, and subsisting on practically nothing for food and clothes, a condition to which they have been inured for centuries, they enter the lists against men who



have been brought up by our civilization to family life and civic duty. Our civilization having been itself rescued from barbarism by the patriots, martyrs and benefactors of mankind, the question now is: Shall it be imperilled? Is not Chinese immigration a harm?

...

If the Chinese are admitted, whence are the ranks of the free population to be recruited? Who shall preserve our civilization and who shall fight our battles? The Chinese may be good laborers, but they are not good citizens. They may in small numbers benefit individual employers, but they breed the germs of a national disease, which spreads as they spread, and grows as they grow.

[Source: James D. Phelan, "Why The Chinese Should Be Excluded," *The North American Review* 173 (November, 1901).]



# 101. Primary Source: William James on “The Philippine Question” (1903)

*Many Americans opposed imperialist actions. Here, the philosopher William James explains his opposition in the light of history.*

We used to believe then that we were of a different clay from other nations, that there was something deep in the American heart that answered to our happy birth, free from that hereditary burden which the nations of Europe bear, and which obliges them to grow by preying on their neighbors. Idle dream! pure Fourth of July fancy, scattered in five minutes by the first temptation. In every national soul there lie potentialities of the most barefaced piracy, and our own American soul is no exception to the rule. Angelic impulses and predatory lusts divide our heart exactly as they divide the hearts of other countries. It is good to rid ourselves of cant and humbug, and to know the truth about ourselves. Political virtue does not follow geographical divisions. It follows the eternal division inside of each country between the more animal and the more intellectual kind of men, between the tory and the liberal tendencies, the jingoism and animal instinct that would run things by main force and brute possession, and the critical conscience that believes in educational methods and in rational rules of right.

...

The country has once for all regurgitated the Declaration of Independence and the Farewell Address, and it won't swallow again immediately what it is so happy to have vomited up. It has come to a hiatus. It has deliberately pushed itself into the circle of international hatreds, and joined the common pack of wolves. It relishes the attitude. We have thrown off our swaddling clothes, it



thinks, and attained our majority. We are objects of fear to other lands.

Source: *Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the New England Anti-Imperialist League, November 28, 1903 and Its Adjournment* Nov. 30 (Boston, Mass.: New England Anti-Imperialist League, 1903), 21-26.

Via [Archive.org](#)



## 102. Primary Source: Mark Twain, “The War Prayer” (ca.1904-5)

*The American writer Mark Twain wrote the following satire in the glow of America’s imperial interventions.*

It was a time of great and exalting excitement. The country was up in arms, the war was on, in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism ... on every hand and far down the receding and fading spread of roofs and balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags flashed in the sun ... nightly the packed mass meetings listened, panting, to patriot oratory which stirred the deepest deeps of their hearts, and which they interrupted at briefest intervals with cyclones of applause, the tears running down their cheeks the while; in the churches the pastors preached devotion to flag and country, and invoked the God of Battles beseeching His aid in our good cause in outpourings of fervid eloquence which moved every listener. ...

Sunday morning came — next day the battalions would leave for the front; the church was filled; the volunteers were there, their young faces alight with martial dreams — visions of the stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender! Then home from the war, bronzed heroes, welcomed, adored, submerged in golden seas of glory! ... The service proceeded; a war chapter from the Old Testament was read; the first prayer was said ...

...

Then came the “long” prayer. None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading and moving and beautiful language. The burden of its supplication was, that an ever-merciful and benignant



Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers, and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work....

An aged stranger entered and moved with slow and noiseless step up the main aisle, his eyes fixed upon the minister, his long body clothed in a robe that reached to his feet, his head bare, his white hair descending in a frothy cataract to his shoulders, his seamy face unnaturally pale, pale even to ghastliness. ... he ascended to the preacher's side and stood there waiting. ...

The stranger touched his arm, motioned him to step aside — which the startled minister did — and took his place. During some moments he surveyed the spellbound audience with solemn eyes, in which burned an uncanny light; then in a deep voice he said:

“I come from the Throne — bearing a message from Almighty God!” ...

“God's servant and yours has prayed his prayer. Has he paused and taken thought? Is it one prayer? No, it is two — one uttered, the other not. Both have reached the ear of Him Who heareth all supplications, the spoken and the unspoken. Ponder this — keep it in mind. If you would beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware! lest without intent you invoke a curse upon a neighbor at the same time. If you pray for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it, by that act you are possibly praying for a curse upon some neighbor's crop which may not need rain and can be injured by it.

“You have heard your servant's prayer — the uttered part of it. I am commissioned of God to put into words the other part of it — that part which the pastor — and also you in your hearts — fervently prayed silently. And ignorantly and unthinkingly? God grant that it was so! You heard these words: ‘Grant us the victory, O Lord our God!’ ... When you have prayed for victory you have prayed for many unmentioned results which follow victory—*must* follow it, cannot help but follow it. Upon the listening spirit of God fell also the unspoken part of the prayer. He commandeth me to put it into words. Listen!

“O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle — be Thou near them! With them — in spirit — we



also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it — for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the Source of Love, and Who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Amen.

(*After a pause.*) “Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! The messenger of the Most High waits!”

It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said.

Source: Mark Twain, “The War Prayer.”







PART XVI

# AMERICANS AND THE GREAT WAR, 1914-1919







## 103. Introduction



*Return of the Useless* (1918), by George Bellows, is an example of a kind of artistic imagery used to galvanize reluctant Americans into joining World War I. The scene shows German soldiers unloading and mistreating imprisoned civilians after their return home to Belgium from German forced-labor camps.

On the eve of World War I, the U.S. government under President Woodrow Wilson opposed any entanglement in international military conflicts. But as the war engulfed Europe and the belligerents' total war strategies targeted commerce and travel across the Atlantic, it became clear that the United States would not be able to maintain its position of neutrality. Still, the American public was of mixed opinion; many resisted the idea of American



intervention and American lives lost, no matter how bad the circumstances.

In 1918, artist George Bellows created a series of paintings intended to strengthen public support for the war effort. His paintings depicted German war atrocities in explicit and expertly captured detail, from children run through with bayonets to torturers happily resting while their victims suffered. The image above, entitled *Return of the Useless*, shows Germans unloading sick or disabled labor camp prisoners from a boxcar. These paintings, while not regarded as Bellows' most important artistic work, were typical for anti-German propaganda at the time. The U.S. government sponsored much of this propaganda out of concern that many American immigrants sympathized with the Central powers and would not support the U.S. war effort.

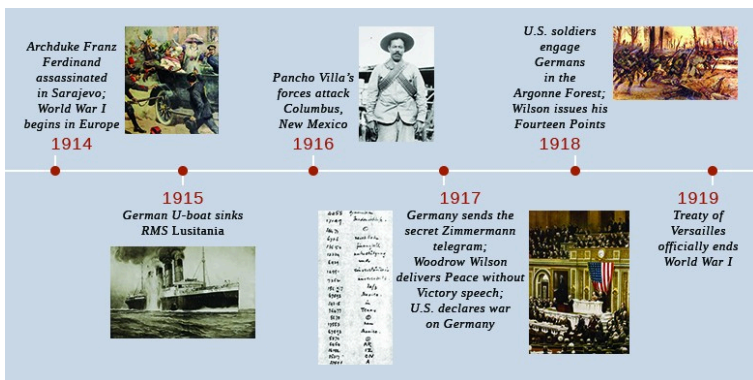


# 104. American Isolationism and the European Origins of War

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy and the difficulties of maintaining American neutrality at the outset of World War I
- Identify the key factors that led to the U.S. declaration of war on Germany in April 1917



Unlike his immediate predecessors, President Woodrow Wilson had planned to shrink the role of the United States in foreign affairs. He



believed that the nation needed to intervene in international events only when there was a moral imperative to do so. But as Europe's political situation grew dire, it became increasingly difficult for Wilson to insist that the conflict growing overseas was not America's responsibility. Germany's war tactics struck most observers as morally reprehensible, while also putting American free trade with the Entente at risk. Despite campaign promises and diplomatic efforts, Wilson could only postpone American involvement in the war.

## WOODROW WILSON'S NEW FREEDOM

When Woodrow Wilson took over the White House in March 1913, he promised a less expansionist approach to American foreign policy than Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft had pursued. Wilson did share the commonly held view that American values were superior to those of the rest of the world, that democracy was the best system to promote peace and stability, and that the United States should continue to actively pursue economic markets abroad. But he proposed an idealistic foreign policy based on morality, rather than American self-interest, and felt that American interference in another nation's affairs should occur only when the circumstances rose to the level of a moral imperative.

Wilson appointed former presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, a noted anti-imperialist and proponent of world peace, as his Secretary of State. Bryan undertook his new assignment with great vigor, encouraging nations around the world to sign "cooling off treaties," under which they agreed to resolve international disputes through talks, not war, and to submit any grievances to an international commission. Bryan also negotiated friendly relations with Colombia, including a \$25 million apology for Roosevelt's



actions during the Panamanian Revolution, and worked to establish effective self-government in the Philippines in preparation for the eventual American withdrawal. Even with Bryan's support, however, Wilson found that it was much harder than he anticipated to keep the United States out of world affairs. In reality, the United States was interventionist in areas where its interests—direct or indirect—were threatened.

Wilson's greatest break from his predecessors occurred in Asia, where he abandoned Taft's "dollar diplomacy," a foreign policy that essentially used the power of U.S. economic dominance as a threat to gain favorable terms. Instead, Wilson revived diplomatic efforts to keep Japanese interference there at a minimum. But as World War I, also known as the Great War, began to unfold, and European nations largely abandoned their imperialistic interests in order to marshal their forces for self-defense, Japan demanded that China succumb to a Japanese

protectorate over their entire nation. In 1917, William Jennings Bryan's successor as Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, signed the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, which recognized Japanese control over the Manchurian region of China in exchange for Japan's promise not to exploit the war to gain a greater foothold in the rest of the country.

Furthering his goal of reducing overseas interventions, Wilson had promised not to rely on the Roosevelt Corollary, Theodore



THE BRONCHO-BUSTER.

PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON. "I WONDER WHAT I DO NEXT."

*While Wilson strove to be less of an interventionist, he found that to be more difficult in practice than in theory. Here, a political cartoon depicts him as a rather hapless cowboy, unclear on how to harness a foreign challenge, in this case, Mexico.*



Roosevelt's explicit policy that the United States could involve itself in Latin American politics whenever it felt that the countries in the Western Hemisphere needed policing. Once president, however, Wilson again found that it was more difficult to avoid American interventionism in practice than in rhetoric. Indeed, Wilson intervened more in Western Hemisphere affairs than either Taft or Roosevelt. In 1915, when a revolution in Haiti resulted in the murder of the Haitian president and threatened the safety of New York banking interests in the country, Wilson sent over three hundred U.S. Marines to establish order. Subsequently, the United States assumed control over the island's foreign policy as well as its financial administration. One year later, in 1916, Wilson again sent marines to Hispaniola, this time to the Dominican Republic, to ensure prompt payment of a debt that nation owed. In 1917, Wilson sent troops to Cuba to protect American-owned sugar plantations from attacks by Cuban rebels; this time, the troops remained for four years.

Wilson's most noted foreign policy foray prior to World War I focused on Mexico, where rebel general Victoriano Huerta had seized control from a previous rebel government just weeks before Wilson's inauguration. Wilson refused to recognize Huerta's government, instead choosing to make an example of Mexico by demanding that they hold democratic elections and establish laws based on the moral principles he espoused. Officially, Wilson supported Venustiano Carranza, who opposed Huerta's military control of the country. When American intelligence learned of a German ship allegedly preparing to deliver weapons to Huerta's forces, Wilson ordered the U.S. Navy to land forces at Veracruz to stop the shipment.

On April 22, 1914, a fight erupted between the U.S. Navy and Mexican troops, resulting in nearly 150 deaths, nineteen of them American. Although Carranza's faction managed to overthrow Huerta in the summer of 1914, most Mexicans—including Carranza—had come to resent American intervention in their affairs. Carranza refused to work with Wilson and the U.S.



government, and instead threatened to defend Mexico's mineral rights against all American oil companies established there. Wilson then turned to support rebel forces who opposed Carranza, most notably Pancho Villa. However, Villa lacked the strength in number or weapons to overtake Carranza; in 1915, Wilson reluctantly authorized official U.S. recognition of Carranza's government.

As a postscript, an irate Pancho Villa turned against Wilson, and on March 9, 1916, led a fifteen-hundred-man force across the border into New Mexico, where they attacked and burned the town of Columbus. Over one hundred people died in the attack, seventeen of them American. Wilson responded by sending General John Pershing into Mexico to capture Villa and return him to the United States



*Pancho Villa, a Mexican rebel who Wilson supported, then ultimately turned from, attempted an attack on the United States in retaliation. Wilson's actions in Mexico were emblematic of how difficult it was to truly set the United States on a course of moral leadership.*

for trial. With over eleven thousand troops at his disposal, Pershing marched three hundred miles into Mexico before an angry Carranza ordered U.S. troops to withdraw from the nation. Although reelected in 1916, Wilson reluctantly ordered the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Mexico in 1917, avoiding war with Mexico and enabling preparations for American intervention in Europe. Again, as in China, Wilson's attempt to impose a moral foreign policy had failed in light of economic and political realities.

## WAR ERUPTS IN EUROPE

When a Serbian nationalist murdered the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungarian Empire on June 29, 1914, the underlying



forces that led to World War I had already long been in motion and seemed, at first, to have little to do with the United States. At the time, the events that pushed Europe from ongoing tensions into war seemed very far away from U.S. interests. For nearly a century, nations had negotiated a series of mutual defense alliance treaties to secure themselves against their imperialistic rivals. Among the largest European powers, the Triple Entente included an alliance of France, Great Britain, and Russia. Opposite them, the Central powers, also known as the Triple Alliance, included Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and initially Italy. A series of “side treaties” likewise entangled the larger European powers to protect several smaller ones should war break out.

At the same time that European nations committed each other to defense pacts, they jockeyed for power over empires overseas and invested heavily in large, modern militaries. Dreams of empire and military supremacy fueled an era of nationalism that was particularly pronounced in the newer nations of Germany and Italy, but also provoked separatist movements among Europeans. The Irish rose up in rebellion against British rule, for example. And in Bosnia’s capital of Sarajevo, Gavrilo Princip and his accomplices assassinated the Austro-Hungarian archduke in their fight for a pan-Slavic nation. Thus, when Serbia failed to accede to Austro-Hungarian demands in the wake of the archduke’s murder, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia with the confidence that it had the backing of Germany. This action, in turn, brought Russia into the conflict, due to a treaty in which they had agreed to defend Serbia. Germany followed suit by declaring war on Russia, fearing that Russia and France would seize this opportunity to move on Germany if it did not take the offensive. The eventual German invasion of Belgium drew Great Britain into the war, followed by the attack of the Ottoman Empire on Russia. By the end of August 1914, it seemed as if Europe had dragged the entire world into war.

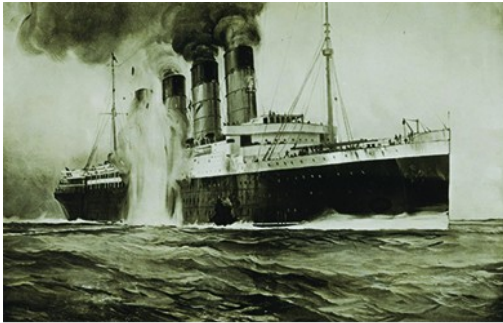
The Great War was unlike any war that came before it. Whereas in previous European conflicts, troops typically faced each other on open battlefields, World War I saw new military technologies that



turned war into a conflict of prolonged trench warfare. Both sides used new artillery, tanks, airplanes, machine guns, barbed wire, and, eventually, poison gas: weapons that strengthened defenses and turned each military offense into barbarous sacrifices of thousands of lives with minimal territorial advances in return. By the end of the war, the total military death toll was ten million, as well as another million civilian deaths attributed to military action, and another six million civilian deaths caused by famine, disease, or other related factors.

One terrifying new piece of technological warfare was the German *unterseeboot*—an “undersea boat” or U-boat. By early 1915, in an effort to break the British naval blockade of Germany and turn the tide of the war, the Germans dispatched a fleet of these submarines around Great Britain to attack both merchant and military ships. The U-boats acted in direct violation of international law, attacking without warning from beneath the water instead of surfacing and permitting the surrender of civilians or crew. By 1918, German U-boats had sunk nearly five thousand vessels. Of greatest historical note was the attack on the British passenger ship, RMS *Lusitania*, on its way from New York to Liverpool on May 7, 1915. The German Embassy in the United States had announced that this ship would be subject to attack for its cargo of ammunition: an allegation that later proved accurate. Nonetheless, almost 1,200 civilians died in the attack, including 128 Americans. The attack horrified the world, galvanizing support in England and beyond for the war. This attack, more than any other event, would test President Wilson’s desire to stay out of what had been a largely European conflict.





(a)



(b)

*The torpedoing and sinking of the Lusitania, depicted in the English drawing above (a), resulted in the death over twelve hundred civilians and was an international incident that shifted American sentiment as to their potential role in the war, as illustrated in a British recruiting poster (b).*

## THE CHALLENGE OF NEUTRALITY

Despite the loss of American lives on the *Lusitania*, President Wilson stuck to his path of neutrality in Europe's escalating war: in part out of moral principle, in part as a matter of practical necessity, and in part for political reasons. Few Americans wished to participate in the devastating battles that ravaged Europe, and Wilson did not want to risk losing his reelection by ordering an unpopular military intervention. Wilson's "neutrality" did not mean isolation from all warring factions, but rather open markets for the United States and continued commercial ties with all belligerents. For Wilson, the conflict did not reach the threshold of a moral imperative for U.S. involvement; it was largely a European affair involving numerous countries with whom the United States wished to maintain working relations. In his message to Congress in 1914, the president noted that "Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned."



Wilson understood that he was already looking at a difficult reelection bid. He had only won the 1912 election with 42 percent of the popular vote, and likely would not have been elected at all had Roosevelt not come back as a third-party candidate to run against his former protégée Taft. Wilson felt pressure from all different political constituents to take a position on the war, yet he knew that elections were seldom won with a campaign promise of “If elected, I will send your sons to war!” Facing pressure from some businessmen and other government officials who felt that the protection of America’s best interests required a stronger position in defense of the Allied forces, Wilson agreed to a “preparedness campaign” in the year prior to the election. This campaign included the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916, which more than doubled the size of the army to nearly 225,000, and the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916, which called for the expansion of the U.S. fleet, including battleships, destroyers, submarines, and other ships.

As the 1916 election approached, the Republican Party hoped to capitalize on the fact that Wilson was making promises that he would not be able to keep. They nominated Charles Evans Hughes, a former governor of New York and sitting U.S. Supreme Court justice at the time of his nomination. Hughes focused his campaign on what he considered Wilson’s foreign policy failures, but even as he did so, he himself tried to walk a fine line between neutrality and belligerence, depending on his audience. In contrast, Wilson and the Democrats capitalized on neutrality and campaigned under the slogan “Wilson—he kept us out of war.” The election itself remained too close to call on election night. Only when a tight race in California was decided two days later could Wilson claim victory in his reelection bid, again with less than 50 percent of the popular vote. Despite his victory based upon a policy of neutrality, Wilson would find true neutrality a difficult challenge. Several different factors pushed Wilson, however reluctantly, toward the inevitability of American involvement.

A key factor driving U.S. engagement was economics. Great Britain was the country’s most important trading partner, and the



Allies as a whole relied heavily on American imports from the earliest days of the war forward. Specifically, the value of all exports to the Allies quadrupled from \$750 million to \$3 billion in the first two years of the war. At the same time, the British naval blockade meant that exports to Germany all but ended, dropping from \$350 million to \$30 million. Likewise, numerous private banks in the United States made extensive loans—in excess of \$500 million—to England. J. P. Morgan's banking interests were among the largest lenders, due to his family's connection to the country.

Another key factor in the decision to go to war were the deep ethnic divisions between native-born Americans and more recent immigrants. For those of Anglo-Saxon descent, the nation's historic and ongoing relationship with Great Britain was paramount, but many Irish-Americans resented British rule over their place of birth and opposed support for the world's most expansive empire. Millions of Jewish immigrants had fled anti-Semitic pogroms in Tsarist Russia and would have supported any nation fighting that authoritarian state. German Americans saw their nation of origin as a victim of British and Russian aggression and a French desire to settle old scores, whereas emigrants from Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were mixed in their sympathies for the old monarchies or ethnic communities that these empires suppressed. For interventionists, this lack of support for Great Britain and its allies among recent immigrants only strengthened their conviction.

Germany's use of submarine warfare also played a role in challenging U.S. neutrality. After the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and the subsequent August 30 sinking of another British liner, the *Arabic*, Germany had promised to restrict their use of submarine warfare. Specifically, they promised to surface and visually identify any ship before they fired, as well as permit civilians to evacuate targeted ships. Instead, in February 1917, Germany intensified their use of submarines in an effort to end the war quickly before Great Britain's naval blockade starved them out of food and supplies.

The German high command wanted to continue unrestricted warfare on all Atlantic traffic, including unarmed American



freighters, in order to cripple the British economy and secure a quick and decisive victory. Their goal: to bring an end to the war before the United States could intervene and tip the balance in this grueling war of attrition. In February 1917, a German U-boat sank the American merchant ship, the *Laconia*, killing two passengers, and, in late March, quickly sunk four more American ships. These attacks increased pressure on Wilson from all sides, as government officials, the general public, and both Democrats and Republicans urged him to declare war.

The final element that led to American involvement in World War I was the so-called Zimmermann telegram. British intelligence intercepted and decoded a top-secret telegram from German foreign minister Arthur Zimmermann to the German ambassador to Mexico, instructing the latter to invite Mexico to join the war effort on the German side, should the United States declare war on Germany. It further went on to encourage Mexico to invade the United States if such a declaration came to pass, as Mexico's invasion would create a diversion and permit Germany a clear path to victory. In exchange, Zimmermann offered to return to Mexico land that was previously lost to the United States in the Mexican-American War, including Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.



The likelihood that Mexico, weakened and torn by its own revolution and civil war, could wage war against the United States and recover territory lost in the Mexican-American war with Germany's help was remote at best. But combined with Germany's unrestricted use of submarine warfare and the sinking of American ships, the Zimmermann telegram made a powerful argument for a declaration of war. The outbreak of the Russian Revolution in February and abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March raised the prospect of democracy in the Eurasian

empire and removed an important moral objection to entering the war on the side of the Allies. On April 2, 1917, Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. Congress debated for four days, and several senators and congressmen expressed their concerns that the war was being fought over U.S. economic interests more than strategic need or democratic ideals. When Congress voted on April 6, fifty-six voted against the resolution, including the first woman ever elected to Congress, Representative Jeannette Rankin. This was the largest “no” vote against a war resolution in American history.

THE TEMPTATION



*“The Temptation,” which appeared in the Dallas Morning News on March 2, 1917, shows Germany as the Devil, tempting Mexico to join their war effort against the United States in exchange for the return of land formerly belonging to Mexico. The prospect of such a move made it all but impossible for Wilson to avoid war. (credit: Library of Congress)*

## Wilson’s Peace without Victory Speech

Wilson’s last-ditch effort to avoid bringing the United States into World War I is captured in a speech he gave before the U.S. Senate



on January 22, 1917. This speech, known as the “Peace without Victory” speech, extolled the country to be patient, as the countries involved in the war were nearing a peace. Wilson stated:

It must be a peace without victory. It is not pleasant to say this. I beg that I may be permitted to put my own interpretation upon it and that it may be understood that no other interpretation was in my thought. I am seeking only to face realities and to face them without soft concealments. Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand. Only a peace between equals can last, only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit.

Not surprisingly, this speech was not well received by either side fighting the war. England resisted being put on the same moral ground as Germany, and France, whose country had been battered by years of warfare, had no desire to end the war without victory and its spoils. Still, the speech as a whole illustrates Wilson's idealistic, if failed, attempt to create a more benign and high-minded foreign policy role for the United States. Unfortunately, the Zimmermann telegram and the sinking of the American merchant ships proved too provocative for Wilson to remain neutral. Little more than two months after this speech, he asked Congress to declare war on Germany.

Read the full transcript of the [Peace without Victory speech](#) that clearly shows Wilson's desire to remain out of the war, even when it seemed inevitable.



## Section Summary

President Wilson had no desire to embroil the United States in the bloody and lengthy war that was devastating Europe. His foreign policy, through his first term and his campaign for reelection, focused on keeping the United States out of the war and involving the country in international affairs only when there was a moral imperative to do so. After his 1916 reelection, however, the free trade associated with neutrality proved impossible to secure against the total war strategies of the belligerents, particularly Germany's submarine warfare. Ethnic ties to Europe meant that much of the general public was more than happy to remain neutral. Wilson's reluctance to go to war was mirrored in Congress, where fifty-six voted against the war resolution. The measure still passed, however, and the United States went to war against the wishes of many of its citizens.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1029>



## *Review Question*

1. To what extent were Woodrow Wilson's actual foreign policy decisions consistent with his foreign policy philosophy or vision?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Wilson's foreign policy goal was to minimize American involvement abroad and use a less imperialistic approach than the presidents before him. Rather than being guided by America's self-interest, he hoped to enact a policy based on moral decisions, acting only when it was morally imperative. In practice, however, Wilson found himself, especially in South and Central America, following the steps of other, more interventionist presidents. He sent troops into Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba, often to ensure that America's interests were met. In Asia and Mexico, Wilson also found it difficult to remain outside of world affairs without jeopardizing America's interests.



## *Glossary*

**neutrality** Woodrow Wilson's policy of maintaining commercial ties with all belligerents and insisting on open markets throughout Europe during World War I

**Zimmermann telegram** the telegram sent from German foreign minister Arthur Zimmermann to the German ambassador in Mexico, which invited Mexico to fight alongside Germany should the United States enter World War I on the side of the Allies



# 105. The United States Prepares for War

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the steps taken by the U.S. government to secure enough men, money, food, and supplies to prosecute World War I
- Explain how the U.S. government attempted to sway popular opinion in favor of the war effort

Wilson knew that the key to America's success in war lay largely in its preparation. With both the Allied and enemy forces entrenched in battles of attrition, and supplies running low on both sides, the United States needed, first and foremost, to secure enough men, money, food, and supplies to be successful. The country needed to first supply the basic requirements to fight a war, and then work to ensure military leadership, public support, and strategic planning.

## THE INGREDIENTS OF WAR

The First World War was, in many ways, a war of attrition, and the United States needed a large army to help the Allies. In 1917, when the United States declared war on Germany, the U.S. Army ranked



seventh in the world in terms of size, with an estimated 200,000 enlisted men. In contrast, at the outset of the war in 1914, the German force included 4.5 million men, and the country ultimately mobilized over eleven million soldiers over the course of the entire war.

To compose a fighting force, Congress passed the Selective Service Act in 1917, which initially required all men aged twenty-one through thirty to register for the draft. In 1918, the act was expanded to include all men between eighteen and forty-five. Through a campaign of patriotic appeals, as well as an administrative system that allowed men to register at their local draft boards rather than directly with the federal government, over ten million men registered for the draft on the very first day. By the war's end, twenty-two million men had registered for the U.S. Army draft. Five million of these men were actually drafted, another 1.5 million volunteered, and over 500,000 additional men signed up for the navy or marines. In all, two million men participated in combat operations overseas. Among the volunteers were also twenty thousand women, a quarter of whom went to France to serve as nurses or in clerical positions.

But the draft also provoked opposition, and almost 350,000 eligible Americans refused to register for military service. About 65,000 of these defied the conscription law as conscientious objectors, mostly on the grounds of their deeply held religious beliefs. Such opposition was not without risks, and whereas most objectors were never prosecuted, those who were found guilty at military hearings received stiff



*While many young men were eager to join the war effort, there were a sizable number who did not want to join, either due to a moral objection or simply because they did not want to fight in a war that seemed far from American interests. (credit: Library of Congress)*



punishments: Courts handed down over two hundred prison sentences of twenty years or more, and seventeen death sentences.

With the size of the army growing, the U.S. government next needed to ensure that there were adequate supplies—in particular food and fuel—for both the soldiers and the home front. Concerns over shortages led to the passage of the Lever Food and Fuel Control Act, which empowered the president to control the production, distribution, and price of all food products during the war effort. Using this law, Wilson created both a Fuel Administration and a Food Administration. The Fuel Administration, run by Harry Garfield, created the concept of “fuel holidays,” encouraging civilian Americans to do their part for the war effort by rationing fuel on certain days. Garfield also implemented “daylight saving time” for the first time in American history, shifting the clocks to allow more productive daylight hours. Herbert Hoover coordinated the Food Administration, and he too encouraged volunteer rationing by invoking patriotism. With the slogan “food will win the war,” Hoover encouraged “Meatless Mondays,” “Wheatless Wednesdays,” and other similar reductions, with the hope of rationing food for military use.



Wilson also created the War Industries Board, run by Bernard Baruch, to ensure adequate military supplies. The War Industries Board had the power to direct shipments of raw materials, as well as to control government contracts with private producers. Baruch used lucrative contracts with guaranteed profits to encourage several private firms to shift their production over to wartime materials. For those firms that refused to cooperate, Baruch's government control over raw materials provided him with the necessary leverage to convince them to join the war effort, willingly or not.

As a way to move all the personnel and supplies around the country efficiently, Congress created the U.S. Railroad Administration. Logistical problems had led trains bound for the East Coast to get stranded as far away as Chicago. To prevent these problems, Wilson appointed William McAdoo, the Secretary of the Treasury, to lead this agency, which had extraordinary war powers to control the entire railroad industry, including traffic, terminals, rates, and wages.

Almost all the practical steps were in place for the United States to fight a successful war. The only step remaining was to figure out how to pay for it. The war effort was costly—with an eventual price tag in excess of \$32 billion by 1920—and the government needed to finance it. The Liberty Loan Act allowed the federal government to sell liberty bonds to the American public, extolling citizens to



*With massive propaganda campaigns linking rationing and frugality to patriotism, the government sought to ensure adequate supplies to fight the war.*



“do their part” to help the war effort and bring the troops home. The government ultimately raised \$23 billion through liberty bonds. Additional monies came from the government’s use of federal income tax revenue, which was made possible by the passage of the Sixteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1913. With the financing, transportation, equipment, food, and men in place, the United States was ready to enter the war. The next piece the country needed was public support.

## CONTROLLING DISSENT

Although all the physical pieces required to fight a war fell quickly into place, the question of national unity was another concern. The American public was strongly divided on the subject of entering the war. While many felt it was the only choice, others protested strongly, feeling it was not America’s war to fight. Wilson needed to ensure that a nation of diverse immigrants, with ties to both sides of the conflict, thought of themselves as American first, and their home country’s nationality second. To do this, he initiated a propaganda campaign, pushing the “America First” message, which sought to convince Americans that they should do everything in their power to ensure an American victory, even if that meant silencing their own criticisms.

### American First, American Above All

At the outset of the war, one of the greatest challenges for Wilson was the lack of national unity. The country, after all, was made up of immigrants, some recently arrived and some well established, but all with ties to their home countries. These home countries included Germany and Russia, as well as Great Britain and France.



In an effort to ensure that Americans eventually supported the war, the government pro-war propaganda campaign focused on driving home that message. The posters below, shown in both English and Yiddish, prompted immigrants to remember what they owed to America.



(a)



(b)

*These posters clearly illustrate the pressure exerted on immigrants to quell any dissent they might feel about the United States at war.*

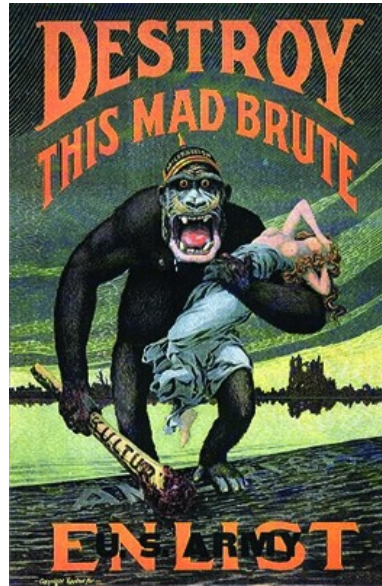
Regardless of how patriotic immigrants might feel and act, however, an anti-German xenophobia overtook the country. German Americans were persecuted and their businesses shunned, whether or not they voiced any objection to the war. Some cities changed the names of the streets and buildings if they were German. Libraries withdrew German-language books from the shelves, and German Americans began to avoid speaking German for fear of reprisal. For some immigrants, the war was fought on two fronts: on the battlefields of France and again at home.



The Wilson administration created the Committee of Public Information under director George Creel, a former journalist, just days after the United States declared war on Germany. Creel employed artists, speakers, writers, and filmmakers to develop a propaganda machine. The goal was to encourage all Americans to make sacrifices during the war and, equally importantly, to hate all things German. Through efforts such as the establishment of “loyalty leagues” in ethnic immigrant communities, Creel largely succeeded in molding an anti-German sentiment around the country. The result? Some schools banned the teaching of the German language and some restaurants refused to serve frankfurters, sauerkraut, or hamburgers, instead serving “liberty dogs with liberty cabbage” and “liberty sandwiches.” Symphonies refused to perform music written by German composers. The hatred of Germans grew so widespread that, at one point, at a circus, audience members cheered when, in an act gone horribly wrong, a Russian bear mauled a German animal trainer (whose ethnicity was more a part of the act than reality).



In addition to its propaganda campaign, the U.S. government also tried to secure broad support for the war effort with repressive legislation. The Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 prohibited individual trade with an enemy nation and banned the use of the postal service for disseminating any literature deemed treasonous by the postmaster general. That same year, the Espionage Act prohibited giving aid to the enemy by spying, or espionage, as well as any public comments that opposed the American war effort. Under this act, the government could impose fines and imprisonment of up to twenty years. The Sedition Act, passed in 1918, prohibited any criticism or disloyal language



*Creel's propaganda campaign embodied a strongly anti-German message. The depiction of Germans as brutal apes, stepping on the nation's shores with their crude weapon of "Kultur" (culture), stood in marked contrast to the idealized rendition of the nation's virtue as a fair beauty whose clothes had been ripped off her.*

against the federal government and its policies, the U.S. Constitution, the military uniform, or the American flag. More than two thousand persons were charged with violating these laws, and many received prison sentences of up to twenty years. Immigrants faced deportation as punishment for their dissent. Not since the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 had the federal government so infringed on the freedom of speech of loyal American citizens.

For a sense of the response and pushback that antiwar



sentiments incited, read this [newspaper article](#) from 1917, discussing the dissemination of 100,000 antidraft flyers by the No Conscription League.

In the months and years after these laws came into being, over one thousand people were convicted for their violation, primarily under the Espionage and Sedition Acts. More importantly, many more war critics were frightened into silence. One notable prosecution was that of Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs, who received a ten-year prison sentence for encouraging draft resistance, which, under the Espionage Act, was considered “giving aid to the enemy.” Prominent Socialist Victor Berger was also prosecuted under the Espionage Act and subsequently twice denied his seat in Congress, to which he had been properly elected by the citizens of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. One of the more outrageous prosecutions was that of a film producer who released a film about the American Revolution: Prosecutors found the film seditious, and a court convicted the producer to ten years in prison for portraying the British, who were now American allies, as the obedient soldiers of a monarchical empire.

State and local officials, as well as private citizens, aided the government’s efforts to investigate, identify, and crush subversion. Over 180,000 communities created local “councils of defense,” which encouraged members to report any antiwar comments to local authorities. This mandate encouraged spying on neighbors, teachers, local newspapers, and other individuals. In addition, a larger national organization—the American Protective League—received support from the Department of Justice to spy on prominent dissenters, as well as open their mail and physically assault draft evaders.

Understandably, opposition to such repression began mounting. In 1917, Roger Baldwin formed the National Civil Liberties Bureau—a forerunner to the American Civil Liberties Union, which was



founded in 1920—to challenge the government’s policies against wartime dissent and conscientious objection. In 1919, the case of *Schenck v. United States* went to the U.S. Supreme Court to challenge the constitutionality of the Espionage and Sedition Acts. The case concerned Charles Schenck, a leader in the Socialist Party of Philadelphia, who had distributed fifteen thousand leaflets, encouraging young men to avoid conscription. The court ruled that during a time of war, the federal government was justified in passing such laws to quiet dissenters. The decision was unanimous, and in the court’s opinion, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that such dissent presented a “clear and present danger” to the safety of the United States and the military, and was therefore justified. He further explained how the First Amendment right of free speech did not protect such dissent, in the same manner that a citizen could not be freely permitted to yell “fire!” in a crowded theater, due to the danger it presented. Congress ultimately repealed most of the Espionage and Sedition Acts in 1921, and several who were imprisoned for violation of those acts were then quickly released. But the Supreme Court’s deference to the federal government’s restrictions on civil liberties remained a volatile topic in future wars.

## Section Summary

Wilson might have entered the war unwillingly, but once it became inevitable, he quickly moved to use federal legislation and government oversight to put into place the conditions for the nation’s success. First, he sought to ensure that all logistical needs—from fighting



men to raw materials for wartime production—were in place and within government reach. From legislating rail service to encouraging Americans to buy liberty loans and “bring the boys home sooner,” the government worked to make sure that the conditions for success were in place. Then came the more nuanced challenge of ensuring that a country of immigrants from both sides of the conflict fell in line as Americans, first and foremost. Aggressive propaganda campaigns, combined with a series of restrictive laws to silence dissenters, ensured that Americans would either support the war or at least stay silent. While some conscientious objectors and others spoke out, the government efforts were largely successful in silencing those who had favored neutrality.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1030>

### *Review Question*

1. How did the government work to ensure unity on the home front, and why did Wilson feel that this was so important?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The government took a number of steps to ensure that Americans supported the war effort. Congress passed several laws, including the Trading with the Enemy Act, the Espionage Act, the Sedition Act, and the Alien Act, all intended to criminalize dissent against the war. The government also encouraged private citizens to identify and report potential disloyalty among their neighbors, teachers, and others, including those who spoke out against the war and the draft for religious reasons. Wilson believed these steps were necessary to prevent divided loyalties, given the many recent immigrants living in the United States who maintained ties to European nations on both sides of the conflict.

## *Glossary*

**clear and present danger** the expression used by Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in the case of *Schenck v. United States* to characterize public dissent during wartime, akin to shouting “fire!” in a crowded theater

**liberty bonds** the name for the war bonds that the U.S. government sold, and strongly encouraged Americans to buy, as a way of raising money for the war effort



## 106. A New Home Front

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how the status of organized labor changed during the First World War
- Describe how the lives of women and African Americans changed as a result of American participation in World War I
- Explain how America's participation in World War I allowed for the passage of prohibition and women's suffrage

The lives of all Americans, whether they went abroad to fight or stayed on the home front, changed dramatically during the war. Restrictive laws censored dissent at home, and the armed forces demanded unconditional loyalty from millions of volunteers and conscripted soldiers. For organized labor, women, and African Americans in particular, the war brought changes to the prewar status quo. Some white women worked outside of the home for the first time, whereas others, like African American men, found that they were eligible for jobs that had previously been reserved for white men. African American women, too, were able to seek employment beyond the domestic servant jobs that had been their primary opportunity. These new options and freedoms were not easily erased after the war ended.



## NEW OPPORTUNITIES BORN FROM WAR

After decades of limited involvement in the challenges between management and organized labor, the need for peaceful and productive industrial relations prompted the federal government during wartime to invite organized labor to the negotiating table. Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), sought to capitalize on these circumstances to better organize workers and secure for them better wages and working conditions. His efforts also solidified his own base of power. The increase in production that the war required exposed severe labor shortages in many states, a condition that was further exacerbated by the draft, which pulled millions of young men from the active labor force.

Wilson only briefly investigated the longstanding animosity between labor and management before ordering the creation of the National Labor War Board in April 1918. Quick negotiations with Gompers and the AFL resulted in a promise: Organized labor would make a “no-strike pledge” for the duration of the war, in exchange for the U.S. government’s protection of workers’ rights to organize and bargain collectively. The federal government kept its promise and promoted the adoption of an eight-hour workday (which had first been adopted by government employees in 1868), a living wage for all workers, and union membership. As a result, union membership skyrocketed during the war, from 2.6 million members in 1916 to 4.1 million in 1919. In short, American workers received better working conditions and wages, as a result of the country’s participation in the war. However, their economic gains were limited. While prosperity overall went up during the war, it was enjoyed more by business owners and corporations than by the workers themselves. Even though wages increased, inflation offset most of the gains. Prices in the United States increased an average of 15–20 percent annually between 1917 and 1920. Individual purchasing power actually declined during the war due to the



substantially higher cost of living. Business profits, in contrast, increased by nearly a third during the war.

## **Women in Wartime**

For women, the economic situation was complicated by the war, with the departure of wage-earning men and the higher cost of living pushing many toward less comfortable lives. At the same time, however, wartime presented new opportunities for women in the workplace. More than one million women entered the workforce for the first time as a result of the war, while more than eight million working women found higher paying jobs, often in industry. Many women also found employment in what were typically considered male occupations, such as on the railroads, where the number of women tripled, and on assembly lines. After the war ended and men returned home and searched for work, women were fired from their jobs, and expected to return home and care for their families. Furthermore, even when they were doing men's jobs, women were typically paid lower wages than male workers, and unions were ambivalent at best—and hostile at worst—to women workers. Even under these circumstances, wartime employment familiarized women with an alternative to a life in domesticity and dependency, making a life of employment, even a career, plausible for women. When, a generation later, World War II arrived, this trend would increase dramatically.





(a)



(b)

*The war brought new opportunities to women, such as the training offered to those who joined the Land Army (a) or the opening up of traditionally male occupations. In 1918, Eva Abbott (b) was one of many new women workers on the Erie Railroad. However, once the war ended and veterans returned home, these opportunities largely disappeared. (credit b: modification of work by U.S. Department of Labor)*

One notable group of women who exploited these new opportunities was the Women's Land Army of America. First during World War I, then again in World War II, these women stepped up to run farms and other agricultural enterprises, as men left for the armed forces. Known as Farmerettes, some twenty thousand women—mostly college educated and from larger urban areas—served in this capacity. Their reasons for joining were manifold. For some, it was a way to serve their country during a time of war. Others hoped to capitalize on the efforts to further the fight for women's suffrage.

Also of special note were the approximately thirty thousand American women who served in the military, as well as a variety of humanitarian organizations, such as the Red Cross and YMCA,



during the war. In addition to serving as military nurses (without rank), American women also served as telephone operators in France. Of this latter group, 230 of them, known as “Hello Girls,” were bilingual and stationed in combat areas. Over eighteen thousand American women served as Red Cross nurses, providing much of the medical support available to American troops in France. Close to three hundred nurses died during service. Many of those who returned home continued to work in hospitals and home healthcare, helping wounded veterans heal both emotionally and physically from the scars of war.

## African Americans in the Crusade for Democracy

African Americans also found that the war brought upheaval and opportunity. Blacks composed 13 percent of the enlisted military, with 350,000 men serving. Colonel Charles Young of the Tenth Cavalry division served as the highest-ranking African American officer. Blacks served in segregated units and suffered from widespread racism in the



*African American soldiers suffered under segregation and second-class treatment in the military. Still, the 369th Infantry earned recognition and reward for its valor in service both in France and the United States.*

military hierarchy, often serving in menial or support roles. Some troops saw combat, however, and were commended for serving with valor. The 369th Infantry, for example, known as the Harlem Hellfighters, served on the frontline of France for six months, longer than any other American unit. One hundred seventy-one men from that regiment received the Legion of Merit for meritorious service in combat. The regiment marched in a homecoming parade in New



York City, was remembered in paintings, and was celebrated for bravery and leadership. The accolades given to them, however, in no way extended to the bulk of African Americans fighting in the war.

On the home front, African Americans, like American women, saw economic opportunities increase during the war. During the so-called Great Migration (discussed in a previous chapter), nearly 350,000 African Americans had fled the post-Civil War South for opportunities in northern urban areas. From 1910–1920, they moved north and found work in the steel, mining, shipbuilding, and automotive industries, among others. African American women also sought better employment opportunities beyond their traditional roles as domestic servants. By 1920, over 100,000 women had found work in diverse manufacturing industries, up from 70,000 in 1910. Despite such opportunities, racism continued to be a major force in both the North and South. Worried about the large influx of black Americans into their cities, several municipalities passed residential codes designed to prohibit African Americans from settling in certain neighborhoods. Race riots also increased in frequency: In 1917 alone, there were race riots in twenty-five cities, including East Saint Louis, where thirty-nine blacks were killed. In the South, white business and plantation owners feared that their cheap workforce was fleeing the region, and used violence to intimidate blacks into staying. According to NAACP statistics, recorded incidences of lynching increased from thirty-eight in 1917 to eighty-three in 1919. These numbers did not start to decrease until 1923, when the number of annual lynchings dropped below thirty-five for the first time since the Civil War.

Explore photographs and a written overview of [the African American experience](#) both at home and on the front line during World War I.



# THE LAST VESTIGES OF PROGRESSIVISM

Across the United States, the war intersected with the last lingering efforts of the Progressives who sought to use the war as motivation for their final push for change. It was in large part due to the war's influence that Progressives were able to lobby for the passage of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting alcohol, and the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the right to vote, received their final impetus due to the war effort.

Prohibition, as the anti-alcohol movement became known, had been a goal of many Progressives for decades. Organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League linked alcohol consumption with any number of societal problems, and they had worked tirelessly with municipalities and counties to



*Surrounded by prominent “dry workers,” Governor James P. Goodrich of Indiana signs a statewide bill to prohibit alcohol.*

limit or prohibit alcohol on a local scale. But with the war, prohibitionists saw an opportunity for federal action. One factor that helped their cause was the strong anti-German sentiment that gripped the country, which turned sympathy away from the largely German-descended immigrants who ran the breweries. Furthermore, the public cry to ration food and grain—the latter being a key ingredient in both beer and hard alcohol—made prohibition even more patriotic. Congress ratified the Eighteenth Amendment in January 1919, with provisions to take effect one year later. Specifically, the amendment prohibited the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors. It did not prohibit the



drinking of alcohol, as there was a widespread feeling that such language would be viewed as too intrusive on personal rights. However, by eliminating the manufacture, sale, and transport of such beverages, drinking was effectively outlawed. Shortly thereafter, Congress passed the Volstead Act, translating the Eighteenth Amendment into an enforceable ban on the consumption of alcoholic beverages, and regulating the scientific and industrial uses of alcohol. The act also specifically excluded from prohibition the use of alcohol for religious rituals.

Unfortunately for proponents of the amendment, the ban on alcohol did not take effect until one full year following the end of the war. Almost immediately following the war, the general public began to oppose—and clearly violate—the law, making it very difficult to enforce. Doctors and druggists, who could prescribe whisky for medicinal purposes, found themselves inundated with requests. In the 1920s, organized crime and gangsters like Al Capone would capitalize on the persistent demand for liquor, making fortunes in the illegal trade. A lack of enforcement, compounded by an overwhelming desire by the public to obtain alcohol at all costs, eventually resulted in the repeal of the law in 1933.

The First World War also provided the impetus for another longstanding goal of some reformers: universal suffrage. Supporters of equal rights for women pointed to Wilson's rallying cry of a war “to make the world safe for democracy,” as hypocritical, saying he was sending American boys to die for such principles while simultaneously denying American women their democratic right to vote. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Women Suffrage



*Suffragists picketed the White House in 1917, leveraging the war and America's stance on democracy to urge Woodrow Wilson to support an amendment giving women the right to vote.*



Movement, capitalized on the growing patriotic fervor to point out that every woman who gained the vote could exercise that right in a show of loyalty to the nation, thus offsetting the dangers of draft-dodgers or naturalized Germans who already had the right to vote.

Alice Paul, of the National Women's Party, organized more radical tactics, bringing national attention to the issue of women's suffrage by organizing protests outside the White House and, later, hunger strikes among arrested protesters. By the end of the war, the abusive treatment of suffragist hunger-strikers in prison, women's important contribution to the war effort, and the arguments of his suffragist daughter Jessie Woodrow Wilson Sayre moved President Wilson to understand women's right to vote as an ethical mandate for a true democracy. He began urging congressmen and senators to adopt the legislation. The amendment finally passed in June 1919, and the states ratified it by August 1920. Specifically, the Nineteenth Amendment prohibited all efforts to deny the right to vote on the basis of sex. It took effect in time for American women to vote in the presidential election of 1920.

## Section Summary

The First World War remade the world for all Americans, whether they served abroad or stayed at home. For some groups, such as women and blacks, the war provided opportunities for advancement. As soldiers went to war, women and African Americans took on jobs that had previously been reserved for white men. In return for a no-strike pledge, workers gained



the right to organize. Many of these shifts were temporary, however, and the end of the war came with a cultural expectation that the old social order would be reinstated.

Some reform efforts also proved short-lived. President Wilson's wartime agencies managed the wartime economy effectively but closed immediately with the end of the war (although they reappeared a short while later with the New Deal). While patriotic fervor allowed Progressives to pass prohibition, the strong demand for alcohol made the law unsustainable. Women's suffrage, however, was a Progressive movement that came to fruition in part because of the circumstances of the war, and unlike prohibition, it remained.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1031>

### *Review Question*

1. Why was prohibition's success short-lived?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The ban on alcohol did not take effect until one year after the war, when the public sentiments that had eased its passage began to wane. The law proved difficult to enforce, as ever-greater numbers of Americans began to defy it. Organized crime's involvement in the illegal liquor trade made enforcement even more difficult and the procurement of alcohol more dangerous. All of these elements led to the law's repeal in 1933.

## *Glossary*

**Harlem Hellfighters** a nickname for the decorated, all-black 369th Infantry, which served on the frontlines of France for six months, longer than any other American unit

**prohibition** the campaign for a ban on the sale and manufacturing of alcoholic beverages, which came to fruition during the war, bolstered by anti-German sentiment and a call to preserve resources for the war effort



## 107. From War to Peace

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the role that the United States played at the end of World War I
- Describe Woodrow Wilson's vision for the postwar world
- Explain why the United States never formally approved the Treaty of Versailles nor joined the League of Nations

The American role in World War I was brief but decisive. While millions of soldiers went overseas, and many thousands paid with their lives, the country's involvement was limited to the very end of the war. In fact, the peace process, with the international conference and subsequent ratification process, took longer than the time U.S. soldiers were "in country" in France. For the Allies, American reinforcements came at a decisive moment in their defense of the western front, where a final offensive had exhausted German forces. For the United States, and for Wilson's vision of a peaceful future, the fighting was faster and more successful than what was to follow.



## WINNING THE WAR

When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, the Allied forces were close to exhaustion. Great Britain and France had already indebted themselves heavily in the procurement of vital American military supplies. Now, facing near-certain defeat, a British delegation to Washington, DC, requested immediate troop reinforcements to boost Allied spirits and help crush German fighting morale, which was already weakened by short supplies on the frontlines and hunger on the home front. Wilson agreed and immediately sent 200,000 American troops in June 1917. These soldiers were placed in “quiet zones” while they trained and prepared for combat.

By March 1918, the Germans had won the war on the eastern front. The Russian Revolution of the previous year had not only toppled the hated regime of Tsar Nicholas II but also ushered in a civil war from which the Bolshevik faction of Communist revolutionaries under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin emerged victorious. Weakened by war and internal strife, and eager to build a new Soviet Union, Russian delegates agreed to a



*U.S. soldiers run past fallen Germans on their way to a bunker. In World War I, for the first time, photographs of the battles brought the war vividly to life for those at home.*

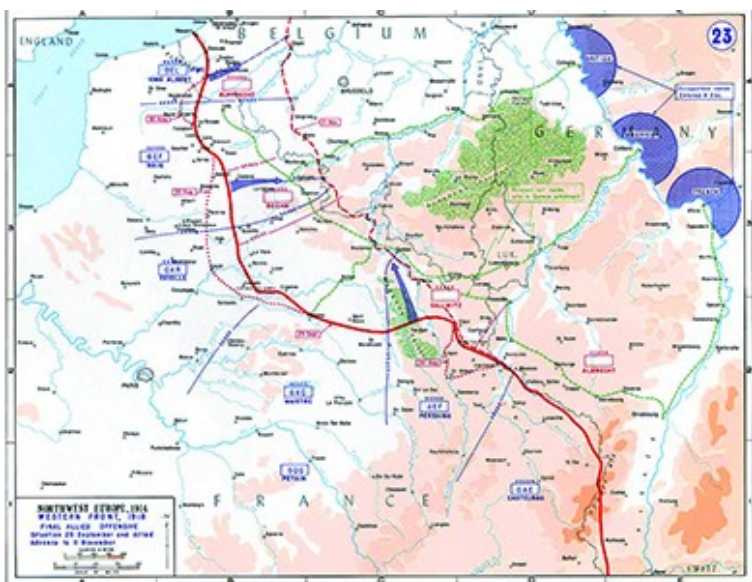
generous peace treaty with Germany. Thus emboldened, Germany quickly moved upon the Allied lines, causing both the French and British to ask Wilson to forestall extensive training to U.S. troops and instead commit them to the front immediately. Although wary of the move, Wilson complied, ordering the commander of the American Expeditionary Force, General John “Blackjack” Pershing,



to offer U.S. troops as replacements for the Allied units in need of relief. By May 1918, Americans were fully engaged in the war.

In a series of battles along the front that took place from May 28 through August 6, 1918, including the battles of Cantigny, Chateau Thierry, Belleau Wood, and the Second Battle of the Marne, American forces alongside the British and French armies succeeded in repelling the German offensive. The Battle of Cantigny, on May 28, was the first American offensive in the war: In less than two hours that morning, American troops overran the German headquarters in the village, thus convincing the French commanders of their ability to fight against the German line advancing towards Paris. The subsequent battles of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood proved to be the bloodiest of the war for American troops. At the latter, faced with a German onslaught of mustard gas, artillery fire, and mortar fire, U.S. Marines attacked German units in the woods on six occasions—at times meeting them in hand-to-hand and bayonet combat—before finally repelling the advance. The U.S. forces suffered 10,000 casualties in the three-week battle, with almost 2,000 killed in total and 1,087 on a single day. Brutal as they were, they amounted to small losses compared to the casualties suffered by France and Great Britain. Still, these summer battles turned the tide of the war, with the Germans in full retreat by the end of July 1918.





*This map shows the western front at the end of the war, as the Allied Forces decisively break the German line.*

## Sgt. Charles Leon Boucher: Life and Death in the Trenches of France

Wounded in his shoulder by enemy forces, George, a machine gunner posted on the right end of the American platoon, was taken prisoner at the Battle of Seicheprey in 1918. However, as darkness set in that evening, another American soldier, Charlie, heard a noise from a gully beside the trench in which he had hunkered down. “I figured it must be the enemy mop-up patrol,” Charlie later said.

I only had a couple of bullets left in the chamber of my forty-five. The noise stopped and a head popped into sight. When I was about to fire, I gave another look and a white and distorted face proved to be that of George, so I grabbed his



shoulders and pulled him down into our trench beside me. He must have had about twenty bullet holes in him but not one of them was well placed enough to kill him. He made an effort to speak so I told him to keep quiet and conserve his energy. I had a few malted milk tablets left and, I forced them into his mouth. I also poured the last of the water I had left in my canteen into his mouth.

Following a harrowing night, they began to crawl along the road back to their platoon. As they crawled, George explained how he survived being captured. Charlie later told how George “was taken to an enemy First Aid Station where his wounds were dressed. Then the doctor motioned to have him taken to the rear of their lines. But, the Sergeant Major pushed him towards our side and ‘No Mans Land,’ pulled out his Luger Automatic and shot him down. Then, he began to crawl towards our lines little by little, being shot at consistently by the enemy snipers till, finally, he arrived in our position.”

The story of Charlie and George, related later in life by Sgt. Charles Leon Boucher to his grandson, was one replayed many times over in various forms during the American Expeditionary Force’s involvement in World War I. The industrial scale of death and destruction was as new to American soldiers as to their European counterparts, and the survivors brought home physical and psychological scars that influenced the United States long after the war was won.



By the end of September 1918, over one million U.S. soldiers staged a full offensive into the Argonne Forest. By November—after nearly forty days of intense fighting—the German lines were broken, and their military command reported to German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II of the desperate need to end the war



*This photograph of U.S. soldiers in a trench hardly begins to capture the brutal conditions of trench warfare, where disease, rats, mud, and hunger plagued the men.*

and enter into peace negotiations. Facing civil unrest from the German people in Berlin, as well as the loss of support from his military high command, Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated his throne on November 9, 1918, and immediately fled by train to the Netherlands. Two days later, on November 11, 1918, Germany and the Allies declared an immediate armistice, thus bring the fighting to a stop and signaling the beginning of the peace process.

When the armistice was declared, a total of 117,000 American soldiers had been killed and 206,000 wounded. The Allies as a whole suffered over 5.7 million military deaths, primarily Russian, British, and French men. The Central powers suffered four million military deaths, with half of them German soldiers. The total cost of the war to the United States alone was in excess of \$32 billion, with interest expenses and veterans' benefits eventually bringing the cost to well over \$100 billion. Economically, emotionally, and geopolitically, the war had taken an enormous toll.

This [Smithsonian interactive exhibit](#) offers a fascinating perspective on World War I.



# THE BATTLE FOR PEACE

While Wilson had been loath to involve the United States in the war, he saw the country's eventual participation as justification for America's involvement in developing a moral foreign policy for the entire world. The “new world order” he wished to create from the outset of his presidency was now within his grasp. The United States emerged from the war as the predominant world power. Wilson sought to capitalize on that influence and impose his moral foreign policy on all the nations of the world.

## The Paris Peace Conference

As early as January 1918—a full five months before U.S. military forces fired their first shot in the war, and eleven months before the actual armistice—Wilson announced his postwar peace plan before a joint session of Congress. Referring to what became known as the Fourteen Points, Wilson called for openness in all matters of diplomacy and trade, specifically, free trade, freedom of the seas, an end to secret treaties and negotiations, promotion of self-determination of all nations, and more. In addition, he called for the creation of a League of Nations to promote the new world order and preserve territorial integrity through open discussions in place of intimidation and war.

As the war concluded, Wilson announced, to the surprise of many, that he would attend the Paris Peace Conference himself, rather than ceding to the tradition of sending professional diplomats to represent the country. His decision influenced other nations to follow suit, and the Paris conference became the largest meeting of world leaders to date in history. For six months, beginning in December 1918, Wilson remained in Paris to personally conduct peace negotiations. Although the French public greeted Wilson with



overwhelming enthusiasm, other delegates at the conference had deep misgivings about the American president's plans for a "peace without victory." Specifically, Great Britain, France, and Italy sought to obtain some measure of revenge against Germany for drawing them into the war, to secure themselves against possible future aggressions from that nation, and also to maintain or even strengthen their own colonial possessions. Great Britain and France in particular sought substantial monetary reparations, as well as territorial gains, at Germany's expense. Japan also desired concessions in Asia, whereas Italy sought new territory in Europe. Finally, the threat posed by a Bolshevik Russia under Vladimir Lenin, and more importantly, the danger of revolutions elsewhere, further spurred on these allies to use the treaty negotiations to expand their territories and secure their strategic interests, rather than strive towards world peace.

In the end, the Treaty of Versailles that officially concluded World War I resembled little of Wilson's original Fourteen Points. The Japanese, French, and British succeeded in carving up many of Germany's colonial holdings in Africa and Asia. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire created new nations under the quasi-colonial rule of France and Great Britain, such as Iraq and Palestine. France gained much of the disputed territory along their border with Germany, as well as passage of a "war guilt clause" that demanded Germany take public responsibility for starting and prosecuting the war that led to so much death and destruction.



*The Paris Peace Conference held the largest number of world leaders in one place to date. The photograph shows (from left to right) Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Great Britain; Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, prime minister of Italy; Georges Clemenceau, prime minister of France; and President Woodrow Wilson discussing the terms of the peace.*



Great Britain led the charge that resulted in Germany agreeing to pay reparations in excess of \$33 billion to the Allies. As for Bolshevik Russia, Wilson had agreed to send American troops to their northern region to protect Allied supplies and holdings there, while also participating in an economic blockade designed to undermine Lenin's power. This move would ultimately have the opposite effect of galvanizing popular support for the Bolsheviks.

The sole piece of the original Fourteen Points that Wilson successfully fought to keep intact was the creation of a League of Nations. At a covenant agreed to at the conference, all member nations in the League would agree to defend all other member nations against military threats. Known as Article X, this agreement would basically render each nation equal in terms of power, as no member nation would be able to use its military might against a weaker member nation. Ironically, this article would prove to be the undoing of Wilson's dream of a new world order.

## Ratification of the Treaty of Versailles

Although the other nations agreed to the final terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Wilson's greatest battle lay in the ratification debate that awaited him upon his return. As with all treaties, this one would require two-thirds approval by the U.S. Senate for final ratification, something Wilson knew would be difficult to achieve. Even before Wilson's return to Washington, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that oversaw ratification proceedings, issued a list of fourteen reservations he had regarding the treaty, most of which centered on the creation of a League of Nations. An isolationist in foreign policy issues, Cabot feared that Article X would require extensive American intervention, as more countries would seek her protection in all controversial affairs. But on the other side of the political spectrum, interventionists argued that Article X would impede the United



States from using her rightfully attained military power to secure and protect America's international interests.

Wilson's greatest fight was with the Senate, where most Republicans opposed the treaty due to the clauses surrounding the creation of the League of Nations. Some Republicans, known as Irreconcilables, opposed the treaty on all grounds, whereas others, called Reservationists, would support the treaty if sufficient amendments were introduced that could eliminate Article X. In an effort to turn public support into a weapon against those in opposition, Wilson embarked on a cross-country railway speaking tour. He began travelling in September 1919, and the grueling pace, after the stress of the six months in Paris, proved too much. Wilson fainted following a public event on September 25, 1919, and immediately returned to Washington. There he suffered a debilitating stroke, leaving his second wife Edith Wilson in charge as *de facto* president for a period of about six months.

Frustrated that his dream of a new world order was slipping away—a frustration that was compounded by the fact that, now an invalid, he was unable to speak his own thoughts coherently—Wilson urged Democrats in the Senate to reject any effort to compromise on the treaty. As a result, Congress voted on, and defeated, the originally worded treaty in November. When the treaty was introduced with “reservations,” or amendments, in March 1920, it again fell short of the necessary margin for ratification. As a result, the United States never became an official signatory of the Treaty of Versailles. Nor did the country join the League of Nations, which shattered the international authority and significance of the organization. Although Wilson received the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1919 for his efforts to create a model of world peace, he remained personally embarrassed and angry at his country's refusal to be a part of that model. As a result of its rejection of the treaty, the United States technically remained at war with Germany until July 21, 1921, when it formally came to a close with Congress's quiet passage of the Knox-Porter Resolution.



Read about the [Treaty of Versailles](#) here, particularly how it sowed the seeds for Hitler's rise to power and World War II.

## Section Summary

American involvement in World War I came late. Compared to the incredible carnage endured by Europe, the United States' battles were brief and successful, although the appalling fighting conditions and significant casualties made it feel otherwise to Americans, both at war and at home. For Wilson, victory in the fields of France was not followed by triumphs in Versailles or Washington, DC, where his vision of a new world order was summarily rejected by his allied counterparts and then by the U.S. Congress. Wilson had hoped that America's political influence could steer the world to a place of more open and tempered international negotiations. His influence did lead to the creation of the League of Nations, but concerns at home impeded the process so completely that the United States never signed the treaty that Wilson worked so hard to create.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1032>



### *Review Question*

1. What barriers did Wilson face in his efforts to ratify the Treaty of Versailles? What objections did those opposed to the treaty voice?

### *Review Question*

1. In order to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, Wilson needed to ensure a two-thirds approval by the U.S. Senate, which meant overcoming the objections of a majority of Senate Republicans. Isolationists, most notably Henry Cabot Lodge, worried that the treaty's Article X would oblige the United States to intervene extensively in international affairs. Interventionists, alternatively, argued that Article X would prevent the United States from using its military might to protect its interests abroad. Ultimately, Congress defeated both the originally worded treaty and a later version that included amendments. As a result, the United States never officially signed the treaty nor joined the League of Nations.



## *Glossary*

**Fourteen Points** Woodrow Wilson's postwar peace plan, which called for openness in all matters of diplomacy, including free trade, freedom of the seas, and an end to secret treaties and negotiations, among others

**Irreconcilables** Republicans who opposed the Treaty of Versailles on all grounds

**League of Nations** Woodrow Wilson's idea for a group of countries that would promote a new world order and territorial integrity through open discussions, rather than intimidation and war

**Reservationists** Republicans who would support the Treaty of Versailles if sufficient amendments were introduced that could eliminate Article X



## 108. Video: America in World War I

This video teaches you about American involvement in World War I, which at the time was called the Great War. They didn't know there was going to be a second one, though they probably should have guessed, 'cause this one didn't wrap up very neatly. So, the United States stayed out of World War I at first, because Americans were in an isolationist mood in the early 20th century. That didn't last though, as the affronts piled up and drew the US into the war. Spoiler alert: the *Lusitania* was sunk two years before we joined the war, so that wasn't the sole cause for our jumping in. It was part of it though, as was the Zimmerman telegram, unrestricted submarine warfare, and our affinity for the Brits. You'll learn the war's effects on the home front, some of Woodrow Wilson's XIV Points, and just how the war ended up expanding the power of the government in Americans' lives.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=139#oembed-1>



# 109. Demobilization and Its Difficult Aftermath

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the challenges that the United States faced following the conclusion of World War I
- Explain Warren G. Harding's landslide victory in the 1920 presidential election

As world leaders debated the terms of the peace, the American public faced its own challenges at the conclusion of the First World War. Several unrelated factors intersected to create a chaotic and difficult time, just as massive numbers of troops rapidly demobilized and came home. Racial tensions, a terrifying flu epidemic, anticommunist hysteria, and economic uncertainty all combined to leave many Americans wondering what, exactly, they had won in the war. Adding to these problems was the absence of President Wilson, who remained in Paris for six months, leaving the country leaderless. The result of these factors was that, rather than a celebratory transition from wartime to peace and prosperity, and ultimately the Jazz Age of the 1920s, 1919 was a tumultuous year that threatened to tear the country apart.



## DISORDER AND FEAR IN AMERICA

After the war ended, U.S. troops were demobilized and rapidly sent home. One unanticipated and unwanted effect of their return was the emergence of a new strain of influenza that medical professionals had never before encountered. Within months of the war's end, over twenty million Americans fell ill from the flu. Eventually, 675,000 Americans died before the disease mysteriously ran its



*The flu pandemic that came home with the returning troops swept through the United States, as evidenced by this overcrowded flu ward at Camp Funston, Kansas, adding another trauma onto the recovering postwar psyche.*

course in the spring of 1919. Worldwide, recent estimates suggest that 500 million people suffered from this flu strain, with as many as fifty million people dying. Throughout the United States, from the fall of 1918 to the spring of 1919, fear of the flu gripped the country. Americans avoided public gatherings, children wore surgical masks to school, and undertakers ran out of coffins and burial plots in cemeteries. Hysteria grew as well, and instead of welcoming soldiers home with a postwar celebration, people hunkered down and hoped to avoid contagion.

Another element that greatly influenced the challenges of immediate postwar life was economic upheaval. As discussed above, wartime production had led to steady inflation; the rising cost of living meant that few Americans could comfortably afford to live off their wages. When the government's wartime control over the economy ended, businesses slowly recalibrated from the wartime production of guns and ships to the peacetime production of toasters and cars. Public demand quickly outpaced the slow production, leading to notable shortages of domestic goods. As a



result, inflation skyrocketed in 1919. By the end of the year, the cost of living in the United States was nearly double what it had been in 1916. Workers, facing a shortage in wages to buy more expensive goods, and no longer bound by the no-strike pledge they made for the National War Labor Board, initiated a series of strikes for better hours and wages. In 1919 alone, more than four million workers participated in a total of nearly three thousand strikes: both records within all of American history.

In addition to labor clashes, race riots shattered the peace at the home front. The sporadic race riots that had begun during the Great Migration only grew in postwar America. White soldiers returned home to find black workers in their former jobs and neighborhoods, and were committed to restoring their position of white supremacy. Black soldiers returned home with a renewed sense of justice and strength, and were determined to assert their rights as men and as citizens. Meanwhile, southern lynchings continued to escalate, with white mobs burning African Americans at the stake. During the “Red Summer” of 1919, northern cities recorded twenty-five bloody race riots that killed over 250 people. Among these was the Chicago Race Riot of 1919, where a white mob stoned a young black boy to death because he swam too close to the “white beach” on Lake Michigan. Police at the scene did not arrest the perpetrator who threw the rock. This crime prompted a week-long riot that left twenty-three blacks and fifteen whites dead, as well as millions of dollars’ worth of damage to the city. Riots in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1921, turned out even more deadly, with estimates of black fatalities ranging from fifty to three hundred. Americans thus entered the new decade with a profound sense of disillusionment over the prospects of peaceful race relations.





(a)



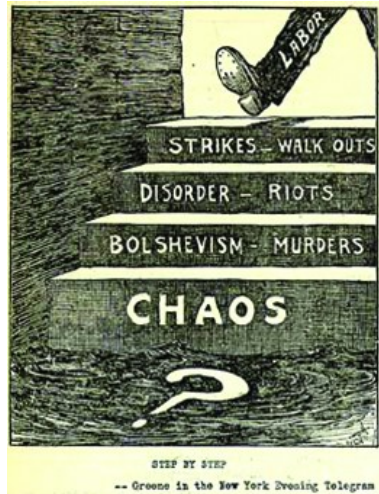
(b)

Riots broke out in Chicago in the wake of the stoning of a black boy. After two weeks, thirty-eight more people had died, some were stoned (a), and many had to abandon their vandalized homes (b).

Read a [Chicago newspaper report](#) of the race riot, as well as a commentary on how the different newspapers—those written for the black community as well as those written by the mainstream press—sought to sensationalize the story.



While illness, economic hardship, and racial tensions all came from within, another destabilizing factor arrived from overseas. As revolutionary rhetoric emanating from Bolshevik Russia intensified in 1918 and 1919, a Red Scare erupted in the United States over fear that Communist infiltrators sought to overthrow the American government as part of an international revolution. When investigators uncovered a collection of thirty-six letter bombs at a New York City post office, with recipients that included several federal, state, and local public officials, as well as industrial leaders such as John D. Rockefeller, fears grew significantly. And when eight additional bombs actually exploded simultaneously on June 2, 1919, including one that destroyed the entrance to U.S. attorney general A. Mitchell Palmer's house in Washington, the country was convinced that all radicals, no matter what ilk, were to blame. Socialists, Communists, members of the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies), and anarchists: They were all threats to be taken down.



*Some Americans feared that labor strikes were the first step on a path that led ultimately to Bolshevik revolutions and chaos. This political cartoon depicts that fear.*



*This cartoon advocates for a restrictive immigration policy, recommending the United States "close the gate" on undesirable (and presumably dangerous) immigrants.*



Private citizens who considered themselves upstanding and loyal Americans, joined by discharged soldiers and sailors, raided radical meeting houses in many major cities, attacking any alleged radicals they found inside. By November 1919, Palmer's new assistant in charge of the Bureau of Investigation, J. Edgar Hoover, organized nationwide raids on radical headquarters in twelve cities around the country. Subsequent "Palmer raids" resulted in the arrests of four thousand alleged American radicals who were detained for weeks in overcrowded cells. Almost 250 of those arrested were subsequently deported on board a ship dubbed "the Soviet Ark."

## A RETURN TO NORMALCY

By 1920, Americans had failed their great expectations to make the world safer and more democratic. The flu epidemic had demonstrated the limits of science and technology in making Americans less vulnerable. The Red Scare signified Americans' fear of revolutionary politics and the persistence of violent capital-labor conflicts. And race riots made it clear that the nation was no closer to peaceful race relations either. After a long era of Progressive initiatives and new government agencies, followed by a costly war that did not end in a better world, most of the public sought to focus on economic progress and success in their private lives instead. As the presidential election of 1920 unfolded, the extent of just how tired Americans were of an interventionist government—whether in terms of Progressive reform or international involvement—became exceedingly clear. Republicans, anxious to return to the White House after eight years of Wilson idealism, capitalized on this growing American sentiment to find the candidate who would promise a return to normalcy.

The Republicans found their man in Senator Warren G. Harding from Ohio. Although not the most energetic candidate for the White House, Harding offered what party handlers desired—a candidate



around whom they could mold their policies of low taxes, immigration restriction, and noninterference in world affairs. He also provided Americans with what they desired: a candidate who could look and act presidential, and yet leave them alone to live their lives as they wished.

Learn more about [President Harding's campaign promise of a return to normalcy](#) by listening to an audio recording or reading the text of his promise.

Democratic leaders realized they had little chance at victory. Wilson remained adamant that the election be a referendum over his League of Nations, yet after his stroke, he was in no physical condition to run for a third term. Political in-fighting among his cabinet, most notably between A. Mitchell Palmer and William McAdoo, threatened to split the party convention until a compromise candidate could be found in Ohio governor James Cox. Cox chose, for his vice presidential running mate, the young Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

At a time when Americans wanted prosperity and normalcy, rather than continued interference in their lives, Harding won in an overwhelming landslide, with 404 votes to 127 in the Electoral College, and 60 percent of the popular vote. With the war, the flu epidemic, the Red Scare, and other issues behind them, American looked forward to Harding's inauguration in 1921, and to an era of personal freedoms and hedonism that would come to be known as the Jazz Age.



## Section Summary

The end of a successful war did not bring the kind of celebration the country craved or anticipated. The flu pandemic, economic troubles, and racial and ideological tensions combined to make the immediate postwar experience in the United States one of anxiety and discontent. As the 1920 presidential election neared, Americans made it clear that they were seeking a break from the harsh realities that the country had been forced to face through the previous years of Progressive mandates and war. By voting in President Warren G. Harding in a landslide election, Americans indicated their desire for a government that would leave them alone, keep taxes low, and limit social Progressivism and international intervention.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1033>

### *Review Question*

1. How did postwar conditions explain Warren Harding's landslide victory in the 1920 presidential election?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. By the time of the 1920 election, the United States was tired and traumatized by the events of the past year. The nation had fought a brutal war, with veterans bringing home their own scars and troubles, and it had suffered domestically as well. Economic uncertainty and shortages, violent racial conflicts, fear of a Communist takeover, and a deadly flu pandemic had left Americans overwhelmed and unhappy. They did not seek new Progressive ideals, they did not want to be the world's policeman, and they did not want to destabilize what already felt unsteady. By choosing a reassuring-looking candidate who promised to bring things “back to normal,” Americans squarely voted to hunker down, nurse their wounds, and try to enjoy themselves.

## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. Why was preparation crucial to ensuring U.S. victory in World War I?
2. Why was the peace process at the war's end so lengthy? What complications did Wilson encounter in his attempts to promote the process and realize his postwar vision?
3. What changes did the war bring to the everyday



lives of Americans? How lasting were these changes?

4. What role did propaganda play in World War I? How might the absence of propaganda have changed the circumstances or the outcome of the war?
5. What new opportunities did the war present for women and African Americans? What limitations did these groups continue to face in spite of these opportunities?

## *Glossary*

**Red Scare** the term used to describe the fear that Americans felt about the possibility of a Bolshevik revolution in the United States; fear over Communist infiltrators led Americans to restrict and discriminate against any forms of radical dissent, whether Communist or not

**Red Summer** the summer of 1919, when numerous northern cities experienced bloody race riots that killed over 250 persons, including the Chicago race riot of 1919



# 110. Assignment: WWI Propaganda

WWI was famous for its propaganda posters. In fact, WWI is the reason the word “propaganda” is now a dirty word. At the start of the war it wasn’t, but as governments lied, withheld information, and manipulated the public, propaganda gained the negative connotation that it has today. Here are two posters from WWI; one American, one British.

For each poster write a short paragraph that answers the following:

1. What message is the poster trying to get across? How does the poster express that message?
2. What emotions does the poster try to stimulate?





[Destroy this mad brute- Enlist](#) – U.S. Army. By Harry R. Hopps, (1869-1937).





[Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?](#) from the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, 1915.



PART XVII

# THE GREAT WAR READER







# III. Primary Source Images: World War I and Its Aftermath

World War I (“The Great War”) toppled empires, created new nations, and sparked tensions that would explode across future years. On the battlefield, its gruesome modern weaponry wrecked an entire generation of young men. The United States entered the conflict in 1917 and was never the same. The war heralded to the world the United States’ potential as a global military power, and, domestically, it advanced but then beat back American progressivism by unleashing vicious waves of repression. The war simultaneously stoked national pride and fueled disenchantments that burst Progressive Era hopes for the modern world. And it laid the groundwork for a global depression, a second world war, and an entire history of national, religious, and cultural conflict around the globe. These sources reveal some of that tumultuous history.



## Boy Scout Charge (1917)



*Photograph from the National Geographic Magazine, 1917. Via Wikimedia.*

The Boy Scouts of America charge up Fifth Avenue in New York City in a “Wake Up, America” parade to support recruitment efforts. Nearly 60,000 people attended this single parade. Photograph from the National Geographic Magazine, 1917. Via Wikimedia.

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## Uncle Sam



James Montgomery Flagg, "I Want You." Ca. 1917, Via Library of Congress (LC-USZC2-564).



“War poster with the famous phrase “I want you for U. S. Army” shows Uncle Sam pointing his finger at the viewer in order to recruit soldiers for the American Army during World War I. The printed phrase “Nearest recruiting station” has a blank space below to add the address for enlisting.” – Library of Congress

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## 112. Primary Source: Woodrow Wilson Requests War (April 2, 1917)

*In this speech before Congress, President Woodrow Wilson made the case for America's entry into World War I.*

I have called the Congress into extraordinary session because there are serious, very serious, choices of policy to be made, and made immediately ...

...

The present German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind. It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of; but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way. There has been no discrimination. The challenge is to all mankind.

Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it. The choice we make for ourselves must be made with a moderation of counsel and a temperateness of judgment befitting our character and our motives as a nation. We must put excited feeling away. Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion.

...

With a profound sense of the solemn and even tragical character of the step I am taking and of the grave responsibilities which it involves, but in unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty, I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German government to be in fact nothing less than war against the government and people of the United States;



that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it; and that it take immediate steps, not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defense but also to exert all its power and employ all its resources to bring the government of the German Empire to terms and end the war.

...

While we do these things, these deeply momentous things, let us be very clear, and make very clear to all the world, what our motives and our objects are. ...

Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up among the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth ensure the observance of those principles. Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states.

...

... We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretense about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience.

The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of



the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.

Just because we fight without rancor and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples, we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe with proud punctilio the principles of right and of fair play we profess to be fighting for.

...

It will be all the easier for us to conduct ourselves as belligerents in a high spirit of right and fairness because we act without animus, not in enmity toward a people or with the desire to bring any injury or disadvantage upon them, but only in armed opposition to an irresponsible government which has thrown aside all considerations of humanity and of right and is running amuck. We are, let me say again, the sincere friends of the German people, and shall desire nothing so much as the early reestablishment of intimate relations of mutual advantage between us—however hard it may be for them, for the time being, to believe that this is spoken from our hearts.

...

It is a distressing and oppressive duty, gentlemen of the Congress, which I have performed in thus addressing you. There are, it may be, many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride



of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

Source: Woodrow Wilson, *Americanism: Woodrow Wilson's Speeches on the War—Why He Made Them—and—What They Have Done*, edited by Oliver Marble Gale (Chicago: Baldwin, 1918) 36-44.

[Google Books](#)



## 113. Primary Source: Alan Seeger on World War I (1914; 1916)

*The poet Alan Seeger, born in New York and educated at Harvard University, lived among artists and poets in Greenwich Village, New York and Paris, France. When the Great War engulfed Europe, and before the United States entered the fighting, Seeger joined the French Foreign Legion. He would be killed at the Battle of the Somme in 1916. His wartime experiences would anticipate those of his countrymen, a million of whom would be deployed to France. Seeger's writings were published posthumously. The first selection is excerpted from a letter Seeger wrote to the New York Sun in 1914; the second is from his collection of poems, published in 1916.*

This is our fourth period of service in the trenches since coming to the front a month ago. ... This style of warfare is extremely modern and for the artillerymen is doubtless very interesting, but for the poor common soldier it is anything but romantic. His role is simply to dig himself a hole in the ground and to keep hidden in it as tightly as possible. Continually under the fire of the opposing batteries, he is yet never allowed to get a glimpse of the enemy. Exposed to all the dangers of war, but with none of its enthusiasms or splendid *élan*, he is condemned to sit like an animal in its burrow and hear the shells whistle over his head and take their little daily toll from his comrades.

The winter morning dawns with gray skies and the hoar frost on the fields. His feet are numb, his canteen frozen, but he is not allowed to make a fire. The winter night falls, with its prospect of sentry duty and the continual apprehension of the hurried call to arms; he is not even permitted to light a candle, but must fold himself in his blanket and lie down cramped in the dirty straw to



sleep as best he may. How different from the popular notion of the evening campfire, the songs and good cheer.

Cramped quarters breed ill temper and disputes. The impossibility of the simplest kind of personal cleanliness makes vermin a universal ill, against which there is no remedy. Cold, dirt, discomfort, are the ever present conditions, and the soldier's life comes to mean to him simply the test of the most misery that the human organism can support. He longs for an attack, to face the barbed wire and the mitrailleuse, anything for a little freedom and function for body and soul.

My comrade in arms is a young Servian, who went through all the Balkan campaign until the war broke out with the Bulgarians. Then he deserted at Salonica, for he was unwilling to fight against his brother people .... [T]he present method of fighting is almost insupportable to him, and he frets pitifully under the forced inaction ... It is ignoble, this style of warfare, he exclaims. Instead of bringing out all that is noble in a man it brings out only his worse self—meanness and greed and ill temper. We are not, in fact, leading the life of men at all, but that of animals, living in holes in the ground and only showing our heads outside to fight and to feed.

...

"I Have a Rendezvous with Death"

I have a rendezvous with Death  
At some disputed barricade,  
When Spring comes back with rustling shade  
And apple-blossoms fill the air—  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.  
It may be he shall take my hand  
And lead me into his dark land  
And close my eyes and quench my breath—  
It may be I shall pass him still.  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
On some scarred slope of battered hill,



When Spring comes round again this year  
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep  
Pillowed in silk and scented down,  
Where love throbs out in blissful sleep,  
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,  
Where hushed awakenings are dear...  
But I've a rendezvous with Death  
At midnight in some flaming town,  
When Spring trips north again this year,  
And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

Source: Alan Seeger, *Letters and Diary of Alan Seeger* (New York: Scribner's, 1917), 26, 29-30; Alan Seeger, "I Have a Rendezvous with Death," *Poems* (New York: Scribner's, 1916), 144.

[Google Books](#); [Google Books](#).



## II4. Primary Source: The Sedition Act of 1918 (1918)

*Passed by Congress in May 1918 and signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson, the Sedition Act of 1918 amended the Espionage Act of 1917 to include greater limitations on war-time dissent.*

Sec. 3. Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully make or convey false reports or false statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States, or to promote the success of its enemies, or shall willfully make or convey false reports or false statements, or say or do anything except by way of bona fide and not disloyal advice to an investor or investors, with intent to obstruct the sale by the United States of bonds or other securities of the United States or the making of loans by or to the United States, and whoever when the United States is at war, shall willfully cause or attempt to cause, or incite or attempt to incite, insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States, or shall willfully obstruct or attempt to obstruct the recruiting or enlistment services of the United States, and whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully utter, print, write or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States or the Constitution of the United States, or the military or naval forces of the United States, or the flag of the United States, or the uniform of the Army or Navy of the United States into contempt, scorn, contumely, or disrepute, or shall willfully utter, print, write, or publish any language intended to incite, provoke, or encourage resistance to the United States, or to promote the cause of its enemies, or shall willfully display the flag of any foreign enemy, or shall willfully by utterance, writing, printing, publication, or language spoken, urge, incite, or advocate any curtailment of



production in this country of any thing or things, product or products, necessary or essential to the prosecution of the war in which the United States may be engaged, with intent by such curtailment to cripple or hinder the United States in the prosecution of war, and whoever shall willfully advocate, teach, defend, or suggest the doing of any of the acts or things in this section enumerated, and whoever shall by word or act support or favor the cause of any country with which the United States is at war or by word or act oppose the cause of the United States therein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or the imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both: *Provided*, That any employee or official of the United States Government who commits any disloyal act or utters any unpatriotic or disloyal language, or who, in an abusive and violent manner criticizes the Army or Navy or the flag of the United States shall be at once dismissed from the service. . . .

Sec. 4. When the United States is at war, the Postmaster General may, upon evidence satisfactory to him that any person or concern is using the mails in violation of any of the provisions of this Act, instruct the postmaster at any post office at which mail is received addressed to such person or concern to return to the postmaster at the office at which they were originally mailed all letters or other matter so addressed, with the words 'Mail to this address undeliverable under Espionage Act' plainly written or stamped upon the outside thereof, and all such letters or other matter so returned to such postmasters shall be by them returned to the senders thereof under such regulations as the Postmaster General may prescribe.

Approved, May 16, 1918.

Source: *United States Statutes at Large, Volume 40, April 1917-March 1919* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919) 553-554.



## 115. Primary Source: Emma Goldman on Patriotism (July 9, 1917)

*The Anarchist Emma Goldman was tried for conspiring to violate the Selective Service Act. The following is an excerpt from her speech to the court, in which she explains her views on patriotism.*

Who is the real patriot, or rather what is the kind of patriotism that we represent? The kind of patriotism we represent is the kind of patriotism which loves America with open eyes. Our relation towards America is the same as the relation of a man who loves a woman, who is enchanted by her beauty and yet who cannot be blind to her defects. And so I wish to state here, in my own behalf and in behalf of hundreds of thousands whom you decry and state to be antipatriotic, that we love America, we love her beauty, we love her riches, we love her mountains and her forests, and above all we love the people who have produced her wealth and riches, who have created all her beauty, we love the dreamers and the philosophers and the thinkers who are giving America liberty. But that must not make us blind to the social faults of America. That cannot make us deaf to the discords of America. That cannot compel us to be inarticulate to the terrible wrongs committed in the name of patriotism and in the name of the country. We simply insist, regardless of all protests to the contrary, that this war is not a war for democracy. If it were a war for the purpose of making democracy safe for the world, we would say that democracy must first be safe for America before it can be safe for the world.

Emma Goldman, "Trial and Speech," *Mother Earth*, July, 1917.

[The Emma Goldman Papers Project](#)



## 116. Primary Source: W.E.B DuBois, “Returning Soldiers” (May, 1919)

*In the aftermath of World War I, W.E.B. DuBois urged returning soldiers to continue fighting for democracy at home.*

We are returning from war! The Crisis and tens of thousands of black men were drafted into a great struggle. For bleeding France and what she means and has meant and will mean to us and humanity and against the threat of German race arrogance, we fought gladly and to the last drop of blood; for America and her highest ideals, we fought in far-off hope; for the dominant southern oligarchy entrenched in Washington, we fought in bitter resignation. For the America that represents and gloats in lynching, disfranchisement, caste, brutality and devilish insult—for this, in the hateful upturning and mixing of things, we were forced by vindictive fate to fight also.

But today we return! We return from the slavery of uniform which the world's madness demanded us to don to the freedom of civil garb. We stand again to look America squarely in the face and call a spade a spade. We sing: This country of ours, despite all its better souls have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.

It lynches.

And lynching is barbarism of a degree of contemptible nastiness unparalleled in human history. Yet for fifty years we have lynched two Negroes a week, and we have kept this up right through the war.

It disfranchises its own citizens.

Disfranchisement is the deliberate theft and robbery of the only protection of poor against rich and black against white. The land that disfranchises its citizens and calls itself a democracy lies and knows it lies.



It encourages *ignorance*.

It has never really tried to educate the Negro. A dominant minority does not want Negroes educated. It wants servants, dogs, whores and monkeys. And when this land allows a reactionary group by its stolen political power to force as many black folk into these categories as it possibly can, it cries in contemptible hypocrisy: "They threaten us with degeneracy; they cannot be educated."

It *steals* from us.

It organizes industry to cheat us. It cheats us out of our land; it cheats us out of our labor. It confiscates our savings. It reduces our wages. It raises our rent. It steals our profit. It taxes us without representation. It keeps us consistently and universally poor, and then feeds us on charity and derides our poverty.

It *insults* us.

It has organized a nation-wide and latterly a world-wide propaganda of deliberate and continuous insult and defamation of black blood wherever found. It decrees that it shall not be possible in travel nor residence, work nor play, education nor instruction for a black man to exist without tacit or open acknowledgment of his inferiority to the dirtiest white dog. And it looks upon any attempt to question or even discuss this dogma as arrogance, unwarranted assumption and treason.

This is the country to which we Soldiers of Democracy return. This is the fatherland for which we fought! But it is our fatherland. It was right for us to fight. The faults of our country are our faults. Under similar circumstances, we would fight again. But by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that that war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.

We *return*.

We *return from fighting*.

We *return fighting*.

Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great



Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.

Source: W.E.B. DuBois, "Returning Soldiers," *The Crisis*, XVIII (May, 1919), p. 13.

[Google Books](#).







PART XVIII

THE JAZZ AGE:  
REDEFINING THE NATION,  
1919-1929





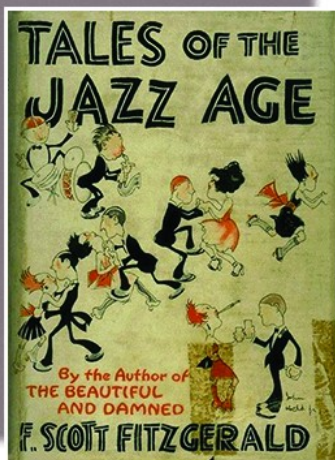


## 117. Introduction

Following the hardships of the immediate postwar era, the United States embarked upon one of the most prosperous decades in history. Mass production, especially of the automobile, increased mobility and fostered new industries. Unemployment plummeted as businesses grew to meet this increased demand. Cities continued to grow and, according to the 1920 census, a majority of the population lived in urban areas of twenty-five hundred or more residents.

Jazz music, movies, speakeasies, and new dances dominated the urban evening scene. Recent immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, many of them Catholic, now participated in the political system. This challenged rural Protestant fundamentalism, even as quota laws sought to limit new immigration patterns. The Ku Klux Klan rose to greater power, as they protested not only the changing role of African Americans but also the growing population of immigrant, Catholic, and Jewish Americans.

This mixture of social, political, economic, and cultural change and conflict gave the decade the nickname the “Roaring Twenties” or the “Jazz Age.” The above illustration, which graced the cover of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tales of the Jazz Age*, embodies the popular view of



The illustrations for F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tales of the Jazz Age*, drawn by John Held, Jr., epitomized the carefree flapper era of the 1920s.



the 1920s as a nonstop party, replete with dancing, music, flappers, and illegal drinking.

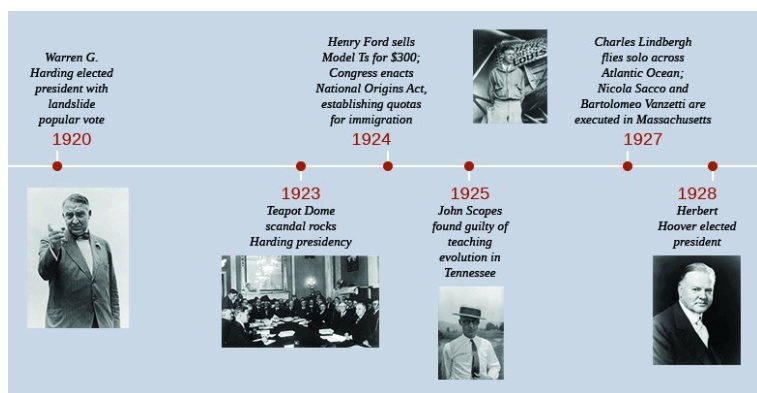


# 118. Prosperity and the Production of Popular Entertainment

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the role of movies in the evolution of American culture
- Explain the rise of sports as a dominant social force
- Analyze the ways in which the automobile, especially the Model T, transformed American life



In the 1920s, prosperity manifested itself in many forms, most



notably in advancements in entertainment and technology that led to new patterns of leisure and consumption. Movies and sports became increasingly popular and buying on credit or “carrying” the debt allowed for the sale of more consumer goods and put automobiles within reach of average Americans. Advertising became a central institution in this new consumer economy, and commercial radio and magazines turned athletes and actors into national icons.

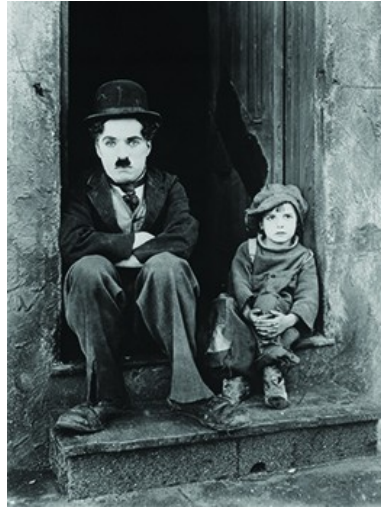
## MOVIES

The increased prosperity of the 1920s gave many Americans more disposable income to spend on entertainment. As the popularity of “moving pictures” grew in the early part of the decade, “movie palaces,” capable of seating thousands, sprang up in major cities. A ticket for a double feature and a live show cost twenty-five cents; for a quarter, Americans could escape from their problems and lose themselves in another era or world. People of all ages attended the movies with far more regularity than today, often going more than once per week. By the end of the decade, weekly movie attendance swelled to ninety million people.

The silent movies of the early 1920s gave rise to the first generation of movie stars. Rudolph Valentino, the lothario with the bedroom eyes, and Clara Bow, the “It Girl” with sex appeal, filled the imagination of millions of American moviegoers. However, no star captured the attention of the American viewing public more than Charlie Chaplin. This sad-eyed tramp with a moustache, baggy pants, and a cane was the top box office attraction of his time.



In 1927, the world of the silent movie began to wane with the New York release of the first “talkie”: *The Jazz Singer*. The plot of this film, which starred Al Jolson, told a distinctively American story of the 1920s. It follows the life of a Jewish man from his boyhood days of being groomed to be the cantor at the local synagogue to his life as a famous and “Americanized” jazz singer. Both the story and the new sound technology used to present it were popular with audiences around the country. It quickly became a huge hit for Warner Brothers, one of the “big five” motion picture



Charlie Chaplin's nickname “The Tramp” came from the recurring character he played in many of his silent films, such as 1921's *The Kid*, which starred Jackie Coogan in the title role.

studios in Hollywood along with Twentieth Century Fox, RKO Pictures, Paramount Pictures, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Southern California in the 1920s, however, had only recently become the center of the American film industry. Film production was originally based in and around New York, where Thomas Edison first debuted the kinetoscope in 1893. But in the 1910s, as major filmmakers like D. W. Griffith looked to escape the cost of Edison's patents on camera equipment, this began to change. When Griffith filmed *In Old California* (1910), the first movie ever shot in Hollywood, California, the small town north of Los Angeles was little more than a village. As moviemakers flocked to southern California, not least because of its favorable climate and predictable sunshine, Hollywood swelled with moviemaking activity. By the 1920s, the once-sleepy village was home to a majorly profitable innovative industry in the United States.



## AUTOMOBILES AND AIRPLANES: AMERICANS ON THE MOVE

Cinema was not the only major industry to make great technological strides in this decade. The 1920s opened up new possibilities of mobility for a large percentage of the U.S. population, as automobile manufacturers began to mass produce what had once been a luxury item, and daring aviators both demonstrated and drove advancements in aircraft technology. The most significant innovation of this era was Henry Ford's Model T Ford, which made car ownership available to the average American.

Ford did not invent the automobile—the Duryea brothers in Massachusetts as well as Gottlieb W. Daimler and Karl Friedrich Benz in Germany were early pioneers. By the early twentieth century, hundreds of car manufacturers existed. However, they all made products that were too expensive for most Americans. Ford's innovation lay in his focus on using mass production to manufacture automobiles; he revolutionized industrial work by perfecting the assembly line, which enabled him to lower the Model T's price from \$850 in 1908 to \$300 in 1924, making car ownership a real possibility for a large share of the population. As prices dropped, more and more people could afford to own a car. Soon, people could buy used Model Ts for as little as five dollars, allowing students and others with low incomes to enjoy the freedom and mobility of car ownership. By 1929, there were over twenty-three million automobiles on American roads.



[illegible]

FORD CARS SOLD BY  
**RUSSELL MOTOR CAR CO.**  
2120-2130 CANAL STREET, NEW ORLEANS, LA.  
SEE OUR EXHIBIT BOOTH IN AT SHOW.

The assembly line helped Ford reduce labor costs within the production process by moving the product from one team of workers to the next, each of them completing a step so simple they had to be, in Ford's words, "no smarter than an ox." Ford's reliance on the moving assembly line, scientific management, and time-motion studies added to his emphasis on efficiency over craftsmanship.





*In this image from a 1928 Literary Digest interview with Henry Ford, workers on an assembly line produce new models of Ford automobiles.*

Ford's emphasis on cheap mass production brought both benefits and disadvantages to its workers. Ford would not allow his workers to unionize, and the boring, repetitive nature of the assembly line work generated a high turnover rate. However, he doubled workers' pay to five dollars a day and standardized the workday to eight hours (a reduction from the norm). Ford's assembly line also offered greater equality than most opportunities of the time, as he paid white and black workers equally. Seeking these wages, many African Americans from the South moved to Detroit and other large northern cities to work in factories.

Ford even bought a plot of land in the Amazonian jungle twice the size of Delaware to build a factory town he called Fordlandia. Workers there rejected his midwestern Puritanism even more than his factory discipline, and the project ended in an epic failure. In the United States, however, Ford shaped the nation's mode of industrialism—one that relied on paying decent wages so that workers could afford to be the consumers of their own products.



The automobile changed the face of America, both economically and socially. Industries like glass, steel, and rubber processing expanded to keep up with auto production. The oil industry in California, Oklahoma, and Texas expanded, as Americans' reliance on oil increased and the nation transitioned from a coal-based economy to one driven by petroleum. The need for public roadways required local and state governments to fund a dramatic expansion of infrastructure, which permitted motels and restaurants to spring up and offer new services to millions of newly mobile Americans with cash to spend. With this new infrastructure, new shopping and living patterns emerged, and streetcar suburbs gave way to automobile suburbs as private automobile traffic on public roads began to replace mass transit on trains and trolleys.

The 1920s not only witnessed a transformation in ground transportation but also major changes in air travel. By the mid-1920s, men—as well as some pioneering women like the African American stunt pilot Bessie Coleman—had been flying for two decades. But there remained doubts about the suitability of airplanes for long-distance travel. Orville Wright, one of the pioneers of airplane technology in the United States, once famously declared, “No flying machine will ever fly from New York to Paris [because] no known motor can run at the requisite speed for four days without stopping.” However, in 1927, this skepticism was finally put to rest when Charles Lindbergh became the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean, flying from New York to Paris in thirty-three hours.





(a)



(b)

Aviator Charles Lindbergh stands in front of the *Spirit of St. Louis* (a), the plane in which he flew from New York to Paris, France, in 1927. Because American flight schools barred black students, stunt pilot Bessie Coleman (b), the daughter of Texas sharecroppers, taught herself French to earn her pilot's license overseas.

Lindbergh's flight made him an international hero: the best-known American in the world. On his return, Americans greeted him with a ticker-tape parade—a celebration in which shredded paper thrown from surrounding buildings creates a festive, flurry effect. His flight, which he completed in the monoplane *Spirit of St. Louis*, seemed like a triumph of individualism in modern mass society and exemplified Americans' ability to conquer the air with new technology. Following his success, the small airline industry began to blossom, fully coming into its own in the 1930s, as companies like Boeing and Ford developed airplanes designed specifically for passenger air transport. As technologies in engine and passenger compartment design improved, air travel became more popular. In 1934, the number of U.S. domestic air passengers was just over 450,000 annually. By the end of the decade, that number had increased to nearly two million.



promised to give women—who continued to have primary responsibility for housework—more opportunities to step out of the home and expand their horizons. Ironically, however, these labor-saving devices tended to increase the workload for women by raising the standards of domestic work. With the aid of these tools, women ended up cleaning more frequently, washing more often, and cooking more elaborate meals rather than gaining spare time.

Despite the fact that the promise of more leisure time went largely unfulfilled, the lure of technology as the gateway to a more relaxed lifestyle endured. This enduring dream was a testament to the influence of another growing industry: advertising. The mass consumption of cars, household appliances, ready-to-wear clothing, and processed foods depended heavily on the work of advertisers. Magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Saturday*

[illegible]

This advertisement for Palmolive soap, which appeared in *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1922, claimed that the soap's "moderate price is due to popularity, to the enormous demand which keeps Palmolive factories working day and night" and so "the old-time luxury of the few may now be enjoyed the world over."



*Evening Post* became vehicles to connect advertisers with middle-class consumers. Colorful and occasionally provocative print advertisements decorated the pages of these publications and became a staple in American popular culture.

The form of the advertisements, however, was not new. These colorful print ads were merely the modern incarnations of an advertising strategy that went back to the nineteenth century. The new medium for advertisers in the 1920s, the one that would reach out to consumers in radically new and innovative ways, was radio.

## THE POWER OF RADIO AND THE WORLD OF SPORTS

After being introduced during World War I, radios became a common feature in American homes of the 1920s. Hundreds of radio stations popped up over the decade. These stations developed and broadcasted news, serial stories, and political speeches. Much like print media, advertising space was interspersed with entertainment. Yet, unlike magazines and newspapers, advertisers did not have to depend on the active participation of consumers: Advertisers could reach out to anyone within listening distance of the radio. On the other hand, their broader audience meant that they had to be more conservative and careful not to offend anyone.

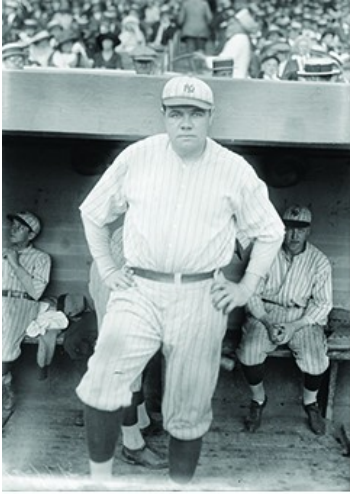
Listen to a recording of a [broadcast](#) of the “WLS Showboat: “The Floating Palace of Wonder,” a variety show from WLS Chicago, a radio station run by Sears Roebuck and Co. What does the clip tell you about the entertainment of the 1920s?



The power of radio further sped up the processes of nationalization and homogenization that were previously begun with the wide distribution of newspapers made possible by railroads and telegraphs. Far more effectively than these print media, however, radio created and pumped out American culture onto the airwaves and into the homes of families around the country. Syndicated radio programs like *Amos 'n' Andy*, which began in the late 1920s, entertained listeners around the country—in the case of the popular *Amos 'n' Andy*, it did so with racial stereotypes about African Americans familiar from minstrel shows of the previous century. No longer were small corners of the country separated by their access to information. With the radio, Americans from coast to coast could listen to exactly the same programming. This had the effect of smoothing out regional differences in dialect, language, music, and even consumer taste.

Radio also transformed how Americans enjoyed sports. The introduction of play-by-play descriptions of sporting events broadcast over the radio brought sports entertainment right into the homes of millions. Radio also helped to popularize sports figures and their accomplishments. Jim Thorpe, who grew up in the Sac and Fox Nation in Oklahoma, was known as one of the best athletes in the world: He medaled in the 1912 Olympic Games, played Major League Baseball, and was one of the founding members of the National Football League. Other sports superstars were soon household names. In 1926, Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel. Helen Wills dominated women's tennis, winning Wimbledon eight times in the late 1920s, whereas "Big Bill" Tilden won the national singles title every year from 1920 to 1925. In football, Harold "Red" Grange played for the University of Illinois, averaging over ten yards per carry during his college career. The biggest star of all was the "Sultan of Swat," Babe Ruth, who became America's first baseball hero. He changed the game of baseball from a low-scoring one dominated by pitchers to one where his hitting became famous. By 1923, most pitchers intentionally walked him. In 1924, he hit sixty homeruns.





(a)



(b)

Babe Ruth (a) led the New York Yankees to four World Series championships. In this 1921 photograph, he stands outside of the New York Yankees dugout. Helen Wills (b) won a total of thirty-one Grand Slam titles in her career, including eight singles titles at Wimbledon from 1927 to 1938. (credit a: modification of work by Library of Congress)

## Section Summary

For many middle-class Americans, the 1920s was a decade of unprecedented prosperity. Rising earnings generated more disposable income for the consumption of entertainment, leisure, and consumer goods. This new wealth coincided with and fueled technological



innovations, resulting in the booming popularity of entertainments like movies, sports, and radio programs. Henry Ford's advances in assembly-line efficiency created a truly affordable automobile, making car ownership a possibility for many Americans. Advertising became as big an industry as the manufactured goods that advertisers represented, and many families relied on new forms of credit to increase their consumption levels and strive for a new American standard of living.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1034>

### *Review Question*

1. How did Henry Ford transform the automobile industry?

### *Review Question*

1. Henry Ford revolutionized the automobile industry by making the car affordable to the average person. In order to accomplish this, he refused to allow workers to unionize, instituted an eight-hour workday, raised workers' wages, promoted equal pay for black and



white workers and for women; and used assembly lines to facilitate production. The automobile thus became a symbol of middle-class life, rather than a luxury good available only to the wealthy.

## *Glossary*

**Hollywood** a small town north of Los Angeles, California, whose reliable sunshine and cheaper production costs attracted filmmakers and producers starting in the 1910s; by the 1920s, Hollywood was the center of American movie production with five movie studios dominating the industry

**Model T** the first car produced by the Ford Motor Company that took advantage of the economies of scale provided by assembly-line production and was therefore affordable to a large segment of the population

**moving assembly line** a manufacturing process that allowed workers to stay in one place as the work came to them



# 119. Transformation and Backlash

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define nativism and analyze the ways in which it affected the politics and society of the 1920s
- Describe the conflict between urban Americans and rural fundamentalists
- Explain the issues in question in the Scopes trial

While prosperous, middle-class Americans found much to celebrate about the new era of leisure and consumption, many Americans—often those in rural areas—disagreed on the meaning of a “good life” and how to achieve it. They reacted to the rapid social changes of modern urban society with a vigorous defense of religious values and a fearful rejection of cultural diversity and equality.

## NATIVISM

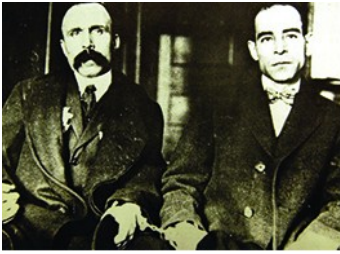
Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, immigration into the United States rocketed to never-before-seen heights. Many of these new immigrants were coming from eastern and southern



Europe and, for many English-speaking, native-born Americans of northern European descent, the growing diversity of new languages, customs, and religions triggered anxiety and racial animosity. In reaction, some embraced nativism, prizing white Americans with older family trees over more recent immigrants, and rejecting outside influences in favor of their own local customs. Nativists also stoked a sense of fear over the perceived foreign threat, pointing to the anarchist assassinations of the Spanish prime minister in 1897, the Italian king in 1900, and even President William McKinley in 1901 as proof. Following the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in November 1917, the sense of an inevitable foreign or communist threat only grew among those already predisposed to distrust immigrants.

The sense of fear and anxiety over the rising tide of immigration came to a head with the trial of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Sacco and Vanzetti were Italian immigrants who were accused of being part of a robbery and murder in Braintree, Massachusetts, in 1920. There was no direct evidence linking them to the crime, but (in addition to being immigrants) both men were anarchists who favored the destruction of the American market-based, capitalistic society through violence. At their trial, the district attorney emphasized Sacco and Vanzetti's radical views, and the jury found them guilty on July 14, 1921. Despite subsequent motions and appeals based on ballistics testing, recanted testimony, and an ex-convict's confession, both men were executed on August 23, 1927.





(a)



(b)

Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco (a) sit in handcuffs at Dedham Superior Court in Massachusetts in 1923. After the verdict in 1921, protesters demonstrated (b) in London, England, hoping to save Sacco and Vanzetti from execution.

Opinions on the trial and judgment tended to divide along nativist-immigrant lines, with immigrants supporting the innocence of the condemned pair. The verdict sparked protests from Italian and other immigrant groups, as well as from noted intellectuals such as writer John Dos Passos, satirist Dorothy Parker, and famed physicist Albert Einstein. Muckraker Upton Sinclair based his indictment of the American justice system, the “documentary novel” *Boston*, on Sacco and Vanzetti’s trial, which he considered a gross miscarriage of justice. As the execution neared, the radical labor union Industrial Workers of the World called for a three-day nationwide walkout, leading to the Great Colorado Coal Strike of 1927. Protests occurred worldwide from Tokyo to Buenos Aires to London.

One of the most articulate critics of the trial was then-Harvard Law School professor Felix Frankfurter, who would go on to be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939. In 1927, six years after the trial, he wrote in *The Atlantic*, “By systematic exploitation of the defendants’ alien blood, their imperfect knowledge of English, their unpopular social views, and their opposition to the war, the District Attorney invoked against them a riot of political passion and patriotic sentiment; and the



trial judge connived at—one had almost written, cooperated in—the process.”

To “preserve the ideal of American homogeneity,” the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 introduced numerical limits on European immigration for the first time in U.S. history. These limits were based on a quota system that restricted annual immigration from any given country to 3 percent of the residents from that same country as counted in the 1910 census. The National Origins Act of 1924 went even further, lowering the level to 2 percent of the 1890 census, significantly reducing the share of eligible southern and eastern Europeans, since they had only begun to arrive in the United States in large numbers in the 1890s. Although New York congressmen Fiorello LaGuardia and Emanuel Celler spoke out against the act, there was minimal opposition in Congress, and both labor unions and the Ku Klux Klan supported the bill. When President Coolidge signed it into law, he declared, “America must be kept American.”

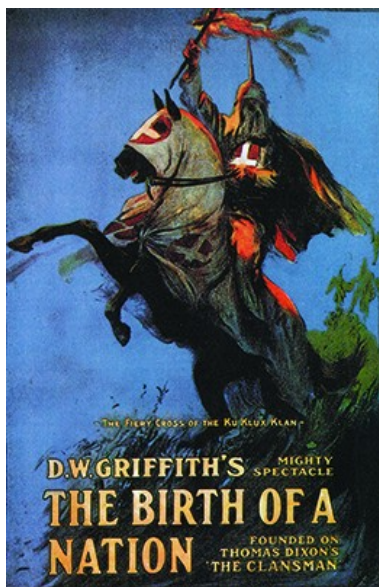
The Library of Congress’s [immigration collection](#) contains information on different immigrant groups, the timelines of their immigration, maps of their settlement routes, and the reasons they came. Click the images on the left navigation bar to learn about each group.



# THE KU KLUX KLAN

The concern that a white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon United States was under siege by throngs of undesirables was not exclusively directed at foreigners. The sense that the country was also facing a threat from within its borders and its own citizenry was also prevalent. This sense was clearly reflected in the popularity of the 1915 motion picture, D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. Based on *The Clansman*, a 1915 novel by Thomas Dixon, the film offers a racist, white-centric view of the Reconstruction Era. The film depicts noble white southerners made helpless by northern carpetbaggers who

empower freed slaves to abuse white men and violate women. The heroes of the film were the Ku Klux Klan, who saved the whites, the South, and the nation. While the film was reviled by many African Americans and the NAACP for its historical inaccuracies and its maligning of freed slaves, it was celebrated by many whites who accepted the historical revisionism as an accurate portrayal of Reconstruction Era oppression. After viewing the film, President Wilson reportedly remarked, "It is like writing history with lightning, and my only regret is that it is all so terribly true."



*A theatrical release poster for *The Birth of a Nation*, in 1915. The film glorified the role of the Ku Klux Klan in quelling the threat of black power during Reconstruction.*



## Artistic License and the Censor

In a letter dated April 17, 1915, Mary Childs Nerney, a secretary of the NAACP, wrote to a local censor to request that certain scenes be cut from *The Birth of a Nation*.

My dear Mr. Packard:

I am utterly disgusted with the situation in regard to "The Birth of a Nation." As you will read in the next number of the *Crisis*, we have fought it at every possible point. In spite of the promise of the Mayor [of Chicago] to cut out the two objectionable scenes in the second part, which show a white girl committing suicide to escape from a Negro pursuer, and a mulatto politician trying to force marriage upon the daughter of his white benefactor, these two scenes still form the motif of the really unimportant incidents, of which I enclose a list. I have seen the thing four times and am positive that nothing more will be done about it. Jane Addams saw it when it was in its worst form in New York. I know of no one else from Chicago who saw it. I enclose Miss Addams's opinion.

When we took the thing before the Police Magistrate he told us that he could do nothing about it unless it [led] to a breach of the peace. Some kind of demonstration began in the Liberty Theatre Wednesday night but the colored people took absolutely no part in it, and the only man arrested was a white man. This, of course, is exactly what Littleton, counsel for the producer, Griffith, held in the Magistrates' Court when we have our hearing and claimed that it might lead to a breach of the peace.

Frankly, I do not think you can do one single thing. It has been to me a most liberal education and I purposely am through. The harm it is doing the colored people cannot be estimated. I hear echoes of it wherever I go and have no doubt that this was in the mind of the people who are



producing it. Their profits here are something like \$14,000 a day and their expenses about \$400. I have ceased to worry about it, and if I seem disinterested, kindly remember that we have put six weeks of constant effort of this thing and have gotten nowhere.

Sincerely yours,

—Mary Childs Nerney, Secretary, NAACP

On what grounds does Nerney request censorship? What efforts to get the movie shut down did she describe?

The Ku Klux Klan, which had been dormant since the end of Reconstruction in 1877, experienced a resurgence of attention following the popularity of the film. Just months after the film's release, a second incarnation of the Klan was established at Stone Mountain, Georgia, under the leadership of William Simmons. This new Klan now publicly eschewed violence and



*In this 1921 image from the Denver News, three Ku Klux Klan members (two women and one man) stand in front of a burning cross.*

received mainstream support. Its embrace of Protestantism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Semitism, and its appeals for stricter immigration policies, gained the group a level of acceptance by nativists with similar prejudices. The group was not merely a male organization: The ranks of the Klan also included many women, with chapters of its women's auxiliary in locations across the country. These women's groups were active in a number of reform-minded activities, such as advocating for prohibition and the distribution of Bibles at public schools. But they also participated in more expressly Klan activities like burning crosses and the public denunciation of Catholics and Jews. By 1924, this Second Ku Klux Klan had six million members in the South, West, and, particularly, the Midwest—more



Americans than there were in the nation's labor unions at the time. While the organization publicly abstained from violence, its members continued to employ intimidation, violence, and terrorism against its victims, particularly in the South.

The Klan's newfound popularity proved to be fairly short-lived. Several states effectively combatted the power and influence of the Klan through anti-masking legislation, that is, laws that barred the wearing of masks publicly. As the organization faced a series of public scandals, such as when the Grand Dragon of Indiana was convicted of murdering a white schoolteacher, prominent citizens became less likely to openly express their support for the group without a shield of anonymity. More importantly, influential people and citizen groups explicitly condemned the Klan. Reinhold Niebuhr, a popular Protestant minister and conservative intellectual in Detroit, admonished the group for its ostensibly Protestant zealotry and anti-Catholicism. Jewish organizations, especially the Anti-Defamation League, which had been founded just a couple of years before the reemergence of the Klan, amplified Jewish discontent at being the focus of Klan attention. And the NAACP, which had actively sought to ban the film *The Birth of a Nation*, worked to lobby congress and educate the public on lynchings. Ultimately, however, it was the Great Depression that put an end to the Klan. As dues-paying members dwindled, the Klan lost its organizational power and sunk into irrelevance until the 1950s.

## FAITH, FUNDAMENTALISM, AND SCIENCE

The sense of degeneration that the Klan and anxiety over mass immigration prompted in the minds of many Americans was in part a response to the process of postwar urbanization. Cities were swiftly becoming centers of opportunity, but the growth of cities,



especially the growth of immigrant populations in those cities, sharpened rural discontent over the perception of rapid cultural change. As more of the population flocked to cities for jobs and quality of life, many left behind in rural areas felt that their way of life was being threatened. To rural Americans, the ways of the city seemed sinful and profligate. Urbanites, for their part, viewed rural Americans as hayseeds who were hopelessly behind the times.

In this urban/rural conflict, Tennessee lawmakers drew a battle line over the issue of evolution and its contradiction of the accepted, biblical explanation of history. Charles Darwin had first published his theory of natural selection in 1859, and by the 1920s, many standard textbooks contained information about Darwin's theory of evolution. Fundamentalist Protestants targeted evolution as representative of all that was wrong with urban society. Tennessee's Butler Act made it illegal "to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals."

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) hoped to challenge the Butler Act as an infringement of the freedom of speech. As a defendant, the ACLU enlisted teacher and coach John Scopes, who suggested that he may have taught evolution while substituting for an ill biology teacher. Town leaders in Dayton, Tennessee, for their part, sensed an opportunity to promote their town, which had lost more than one-third of its population, and welcomed the ACLU to stage a test case against the Butler Act. The ACLU and the town got their wish as the Scopes Monkey Trial, as the newspapers publicized it, quickly turned into a carnival that captured the attention of the country and epitomized the nation's urban/rural divide.



Fundamentalist champion William Jennings Bryan argued the case for the prosecution. Bryan was a three-time presidential candidate and Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State until 1915, at which point he began preaching across the country about the spread of secularism and the declining role of religion in education. He was known for offering \$100 to anyone who would admit to

being descended from an ape. Clarence Darrow, a prominent lawyer and outspoken agnostic, led the defense team. His statement that, "Scopes isn't on trial, civilization is on trial. No man's belief will be safe if they win," struck a chord in society.

The outcome of the trial, in which Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100, was never really in question, as Scopes himself had confessed to violating the law. Nevertheless, the trial itself proved to be high drama. The drama only escalated when Darrow made the unusual choice of calling Bryan as an expert witness on the Bible. Knowing of Bryan's convictions of a literal interpretation of the Bible, Darrow peppered him with a series of questions designed to ridicule such a belief. The result was that those who approved of the teaching of evolution saw Bryan as foolish, whereas many rural Americans considered the cross-examination an attack on the Bible and their faith.



*During the Scopes Monkey Trial, supporters of the Butler Act read literature at the headquarters of the Anti-Evolution League in Dayton, Tennessee.*

## H. L. Mencken on the Scopes Trial

H. L. Mencken covered the trial for Baltimore's *The Evening Sun*. One of most popular writers of social satire of his age, Mencken was



very critical of the South, the trial, and especially Bryan. He coined the terms “monkey trial” and “Bible belt.” In the excerpt below, Mencken reflects on the trial’s outcome and its overall importance for the United States.

The Scopes trial, from the start, has been carried on in a manner exactly fitted to the anti- evolution law and the simian imbecility under it. There hasn’t been the slightest pretense to decorum. The rustic judge, a candidate for re-election, has postured the yokels like a clown in a ten-cent side show, and almost every word he has uttered has been an undisguised appeal to their prejudices and superstitions. The chief prosecuting attorney, beginning like a competent lawyer and a man of self-respect, ended like a convert at a Billy Sunday revival. It fell to him, finally, to make a clear and astounding statement of theory of justice prevailing under fundamentalism. What he said, in brief, was that a man accused of infidelity had no rights whatever under Tennessee law. . . .

Darrow has lost this case. It was lost long before he came to Dayton. But it seems to me that he has nevertheless performed a great public service by fighting it to a finish and in a perfectly serious way. Let no one mistake it for comedy, farcical though it may be in all its details. It serves notice on the country that Neanderthal man is organizing in these forlorn backwaters of the land, led by a fanatic, rid of sense and devoid of conscience. Tennessee, challenging him too timorously and too late, now sees its courts converted into camp meetings and its Bill of Rights made a mock of by its sworn officers of the law. There are other States that had better look to their arsenals before the Hun is at their gates.

—H. L. Mencken, *The Evening Sun*, July 18, 1925

How does Mencken characterize Judge Raulston? About what threat is Mencken warning America?



Indicative of the revival of Protestant fundamentalism and the rejection of evolution among rural and white Americans was the rise of Billy Sunday. As a young man, Sunday had gained fame as a baseball player with exceptional skill and speed. Later, he found even more celebrity as the nation's most revered evangelist, drawing huge crowds at camp meetings around the country. He was one of the most influential evangelists of the time and had access to some of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the country. Sunday rallied many Americans around “old-time” fundamentalist religion and garnered support for prohibition. Recognizing Sunday's popular appeal, Bryan attempted to bring him to Dayton for the Scopes trial, although Sunday politely refused.



(a)



(b)

Billy Sunday, one of the most influential evangelists of his day, leaves the White House on February 20, 1922 (a). Aimee Semple McPherson, shown here preaching at the Angelus Temple in 1923 (b), founded the Foursquare Church. (credit a: modification of work by Library of Congress)



Even more spectacular than the rise of Billy Sunday was the popularity of Aimee Semple McPherson, a Canadian Pentecostal preacher whose Foursquare Church in Los Angeles catered to the large community of midwestern transplants and newcomers to California. Although her message promoted the fundamental truths of the Bible, her style was anything but old fashioned. Dressed in tight-fitting clothes and wearing makeup, she held radio-broadcast services in large venues that resembled concert halls and staged spectacular faith-healing performances. Blending Hollywood style and modern technology with a message of fundamentalist Christianity, McPherson exemplified the contradictions of the decade well before public revelations about her scandalous love affair cost her much of her status and following.

## Section Summary

The old and the new came into sharp conflict in the 1920s. In many cases, this divide was geographic as well as philosophical; city dwellers tended to embrace the cultural changes of the era, whereas those who lived in rural towns clung to traditional norms. The Sacco and Vanzetti trial in Massachusetts, as well as the Scopes trial in Tennessee, revealed many Americans' fears and suspicions about immigrants, radical politics, and the ways in which new scientific theories might challenge traditional Christian beliefs. Some reacted more zealously than others, leading to the inception of



nativist and fundamentalist philosophies, and the rise of terror groups such as the Second Ku Klux Klan.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1035>

### *Review Question*

1. What was the platform of the Second Ku Klux Klan, and in what activities did they engage to promote it?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The reincarnated Ku Klux Klan championed an anti-black, anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic, and anti-Jewish philosophy, and promoted the spread of Protestant beliefs. The Klan publicly denounced the groups they despised and continued to engage in activities such as cross-burning, violence, and intimidation, despite their public commitment to nonviolent tactics. Women's groups within the Klan also participated in various types of reform, such as advocating the prohibition of alcohol and distributing Bibles in public schools.



## *Glossary*

**nativism** the rejection of outside influences in favor of local or native customs

**Scopes Monkey Trial** the 1925 trial of John Scopes for teaching evolution in a public school; the trial highlighted the conflict between rural traditionalists and modern urbanites

**Second Ku Klux Klan** unlike the secret terror group of the Reconstruction Era, the Second Ku Klux Klan was a nationwide movement that expressed racism, nativism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Catholicism



## 120. A New Generation

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the factors that shaped the new morality and the changing role of women in the United States during the 1920s
- Describe the “new Negro” and the influence of the Harlem Renaissance
- Analyze the effects of prohibition on American society and culture
- Describe the character and main authors of the Lost Generation

The 1920s was a time of dramatic change in the United States. Many young people, especially those living in big cities, embraced a new morality that was much more permissive than that of previous generations. They listened to jazz music, especially in the nightclubs of Harlem. Although prohibition outlawed alcohol, criminal bootlegging and importing businesses thrived. The decade was not a pleasure cruise for everyone, however; in the wake of the Great War, many were left awaiting the promise of a new generation.



## A NEW MORALITY

Many Americans were disillusioned in the post-World War I era, and their reactions took many forms. Rebellious American youth, in particular, adjusted to the changes by embracing a new morality that was far more permissive than the social mores of their parents. Many young women of the era shed their mother's morality and adopted the dress and mannerisms of a flapper, the Jazz Age female stereotype, seeking the endless party. Flappers wore shorter skirts, shorter hair, and more makeup, and they drank and smoked with the boys. Flappers' dresses

emphasized straight lines from the shoulders to the knees, minimizing breasts and curves while highlighting legs and ankles. The male equivalent of a flapper was a "sheik," although that term has not remained as strong in the American vernacular. At the time, however, many of these fads became a type of conformity, especially among college-aged youths, with the signature bob haircut of the flapper becoming almost universal—in both the United States and overseas.

As men and women pushed social and cultural boundaries in the Jazz Age, sexual mores changed and social customs grew more permissive. "Petting parties" or "necking parties" became the rage on college campuses. Psychologist Sigmund Freud and British "sexologist" Havelock Ellis emphasized that sex was a natural and



Beginning  
**Merton of the Movies**—By Harry Leon Wilson

*The flapper look, seen here in "Flapper" by Ellen Pyle for the cover of The Saturday Evening Post in February 1922, was a national craze in American cities during the 1920s.*



pleasurable part of the human experience. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, launched an information campaign on birth control to give women a choice in the realm in which suffrage had changed little—the family. The popularization of contraception and the private space that the automobile offered to teenagers and unwed couples also contributed to changes in sexual behavior.

Flappers and sheiks also took their cues from the high-flying romances they saw on movie screens and confessions in movie magazines of immorality on movie sets. Movie posters promised: “Brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp.” And “neckers, petters, white kisses, red kisses, pleasure-mad daughters, sensation-craving mothers . . . the truth: bold, naked, sensational.”

Could you go “on a toot” with flappers and sheiks?  
Improve your chances with this [collection](#) of Jazz Age  
slang.

New dances and new music—especially jazz—also characterized the Jazz Age. Born out of the African American community, jazz was a uniquely American music. The innovative sound emerged from a number of different communities and from a number of different musical traditions such as blues and ragtime. By the 1920s, jazz had spread from African American clubs in New Orleans and Chicago to



*Black jazz bands such as the King and Carter Jazzing Orchestra, photographed in 1921 by Robert Runyon, were immensely popular among white urbanites in the 1920s.*



reach greater popularity in New York and abroad. One New York jazz establishment, the Cotton Club, became particularly famous and attracted large audiences of hip, young, and white flappers and sheiks to see black entertainers play jazz.

## THE “NEW WOMAN”

The Jazz Age and the proliferation of the flapper lifestyle of the 1920s should not be seen merely as the product of postwar disillusionment and newfound prosperity. Rather, the search for new styles of dress and new forms of entertainment like jazz was part of a larger women's rights movement. The early 1920s, especially with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteeing full voting rights to women, was a period that witnessed the expansion of women's political power. The public flaunting of social and sexual norms by flappers represented an attempt to match gains in political equality with gains in the social sphere. Women were increasingly leaving the Victorian era norms of the previous generation behind, as they broadened the concept of women's liberation to include new forms of social expression such as dance, fashion, women's clubs, and forays into college and the professions.

Nor did the struggle for women's rights through the promotion and passage of legislation cease in the 1920s. In 1921, Congress passed the Promotion of the Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy Act, also known as the Sheppard-Towner Act, which earmarked \$1.25 million for well-baby clinics and educational programs, as well as nursing. This funding dramatically reduced the rate of infant mortality. Two years later, in 1923, Alice Paul drafted and promoted an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that promised to end all sex discrimination by guaranteeing that “Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction.”



Yet, ironically, at precisely the time when the Progressive movement was achieving its long-sought-after goals, the movement itself was losing steam and the Progressive Era was coming to a close. As the heat of Progressive politics grew less intense, voter participation from both sexes declined over the course of the 1920s. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, many women believed that they had accomplished their goals and dropped out of the movement. As a result, the proposed ERA stalled (the ERA eventually passed Congress almost fifty years later in 1972, but then failed to win ratification by a sufficient number of states), and, by the end of the 1920s, Congress even allowed funding for the Sheppard-Towner Act to lapse.

The growing lethargy toward women's rights was happening at a time when an increasing number of women were working for wages in the U.S. economy—not only in domestic service, but in retail, healthcare and education, offices, and manufacturing. Beginning in the 1920s, women's participation in the labor force increased steadily. However, most were paid less than men for the same type of work based on the rationale that they did not have to support a family. While the employment of single and unmarried women had largely won social acceptance, married women often suffered the stigma that they were working for pin money—frivolous additional discretionary income.

## THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE AND THE NEW NEGRO

It wasn't only women who found new forms of expression in the 1920s. African Americans were also expanding their horizons and embracing the concept of the "new Negro." The decade witnessed the continued Great Migration of African Americans to the North, with over half a million fleeing the strict Jim Crow laws of the South.



Life in the northern states, as many African Americans discovered, was hardly free of discrimination and segregation. Even without Jim Crow, businesses, property owners, employers, and private citizens typically practiced *de facto* segregation, which could be quite stifling and oppressive. Nonetheless, many southern blacks continued to move north into segregated neighborhoods that were already bursting at the seams, because the North, at the very least, offered two tickets toward black progress: schools and the vote. The black population of New York City doubled during the decade. As a result, Harlem, a neighborhood at the northern end of Manhattan, became a center for Afro-centric art, music, poetry, and politics. Political expression in the Harlem of the 1920s ran the gamut, as some leaders advocated a return to Africa, while others fought for inclusion and integration.

Revived by the wartime migration and fired up by the white violence of the postwar riots, urban blacks developed a strong cultural expression in the 1920s that came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance. In this rediscovery of black culture, African American artists and writers formulated an independent black culture and encouraged racial pride, rejecting any emulation of white American culture. Claude McKay's poem "If We Must Die" called on African Americans to start fighting back in the wake of the Red Summer riots of 1919. Langston Hughes, often nicknamed the "poet laureate"



*The Jamaican-born poet and novelist Claude McKay articulated the new sense of self and urban community of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. Although centered in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, this cultural movement emerged in urban centers throughout the Northeast and Midwest.*



of the movement, invoked sacrifice and the just cause of civil rights in “The Colored Soldier,” while another author of the movement, Zora Neale Hurston, celebrated the life and dialect of rural blacks in a fictional, all-black town in Florida. Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was only published posthumously in 1937.

The new Negro found political expression in a political ideology that celebrated African Americans distinct national identity. This Negro nationalism, as some referred to it, proposed that African Americans had a distinct and separate national heritage that should inspire pride and a sense of community. An early proponent of such nationalism was W. E. B. Du Bois. One of the founders of the NAACP, a brilliant writer and scholar, and the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard, Du Bois openly rejected assumptions of white supremacy. His conception of Negro nationalism encouraged Africans to work together in support of their own interests, promoted the elevation of black literature and cultural expression, and, most famously, embraced the African continent as the true homeland of all ethnic Africans—a concept known as Pan-Africanism.

Taking Negro nationalism to a new level was Marcus Garvey. Like many black Americans, the Jamaican immigrant had become utterly disillusioned with the prospect of overcoming white racism in the United States in the wake of the postwar riots and promoted a “Back to Africa” movement. To return African Americans to a presumably more welcoming home in Africa, Garvey founded the *Black Star Steamship Line*. He also started the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which attracted thousands of primarily lower-income working people. UNIA members wore colorful uniforms and promoted the doctrine of a “negritude” that reversed the color hierarchy of white supremacy, prizing blackness and identifying light skin as a mark of inferiority. Intellectual leaders like Du Bois, whose lighter skin put him low on Garvey’s social order, considered the UNIA leader a charlatan. Garvey was eventually imprisoned for mail fraud and then deported, but his legacy set the stage for Malcolm X and the Black Power movement of the 1960s.



# PROHIBITION

At precisely the same time that African Americans and women were experimenting with new forms of social expression, the country as a whole was undergoing a process of austere and dramatic social reform in the form of alcohol prohibition. After decades of organizing to reduce or end the consumption of alcohol in the United States, temperance groups and the Anti-Saloon League finally succeeded in pushing through the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, which banned the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors. The law proved difficult to enforce, as illegal alcohol soon poured in from Canada and the Caribbean, and rural Americans resorted to home-brewed “moonshine.” The result was an eroding of respect for law and order, as many people continued to drink illegal liquor. Rather than bringing about an age of sobriety, as Progressive reformers had hoped, it gave rise to a new subculture that included illegal importers, interstate smuggling (or bootlegging), clandestine saloons referred to as “speakeasies,” hipflasks, cocktail parties, and the organized crime of trafficking liquor.



(a)



(b)

*While forces of law and order confiscated and discarded alcohol when they found it (a), consumers found ingenious ways of hiding liquor during prohibition, such as this cane that served as a flask (b).*



Prohibition also revealed deep political divisions in the nation. The Democratic Party found itself deeply divided between urban, northern “wets” who hated the idea of abstinence, and rural, southern “dries” who favored the amendment. This divided the party and opened the door for the Republican Party to gain ascendancy in the 1920s. All politicians, including Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, Robert La Follette, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, equivocated in their support for the law. Publicly, they catered to the Anti-Saloon League; however, they failed to provide funding for enforcement.

Prohibition sparked a rise in organized crime. “Scarface” Al Capone ran an extensive bootlegging and criminal operation known as the Chicago Outfit or Chicago mafia. By 1927, Capone’s organization included a number of illegal activities including bootlegging, prostitution, gambling, loan sharking, and



*Al Capone, pictured here in his U.S. Department of Justice mug shot, was convicted of tax fraud and sent to prison in 1931.*

even murder. His operation was earning him more than \$100 million annually, and many local police were on his payroll. Although he did not have a monopoly on crime, his organizational structure was better than many other criminals of his era. His liquor trafficking business and his Chicago soup kitchens during the Great Depression led some Americans to liken Capone to a modern-day Robin Hood. Still, Capone was eventually imprisoned for eleven years for tax evasion, including a stint in California’s notorious Alcatraz prison.



# THE LOST GENERATION

As the country struggled with the effects and side-effects of prohibition, many young intellectuals endeavored to come to grips with a lingering sense of disillusionment. World War I, fundamentalism, and the Red Scare—a pervasive American fear of Communist infiltrators prompted by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution—all left their mark on these intellectuals. Known as the Lost Generation, writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, Edith Wharton, and John Dos Passos expressed their hopelessness and despair by skewering the middle class in their work. They felt alienated from society, so they tried to escape (some literally) to criticize it. Many lived an expatriate life in Paris for the decade, although others went to Rome or Berlin.

The Lost Generation writer that best exemplifies the mood of the 1920s was F. Scott Fitzgerald, now considered one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. His debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*, describes a generation of youth “grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faith in man shaken.” *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, exposed the doom that always follows the fun, fast-lived life. Fitzgerald depicted the modern millionaire Jay Gatsby living a profligate life: unscrupulous, coarse, and in love with another man’s wife. Both Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda lived this life as well, squandering the money he made from his writing.

F. Scott Fitzgerald on the 1920s

In the 1920s, Fitzgerald was one of the most celebrated authors of his day, publishing *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, and *The Great Gatsby* in quick succession. However, his profligate lifestyle with his wife Zelda sapped their funds, and Fitzgerald had to struggle to maintain their lavish lifestyle. Below is an excerpt from “The Crack-Up,” a personal essay by Fitzgerald originally published in *Esquire* in which he describes his “good life” during the 1920s.



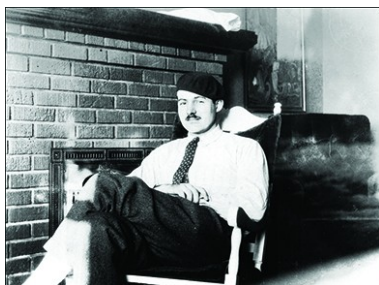
It seemed a romantic business to be a successful literary man—you were not ever going to be as famous as a movie star but what note you had was probably longer-lived; you were never going to have the power of a man of strong political or religious convictions but you were certainly more independent. Of course within the practice of your trade you were forever unsatisfied—but I, for one, would not have chosen any other.

As the Twenties passed, with my own twenties marching a little ahead of them, my two juvenile regrets—at not being big enough (or good enough) to play football in college, and at not getting overseas during the war—resolved themselves into childish waking dreams of imaginary heroism that were good enough to go to sleep on in restless nights. The big problems of life seemed to solve themselves, and if the business of fixing them was difficult, it made one too tired to think of more general problems.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up,” 1936

How does Fitzgerald describe his life in the 1920s? How did his interpretation reflect the reality of the decade?

Equally idiosyncratic and disillusioned was writer Ernest Hemingway. He lived a peripatetic and adventurous lifestyle in Europe, Cuba, and Africa, working as an ambulance driver in Italy during World War I and traveling to Spain in the 1930s to cover the civil war there. His experiences of war and tragedy stuck with him, emerging in colorful



Ernest Hemingway was one of the most prominent members of the Lost Generation who went to live as expatriates in Europe during the 1920s.

scenes in his novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). In 1952, his novella, *The*



*Old Man and the Sea*, won the Pulitzer Prize. Two years later, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature for this book and his overall influence on contemporary style.

Listen to an [audio](#) of Hemingway's Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

Not all Lost Generation writers were like Fitzgerald or Hemingway. The writing of Sinclair Lewis, rather than expressing a defined disillusionment, was more influenced by the Progressivism of the previous generation. In *Babbitt* (1922), he examined the “sheep following the herd” mentality that conformity promoted. He satirized American middle-class life as pleasure seeking and mindless. Similarly, writer Edith Wharton celebrated life in old New York, a vanished society, in *The Age of Innocence*, in 1920. Wharton came from a very wealthy, socialite family in New York, where she was educated by tutors and never attended college. She lived for many years in Europe; during the Great War, she worked in Paris helping women establish businesses.

## Section Summary

Different groups reacted to the upheavals of the 1920s in different ways. Some people, especially young urbanites, embraced the new amusements and social venues of the decade. Women found new opportunities



for professional and political advancement, as well as new models of sexual liberation; however, the women's rights movement began to wane with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. For black artists of the Harlem Renaissance, the decade was marked less by leisure and consumption than by creativity and purpose. African American leaders like Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois responded to the entrenched racism of the time with different campaigns for civil rights and black empowerment. Others, like the writers of the Lost Generation, reveled in exposing the hypocrisies and shallowness of mainstream middle-class culture. Meanwhile, the passage of prohibition served to increase the illegal production of alcohol and led to a rise in organized crime.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1036>

### *Review Questions*

1. Why did the prohibition amendment fail after its adoption in 1919?
2. What was the Harlem Renaissance, and who were some of the most famous participants?



## *Answers to Review Questions*

1. The prohibition amendment failed due to its infeasibility. It lacked both public support and funds for its enforcement. It also lessened Americans' respect for law and order, and sparked a rise in unlawful activities, such as illegal alcohol production and organized crime.
2. The Harlem Renaissance was a rediscovery and celebration of black culture and race pride. Within this context, black literature and art flourished. Writers such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston created fiction and poetry that spoke directly to the experiences of black Americans. Meanwhile, black scholars and political leaders, such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, created new social and political ideologies and defined a distinct national identity for African Americans.

## *Glossary*

**bootlegging** a nineteenth-century term for the illegal transport of alcoholic beverages that became popular during prohibition

**expatriate** someone who lives outside of their home country



**flapper** a young, modern woman who embraced the new morality and fashions of the Jazz Age

**Lost Generation** a group of writers who came of age during World War I and expressed their disillusionment with the era

**Negro nationalism** the notion that African Americans had a distinct and separate national heritage that should inspire pride and a sense of community

**new morality** the more permissive mores adopted by many young people in the 1920s



# 121. Republican Ascendancy: Politics in the 1920s

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss Warren G. Harding's strengths and weaknesses as president
- Explain how Calvin Coolidge was able to defeat the Democratic Party
- Explain what Calvin Coolidge meant by "the business of America is business"

The election of 1920 saw the weakening of the Democratic Party. The death of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson's ill health meant the passing of a generation of Progressive leaders. The waning of the Red Scare took with it the last vestiges of Progressive zeal, and Wilson's support of the League of Nations turned Irish and German immigrants against the Democrats. Americans were tired of reform, tired of witch hunts, and were more than ready for a return to "normalcy."

Above all, the 1920s signaled a return to a pro-business government—almost a return to the *laissez-faire* politics of the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century. Calvin Coolidge's statement that "the chief business of the American people is business," often rendered as "the business of America is business" became the dominant attitude.



## WARREN HARDING AND THE RETURN TO NORMALCY

In the election of 1920, professional Republicans were eager to nominate a man whom they could manage and control. Warren G. Harding, a senator from Ohio, represented just such a man. Before his nomination, Harding stated, “America’s present need is not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration.” Harding was genial and affable, but not everyone appreciated his speeches; Democratic presidential-hopeful William Gibbs McAdoo described Harding’s speeches as “an army of pompous phrases moving across the landscape in search of an idea.” H. L. Mencken, the great social critic of the 1920s, wrote of Harding’s speaking, “It drags itself out of the dark abysm of pish, and crawls insanelly up to the top-most pinnacle of posh. It is rumble and bumble. It is flap and doodle. It is balder and dash.”

Harding was known for enjoying golf, alcohol, and poker (not necessarily in that order). Although his critics depicted him as weak, lazy, or incompetent, he was actually quite shrewd and politically astute. Together with his running mate, Calvin Coolidge, the governor of Massachusetts, they attracted the votes of many Americans who sought Harding’s promised return to normalcy. In the election, Harding defeated Governor James Cox of Ohio by the greatest majority in the history of two-party politics: 61 percent of the popular vote.



Harding's cabinet reflected his pro-business agenda. Herbert Hoover, a millionaire mechanical engineer and miner, became his Secretary of Commerce. Hoover had served as head of the relief effort for Belgium during World War I and helped to feed those in Russia and Germany after the war ended. He was a very effective administrator, seeking



(a)



(b)

*Warren Harding (a) poses on the campaign trail in 1920. His running mate, Calvin Coolidge (b), would go on to become president in 1923, when Harding died suddenly while touring the United States.*

to limit inefficiency in the government and promoting partnerships between government and businesses. Harding's Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, was also a pro-business multimillionaire with a fortune built in banking and aluminum. Even more so than Hoover, Mellon entered public service with a strong sense that government should run as efficiently as any business, famously writing that "the Government is just a business, and can and should be run on business principles."

Consistent with his principles of running government with business-like efficiency, Harding proposed and signed into law tax rate cuts as well as the country's first formal budgeting process, which created a presidential budget director and required that the president submit an annual budget to Congress. These policies helped to reduce the debt that the United States had incurred during World War I. However, as Europe began to recover, U.S. exports to the continent dwindled. In an effort to protect U.S. agriculture and other businesses threatened by lower-priced imports, Harding pushed through the Emergency Tariff of 1921. This defensive tariff had the effect of increasing American purchasing power, although it also inflated the prices of many goods.

In the area of foreign policy, Harding worked to preserve the peace through international cooperation and the reduction of armaments around the world. Despite the refusal of the U.S. Senate



to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, Harding was able to work with Germany and Austria to secure a formal peace. He convened a conference in Washington that brought world leaders together to agree on reducing the threat of future wars by reducing armaments. Out of these negotiations came a number of treaties designed to foster cooperation in the Far East, reduce the size of navies around the world, and establish guidelines for submarine usage. These agreements ultimately fell apart in the 1930s, as the world descended into war again. But, at the time, they were seen as a promising path to maintaining the peace.

Despite these developments, the Harding administration has gone down in history as one that was especially ridden with scandal. While Harding was personally honest, he surrounded himself with politicians who weren't. Harding made the mistake of often turning to unscrupulous advisors or even his "Ohio Gang" of drinking and poker buddies for advice and guidance. And, as he himself recognized, this group tended to cause him grief. "I have no trouble with my enemies," he once commented. "I can take care of my enemies in a fight. But my friends, my goddamned friends, they're the ones who keep me walking the floor at nights!"

The scandals mounted quickly. From 1920 to 1923, Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall was involved in a scam that became known as the Teapot Dome scandal. Fall had leased navy reserves in Teapot Dome, Wyoming, and two other sites in California to private oil companies without opening the bidding to other companies. In exchange, the companies gave him \$300,000 in cash and bonds, as well as a herd of cattle for his ranch. Fall was convicted of accepting bribes from the oil companies; he was fined \$100,000 and sentenced to a year in prison. It was the first time that a cabinet official had received such a sentence.

In 1923, Harding also learned that the head of the Veterans' Bureau, Colonel Charles Forbes, had absconded with most of the \$250 million set aside for extravagant bureau functions. Harding allowed Forbes to resign and leave the country; however, after the



president died, Forbes returned and was tried, convicted, and sentenced to two years in Leavenworth prison.

Although the Harding presidency had a number of large successes and variety of dark scandals, it ended before the first term was up. In July 1923, while traveling in Seattle, the president suffered a heart attack. On August 2, in his weakened condition, he suffered a stroke and died in San Francisco, leaving the presidency to his vice president, Calvin Coolidge. As for Harding, few presidents were so deeply mourned by the populace. His kindly nature and ability to poke fun at himself endeared him to the public.

Listen to some of [Harding's speeches](#) at The University of Virginia's Miller Center's website.

## A MAN OF FEW WORDS

Coolidge ended the scandals, but did little beyond that. Walter Lippman wrote in 1926 that “Mr. Coolidge’s genius for inactivity is developed to a very high point. It is a grim, determined, alert inactivity, which keeps Mr. Coolidge occupied constantly.”

Coolidge had a strong belief in the Puritan work ethic: Work hard, save your money, keep your mouth shut and listen, and good things will happen to you. Known as “Silent Cal,” his clean image seemed capable of cleaning up scandals left by Harding. Republicans—and the nation—now had a president who combined a preference for normalcy with the respectability and honesty that was absent from the Harding administration.

Coolidge’s first term was devoted to eliminating the taint of scandal that Harding had brought to the White House. Domestically, Coolidge adhered to the creed: “The business of America is



business.” He stood in awe of Andrew Mellon and followed his fiscal policies, which made him the only president to turn a legitimate profit in the White House. Coolidge believed the rich were worthy of their property and that poverty was the wage of sin. Most importantly, Coolidge believed that since only the rich best understood their own interests, the government should let businessmen handle their own affairs with as little federal intervention as possible. Coolidge was quoted as saying, “The man who builds a factory builds a temple. The man who works there worships there.”

Thus, silence and inactivity became the dominant characteristics of the Coolidge presidency. Coolidge’s legendary reserve was famous in Washington society. Contemporaries told a possibly apocryphal story of how, at a dinner party at the White House, a woman bet her friends that she could get Coolidge to say more than three words. He looked at her and said, “you lose.”

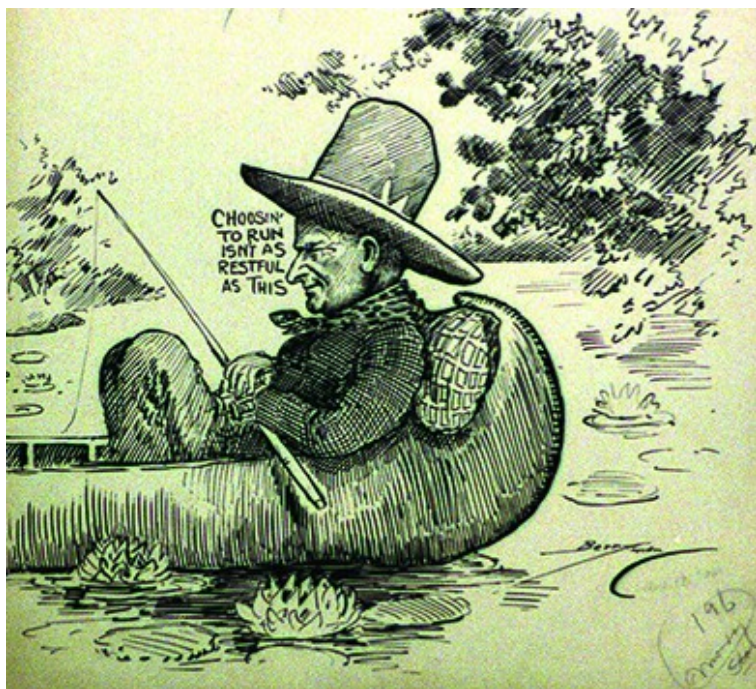
The 1924 election saw Coolidge win easily over the divided Democrats, who fought over their nomination. Southerners wanted to nominate pro-prohibition, pro-Klan, anti-immigrant candidate William G. McAdoo. The eastern establishment wanted Alfred E. Smith, a Catholic, urban, and anti-prohibition candidate. After many battles, they compromised on corporation lawyer John W. Davis. Midwesterner Robert M. La Follette, promoted by farmers, socialists, and labor unions, attempted to resurrect the Progressive Party. Coolidge easily beat both candidates.

## THE ELECTION OF 1928

This cultural battle between the forces of reaction and rebellion appeared to culminate with the election of 1928, the height of Republican ascendancy. On August 2, 1927, Coolidge announced that he would not be participating in the 1928 election; “I choose not to run,” was his comment. Republicans promoted the heir apparent,



Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. The Democrats nominated Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York. Smith represented everything that small-town, rural America hated: He was Irish, Catholic, anti-prohibition, and a big-city politician. He was very flamboyant and outspoken, which also did not go over well with many Americans.



*In this cartoon, Clifford Berryman lampoons Coolidge's laid-back attitude as he chooses "not to run" in 1928.*

Republican prosperity carried the day once again, and Hoover won easily with twenty-one million votes over Al Smith's fifteen million. The stock market continued to rise, and prosperity was the watchword of the day. Many Americans who had not done so before invested in the market, believing that the prosperous times would continue.



As Hoover came into office, Americans had every reason to believe that prosperity would continue forever. In less than a year, however, the bubble would burst, and a harsh reality would take its place.

## Section Summary

After World War I, Americans were ready for “a return to normalcy,” and Republican Warren Harding offered them just that. Under the guidance of his big-business backers, Harding’s policies supported businesses at home and isolation from foreign affairs. His administration was wracked by scandals, and after he died in 1923, Calvin Coolidge continued his policy legacy in much the same vein. Herbert Hoover, elected as Coolidge’s heir apparent, planned for more of the same until the stock market crash ended a decade of Republican ascendancy.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1037>

### *Review Question*

1. What was the economic outlook of the average American when Herbert Hoover took office in 1929?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Most Americans believed that their prosperity would continue. The stock market continued to flourish, prompting many Americans—including those who had never done so before—to invest their savings and hope for the best.

## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. Explain how the 1920s was a decade of contradictions. What does the relationship between mass immigration and the rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan tell us about American attitudes? How might we reconcile the decade as the period of both the flapper and prohibition?
2. What new opportunities did the 1920s provide for women and African Americans? What new limitations did this era impose?
3. Discuss what the concept of “modernity” meant in the 1920s. How did art and innovation in the decade reflect the new mood of the postwar era?
4. Explain how technology took American culture in new and different directions. What role did motion pictures and radio play in shaping cultural attitudes in the United States?
5. Discuss how politics of the 1920s reflected the new



postwar mood of the country. What did the Harding administration's policies attempt to achieve, and how?

## *Glossary*

**return to normalcy** the campaign promise made by Warren Harding in the presidential election of 1920

**Teapot Dome scandal** the bribery scandal involving Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall in 1923



## 122. Video: The Roaring 20s

This video teaches you about the United States in the 1920s. They were known as the roaring 20s, but not because there were lions running around everywhere. In the 1920s, America's economy was booming, and all kinds of social changes were in progress. Hollywood, flappers, jazz, there was all kinds of stuff going on in the 20s. But as usual with Crash Course, things were about to take a turn for the worse. This video will teach you about the Charleston, the many Republican presidents of the 1920s, laissez-faire capitalism, jazz, consumer credit, the resurgent Klan, and all kinds of other stuff.



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pimaushistory2/?p=155#oembed-1](https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=155#oembed-1)



# 123. Assignment: The Roaring Twenties Discussion

One of the central facets of the Roaring Twenties was Prohibition – the banning of alcohol. Read [Percy Andreae, “A Glimpse Behind the Mask”](#) and [Richmond Hobson speech supporting Prohibition](#), then write a paragraph that addresses the following:

In a paragraph for each, answer the following:

- What did each person see as the motivation behind Prohibition?
- Can you think of a current issue that looks similar to Prohibition? Compare and contrast the current issue you picked with Prohibition. How are they similar, how are they different?
  - Be prepared to discuss this in class.



PART XIX

# THE JAZZ AGE READER







## 124. Primary Source Images: The New Era

The 1920s so reshaped American life that it came to be called by many names: the New Era, the Jazz Age, the Age of the Flapper, the Prosperity Decade, and, perhaps most commonly, the Roaring Twenties. The mass production and consumption of automobiles, household appliances, film, and radio fueled a new economy and new standards of living, new mass entertainment introduced talking films and jazz while sexual and social restraints loosened. But at the same time, many Americans turned their back on political and economic reform, denounced America's shifting demographics, stifled immigration, retreated toward "old time religion," and revived with millions of new members the Ku Klux Klan. On the other hand, many Americans fought harder than ever for equal rights and cultural observers noted the appearance of "the New Woman" and "the New Negro." Old immigrant communities that had predated new immigration quotas, meanwhile, clung to their cultures and their native faiths. The 1920s were a decade of conflict and tension. Whatever the decade was, as the following sources reveal, it was not "normalcy."



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*“Advertising Section” Photoplay (October 1924) Museum of Modern Art Library, via [Archive.org](#).*

In the 1920’s Americans across the country bought magazines like Photoplay in order to get more information about the stars of their new favorite entertainment media: the movies. Advertisers took advantage of this broad audience to promote a wide range of goods and services to both men and women who enjoyed the proliferation of consumer culture during this time. “Advertising Section” Photoplay (October 1924) Museum of Modern Art Library, via [Archive.org](#).

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## Klan Gathering (1920s)



*Underwood and Underwood, “Klan assembles Short Distance from U.S. Capitol,” (ca. 1920’s). Library of Congress.*



This photo by popular news photographers Underwood and Underwood shows a gathering of a reported 300 Ku Klux Klansmen just outside Washington DC to initiate a new group of men into their order. The proximity of the photographer to his subjects for one of the Klan's notorious night-time rituals suggests that this was yet another of the Klan's numerous publicity stunts.



# 125. Primary Source: Hobson Argues for Prohibition (1914)

## Richmond P. Hobson argues for prohibition

*Richmond P. Hobson, a Representative from Alabama, voiced his support for a prohibition amendment on the floor of the House of Representatives on December 22, 1914. The proposed amendment received a majority of votes, but not the necessary two-thirds majority to proceed with the process. The following is scanned from K. Austin Kerr, *The Politics of Moral Behavior: Prohibition and Drug Abuse* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1973): 97-102 [long out of print].*

Hobson:

What is the object of this resolution? It is to destroy the agency that debauches the youth of the land and thereby perpetuates its hold upon the Nation. How does the resolution propose to destroy this agent? In the simplest manner.... It does not coerce any drinker. It simply says that barter and sale, matters that have been a public function from the semicivilized days of society, shall not continue the debauching of the youth. Now, the Liquor Trust are wise enough to know that they can not perpetuate their sway by depending on debauching grown people, so they go to an organic method of teaching the young to drink. Now we apply exactly the same method to destroy them. We do not try to force old drinkers to stop drinking, but we do effectively put an end to the systematic, organized debauching of our youth through thousands and tens of thousands of agencies throughout the land. Men here may try to escape the simplicity of this problem. They can not. Some are trying to defend alcohol by saying that its abuse only is bad and that its temperate use is all right. Science absolutely denies it, and



proclaims that drunkenness does not produce one-tenth part of the harm to society that the widespread, temperate, moderate drinking does. Some say it is adulteration that harms. Some are trying to say that it is only distilled liquors that do harm. Science comes in now and says that all alcohol does harm; that the malt and fermented liquors produce vastly more harm than distilled liquors, and that it is the general public use of such drinks that has entailed the gradual decline and degeneracy of the nations of the past.

[The wets] have no foundation in scientific truth to stand upon, and so they resort to all kinds of devious methods.

Their favorite contention is that we can not reach the evil because of our institutions. This assumes that here is something very harmful and injurious to the public health and morals, that imperils our very institutions themselves and the perpetuity of the Nation, but the Nation has not within itself, because of its peculiar organization, the power to bring about the public good and end a great public wrong. They invoke the principle of State rights. As a matter of fact, we are fighting more consistently for State rights than they ever dreamed of. We know the States have the right to settle this question, and furthermore our confidence in three-quarters of all the States to act wisely does not lead us to fear that if we submit the proposition to them they might establish an imperialistic empire. We believe that three-quarters of all the States have the wisdom as well as the right to settle the national prohibition question for this country.

Neither can they take refuge about any assumed question of individual liberty. We do not say that a man shall not drink. We ask for no sumptuary action. We do not say that a man shall not have or make liquor in his own home for his own use. Nothing of that sort is involved in this resolution. We only touch the sale. A man may feel he has a right to drink, but he certainly has no inherent right to sell liquor. A man's liberties are absolutely secure in this resolution. The liberties and sanctity of the home are protected. The liberties of the community are secure, the liberties of the county are secure, and the liberties of the State are secure.



Let no one imagine that a State to-day has the real power and right to be wet of its own volition. Under the taxing power of the Federal Government by act of Congress, Congress could make every State in the country dry. They need not think it is an inherent right for a State to be wet; it is not; but there is an inherent right in every State and every county and every township to be dry, and these rights are now trampled upon, and this monster prides himself in trampling upon them.

Why, here to-day Member after Member has proclaimed that prohibition does not prohibit, and I have heard them actually tell us that prohibition could not prohibit. They tell us that this interstate liquor power is greater than the National Government....

I say now, as I said before, I will meet this foe on a hundred battlefields. If the Sixty-third Congress does not grant this plain right of the people for this referendum to change their organic law, to meet this mighty evil, the Sixty-fourth Congress will be likewise invoked. I do not say that we are going to get a two-thirds majority here tonight ... because we have not yet had a chance to appeal to Caesar: but I do say that the day is coming when we shall have that referendum sent to the States, nor is that day as far distant as some may imagine. Unless this question has been made a State matter, as we are asking now for it to be so made by being removed from national politics, and referred to the States-if this is not done by the intervening Congresses, I here announce to you the determination of the great moral, the great spiritual, the great temperance and prohibition forces of this whole Nation to make this question the paramount issue in 1916, not only to gain a two-thirds majority in the Houses of Congress, but to have an administration that neither in the open nor under cover will fight this reform, so that in the spring of 1917 with an extraordinary session of the Sixty-fifth Congress we will have a command from the \* masters of men and of Congress to grant this right to the people. My appeal is to each one of you now, be a man when the vote is taken and do your duty. [Applause.]

*A Habit-Forming Drug*



Alcohol has the property of chloroform and ether of penetrating actually into the nerve fibers themselves, putting the tissues under an anesthetic which prevents pain at first, but when the anesthetic effect is over discomfort follows throughout the tissues of the whole body, particularly the nervous system, which causes a craving for relief by recourse to the very substance that produced the disturbance. This craving grows directly with the amount and regularity of the drinking.

*Undermines the Will Power*

The poisoning attack of alcohol is specially severe in the cortex cerebrum-the top part of the brain-where resides the center of inhibition, or of will power, causing partial paralysis, which liberates lower activities otherwise held in control, causing a man to be more of a brute, but to imagine that he has been stimulated, when he is really partially paralyzed. This center of inhibition is the seat of the will power, which of necessity declines a little in strength every time partial paralysis takes place.

*Little Less of a Man After Each Drink*

Thus a man is little less of a man after each drink he takes. In this way continued drinking causes a progressive weakening of the will and a progressive growing of the craving, so that after a time, if persisted in, there must come a point where the will power can not control the craving and the victim is in the grip of the habit.

*Slaves in Shackles*

When the drinking begins young the power of the habit becomes overwhelming, and the victim might as well have shackles. It is estimated that there are 5,000,000 heavy drinkers and drunkards in America, and these men might as well have a ball and chain on their ankles, for they are more abject slaves than those black men who were driven by slave drivers.

*Present-day Slave Owners*

These victims are driven imperatively to procure their liquor, no matter at what cost. A few thousand brewers and distillers, making up the organizations composing the great Liquor Trust, have a monopoly of the supply, and they therefore own these 5,000,000



slaves and through them they are able to collect two and one-half billions of dollars cash from the American people every year.

*Liquor Degenerates the Character*

The first finding of science that alcohol is a protoplasmic poison and the second finding that it is an insidious, habit-forming drug, though of great importance, are as unimportant when compared with the third finding, that alcohol degenerates the character of men and tears down their spiritual nature. Like the other members of the group of oxide derivatives of hydrocarbons, alcohol is not only a general poison, but it has a chemical affinity or deadly appetite for certain particular tissues. Strychnine tears down the spinal cord. Alcohol tears down the top part of the brain in a man, attacks certain tissues in an animal, certain cells in a flower. It has been established that whatever the line of a creature's evolution alcohol will attack that line. Every type and every species is evolving in building from generation to generation along some particular line. Man is evolving in the top part of the brain, the seat of the will power, the seat of the moral senses, and of the spiritual nature, the recognition of right and wrong, the consciousness of God and of duty and of brotherly love and of self-sacrifice.

*Reverses the Life Principle of the Universe*

All life in the universe is founded upon the principle of evolution. Alcohol directly reverses that principle. Man has risen from the savage up through successive steps to the level of the semisavage, the semicivilized, and the highly civilized.

*Liquor and the Red Man*

Liquor promptly degenerates the red man, throws him back into savagery. It will promptly put a tribe on the war path.

*Liquor and the Black Man*

Liquor will actually make a brute out of a negro, causing him to commit unnatural crimes.

*Liquor and the White Man*

The effect is the same on the white man, though the white man being further evolved it takes longer time to reduce him to the same level. Starting young, however, it does not take a very long time to



speedily cause a man in the forefront of civilization to pass through the successive stages and become semicivilized, semisavage, savage, and, at last, below the brute.

#### *The Great Tragedy*

The spiritual nature of man gives dignity to his life above the life of the brute. It is this spiritual nature of man that makes him in the image of his Maker, so that the Bible referred to man as being a little lower than the angels. It is a tragedy to blight the physical life. No measure can be made of blighting the spiritual life.

#### *The Blight Degeneracy*

Nature does not tolerate reversing its evolutionary principle, and proceeds automatically to exterminate any creature, any animal, any race, any species that degenerates. Nature adopts two methods of extermination—one to shorten the life, the other to blight the offspring.

#### *The Verdict*

Science has thus demonstrated that alcohol is a protoplasmic poison, poisoning all living things; that alcohol is a habit-forming drug that shackles millions of our citizens and maintains slavery in our midst; that it lowers in a fearful way the standard of efficiency of the Nation, reducing enormously the national wealth, entailing startling burdens of taxation, encumbering the public with the care of crime, pauperism, and insanity; that it corrupts politics and public servants, corrupts the Government, corrupts the public morals, lowers terrifically the average standard of character of the citizenship, and undermines the liberties and institutions of the Nation; that it undermines and blights the home and the family, checks education, attacks the young when they are entitled to protection, undermines the public health, slaughtering, killing, and wounding our citizens many fold times more than war, pestilence, and famine combined; that it blights the progeny of the Nation, flooding the land with a horde of degenerates; that it strikes deadly blows at the life of the Nation itself and at the very life of the race, reversing the great evolutionary principles of nature and the purposes of the Almighty.



There can be but one verdict, and that is this great destroyer must be destroyed. The time is ripe for fulfillment. The present generation, the generation to which we belong, must cut this millstone of degeneracy from the neck of humanity....

*The Final Conclusion*

To cure this organic disease we must have recourse to the organic law. The people themselves must act upon this question. A generation must be prevailed upon to place prohibition in their own constitutional law, and such a generation could be counted upon to keep it in the Constitution during its lifetime. The Liquor Trust of necessity would disintegrate. The youth would grow up sober. The final, scientific conclusion is that we must have constitutional prohibition, prohibiting only the sale, the manufacture for sale, and everything that pertains to the sale, and invoke the power of both Federal and State Governments for enforcement. The resolution is drawn to fill these requirements.



# 126. Primary Source: A Glimpse Behind the Mask of Prohibition (1915)

## A Glimpse Behind the Mask of Prohibition

*The Prohibition Movement in its Broader Bearings upon Our Social, Commercial, and Religious Liberties*

by Percy Andreae in *The Prohibition Movement in its Broader Bearings upon Our Social, Commercial, and Religious Liberties*

(Editor's note: Andreae was one of the most successful spokesmen against prohibition. Closely associated with brewing interests in Cincinnati, Ohio, Andreae organized a successful resistance to the Ohio Anti Saloon League after its sweeping victories in the 1908 state elections. Eventually Andreae tried to take the Ohio resistance to a national level through an brewery-financed organization called The National Association of Commerce and Labor.)

Somewhere in the Bible it is said: "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." I used to think the remedy somewhat radical. But to-day, being imbued with the wisdom of the prohibitionist, I have to acknowledge that, if the Bible in general, and that passage in it in particular, has a fault, it lies in its ultra-conservativeness. What? Merely cut off my own right hand if it offend me? What business have my neighbors to keep their right hands if I am not able to make mine behave itself? Off with the lot of them! Let there be no right hands; then I am certain that mine won't land me in trouble.

I have met many active prohibitionists, both in this and in other



countries, all of them thoroughly in earnest. In some instances I have found that their allegiance to the cause of prohibition took its origin in the fact that some near relative or friend had succumbed to over-indulgence in liquor. In one or two cases the man himself had been a victim of this weakness, and had come to the conclusion, firstly that every one else was constituted as he was, and, therefore, liable to the same danger; and secondly, that unless every one were prevented from drinking, he would not be secure from the temptation to do so himself.

This is one class of prohibitionists. The other, and by far the larger class, is made up of religious zealots, to whom prohibition is a word having at bottom a far wider application than that which is generally attributed to it. The liquor question, if there really is such a question per se, is merely put forth by them as a means to an end, an incidental factor in a fight which has for its object the supremacy of a certain form of religious faith. The belief of many of these people is that the Creator frowns upon enjoyment of any and every kind, and that he has merely endowed us with certain desires and capacities for pleasure in order to give us an opportunity to please Him by resisting them. They are, of course, perfectly entitled to this belief, though some of us may consider it eccentric and somewhat in the nature of a libel on the Almighty. But are they privileged to force that belief on all their fellow beings? That, in substance, is the question that is involved in the present-day prohibition movement.

For it is all nonsense to suppose that because, perhaps, one in a hundred or so of human beings is too weak to resist the temptation of over-indulging in drink-or of over-indulging in anything else, for the matter of that--therefore all mankind is going to forego the right to indulge in that enjoyment in moderation. the leaders of the so-called prohibition movement know as well as you and I do that you can no more prevent an individual from taking a drink if he be so inclined than you can prevent him from scratching himself if he itches. They object to the existence of the saloon, not, bear in mind, to that of the badly conducted saloon, but to that of the well-regulated, decent saloon, and wherever they succeed



in destroying the latter, their object, which is the manifestation of their political power, is attained. That for every decent, well-ordered saloon they destroy, there springs up a dive, or speak-easy, or blind tiger, or whatever other name it may be known by, and the dispensing of drink continues as merrily as before, doesn't disturb them at all. They make the sale of liquor a crime, but steadily refuse to make its purchase and consumption an offense. Time and again the industries affected by this apparently senseless crusade have endeavored to have laws passed making dry territories really dry by providing for the punishment of the man who buys drink as well as the man who sells it. But every such attempt has been fiercely opposed by the prohibition leaders. And why? Because they know only too well that the first attempt to really prohibit drinking would put an end to their power forever. They know that 80 per cent of those who, partly by coercion, partly from sentiment, vote dry, are perfectly willing to restrict the right of the remaining 20 per cent to obtain drink, but that they are not willing to sacrifice that right for themselves.

And so the farce called prohibition goes on, and will continue to go on as long as it brings grist to the mill of the managers who are producing it. But the farce conceals something far more serious than that which is apparent to the public on the face of it. Prohibition is merely the title of the movement. Its real purpose is of a religious, sectarian character, and this applies not only to the movement in America, but to the same movement in England, a fact which, strangely enough, has rarely, if at all, been recognized by those who have dealt with the question in the public press.

If there is any one who doubts the truth of this statement, let me put this to him: How many Roman Catholics are prohibitionists? How many Jews, the most temperate race on earth, are to be found in the ranks of prohibition? Or Lutherans? Or German Protestants generally? What is the proportion of Episcopalians to that of Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, and the like, in the active prohibition army? The answer to these questions will, I venture to say, prove conclusively the assertion that the fight for prohibition



is synonymous with the fight of a certain religious sect, or group of religious sects, for the supremacy of its ideas. In England it is the Nonconformists, which is in that country the generic name for the same sects, who are fighting the fight, and the suppression of liquor there is no more the ultimate end they have in view than it is here in America. It is the fads and restrictions that are part and parcel of their lugubrious notion of Godworship which they eventually hope to impose upon the rest of humanity; a Sunday without a smile, no games, no recreation, no pleasures, no music, card-playing tabooed, dancing anathematized, the beauties of art decried as impure—in short, this world reduced to a barren, forbidding wilderness in which we, its inhabitants, are to pass our time contemplating the joys of the next. Rather problematical joys, by the way, if we are to suppose we shall worship God in the next world in the same somber way as we are called upon by these worthies to do in this.

To my mind, and that of many others, the hearty, happy laugh of a human being on a sunny Sunday is music sweeter to the ears of that being's Creator than all the groaning and moanings, and *misericordias* that rise to heaven from the lips of those who would deprive us altogether of the faculty and the privilege of mirth. That some overdo hilarity and become coarse and offensive, goes without saying. There are people without the sense of proportion or propriety in all matters. Yet none of us think of abolishing pleasures because a few do not know how to enjoy them in moderation and with decency, and become an offense to their neighbors.

The drink evil has existed from time immemorial, just as sexual excess has, and all other vices to which mankind is and always will be more or less prone, though less in proportion as education progresses and the benefits of civilization increased. Sexual excess, curiously enough, has never interested our hyper-religious friends, the prohibitionists, in anything like the degree that the vice of excessive drinking does. Perhaps this is because the best of us have our pet aversions and our pet weaknesses. Yet this particular vice has produced more evil results to the human race than all other vices combined, and, in spite of it, mankind, thanks not to



prohibitive laws and restrictive legislation, but to the forward strides of knowledge and to patient and intelligent education, is to-day ten times sounder in body and healthier in mind than it ever was in the world's history.

Now, if the habit of drinking to excess were a growing one, as our prohibitionist friends claim that it is, we should to-day, instead of discussing this question with more or less intelligence, not be here at all to argue it; for the evil, such as it is, has existed for so many ages that, if it were as general and as contagious as is claimed, and its results as far-reaching as they are painted, the human race would have been destroyed by it long ago. Of course, the contrary is the case. The world has progressed in this as in all other respects. Compare, for instance, the drinking to-day with the drinking of a thousand years ago, nay, of only a hundred odd years ago, when a man, if he wanted to ape his so-called betters, did so by contriving to be carried to bed every night "drunk as a lord." Has that condition of affairs been altered by legislative measures restricting the right of the individual to control himself? No. It has been altered by that far greater power, the moral force of education and the good example which teaches mankind the very thing that prohibition would take from it: the virtue of selfcontrol and moderation in all things.

And here we come to the vital distinction between the advocacy of temperance and the advocacy of prohibition. Temperance and self-control are convertible terms. Prohibition, or that which it implies, is the direct negation of the term self-control. In order to save the small percentage of men who are too weak to resist their animal desires, it aims to put chains on every man, the weak and the strong alike. And if this is proper in one respect, why not in all respects? Yet, what would one think of a proposition to keep all men locked up because a certain number have a propensity to steal? Theoretically, perhaps, all crime or vice could be stopped by chaining us all up as we chain up a wild animal, and only allowing us to take exercise under proper supervision and control. But while such a measure would check crime, it would not eliminate the criminal. It is true, some people are only kept from vice and crime



by the fear of punishment. Is not, indeed, the basis of some men's religiousness nothing else but the fear of Divine punishment? The doctrines of certain religious denominations not entirely unknown in the prohibition camp make self respect, which is the foundation of self-control and of all morality, a sin. They decry rather than advocate it. They love to call themselves miserable, helpless sinners, cringing before the flaming sword, and it is the flaming sword, not the exercise of their own enlightened will, that keeps them within decent bounds. Yet has this fear of eternal punishment contributed one iota toward the intrinsic betterment of the human being? If it had, would so many of our Christian creeds have discarded it, admitting that it is the precepts of religion, not its dark and dire threats, that make men truly better and stronger within themselves to resist that which our self-respect teaches us is bad and harmful? The growth of self-respect in man, with its outward manifestation, self-control, is the growth of civilization. If we are to be allowed to exercise it no longer, it must die in us from want of nutrition, and men must become savages once more, fretting now at their chains, which they will break as inevitably as the sun will rise to-morrow and herald a new day.

I consider the danger which threatens civilized society from the growing power of a sect whose views on prohibition are merely an exemplification of their general low estimate of man's ability to rise to higher things -by his own volition to be of infinitely greater consequence than the danger that, in putting their narrow theories to the test, a few billions of invested property will be destroyed, a number of great wealth-producing industries wiped out, the rate of individual taxation largely increased, and a million or so of struggling wage earners doomed to face starvation. These latter considerations, of course, must appeal to every thinking man's but what are they compared with the greater questions involved? Already the government of our State, and indeed of a good many other States, has passed practically into the hands of a few preacher-politicians of a certain creed. With the machine they have built up, by appealing to the emotional weaknesses of the more



or less unintelligent masses, they have lifted themselves on to a pedestal of power that has enabled them to dictate legislation or defeat it at their will, to usurp the functions of the governing head of the State and actually induce him to delegate to them the appointive powers vested in him by the Constitution. When a Governor elected by the popular vote admits, as was recently the case, that he can not appoint a man to one of the most important offices of the State without the indorsement of the irresponsible leader of a certain semi-religious movement, and when he submits to this same personage for correction and amendment his recommendation to the legislative body, there can scarcely be any doubt left in any reasonable mind as to the extent of the power wielded by this leader, or as to the uses he and those behind him intend putting it to.

And what does it all mean? It means that government by emotion is to be substituted for government by reason, and government by emotion, of which history affords many examples, is, according to the testimony of all ages, the most dangerous and pernicious of all forms of government. It has already crept into the legislative assemblies of most of the States of the Union, and is being craftily fostered by those who know how easily it can be made available for their purposes—purposes to the furtherance of which cool reason would never lend itself. Prohibition is but one of its fruits, and the hand that is plucking this fruit is the same hand of intolerance that drove forth certain of our forefathers from the land of their birth to seek the sheltering freedom of these shores.

What a strange reversal of conditions! The intolerants of a few hundred years ago are the upholders of liberty to-day, while those they once persecuted, having multiplied by grace of the very liberty that has so long sheltered them here, are now planning to impose the tyranny of their narrow creed upon the descendants of their persecutors of yore.

Let the greater public, which is, after all, the arbiter of the country's destinies, pause and ponder these things before they are allowed to progress too far. Prohibition, though it must callse, and



is already causing, incalculable damage, may never succeed in this country; but that which is behind it, as the catapults and the cannon were behind the battering rams in the battles of olden days, is certain to succeed unless timely measures of prevention are resorted to; and if it does succeed, we shall witness the enthronement of a monarch in this land of liberty compared with whose autocracy the autocracy of the Russian Czar is a mere trifle.

The name of this monarch is Religious Intolerance.



## 127. Primary Source: Warren G. Harding and the “Return to Normalcy” (1920)

*Republican Senator and presidential candidate Warren G. Harding of Ohio delivered the following address to the Home Market Club of Boston on May 14, 1920. In it, Harding outlined his hope that the United States would, after a decade of progressive politics and foreign interventions, return to “normalcy.” In November, Harding received the highest percentage of the popular vote in a presidential election up to that time.*

My countrymen, there isn't anything the matter with world civilization, except that humanity is viewing it through a vision impaired in a cataclysmal war. Poise has been disturbed, and nerves have been racked, and fever has rendered men irrational; sometimes there have been draughts upon the dangerous cup of barbarity, and men have wandered far from safe paths, but the human procession still marches in the right direction. ...

America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not experiment, but equipoise; not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality. It is one thing to battle successfully against world domination by military autocracy, because the infinite God never intended such a program, but it is quite another thing to revise human nature and suspend the fundamental laws of life and all of life's acquirements...

This republic has its ample task. If we put an end to false economics which lure humanity to utter chaos, ours will be the commanding example of world leadership today. If we can prove a representative popular government under which a citizenship seeks



what it may do for the government rather than what the government may do for individuals, we shall do more to make democracy safe for the world than all armed conflict ever recorded.

The world needs to be reminded that all human ills are not curable by legislation, and that quantity of statutory enactment and excess of government offer no substitute for quality of citizenship. The problems of maintained civilization are not to be solved by a transfer of responsibility from citizenship to government, and no eminent page in history was ever drafted by the standards of mediocrity. More, no government is worthy of the name which is directed by influence on the one hand, or moved by intimidation on the other.

My best judgment of America's need is to steady down, to get squarely on our feet, to make sure of the right path. Let's get out of the fevered delirium of war, with the hallucination that all the money in the world is to be made in the madness of war and the wildness of its aftermath. Let us stop to consider that tranquility at home is more precious than peace abroad, and that both our good fortune and our eminence are dependent on the normal forward stride of all the American people. We want to go on, secure and unafraid, holding fast to the American inheritance, and confident of the supreme American fulfillment.

[Source: Warren G. Harding, "National Ideals and Policies," *The Protectionist* (May, 1920), 71-81. Available online via The Miller Center (<http://millercenter.org/president/harding/speeches/readjustment>).]



## 128. Primary Source: Crystal Eastman, “Now We Can Begin” (1920)

*In the following selection, Crystal Eastman, a socialist and feminist, considered what women should fight for following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted American women the right to vote.*

Most women will agree that August 23, the day when the Tennessee legislature finally enacted the Federal suffrage amendment, is a day to begin with, not a day to end with. Men are saying perhaps “Thank God, this everlasting woman’s fight is over!” But women, if I know them, are saying, “Now at last we can begin.” In fighting for the right to vote most women have tried to be either non-committal or thoroughly respectable on every other subject. Now they can say what they are really after; and what they are after, in common with all the rest of the struggling world, is freedom.

Freedom is a large word.

...

What, then, is “the matter with women”? What is the problem of women’s freedom? It seems to me to be this: how to arrange the world so that women can be human beings, with a chance to exercise their infinitely varied gifts in infinitely varied ways, instead of being destined by the accident of their sex to one field of activity—housework and child-raising. And second, if and when they choose housework and child-raising, to have that occupation recognized by the world as work, requiring a definite economic reward and not merely entitling the performer to be dependent on some man.

This is not the whole of feminism, of course, but it is enough to begin with. “Oh, don’t begin with economics,” my friends often



protest, “Woman does not live by bread alone. What she needs first of all is a free soul.” And I can agree that women will never be great until they achieve a certain emotional freedom, a strong healthy egotism, and some un-personal sources of joy — that in this inner sense we cannot make woman free by changing her economic status. What we can do, however, is to create conditions of outward freedom in which a free woman’s soul can be born and grow. It is these outward conditions with which an organized feminist movement must concern itself.

Freedom of choice in occupation and individual economic independence for women: How shall we approach this next feminist objective? First, by breaking down all remaining barriers, actual as well as legal, which make it difficult for women to enter or succeed in the various professions, to go into and get on in business, to learn trades and practice them, to join trades unions. Chief among these remaining barriers is inequality in pay. Here the ground is already broken. This is the easiest part of our program.

Second, we must institute a revolution in the early training and education of both boys and girls. It must be womanly as well as manly to earn your own living, to stand on your own feet. And it must be manly as well as womanly to know how to cook and sew and clean and take care of yourself in the ordinary exigencies of life. I need not add that the second part of this revolution will be more passionately resisted than the first. Men will not give up their privilege of helplessness without a struggle. The average man has a carefully cultivated ignorance about household matters — from what to do with the crumbs to the grocer’s telephone number — a sort of cheerful inefficiency which protects him better than the reputation for having a violent temper. It was his mother’s fault in the beginning, but even as a boy he was quick to see how a general reputation for being “no good around the house” would serve him throughout life, and half-consciously he began to cultivate that helplessness until today it is the despair of feminist wives.

...

Cooperative schemes and electrical devices will simplify the



business of homemaking, but they will not get rid of it entirely. As far as we can see ahead people will always want homes, and a happy home cannot be had without a certain amount of rather monotonous work and responsibility. How can we change the nature of man so that he will honorably share that work and responsibility and thus make the homemaking enterprise a song instead of a burden? Most assuredly not by laws or revolutionary decrees. Perhaps we must cultivate or simulate a little of that highly prized helplessness ourselves. But fundamentally it is a problem of education, of early training — we must bring up feminist sons.

Sons? Daughters? They are born of women — how can women be free to choose their occupation, at all times cherishing their economic independence, unless they stop having children? This is a further question for feminism. If the feminist program goes to pieces on the arrival of the first baby, it is false and useless. For ninety-nine out of every hundred women want children, and seventy-five out of every hundred want to take care of their own children, or at any rate so closely superintend their care as to make any other full-time occupation impossible for at least ten or fifteen years. Is there any such thing then as freedom of choice in occupation for women? And is not the family the inevitable economic unit and woman's individual economic independence, at least during that period, out of the question?

The feminist must have an answer to these questions, and she has. The immediate feminist program must include voluntary motherhood. Freedom of any kind for women is hardly worth considering unless it is assumed that they will know how to control the size of their families. "Birth control" is just as elementary an essential in our propaganda as "equal pay." Women are to have children when they want them, that's the first thing. That ensures some freedom of occupational choice; those who do not wish to be mothers will not have an undesired occupation thrust upon them by accident, and those who do wish to be mothers may choose in a general way how many years of their lives they will devote to the occupation of childraising.



But is there any way of insuring a woman's economic independence while child-raising is her chosen occupation? Or must she sink into that dependent state from which, as we all know, it is so hard to rise again? That brings us to the fourth feature of our program – motherhood endowment. It seems that the only way we can keep mothers free, at least in a capitalist society, is by the establishment of a principle that the occupation of raising children is peculiarly and directly a service to society, and that the mother upon whom the necessity and privilege of performing this service naturally falls is entitled to an adequate economic reward from the political government. It is idle to talk of real economic independence for women unless this principle is accepted. But with a generous endowment of motherhood provided by legislation, with all laws against voluntary motherhood and education in its methods repealed, with the feminist ideal of education accepted in home and school, and with all special barriers removed in every field of human activity, there is no reason why woman should not become almost a human thing.

It will be time enough then to consider whether she has a soul.

[Source: Crystal Eastman, "Now We Can Begin," *Liberator* (December 1920).]



# 129. Primary Source: Marcus Garvey, Explanation of the Objects of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (1921)

*Inspired by the writings of Booker T. Washington, Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey became the most prominent Black Nationalist in the United States. He championed the back-to-Africa movement, advocated for black-owned businesses—he founded the Black Star Line, a transnational shipping company—and founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Thousands of UNIA chapters formed all across the world. In 1921, Garvey recorded a message in a New York studio explaining the object of the UNIA.*

Fellow citizens of Africa, I greet you in the name of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League of the World. You may ask, “what organization is that?” It is for me to inform you that the Universal Negro Improvement Association is an organization that seeks to unite, into one solid body, the four hundred million Negroes in the world. To link up the fifty million Negroes in the United States of America, with the twenty million Negroes of the West Indies, the forty million Negroes of South and Central America, with the two hundred and eighty million Negroes of Africa, for the purpose of bettering our industrial, commercial, educational, social, and political conditions.

As you are aware, the world in which we live today is divided into separate race groups and distinct nationalities. Each race and each nationality is endeavoring to work out its own destiny, to the exclusion of other races and other nationalities. We hear the cry



of “England for the Englishman,” of “France for the Frenchman,” of “Germany for the German,” of “Ireland for the Irish,” of “Palestine for the Jew,” of “Japan for the Japanese,” of “China for the Chinese.”

We of the Universal Negro Improvement Association are raising the cry of “Africa for the Africans,” those at home and those abroad. There are 400 million Africans in the world who have Negro blood coursing through their veins, and we believe that the time has come to unite these 400 million people toward the one common purpose of bettering their condition.

The great problem of the Negro for the last 500 years has been that of disunity. No one or no organization ever succeeded in uniting the Negro race. But within the last four years, the Universal Negro Improvement Association has worked wonders. It is bringing together in one fold four million organized Negroes who are scattered in all parts of the world. Here in the 48 States of the American Union, all the West Indies islands, and the countries of South and Central America and Africa. These four million people are working to convert the rest of the four hundred million that are all over the world, and it is for this purpose, that we are asking you to join our land and to do the best you can to help us to bring about an emancipated race.

If anything praiseworthy is to be done, it must be done through unity, and it is for that reason that the Universal Negro Improvement Association calls upon every Negro in the United States to rally to this standard. We want to unite the Negro race in this country. We want every Negro to work for one common object, that of building a nation of his own on the great continent of Africa. That all Negroes all over the world are working for the establishment of a government in Africa means that it will be realized in another few years.

We want the moral and financial support of every Negro to make this dream a possibility. Our race, this organization, has established itself in Nigeria, West Africa, and it endeavors to do all possible to develop that Negro country to become a great industrial and commercial commonwealth.



Pioneers have been sent by this organization to Nigeria, and they are now laying the foundations upon which the four hundred million Negroes of the world will build. If you believe that the Negro has a soul, if you believe that the Negro is a man, if you believe the Negro was endowed with the senses commonly given to other men by the Creator, then you must acknowledge that what other men have done, Negroes can do. We want to build up cities, nations, governments, industries of our own in Africa, so that we will be able to have a chance to rise from the lowest to the highest position in the African Commonwealth.

[Source: Marcus Garvey, "Explanation of the Objects of the Universal Negro Improvement Association" (1921), Marcus Garvey and the UNIA Papers Project at the University of California, Los Angeles. Available online via History Matters (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5124>).]



## 130. Primary Source: Hiram Evans on the “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism” (1926)

*The “Second” Ku Klux Klan rose to prominence in the 1920s and, at its peak, claimed millions of Americans as members. Klansmen wrapped themselves in the flag and the cross and proclaimed themselves the moral guardians of America. The organization appealed to many “respectable,” middle-class Americans. Here, Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans, a dentist from Dallas, Texas, outlines the Second Klan’s potent mix of Americanism, Protestantism, and white supremacy.*

There are three ... great racial instincts, vital elements in both the historic and the present attempts to build an America which shall fulfill the aspirations and justify the heroism of the men who made the nation. These are the instincts of loyalty to the white race, to the traditions of America, and to the spirit of Protestantism, which has been an essential part of Americanism ever since the days of Roanoke and Plymouth Rock. They are condensed into the Klan slogan: “Native, white, Protestant supremacy.”

First in the Klansman’s mind is patriotism—America for Americans. He believes religiously that a betrayal of Americanism or the American race is treason to the most sacred trusts, a trust from his fathers and a trust from God. He believes too that Americanism can only be achieved if the pioneer stock is kept pure. There is more than race pride in this. Mongrelization has been proven bad. It is only between closely related stocks of the same race that interbreeding has improved men; the kind of interbreeding that went on in the early days of America between English, Dutch, German, Huguenot, Irish, and Scotch.

Racial integrity is a very definite thing to a Klansman. It means even more than good citizenship, for a man may be in all ways



a good citizen and yet a poor American, unless he has racial understanding of Americanism, and instinctive loyalty to it. It is in no way a reflection on any man to say that he is un-American; it is merely a statement that he is not one of us. It is often not even wise to try and make an American of the best of aliens. What he is may be spoiled without his becoming American. The races and stocks of men are as distinct as breeds of animals, and every boy knows that if one tries to train a bulldog to herd sheep, he has in the end neither a good bulldog nor a good collie.

Americanism, to the Klansman, is a thing of the spirit, a purpose and a point of view, that can only come through instinctive racial understanding. It has, to be sure, certain defined principles, but he does not believe that many aliens understand those principles, even when they use our words in talking about them. . . . In short, the Klansman believes in the greatest possible diversity and individualism within the limits of the American spirit. But he believes also that few aliens can understand that spirit, that fewer try to, and that there must be resistance, intolerance even, toward anything that threatens it, or the fundamental national unity based upon it.

The second word in the Klansman's trilogy is "white." The white race must be supreme, not only in America but in the world. This is equally undebatable, except on the ground that the races might live together, each with full regard for the rights and interests of others, and that those rights and interests would never conflict. Such an idea, of course, is absurd; the colored races today, such as Japan, are clamoring not for equality but for their supremacy. The whole history of the world, on its broader lines, has been one of race conflicts, wars, subjugation or extinction. This is not pretty and certainly disagrees with the maudlin theories of cosmopolitanism, but it is truth. The world has been so made that each race must fight for its life, must conquer, accept slavery or die. The Klansman believes that the whites will not become slaves, and he does not intend to die before his time. . . .

The third of the Klan principles is that Protestantism must be



supreme; that Rome shall not rule America. The Klansman believes this is not merely because he is a Protestant, nor even because the Colonies that are now our nation were settled for the purpose of wresting America from the control of Rome and establishing a land free of conscience. He believes it also because Protestantism is an essential part of Americanism; without it America could never have been created and without it she cannot go forward. Roman rule would kill it.

Protestantism contains more than just religion. It is the expression in religion of the same spirit of independence, self-reliance, and freedom which are the highest achievements of the Nordic race. . . .

Let it be clear what is meant by “supremacy.” It is nothing more than power of control, under just laws. It is not imperialism, far less is it autocracy or even aristocracy of a race or stock of men. What it does mean is that we insist on our inherited right to insure our own safety, individually and as a race, to secure the future of our children, to maintain and develop our racial heritage in our own, white, Protestant, American way, without interference. . . .

There are, however, certain general principles and purposes which are always kept in view. Enough has been said about pioneer Americanism. Another constant aim is better citizenship. The Klan holds that no man can either be a good Klansman or a good American without being a good citizen. A large part of our work is to preach this, and no man can be a Klansman long without feeling it.

Another constant objective is good government, locally and nationally. The Klansman is pledged to support law and order and it is also a part of his duty to see that both law and office are as good as possible. We believe that every man and woman should keep well informed on all public matters and take active and direct part in all public affairs. . . . The Klan however never attempts to dictate the votes of its members, but does furnish information about men and measures.

[Source: Hiram W. Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism,”



North American Review 223 (March 1926). Available online via The Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/details/Klansfightamericanism>).]



# 131. Primary Source: Herbert Hoover, “Principles and Ideals of the United States Government” (1928)

*Republican Herbert Hoover embodied the political conservatism of the 1920s. He denounced the regulation of business and championed the individual against “bureaucracy.” In November 1928, Hoover, a Protestant from the Midwest, soundly defeated Al Smith, an Irish Catholic from New York City. Here, in a speech delivered in late October, Hoover outlined his vision of American government.*

... Tonight, I will not deal with the multitude of issues which have been already well canvassed, I propose rather to discuss some of those more fundamental principles and ideals upon which I believe the Government of the United States should be conducted.

Before I enter upon that discussion of principles I wish to lay before you the proof of progress under Republican rule. In doing this I do not need to review its seventy years of constructive history. That history shows that the Republican Party has ever been a party of progress. It has reflected the spirit of the American people. We are a progressive people. Our history of 150 years in the greatest epic of human progress. Tonight to demonstrate the constructive character of our Party, I need only briefly picture the advance of fundamental progress during the past seven and a half years since we took over the Government amidst the ruin of war.

First of all, let me deal with the material side. I do this because upon the well-being, comfort and security of the American home do we build up the moral and spiritual virtues as well as the finer flowers of civilization and the wider satisfactions of life.

As a nation we came out of the war with great losses. ... Yet during



these last eight years we have recovered from these losses and increased our national income by over one-third even if we discount the inflation of the dollar. ... In addition to ... evidences of larger savings our people are steadily increasing their spending for higher standards of living. Today there are almost 9 automobiles for each 10 families, where seven and a half years ago only enough automobiles were running to average less than 4 for each 10 families. The slogan of progress is changing from the full dinner pail to the full garage. Our people have more to eat, better things to wear, and better homes. We have even gained in elbow room in our homes, for the increase of residential floor space is over 25 per cent with less than 10 per cent increase in our number of people. We have increased the security of his job to every man and woman. We have decreased the fear of old age, the fear of poverty, the fear of unemployment and these are fears which have always been amongst the greatest calamities of human kind.

... I do not need to recite more figures and more evidence. There is not a person within the sound of my voice that does not know the profound progress which our country has made in this period. Every man and woman knows that their comfort, their hopes and their confidence for the future are higher this day than they were seven and one-half years ago.

...

It detracts nothing from the character and energy of the American people, it minimizes in no degree the quality of their accomplishments to say that the policies of the Republican Party have played a large part in the building of this progress of these last seven and one-half years. I can say with emphasis that without the wise policies which the Republican Party has brought into action in this period, no such progress would have been possible.

The first responsibility of the Republican Administration was to renew the march of progress from its collapse by the war. That task involved the restoration of confidence in the future and the liberation and stimulation of the constructive energies of our people. It is not my purpose to enter upon a detailed recitation of



the history of the great constructive measures of the past seven and a half years.

...

But in addition to this great record of contributions of the Republican Party to progress, there has been a further fundamental contribution — a contribution perhaps more important than all the others — and that is the resistance of the Republican Party to every attempt to inject the Government into business in competition with its citizens.

After the war, when the Republican Party assumed administration of the country, we were faced with the problem of determination of the very nature of our national life. Over 150 years we have builded up a form of self-government and we had builded up a social system which is peculiarly our own. It differs fundamentally from all others in the world. It is the American system. It is just as definite and positive a political and social system as has ever been developed on earth. It is founded upon the conception that self-government can be preserved only by decentralization of Government in the State and by fixing local responsibility; but further than this, it is founded upon the social conception that only through ordered liberty, freedom and equal opportunity to the individual will his initiative and enterprise drive the march of progress.

...

I regret, however, to say that there has been revived in this campaign a proposal which would be a long step to the abandonment of our American system, to turn to the idea of government in business. Because we are faced with difficulty and doubt over certain national problems which we are faced — that is prohibition, farm relief and electrical power — our opponents propose that we must to some degree thrust government into these businesses and in effect adopt state socialism as a solution.

There is, therefore submitted to the American people the question — Shall we depart from the American system and start upon a new road. And I wish to emphasize this question on this occasion. I wish to make clear my position on the principles involved



for they go to the very roots of American life in every act of our Government. I should like to state to you the effect of the extension of government into business upon our system of self government and our economic system. But even more important is the effect upon the average man. That is the effect on the very basis of liberty and freedom not only to those left outside the fold of expanded bureaucracy but to those embraced within it.

...

Bureaucracy is ever desirous of spreading its influence and its power. You cannot give to a government the mastery of the daily working life of a people without at the same time giving it mastery of the peoples' souls and thoughts. Every expansion of government means that government in order to protect itself from political consequences of its errors and wrongs is driven onward and onward without peace to greater and greater control of the country's press and platform. Free speech does not live many hours after free industry and free commerce die.

It is false liberalism that interprets itself into the Government operation of business. The bureaucratization of our country would poison the very roots of liberalism that is free speech, free assembly, free press, political equality and equality of opportunity. It is the road, not to more liberty, but to less liberty. Liberalism should be found not striving to spread bureaucracy, but striving to set bounds to it. True liberalism seeks freedom first in the confident belief that without freedom the pursuit of all other blessings and benefits is vain. That belief is the foundation of all American progress, political as well as economic.

Liberalism is a force truly of the spirit, a force proceeding from the deep realization that economic freedom cannot be sacrificed if political freedom is to be preserved. Even if governmental conduct of business could give us more efficiency instead of giving us decreased efficiency, the fundamental objection to it would remain unaltered and unabated. It would destroy political equality. It would cramp and cripple mental and spiritual energies of our people. It would dry up the spirit of liberty and progress. It would extinguish



equality of opportunity, and for these reasons fundamentally and primarily it must be resisted. For a hundred and fifty years liberalism has found its true spirit in the American system, not in the European systems.

I do not wish to be misunderstood in this statement. I am defining a general policy! It does not mean that our government is to part with one iota of its national resources without complete protection to the public interest. I have already stated that where the government is engaged in public works for purposes of flood control, of navigation, of irrigation, of scientific research or national defense that, or in pioneering a new art, it will at times necessarily produce power or commodities as a by-product. But they must be by-products, not the major purpose.

Nor do I wish to be misinterpreted as believing that the United States is free-for-all and the devil-take-the-hindmost. The very essence of equality of opportunity is that there shall be no domination by any group or trust or combination in this republic, whether it be business or political. It demands economic justice as well as political and social justice. It is no system to laissez faire.

...

In the last fifty years we have discovered that mass production will produce articles for us at half the cost that obtained previously. We have seen the resultant growth of large units of production and distribution. This is big business. Business must be bigger for our tools are bigger, our country is bigger. We build a single dynamo of a hundred thousand horsepower. Even fifteen years ago that would have been a big business all by itself. Yet today advance in production requires that we set ten of these units together.

...

[Source: Herbert Hoover, "Principles and Ideals of the United States Government," Speech, (October 22, 1928). Available online via <http://millercenter.org/president/hover/speeches/speech-6000>.]



PART XX

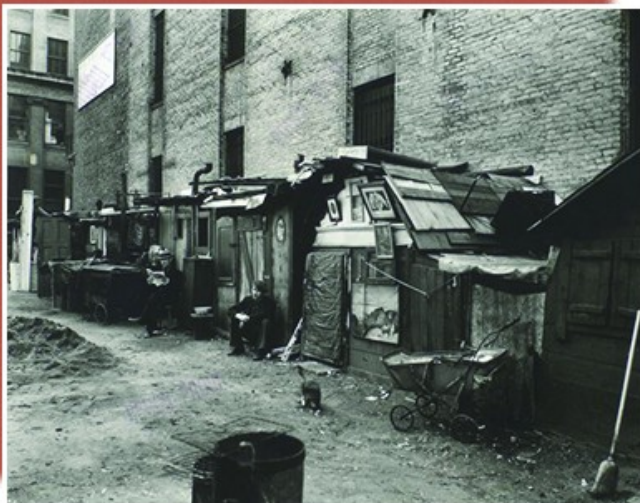
BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE  
A DIME? THE GREAT  
DEPRESSION, 1929-1932







## 132. Introduction



*In 1935, American photographer Berenice Abbott photographed these shanties, which the unemployed in Lower Manhattan built during the depths of the Great Depression. (credit: modification of work by Works Progress Administration)*

On March 4, 1929, at his presidential inauguration, Herbert Hoover stated, “I have no fears for the future of our country. It is bright with hope.” Most Americans shared his optimism. They believed that the prosperity of the 1920s would continue, and that the country was moving closer to a land of abundance for all. Little could Hoover imagine that barely a year into his presidency, shantytowns known as “Hoovervilles” would emerge on the fringes of most major cities, newspapers covering the homeless would be called “Hoover



blankets,” and pants pockets, turned inside-out to show their emptiness, would become “Hoover flags.”

The stock market crash of October 1929 set the Great Depression into motion, but other factors were at the root of the problem, propelled onward by a series of both human-made and natural catastrophes. Anticipating a short downturn and living under an ethos of free enterprise and individualism, Americans suffered mightily in the first years of the Depression. As conditions worsened and the government failed to act, they grew increasingly desperate for change. While Hoover could not be blamed for the Great Depression, his failure to address the nation’s hardships would remain his legacy.



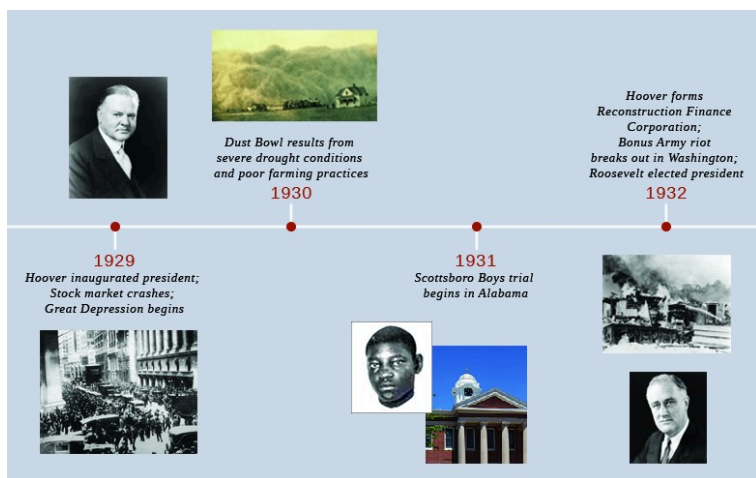
# 133. The Stock Market Crash of 1929

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the causes of the stock market crash of 1929
- Assess the underlying weaknesses in the economy that resulted in America's spiraling from prosperity to depression so quickly
- Explain how a stock market crash might contribute to a nationwide economic disaster





(credit "courthouse": modification of work by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

Herbert Hoover became president at a time of ongoing prosperity in the country. Americans hoped he would continue to lead the country through still more economic growth, and neither he nor the country was ready for the unraveling that followed. But Hoover's moderate policies, based upon a strongly held belief in the spirit of American individualism, were not enough to stem the ever-growing problems, and the economy slipped further and further into the Great Depression.

While it is misleading to view the stock market crash of 1929 as the sole cause of the Great Depression, the dramatic events of that October did play a role in the downward spiral of the American economy. The crash, which took place less than a year after Hoover was inaugurated, was the most extreme sign of the economy's weakness. Multiple factors contributed to the crash, which in turn caused a consumer panic that drove the economy even further downhill, in ways that neither Hoover nor the financial industry was able to restrain. Hoover, like many others at the time, thought and hoped that the country would right itself with limited government



intervention. This was not the case, however, and millions of Americans sank into grinding poverty.

## THE EARLY DAYS OF HOOVER'S PRESIDENCY

Upon his inauguration, President Hoover set forth an agenda that he hoped would continue the “Coolidge prosperity” of the previous administration. While accepting the Republican Party’s presidential nomination in 1928, Hoover commented, “Given the chance to go forward with the policies of the last eight years, we shall soon with the help of God be in sight of the day when poverty will be banished from this nation forever.” In the spirit of normalcy that defined the Republican ascendancy of the 1920s, Hoover planned to immediately overhaul federal regulations with the intention of allowing the nation’s economy to grow unfettered by any controls. The role of the government, he contended, should be to create a partnership with the American people, in which the latter would rise (or fall) on their own merits and abilities. He felt the less government intervention in their lives, the better.

Yet, to listen to Hoover’s later reflections on Franklin Roosevelt’s first term in office, one could easily mistake his vision for America for the one held by his successor. Speaking in 1936 before an audience in Denver, Colorado, he acknowledged that it was always his intent as president to ensure “a nation built of home owners and farm owners. We want to see more and more of them insured against death and accident, unemployment and old age,” he declared. “We want them all secure.” <sup>1</sup> Such humanitarianism was not uncommon to Hoover. Throughout his early career in public service, he was committed to relief for people around the world. In 1900, he coordinated relief efforts for foreign nationals trapped in China during the Boxer Rebellion. At the outset of World War I,



he led the food relief effort in Europe, specifically helping millions of Belgians who faced German forces. President Woodrow Wilson subsequently appointed him head of the U.S. Food Administration to coordinate rationing efforts in America as well as to secure essential food items for the Allied forces and citizens in Europe.

Hoover's first months in office hinted at the reformist, humanitarian spirit that he had displayed throughout his career. He continued the civil service reform of the early twentieth century by expanding opportunities for employment throughout the federal government. In response to the Teapot Dome Affair, which had occurred during the Harding administration, he invalidated several private oil leases on public lands. He directed the Department of Justice, through its Bureau of Investigation, to crack down on organized crime, resulting in the arrest and imprisonment of Al Capone. By the summer of 1929, he had signed into law the creation of a Federal Farm Board to help farmers with government price supports, expanded tax cuts across all income classes, and set aside federal funds to clean up slums in major American cities. To directly assist several overlooked populations, he created the Veterans Administration and expanded veterans' hospitals, established the Federal Bureau of Prisons to oversee incarceration conditions nationwide, and reorganized the Bureau of Indian Affairs to further protect Native Americans. Just prior to the stock market crash, he even proposed the creation of an old-age pension program, promising fifty dollars monthly to all Americans over the age of sixty-five—a proposal remarkably similar to the social security benefit that would become a hallmark of Roosevelt's subsequent New Deal programs. As the summer of 1929 came to a close, Hoover remained a popular successor to Calvin "Silent Cal" Coolidge, and all signs pointed to a highly successful administration.



# THE GREAT CRASH

The promise of the Hoover administration was cut short when the stock market lost almost one-half its value in the fall of 1929, plunging many Americans into financial ruin. However, as a singular event, the stock market crash itself did not cause the Great Depression that followed. In fact, only approximately 10 percent of American households held stock investments and speculated in the market; yet nearly a third would lose their lifelong savings and jobs in the ensuing depression. The connection between the crash and the subsequent decade of hardship was complex, involving underlying weaknesses in the economy that many policymakers had long ignored.

## What Was the Crash?

To understand the crash, it is useful to address the decade that preceded it. The prosperous 1920s ushered in a feeling of euphoria among middle-class and wealthy Americans, and people began to speculate on wilder investments. The government was a willing partner in this endeavor: The Federal Reserve followed a brief postwar recession in 1920–1921 with a policy of setting interest rates artificially low, as well as easing the reserve requirements on the nation's largest banks. As a result, the money supply in the U.S. increased by nearly 60 percent, which convinced even more Americans of the safety of investing in questionable schemes. They felt that prosperity was boundless and that extreme risks were likely tickets to wealth. Named for Charles Ponzi, the original “Ponzi schemes” emerged early in the 1920s to encourage novice investors to divert funds to unfounded ventures, which in reality simply used new investors’ funds to pay off older investors as the schemes grew in size. Speculation, where investors purchased into high-risk



schemes that they hoped would pay off quickly, became the norm. Several banks, including deposit institutions that originally avoided investment loans, began to offer easy credit, allowing people to invest, even when they lacked the money to do so. An example of this mindset was the Florida land boom of the 1920s: Real estate developers touted Florida as a tropical paradise and investors went all in, buying land they had never seen with money they didn't have and selling it for even higher prices.

## Selling Optimism and Risk

Advertising offers a useful window into the popular perceptions and beliefs of an era. By seeing how businesses were presenting their goods to consumers, it is possible to sense the hopes and aspirations of people at that moment in history. Maybe companies are selling patriotism or pride in technological advances. Maybe they are pushing idealized views of parenthood or safety. In the 1920s, advertisers were selling opportunity and euphoria, further feeding the notions of many Americans that prosperity would never end.

In the decade before the Great Depression, the optimism of the American public was seemingly boundless. Advertisements from that era show large new cars, timesaving labor devices, and, of course, land. This advertisement for California real estate illustrates how realtors in the West, much like the ongoing Florida land boom, used a combination of the hard sell and easy credit. "Buy now!!" the ad shouts. "You are sure to make money on these." In great numbers, people did. With easy access to credit and hard-pushing advertisements like this one, many felt that they could not afford to miss out on such an opportunity. Unfortunately, overspeculation in California and hurricanes along the Gulf Coast and in Florida conspired to burst this land bubble, and would-be millionaires were left with nothing but the ads that once pulled them in.



Another Ratterree Tract  
**ADAMS SQUARE**  
 Los Angeles, the Fastest Growing City in the U. S. A.  
**BUY NOW!!**  
 Put Your Money in Real Estate—It Will Grow With the City  
 We believe Adams Square is the biggest realty bargain ever offered in Los Angeles  
 Adams Square fronts on Adams boulevard, one of the most important thoroughfares between Los Angeles and the beach cities, and is in the direct trend of expansion from the city to the sea.  
 Adams Square is close in, with five cent yellow ear-bushes for fortunate location as to boulevard.  
 There is no better place in Los Angeles than Adams Square from every point of view, for location, location or convenience.  
 Adams Square is exceptionally beautiful, commanding views such that cannot be brought in but few places. In no other location can you buy at such attractive prices.  
 The reason we can sell you this property, which is within the reach of all, is we are the owners, backed by national capital and with an enormous business that we cannot do in.  
 "Preservation Is the Thief of Time"  
**Come Out Tomorrow**  
 By Motor—Wait on Adams to Kings Ave.  
 West Adams "Then" Car to Kings Ave.  
**The RATTERREE BROTHERS Co.**  
 Close In—Not Away Out in the Country  
 60 FOOT BUNGALOW RESTRICTED LOTS \$749 \$50 DOWN 15 MONTHLY  
 ADAMS ST. BUSINESS LOTS \$1499 250 DOWN 25 MONTHLY  
 INTEREST PAID IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDED — You Are Sure to Make Money on These

This real estate advertisement from Los Angeles illustrates the hard-sell techniques and easy credit offered to those who wished to buy in. Unfortunately, the opportunities being promoted with these techniques were of little value, and many lost their investments. (credit: "army.arch"/Flickr)

The Florida land boom went bust in 1925–1926. A combination of negative press about the speculative nature of the boom, IRS investigations into the questionable financial practices of several land brokers, and a railroad embargo that limited the delivery of construction supplies into the region significantly hampered investor interest. The subsequent Great Miami Hurricane of 1926 drove most land developers into outright bankruptcy. However, speculation continued throughout the decade, this time in the stock market. Buyers purchased stock “on margin”—buying for a small down payment with borrowed money, with the intention of quickly selling at a much higher price before the remaining payment came due—which worked well as long as prices continued to rise. Speculators were aided by retail stock brokerage firms, which catered to average investors anxious to play the market but lacking direct ties to investment banking houses or larger brokerage firms. When prices began to fluctuate in the summer of 1929, investors sought excuses to continue their speculation. When fluctuations



turned to outright and steady losses, everyone started to sell. As September began to unfold, the Dow Jones Industrial Average peaked at a value of 381 points, or roughly ten times the stock market's value, at the start of the 1920s.

Several warning signs portended the impending crash but went unheeded by Americans still giddy over the potential fortunes that speculation might promise. A brief downturn in the market on September 18, 1929, raised questions among more-seasoned investment bankers, leading some to predict an end to high stock values, but did little to stem the tide of investment. Even the collapse of the London Stock Exchange on September 20 failed to fully curtail the optimism of American investors. However, when the New York Stock Exchange lost 11 percent of its value on October 24—often referred to as “Black Thursday”—key American investors sat up and took notice. In an effort to forestall a much-feared panic, leading banks, including Chase National, National City, J.P. Morgan, and others, conspired to purchase large amounts of blue chip stocks (including U.S. Steel) in order to keep the prices artificially high. Even that effort failed in the growing wave of stock sales. Nevertheless, Hoover delivered a radio address on Friday in which he assured the American people, “The fundamental business of the country . . . is on a sound and prosperous basis.”

As newspapers across the country began to cover the story in earnest, investors anxiously awaited the start of the following week. When the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost another 13 percent of its value on Monday morning, many knew the end of stock market speculation was near. The evening before the infamous crash was ominous. Jonathan Leonard, a newspaper reporter who regularly covered the stock market beat, wrote of how Wall Street “lit up like a Christmas tree.” Brokers and businessmen who feared the worst the next day crowded into restaurants and speakeasies (a place where alcoholic beverages were illegally sold). After a night of heavy drinking, they retreated to nearby hotels or flop-houses (cheap boarding houses), all of which were overbooked, and awaited sunrise. Children from nearby slums and tenement districts played



stickball in the streets of the financial district, using wads of ticker tape for balls. Although they all awoke to newspapers filled with predictions of a financial turnaround, as well as technical reasons why the decline might be short-lived, the crash on Tuesday morning, October 29, caught few by surprise.

No one even heard the opening bell on Wall Street that day, as shouts of “Sell! Sell!” drowned it out. In the first three minutes alone, nearly three million shares of stock, accounting for \$2 million of wealth, changed hands. The volume of Western Union telegrams tripled, and telephone lines could not meet the demand, as investors sought any means available to dump their stock immediately. Rumors spread of investors jumping from their office windows. Fistfights broke out on the trading floor, where one broker fainted from physical exhaustion. Stock trades happened at such a furious pace that runners had nowhere to store the trade slips, and so they resorted to stuffing them into trash cans. Although the stock exchange’s board of governors briefly considered closing the exchange early, they subsequently chose to let the market run its course, lest the American public panic even further at the thought of closure. When the final bell rang, errand boys spent hours sweeping up tons of paper, tickertape, and sales slips. Among the more curious finds in the rubbish were torn suit coats, crumpled eyeglasses, and one broker’s artificial leg. Outside a nearby brokerage house, a policeman allegedly found a discarded birdcage with a live parrot squawking, “More margin! More margin!”

On Black Tuesday, October 29, stock holders traded over sixteen million shares and lost over \$14 billion in wealth in a single day. To put this in context, a trading day of three million shares was considered a busy day on the stock market. People unloaded their stock as quickly as they could, never minding the loss. Banks, facing debt and seeking to protect their own assets, demanded payment for the loans they had provided to individual investors. Those individuals who could not afford to pay found their stocks sold immediately and their life savings wiped out in minutes, yet their debt to the bank still remained.



The financial outcome of the crash was devastating. Between September 1 and November 30, 1929, the stock market lost over one-half its value, dropping from \$64 billion to approximately \$30 billion. Any effort to stem the tide was, as one historian noted, tantamount to bailing Niagara Falls with a bucket. The crash affected many more than the relatively few Americans who invested in the stock market.



*October 29, 1929, or Black Tuesday, witnessed thousands of people racing to Wall Street discount brokerages and markets to sell their stocks. Prices plummeted throughout the day, eventually leading to a complete stock market crash.*

While only 10 percent of households had investments, over 90 percent of all banks had invested in the stock market. Many banks failed due to their dwindling cash reserves. This was in part due to the Federal Reserve lowering the limits of cash reserves that banks were traditionally required to hold in their vaults, as well as the fact that many banks invested in the stock market themselves. Eventually, thousands of banks closed their doors after losing all of their assets, leaving their customers penniless. While a few savvy investors got out at the right time and eventually made fortunes buying up discarded stock, those success stories were rare. Housewives who speculated with grocery money, bookkeepers who embezzled company funds hoping to strike it rich and pay the funds back before getting caught, and bankers who used customer deposits to follow speculative trends all lost. While the stock market crash was the trigger, the lack of appropriate economic and banking safeguards, along with a public psyche that pursued wealth and prosperity at all costs, allowed this event to spiral downward into a depression.



The [National Humanities Center](#) has brought together a selection of newspaper commentary from the 1920s, from before the crash to its aftermath. Read through to see what journalists and financial analysts thought of the situation at the time.

## Causes of the Crash

The crash of 1929 did not occur in a vacuum, nor did it cause the Great Depression. Rather, it was a tipping point where the underlying weaknesses in the economy, specifically in the nation's banking system, came to the fore. It also represented both the end of an era characterized by blind faith in American exceptionalism and the beginning of one in which citizens began increasingly to question some long-held American values. A number of factors played a role in bringing the stock market to this point and contributed to the downward trend in the market, which continued well into the 1930s. In addition to the Federal Reserve's questionable policies and misguided banking practices, three primary reasons for the collapse of the stock market were international economic woes, poor income distribution, and the psychology of public confidence.

After World War I, both America's allies and the defeated nations of Germany and Austria contended with disastrous economies. The Allies owed large amounts of money to U.S. banks, which had advanced them money during the war effort. Unable to repay these debts, the Allies looked to reparations from Germany and Austria to help. The economies of those countries, however, were struggling badly, and they could not pay their reparations, despite the loans that the U.S. provided to assist with their payments. The U.S. government refused to forgive these loans, and American banks



were in the position of extending additional private loans to foreign governments, who used them to repay their debts to the U.S. government, essentially shifting their obligations to private banks. When other countries began to default on this second wave of private bank loans, still more strain was placed on U.S. banks, which soon sought to liquidate these loans at the first sign of a stock market crisis.

Poor income distribution among Americans compounded the problem. A strong stock market relies on today's buyers becoming tomorrow's sellers, and therefore it must always have an influx of new buyers. In the 1920s, this was not the case. Eighty percent of American families had virtually no savings, and only one-half to 1 percent of Americans controlled over a third of the wealth. This scenario meant that there were no new buyers coming into the marketplace, and nowhere for sellers to unload their stock as the speculation came to a close. In addition, the vast majority of Americans with limited savings lost their accounts as local banks closed, and likewise lost their jobs as investment in business and industry came to a screeching halt.

Finally, one of the most important factors in the crash was the contagion effect of panic. For much of the 1920s, the public felt confident that prosperity would continue forever, and therefore, in a self-fulfilling cycle, the market continued to grow. But once the panic began, it spread quickly and with the same cyclical results; people were worried that the market was going down, they sold their stock, and the market continued to drop. This was partly due to Americans' inability to weather market volatility, given the limited cash surpluses they had on hand, as well as their psychological concern that economic recovery might never happen.

## IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE CRASH

After the crash, Hoover announced that the economy was



“fundamentally sound.” On the last day of trading in 1929, the New York Stock Exchange held its annual wild and lavish party, complete with confetti, musicians, and illegal alcohol. The U.S. Department of Labor predicted that 1930 would be “a splendid employment year.” These sentiments were not as baseless as it may seem in hindsight. Historically, markets cycled up and down, and periods of growth were often followed by downturns that corrected themselves. But this time, there was no market correction; rather, the abrupt shock of the crash was followed by an even more devastating depression. Investors, along with the general public, withdrew their money from banks by the thousands, fearing the banks would go under. The more people pulled out their money in bank runs, the closer the banks came to insolvency.

The contagion effect of the crash grew quickly. With investors losing billions of dollars, they invested very little in new or expanded businesses. At this time, two industries had the greatest impact on the country’s economic future in terms of investment, potential growth, and employment: automotive and construction. After the crash, both were hit hard. In November 1929, fewer cars were built than in any other month since November



*As the financial markets collapsed, hurting the banks that had gambled with their holdings, people began to fear that the money they had in the bank would be lost. This began bank runs across the country, a period of still more panic, where people pulled their money out of banks to keep it hidden at home.*

1919. Even before the crash, widespread saturation of the market meant that few Americans bought them, leading to a slowdown. Afterward, very few could afford them. By 1933, Stutz, Locomobile, Durant, Franklin, Deussenberg, and Pierce-Arrow automobiles, all luxury models, were largely unavailable; production had ground to a halt. They would not be made again until 1949. In construction, the



drop-off was even more dramatic. It would be another thirty years before a new hotel or theater was built in New York City. The Empire State Building itself stood half empty for years after being completed in 1931.

The damage to major industries led to, and reflected, limited purchasing by both consumers and businesses. Even those Americans who continued to make a modest income during the Great Depression lost the drive for conspicuous consumption that they exhibited in the 1920s. People with less money to buy goods could not help businesses grow; in turn, businesses with no market for their products could not hire workers or purchase raw materials. Employers began to lay off workers. The country's gross national product declined by over 25 percent within a year, and wages and salaries declined by \$4 billion. Unemployment tripled, from 1.5 million at the end of 1929 to 4.5 million by the end of 1930. By mid-1930, the slide into economic chaos had begun but was nowhere near complete.

## THE NEW REALITY FOR AMERICANS

For most Americans, the crash affected daily life in myriad ways. In the immediate aftermath, there was a run on the banks, where citizens took their money out, if they could get it, and hid their savings under mattresses, in bookshelves, or anywhere else they felt was safe. Some went so far as to exchange their dollars for gold and ship it out of the country. A number of banks failed outright, and others, in their attempts to stay solvent, called in loans that people could not afford to repay. Working-class Americans saw their wages drop: Even Henry Ford, the champion of a high minimum wage, began lowering wages by as much as a dollar a day. Southern cotton planters paid workers only twenty cents for every one hundred pounds of cotton picked, meaning that the *strongest* picker might



earn sixty cents for a fourteen-hour day of work. Cities struggled to collect property taxes and subsequently laid off teachers and police.

The new hardships that people faced were not always immediately apparent; many communities felt the changes but could not necessarily look out their windows and see anything different. Men who lost their jobs didn't stand on street corners begging; they disappeared. They might be found keeping warm by a trashcan bonfire or picking through garbage at dawn, but mostly, they stayed out of public view. As the effects of the crash continued, however, the results became more evident. Those living in cities grew accustomed to seeing long breadlines of unemployed men waiting for a meal. Companies fired workers and tore down employee housing to avoid paying property taxes. The landscape of the country had changed.

The hardships of the Great Depression threw family life into disarray. Both marriage and birth rates declined in the decade after the crash. The most vulnerable members of society—children, women, minorities, and the working class—struggled the most. Parents often sent children out to beg for food at restaurants and stores to save themselves from the disgrace of begging. Many children dropped out of school, and even fewer went to college. Childhood, as it had

existed in the prosperous twenties, was over. And yet, for many children living in rural areas where the affluence of the previous decade was not fully developed, the Depression was not viewed as a great challenge. School continued. Play was simple and enjoyed.



*As the Great Depression set in, thousands of unemployed men lined up in cities around the country, waiting for a free meal or a hot cup of coffee.*



Families adapted by growing more in gardens, canning, and preserving, wasting little food if any. Home-sewn clothing became the norm as the decade progressed, as did creative methods of shoe repair with cardboard soles. Yet, one always knew of stories of the “other” families who suffered more, including those living in cardboard boxes or caves. By one estimate, as many as 200,000 children moved about the country as vagrants due to familial disintegration.

Women’s lives, too, were profoundly affected. Some wives and mothers sought employment to make ends meet, an undertaking that was often met with strong resistance from husbands and potential employers. Many men derided and criticized women who worked, feeling that jobs should go to unemployed men. Some campaigned to keep companies from hiring married women, and an increasing number of school districts expanded the long-held practice of banning the hiring of married female teachers. Despite the pushback, women entered the workforce in increasing numbers, from ten million at the start of the Depression to nearly thirteen million by the end of the 1930s. This increase took place in spite of the twenty-six states that passed a variety of laws to prohibit the employment of married women. Several women found employment in the emerging pink collar occupations, viewed as traditional women’s work, including jobs as telephone operators, social workers, and secretaries. Others took jobs as maids and housecleaners, working for those fortunate few who had maintained their wealth.

White women’s forays into domestic service came at the expense of minority women, who had even fewer employment options. Unsurprisingly, African American men and women experienced unemployment, and the grinding poverty that followed, at double and triple the rates of their white counterparts. By 1932, unemployment among African Americans reached near 50 percent. In rural areas, where large numbers of African Americans continued to live despite the Great Migration of 1910–1930, depression-era life represented an intensified version of the poverty that they



traditionally experienced. Subsistence farming allowed many African Americans who lost either their land or jobs working for white landholders to survive, but their hardships increased. Life for African Americans in urban settings was equally trying, with blacks and working-class whites living in close proximity and competing for scarce jobs and resources.

Life for all rural Americans was difficult. Farmers largely did not experience the widespread prosperity of the 1920s. Although continued advancements in farming techniques and agricultural machinery led to increased agricultural production, decreasing demand (particularly in the previous markets created by World War I) steadily drove down commodity prices. As a result, farmers could barely pay the debt they owed on machinery and land mortgages, and even then could do so only as a result of generous lines of credit from banks. While factory workers may have lost their jobs and savings in the crash, many farmers also lost their homes, due to the thousands of farm foreclosures sought by desperate bankers. Between 1930 and 1935, nearly 750,000 family farms disappeared through foreclosure or bankruptcy. Even for those who managed to keep their farms, there was little market for their crops. Unemployed workers had less money to spend on food, and when they did purchase goods, the market excess had driven prices so low that farmers could barely piece together a living. A now-famous example of the farmer's plight is that, when the price of coal began to exceed that of corn, farmers would simply burn corn to stay warm in the winter.



As the effects of the Great Depression worsened, wealthier Americans had particular concern for “the deserving poor”—those who had lost all of their money due to no fault of their own. This concept gained greater attention beginning in the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when early social reformers sought to improve the quality of life for all Americans by addressing the poverty that was becoming more prevalent, particularly in emerging urban areas. By the



*Because there was no infrastructure to support them should they become unemployed or destitute, the elderly were extremely vulnerable during the Great Depression. As the depression continued, the results of this tenuous situation became more evident, as shown in this photo of a vacant storefront in San Francisco, captured by Dorothea Lange in 1935.*

time of the Great Depression, social reformers and humanitarian agencies had determined that the “deserving poor” belonged to a different category from those who had speculated and lost. However, the sheer volume of Americans who fell into this group meant that charitable assistance could not begin to reach them all. Some fifteen million “deserving poor,” or a full one-third of the labor force, were struggling by 1932. The country had no mechanism or system in place to help so many; however, Hoover remained adamant that such relief should rest in the hands of private agencies, not with the federal government.



Unable to receive aid from the government, Americans thus turned to private charities; churches, synagogues, and other religious organizations; and state aid. But these organizations were not prepared to deal with the scope of the problem. Private aid organizations showed declining assets as well during the Depression, with fewer Americans possessing the ability to donate to such charities. Likewise, state governments were particularly



*In the early 1930s, without significant government relief programs, many people in urban centers relied on private agencies for assistance. In New York City, St. Peter's Mission distributed bread, soup, and canned goods to large numbers of the unemployed and others in need.*

ill-equipped. Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first to institute a Department of Welfare in New York in 1929. City governments had equally little to offer. In New York City in 1932, family allowances were \$2.39 per week, and only one-half of the families who qualified actually received them. In Detroit, allowances fell to fifteen cents a day per person, and eventually ran out completely. In most cases, relief was only in the form of food and fuel; organizations provided nothing in the way of rent, shelter, medical care, clothing, or other necessities. There was no infrastructure to support the elderly, who were the most vulnerable, and this population largely depended on their adult children to support them, adding to families' burdens.

During this time, local community groups, such as police and teachers, worked to help the neediest. New York City police, for example, began contributing 1 percent of their salaries to start a food fund that was geared to help those found starving on the streets. In 1932, New York City schoolteachers also joined forces to try to help; they contributed as much as \$250,000 per month from their own salaries to help needy children. Chicago teachers



did the same, feeding some eleven thousand students out of their own pockets in 1931, despite the fact that many of them had not been paid a salary in months. These noble efforts, however, failed to fully address the level of desperation that the American public was facing.

## Section Summary

The prosperous decade leading up to the stock market crash of 1929, with easy access to credit and a culture that encouraged speculation and risk-taking, put into place the conditions for the country's fall. The stock market, which had been growing for years, began to decline in the summer and early fall of 1929, precipitating a panic that led to a massive stock sell-off in late October. In one month, the market lost close to 40 percent of its value. Although only a small percentage of Americans had invested in the stock market, the crash affected everyone. Banks lost millions and, in response, foreclosed on business and personal loans, which in turn pressured customers to pay back their loans, whether or not they had the cash. As the pressure mounted on individuals, the effects of the crash continued to spread. The state of the international economy, the inequitable income distribution in the United States, and, perhaps most importantly, the contagion effect of panic all played roles in the continued downward spiral of the economy.



In the immediate aftermath of the crash, the government was confident that the economy would rebound. But several factors led it to worsen instead. One significant issue was the integral role of automobiles and construction in American industry. With the crash, there was no money for either auto purchases or major construction projects; these industries therefore suffered, laying off workers, cutting wages, and reducing benefits. Affluent Americans considered the deserving poor—those who lost their money due to no fault of their own—to be especially in need of help. But at the outset of the Great Depression, there were few social safety nets in place to provide them with the necessary relief. While some families retained their wealth and middle-class lifestyle, many more were plunged quite suddenly into poverty and often homelessness. Children dropped out of school, mothers and wives went into domestic service, and the fabric of American society changed inexorably.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1038>

### *Review Question*

1. What were Hoover's plans when he first entered office, and how were these reflective of the years that preceded the Great Depression?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. At the outset of his presidency, Hoover planned to establish an agenda that would promote continued economic prosperity and eradicate poverty. He planned to eliminate federal regulations of the economy, which he believed would allow for maximum growth. For Americans themselves, he advocated a spirit of rugged individualism: Americans could bring about their own success or failure in partnership with the government, but remain unhindered by unnecessary government intervention in their everyday lives. These philosophies and policies reflected both the prosperity and optimism of the previous decade and a continuation of the postwar “return to normalcy” championed by Hoover’s Republican predecessors.

## Footnotes

1. Herbert Hoover, address delivered in Denver, Colorado, 30 October 1936, compiled in Hoover, *Addresses Upon the American Road, 1933-1938* (New York, 1938), p. 216. This particular quotation is frequently misidentified as part of Hoover’s inaugural address in 1932.



## *Glossary*

**bank run** the withdrawal by a large number of individuals or investors of money from a bank due to fears of the bank's instability, with the ironic effect of increasing the bank's vulnerability to failure

**Black Tuesday** October 29, 1929, when a mass panic caused a crash in the stock market and stockholders divested over sixteen million shares, causing the overall value of the stock market to drop precipitously

**speculation** the practice of investing in risky financial opportunities in the hopes of a fast payout due to market fluctuations



# 134. President Hoover's Response

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain Herbert Hoover's responses to the Great Depression and how they reflected his political philosophy
- Identify the local, city, and state efforts to combat the Great Depression
- Analyze the frustration and anger that a majority of Americans directed at Herbert Hoover

President Hoover was unprepared for the scope of the depression crisis, and his limited response did not begin to help the millions of Americans in need. The steps he took were very much in keeping with his philosophy of limited government, a philosophy that many had shared with him until the upheavals of the Great Depression made it clear that a more direct government response was required. But Hoover was stubborn in his refusal to give "handouts," as he saw direct government aid. He called for a spirit of volunteerism among America's businesses, asking them to keep workers employed, and he exhorted the American people to tighten their belts and make do in the spirit of "rugged individualism." While Hoover's philosophy and his appeal to the country were very much in keeping with his character, it was not enough to keep the economy from plummeting further into economic chaos.



The steps Hoover did ultimately take were too little, too late. He created programs for putting people back to work and helping beleaguered local and state charities with aid. But the programs were small in scale and highly specific as to who could benefit, and they only touched a small percentage of those in need. As the situation worsened, the public grew increasingly unhappy with Hoover. He left office with one of the lowest approval ratings of any president in history.

## THE INITIAL REACTION

In the immediate aftermath of Black Tuesday, Hoover sought to reassure Americans that all was well. Reading his words after the fact, it is easy to find fault. In 1929 he said, “Any lack of confidence in the economic future or the strength of business in the United States is foolish.” In 1930, he stated, “The worst is behind us.” In 1931, he pledged federal aid should he ever witness starvation in the country; but as of that date, he had yet to see such need in America, despite the very real evidence that children and the elderly were starving to death. Yet Hoover was neither intentionally blind nor unsympathetic. He simply held fast to a belief system that did not change as the realities of the Great Depression set in.

Hoover believed strongly in the ethos of American individualism: that hard work brought its own rewards. His life story testified to that belief. Hoover was born into poverty, made his way through college at Stanford University, and eventually made his fortune as an engineer. This experience, as well as his extensive travels in China and throughout Europe, shaped his fundamental conviction that the very existence of American civilization depended upon the moral fiber of its citizens, as evidenced by their ability to overcome all hardships through individual effort and resolve. The idea of government handouts to Americans was repellant to him. Whereas Europeans might need assistance, such as his hunger relief work



in Belgium during and after World War I, he believed the American character to be different. In a 1931 radio address, he said, “The spread of government destroys initiative and thus destroys character.”

Likewise, Hoover was not completely unaware of the potential harm that wild stock speculation might create if left unchecked. As secretary of commerce, Hoover often warned President Coolidge of the dangers that such speculation engendered. In the weeks before his inauguration, he offered many interviews to newspapers and magazines, urging Americans to curtail their rampant stock investments, and even encouraged the Federal Reserve to raise the discount rate to make it more costly for local banks to lend money to potential speculators. However, fearful of creating a panic, Hoover never issued a stern warning to discourage Americans from such investments. Neither Hoover, nor any other politician of that day, ever gave serious thought to outright government regulation of the stock market. This was even true in his personal choices, as Hoover often lamented poor stock advice he had once offered to a friend. When the stock nose-dived, Hoover bought the shares from his friend to assuage his guilt, vowing never again to advise anyone on matters of investment.

In keeping with these principles, Hoover’s response to the crash focused on two very common American traditions: He asked individuals to tighten their belts and work harder, and he asked the business community to voluntarily help sustain the economy by retaining workers and continuing production. He immediately summoned a conference of leading industrialists to meet in Washington, DC, urging them to maintain their current wages while America rode out this brief economic panic. The crash, he assured business leaders, was not part of a greater downturn; they had nothing to worry about. Similar meetings with utility companies and railroad executives elicited promises for billions of dollars in new construction projects, while labor leaders agreed to withhold demands for wage increases and workers continued to labor. Hoover also persuaded Congress to pass a \$160 million tax cut



to bolster American incomes, leading many to conclude that the president was doing all he could to stem the tide of the panic. In April 1930, the *New York Times* editorial board concluded that “No one in his place could have done more.”

However, these modest steps were not enough. By late 1931, when it became clear that the economy would not improve on its own, Hoover recognized the need for some government intervention. He created the President’s Emergency Committee for Employment (PECE), later renamed the President’s Organization of Unemployment Relief (POUR). In keeping with Hoover’s distaste of what he viewed as handouts, this organization did *not* provide direct federal relief to people in need. Instead, it assisted state and private relief agencies, such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, YMCA, and Community Chest. Hoover also strongly urged people of means to donate funds to help the poor, and he himself gave significant private donations to worthy causes. But these private efforts could not alleviate the widespread effects of poverty.

Congress pushed for a more direct government response to the hardship. In 1930–1931, it attempted to pass a \$60 million bill to provide relief to drought victims by allowing them access to food, fertilizer, and animal feed. Hoover stood fast in his refusal to provide food, resisting any element of direct relief. The final bill of \$47 million provided for everything *except* food but did not come close to adequately addressing the crisis. Again in 1931, Congress proposed the Federal Emergency Relief Bill, which would have provided \$375 million to states to help provide food, clothing, and shelter to the homeless. But Hoover opposed the bill, stating that it ruined the balance of power between states and the federal government, and in February 1932, it was defeated by fourteen votes.

However, the president’s adamant opposition to direct-relief federal government programs should not be viewed as one of indifference or uncaring toward the suffering American people. His personal sympathy for those in need was boundless. Hoover was one of only two presidents to reject his salary for the office he



held. Throughout the Great Depression, he donated an average of \$25,000 annually to various relief organizations to assist in their efforts. Furthermore, he helped to raise \$500,000 in private funds to support the White House Conference on Child Health and Welfare in 1930. Rather than indifference or heartlessness, Hoover's steadfast adherence to a philosophy of individualism as the path toward long-term American recovery explained many of his policy decisions. "A voluntary deed," he repeatedly commented, "is infinitely more precious to our national ideal and spirit than a thousand-fold poured from the Treasury."

As conditions worsened, however, Hoover eventually relaxed his opposition to federal relief and formed the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) in 1932, in part because it was an election year and Hoover hoped to keep his office. Although not a form of direct relief to the American people in greatest need, the RFC was much larger in scope than any preceding effort, setting aside \$2 billion in taxpayer money to rescue banks, credit unions, and insurance companies. The goal was to boost confidence in the nation's financial institutions by ensuring that they were on solid footing. This model was flawed on a number of levels. First, the program only lent money to banks with sufficient collateral, which meant that most of the aid went to large banks. In fact, of the first \$61 million loaned, \$41 million went to just three banks. Small town and rural banks got almost nothing. Furthermore, at this time, confidence in financial institutions was not the primary concern of most Americans. They needed food and jobs. Many had no money to put into the banks, no matter how confident they were that the banks were safe.

Hoover's other attempt at federal assistance also occurred in 1932, when he endorsed a bill by Senator Robert Wagner of New York. This was the Emergency Relief and Construction Act. This act authorized the RFC to expand beyond loans to financial institutions and allotted \$1.5 billion to states to fund local public works projects. This program failed to deliver the kind of help needed, however, as Hoover severely limited the types of projects it could fund to



those that were ultimately self-paying (such as toll bridges and public housing) and those that required skilled workers. While well intended, these programs maintained the status quo, and there was still no direct federal relief to the individuals who so desperately needed it.

## PUBLIC REACTION TO HOOVER

Hoover's steadfast resistance to government aid cost him the reelection and has placed him squarely at the forefront of the most unpopular presidents, according to public opinion, in modern American history. His name became synonymous with the poverty of the era: "Hooverilles" became the common name for homeless shantytowns and "Hoover blankets" for the newspapers that the homeless used to keep warm. A "Hoover flag" was a pants pocket—empty of all money—turned inside out. By the 1932 election, hitchhikers held up signs reading: "If you don't give me a ride, I'll vote for Hoover." Americans did not necessarily believe that Hoover caused the Great Depression. Their anger stemmed instead from what appeared to be a willful refusal to help regular citizens with direct aid that might allow them to recover from the crisis.





(a)



(b)

*Hoover became one of the least popular presidents in history. “Hoovervilles,” or shantytowns, were a negative reminder of his role in the nation’s financial crisis. This family (a) lived in a “Hooverville” in Elm Grove, Oklahoma. This shanty (b) was one of many making up a “Hooverville” in the Portland, Oregon area. (credit: modification of work by United States Farm Security Administration)*

## FRUSTRATION AND PROTEST: A BAD SITUATION GROWS WORSE FOR HOOVER

Desperation and frustration often create emotional responses, and the Great Depression was no exception. Throughout 1931–1932, companies trying to stay afloat sharply cut worker wages, and, in response, workers protested in increasingly bitter strikes. As the Depression unfolded, over 80 percent of automotive workers lost their jobs. Even the typically prosperous Ford Motor Company laid off two-thirds of its workforce.

In 1932, a major strike at the Ford Motor Company factory near Detroit resulted in over sixty injuries and four deaths. Often referred to as the Ford Hunger March, the event unfolded as a planned demonstration among unemployed Ford workers who, to



protest their desperate situation, marched nine miles from Detroit to the company's River Rouge plant in Dearborn. At the Dearborn city limits, local police launched tear gas at the roughly three thousand protestors, who responded by throwing stones and clods of dirt. When they finally reached the gates of the plant, protestors faced more police and firemen, as well as private security guards. As the firemen turned hoses onto the protestors, the police and security guards opened fire. In addition to those killed and injured, police arrested fifty protestors. One week later, sixty thousand mourners attended the public funerals of the four victims of what many protesters labeled police brutality. The event set the tone for worsening labor relations in the U.S.

Farmers also organized and protested, often violently. The most notable example was the Farm Holiday Association. Led by Milo Reno, this organization held significant sway among farmers in Iowa, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Dakotas. Although they never comprised a majority of farmers in any of these states, their public actions drew press attention nationwide. Among their demands, the association sought a federal government plan to set agricultural prices artificially high enough to cover the farmers' costs, as well as a government commitment to sell any farm surpluses on the world market. To achieve their goals, the group called for farm holidays, during which farmers would neither sell their produce nor purchase any other goods until the government met their demands. However, the greatest strength of the association came from the unexpected and seldom-planned actions of its members, which included barricading roads into markets, attacking nonmember farmers, and destroying their produce. Some members even raided small town stores, destroying produce on the shelves. Members also engaged in "penny auctions," bidding pennies on foreclosed farm land and threatening any potential buyers with bodily harm if they competed in the sale. Once they won the auction, the association returned the land to the original owner. In Iowa, farmers threatened to hang a local judge if he signed any more farm foreclosures. At least one death occurred as a direct result of



these protests before they waned following the election of Franklin Roosevelt.

One of the most notable protest movements occurred toward the end of Hoover's presidency and centered on the Bonus Expeditionary Force, or Bonus Army, in the spring of 1932. In this protest, approximately fifteen thousand World War I veterans marched on Washington to demand early payment of their veteran bonuses, which were not due to be paid until 1945. The group camped out in vacant federal buildings and set up camps in Anacostia Flats near the Capitol building.

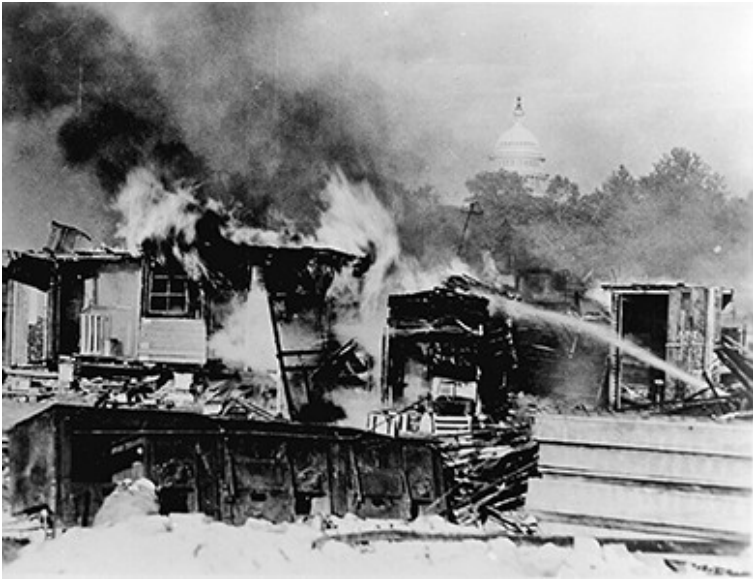


*In the spring of 1932, World War I veterans marched on Washington and set up camps in Anacostia Flats, remaining there for weeks. (credit: Library of Congress)*

Many veterans remained in the city in protest for nearly two months, although the U.S. Senate officially rejected their request in July. By the middle of that month, Hoover wanted them gone. He ordered the police to empty the buildings and clear out the



camps, and in the exchange that followed, police fired into the crowd, killing two veterans. Fearing an armed uprising, Hoover then ordered General Douglas MacArthur, along with his aides, Dwight Eisenhower and George Patton, to forcibly remove the veterans from Anacostia Flats. The ensuing raid proved catastrophic, as the military burned down the shantytown and injured dozens of people, including a twelve-week-old infant who was killed when accidentally struck by a tear gas canister.



*When the U.S. Senate denied early payment of their veteran bonuses, and Hoover ordered their makeshift camps cleared, the Bonus Army protest turned violent, cementing Hoover's demise as a president. (credit: U.S. Department of Defense)*

As Americans bore witness to photographs and newsreels of the U.S. Army forcibly removing veterans, Hoover's popularity plummeted even further. By the summer of 1932, he was largely a defeated man. His pessimism and failure mirrored that of the nation's citizens. America was a country in desperate need: in need of a charismatic



leader to restore public confidence as well as provide concrete solutions to pull the economy out of the Great Depression.

Whether he truly believed it or simply thought the American people wanted to hear it, Hoover continued to state publicly that the country was getting back on track. Listen as he speaks about the [“Success of Recovery”](#) at a campaign stop in Detroit, Michigan on October 22, 1932.

## Section Summary

President Hoover’s deeply held philosophy of American individualism, which he maintained despite extraordinary economic circumstances, made him particularly unsuited to deal with the crisis of the Great Depression. He greatly resisted government intervention, considering it a path to the downfall of American greatness. His initial response of asking Americans to find their own paths to recovery and seeking voluntary business measures to stimulate the economy could not stem the tide of the Depression. Ultimately, Hoover did create some federal relief programs, such as the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), which sought to boost public confidence in financial institutions by ensuring that they



were on solid footing. When this measure did little to help impoverished individuals, he signed the Emergency Relief Act, which allowed the RFC to invest in local public works projects. But even this was too little, too late. The severe limits on the types of projects funded and type of workers used meant that most Americans saw no benefit.

The American public ultimately responded with anger and protest to Hoover's apparent inability to create solutions. Protests ranged from factory strikes to farm riots, culminating in the notorious Bonus Army protest in the spring of 1932. Veterans from World War I lobbied to receive their bonuses immediately, rather than waiting until 1945. The government denied them, and in the ensuing chaos, Hoover called in the military to disrupt the protest. The violence of this act was the final blow for Hoover, whose popularity was already at an all-time low.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1039>

### *Review Question*

1. What attempts did Hoover make to offer federal relief? How would you evaluate the success or failure of these programs?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Hoover formed the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) in 1932. This represented a significant effort, although it did not provide any direct aid to needy Americans. The RFC set aside \$2 billion in taxpayer money to rescue banks, credit unions, and insurance companies, hoping to promote Americans' confidence in financial institutions. However, by lending money only to banks with sufficient collateral, he ensured that most of the recipients of the aid were large banks. Additionally, most Americans at this time did not have assets to place into banks, however confident they may have felt. In 1932, Hoover also endorsed the Emergency Relief and Construction Act, which allotted \$1.5 billion to states to fund local public works projects. Hoover's limitations upon the types of projects that could receive funding and the types of workers who could participate, however, limited the program's utility.

## *Glossary*

**American individualism** the belief, strongly held by Herbert Hoover and others, that hard work and individual effort, absent government interference, comprised the formula for success in the U.S.



**Bonus Army** a group of World War I veterans and affiliated groups who marched to Washington in 1932 to demand their war bonuses early, only to be refused and forcibly removed by the U.S. Army



# 135. The Depths of the Great Depression

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the challenges that everyday Americans faced as a result of the Great Depression and analyze the government's initial unwillingness to provide assistance
- Explain the particular challenges that African Americans faced during the crisis
- Identify the unique challenges that farmers in the Great Plains faced during this period

From industrial strongholds to the rural Great Plains, from factory workers to farmers, the Great Depression affected millions. In cities, as industry slowed, then sometimes stopped altogether, workers lost jobs and joined breadlines, or sought out other charitable efforts. With limited government relief efforts, private charities tried to help, but they were unable to match the pace of demand. In rural areas, farmers suffered still more. In some parts of the country, prices for crops dropped so precipitously that farmers could not earn enough to pay their mortgages, losing their farms to foreclosure. In the Great Plains, one of the worst droughts in history left the land barren and unfit for growing even minimal food to live on.

The country's most vulnerable populations, such as children, the



elderly, and those subject to discrimination, like African Americans, were the hardest hit. Most white Americans felt entitled to what few jobs were available, leaving African Americans unable to find work, even in the jobs once considered their domain. In all, the economic misery was unprecedented in the country's history.

## STARVING TO DEATH

By the end of 1932, the Great Depression had affected some sixty million people, most of whom wealthier Americans perceived as the “deserving poor.” Yet, at the time, federal efforts to help those in need were extremely limited, and national charities had neither the capacity nor the will to elicit the large-scale response required to address the problem. The American Red Cross did exist, but Chairman John Barton Payne contended that unemployment was not an “Act of God” but rather an “Act of Man,” and therefore refused to get involved in widespread direct relief efforts. Clubs like the Elks tried to provide food, as did small groups of individually organized college students. Religious organizations remained on the front lines, offering food and shelter. In larger cities, breadlines and soup lines became a common sight. At one count in 1932, there were as many as eighty-two breadlines in New York City.

Despite these efforts, however, people were destitute and ultimately starving. Families would first run through any savings, if they were lucky enough to have any. Then, the few who had insurance would cash out their policies. Cash surrender payments of individual insurance policies tripled in the first three years of the Great Depression, with insurance companies issuing total payments in excess of \$1.2 billion in 1932 alone. When those funds were depleted, people would borrow from family and friends, and when they could get no more, they would simply stop paying rent or mortgage payments. When evicted, they would move in with relatives, whose own situation was likely only a step or two behind.



The added burden of additional people would speed along that family's demise, and the cycle would continue. This situation spiraled downward, and did so quickly. Even as late as 1939, over 60 percent of rural households, and 82 percent of farm families, were classified as "impoverished." In larger urban areas, unemployment levels exceeded the national average, with over half a million unemployed workers in Chicago, and nearly a million in New York City. Breadlines and soup kitchens were packed, serving as many as eighty-five thousand meals daily in New York City alone. Over fifty thousand New York citizens were homeless by the end of 1932.

Children, in particular, felt the brunt of poverty. Many in coastal cities would roam the docks in search of spoiled vegetables to bring home. Elsewhere, children begged at the doors of more well-off neighbors, hoping for stale bread, table scraps, or raw potato peelings. Said one childhood survivor of the Great Depression, "You get used to hunger. After the first few days it doesn't even hurt; you just get weak." In 1931 alone, there were at least twenty documented cases of starvation; in 1934, that number grew to 110. In rural areas where such documentation was lacking, the number was likely far higher. And while the middle class did not suffer from starvation, they experienced hunger as well.

By the time Hoover left office in 1933, the poor survived not on relief efforts, but because they had learned to be poor. A family with little food would stay in bed to save fuel and avoid burning calories. People began eating parts of animals that had normally been considered waste. They scavenged for scrap wood to burn in the furnace, and when electricity was turned off, it was not uncommon to try and tap into a neighbor's wire. Family members swapped clothes; sisters might take turns going to church in the one dress they owned. As one girl in a mountain town told her teacher, who had said to go home and get food, "I can't. It's my sister's turn to eat."



For his book on the Great Depression, *Hard Times*, author Studs Terkel interviewed hundreds of Americans from across the country. He subsequently selected over seventy interviews to air on a radio show that was based in Chicago. Visit [Studs Terkel: Conversations with America](#) to listen to those interviews, during which participants reflect on their personal hardships as well as on national events during the Great Depression.

## BLACK AND POOR: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Most African Americans did not participate in the land boom and stock market speculation that preceded the crash, but that did not stop the effects of the Great Depression from hitting them particularly hard. Subject to continuing racial discrimination, blacks nationwide fared even worse than their hard-hit white counterparts. As the prices for cotton and other agricultural products plummeted, farm owners paid workers less or simply laid them off. Landlords evicted sharecroppers, and even those who owned their land outright had to abandon it when there was no way to earn any income.

In cities, African Americans fared no better. Unemployment was rampant, and many whites felt that any available jobs belonged to whites first. In some Northern cities, whites would conspire to have African American workers fired to allow white workers access to their jobs. Even jobs traditionally held by black workers, such as household servants or janitors, were now going to whites. By 1932,

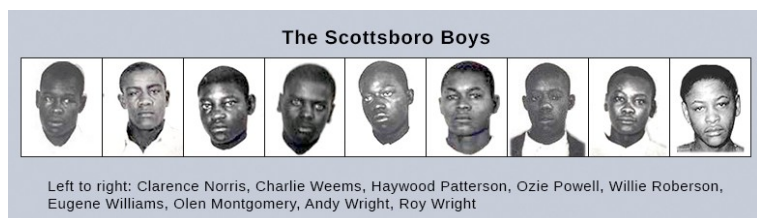


approximately one-half of all black Americans were unemployed. Racial violence also began to rise. In the South, lynching became more common again, with twenty-eight documented lynchings in 1933, compared to eight in 1932. Since communities were preoccupied with their own hardships, and organizing civil rights efforts was a long, difficult process, many resigned themselves to, or even ignored, this culture of racism and violence. Occasionally, however, an incident was notorious enough to gain national attention.

One such incident was the case of the Scottsboro Boys. In 1931, nine black boys, who had been riding the rails, were arrested for vagrancy and disorderly conduct after an altercation with some white travelers on the train. Two young white women, who had been dressed as boys and traveling with a group of white boys, came forward and said that the black boys had raped them. The case, which was tried in Scottsboro, Alabama, reignited decades of racial hatred and illustrated the injustice of the court system. Despite significant evidence that the women had not been raped at all, along with one of the women subsequently recanting her testimony, the all-white jury quickly convicted the boys and sentenced all but one of them to death. The verdict broke through the veil of indifference toward the plight of African Americans, and protests erupted among newspaper editors, academics, and social reformers in the North. The Communist Party of the United States offered to handle the case and sought retrial; the NAACP later joined in this effort. In all, the case was tried three separate times. The series of trials and retrials, appeals, and overturned convictions shone a spotlight on a system that provided poor legal counsel and relied on all-white juries. In October 1932, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with the Communist Party's defense attorneys that the defendants had been denied adequate legal representation at the original trial, and that due process as provided by the Fourteenth Amendment had been denied as a result of the exclusion of any potential black jurors. Eventually, most of the accused received lengthy prison terms and subsequent parole, but avoided the death penalty. The Scottsboro



case ultimately laid some of the early groundwork for the modern American civil rights movement. Alabama granted posthumous pardons to all defendants in 2013.



*The trial and conviction of nine African American boys in Scottsboro, Alabama, illustrated the numerous injustices of the American court system. Despite being falsely accused, the boys received lengthy prison terms and were not officially pardoned by the State of Alabama until 2013.*

Read [Voices from Scottsboro](#) for the perspectives of both participants and spectators in the Scottsboro case, from the initial trial to the moment, in 1976, when one of the women sued for slander.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE MEETS ECONOMIC HARDSHIP: THE DUST BOWL

Despite the widely held belief that rural Americans suffered less in the Great Depression due to their ability to at least grow their own food, this was not the case. Farmers, ranchers, and their families



suffered more than any group other than African Americans during the Depression.

From the turn of the century through much of World War I, farmers in the Great Plains experienced prosperity due to unusually good growing conditions, high commodity prices, and generous government farming policies that led to a rush for land. As the federal government continued to purchase all excess produce for the war effort, farmers and ranchers fell into several bad practices, including mortgaging their farms and borrowing money against future production in order to expand. However, after the war, prosperity rapidly dwindled, particularly during the recession of 1921. Seeking to recoup their losses through economies of scale in which they would expand their production even further to take full advantage of their available land and machinery, farmers plowed under native grasses to plant acre after acre of wheat, with little regard for the long-term repercussions to the soil. Regardless of these misguided efforts, commodity prices continued to drop, finally plummeting in 1929, when the price of wheat dropped from two dollars to forty cents per bushel.

Exacerbating the problem was a massive drought that began in 1931 and lasted for eight terrible years. Dust storms roiled through the Great Plains, creating huge, choking clouds that piled up in doorways and filtered into homes through closed windows. Even more quickly than it had boomed, the land of agricultural opportunity went bust, due to widespread overproduction and overuse of the land, as well as to the harsh weather conditions that followed, resulting in the creation of the Dust Bowl.





*The dust storms that blew through the Great Plains were epic in scale. Drifts of dirt piled up against doors and windows. People wore goggles and tied rags over their mouths to keep the dust out. (credit: U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)*

Livestock died, or had to be sold, as there was no money for feed. Crops intended to feed the family withered and died in the drought. Terrifying dust storms became more and more frequent, as “black blizzards” of dirt blew across the landscape and created a new illness known as “dust pneumonia.” In 1935 alone, over 850 million tons of topsoil blew away. To put this number in perspective, geologists estimate that it takes the earth five hundred years to naturally regenerate one inch of topsoil; yet, just one significant dust storm could destroy a similar amount. In their desperation to get more from the land, farmers had stripped it of the delicate balance that kept it healthy. Unaware of the consequences, they had moved away from such traditional practices as crop rotation and allowing land to regain its strength by permitting it to lie fallow between plantings, working the land to death.



For farmers, the results were catastrophic. Unlike most factory workers in the cities, in most cases, farmers lost their homes when they lost their livelihood. Most farms and ranches were originally mortgaged to small country banks that understood the dynamics of farming, but as these banks failed, they often sold rural mortgages to larger eastern banks that were less



*As the Dust Bowl continued in the Great Plains, many had to abandon their land and equipment, as captured in this image from 1936, taken in Dallas, South Dakota. (credit: United States Department of Agriculture)*

concerned with the specifics of farm life. With the effects of the drought and low commodity prices, farmers could not pay their local banks, which in turn lacked funds to pay the large urban banks. Ultimately, the large banks foreclosed on the farms, often swallowing up the small country banks in the process. It is worth noting that of the five thousand banks that closed between 1930 and 1932, over 75 percent were country banks in locations with populations under 2,500. Given this dynamic, it is easy to see why farmers in the Great Plains remained wary of big city bankers.

For farmers who survived the initial crash, the situation worsened, particularly in the Great Plains where years of overproduction and rapidly declining commodity prices took their toll. Prices continued to decline, and as farmers tried to stay afloat, they produced still more crops, which drove prices even lower. Farms failed at an astounding rate, and farmers sold out at rock-bottom prices. One farm in Shelby, Nebraska was mortgaged at \$4,100 and sold for \$49.50. One-fourth of the entire state of Mississippi was auctioned off in a single day at a foreclosure auction in April 1932.

Not all farmers tried to keep their land. Many, especially those who had arrived only recently, in an attempt to capitalize on the earlier prosperity, simply walked away. In hard-hit Oklahoma,



thousands of farmers packed up what they could and walked or drove away from the land they thought would be their future. They, along with other displaced farmers from throughout the Great Plains, became known as Okies. Okies were an emblem of the failure of the American breadbasket to deliver on its promise, and their story was made famous in John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Experience the [Interactive Dust Bowl](#) to see how decisions compounded to create peoples' destiny. Click through to see what choices you would make and where that would take you.

## Caroline Henderson on the Dust Bowl

Now we are facing a fourth year of failure. There can be no wheat for us in 1935 in spite of all our careful and expensive work in preparing ground, sowing and re-sowing our allocated acreage. Native grass pastures are permanently damaged, in many cases hopelessly ruined, smothered under by drifted sand. Fences are buried under banks of thistles and hard packed earth or undermined by the eroding action of the wind and lying flat on the ground. Less traveled roads are impassable, covered deep under by sand or the finer silt-like loam. Orchards, groves and hedge-rows cultivated for many years with patient care are dead or dying . . . Impossible it seems not to grieve that the work of hands should prove so perishable. —Caroline Henderson, Shelton, Oklahoma, 1935

Much like other farm families whose livelihoods were destroyed by



the Dust Bowl, Caroline Henderson describes a level of hardship that many Americans living in Depression-ravaged cities could never understand. Despite their hard work, millions of Americans were losing both their produce and their homes, sometimes in as little as forty-eight hours, to environmental catastrophes. Lacking any other explanation, many began to question what they had done to incur God's wrath. Note in particular Henderson's references to "dead," "dying," and "perishable," and contrast those terms with her depiction of the "careful and expensive work" undertaken by their own hands. Many simply could not understand how such a catastrophe could have occurred.

## CHANGING VALUES, CHANGING CULTURE

In the decades before the Great Depression, and particularly in the 1920s, American culture largely reflected the values of individualism, self-reliance, and material success through competition. Novels like F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* portrayed wealth and the self-made man in America, albeit in a critical fashion. In film, many silent movies, such as Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush*, depicted the rags-to-riches fable that Americans so loved. With the shift in U.S. fortunes, however, came a shift in values, and with it, a new cultural reflection. The arts revealed a new emphasis on the welfare of the whole and the importance of community in preserving family life. While box office sales briefly declined at the beginning of the Depression, they quickly rebounded. Movies offered a way for Americans to think of better times, and people were willing to pay twenty-five cents for a chance to escape, at least for a few hours.

Even more than escapism, other films at the close of the decade reflected on the sense of community and family values that



Americans struggled to maintain throughout the entire Depression. John Ford's screen version of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* came out in 1940, portraying the haunting story of the Joad family's exodus from their Oklahoma farm to California in search of a better life. Their journey leads them to realize that they need to join a larger social movement—communism—dedicated to bettering the lives of all people. Tom Joad says, "Well, maybe it's like Casy says, a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on'y a piece of a soul—the one big soul that belongs to ever'body." The greater lesson learned was one of the strength of community in the face of individual adversity.

Another trope was that of the hard-working everyman against greedy banks and corporations. This was perhaps best portrayed in the movies of Frank Capra, whose *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* was emblematic of his work. In this 1939 film, Jimmy Stewart plays a legislator sent to Washington to finish out the term of a deceased senator. While there, he fights corruption to ensure the construction of a boy's camp in his hometown rather than a dam project that would only serve to line the pockets of a few. He ultimately engages in a two-day filibuster, standing up to the power players to do what's right. The Depression era was a favorite of Capra's to depict in his films, including *It's a Wonderful Life*, released in 1946. In this film, Jimmy Stewart runs a family-owned savings and loan, which at one point faces a bank run similar to those seen in 1929–1930. In the end, community support helps Stewart retain his business and home against the unscrupulous actions of a wealthy banker who sought to bring ruin to his family.

## "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?"

They used to tell me I was building a dream, and so I  
followed the mob

When there was earth to plow or guns to bear, I was always  
there, right on the job



They used to tell me I was building a dream, with peace and  
glory ahead  
Why should I be standing in line, just waiting for bread?  
Once I built a railroad, I made it run, made it race against  
time  
Once I built a railroad, now it's done, Brother, can you spare  
a dime?  
Once I built a tower up to the sun, brick and rivet and lime  
Once I built a tower, now it's done, Brother, can you spare a  
dime?—Jay Gorney and “Yip” Harburg

“Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” first appeared in 1932, written for the Broadway musical *New Americana* by Jay Gorney, a composer who based the song’s music on a Russian lullaby, and Edgar Yipsel “Yip” Harburg, a lyricist who would go on to win an Academy Award for the song “Over the Rainbow” from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).

With its lyrics speaking to the plight of the common man during the Great Depression and the refrain appealing to the same sense of community later found in the films of Frank Capra, “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” quickly became the *de facto* anthem of the Great Depression. Recordings by Bing Crosby, Al Jolson, and Rudy Vallee all enjoyed tremendous popularity in the 1930s.

For more on “Brother Can You Spare a Dime?” and the Great Depression, visit [ArtsEdge](#) to explore the Kennedy Center’s digital resources and learn the “Story Behind the Song.”



Finally, there was a great deal of pure escapism in the popular culture of the Depression. Even the songs found in films reminded many viewers of the bygone days of prosperity and happiness, from Al Dubin and Henry Warren's hit "We're in the Money" to the popular "Happy Days are Here Again." The latter eventually became the theme song of Franklin Roosevelt's 1932 presidential campaign. People wanted to forget their worries and enjoy the madcap antics of the Marx Brothers, the youthful charm of Shirley Temple, the dazzling dances of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, or the

comforting morals of the *Andy Hardy* series. The Hardy series—nine films in all, produced by MGM from 1936 to 1940—starred Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, and all followed the adventures of a small-town judge and his son. No matter what the challenge, it was never so big that it could not be solved with a musical production put on by the neighborhood kids, bringing together friends and family members in a warm display of community values.

All of these movies reinforced traditional American values, which suffered during these hard times, in part due to declining marriage and birth rates, and increased domestic violence. At the same time, however, they reflected an increased interest in sex and sexuality. While the birth rate was dropping, surveys in *Fortune* magazine in 1936–1937 found that two-thirds of college students favored birth control, and that 50 percent of men and 25 percent of women admitted to premarital sex, continuing a trend among younger



*Flying Down to Rio* (1933) was the first motion picture to feature the immensely popular dance duo of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. The pair would go on to star in nine more Hollywood musicals throughout the 1930s and 1940s.



Americans that had begun to emerge in the 1920s. Contraceptive sales soared during the decade, and again, culture reflected this shift. Blonde bombshell Mae West was famous for her sexual innuendoes, and her flirtatious persona was hugely popular, although it got her banned on radio broadcasts throughout the Midwest. Whether West or Garland, Chaplin or Stewart, American film continued to be a barometer of American values, and their challenges, through the decade.

## Section Summary

The Great Depression affected huge segments of the American population—sixty million people by one estimate. But certain groups were hit harder than the rest. African Americans faced discrimination in finding employment, as white workers sought even low-wage jobs like housecleaning. Southern blacks moved away from their farms as crop prices failed, migrating en masse to Northern cities, which had little to offer them. Rural Americans were also badly hit. The eight-year drought that began shortly after the stock market crash exacerbated farmers' and ranchers' problems. The cultivation of greater amounts of acreage in the preceding decades meant that land was badly overworked, and the drought led to massive and terrible dust storms, creating the region's nickname, the Dust Bowl. Some farmers tried to remain and buy up more land as neighbors went broke; others simply fled their



failed farms and moved away, often to the large-scale migrant farms found in California, to search for a better life that few ever found. Maltreated by Californians who wished to avoid the unwanted competition for jobs that these “Okies” represented, many of the Dust Bowl farmers were left wandering as a result.

There was very little in the way of public assistance to help the poor. While private charities did what they could, the scale of the problem was too large for them to have any lasting effects. People learned to survive as best they could by sending their children out to beg, sharing clothing, and scrounging wood to feed the furnace. Those who could afford it turned to motion pictures for escape. Movies and books during the Great Depression reflected the shift in American cultural norms, away from rugged individualism toward a more community-based lifestyle.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1040>

### *Review Question*

1. What did the popular movies of the Depression reveal about American values at that time? How did these values contrast with the values Americans held before the Depression?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. American films in the 1930s served to both assuage the fears and frustrations of many Americans suffering through the Depression and reinforce the idea that communal efforts—town and friends working together—would help to address the hardships. Previous emphasis upon competition and individualism slowly gave way to notions of “neighbor helping neighbor” and seeking group solutions to common problems. The *Andy Hardy* series, in particular, combined entertainment with the concept of family coming together to solve shared problems. The themes of greed, competition, and capitalist-driven market decisions no longer commanded a large audience among American moviegoers.

## *Glossary*

**Dust Bowl** the area in the middle of the country that had been badly overfarmed in the 1920s and suffered from a terrible drought that coincided with the Great Depression; the name came from the “black blizzard” of topsoil and dust that blew through the area

**Scottsboro Boys** a reference to the infamous trial in Scottsboro, Alabama in 1931, where nine African American boys were falsely accused of raping two white women and



sentenced to death; the extreme injustice of the trial, particularly given the age of the boys and the inadequacy of the testimony against them, garnered national and international attention



# 136. Video: The Great Depression

This video teaches you about the Great Depression. So, everybody knows that the Great Depression started with the stock market crash in 1929, right? Not exactly. The Depression happened after the stock market crash, but wasn't caused by the crash. This video will teach you about how the Depression started, what Herbert Hoover tried to do to fix it, and why those efforts failed.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=171#oembed-1>



# 137. Assessing the Hoover Years on the Eve of the New Deal

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the successes and failures of Herbert Hoover's presidency
- Determine the fairness and accuracy of assessments of Hoover's presidency



As so much of the Hoover presidency is circumscribed by the onset of the Great Depression, one must be careful in assessing his successes and failures, so as not to attribute all blame to Hoover. Given the suffering that many Americans endured between the fall of 1929 and Franklin Roosevelt's inauguration in the spring of 1933, it is easy to lay much of the blame at Hoover's doorstep. However, the extent to which Hoover was constrained by the economic circumstances unfolding well before he assumed office offers a few mitigating factors. Put simply, Hoover did not cause the stock market crash. However, his stubborn



*Herbert Hoover (left) had the misfortune to be a president elected in prosperity and subsequently tasked with leading the country through the Great Depression. His unwillingness to face the harsh realities of widespread unemployment, farm foreclosures, business failures, and bank closings made him a deeply unpopular president, and he lost the 1932 election in a landslide to Franklin D. Roosevelt (right). (credit: Architect of the Capitol)*

adherence to a questionable belief in “American individualism,” despite mounting evidence that people were starving, requires that some blame be attributed to his policies (or lack thereof) for the depth and length of the Depression. Yet, Hoover's presidency was much more than simply combating the Depression. To assess the extent of his inability to provide meaningful national leadership through the darkest months of the Depression, his other policies require consideration.



## HOOVER'S FOREIGN POLICY

Although it was a relatively quiet period for U.S. diplomacy, Hoover did help to usher in a period of positive relations, specifically with several Latin American neighbors. This would establish the basis for Franklin Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor" policy. Following a goodwill tour of Central American countries immediately following his election in 1928, Hoover shaped the subsequent Clark Memorandum—released in 1930—which largely repudiated the previous Roosevelt Corollary, establishing a basis for unlimited American military intervention throughout Latin America. To the contrary, through the memorandum, Hoover asserted that greater emphasis should be placed upon the older Monroe Doctrine, in which the U.S. pledged assistance to her Latin American neighbors should any European powers interfere in Western Hemisphere affairs. Hoover further strengthened relations to the south by withdrawing American troops from Haiti and Nicaragua. Additionally, he outlined with Secretary of State Henry Stimson the Hoover-Stimson Doctrine, which announced that the United States would never recognize claims to territories seized by force (a direct response to the recent Japanese invasion of Manchuria).

Other diplomatic overtures met with less success for Hoover. Most notably, in an effort to support the American economy during the early stages of the Depression, the president signed into law the Smoot-Hawley Tariff in 1930. The law, which raised tariffs on thousands of imports, was intended to increase sales of American-made goods, but predictably angered foreign trade partners who in turn raised their tariffs on American imports, thus shrinking international trade and closing additional markets to desperate American manufacturers. As a result, the global depression worsened further. A similar attempt to spur the world economy, known as the Hoover Moratorium, likewise met with great opposition and little economic benefit. Issued in 1931, the moratorium called for a halt to World War I reparations to be paid



by Germany to France, as well as forgiveness of Allied war debts to the U.S.

## HOOVER AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Holding true to his belief in individualism, Hoover saw little need for significant civil rights legislation during his presidency, including any overtures from the NAACP to endorse federal anti-lynching legislation. He felt African Americans would benefit more from education and assimilation than from federal legislation or programs; yet he failed to recognize that, at this time in history, federal legislation and programs were required to ensure equal opportunities.

Hoover did give special attention to the improvement of Native American conditions, beginning with his selection of Charles Curtis as his vice-presidential running mate in the 1928 election. Curtis, of the Kaw Tribe, became the country's first Native American to hold so high an elected office. Hoover subsequently appointed Charles Rhoads as the new commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and advocated, with Rhoads' assistance, for Native American self-sufficiency and full assimilation as Americans under the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. During Hoover's presidency, federal expenditures for Native American schools and health care doubled.

Cartoons, especially political cartoons, provide a window into the frustrations and worries of an age. Browse the political cartoons at [The Changing Face of Herbert Hoover](#) to better understand the historical context of Herbert Hoover's presidency.



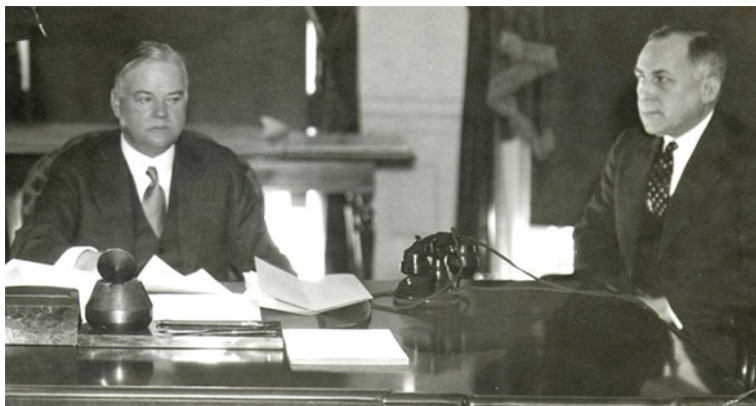
## A FINAL ASSESSMENT

Herbert Hoover's presidency, embarked upon with much promise following his election in November 1928, produced a legacy of mixed reactions. Some Americans blamed him for all of the economic and social woes from which they suffered for the next decade; all blamed him for simply not responding to their needs. As contemporary commentator and actor Will Rogers said at the time, "If an American was lucky enough to find an apple to eat in the Depression and bit into it only to find a worm, they would blame Hoover for the worm." Likewise, subsequent public opinion polls of presidential popularity, as well as polls of professional historians, routinely rate Hoover in the bottom seven of all U.S. presidents in terms of overall success.

However, Hoover the president was a product of his time. Americans sought a president in 1928 who would continue the policies of normalcy with which many associated the prosperity they enjoyed. They wanted a president who would forego government interference and allow industrial capitalism to grow unfettered. Hoover, from his days as the secretary of commerce, was the ideal candidate. In fact, he was too ideal when the Great Depression actually hit. Holding steadfast to his philosophy of "American individualism," Hoover proved largely incapable of shifting into economic crisis mode when Americans came to realize that prosperity could not last forever. Desperate to help, but unwilling to compromise on his philosophy, Hoover could not manage a comprehensive solution to the worldwide depression that few foresaw. Only when reelection was less than a year away did a reluctant Hoover initiate significant policies, but even then, they did not provide direct relief. By the start of 1932, unemployment hovered near 25 percent, and thousands of banks and factories were closing their doors. Combined with Hoover's ill-timed response to the Bonus Army crisis, his political fate was sealed. Americans would look to the next president for a solution. "Democracy is a harsh



employer,” Hoover concluded, as he awaited all but certain defeat in the November election of 1932.



*By the election of 1932, Hoover (left) knew that he was beaten. In photos from this time, he tends to appear grim-faced and downtrodden.*

## Section Summary

In Hoover, Americans got the president they had wanted, at least at first. He was third in a line of free-market Republican presidents, elected to continue the policies that had served the economy so well. But when the stock market crashed in 1929, and the underlying weaknesses in the economy came to the fore, Hoover did not act with clear intentionality and speed. His record as a president will likely always bear the taint of



his unwillingness to push through substantial government aid, but, despite that failing, his record is not without minor accomplishments. Hoover's international policies, particularly in regard to Latin America, served the country well. And while his attitude toward civil rights mirrored his conviction that government intervention was a negative force, he did play a key role changing living conditions for Native Americans. In all, it was his—and the country's—bad luck that his presidency ultimately required a very different philosophy than the one that had gotten him elected.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1041>

### *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. What were the possible causes of the Great Depression? To what extent could a stock market crash of the intensity of 1929 occur again in America?
2. Why did people feel so confident before the stock market crash of 1929? What were some factors that led to irrational investing?
3. Why was Herbert Hoover's response to the initial months of the Great Depression so limited in scope?
4. How did the cultural products of the Great Depression serve to reflect, shape, and assuage Americans' fears and concerns during this volatile period? How do our cultural products—such as books,



movies, and music—reflect and reinforce our values in our own times?

5. To what extent did the Great Depression catalyze important changes in Americans' perceptions of themselves, their national identity, and the role of their government? What evidence of these shifts can you find in the politics and values of our own times?
6. Why is Herbert Hoover so often blamed for the Great Depression? To what extent is such an assessment fair or accurate?

## *Glossary*

**Clark Memorandum** Hoover's repudiation of the Roosevelt Corollary that justified American military intervention in Latin American affairs; this memorandum improved relations with America's neighbors by reasserting that intervention would occur only in the event of European interference in the Western Hemisphere

**Smoot-Hawley Tariff** the tariff approved by Hoover to raise the tax on thousands of imported goods in the hope that it would encourage people to buy American-made products; the unintended result was that other nations raised their tariffs, further hurting American exports and exacerbating the global financial crisis



PART XXI

# THE GREAT DEPRESSION READER







## 138. Primary Source Media: The Great Depression

The wonder of the stock market permeated popular culture in the 1920s. Although it was released during the first year of the Great Depression, the 1930 film *High Society Blues* captured the speculative hope and prosperity of the previous decade. “I’m in the Market for You,” a popular musical number from the film, even used the stock market as a metaphor for love: *You’re going up, up, up in my estimation, / I want a thousand shares of your caresses, too. / We’ll count the hugs and kisses, / When dividends are due, / Cause I’m in the market for you.* But, just as the song was being recorded in 1929, the stock market reached the apex of its swift climb, crashed, and brought an abrupt end to the seeming prosperity of the “Roaring ‘20s.” The Great Depression had arrived, and with it, as the following sources chronicle, a rupturing of American life.

### Family Walking on Highway 1936



Dorothea Lange,  
“Family walking on highway, five children”  
(June 1938)  
Works Progress Administration, Library of Congress.



During her assignment as a photographer for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Dorothea Lange documented the movement of migrant families forced from their homes by drought and economic depression. This family was in the process of traveling 124 miles by foot, across Oklahoma, because the father was unable to receive relief or WPA work of his own due to an illness.

## **“Bonus Army Routed” (1932)**

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This short newsreel clip made by British film company Pathé shows the federal government's response to the thousands of WWI veterans who organized in Washington DC during the summer of 1932 to form what was called a “Bonus Army.” At the demand of attorney general, the marchers were violently removed from government property.



## 139. Primary Source: Greater Security for the Average Man (1934)

*President Herbert Hoover lost his bid for re-election in 1932 to Franklin Roosevelt (FDR – don't confuse FDR with Teddy Roosevelt from the Progressive era, that was his uncle). Americans were struggling through the Depression and, thanks to the Progressive Era, had come to expect the government to solve the problem. Hoover objected to the use of government power, even to try and stem the Depression, for fear that a big government was a threat to individual freedom. Roosevelt on the other hand felt that the federal government had an obligation, even though that would mean increasing the power of the federal government (and thus decreasing the power of the states or the public in general). Read this excerpt from FDR's Fireside Chat 6: On Government and Capitalism, given on September 30, 1934.*

### Fireside Chat 6

To those who say that our expenditures for Public Works and other means for recovery are a waste that we cannot afford, I answer that no country, however rich, can afford the waste of its human resources. Demoralization caused by vast unemployment is our greatest extravagance. Morally, it is the greatest menace to our social order. Some people try to tell me that we must make up our minds that for the future we shall permanently have millions of unemployed just as other countries have had them for over a decade. What may be necessary for those countries is not my responsibility to determine. But as for this country, I stand or fall



by my refusal to accept as a necessary condition of our future a permanent army of unemployed. On the contrary, we must make it a national principle that we will not tolerate a large army of unemployed and that we will arrange our national economy to end our present unemployment as soon as we can and then to take wise measures against its return. I do not want to think that it is the destiny of any American to remain permanently on relief rolls.

Those, fortunately few in number, who are frightened by boldness and cowed by the necessity for making decisions, complain that all we have done is unnecessary and subject to great risks. Now that these people are coming out of their storm cellars, they forget that there ever was a storm. They point to England. They would have you believe that England has made progress out of her depression by a do-nothing policy, by letting nature take her course. England has her peculiarities and we have ours but I do not believe any intelligent observer can accuse England of undue orthodoxy in the present emergency.

Did England let nature take her course? No. Did England hold to the gold standard when her reserves were threatened? No. Has England gone back to the gold standard today? No. Did England hesitate to call in ten billion dollars of her war bonds bearing 5 percent interest, to issue new bonds therefore bearing only 3 1/2 percent interest, thereby saving the British Treasury one hundred and fifty million dollars a year in interest alone? No. And let it be recorded that the British bankers helped. Is it not a fact that ever since the year 1909, Great Britain in many ways has advanced further along lines of social security than the United States? Is it not a fact that relations between capital and labor on the basis of collective bargaining are much further advanced in Great Britain than in the United States? It is perhaps not strange that the conservative British press has told us with pardonable irony that much of our New Deal program is only an attempt to catch up with English reforms that go back ten years or more.

Nearly all Americans are sensible and calm people. We do not get greatly excited nor is our peace of mind disturbed, whether we be



businessmen or workers or farmers, by awesome pronouncements concerning the unconstitutionality of some of our measures of recovery and relief and reform. We are not frightened by reactionary lawyers or political editors. All of these cries have been heard before. More than twenty years ago, when Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were attempting to correct abuses in our national life, the great Chief Justice White said:

“There is great danger it seems to me to arise from the constant habit which prevails where anything is opposed or objected to, of referring without rhyme or reason to the Constitution as a means of preventing its accomplishment, thus creating the general impression that the Constitution is but a barrier to progress instead of being the broad highway through which alone true progress may be enjoyed.”

In our efforts for recovery we have avoided on the one hand the theory that business should and must be taken over into an all-embracing Government. We have avoided on the other hand the equally untenable theory that it is an interference with liberty to offer reasonable help when private enterprise is in need of help. The course we have followed fits the American practice of Government – a practice of taking action step by step, of regulating only to meet concrete needs – a practice of courageous recognition of change. I believe with Abraham Lincoln, that “The legitimate object of Government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done but cannot do at all or cannot do so well for themselves in their separate and individual capacities.”

I still believe in ideals. I am not for a return to that definition of Liberty under which for many years a free people were being gradually regimented into the service of the privileged few. I prefer and I am sure you prefer that broader definition of Liberty under which we are moving forward to greater freedom, to greater security for the average man than he has ever known before in the history of America.



## 140. Primary Source: Huey P. Long, “Every Man a King” and “Share our Wealth” (1934)

*Amid the economic indignities of the Great Depression, Huey P. Long of Louisiana championed an aggressive program of public spending and wealth redistribution. Critics denounced Long, who served as both governor and a senator from Louisiana, as a corrupt demagogue, but “the Kingfish” appealed to impoverished Louisianans and Americans wracked by joblessness and resentful of American economic inequality. He was assassinated before he could mount his independent bid for the White House in 1936. In the following extracts from two of his most famous speeches, Long outlines his political program.*

### “Every Man a King”

...

We have a marvelous love for this Government of ours; in fact, it is almost a religion, and it is well that it should be, because we have a splendid form of government and we have a splendid set of laws. We have everything here that we need, except that we have neglected the fundamentals upon which the American Government was principally predicated.

How many of you remember the first thing that the Declaration of Independence said? It said: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that there are certain inalienable rights for the people, and among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;” and it said further, “We hold the view that all men are created equal!”



Now, what did they mean by that? Did they mean, my friends, to say that all men are created equal and that that meant that any one man was born to inherit \$10,000,000,000 and that another child was to be born to inherit nothing?

Did that mean, my friends, that someone would come into this world without having had an opportunity, of course, to have hit one lick of work, should be born with more than it and all of its children and children's children could ever dispose of, but that another one would have to be born into a life of starvation?

That was not the meaning of the Declaration of Independence when it said that all men are created equal or "That we hold that all men are created equal."

Nor was it the meaning of the Declaration of Independence when it said that they held that there were certain rights that were inalienable—the right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Is that right of life, my friends, when the young children of this country are being reared into a sphere which is more owned by 12 men than it by 120,000,000 people?

Is that, my friends, giving them a fair shake of the dice or anything like the inalienable right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or anything resembling the fact that all people are created equal; when we have today in America thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions of children on the verge of starvation in a land that is overflowing with too much to eat and too much to wear?

I do not think you will contend that, and I do not think for a moment that they will contend it.

...

Now, my friends, if you were off on an island where there were 100 lunches, you could not let one man eat up the hundred lunches, or take the hundred lunches and not let anybody else eat any of them. If you did, there would not be anything else for the balance of the people to consume.

...

Now, we have organized a society, and we call it "Share Our Wealth Society," a society with the motto "Every Man a King."



Every man a king, so there would be no such thing as a man or woman who did not have the necessities of life, who would not be dependent upon the whims and caprices and ipsi dixit [unproved assertion] of the financial barons for a living. What do we propose by this society? We propose to limit the wealth of big men in the country. There is an average of \$15,000 in wealth to every family in America. That is right here today.

We do not propose to divide it up equally. We do not propose a division of wealth, but we propose to limit poverty that we will allow to be inflicted upon any man's family. We will not say we are going to try to guarantee any equality, or \$15,000 to a family. No; but we do say that one third of the average is low enough for any one family to hold, that there should be a guarantee of a family wealth of around \$5,000; enough for a home, an automobile, a radio, and the ordinary conveniences, and the opportunity to educate their children; a fair share of the income of this land thereafter to that family so there will be no such thing as merely the select to have those things, and so there will be no such thing as a family living in poverty and distress.

We have to limit fortunes. Our present plan is that we will allow no one man to own more than \$50,000,000. We think that with that limit we will be able to carry out the balance of the program. It may be necessary that we limit it to less than \$50,000,000. It may be necessary, in working out of the plans that no man's fortune would be more than \$10,000,000 or \$15,000,000. But be that as it may, it will still be more than any one man, or any one man and his children and their children, will be able to spend in their lifetimes; and it is not necessary or reasonable to have wealth piled up beyond that point where we cannot prevent poverty among the masses.

...

Those are the things we propose to do. "Every Man a King." Every man to eat when there is something to eat; all to wear something when there is something to wear. That makes us all a sovereign.



## “Share our Wealth”

For 20 years I have been in the battle to provide that, so long as America has, or can produce, an abundance of the things which make life comfortable and happy, that none should own so much of the things which he does not need and cannot use as to deprive the balance of the people of a reasonable proportion of the necessities and conveniences of life. The whole line of my political thought has always been that America must face the time when the whole country would shoulder the obligation which it owes to every child born on earth—that is, a fair chance to life, liberty, and happiness.

... [I]n the land of plenty there shall be comfort for all. The organized 600 families who control the wealth of America have been able to keep the 125,000,000 people in bondage because they have never once known how to effectually strike for their fair demands.

...

It is impossible for the United States to preserve itself as a republic or as a democracy when 600 families own more of this Nation's wealth—in fact, twice as much—as all the balance of the people put together. Ninety-six percent of our people live below the poverty line, while 4 percent own 87 percent of the wealth. America can have enough for all to live in comfort and still permit millionaires to own more than they can ever spend and to have more than they can ever use; but America cannot allow the multimillionaires and the billionaires, a mere handful of them, to own everything unless we are willing to inflict starvation upon 125,000,000 people.

Here is the whole sum and substance of the share-our-wealth movement:

1. Every family to be furnished by the Government a homestead allowance, free of debt, of not less than one-third the average family wealth of the country, which means, at the lowest, that every family shall have the reasonable comforts of life up to a



value of from \$5,000 to \$6,000. No person to have a fortune of more than 100 to 300 times the average family fortune, which means that the limit to fortunes is between \$1,500,000 and \$5,000,000, with annual capital levy taxes imposed on all above \$1,000,000.

2. The yearly income of every family shall be not less than one-third of the average family income, which means that, according to the estimates of the statisticians of the United States Government and Wall Street, no family's annual income would be less than from \$2,000 to \$2,500. No yearly income shall be allowed to any person larger than from 100 to 300 times the size of the average family income, which means; that no person would be allowed to earn in any year more than from \$600,000 to \$1,800,000, all to be subject to present income-tax laws.
3. To limit or regulate the hours of work to such an extent as to prevent overproduction; the most modern and efficient machinery would be encouraged, so that as much would be produced as possible so as to satisfy all demands of the people, but to also allow the maximum time to the workers for recreation, convenience, education, and luxuries of life.
4. An old-age pension to the persons of 60.
5. To balance agricultural production with what can be consumed according to the laws of

God, which includes the preserving and storage of surplus commodities to be paid for and held by the Government for the emergencies when such are needed. ...

6. To pay the veterans of our wars what we owe them and to care for their disabled.
7. Education and training for all children to be equal in opportunity in all schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions for training in the professions and vocations of life; to be regulated on the capacity of children to learn, and not on



the ability of parents to pay the costs. Training for life's work to be as much universal and thorough for all walks in life as has been the training in the arts of killing.

8. The raising of revenue and taxes for the support of this program to come from the reduction of swollen fortunes from the top, as well as for the support of public works to give employment whenever there may be any slackening necessary in private enterprise.

I now ask those who read this circular to help us at once in this work of giving life and happiness to our people — not a starvation dole upon which someone may live in misery from week to week. Before this miserable system of wreckage has destroyed the life germ of respect and culture in our American people let us save what was here, merely by having none too poor and none too rich. The theory of the Share Our Wealth Society is to have enough for all, but not to have one with so much that less than enough remains for the balance of the people.

...

Let everyone who feels he wishes to help in our work start right out and go ahead. One man or woman is as important as any other. Take up the fight! Do not wait for someone else to tell you what to do. There are no high lights in this effort. We have no State managers and no city managers. Everyone can take up the work, and as many societies can be organized as there are people to organize them. One is the same as another. The reward and compensation is the salvation of humanity. Fear no opposition. "He who fails in this fight falls in the radiance of the future!"

Yours sincerely,

Huey P. Long,

United States Senator, Washington, D.C.

[Sources: Senator Huey P. Long, "Statement of the Share Our Wealth Movement" (May 23, 1935). In *Congressional Record*, 74th Cong., 1st sess., Vol. 79, 8040-43; Huey Long, "Every Man a King," Radio Address (February 23, 1934).]







## 141. Primary Source: Lester Hunter, “I’d Rather Not Be on Relief” (1938)

*Lester Hunter left the Dust Bowl for the fields of California and wrote this poem, later turned into a song by migrant workers in California’s Farm Security Administration camps. The “C.I.O.” in the final line refers to the Congress of Industrial Unions, a powerful new industrial union founded in 1935.*

We go around all dressed in rags  
While the rest of the world goes neat,  
And we have to be satisfied  
With half enough to eat.  
We have to live in lean-tos,  
Or else we live in a tent,  
For when we buy our bread and beans  
There’s nothing left for rent.  
I’d rather not be on the rolls of relief,  
Or work on the W. P. A.,  
We’d rather work for the farmer  
If the farmer could raise the pay;  
Then the farmer could plant more cotton  
And he’d get more money for spuds,  
Instead of wearing patches,  
We’d dress up in new duds.  
From the east and west and north and south  
Like a swarm of bees we come;  
The migratory workers  
Are worse off than a bum.  
We go to Mr. Farmer  
And ask him what he’ll pay;



He says, "You gypsy workers  
Can live on a buck a day."  
I'd rather not be on the rolls of relief,  
Or work on the W. P. A.,  
We'd rather work for the farmer  
If the farmer could raise the pay;  
Then the farmer could plant more cotton  
And he'd get more money for spuds,  
Instead of wearing patches,  
We'd dress up in new duds.  
We don't ask for luxuries  
Or even a feather bed.  
But we're bound to raise the dickens  
While our families are underfed.  
Now the winter is on us  
And the cotton picking is done,  
What are we going to live on  
While we're waiting for spuds to come?  
Now if you will excuse me  
I'll bring my song to an end.  
I've got to go and chuck a crack  
Where the howling wind comes in.  
The times are going to better  
And I guess you'd like to know  
I'll tell you all about it,  
I've joined the C. I. O.

[Source: Lester Hunter, "I'd Rather Not Be on Relief" (1938).  
Available online via *Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress*,  
<https://www.loc.gov/folklife/archive.html>.]



PART XXII

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT  
AND THE NEW DEAL,  
1932-1941







## 142. Introduction

The election of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signaled both immediate relief for the American public as well as a permanent shift in the role of the federal government in guiding the economy and providing direct assistance to the people, albeit through expensive programs that made extensive budget deficits commonplace. For many, the immediate relief was, at a minimum, psychological: Herbert Hoover was gone, and the situation could not grow worse under Roosevelt. But as



*President Roosevelt's Federal One Project allowed thousands of artists to create public art. This initiative was a response to the Great Depression as part of the Works Project Administration, and much of the public art in cities today date from this era. New Deal by Charles Wells can be found in the Clarkson S. Fisher Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Trenton, New Jersey. (credit: modification of work by Library of Congress)*

his New Deal unfolded, Americans learned more about the fundamental changes their new president brought with him to the Oval Office. In the span of little more than one hundred days, the country witnessed a wave of legislation never seen before or since.

Roosevelt understood the need to “save the patient,” to borrow a medical phrase he often employed, as well as to “cure the ill.” This meant both creating jobs, through such programs as the Works Progress Administration, which provided employment to over eight million Americans, as well as reconfiguring the structure of the American economy. In pursuit of these two goals, Americans re-elected Roosevelt for three additional terms in the White House and became full partners in the reshaping of their country.

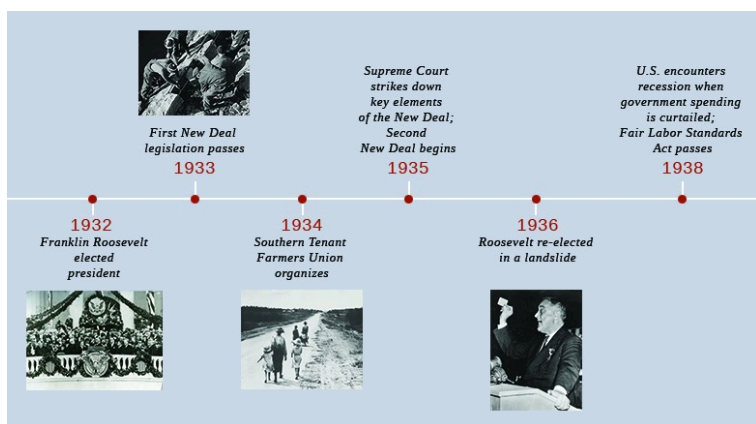


# 143. The Rise of Franklin Roosevelt

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the events of the 1932 presidential election and identify the characteristics that made Franklin Roosevelt a desirable candidate
- Explain why Congress amended the U.S. Constitution to reduce the period of time between presidential elections and inaugurations



Franklin Roosevelt was part of the political establishment and the



wealthy elite, but in the 1932 presidential campaign, he did not want to be perceived that way. Roosevelt felt that the country needed sweeping change, and he ran a campaign intended to convince the American people that he could deliver that change. It was not the specifics of his campaign promises that were different; in fact, he gave very few details and likely did not yet have a clear idea of how he would raise the country out of the Great Depression. But he campaigned tirelessly, talking to thousands of people, appearing at his party's national convention, and striving to show the public that he was a different breed of politician. As Hoover grew more morose and physically unwell in the face of the campaign, Roosevelt thrived. He was elected in a landslide by a country ready for the change he had promised.

## THE ELECTION OF FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

By the 1932 presidential election, Hoover's popularity was at an all-time low. Despite his efforts to address the hardships that many Americans faced, his ineffectual response to the Great Depression left Americans angry and ready for change. Franklin Roosevelt, though born to wealth and educated at the best schools, offered the change people sought. His experience in politics had previously included a seat in the New York State legislature, a vice-presidential nomination, and a stint as governor of New York. During the latter, he introduced many state-level reforms that later formed the basis of his New Deal as well as worked with several advisors who later formed the Brains Trust that advised his federal agenda.

Roosevelt exuded confidence, which the American public desperately wished to see in their leader. And, despite his affluence, Americans felt that he could relate to their suffering due to his own physical hardships; he had been struck with polio a decade



earlier and was essentially paralyzed from the waist down for the remainder of his life. Roosevelt understood that the public sympathized with his ailment; he likewise developed a genuine empathy for public suffering as a result of his illness. However, he never wanted to be photographed in his wheelchair or appear infirm in any way, for fear that the public's sympathy would transform into concern over his physical ability to discharge the duties of the Oval Office.

Roosevelt also recognized the need to convey to the voting public that he was not simply another member of the political aristocracy. At a time when the country not only faced its most severe economic challenges to date, but Americans began to question some of the fundamental principles of capitalism and democracy, Roosevelt sought to show that he was different—that he could



*Franklin Roosevelt brought a new feeling of optimism and possibility to a country that was beaten down by hardship. His enthusiasm was in counterpoint to Herbert Hoover's discouraging last year in office.*

defy expectations—and through his actions could find creative solutions to address the nation's problems while restoring public confidence in fundamental American values. As a result, he not only was the first presidential candidate to appear in person at a national political convention to accept his party's nomination but also flew there through terrible weather from New York to Chicago in order to do so—a risky venture in what was still the early stages of flight as public transportation. At the Democratic National Convention in 1932, he coined the famous phrase: "I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people." The New Deal did not yet exist, but to the American people, any positive and optimistic response to the Great Depression was a welcome one.

Hoover assumed at first that Roosevelt would be easy to defeat,



confident that he could never carry the eastern states and the business vote. He was sorely mistaken. Everywhere he went, Hoover was met with antagonism; anti-Hoover signs and protests were the norm. Hoover's public persona declined rapidly. Many news accounts reported that he seemed physically unwell, with an ashen face and shaking hands. Often, he seemed as though he would faint, and an aide constantly remained nearby with a chair in case he fell. In contrast, Roosevelt thrived on the campaign. He commented, "I have looked into the faces of thousands of Americans, and they have the frightened look of lost children."

The election results that November were never really in question: With three million more people voting than in 1928, Roosevelt won by a popular count of twenty-three million to fifteen million. He carried all but six states while winning over 57 percent of the popular vote. Whether they voted due to animosity towards Hoover for his relative inactivity, or out of hope for what Roosevelt would accomplish, the American public committed themselves to a new vision. Historians identify this election as the beginning of a new Democratic coalition, bringing together African Americans, other ethnic minorities, and organized labor as a voting bloc upon whom the party would rely for many of its electoral victories over the next fifty years. Unlike some European nations where similar challenges caused democratic constitutions to crumble and give way to radical ideologies and authoritarian governments, the Roosevelt administration changed the nation's economic fortunes with reforms, preserved the constitution, and expanded rather than limited the reach of democratic principles into the market economy. As a result, radical alternatives, such as the Fascist movement or Communist Party, remained on the margins of the nation's political culture.



## THE INTERREGNUM

After the landslide election, the country—and Hoover—had to endure the interregnum, the difficult four months between the election and President Roosevelt's inauguration in March 1933. Congress did not pass a single significant piece of legislation during this period, although Hoover spent much of the time trying to get Roosevelt to commit publicly to a legislative agenda of Hoover's choosing. Roosevelt remained gracious but refused to begin his administration as the incumbent's advisor without any legal authority necessary to change policy. Unwilling to tie himself to Hoover's legacy of failed policies, Roosevelt kept quiet when Hoover supported the passage of a national sales tax. Meanwhile, the country suffered from Hoover's inability to further drive a legislative agenda through Congress. It was the worst winter since the beginning of the Great Depression, and the banking sector once again suffered another round of panics. While Roosevelt kept his distance from the final tremors of the Hoover administration, the country continued to suffer in wait. In part as a response to the challenges of this time, the U.S. Constitution was subsequently amended to reduce the period from election to inauguration to the now-commonplace two months.

Any ideas that Roosevelt held almost did not come to fruition, thanks to a would-be assassin's bullet. On February 15, 1933, after delivering a speech from his open car in Miami's Bayfront Park, local Italian bricklayer Giuseppe Zangara emerged from a crowd of well-wishers to fire six shots from his revolver. Although Roosevelt emerged from the assassination attempt unscathed, Zangara wounded five individuals that day, including Chicago Mayor Tony Cermak, who attended the speech in the hopes of resolving any long-standing differences with the president-elect. Roosevelt and his driver immediately rushed Cermak to the hospital where he died three days later. Roosevelt's calm and collected response to the event reassured many Americans of his ability to lead the nation



through the challenges they faced. All that awaited was Roosevelt's inauguration before his ideas would unfold to the expectant public.

So what was Roosevelt's plan? Before he took office, it seems likely that he was not entirely sure. Certain elements were known: He believed in positive government action to solve the Depression; he believed in federal relief, public works, social security, and unemployment insurance; he wanted to restore public confidence in banks; he wanted stronger government regulation of the economy; and he wanted to directly help farmers. But how to take action on these beliefs was more in question. A month before his inauguration, he said to his advisors, "Let's concentrate upon one thing: Save the people and the nation, and if we have to change our minds twice every day to accomplish that end, we should do it."

Unlike Hoover, who professed an ideology of "American individualism," an adherence that rendered him largely incapable of widespread action, Roosevelt remained pragmatic and open-minded to possible solutions. To assist in formulating a variety of relief and recovery programs, Roosevelt turned to a group of men who had previously orchestrated his election campaign and victory. Collectively known as the "Brains Trust" (a phrase coined by a *New York Times* reporter to describe the multiple "brains" on Roosevelt's advisory team), the group most notably included Rexford Tugwell, Raymond Moley, and Adolph Berle. Moley, credited with bringing the group into existence, was a government professor who advocated for a new national tax policy to help the nation recover from its economic woes. Tugwell, who eventually focused his energy on the country's agricultural problems, saw an increased role for the federal government in setting wages and prices across the economy. Berle was a mediating influence, who often advised against a centrally controlled economy, but did see the role that the federal government could play in mediating the stark cycles of prosperity and depression that, if left unchecked, could result in the very situation in which the country presently found itself. Together, these men, along with others, advised Roosevelt through the earliest



days of the New Deal and helped to craft significant legislative programs for congressional review and approval.

## **INAUGURATION DAY: A NEW BEGINNING**

March 4, 1933, dawned gray and rainy. Roosevelt rode in an open car along with outgoing president Hoover, facing the public, as he made his way to the U.S. Capitol. Hoover's mood was somber, still personally angry over his defeat in the general election the previous November; he refused to crack a smile at all during the ride among the crowd, despite Roosevelt's urging to the contrary. At the ceremony, Roosevelt rose with the aid of leg braces equipped under his specially tailored trousers and placed his hand on a Dutch family Bible as he took his solemn oath. At that very moment, the rain stopped and the sun began to shine directly on the platform, and those present would later claim that it was as though God himself was shining down on Roosevelt and the American people in that moment.





*Roosevelt's inauguration was truly a day of new beginnings for the country. The sun breaking through the clouds as he was being sworn in became a metaphor for the hope that people felt at his presidency.*

Bathed in the sunlight, Roosevelt delivered one of the most famous and oft-quoted inaugural addresses in history. He encouraged Americans to work with him to find solutions to the nation's problems and not to be paralyzed by fear into inaction. Borrowing a wartime analogy provided by Moley, who served as his speechwriter at the time, Roosevelt called upon all Americans to assemble and fight an essential battle against the forces of economic depression. He famously stated, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Upon hearing his inaugural address, one observer in the crowd later commented, "Any man who can talk like that in times like these is worth every ounce of support a true American has." To borrow the popular song title of the day, "happy days were here again." Foregoing the traditional inaugural parties, the new president immediately returned to the White House to begin his work to save the nation.



Visit the [American Presidency Project](#) to listen to Roosevelt's first inaugural speech and identify ways he conveyed optimism and a spirit of community to his listeners.

## Section Summary

Franklin Roosevelt was a wealthy, well-educated, and popular politician whose history of polio made him a more sympathetic figure to the public. He did not share any specifics of his plan to bring the country out of the Great Depression, but his attitude of optimism and possibility contrasted strongly with Hoover's defeated misery. The 1932 election was never really in question, and Roosevelt won in a landslide. During the four-month interregnum, however, Americans continued to endure President Hoover's failed policies, which led the winter of 1932–1933 to be the worst of the Depression, with unemployment rising to record levels.

When Roosevelt took office in March 1933, he infused the country with a sense of optimism. He still did not have a formal plan but rather invited the American people to join him in the spirit of experimentation. Roosevelt did bring certain beliefs to office: the belief in an active government that would take direct action on



federal relief, public works, social services, and direct aid to farmers. But as much as his policies, Roosevelt's own personality and engaging manner helped the country feel that they were going to get back on track.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1042>

### *Review Question*

1. What was the purpose of Roosevelt's "Brains Trust?"

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Roosevelt recruited his "Brains Trust" to advise him in his inception of a variety of relief and recovery programs. Among other things, the members of this group pushed for a new national tax policy; addressed the nation's agricultural problems; advocated an increased role for the federal government in setting wages and prices; and believed that the federal government could temper the boom-and-bust cycles that rendered the economy unstable. These advisors helped to craft the legislative programs that



Roosevelt presented to Congress.

## *Glossary*

**Brains Trust** an unofficial advisory cabinet to President Franklin Roosevelt, originally gathered while he was governor of New York, to present possible solutions to the nations' problems; among its prominent members were Rexford Tugwell, Raymond Moley, and Adolph Berle

**interregnum** the period between the election and the inauguration of a new president; when economic conditions worsened significantly during the four-month lag between Roosevelt's win and his move into the Oval Office, Congress amended the Constitution to limit this period to two months



# 144. The First New Deal

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the key pieces of legislation included in Roosevelt's "First New Deal"
- Assess the strengths, weaknesses, and general effectiveness of the First New Deal
- Explain Roosevelt's overall vision for addressing the structural problems in the U.S. economy

Much like a surgeon assessing the condition of an emergency room patient, Roosevelt began his administration with a broad, if not specific, strategy in mind: a combination of relief and recovery programs designed to first save the patient (in this case, the American people), and then to find a long-term cure (reform through federal regulation of the economy). What later became known as the "First New Deal" ushered in a wave of legislative activity seldom before seen in the history of the country. By the close of 1933, in an effort to stem the crisis, Congress had passed over fifteen significant pieces of legislation—many of the circulated bills allegedly still wet with ink from the printing presses as members voted upon them. Most bills could be grouped around issues of relief, recovery, and reform. At the outset of the First New Deal, specific goals included 1) bank reform; 2) job creation; 3) economic regulation; and 4) regional planning.

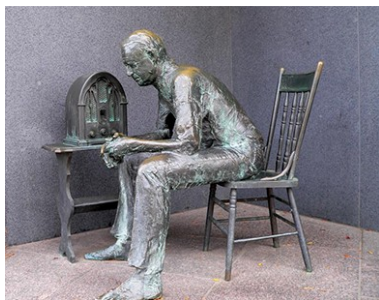


## REFORM: THE BANKING CRISIS

When Roosevelt took office, he faced one of the worst moments in the country's banking history. States were in disarray. New York and Illinois had ordered the closure of their banks in the hopes of avoiding further "bank runs," which occurred when hundreds (if not thousands) of individuals ran to their banks to withdraw all of their savings. In all, over five thousand banks had been shuttered. Within forty-eight hours of his inauguration, Roosevelt proclaimed an official bank holiday and called Congress into a special session to address the crisis. The resulting Emergency Banking Act of 1933 was signed into law on March 9, 1933, a scant eight hours after Congress first saw it. The law officially took the country off the gold standard, a restrictive practice that, although conservative and traditionally viewed as safe, severely limited the circulation of paper money. Those who held gold were told to sell it to the U.S. Treasury for a discounted rate of a little over twenty dollars per ounce. Furthermore, dollar bills were no longer redeemable in gold. The law also gave the comptroller of currency the power to reorganize all national banks faced with insolvency, a level of federal oversight seldom seen prior to the Great Depression. Between March 11 and March 14, auditors from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the Treasury Department, and other federal agencies swept through the country, examining each bank. By March 15, 70 percent of the banks were declared solvent and allowed to reopen.



On March 12, the day before the banks were set to reopen, Roosevelt held his first “fireside chat.” In this initial radio address to the American people, he explained what the bank examiners had been doing over the previous week. He assured people that any bank open the next day had the federal government’s stamp of approval. The combination of his reassuring manner and the promise that the government was addressing the problems worked wonders in changing



Roosevelt’s “fireside chats” provided an opportunity for him to speak directly to the American people, and the people were happy to listen. These radio addresses, commemorated at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, DC, with this bronze sculpture by George Segal, contributed to Roosevelt’s tremendous popularity. (credit: Koshy Koshy)

the popular mindset. Just as the culture of panic had contributed to the country’s downward spiral after the crash, so did this confidence-inducing move help to build it back up. Consumer confidence returned, and within weeks, close to \$1 billion in cash and gold had been brought out from under mattresses and hidden bookshelves, and re-deposited in the nation’s banks. The immediate crisis had been quelled, and the public was ready to believe in their new president.

## The Power of Hearth and Home

Fireside chats—Roosevelt’s weekly radio addresses—underscored Roosevelt’s savvy in understanding how best to reach people. Using simple terms and a reassuring tone, he invoked a family patriarch sitting by the fire, explaining to those who trusted him how he was working to help them. It is worth noting how he explained complex financial concepts quite simply, but at the same time, complimented



the American people on their “intelligent support.” One of his fireside chats is provided below:

I recognize that the many proclamations from State capitols and from Washington, the legislation, the Treasury regulations, etc., couched for the most part in banking and legal terms, should be explained for the benefit of the average citizen. I owe this in particular because of the fortitude and good temper with which everybody has accepted the inconvenience and hardships of the banking holiday. I know that when you understand what we in Washington have been about I shall continue to have your cooperation as fully as I have had your sympathy and help during the past week. . . .

The success of our whole great national program depends, of course, upon the cooperation of the public—on its intelligent support and use of a reliable system. . . . After all, there is an element in the readjustment of our financial system more important than currency, more important than gold, and that is the confidence of the people. Confidence and courage are the essentials of success in carrying out our plan. You people must have faith; you must not be stampeded by rumors or guesses. Let us unite in banishing fear. We have provided the machinery to restore our financial system; it is up to you to support and make it work. It is your problem no less than it is mine. Together we cannot fail.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 12, 1933

A huge part of Roosevelt’s success in turning around the country can be seen in his addresses like these: He built support and galvanized the public. Ironically, Roosevelt, the man who famously said we have nothing to fear but fear itself, had a significant fear: fire. Being paralyzed with polio, he was very afraid of being left near a fireplace. But he knew the power of the hearth and home, and



drew on this mental image to help the public view him the way that he hoped to be seen.

Visit the [American Presidency Project](#) to listen to one of Roosevelt's fireside chats. What kind of feeling does his language and demeanor evoke?

In June 1933, Roosevelt replaced the Emergency Banking Act with the more permanent Glass-Steagall Banking Act. This law prohibited commercial banks from engaging in investment banking, therefore stopping the practice of banks speculating in the stock market with deposits. This law also created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, or FDIC, which insured personal bank deposits up to \$2,500. Other measures designed to boost confidence in the overall economy beyond the banking system included passage of the Economy Act, which fulfilled Roosevelt's campaign pledge to reduce government spending by reducing salaries, including his own and those of the Congress. He also signed into law the Securities Act, which required full disclosure to the federal government from all corporations and investment banks that wanted to market stocks and bonds. Roosevelt also sought new revenue through the Beer Tax. As the Twenty-First Amendment, which would repeal the Eighteenth Amendment establishing Prohibition, moved towards ratification, this law authorized the manufacture of 3.2 percent beer and levied a tax on it.

## THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS

In his first hundred days in office, the new president pushed forward an unprecedented number of new bills, all geared towards



stabilizing the economy, providing relief to individuals, creating jobs, and helping businesses. A sympathetic Democrat-controlled Congress helped propel his agenda forward.

## Relief: Employment for the Masses

Even as he worked to rebuild the economy, Roosevelt recognized that the unemployed millions required jobs more quickly than the economy could provide. In a push to create new jobs, Roosevelt signed the Wagner-Peyser Act, creating the United States Employment Service, which promised states matching funds if they created local employment opportunities. He also authorized \$500 million in direct grants through the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA). This money went directly to states to infuse relief agencies with the much-needed resources to help the nearly fifteen million unemployed. These two bills illustrate Roosevelt's dual purposes of providing short-term emergency help and building employment opportunities that would strengthen the economy in the long term.

Roosevelt was aware of the need for immediate help, but he mostly wanted to create more jobs. FERA overseer Harry Hopkins, who later was in charge of the Civil Works Administration (CWA), shared this sentiment. With Hopkins at its helm, the CWA, founded in early 1933, went on to put millions of men and women to work. At its peak, there were some four million Americans repairing bridges, building roads and airports, and undertaking other public projects. Another



*The CCC put hundreds of thousands of men to work on environmental projects around the country. Some call it the beginning of the modern environmentalist movement in the United States.*



work program was the Civilian Conservation Corps Relief Act (CCC). The CCC provided government jobs for young men aged fourteen to twenty-four who came from relief families. They would earn thirty dollars per month planting trees, fighting forest fires, and refurbishing historic sites and parks, building an infrastructure that families would continue to enjoy for generations to come. Within the first two months, the CCC employed its first 250,000 men and eventually established about twenty-five hundred camps.

The various programs that made up the First New Deal are listed in the table below.



### Key Programs from the First New Deal

New Deal Legislation	Years Enacted	Brief Description
Agricultural Adjustment Administration	1933–1935	Farm program designed to raise process by curtailing production
Civil Works Administration	1933–1934	Temporary job relief program
Civilian Conservation Corps	1933–1942	Employed young men to work in rural areas
Farm Credit Administration	1933–today	Low interest mortgages for farm owners
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	1933–today	Insure private bank deposits
Federal Emergency Relief Act	1933	Direct monetary relief to poor unemployed Americans
Glass-Steagall Act	1933	Regulate investment banking
Homeowners Loan Corporation	1933–1951	Government mortgages that allowed people to keep their homes
Indian Reorganization Act	1933	Abandoned federal policy of assimilation
National Recovery Administration	1933–1935	Industries agree to codes of fair practice to set price, wage, production levels
Public Works Administration	1933–1938	Large public works projects
Resettlement Administration	1933–1935	Resettles poor tenant farmers
Securities Act of 1933	1933–today	Created SEC; regulates stock transactions
Tennessee Valley Authority	1933–today	Regional development program; brought electrification to the valley

The final element of Roosevelt's efforts to provide relief to those in desperate straits was the Home Owners' Refinancing Act. Created by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), the program rescued homeowners from foreclosure by refinancing their



mortgages. Not only did this save the homes of countless homeowners, but it also saved many of the small banks who owned the original mortgages by relieving them of that responsibility. Later New Deal legislation created the Federal Housing Authority, which eventually standardized the thirty-year mortgage and promoted the housing boom of the post-World War II era. A similar program, created through the Emergency Farm Mortgage Act and Farm Credit Act, provided the same service for farm mortgages.

In this [American Experience](#) interview, Neil Maher, author of *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and Roots of the Modern Environmental Movement*, provides a comprehensive look into what the CCC offered the country—and the president—on issues as diverse as economics, race, and recreation.

## Rescuing Farms and Factories

While much of the legislation of the first hundred days focused on immediate relief and job creation through federal programs, Roosevelt was committed to addressing the underlying problems inherent in the American economy. In his efforts to do so, he created two of the most significant pieces of New Deal legislation: the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) and the National Industry Recovery Act (NIRA).

Farms around the country were suffering, but from different causes. In the Great Plains, drought conditions meant that little was growing at all, while in the South, bumper crops and low prices meant that farmers could not sell their goods at prices that could sustain them. The AAA offered some direct relief: Farmers received



\$4.5 million through relief payments. But the larger part of the program paid southern farmers to reduce their production: Wheat, cotton, corn, hogs, tobacco, rice, and milk farmers were all eligible. Passed into law on May 12, 1933, it was designed to boost prices to a level that would alleviate rural poverty and restore profitability to American agriculture. These price increases would be achieved by encouraging farmers to limit production in order to increase demand while receiving cash payments in return. Corn producers would receive thirty cents per bushel for corn they did not grow. Hog farmers would get five dollars per head for hogs not raised. The program would be financed by a tax on processing plants, passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices.

This was a bold attempt to help farmers address the systemic problems of overproduction and lower commodity prices. Despite previous efforts to regulate farming through subsidies, never before had the federal government intervened on this scale; the notion of paying farmers *not* to produce crops was unheard of. One significant problem, however, was that, in some cases, there was already an excess of crops, in particular, cotton and hogs, which clogged the marketplace. A bumper crop in 1933, combined with the slow implementation of the AAA, led the government to order the plowing under of ten million acres of cotton, and the butchering of six million baby pigs and 200,000 sows. Although it worked to some degree—the price of cotton increased from six to twelve cents per pound—this move was deeply problematic. Critics saw it as the ultimate example of corrupt capitalism: a government destroying food, while its citizens were starving, in order to drive up prices.

Another problem plaguing this relief effort was the disparity between large commercial farms, which received the largest payments and set the quotas, and the small family farms that felt no relief. Large farms often cut production by laying off sharecroppers or evicting tenant farmers, making the program even worse for them than for small farm owners. Their frustration led to the creation of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU), an interracial organization that sought to gain government relief for



these most disenfranchised of farmers. The STFU organized, protested, and won its members some wage increases through the mid-1930s, but the overall plight of these workers remained dismal. As a result, many of them followed the thousands of Dust Bowl refugees to California.



*Sharecroppers and tenant farmers suffered enormously during the Great Depression. The STFU was created to help alleviate this suffering, but many farmers ended up taking to the road, along with other Dust Bowl refugees, on their way to California.*

## Labor Songs and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union

And if the growers get in the way, we're gonna roll right over  
them

We're gonna roll right over them, we're gonna roll right over  
them



And if the growers get in the way, we're gonna roll right over  
them

We're gonna roll this union on

—John Handcox, “Roll the Union On”

“Mean Things Happening in This Land,” “Roll the Union On,” and “Strike in Arkansas” are just a few of the folk songs written by John Handcox. A union organizer and STFU member, Handcox became the voice of the worker's struggle, writing dozens of songs that have continued to be sung by labor activists and folk singers over the years. Handcox joined the STFU in 1935, and used his songs to rally others, stating, “I found out singing was more inspiring than talking . . . to get the attention of the people.”

Racially integrated and with active women members, the STFU was ahead of its time. Although criticized by other union leaders for its relationship with the Communist Party in creating the “Popular Front” for labor activism in 1934, the STFU succeeded in organizing strikes and bringing national attention to the issues that tenant farmers faced. While the programs Roosevelt put in place did not do enough to help these farmers, the STFU—and Handcox's music—remains a relevant part of the country's labor movement.

The AAA did succeed on some fronts. By the spring of 1934, farmers had formed over four thousand local committees, with more than three million farmers agreeing to participate. They signed individual contracts agreeing to take land out of production in return for government payments, and checks began to arrive by the end of 1934. For some farmers, especially those with large farms, the program spelled relief.

While Roosevelt hoped the AAA would help farms and farmers, he also sought aid for the beleaguered manufacturing sector. The Emergency Railroad Transportation Act created a national railroad office to encourage cooperation among different railroad companies, hoping to shore up an industry essential to the stability of the manufacturing sector, but one that had been devastated by mismanagement. More importantly, the NIRA suspended antitrust



laws and allowed businesses and industries to work together in order to establish codes of fair competition, including issues of price setting and minimum wages. New Deal officials believed that allowing these collaborations would help industries stabilize prices and production levels in the face of competitive overproduction and declining profits; however, at the same time, many felt it important to protect workers from potentially unfair agreements.

A new government agency, the National Recovery Administration (NRA), was central to this plan, and mandated that businesses accept a code that included minimum wages and maximum work hours. In order to protect workers from potentially unfair agreements among factory owners, every industry had its own “code of fair practice” that included workers’ rights to organize and use collective bargaining to ensure that wages rose with prices ([link](#)). Headed by General Hugh S. Johnson, the NRA worked to create over five hundred different codes for different industries. The administration of such a complex plan naturally created its own problems. While codes for key industries such as automotive and steel made sense, Johnson pushed to create similar codes for dog food manufacturers, those who made shoulder pads for women’s clothing, and even burlesque shows (regulating the number of strippers in any one show).

Consumers were encouraged to buy from companies displaying the Blue Eagle (a), the logo signifying compliance with the new NRA regulations. With talons gripping a gear, representing industry, and lightning bolts, representing power, the eagle (b) was intended to be a symbol of economic recovery.





(a)



(b)

The NIRA also created the Public Works Administration (PWA). The PWA set aside \$3.3 billion to build public projects such as highways, federal buildings, and military bases. Although this program suffered from political squabbles over appropriations for projects in various congressional districts, as well as significant underfunding of public housing projects, it ultimately offered some of the most lasting benefits of the NIRA. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes ran the program, which completed over thirty-four thousand projects, including the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel in New York. Between 1933 and 1939, the PWA accounted for the construction of over one-third of all new hospitals and 70 percent of all new public schools in the country.

Another challenge faced by the NRA was that the provision granting workers the right to organize appeared to others as a mandate to do so. In previously unorganized industries, such as oil and gas, rubber, and service occupations, workers now sought groups that would assist in their organization, bolstered by the encouragement they now felt from the government. The Communist Party took advantage of the opportunity to assist in the hope of creating widespread protests against the American industrial structure. The number of strikes nationwide doubled between 1932 and 1934, with over 1.5 million workers going on strike in 1934 alone, often in protests that culminated in bloodshed. A strike at the Auto-Lite plant in Toledo, Ohio, that summer resulted



in ten thousand workers from other factories joining in sympathy with their fellow workers to attack potential strike-breakers with stones and bricks. Simultaneously in Minneapolis, a teamsters strike resulted in frequent, bloody confrontations between workers and police, leading the governor to contemplate declaring martial law before the companies agreed to negotiate better wages and conditions for the workers. Finally, a San Francisco strike among 14,000 longshoremen closed the city's waterfront and eventually led to a city-wide general strike of over 130,000 workers, essentially paralyzing the city. Clashes between workers, and police and National Guardsmen left many strikers bloodied, and at least two dead.

Although Roosevelt's relief efforts provided jobs to many and benefitted communities with the construction of several essential building projects, the violence that erupted amid clashes between organized labor and factories backed by police and the authorities exposed a fundamental flaw in the president's approach. Immediate relief did not address long-existing, inherent class inequities that left workers exposed to poor working conditions, low wages, long hours, and little protection. For many workers, life on the job was not much better than life as an unemployed American. Employment programs may have put men back to work and provided much needed relief, but the fundamental flaws in the system required additional attention—attention that Roosevelt was unable to pay in the early days of the New Deal. Critics were plentiful, and the president would be forced to address them in the years ahead.

## Regional Planning

Regionally, Roosevelt's work was most famously seen in the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), a federal agency tasked with the job of planning and developing the area through flood control, reforestation, and hydroelectric power. Employing several thousand



Americans on a project that Roosevelt envisioned as a template for future regional redevelopment, the TVA revitalized a river valley that landowners had badly over-farmed, leaving behind eroded soil that lacked essential nutrients for future farming. Under the direction of David Lilienthal, beginning in 1933, the TVA workers erected a series of dams to harness the Tennessee River in the creation of much-needed hydroelectric power. The arrival of both electric lighting and machinery to the region eased the lives of the people who lived there, as well as encouraged industrial growth. The TVA also included an educational component, teaching farmers important lessons about crop rotation, soil replenishment, fertilizing, and reforestation.

The TVA was not without its critics, however, most notably among the fifteen thousand families who were displaced due to the massive construction projects. Although eventually the project benefited farmers with the introduction of new farming and fertilizing techniques, as well as the added benefit of electric power, many local citizens were initially mistrustful of the TVA and the



*The TVA helped a struggling part of the country through the creation of jobs, and flood control and reforestation programs. The Wilson Dam, shown here, is one of nine TVA dams on the Tennessee River. (credit: United States Geological Survey)*

federal government's agenda. Likewise, as with several other New Deal programs, women did not directly benefit from these employment opportunities, as they were explicitly excluded for the benefit of men who most Americans still considered the family's primary breadwinner. However, with the arrival of electricity came new industrial ventures, including several textile mills up and down the valley, several of which offered employment to women. Throughout his presidency, Roosevelt frequently pointed to the TVA as one of the glowing accomplishments of the New Deal and its



ability to bring together the machinery of the federal government along with private interests to revitalize a regional economy. Just months before his death in 1945, he continued to speak of the possibility of creating other regional authorities throughout the country.

## ASSESSING THE FIRST NEW DEAL

While many were pleased with the president's bold plans, there were numerous critics of the New Deal, discussed in the following section. The New Deal was far from perfect, but Roosevelt's quickly implemented policies reversed the economy's long slide. It put new capital into ailing banks. It rescued homeowners and farmers from foreclosure and helped people keep their homes. It offered some direct relief to the unemployed poor. It gave new incentives to farmers and industry alike, and put people back to work in an effort to both create jobs and boost consumer spending. The total number of working Americans rose from twenty-four to twenty-seven million between 1933 and 1935, in contrast to the seven-million-worker decline during the Hoover administration. Perhaps most importantly, the First New Deal changed the pervasive pessimism that had held the country in its grip since the end of 1929. For the first time in years, people had hope.

It was the hard work of Roosevelt's advisors—the “Brains Trust” of scholars and thinkers from leading universities—as well as Congress and the American public who helped the New Deal succeed as well as it did. Ironically, it was the American people's volunteer spirit, so extolled by Hoover, that Roosevelt was able to harness. The first hundred days of his administration was not a master plan that Roosevelt dreamed up and executed on his own. In fact, it was not a master plan at all, but rather a series of, at times, disjointed efforts made from different assumptions. But after taking office and analyzing the crisis, Roosevelt and his advisors did feel that they



had a larger sense of what had caused the Great Depression and thus attempted a variety of solutions to fix it. They believed that it was caused by abuses on the part of a small group of bankers and businessmen, aided by Republican policies that built wealth for a few at the expense of many. The answer, they felt, was to root out these abuses through banking reform, as well as adjust production and consumption of both farm and industrial goods. This adjustment would come about by increasing the purchasing power of everyday people, as well as through regulatory policies like the NRA and AAA. While it may seem counterintuitive to raise crop prices and set prices on industrial goods, Roosevelt's advisors sought to halt the deflationary spiral and economic uncertainty that had prevented businesses from committing to investments and consumers from parting with their money.

## Section Summary

After assuming the presidency, Roosevelt lost no time in taking bold steps to fight back against the poverty and unemployment plaguing the country. He immediately created a bank holiday and used the time to bring before Congress legislation known as the Emergency Banking Act, which allowed federal agencies to examine all banks before they reopened, thus restoring consumer confidence. He then went on, in his historic first hundred days, to sign numerous other significant pieces of legislation that were geared towards creating jobs, shoring up industry and



agriculture, and providing relief to individuals through both refinancing options and direct handouts. Not all of his programs were effective, and many generated significant criticism. Overall, however, these programs helped to stabilize the economy, restore confidence, and change the pessimistic mindset that had overrun the country.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1043>

### *Review Questions*

1. In what ways did the New Deal both provide direct relief and create new jobs? Which programs served each of these goals?
2. How did the NRA seek to protect workers? What difficulties did this agency face?

### *Answers to Review Questions*

1. The most prominent of Roosevelt's job-creation programs included the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Public Works Administration (the latter under the auspices of the National Industrial Recovery Act).



Both employed millions of Americans to work on thousands of projects. While programs such as the Tennessee Valley Authority were not inceptioned solely for the purpose of generating jobs, they nevertheless created thousands of employment opportunities in service of their greater goals. Direct relief came primarily in the form of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, which lent over \$3 billion to states to operate direct relief programs from 1933 to 1935, as well as undertook several employment projects.

2. The National Recovery Administration (NRA) established a “code of fair practice” for every industry. Business owners were made to accept a set minimum wage and maximum number of work hours, as well as to recognize workers’ rights to organize and use collective bargaining. While the NRA established over five hundred different codes, it proved difficult to adapt this plan successfully for diverse industries with very different characteristics and practices.

## *Glossary*

**Civilian Conservation Corps** a public program for unemployed young men from relief families who were put to work on conservation and land management projects around the country



**Tennessee Valley Authority** a federal agency tasked with the job of planning and developing the area through flood control, reforestation, and hydroelectric power projects



# 145. The Second New Deal

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify key pieces of legislation from the Second New Deal
- Assess the entire New Deal, especially in terms of its impact on women, African Americans, and Native Americans

Roosevelt won his second term in a landslide, but that did not mean he was immune to criticism. His critics came from both the left and the right, with conservatives deeply concerned over his expansion of government spending and power, and liberals angered that he had not done more to help those still struggling. Adding to Roosevelt's challenges, the Supreme Court struck down several key elements of the First New Deal, angering Roosevelt and spurring him to try and stack the courts in his second term. Still, he entered his new term with the unequivocal support of the voting public, and he wasted no time beginning the second phase of his economic plan. While the First New Deal focused largely on stemming the immediate suffering of the American people, the Second New Deal put in place legislation that changed America's social safety net for good.

## CHALLENGES FROM CRITICS ON ALL

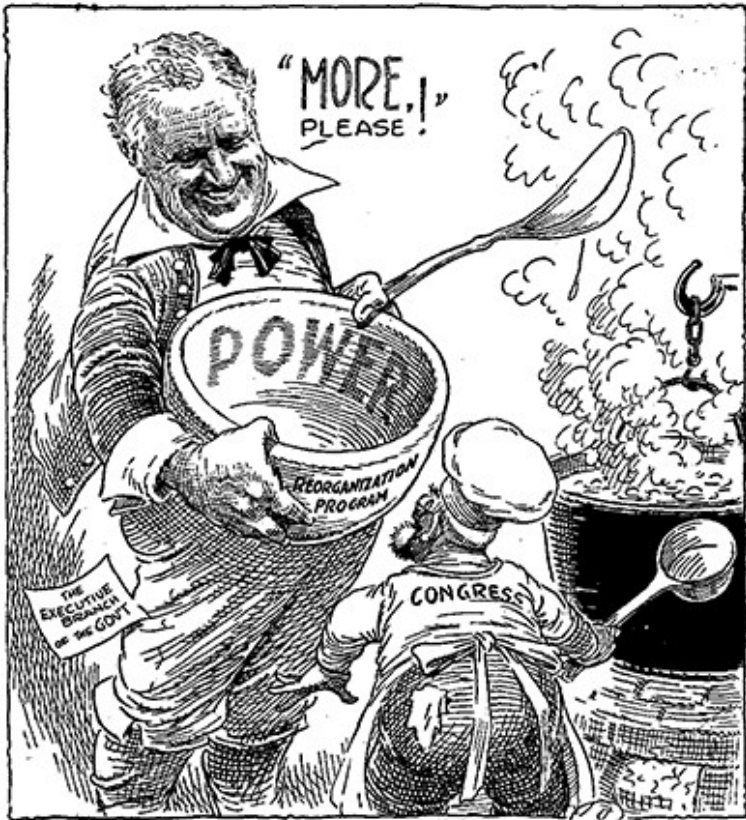


## SIDES

While many people supported Roosevelt, especially in the first few years of his presidency, the New Deal did receive significant criticism, both from conservatives who felt that it was a radical agenda to ruin the country's model of free enterprise, and from liberals who felt that it did not provide enough help to those who needed it most.



## OLIVER TWIST



Roosevelt used previously unheard of levels of government power in his attempt to push the country out of the Great Depression, as artist Joseph Parrish depicts here in this 1937 Chicago Tribune cartoon. While critics on the left felt that he had not done enough, critics on the right felt that his use of power was frighteningly close to fascism and socialism.

Industrialists and wealthy Americans led the conservative criticism against the president. Whether attacking his character or simply stating that he was moving away from American values toward fascism and socialism, they sought to undermine his power and



popularity. Most notably, the American Liberty League—comprised largely of conservative Democrats who lamented the excesses of several of Roosevelt’s New Deal programs—labeled the AAA as fascist and proclaimed later New Deal programs to be key threats to the very nature of democracy. Additional criticism came from the National Association of Manufacturers, which urged businessmen to outright ignore portions of the NRA that promoted collective bargaining, as well as subsequent labor protection legislation. In 1935, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt the most crushing blow to Roosevelt’s vision, striking down several key pieces of the New Deal as unconstitutional. They found that both the AAA and the NIRA overreached federal authority. The negation of some of his most ambitious economic recovery efforts frustrated Roosevelt greatly, but he was powerless to stop it at this juncture.

Meanwhile, others felt that Roosevelt had not done enough. Dr. Francis E. Townsend of California was one who felt that Roosevelt had failed to adequately address the country’s tremendous problems. Townsend, who was a retired dentist, proposed an expansive pension plan for the elderly. The Townsend Plan, as it was known, gained a great deal of popularity: It recommended paying every citizen over sixty who retired from work the sum of \$200 per month, provided they spend it in thirty days. Another figure who gained national attention was Father Charles Coughlin. He was a “radio priest” from Michigan who, although he initially supported the New Deal, subsequently argued that Roosevelt stopped far too short in his defense of labor, monetary reform, and the nationalization of key industries. The president’s plan, he proclaimed, was inadequate. He created the National Union for Social Justice and used his weekly radio show to gain followers.

A more direct political threat to Roosevelt came from muckraker Upton Sinclair, who pursued the California governorship in 1934 through a campaign based upon criticism of the New Deal’s shortcomings. In his “End Poverty in California” program, Sinclair called for a progressive income tax, a pension program for the elderly, and state seizure of factories and farms where property



taxes remained unpaid. The state would then offer jobs to the unemployed to work those farms and factories in a cooperative mode. Although Sinclair lost the election to his Republican opponent, he did draw local and national attention to several of his ideas.

The biggest threat to the president, however, came from corrupt but beloved Louisiana senator Huey “Kingfish” Long. His disapproval of Roosevelt came in part from his own ambitions for higher office; Long stated that the president was not doing enough to help people and proposed his own Share Our Wealth program. Under this plan, Long recommended the liquidation of all large personal fortunes in order to fund direct payments to less fortunate Americans. He foresaw giving \$5,000 to every family, \$2,500 to every worker,



*Huey P. Long was a charismatic populist and governor of Louisiana from 1928 to 1932. In 1932, he became a member of the U.S. Senate and would have been a serious rival for Roosevelt in the 1936 presidential election if his life had not been cut short by an assassin's bullet.*

as well as a series of elderly pensions and education funds. Despite his questionable math, which numerous economists quickly pointed out rendered his program unworkable, by 1935, Long had a significant following of over four million people. If he had not been assassinated by the son-in-law of a local political rival, he may well have been a contender against Roosevelt for the 1936 presidential nomination.



## ANSWERING THE CHALLENGE

Roosevelt recognized that some of the criticisms of the New Deal were valid. Although he was still reeling from the Supreme Court's invalidation of key statutes, he decided to face his re-election bid in 1936 by unveiling another wave of legislation that he dubbed the Second New Deal. In the first week of June 1935, Roosevelt called congressional leaders into the White House and gave them a list of “must-pass” legislation that he wanted before they adjourned for the summer. Whereas the policies of the first hundred days may have shored up public confidence and stopped the most drastic of the problems, the second hundred days changed the face of America for the next sixty years.

The Banking Act of 1935 was the most far-reaching revision of banking laws since the creation of the Federal Reserve System in 1914. Previously, regional reserve banks, particularly the New York Reserve Bank—controlled by the powerful Morgan and Rockefeller families—had dominated policy-making at the Federal Reserve. Under the new system, there would be a seven-member board of governors to oversee regional banks. They would have control over reserve requirements, discount rates, board member selection, and more. Not surprisingly, this new board kept initial interest rates quite low, allowing the federal government to borrow billions of dollars of additional cash to fund major relief and recovery programs.



In 1935, Congress also passed the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, which authorized the single largest expenditure at that time in the country's history: \$4.8 billion. Almost one-third of those funds were invested in a new relief agency, the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Harry Hopkins, formerly head of the CWA, took on the WPA and ran it until 1943. In that time, the program provided employment relief to over eight million Americans, or approximately 20 percent of the country's workforce. The WPA funded the construction



*Painted by artists funded by the Federal One Project, this section of Ohio, a mural located in the Bellevue, Ohio post office, illustrates a busy industrial scene. Artists painted the communities where they lived, thus creating visions of farms, factories, urban life, harvest celebrations, and more that still reflect the life and work of that era. (credit: Works Progress Administration)*

of more than 2,500 hospitals, 5,900 schools, 570,000 miles of road, and more. The WPA also created the Federal One Project, which employed approximately forty thousand artists in theater, art, music, and writing. They produced state murals, guidebooks, concerts, and drama performances all around the country. Additionally, the project funded the collection of oral histories, including those of former slaves, which provided a valuable addition to the nation's understanding of slave life. Finally, the WPA also included the National Youth Administration (NYA), which provided work-study jobs to over 500,000 college students and four million high school students.

Browse the *Born in Slavery* [collection](#) to examine



personal accounts of former slaves, recorded between 1936 and 1938, as part of the Federal Writers' Project of the WPA.

With the implementation of the Second New Deal, Roosevelt also created the country's present-day social safety net. The Social Security Act established programs intended to help the most vulnerable: the elderly, the unemployed, the disabled, and the young. It included a pension fund for all retired people—except domestic workers and farmers, which therefore left many women and African Americans beyond the scope of its benefits—over the age of sixty-five, to be paid through a payroll tax on both employee and employer. Related to this act, Congress also passed a law on unemployment insurance, to be funded by a tax on employers, and programs for unwed mothers, as well as for those who were blind, deaf, or disabled. It is worth noting that some elements of these reforms were pulled from Roosevelt detractors Coughlin and Townsend; the popularity of their movements gave the president more leverage to push forward this type of legislation.

To the benefit of industrial workers, Roosevelt signed into law the Wagner Act, also known as the National Labor Relations Act. The protections previously afforded to workers under the NIRA were inadvertently lost when the Supreme Court struck down the original law due to larger regulatory concerns, leaving workers vulnerable. Roosevelt sought to salvage this important piece of labor legislation, doing so with the Wagner Act. The act created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to once again protect American workers' right to unionize and bargain collectively, as well as to provide a federal vehicle for labor grievances to be heard. Although roundly criticized by the Republican Party and factory owners, the Wagner Act withstood several challenges and eventually received constitutional sanction by the U.S. Supreme



Court in 1937. The law received the strong support of John L. Lewis and the Congress of Industrial Organizations who had long sought government protection of industrial unionism, from the time they split from the American Federation of Labor in 1935 over disputes on whether to organize workers along craft or industrial lines. Following passage of the law, Lewis began a widespread publicity campaign urging industrial workers to join “the president’s union.” The relationship was mutually beneficial to Roosevelt, who subsequently received the endorsement of Lewis’s United Mine Workers union in the 1936 presidential election, along with a sizeable \$500,000 campaign contribution. The Wagner Act permanently established government-secured workers’ rights and protections from their employers, and it marked the beginning of labor’s political support for the Democratic Party.

The various programs that made up the Second New Deal are listed in the table below.



### Key Programs from the Second New Deal

New Deal Legislation	Years Enacted	Brief Description
Fair Labor Standards Act	1938–today	Established minimum wage and forty-hour workweek
Farm Security Administration	1935–today	Provides poor farmers with education and economic support programs
Federal Crop Insurance Corporation	1938–today	Insures crops and livestock against loss of revenue
National Labor Relations Act	1935–today	Recognized right of workers to unionize & collectively bargain
National Youth Administration	1935–1939 (part of WPA)	Part-time employment for college and high school students
Rural Electrification Administration	1935–today	Provides public utilities to rural areas
Social Security Act	1935–today	Aid to retirees, unemployed, disabled
Surplus Commodities Program	1936–today	Provides food to the poor (still exists in Food Stamps program)
Works Progress Administration	1935–1943	Jobs program (including artists and youth)

## THE FINAL PIECES

Roosevelt entered the 1936 presidential election on a wave of popularity, and he beat Republican opponent Alf Landon by a nearly unanimous Electoral College vote of 523 to 8. Believing it to be his moment of strongest public support, Roosevelt chose to exact a measure of revenge against the U.S. Supreme Court for challenging his programs and to pressure them against challenging his more recent Second New Deal provisions. To this end, Roosevelt created the informally named “Supreme Court Packing Plan” and tried to pack the court in his favor by expanding the number of justices and



adding new ones who supported his views. His plan was to add one justice for every current justice over the age of seventy who refused to step down. This would have allowed him to add six more justices, expanding the bench from nine to fifteen. Opposition was quick and thorough from both the Supreme Court and Congress, as well as from his own party. The subsequent retirement of Justice Van Devanter from the court, as well as the sudden death of Senator Joe T. Robinson, who championed Roosevelt's plan before the Senate, all but signaled Roosevelt's defeat. However, although he never received the support to make these changes, Roosevelt appeared to succeed in politically intimidating the current justices into supporting his newer programs, and they upheld both the Wagner Act and the Social Security Act. Never again during his presidency would the Supreme Court strike down any significant elements of his New Deal.

Roosevelt was not as successful in addressing the nation's growing deficit. When he entered the presidency in 1933, Roosevelt did so with traditionally held fiscal beliefs, including the importance of a balanced budget in order to maintain public confidence in federal government operations. However, the severe economic conditions of the depression quickly convinced the president of the importance of government spending to create jobs and relief for the American people. As he commented to a crowd in Pittsburgh in 1936, "To balance our budget in 1933 or 1934 or 1935 would have been a crime against the American people. To do so . . . we should have had to set our face against human suffering with callous indifference. When Americans suffered, we refused to pass by on the other side. Humanity came first." However, after his successful re-election, Roosevelt anticipated that the economy would recover enough by late 1936 that he could curtail spending by 1937. This reduction in spending, he hoped, would curb the deficit. As the early months of 1937 unfolded, Roosevelt's hopes seemed supported by the most recent economic snapshot of the country. Production, wages, and profits had all returned to pre-1929 levels, while unemployment was at its lowest rate in the decade, down from 25



percent to 14 percent. But no sooner did Roosevelt cut spending when a recession hit. Two million Americans were newly out of work as unemployment quickly rose by 5 percent and industrial production declined by a third. Breadlines began to build again, while banks prepared to close.

Historians continue to debate the causes of this recession within a depression. Some believe the fear of increased taxes forced factory owners to curtail planned expansion; others blame the Federal Reserve for tightening the nation's money supply. Roosevelt, however, blamed the downturn on his decision to significantly curtail federal government spending in job relief programs such as the WPA. Several of his closest advisors, including Harry Hopkins, Henry Wallace, and others, urged him to adopt the new economic theory espoused by British economic John Maynard Keynes, who argued that deficit spending was necessary in advanced capitalist economies in order to maintain employment and stimulate consumer spending. Convinced of the necessity of such an approach, Roosevelt asked Congress in the spring of 1938 for additional emergency relief spending. Congress immediately authorized \$33 billion for PWA and WPA work projects. Although World War II would provide the final impetus for lasting economic recovery, Roosevelt's willingness to adapt in 1938 avoided another disaster.

Roosevelt signed the last substantial piece of New Deal legislation in the summer of 1938. The Fair Labor Standards Act established a federal minimum wage—at the time, forty cents per hour—a maximum workweek of forty hours (with an opportunity for four additional hours of work at overtime wages), and prohibited child labor for those under age sixteen. Roosevelt was unaware that the war would soon dominate his legacy, but this proved to be his last major piece of economic legislation in a presidency that changed the fabric of the country forever.



## IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS

The legacy of the New Deal is in part seen in the vast increase in national power: The federal government accepted responsibility for the nation's economic stability and prosperity. In retrospect, the majority of historians and economists judge it to have been a tremendous success. The New Deal not only established minimum standards for wages, working conditions, and overall welfare, it also allowed millions of Americans to hold onto their homes, farms, and savings. It laid the groundwork for an agenda of expanded federal government influence over the economy that continued through President Harry Truman's "Fair Deal" in the 1950s and President Lyndon Johnson's call for a "Great Society" in the 1960s. The New Deal state that embraced its responsibility for the citizens' welfare and proved willing to use its power and resources to spread the nation's prosperity lasted well into the 1980s, and many of its tenets persist today. Many would also agree that the postwar economic stability of the 1950s found its roots in the stabilizing influences introduced by social security, the job stability that union contracts provided, and federal housing mortgage programs introduced in the New Deal. The environment of the American West in particular, benefited from New Deal projects such as the Soil Conservation program.

Still, Roosevelt's programs also had their critics. Following the conservative rise initiated by presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964, and most often associated with the Ronald Reagan era of the 1980s, critics of the welfare state pointed to Roosevelt's presidency as the start of a slippery slope towards entitlement and the destruction of the individualist spirit upon which the United States had presumably developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the growth of the GDP between 1934 and 1940 approached an average of 7.5 percent—higher than in any other peacetime period in U.S. history, critics of the New Deal point out that unemployment still hovered



around 15 percent in 1940. While the New Deal resulted in some environmental improvements, it also inaugurated a number of massive infrastructural projects, such as the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River, that came with grave environmental consequences. And other shortcomings of the New Deal were obvious and deliberate at the time.

## African Americans under the New Deal

Critics point out that not all Americans benefited from the New Deal. African Americans in particular were left out, with overt discrimination in hiring practices within the federal job programs, such as the CCC, CWA, and WPA. The NRA was oftentimes criticized as the “Negro Run Around” or “Negroes Ruined Again” program. As well, the AAA left tenant farmers and sharecroppers, many of whom were black, with no support. Even Social Security originally excluded domestic workers, a primary source of employment for African American women. Facing such criticism early in his administration, Roosevelt undertook some efforts to ensure a measure of equality in hiring practices for the relief agencies, and opportunities began to present themselves by 1935. The WPA eventually employed 350,000 African Americans annually, accounting for nearly 15 percent of its workforce. By the close of the CCC in 1938, this program had employed over 300,000 African Americans, increasing the black percentage of its workforce from 3 percent at the outset to nearly 11 percent at its close. Likewise, in 1934, the PWA began to require that all government projects under its purview hire African Americans using a quota that reflected their percentage of the local population being served. Additionally, among several important WPA projects, the Federal One Project included a literacy program that eventually reached over one million African American children, helping them learn how to read and write.



On the issue of race relations themselves, Roosevelt has a mixed legacy. Within his White House, Roosevelt had a number of African American appointees, although most were in minor positions. Unofficially, Roosevelt relied upon advice from the Federal Council on Negro Affairs, also known as his “Black Cabinet.” This group included a young Harvard economist, Dr. Robert Weaver, who subsequently became the nation’s first black cabinet secretary in 1966, as President Lyndon Johnson’s Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Aubrey Williams, the director of the NYA, hired more black administrators than any other federal agency, and appointed them to oversee projects throughout the country. One key figure in the NYA was Mary McLeod Bethune, a prominent African American educator tapped by Roosevelt to act as the director of the NYA’s Division of Negro Affairs. Bethune had been a spokesperson and an educator for years; with this role, she became one of the president’s foremost African American advisors. During his presidency, Roosevelt became the first to appoint a black federal judge, as well as the first commander-in-chief to promote an African American to brigadier general. Most notably, he became the first president to publicly speak against lynching as a “vile form of collective murder.”





*This photo of Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune (second from left) was taken at the opening of Midway Hall, a federal building to house female African American government workers. Bethune was sometimes criticized for working with those in power, but her willingness to build alliances contributed to success in raising money and support for her causes.*

## Mary McLeod Bethune on Racial Justice

Democracy is for me, and for twelve million black Americans, a goal towards which our nation is marching. It is a dream and an ideal in whose ultimate realization we have a deep and abiding faith. For me, it is based on Christianity, in which we confidently entrust our destiny as a people. Under God's guidance in this great democracy, we are rising out of the darkness of slavery into the light of freedom. Here my race has been afforded [the] opportunity to advance from a people 80 percent illiterate to a people 80 percent literate; from abject poverty to the ownership



and operation of a million farms and 750,000 homes; from total disfranchisement to participation in government; from the status of chattels to recognized contributors to the American culture.

When Mary McLeod Bethune spoke these words, she spoke on behalf of a race of American citizens for whom the Great Depression was much more than economic hardship. For African Americans, the Depression once again exposed the racism and inequality that gripped the nation economically, socially, and politically. Her work as a member of President Franklin Roosevelt's unofficial "Black Cabinet" as well as the Director of the Division of Negro Affairs for the NYA, presented her an opportunity to advance African American causes on all fronts—but especially in the area of black literacy. As part of the larger WPA, she also influenced employment programs in the arts and public work sectors, and routinely had the president's ear on matters related to racial justice.

Listen to this [audio clip](#) of Eleanor Roosevelt interviewing Mary McLeod Bethune. By listening to her talking to Bethune and offering up her support, it becomes clear how compelling the immensely popular first lady was when speaking about programs of close personal interest to her. How do you think this would have been received by Roosevelt's supporters?

However, despite these efforts, Roosevelt also understood the precariousness of his political position. In order to maintain a coalition of Democrats to support his larger relief and recovery efforts, Roosevelt could not afford to alienate Southern Democrats who might easily bolt should he openly advocate for civil rights. While he spoke about the importance of anti-lynching legislation, he never formally pushed Congress to propose such a law. He did



publicly support the abolition of the poll tax, which Congress eventually accomplished in 1941. Likewise, although agency directors adopted changes to ensure job opportunities for African Americans at the federal level, at the local level, few advancements were made, and African Americans remained at the back of the employment lines. Despite such failures, however, Roosevelt deserves credit for acknowledging the importance of race relations and civil rights. At the federal level, more than any of his predecessors since the Civil War, Roosevelt remained aware of the role that the federal government can play in initiating important discussions about civil rights, as well as encouraging the development of a new cadre of civil rights leaders.

Although unable to bring about sweeping civil rights reforms for African Americans in the early stages of his administration, Roosevelt was able to work with Congress to significantly improve the lives of Indians. In 1934, he signed into law the Indian Reorganization Act (sometimes referred to as the “Indian New Deal”). This law formally abandoned the assimilationist policies set forth in the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Rather than forcing Indians to adapt to American culture, the new program encouraged them to develop forms of local self-government, as well as to preserve their artifacts and heritage. John Collier, the Commissioner on Indian Bureau Affairs from 1933 to 1945, championed this legislation and saw it as an opportunity to correct past injustices that land allotment and assimilation had wrought upon Indians. Although the re-establishment of communal tribal lands would prove to be difficult, Collier used this law to convince federal officials to return nearly two million acres of government-held land to various tribes in order to move the process along. Although subsequent legislation later circumscribed the degree to which tribes were allowed to self-govern on reservations, Collier’s work is still viewed as a significant step in improving race relations with Indians and preserving their heritage.



## Women and the New Deal

For women, Roosevelt's policies and practices had a similarly mixed effect. Wage discrimination in federal jobs programs was rampant, and relief policies encouraged women to remain home and leave jobs open for men. This belief was well in line with the gender norms of the day. Several federal relief programs specifically forbade husbands and wives' both drawing jobs or relief from the same agency. The WPA became the first specific New Deal agency to openly hire women—specifically widows, single women, and the wives of disabled husbands. While they did not take part in construction projects, these women did undertake sewing projects to provide blankets and clothing to hospitals and relief agencies. Likewise, several women took part in the various Federal One art projects. Despite the obvious gender limitations, many women strongly supported Roosevelt's New Deal, as much for its direct relief handouts for women as for its employment opportunities for men. One such woman was Mary (Molly) Dewson. A longtime activist in the women's suffrage movement, Dewson worked for women's rights and ultimately rose to be the Director of the Women's Division of the Democratic Party. Dewson and Mary McLeod Bethune, the national champion of African American education and literacy who rose to the level of Director of the Division of Negro Affairs for the NYA, understood the limitations of the New Deal, but also the opportunities for advancement it presented during very trying times. Rather than lamenting what Roosevelt could not or would not do, they felt, and perhaps rightly so, that Roosevelt would do more than most to help women and African Americans achieve a piece of the new America he was building.

Among the few, but notable, women who directly impacted Roosevelt's policies was Frances Perkins, who as Secretary of Labor was the first female member of any presidential cabinet, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who was a strong and public advocate for



social causes. Perkins, one of only two original Cabinet members to stay with Roosevelt for his entire presidency, was directly involved in the administration of the CCC, PWA, NRA, and the Social Security Act. Among several important measures, she took greatest pleasure in championing minimum wage statutes as well as the penultimate piece of New Deal legislation, the Fair Labor Standards Act. Roosevelt came to trust Perkins' advice with few questions or concerns, and steadfastly supported her work through the end of his life (Figure 26\_03\_Perkins).



(a)



(b)

After leaving her post as head of the Women's Division of the Democratic Party, Molly Dewson (a) later accepted an appointment to the Social Security Board, working with fellow board members Arthur J. Altmeyer and George E. Bigge, shown here in 1937. Another influential advisor to President Franklin Roosevelt was Frances Perkins (b), who, as U.S. Secretary of Labor, graced the cover of *Time* magazine on August 14, 1933.

## Molly Dewson and Women Democrats

In her effort to get President Roosevelt re-elected in 1936, Dewson commented, "We don't make the old-fashioned plea to the women that our nominee is charming, and all that. We appeal to the intelligence of the country's women. Ours were economic issues and we found the women ready to listen."



As head of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in 1932, Molly Dewson proved to be an influential supporter of President Franklin Roosevelt and one of his key advisors regarding issues pertaining to women's rights. Agreeing with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt that "Women must learn to play the games as men do," Dewson worked diligently in her position with the DNC to ensure that women could serve as delegates and alternates to the national conventions. Her approach, and her realization that women were intelligent enough to make rational choices, greatly appealed to Roosevelt. Her methods were perhaps not too different from his own, as he spoke to the public through his fireside chats. Dewson's impressive organizational skills on behalf of the party earned her the nickname "the little general" from President Roosevelt.

However, Eleanor Roosevelt, more so than any other individual, came to represent the strongest influence upon the president; and she used her unique position to champion several causes for women, African Americans, and the rural poor. She married Franklin Roosevelt, who was her fifth cousin, in 1905 and subsequently had six children, one of whom died at only seven months old. A strong supporter of her husband's political ambitions, Eleanor campaigned by his side through the failed vice-presidential bid in 1920 and on his behalf after he was diagnosed with polio in 1921. When she discovered letters of her husband's affair with her social secretary, Lucy Mercer, the marriage became less one of romance and more one of a political partnership that would continue—strained at times—until the president's death in 1945.



Historians agree that the first lady used her presence in the White House, in addition to the leverage of her failed marriage and knowledge of her husband's infidelities, to her advantage. She promoted several causes that the president himself would have had difficulty championing at the time. From newspaper and magazine articles she authored, to a busy travel schedule that saw her regularly cross the country, the first lady sought to remind Americans that their plight was foremost on the minds of all working in the White House.



*Eleanor Roosevelt travelled the country to promote New Deal programs. Here she visits a WPA nursery school in Des Moines, Iowa, on June 8, 1936. (credit: FDR Presidential Library & Museum)*

Eleanor was so active in her public appearances that, by 1940, she began holding regular press conferences to answer reporters' questions. Among her first substantial projects was the creation of Arthurdale—a resettlement community for displaced coal miners in West Virginia. Although the planned community became less of an administration priority as the years progressed (eventually folding in 1940), for seven years, Eleanor remained committed to its success as a model of assistance for the rural poor.

Exposed to issues of racial segregation in the Arthurdale experiment, Eleanor subsequently supported many civil rights causes through the remainder of the Roosevelt presidency. When it further became clear that racial discrimination was rampant in the administration of virtually all New Deal job programs—especially in the southern states—she continued to pressure her husband for remedies. In 1934, she openly lobbied for passage of the federal anti-lynching bill that the president privately supported but could



not politically endorse. Despite the subsequent failure of the Senate to pass such legislation, Eleanor succeeded in arranging a meeting between her husband and then-NAACP president Walter White to discuss anti-lynching and other pertinent calls for civil rights legislation.

White was only one of Eleanor's African American guests to the White House. Breaking with precedent, and much to the disdain of many White House officials, the first lady routinely invited prominent African Americans to dine with her and the president. Most notably, when the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) refused to permit internationally renowned black opera contralto Marian Anderson to sing in Constitution Hall, Eleanor resigned her membership in the DAR and arranged for Anderson to sing at a public concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, followed by her appearance at a state dinner at the White House in honor of the king and queen of England. With regard to race relations in particular, Eleanor Roosevelt was able to accomplish what her husband—for delicate political reasons—could not: become the administration's face for civil rights.

## Section Summary

Despite his popularity, Roosevelt had significant critics at the end of the First New Deal. Some on the right felt that he had moved the country in a dangerous direction towards socialism and fascism, whereas others on the left felt that he had not gone far enough to help the still-struggling American people. Reeling after the



Supreme Court struck down two key pieces of New Deal legislation, the AAA and NIRA, Roosevelt pushed Congress to pass a new wave of bills to provide jobs, banking reforms, and a social safety net. The laws that emerged—the Banking Act, the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, and the Social Security Act—still define our country today.

Roosevelt won his second term in a landslide and continued to push for legislation that would help the economy. The jobs programs employed over eight million people and, while systematic discrimination hurt both women and African American workers, these programs were still successful in getting people back to work. The last major piece of New Deal legislation that Roosevelt passed was the Fair Labor Standards Act, which set a minimum wage, established a maximum-hour workweek, and forbade child labor. This law, as well as Social Security, still provides much of the social safety net in the United States today.

While critics and historians continue to debate whether the New Deal ushered in a permanent change to the political culture of the country, from one of individualism to the creation of a welfare state, none deny the fact that Roosevelt's presidency expanded the role of the federal government in all people's lives, generally for the better. Even if the most conservative of presidential successors would question this commitment, the notion of some level of government involvement in economic regulation and social welfare had largely been settled by 1941. Future debates would be about the extent and degree of that involvement.



### *Review Question*

1. What were the major goals and accomplishments of the Indian New Deal?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The Indian Reorganization Act, or Indian New Deal, of 1934 put an end to the policies set forth in the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Rather than encouraging assimilation, the new act promoted Indians' development of local self-government and the preservation of Indian artifacts and heritage. John Collier, the Commissioner on Indian Bureau Affairs, was able to use the law to push for federal officials' return of nearly two million acres of government-held land to various tribes.

### *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. To what extent was Franklin Roosevelt's



overwhelming victory in the 1932 presidential election a reflection of his own ideas for change? To what extent did it represent public discontent with Herbert Hoover's lack of answers?

2. Whom did the New Deal help the least? What hardships did these individuals continue to suffer? Why were Roosevelt's programs unsuccessful in the alleviation of their adversities?
3. Was Franklin Roosevelt successful at combatting the Great Depression? How did the New Deal affect future generations of Americans?
4. What were the key differences between the First New Deal and the Second New Deal? On the whole, what did each New Deal set out to accomplish?
5. What challenges did Roosevelt face in his work on behalf of African Americans? What impact did the New Deal have ultimately on race relations?

## *Glossary*

**Social Security** a series of programs designed to help the population's most vulnerable—the unemployed, those over age sixty-five, unwed mothers, and the disabled—through various pension, insurance, and aid programs **Supreme Court Packing Plan** Roosevelt's plan, after being reelected, to pack the Supreme Court with an additional six justices, one for every justice over seventy who refused to step down **Works Progress Administration** a program run by



Harry Hopkins that provided jobs for over eight million Americans from its inception to its closure in 1943



## 146. Video: The New Deal

This video teaches you about the New Deal, which was president Franklin D. Roosevelt's plan to pull the United States out of the Great Depression of the 1930's. Did it work? Maybe. This video will teach you about some of the most effective and some of the best known programs of the New Deal. They weren't always the same thing. You will learn who supported the New Deal and who opposed it. The video will also get into how the New Deal changed the relationship between the government and citizens, and will even reveal just how the Depression ended. (hint: it was war spending)



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=183#oembed-1>



# 147. Assignment: Perspectives on the Great Depression and the New Deal

After reading the previous primary source readings (FDR's fireside chat [Greater Security for the Average Man](#) and [Hoover's speech on liberty](#)), answer the following in a paragraph:

1. Why did FDR see raising taxes and increasing welfare spending as an increase of freedom, and why did Hoover see it as restricting freedom?

Be sure to cite specific passages and quotations from each document in support of your answer.

NOTE: Be prepared to discuss the following in class, based on the documents above:

1. Is it ever possible for one person to gain something *without* someone else having to lose something? Can you think of a true win-win scenario? This is an important point, because back then, as today, people clamor for this or that, claiming that it will “increase freedom” or “guarantee rights,” but will it do so for everyone? If it won't can you claim that a particular program or policy is truly expanding freedom and protecting rights? When is it acceptable to decrease one person's freedom in order to increase another's?



PART XXIII

# THE NEW DEAL READER







## 148. Primary Source: Herbert Hoover on the New Deal (1932)

*Americans elected a string of conservative Republicans to the presidency during the boom years of the 1920s. When the economy crashed in 1929, however, and the nation descended deeper into the Great Depression, voters abandoned the Republican Party and conservative politicians struggled to in office. In this speech on the eve of the 1932 election, Herbert Hoover warned against Franklin Roosevelt's proposed New Deal.*

This campaign is more than a contest between two men. It is more than a contest between two parties. It is a contest between two philosophies of government.

We are told by the opposition that we must have a change, that we must have a new deal. It is not the change that comes from normal development of national life to which I object but the proposal to alter the whole foundations of our national life which have been builded through generations of testing and struggle, and of the principles upon which we have builded the nation. The expressions our opponents use must refer to important changes in our economic and social system and our system of government, otherwise they are nothing but vacuous words. And I realize that in this time of distress many of our people are asking whether our social and economic system is incapable of that great primary function of providing security and comfort of life to all of the firesides of our 25 million homes in America, whether our social system provides for the fundamental development and progress of our people, whether our form of government is capable of originating and sustaining that security and progress.

This question is the basis upon which our opponents are



appealing to the people in their fears and distress. They are proposing changes and so-called new deals which would destroy the very foundations of our American system.

Our people should consider the primary facts before they come to the judgment—not merely through political agitation, the glitter of promise, and the discouragement of temporary hardships—whether they will support changes which radically affect the whole system which has been builded up by 150 years of the toil of our fathers. They should not approach the question in the despair with which our opponents would clothe it.

Our economic system has received abnormal shocks during the past three years, which temporarily dislocated its normal functioning. These shocks have in a large sense come from without our borders, but I say to you that our system of government has enabled us to take such strong action as to prevent the disaster which would otherwise have come to our nation. It has enabled us further to develop measures and programs which are now demonstrating their ability to bring about restoration and progress.

...

I may say at once that the changes proposed from all these Democratic principals and allies are of the most profound and penetrating character. If they are brought about, this will not be the America which we have known in the past.

Let us pause for a moment and examine the American system of government, of social and economic life, which it is now proposed that we should alter. Our system is the product of our race and of our experience in building a nation to heights unparalleled in the whole history of the world. It is a system peculiar to the American people. It differs essentially from all others in the world. It is an American system.

It is founded on the conception that only through ordered liberty, through freedom to the individual, and equal opportunity to the individual will his initiative and enterprise be summoned to spur the march of progress.

...



The implacable march of scientific discovery with its train of new inventions presents every year new problems to government and new problems to the social order. Questions often arise whether, in the face of the growth of these new and gigantic tools, democracy can remain master in its own house, can preserve the fundamentals of our American system. I contend that it can; and I contend that this American system of ours has demonstrated its validity and superiority over any other system yet invented by human mind.

It has demonstrated it in the face of the greatest test of our history—that is the emergency which we have faced in the past three years.

...

I therefore contend that the problem of today is to continue ... measures and policies to restore this American system to its normal functioning, to repair the wounds it has received, to correct the weaknesses and evils which would defeat that system. To enter upon a series of deep changes, to embark upon this inchoate new deal which has been propounded in this campaign, would be to undermine and destroy our American system.

[Source: *The State Papers and Other Public Writings of Herbert Hoover*, vol. 2, William S. Myers, ed., 1934, pp. 408-413. Available online via The American Presidency Project (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=23317>).]



# 149. Primary Source: Second Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1937)

*After winning a landslide victory in his 1936 quest for a second presidential term, President Franklin Roosevelt championed again the ambitious goals of his New Deal economic programs and their relationship to American democracy.*

...

Our progress out of the depression is obvious. But that is not all that you and I mean by the new order of things. Our pledge was not merely to do a patchwork job with secondhand materials. By using the new materials of social justice we have undertaken to erect on the old foundations a more enduring structure for the better use of future generations.

... Old truths have been relearned; untruths have been unlearned. We have always known that heedless self-interest was bad morals; we know now that it is bad economics. ... we are fashioning an instrument of unimagined power for the establishment of a morally better world.

This new understanding undermines the old admiration of worldly success as such. We are beginning to abandon our tolerance of the abuse of power by those who betray for profit the elementary decencies of life.

In this process evil things formerly accepted will not be so easily condoned. Hard-headedness will not so easily excuse hardheartedness. We are moving toward an era of good feeling. But we realize that there can be no era of good feeling save among men of good will.

For these reasons I am justified in believing that the greatest



change we have witnessed has been the change in the moral climate of America.

Among men of good will, science and democracy together offer an ever-richer life and ever-larger satisfaction to the individual. With this change in our moral climate and our rediscovered ability to improve our economic order, we have set our feet upon the road of enduring progress.

Shall we pause now and turn our back upon the road that lies ahead? Shall we call this the promised land? Or, shall we continue on our way? For “each age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth.”

...

True, we have come far from the days of stagnation and despair. Vitality has been preserved. Courage and confidence have been restored. Mental and moral horizons have been extended.

...

But here is the challenge to our democracy: In this nation I see tens of millions of its citizens—a substantial part of its whole population—who at this very moment are denied the greater part of what the very lowest standards of today call the necessities of life.

I see millions of families trying to live on incomes so meager that the pall of family disaster hangs over them day by day.

I see millions whose daily lives in city and on farm continue under conditions labeled indecent by a so-called polite society half a century ago.

I see millions denied education, recreation, and the opportunity to better their lot and the lot of their children.

I see millions lacking the means to buy the products of farm and factory and by their poverty denying work and productiveness to many other millions.

I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.

It is not in despair that I paint you that picture. I paint it for you in hope—because the Nation, seeing and understanding the injustice in it, proposes to paint it out. We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of his country’s interest and concern;



and we will never regard any faithful law-abiding group within our borders as superfluous. The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

...

Today we reconsecrate our country to long-cherished ideals in a suddenly changed civilization. In every land there are always at work forces that drive men apart and forces that draw men together. In our personal ambitions we are individualists. But in our seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people.

To maintain a democracy of effort requires a vast amount of patience in dealing with differing methods, a vast amount of humility. But out of the confusion of many voices rises an understanding of dominant public need. Then political leadership can voice common ideals, and aid in their realization.

In taking again the oath of office as President of the United States, I assume the solemn obligation of leading the American people forward along the road over which they have chosen to advance.

...

[Source: Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Second Inaugural Address," January 20, 1937. Available online via Avalon Project ([http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/froos2.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos2.asp)).]



# 150. Primary Source: Franklin Roosevelt's Re-Nomination Acceptance Speech (1936)

*In July 27, 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt accepted his re-nomination as the Democratic Party's presidential choice. In his acceptance speech, Roosevelt laid out his understanding of what "freedom" and "tyranny" meant in an industrial democracy.*

... Philadelphia is a good city in which to write American history. This is fitting ground on which to reaffirm the faith of our fathers; to pledge ourselves to restore to the people a wider freedom; to give to 1936 as the founders gave to 1776—an American way of life.

That very word freedom, in itself and of necessity, suggests freedom from some restraining power. In 1776 we sought freedom from the tyranny of a political autocracy—from the eighteenth century royalists who held special privileges from the crown. It was to perpetuate their privilege that they governed without the consent of the governed; that they denied the right of free assembly and free speech; that they restricted the worship of God; that they put the average man's property and the average man's life in pawn to the mercenaries of dynastic power; that they regimented the people.

And so it was to win freedom from the tyranny of political autocracy that the American Revolution was fought. That victory gave the business of governing into the hands of the average man, who won the right with his neighbors to make and order his own destiny through his own Government. Political tyranny was wiped out at Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.

Since that struggle, however, man's inventive genius released new forces in our land which reordered the lives of our people. The age of machinery, of railroads; of steam and electricity; the telegraph



and the radio; mass production, mass distribution—all of these combined to bring forward a new civilization and with it a new problem for those who sought to remain free.

For out of this modern civilization economic royalists carved new dynasties. New kingdoms were built upon concentration of control over material things. Through new uses of corporations, banks and securities, new machinery of industry and agriculture, of labor and capital—all undreamed of by the fathers—the whole structure of modern life was impressed into this royal service.

There was no place among this royalty for our many thousands of small business men and merchants who sought to make a worthy use of the American system of initiative and profit. They were no more free than the worker or the farmer. Even honest and progressive-minded men of wealth, aware of their obligation to their generation, could never know just where they fitted into this dynastic scheme of things.

It was natural and perhaps human that the privileged princes of these new economic dynasties, thirsting for power, reached out for control over Government itself. They created a new despotism and wrapped it in the robes of legal sanction. In its service new mercenaries sought to regiment the people, their labor, and their property. And as a result the average man once more confronts the problem that faced the Minute Man.

...

An old English judge once said: "Necessitous men are not free men." Liberty requires opportunity to make a living—a living decent according to the standard of the time, a living which gives man not only enough to live by, but something to live for.

For too many of us the political equality we once had won was meaningless in the face of economic inequality. A small group had concentrated into their own hands an almost complete control over other people's property, other people's money, other people's labor—other people's lives. For too many of us life was no longer free; liberty no longer real; men could no longer follow the pursuit of happiness.



Against economic tyranny such as this, the American citizen could appeal only to the organized power of Government. The collapse of 1929 showed up the despotism for what it was. The election of 1932 was the people's mandate to end it. Under that mandate it is being ended.

...

Today we stand committed to the proposition that freedom is no half-and-half affair. If the average citizen is guaranteed equal opportunity in the polling place, he must have equal opportunity in the market place.

These economic royalists complain that we seek to overthrow the institutions of America. What they really complain of is that we seek to take away their power. Our allegiance to American institutions requires the overthrow of this kind of power. In vain they seek to hide behind the Flag and the Constitution. In their blindness they forget what the Flag and the Constitution stand for. Now, as always, they stand for democracy, not tyranny; for freedom, not subjection; and against a dictatorship by mob rule and the over-privileged alike.

...

Governments can err, Presidents do make mistakes, but the immortal Dante tells us that divine justice weighs the sins of the cold-blooded and the sins of the warm-hearted in different scales.

Better the occasional faults of a Government that lives in a spirit of charity than the consistent omissions of a Government frozen in the ice of its own indifference.

There is a mysterious cycle in human events. To some generations much is given. Of other generations much is expected. This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny.

[Source: Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Acceptance Speech for the Re-Nomination for the Presidency," Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 27, 1936. Available online via *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15314>.]



# 151. Primary Source: Herbert Hoover on Liberty (1936)

Click [HERE](#) to read a excerpt from Herbert Hoover's speech to the Republican National Convention in 1936.



PART XXIV

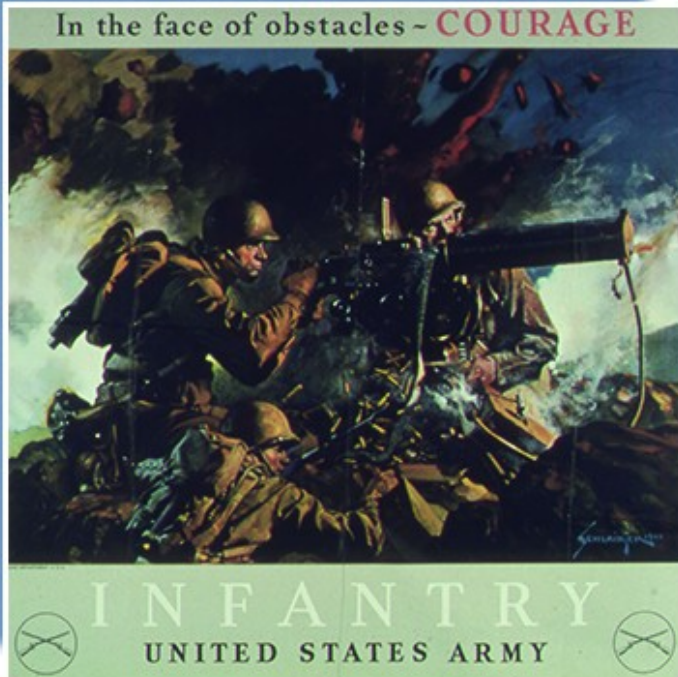
FIGHTING THE GOOD  
FIGHT IN WORLD WAR II,  
1941-1945







## 152. Introduction



*During World War II, American propaganda was used to drum up patriotism and support for the war effort. This poster shows the grit and determination of infantrymen in the face of enemy fire.*

World War II awakened the sleeping giant of the United States from the lingering effects of the Great Depression. Although the country had not entirely disengaged itself from foreign affairs following World War I, it had remained largely divorced from events occurring in Europe until the late 1930s. World War II forced the United States to involve itself once again in European affairs. It also helped to



relieve the unemployment of the 1930s and stir industrial growth. The propaganda poster above was part of a concerted effort to get Americans to see themselves as citizens of a strong, unified country, dedicated to the protection of freedom and democracy. However, the war that unified many Americans also brought to the fore many of the nation's racial and ethnic divisions, both on the frontlines—where military units, such as the one depicted in this poster, were segregated by race—and on the home front. Yet, the war also created new opportunities for ethnic minorities and women, which, in postwar America, would contribute to their demand for greater rights.

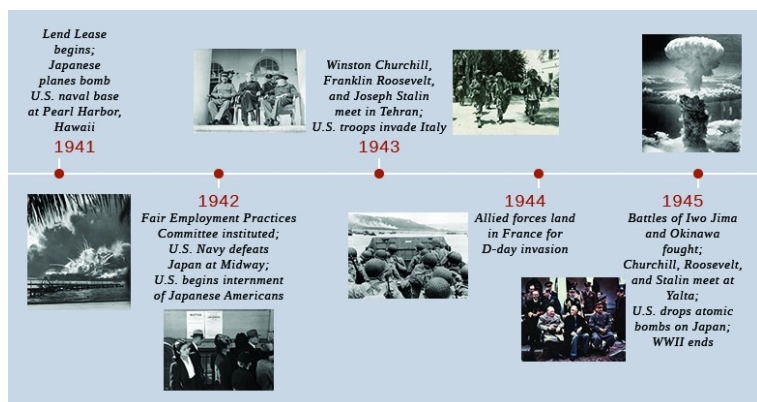


# 153. The Origins of War: Europe, Asia, and the United States

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the factors in Europe that gave rise to Fascism and Nazism
- Discuss the events in Europe and Asia that led to the start of the war
- Identify the early steps taken by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to increase American aid to nations fighting totalitarianism while maintaining neutrality





The years between the First and Second World Wars were politically and economically tumultuous for the United States and especially for the world. The Russian Revolution of 1917, Germany's defeat in World War I, and the subsequent Treaty of Versailles had broken up the Austro-Hungarian, German, and Russian empires and significantly redrew the map of Europe. President Woodrow Wilson had wished to make World War I the "war to end all wars" and hoped that his new paradigm of "collective security" in international relations, as actualized through the League of Nations, would limit power struggles among the nations of the world. However, during the next two decades, America's attention turned away from global politics and toward its own needs. At the same time, much of the world was dealing with economic and political crises, and different types of totalitarian regimes began to take hold in Europe. In Asia, an ascendant Japan began to expand its borders. Although the United States remained focused on the economic challenges of the Great Depression as World War II approached, ultimately it became clear that American involvement in the fight against Nazi Germany and Japan was in the nation's interest.

## ISOLATION

While during the 1920s and 1930s there were Americans who favored active engagement in Europe, most Americans, including many prominent politicians, were leery of getting too involved in European affairs or accepting commitments to other nations that might restrict America's ability to act independently, keeping with the isolationist tradition. Although the United States continued to intervene in the affairs of countries in the Western Hemisphere during this period, the general mood in America was to avoid becoming involved in any crises that might lead the nation into another global conflict.

Despite its largely noninterventionist foreign policy, the United



States did nevertheless take steps to try to lessen the chances of war and cut its defense spending at the same time. President Warren G. Harding's administration participated in the Washington Naval Conference of 1921–1922, which reduced the size of the navies of the nine signatory nations. In addition, the Four Power Treaty, signed by the United States, Great Britain, France, and Japan in 1921, committed the signatories to eschewing any territorial expansion in Asia. In 1928, the United States and fourteen other nations signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, declaring war an international crime. Despite hopes that such agreements would lead to a more peaceful world—far more nations signed on to the agreement in later years—they failed because none of them committed any of the nations to take action in the event of treaty violations.

## THE MARCH TOWARD WAR

While the United States focused on domestic issues, economic depression and political instability were growing in Europe. During the 1920s, the international financial system was propped up largely by American loans to foreign countries. The crash of 1929, when the U.S. stock market plummeted and American capital dried up, set in motion a series of financial chain reactions that contributed significantly to a global downward economic spiral. Around the world, industrialized economies faced significant problems of economic depression and worker unemployment.

## Totalitarianism in Europe

Many European countries had been suffering even before the Great Depression began. A postwar recession and the continuation of wartime inflation had hurt many economies, as did a decrease in



agricultural prices, which made it harder for farmers to buy manufactured goods or pay off loans to banks. In such an unstable environment, Benito Mussolini capitalized on the frustrations of the Italian people who felt betrayed by the Versailles Treaty. In 1919, Mussolini created the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian Combat Squadron). The organization's main tenets of Fascism called for a totalitarian form of government and a heightened focus on national unity, militarism, social Darwinism, and loyalty to the state. With the support of major Italian industrialists and the king, who saw Fascism as a bulwark against growing Socialist and Communist movements, Mussolini became prime minister in 1922. Between 1925 and 1927, Mussolini transformed the nation into a single party state and removed all restraints on his power.

In Germany, a similar pattern led to the rise of the totalitarian National Socialist Party. Political fragmentation through the 1920s accentuated the severe economic problems facing the country. As a result, the German Communist Party began to grow in strength, frightening many wealthy and middle-class Germans. In addition, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles had given rise to a deep-seated resentment of the victorious Allies. It was in such an environment that Adolf Hitler's anti-Communist National Socialist Party—the Nazis—was born.

The Nazis gained numerous followers during the Great Depression, which hurt Germany tremendously, plunging it further into economic crisis. By 1932, nearly 30 percent of the German labor force was unemployed. Not surprisingly, the political mood was angry and sullen. Hitler, a World War I veteran, promised to return Germany to greatness. By the beginning of 1933, the Nazis had become the largest party in the German legislature. Germany's president, Paul von Hindenburg, at the urging of large industrialists who feared a Communist uprising, appointed Hitler to the position of prime minister in January 1933. In the elections that took place the next month, the Nazis passed the Enabling Act, which gave Hitler the power to make all laws for the next four years. Hitler thus effectively became the dictator of Germany and remained so long



after the four-year term passed. Like Italy, Germany had become a one-party totalitarian state. Nazi Germany was an anti-Semitic nation, and in 1935, the Nuremberg Laws deprived Jews, whom Hitler blamed for Germany's downfall, of German citizenship and the rights thereof.



(a)



(b)

*Italian Fascists under the dictatorial leadership of Benito Mussolini (a, center) and German National Socialist Party leader and dictator Adolf Hitler (b) systematically dismantled democratic institutions and pushed military buildups, racial supremacy, and an aggressive nationalism in the 1920s and early 1930s.*

Once in power, Hitler began to rebuild German military might. He commenced his program by withdrawing Germany from the League of Nations in October 1933. In 1936, in accordance with his promise to restore German greatness, Hitler dispatched military units into the Rhineland, on the border with France, which was an act contrary to the provisions of the Versailles Treaty. In March 1938, claiming that he sought only to reunite ethnic Germans within the borders of one country, Hitler invaded Austria. At a conference in Munich later that year, Great Britain's prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, and France's prime minister, Édouard Daladier, agreed to the partial dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the occupation of the Sudetenland (a region with a sizable German population) by German troops. This Munich Pact offered a policy of appeasement, in the



hope that German expansionist appetites could be satisfied without war. But not long after the agreement, Germany occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia as well.

In the Soviet Union, Premier Joseph Stalin, observing Hitler's actions and listening to his public pronouncements, realized that Poland, part of which had once belonged to Germany and was home to people of German ancestry, was most likely next. Although fiercely opposed to Hitler, Stalin, sobered by the French and British betrayal of



*Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain arrives home in England bearing the Munich Pact agreement. The jubilant Chamberlain proclaimed that the agreement meant "peace in our time."*

Czechoslovakia and unprepared for a major war, decided the best way to protect the Soviet Union, and gain additional territory, was to come to some accommodation with the German dictator. In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union essentially agreed to divide Poland between them and not make war upon one another.

## Japan

Militaristic politicians also took control of Japan in the 1930s. The Japanese had worked assiduously for decades to modernize, build their strength, and become a prosperous, respected nation. The sentiment in Japan was decidedly pro-capitalist, and the Japanese militarists were fiercely supportive of a capitalist economy. They viewed with great concern the rise of Communism in the Soviet Union and in particular China, where the issue was fueling a civil war, and feared that the Soviet Union would make inroads in Asia by assisting China's Communists. The Japanese militarists thus found



a common ideological enemy with Fascism and National Socialism, which had based their rise to power on anti-Communist sentiments. In 1936, Japan and Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, pledging mutual assistance in defending themselves against the Comintern, the international agency created by the Soviet Union to promote worldwide Communist revolution. In 1937, Italy joined the pact, essentially creating the foundation of what became the military alliance of the Axis powers.

Like its European allies, Japan was intent upon creating an empire for itself. In 1931, it created a new nation, a puppet state called Manchukuo, which had been cobbled together from the three northernmost provinces of China. Although the League of Nations formally protested Japan's seizure of Chinese territory in 1931 and 1932, it did nothing else. In 1937, a clash between Japanese and Chinese troops, known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, led to a full-scale invasion of China by the Japanese. By the end of the year, the Chinese had suffered some serious defeats. In Nanjing, then called Nanking by Westerners, Japanese soldiers systematically raped Chinese women and massacred hundreds of thousands of civilians, leading to international outcry. Public sentiment against Japan in the United States reached new heights. Members of Protestant churches that were involved in missionary work in China were particularly outraged, as were Chinese Americans. A troop of Chinese American Boy Scouts in New York City's Chinatown defied Boy Scout policy and marched in protest against Japanese aggression.

## FROM NEUTRALITY TO ENGAGEMENT

President Franklin Roosevelt was aware of the challenges facing the targets of Nazi aggression in Europe and Japanese aggression



in Asia. Although he hoped to offer U.S. support, Congress's commitment to nonintervention was difficult to overcome. Such a policy in regards to Europe was strongly encouraged by Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota. Nye claimed that the United States had been tricked into participating in World War I by a group of industrialists and bankers who sought to gain from the country's participation in the war. The United States, Nye urged, should not be drawn again into an international dispute over matters that did not concern it. His sentiments were shared by other noninterventionists in Congress.

Roosevelt's willingness to accede to the demands of the noninterventionists led him even to refuse assistance to those fleeing Nazi Germany. Although Roosevelt was aware of Nazi persecution of the Jews, he did little to aid them. In a symbolic act of support, he withdrew the American ambassador to Germany in 1938. He did not press for a relaxation of immigration quotas that would have allowed



*This protest sign shows the unwillingness of many Americans to become involved in a foreign war. A reluctance to intervene in events outside of the Western Hemisphere had characterized American foreign policy since the administration of George Washington. World War I had been an exception that many American politicians regretted making.*

more refugees to enter the country, however. In 1939, he refused to support a bill that would have admitted twenty thousand Jewish refugee children to the United States. Again in 1939, when German refugees aboard the SS *St. Louis*, most of them Jews, were refused permission to land in Cuba and turned to the United States for help, the U.S. State Department informed them that immigration quotas for Germany had already been filled. Once again, Roosevelt did not intervene, because he feared that nativists in Congress might smear him as a friend of Jews.

To ensure that the United States did not get drawn into another



war, Congress passed a series of Neutrality Acts in the second half of the 1930s. The Neutrality Act of 1935 banned the sale of armaments to warring nations. The following year, another Neutrality Act prohibited loaning money to belligerent countries. The last piece of legislation, the Neutrality Act of 1937, forbade the transportation of weapons or passengers to belligerent nations on board American ships and also prohibited American citizens from traveling on board the ships of nations at war.

Once all-out war began between Japan and China in 1937, Roosevelt sought ways to help the Chinese that did not violate U.S. law. Since Japan did not formally declare war on China, a state of belligerency did not technically exist. Therefore, under the terms of the Neutrality Acts, America was not prevented from transporting goods to China. In 1940, the president of China, Chiang Kai-shek, was able to prevail upon Roosevelt to ship to China one hundred P-40 fighter planes and to allow American volunteers, who technically became members of the Chinese Air Force, to fly them.

## War Begins in Europe

In 1938, the agreement reached at the Munich Conference failed to satisfy Hitler—in fact, the refusal of Britain and France to go to war over the issue infuriated the German dictator. In May of the next year, Germany and Italy formalized their military alliance with the “Pact of Steel.” On September 1, 1939, Hitler unleashed his Blitzkrieg, or “lightning war,” against Poland, using swift, surprise attacks combining infantry, tanks, and aircraft to quickly overwhelm the enemy. Britain and France had already learned from Munich that Hitler could not be trusted and that his territorial demands were insatiable. On September 3, 1939, they declared war on Germany, and the European phase of World War II began. Responding to the German invasion of Poland, Roosevelt worked with Congress to alter the Neutrality Laws to permit a policy of “Cash and Carry”



in munitions for Britain and France. The legislation, passed and signed by Roosevelt in November 1939, permitted belligerents to purchase war materiel if they could pay cash for it and arrange for its transportation on board their own ships.

When the Germans commenced their spring offensive in 1940, they defeated France in six weeks with a highly mobile and quick invasion of France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. In the Far East, Japan took advantage of France's surrender to Germany to occupy French Indochina. In response, beginning with the Export Control Act in July 1940, the United States began to embargo the shipment of various materials to Japan, starting first with aviation gasoline and machine tools, and proceeding to scrap iron and steel.

## The Atlantic Charter

Following the surrender of France, the Battle of Britain began, as Germany proceeded to try to bomb England into submission. As the battle raged in the skies over Great Britain throughout the summer and autumn of 1940, Roosevelt became increasingly concerned over England's ability to hold out against the German juggernaut. In June 1941, Hitler broke the nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union that had given him the backing to ravage Poland and marched his armies deep into Soviet territory, where they would kill Red Army regulars and civilians by the millions until their advances were stalled in the devastating one-year battle over Stalingrad two years later.

Listen to the BBC's [archived reports](#) of the Battle of Britain, including Winston Churchill's "Finest Hour" speech.



In August 1941, Roosevelt met with the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. At this meeting, the two leaders drafted the Atlantic Charter, the blueprint of Anglo-American cooperation during World War II. The charter stated that the United States and Britain sought no territory from the conflict. It proclaimed that citizens of all countries should be given the right of

self-determination, self-government should be restored in places where it had been eliminated, and trade barriers should be lowered. Further, the charter mandated freedom of the seas, renounced the use of force to settle international disputes, and called for postwar disarmament.

In March 1941, concerns over Britain's ability to defend itself also influenced Congress to authorize a policy of Lend Lease, a practice by which the United States could sell, lease, or transfer armaments to any nation deemed important to the defense of the United States. Lend Lease effectively ended the policy of nonintervention and dissolved America's pretense of being a neutral nation. The program ran from 1941 to 1945, and distributed some \$45 billion worth of weaponry and supplies to Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and other allies.



*London and other major British cities suffered extensive damaged from the bombing raids of the Battle of Britain. Over one million London houses were destroyed or damaged during "The Blitz" and almost twenty thousand Londoners were killed.*

## A Date Which Will Live in Infamy

By the second half of 1941, Japan was feeling the pressure of the American embargo. As it could no longer buy strategic material



from the United States, the Japanese were determined to obtain a sufficient supply of oil by taking control of the Dutch East Indies. However, they realized that such an action might increase the possibility of American intervention, since the Philippines, a U.S. territory, lay on the direct route that oil tankers would have to take to reach Japan from Indonesia. Japanese leaders thus attempted to secure a diplomatic solution by negotiating with the United States while also authorizing the navy to plan for war. The Japanese government also decided that if no peaceful resolution could be reached by the end of November 1941, then the nation would have to go to war against the United States.

The American final counterproposal to various offers by Japan was for the Japanese to completely withdraw, without any conditions, from China and enter into nonaggression pacts with all the Pacific powers. Japan found that proposal unacceptable but delayed its rejection for as long as possible. Then, at 7:48 a.m. on Sunday, December 7, the Japanese attacked the U.S. Pacific fleet at



*This famous shot captured the explosion of the USS Shaw after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. While American losses were significant, the Japanese lost only twenty-nine planes and five miniature submarines.*

anchor in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. They launched two waves of attacks from six aircraft carriers that had snuck into the central Pacific without being detected. The attacks brought some 353 fighters, bombers, and torpedo bombers down on the unprepared fleet. The Japanese hit all eight battleships in the harbor and sank four of them. They also damaged several cruisers and destroyers. On the ground, nearly two hundred aircraft were destroyed, and twenty-four hundred servicemen were killed. Another eleven hundred were wounded. Japanese losses were minimal. The strike was part of a more concerted campaign by the Japanese to gain territory. They



subsequently attacked Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Guam, Wake Island, and the Philippines.

Whatever reluctance to engage in conflict the American people had had before December 7, 1941, quickly evaporated. Americans' incredulity that Japan would take such a radical step quickly turned to a fiery anger, especially as the attack took place while Japanese diplomats in Washington were still negotiating a possible settlement. President Roosevelt, referring to the day of the attack as "a date which will live in infamy," asked Congress for a declaration of war, which it delivered to Japan on December 8. On December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States in accordance with their alliance with Japan. Against its wishes, the United States had become part of the European conflict.

You can listen to [Franklin Roosevelt's speech to Congress](#) seeking a Declaration of War at this archive of presidential recordings.

## Section Summary

America sought, at the end of the First World War, to create new international relationships that would make such wars impossible in the future. But as the Great Depression hit Europe, several new leaders rose to power under the new political ideologies of Fascism and Nazism. Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany were



both proponents of Fascism, using dictatorial rule to achieve national unity. Still, the United States remained focused on the economic challenges of its own Great Depression. Hence, there was little interest in getting involved in Europe's problems or even the China-Japan conflict.

It soon became clear, however, that Germany and Italy's alliance was putting democratic countries at risk. Roosevelt first sought to support Great Britain and China by providing economic support without intervening directly. However, when Japan, an ally of Germany and Italy, attacked Pearl Harbor, catching the military base unaware and claiming thousands of lives, America's feelings toward war shifted, and the country was quickly pulled into the global conflict.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1045>

### *Review Question*

1. Describe Franklin Roosevelt's efforts on behalf of German Jews in the 1930s. How was he able to help, and in what ways did his actions come up short?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Roosevelt recalled the American ambassador from Germany. However, he made no move to relax national immigration quotas, which would have allowed persecuted German Jews to take refuge in the United States. He failed to support legislation that would have enabled Jewish children to enter the country. He also refused to intervene when a ship carrying German refugees, most of whom were Jewish, was turned away from Cuba and looked to the United States for help.

## *Glossary*

**appeasement** the policy of giving in to threats and aggression in the hopes that the aggressor will be satisfied and make no more demands

**Fascism** a political ideology that places a heightened focus on national unity, through dictatorial rule, and militarism

**materiel** equipment and supplies used by the military



## 154. Assignment: Why Nazis?

It seems odd that a crazy, bloodthirsty regime like the Nazis could ever come to power in an educated, cultured and civilized nation like Germany. Why did so many Germans support the Nazi Party?

After reading the Nazi Party Program, the party's blueprint for Germany (created in the early 1920s) and write a short paragraph that answers the following:

1. Of the 25 points, how many seem quite reasonable (keeping in mind how Germany was treated at the end of WWI), how many are flat out bad ideas, and how many are a mix? I want you to give me specific numbers ("I think X are reasonable, Y are bad, and Z are a mix). Be honest; if you aren't honest then the real point of this assignment will be lost.
2. For the points that are reasonable or a mix, what makes them so? Explain in general why you decided which points are good, bad, or a mix.
3. Which category had the most in it? Now ask again, why did so many people support the Nazi Party?



# 155. The Home Front

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the steps taken by the United States to prepare for war
- Describe how the war changed employment patterns in the United States
- Discuss the contributions of civilians on the home front, especially women, to the war effort
- Analyze how the war affected race relations in the United States

The impact of the war on the United States was nowhere near as devastating as it was in Europe and the Pacific, where the battles were waged, but it still profoundly changed everyday life for all Americans. On the positive side, the war effort finally and definitively ended the economic depression that had been plaguing the country since 1929. It also called upon Americans to unite behind the war effort and give of their money, their time, and their effort, as they sacrificed at home to assure success abroad. The upheaval caused by white men leaving for war meant that for many disenfranchised groups, such as women and African Americans, there were new opportunities in employment and wage earning. Still, fear and racism drove cracks in the nation's unified facade.



# MOBILIZING A NATION

Although the United States had sought to avoid armed conflict, the country was not entirely unprepared for war. Production of armaments had increased since 1939, when, as a result of Congress's authorization of the Cash and Carry policy, contracts for weapons had begun to trickle into American factories. War production increased further following the passage of Lend Lease in 1941. However, when the United States entered the war, the majority of American factories were still engaged in civilian production, and many doubted that American businesses would be sufficiently motivated to convert their factories to wartime production.

Just a few years earlier, Roosevelt had been frustrated and impatient with business leaders when they failed to fully support the New Deal, but enlisting industrialists in the nation's crusade was necessary if the United States was to produce enough armaments to win the war. To encourage cooperation, the government agreed to assume all costs of development and production, and also guarantee a profit on the sale of what was produced. This arrangement resulted in 233 to 350 percent increases in profits over what the same businesses had been able to achieve from 1937 to 1940. In terms of dollars earned, corporate profits rose from \$6.4 billion in 1940 to nearly \$11 billion in 1944. As the country switched to wartime production, the top one hundred U.S. corporations received approximately 70 percent of government contracts; big businesses prospered.

In addition to gearing up industry to fight the war, the country also needed to build an army. A peacetime draft, the first in American history, had been established in September 1940, but the initial draftees were to serve for only one year, a length of time that was later extended. Furthermore, Congress had specified that no more than 900,000 men could receive military training at any one time. By December 1941, the United States had only one division completely ready to be deployed. Military planners estimated that



it might take nine million men to secure victory. A massive draft program was required to expand the nation's military forces. Over the course of the war, approximately fifty million men registered for the draft; ten million were subsequently inducted into the service.

Approximately 2.5 million African Americans registered for the draft, and 1 million of them subsequently served. Initially, African American soldiers, who served in segregated units, had been used as support troops and not been sent into combat. By the end of the war, however, manpower needs resulted in



*First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt insisted on flying with an African American pilot to help fight racism in the military. The First Lady was famous for her support of civil rights.*

African American recruits serving in the infantry and flying planes. The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama had instituted a civilian pilot training program for aspiring African American pilots. When the war began, the Department of War absorbed the program and adapted it to train combat pilots. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt demonstrated both her commitment to African Americans and the war effort by visiting Tuskegee in 1941, shortly after the unit had been organized. To encourage the military to give the airmen a chance to serve in actual combat, she insisted on taking a ride in a plane flown by an African American pilot to demonstrate the Tuskegee Airmen's skill. When the Tuskegee Airmen did get their opportunity to serve in combat, they did so with distinction.

In addition, forty-four thousand Native Americans served in all theaters of the war. In some of the Pacific campaigns, Native Americans made distinct and unique contributions to Allied victories. Navajo marines served in communications units, exchanging information over radios using codes based on their native language, which the Japanese were unable to comprehend or to crack. They became known as code talkers and participated in the battles of Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Peleliu, and Tarawa. A smaller



number of Comanche code talkers performed a similar function in the European theater.

While millions of Americans heeded the rallying cry for patriotism and service, there were those who, for various reasons, did not accept the call. Before the war began, American Peace Mobilization had campaigned against American involvement in the European conflict as had the noninterventionist America First organization. Both groups ended their opposition, however, at the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, respectively. Nevertheless, during the war, some seventy-two thousand men registered as conscientious objectors (COs), and fifty-two thousand were granted that status. Of that fifty-two thousand, some accepted noncombat roles in the military, whereas others accepted unpaid work in civilian work camps. Many belonged to pacifist religious sects such as the Quakers or Mennonites. They were willing to serve their country, but they refused to kill. COs suffered public condemnation for disloyalty, and family members often turned against them. Strangers assaulted them. A portion of the town of Plymouth, NH, was destroyed by fire because the residents did not want to call upon the services of the COs trained as firemen at a nearby camp. Only a very small number of men evaded the draft completely.



Most Americans, however, were willing to serve, and they required a competent officer corps. The very same day that Germany invaded Poland in 1939, President Roosevelt promoted George C. Marshall, a veteran of World War I and an expert at training officers, from a one-star general to a four-star general, and gave him the responsibility of serving as Army Chief of Staff. The desire to create a command staff that could win the army's confidence no doubt contributed to the rather



*Dwight D. Eisenhower rose quickly through the ranks to become commander of the European Theater of Operations by June 1942.*

meteoric rise of Dwight D. Eisenhower. During World War I, Eisenhower had been assigned to organize America's new tank corps, and, although he never saw combat during the war, he demonstrated excellent organizational skills. When the United States entered World War II, Eisenhower was appointed commander of the General European Theater of Operations in June 1942.

## General Eisenhower on Winning a War

Promoted to the level of one-star general just before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dwight D. Eisenhower had never held an active command position above the level of a battalion and was not considered a potential commander of major military operations. However, after he was assigned to the General Staff in Washington,



DC, he quickly rose through the ranks and, by late 1942, was appointed commander of the North African campaign.

Excerpts from General Eisenhower's diary reveal his dedication to the war effort. He continued to work despite suffering a great personal loss.

March 9, 1942

General McNaughton (commanding Canadians in Britain) came to see me. He believes in attacking in Europe (thank God). He's over here in an effort to speed up landing craft production and cargo ships. Has some d\_\_\_\_ good ideas. Sent him to see Somervell and Admiral Land. How I hope he can do something on landing craft.

March 10, 1942

Father dies this morning. Nothing I can do but send a wire. One thing that might help win this war is to get someone to shoot [Admiral] King. He's the antithesis of cooperation, a deliberately rude person, which means he's a mental bully. He became Commander in Chief of the fleet some time ago. Today he takes over, also Stark's job as chief of naval operations. It's a good thing to get rid of the double head in the navy, and of course Stark was just a nice old lady, but this fellow is going to cause a blow-up sooner or later, I'll bet a cookie.

Gradually some of the people with whom I have to deal are coming to agree with me that there are just three "musts" for the Allies this year: hold open the line to England and support her as necessary, keep Russia in the war as an active participant; hold the India-Middle East buttress between Japs and Germans. All this assumes the safety from major attack of North America, Hawaii, and Caribbean area.

We lost eight cargo ships yesterday. That we must stop, because any effort we make depends upon sea communication.

March 11, 1942



I have felt terribly. I should like so much to be with my Mother these few days. But we're at war. And war is not soft, it has no time to indulge even the deepest and most sacred emotions. I loved my Dad. I think my Mother the finest person I've ever known. She has been the inspiration for Dad's life and a true helpmeet in every sense of the word.

I'm quitting work now, 7:30 p.m. I haven't the heart to go on tonight.

—Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*

What does Eisenhower identify as the most important steps to take to win the war?

## EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE UNITED STATES

Even before the official beginning of the war, the country started to prepare. In August 1940, Congress created the Defense Plant Corporation, which had built 344 plants in the West by 1945, and had funneled over \$1.8 billion into the economies of western states. After Pearl Harbor, as American military strategists began to plan counterattacks and campaigns against the Axis powers, California became a training ground. Troops trained there for tank warfare and amphibious assaults as well as desert campaigns—since the first assault against the Axis powers was planned for North Africa.

As thousands of Americans swarmed to the West Coast to take jobs in defense plants and shipyards, cities like Richmond, California, and nearby Oakland, expanded quickly. Richmond grew from a city of 20,000 people to 100,000 in only three years. Almost overnight, the population of California skyrocketed. African Americans moved out of the rural South into northern or West Coast cities to provide the muscle and skill to build the machines



of war. Building on earlier waves of African American migration after the Civil War and during World War I, the demographics of the nation changed with the growing urbanization of the African American population. Women also relocated to either follow their husbands to military bases or take jobs in the defense industry, as the total mobilization of the national economy began to tap into previously underemployed populations.

Roosevelt and his administration already had experience in establishing government controls and taking the initiative in economic matters during the Depression. In April 1941, Roosevelt created the Office of Price Administration (OPA), and, once the United States entered the war, the OPA regulated prices and attempted to combat inflation. The OPA ultimately had the power to set ceiling prices for all goods, except agricultural commodities, and to ration a long list of items. During the war, major labor unions pledged not to strike in order to prevent disruptions in production; in return, the government encouraged businesses to recognize unions and promised to help workers bargain for better wages.

As in World War I, the government turned to bond drives to finance the war. Millions of Americans purchased more than \$185 billion worth of war bonds. Children purchased Victory Stamps and exchanged full stamp booklets for bonds. The federal government also instituted the current tax-withholding system to ensure collection of taxes. Finally, the government once again urged Americans to plant victory gardens, using marketing campaigns and celebrities to promote the idea. Americans responded eagerly, planting gardens in their backyards and vacant lots.





(a)



(b)

Wartime rationing meant that Americans had to do without many everyday items and learn to grow their own produce in order to allow the country's food supply to go to the troops.

The federal government also instituted rationing to ensure that America's fighting men were well fed. Civilians were issued ration booklets, books of coupons that enabled them to buy limited amounts of meat, coffee, butter, sugar, and other foods. Wartime cookbooks were produced, such as the Betty Crocker cookbook *Your Share*, telling housewives how to prepare tasty meals without scarce food items. Other items were rationed as well, including shoes, liquor, cigarettes, and gasoline. With a few exceptions, such as doctors, Americans were allowed to drive their automobiles only on certain days of the week. Most Americans complied with these regulations, but some illegally bought and sold rationed goods on the black market.



View an excerpt from a [PBS documentary on rationing](#) during World War II.

Civilians on the home front also recycled, conserved, and participated in scrap drives to collect items needed for the production of war materiel. Housewives saved cooking fats, needed to produce explosives. Children collected scrap metal, paper, rubber, silk, nylon, and old rags. Some children sacrificed beloved metal toys in order to “win the war.” Civilian volunteers, trained to recognize enemy aircraft, watched the skies along the coasts and on the borders.

## WOMEN IN THE WAR: ROSIE THE RIVETER AND BEYOND

As in the previous war, the gap in the labor force created by departing soldiers meant opportunities for women. In particular, World War II led many to take jobs in defense plants and factories around the country. For many women, these jobs provided unprecedented opportunities to move into occupations previously thought of as exclusive to men, especially the aircraft industry, where a majority of workers were composed of women by 1943. Most women in the labor force did not work in the defense industry, however. The majority took over other factory jobs that had been held by men. Many took positions in offices as well. As white women, many of whom had been in the workforce before the war, moved into these more highly paid positions, African American women, most of whom had previously been limited to domestic service, took over white women’s lower-paying positions in



factories; some were also hired by defense plants, however. Although women often earned more money than ever before, it was still far less than men received for doing the same jobs. Nevertheless, many achieved a degree of financial self-reliance that was enticing. By 1944, as many as 33 percent of the women working in the defense industries were mothers and worked “double-day” shifts—one at the plant and one at home.

Still, there was some resistance to women going to work in such a male-dominated environment. In order to recruit women for factory jobs, the government created a propaganda campaign centered on a now-iconic figure known as Rosie the Riveter. Rosie, who was a composite based on several real women, was most famously depicted by American illustrator Norman Rockwell. Rosie was tough yet feminine. To reassure men that the demands of war would not make women too masculine, some factories gave female employees lessons in how to apply makeup, and cosmetics were never rationed during the war. Elizabeth Arden even created a special red lipstick for use by women reservists in the Marine Corps.



(a)



(b)

*“Rosie the Riveter” became a generic term for all women working in the defense industry. Although the Rosie depicted on posters was white, many of the real Rosies were African American, such as this woman who poses atop an airplane at the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in Burbank, California (a), and Anna Bland, a worker at the Richmond Shipyards (b).*



Although many saw the entry of women into the workforce as a positive thing, they also acknowledged that working women, especially mothers, faced great challenges. To try to address the dual role of women as workers and mothers, Eleanor Roosevelt urged her husband to approve the first U.S. government childcare facilities under the Community Facilities Act of 1942. Eventually, seven centers, servicing 105,000 children, were built. The First Lady also urged industry leaders like Henry Kaiser to build model childcare facilities for their workers. Still, these efforts did not meet the full need for childcare for working mothers.

The lack of childcare facilities meant that many children had to fend for themselves after school, and some had to assume responsibility for housework and the care of younger siblings. Some mothers took younger children to work with them and left them locked in their cars during the workday. Police and social workers also reported an increase in juvenile delinquency during the war. New York City saw its average number of juvenile cases balloon from 9,500 in the prewar years to 11,200 during the war. In San Diego, delinquency rates for girls, including sexual misbehavior, shot up by 355 percent. It is unclear whether more juveniles were actually engaging in delinquent behavior; the police may simply have become more vigilant during wartime and arrested youngsters for activities that would have gone overlooked before the war. In any event, law enforcement and juvenile courts attributed the perceived increase to a lack of supervision by working mothers.

Tens of thousands of women served in the war effort more directly. Approximately 350,000 joined the military. They worked as nurses, drove trucks, repaired airplanes, and performed clerical work to free up men for combat. Those who joined the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) flew planes from the factories to military bases. Some of these women were killed in combat and captured as prisoners of war. Over sixteen hundred of the women nurses received various decorations for courage under fire. Many women also flocked to work in a variety of civil service jobs. Others worked as chemists and engineers, developing weapons for the war.



This included thousands of women who were recruited to work on the Manhattan Project, developing the atomic bomb.

## THE CULTURE OF WAR: ENTERTAINERS AND THE WAR EFFORT

During the Great Depression, movies had served as a welcome diversion from the difficulties of everyday life, and during the war, this held still truer. By 1941, there were more movie theaters than banks in the United States. In the 1930s, newsreels, which were shown in movie theaters before feature films, had informed the American public of what was happening elsewhere in the world. This interest grew once American armies began to engage the enemy. Many informational documentaries about the war were also shown in movie theaters. The most famous were those in the *Why We Fight* series, filmed by Hollywood director Frank Capra. During the war, Americans flocked to the movies not only to learn what was happening to the troops overseas but also to be distracted from the fears and hardships of wartime by cartoons, dramas, and comedies. By 1945, movie attendance had reached an all-time high.

This link shows [newsreel footage of a raid](#) on Tarawa Island. This footage was shown in movie theaters around the country.

Many feature films were patriotic stories that showed the day's biggest stars as soldiers fighting the nefarious German and Japanese enemy. During the war years, there was a consistent supply of



patriotic movies, with actors glorifying and inspiring America's fighting men. John Wayne, who had become a star in the 1930s, appeared in many war-themed movies, including *The Fighting Seabees* and *Back to Bataan*.

Besides appearing in patriotic movies, many male entertainers temporarily gave up their careers to serve in the armed forces. Jimmy Stewart served in the Army Air Force and appeared in a short film entitled *Winning Your Wings* that encouraged young men to enlist. Tyrone Power joined the U.S. Marines. Female entertainers did their part as well. Rita Hayworth and Marlene Dietrich entertained the troops. African American singer and dancer Josephine Baker entertained Allied troops in North Africa and also carried secret messages for the French Resistance. Actress Carole Lombard was killed in a plane crash while returning home from a rally where she had sold war bonds.



(a)



(b)

General George Marshall awards Frank Capra the Distinguished Service Cross in 1945 (a), in recognition of the important contribution that Capra's films made to the war effort. Jimmy Stewart was awarded numerous commendations for his military service, including the French Croix de Guerre (b).



## The Meaning of Democracy

E. B. White was one of the most famous writers of the twentieth century. During the 1940s, he was known for the articles that he contributed to *The New Yorker* and the column that he wrote for *Harper's Magazine*. Today, he is remembered for his children's books *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*, and for his collaboration with William Strunk, Jr., *The Elements of Style*, a guide to writing. In 1943, he wrote a definition of democracy as an example of what Americans hoped that they were fighting for.

We received a letter from the Writer's War Board the other day asking for a statement on 'The Meaning of Democracy.' It presumably is our duty to comply with such a request, and it is certainly our pleasure. Surely the Board knows what democracy is. It is the line that forms on the right. It is the 'don't' in don't shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles; it is the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere. Democracy is a letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea that hasn't been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad. It is the mustard on the hot dog and the cream in the rationed coffee. Democracy is a request from a War Board, in the middle of the morning in the middle of a war, wanting to know what democracy is.

Do you agree with this definition of democracy? Would you change anything to make it more contemporary?



# SOCIAL TENSIONS ON THE HOME FRONT

The need for Americans to come together, whether in Hollywood, the defense industries, or the military, to support the war effort encouraged feelings of unity among the American population. However, the desire for unity did not always mean that Americans of color were treated as equals or even tolerated, despite their proclamations of patriotism and their willingness to join in the effort to defeat America's enemies in Europe and Asia. For African Americans, Mexican Americans, and especially for Japanese Americans, feelings of patriotism and willingness to serve one's country both at home and abroad was not enough to guarantee equal treatment by white Americans or to prevent the U.S. government from regarding them as the enemy.

## African Americans and Double V

The African American community had, at the outset of the war, forged some promising relationships with the Roosevelt administration through civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune and Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet" of African American advisors. Through the intervention of Eleanor Roosevelt, Bethune was appointed to the advisory council set up by the War Department Women's Interest Section. In this position, Bethune was able to organize the first officer candidate school for women and enable African American women to become officers in the Women's Auxiliary Corps.

As the U.S. economy revived as a result of government defense contracts, African Americans wanted to ensure that their service to the country earned them better opportunities and more equal treatment. Accordingly, in 1942, after African American labor leader



A. Philip Randolph pressured Roosevelt with a threatened “March on Washington,” the president created, by Executive Order 8802, the Fair Employment Practices Committee. The purpose of this committee was to see that there was no discrimination in the defense industries. While they were effective in forcing defense contractors, such as the DuPont Corporation, to hire African Americans, they were not able to force corporations to place African Americans in well-paid positions. For example, at DuPont’s plutonium production plant in Hanford, Washington, African Americans were hired as low-paid construction workers but not as laboratory technicians.

During the war, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), founded by James Farmer in 1942, used peaceful civil disobedience in the form of sit-ins to desegregate certain public spaces in Washington, DC, and elsewhere, as its contribution to the war effort. Members of CORE sought support for their movement by stating that one of their goals was to deprive the enemy of the ability to generate anti-American propaganda by



*During World War II, African Americans volunteered for government work just as white Americans did. These Washington, DC, residents have become civil defense workers as part of the Double V campaign that called for victory at home and abroad.*

accusing the United States of racism. After all, they argued, if the United States were going to denounce Germany and Japan for abusing human rights, the country should itself be as exemplary as possible. Indeed, CORE’s actions were in keeping with the goals of the Double V campaign that was begun in 1942 by the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the largest African American newspaper at the time. The campaign called upon African Americans to accomplish the two “Vs”: victory over America’s foreign enemies and victory over racism in the United States.



Despite the willingness of African Americans to fight for the United States, racial tensions often erupted in violence, as the geographic relocation necessitated by the war brought African Americans into closer contact with whites. There were race riots in Detroit, Harlem, and Beaumont, Texas, in which white residents responded with sometimes deadly violence to their new black coworkers or neighbors. There were also racial incidents at or near several military bases in the South. Incidents of African American soldiers being harassed or assaulted occurred at Fort Benning, Georgia; Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Alexandria, Louisiana; Fayetteville, Arkansas; and Tampa, Florida. African American leaders such as James Farmer and Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP since 1931, were asked by General Eisenhower to investigate complaints of the mistreatment of African American servicemen while on active duty. They prepared a fourteen-point memorandum on how to improve conditions for African Americans in the service, sowing some of the seeds of the postwar civil rights movement during the war years.

## The Zoot Suit Riots

Mexican Americans also encountered racial prejudice. The Mexican American population in Southern California grew during World War II due to the increased use of Mexican agricultural workers in the fields to replace the white workers who had left for better paying jobs in the defense industries. The United States and Mexican governments instituted the “*bracero*” program on August 4, 1942, which sought to address the needs of California growers for manual labor to increase food production during wartime. The result was the immigration of thousands of impoverished Mexicans into the United States to work as *braceros*, or manual laborers.

Forced by racial discrimination to live in the barrios of East Los Angeles, many Mexican American youths sought to create their own



identity and began to adopt a distinctive style of dress known as zoot suits, which were also popular among many young African American men. The zoot suits, which required large amounts of cloth to produce, violated wartime regulations that restricted the amount of cloth that could be used in civilian garments. Among the charges leveled at young Mexican Americans was that they were un-American and unpatriotic; wearing zoot suits was seen as evidence of this. Many native-born Americans also denounced Mexican American men for being unwilling to serve in the military, even though some 350,000 Mexican Americans either volunteered to serve or were drafted into the armed services. In the summer of 1943, “zoot-suit riots” occurred in Los Angeles when carloads of white sailors, encouraged by other white civilians, stripped and beat a group of young men wearing the distinctive form of dress. In retaliation, young Mexican American men attacked and beat up sailors. The response was swift and severe, as sailors and civilians went on a spree attacking young Mexican Americans on the streets, in bars, and in movie theaters. More than one hundred people were injured.

## Internment

Japanese Americans also suffered from discrimination. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor unleashed a cascade of racist assumptions about Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans in the United States that culminated in the relocation and internment of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, 66 percent of whom had been born in the United States. Executive Order 9066, signed by Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, gave the army power to remove people from “military areas” to prevent sabotage or espionage. The army then used this authority to relocate people of Japanese ancestry living along the Pacific coast of Washington, Oregon, and California, as well as in parts of Arizona, to internment camps in the American



interior. Although a study commissioned earlier by Roosevelt indicated that there was little danger of disloyalty on the part of West Coast Japanese, fears of sabotage, perhaps spurred by the attempted rescue of a Japanese airman shot down at Pearl Harbor by Japanese living in Hawaii, and racist sentiments led Roosevelt to act. Ironically, Japanese in Hawaii were not interned. Although characterized afterwards as America's worst wartime mistake by Eugene V. Rostow in the September 1945 edition of *Harper's Magazine*, the government's actions were in keeping with decades of anti-Asian sentiment on the West Coast.

After the order went into effect, Lt. General John L. DeWitt, in charge of the Western Defense command, ordered approximately 127,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans—roughly 90 percent of those of Japanese ethnicity living in the United States—to assembly centers where they were transferred to hastily prepared camps in the interior of California, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and Arkansas. Those who were sent to the camps reported that the experience was deeply traumatic. Families were sometimes separated. People could only bring a few of their belongings and had to abandon the rest of their possessions. The camps themselves were dismal and overcrowded. Despite the hardships, the Japanese attempted to build communities in the camps and resume “normal” life. Adults participated in camp government and worked at a variety of jobs. Children attended school, played basketball against local teams, and organized Boy Scout units. Nevertheless, they were imprisoned, and minor infractions, such as wandering too near the camp gate or barbed wire fences while on an evening stroll, could meet with severe consequences. Some sixteen thousand Germans, including some from Latin America, and German Americans were also placed in internment camps, as were 2,373 persons of Italian ancestry. However, unlike the case with Japanese Americans, they represented only a tiny percentage of the members of these ethnic groups living in the country. Most of these people were innocent of any wrongdoing, but some Germans were members of the Nazi



party. No interned Japanese Americans were found guilty of sabotage or espionage.

Despite being singled out for special treatment, many Japanese Americans sought to enlist, but draft boards commonly classified them as 4-C: undesirable aliens. However, as the war ground on, some were reclassified as eligible for service. In total, nearly thirty-three thousand



*Japanese Americans standing in line in front of a poster detailing internment orders in California.*

Japanese Americans served in the military during the war. Of particular note was the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, nicknamed the “Go For Broke,” which finished the war as the most decorated unit in U.S. military history given its size and length of service. While their successes, and the successes of the African American pilots, were lauded, the country and the military still struggled to contend with its own racial tensions, even as the soldiers in Europe faced the brutality of Nazi Germany.

This U.S. government [propaganda film](#) attempts to explain why the Japanese were interned.



## Section Summary

The brunt of the war's damage occurred far from United States soil, but Americans at home were still greatly affected by the war. Women struggled to care for children with scarce resources at their disposal and sometimes while working full time. Economically, the country surged forward, but strict rationing for the war effort meant that Americans still went without. New employment opportunities opened up for women and ethnic minorities, as white men enlisted or were drafted. These new opportunities were positive for those who benefited from them, but they also created new anxieties among white men about racial and gender equality. Race riots took place across the country, and Americans of Japanese ancestry were relocated to internment camps. Still, there was an overwhelming sense of patriotism in the country, which was reflected in the culture of the day.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1046>



## *Review Question*

1. What were American women's contributions to the war effort?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Many American women joined the armed forces, where they served as nurses, repaired and piloted airplanes, drove trucks, and performed clerical duties. Women in civilian life assumed occupations, often in the defense industries, that would have gone to men in times of peace. Women who did not take on wartime employment also contributed by recycling scarce materials, buying war bonds, planning meals using rationed foods, and generally making do with less.

## *Glossary*

**conscientious objectors** those who, for religious or philosophical reasons, refuse to serve in the armed forces



**Double V campaign** a campaign by African Americans to win victory over the enemy overseas and victory over racism at home

**Executive Order 9066** the order given by President Roosevelt to relocate and detain people of Japanese ancestry, including those who were American citizens

**internment** the forced collection of the West Coast Japanese and Japanese American population into ten relocation centers for the greater part of World War II

**Rosie the Riveter** a symbol of female workers in the defense industries

**zoot suit** a flamboyant outfit favored by young African American and Mexican American men



# 156. Victory in the European Theater

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the major battles of the European theater
- Analyze the goals and results of the major wartime summit meetings

Despite the fact that a Japanese attack in the Pacific was the tripwire for America's entrance into the war, Roosevelt had been concerned about Great Britain since the beginning of the Battle of Britain. Roosevelt viewed Germany as the greater threat to freedom. Hence, he leaned towards a "Europe First" strategy, even before the United States became an active belligerent. That meant that the United States would concentrate the majority of its resources and energies in achieving a victory over Germany first and then focus on defeating Japan. Within Europe, Churchill and Roosevelt were committed to saving Britain and acted with this goal in mind, often ignoring the needs of the Soviet Union. As Roosevelt imagined an "empire-free" postwar world, in keeping with the goals of the Atlantic Charter, he could also envision the United States becoming the preeminent world power economically, politically, and militarily.



## WARTIME DIPLOMACY

Franklin Roosevelt entered World War II with an eye toward a new postwar world, one where the United States would succeed Britain as the leader of Western capitalist democracies, replacing the old British imperial system with one based on free trade and decolonization. The goals of the Atlantic Charter had explicitly included self-determination, self-government, and free trade. In 1941, although Roosevelt had yet to meet Soviet premier Joseph Stalin, he had confidence that he could forge a positive relationship with him, a confidence that Churchill believed was born of naiveté. These allied leaders, known as the Big Three, thrown together by the necessity to defeat common enemies, took steps towards working in concert despite their differences.

Through a series of wartime conferences, Roosevelt and the other global leaders sought to come up with a strategy to both defeat the Germans and bolster relationships among allies. In January 1943, at Casablanca, Morocco, Churchill convinced Roosevelt to delay an invasion of France in favor of an invasion of Sicily. It was also at this conference that Roosevelt enunciated the doctrine of



*Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt met together multiple times during the war. One such conference was located in Casablanca, Morocco, in January 1943.*

“unconditional surrender.” Roosevelt agreed to demand an unconditional surrender from Germany and Japan to assure the Soviet Union that the United States would not negotiate a separate peace and prepare the former belligerents for a thorough and permanent transformation after the war. Roosevelt thought that announcing this as a specific war aim would discourage any nation or leader from seeking any negotiated armistice that would hinder



efforts to reform and transform the defeated nations. Stalin, who was not at the conference, affirmed the concept of unconditional surrender when asked to do so. However, he was dismayed over the delay in establishing a “second front” along which the Americans and British would directly engage German forces in western Europe. A western front, brought about through an invasion across the English Channel, which Stalin had been demanding since 1941, offered the best means of drawing Germany away from the east. At a meeting in Tehran, Iran, also in November 1943, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin met to finalize plans for a cross-channel invasion.

## THE INVASION OF EUROPE

Preparing to engage the Nazis in Europe, the United States landed in North Africa in 1942. The Axis campaigns in North Africa had begun when Italy declared war on England in June 1940, and British forces had invaded the Italian colony of Libya. The Italians had responded with a counteroffensive that penetrated into Egypt, only to be defeated by the British again. In response, Hitler dispatched the Afrika Korps under General Erwin Rommel, and the outcome of the situation was in doubt until shortly before American forces joined the British.

Although the Allied campaign secured control of the southern Mediterranean and preserved Egypt and the Suez Canal for the British, Stalin and the Soviets were still engaging hundreds of German divisions in bitter struggles at Stalingrad and Leningrad. The invasion of North Africa did nothing to draw German troops away from the Soviet Union. An invasion of Europe by way of Italy, which is what the British and American campaign in North Africa laid the ground for, pulled a few German divisions away from their Russian targets. But while Stalin urged his allies to invade France, British and American troops pursued the defeat of Mussolini's Italy.



This choice greatly frustrated Stalin, who felt that British interests were taking precedence over the agony that the Soviet Union was enduring at the hands of the invading German army. However, Churchill saw Italy as the vulnerable underbelly of Europe and believed that Italian support for Mussolini was waning, suggesting that victory there might be relatively easy. Moreover, Churchill pointed out that if Italy were taken out of the war, then the Allies would control the Mediterranean, offering the Allies easier shipping access to both the Soviet Union and the British Far Eastern colonies.

## D-Day

A direct assault on Nazi Germany's "Fortress Europe" was still necessary for final victory. On June 6, 1944, the second front became a reality when Allied forces stormed the beaches of northern France on D-day. Beginning at 6:30 a.m., some twenty-four thousand British, Canadian, and American troops waded ashore along a fifty-mile piece of the Normandy coast. Well over a



*U.S. troops in a military landing craft approach the beach code-named "Omaha" on June 6, 1944. More than ten thousand soldiers were killed or wounded during the D-day assault along the coast of Normandy, France.*

million troops would follow their lead. German forces on the hills and cliffs above shot at them, and once they reached the beach, they encountered barbed wire and land mines. More than ten thousand Allied soldiers were wounded or killed during the assault. Following the establishment of beachheads at Normandy, it took months of difficult fighting before Paris was liberated on August 20, 1944. The invasion did succeed in diverting German forces from the eastern front to the western front, relieving some of the pressure on Stalin's



troops. By that time, however, Russian forces had already defeated the German army at Stalingrad, an event that many consider the turning point of the war in Europe, and begun to push the Germans out of the Soviet Union.

Nazi Germany was not ready to surrender, however. On December 16, in a surprise move, the Germans threw nearly a quarter-million men at the Western Allies in an attempt to divide their armies and encircle major elements of the American forces. The struggle, known as the Battle of the Bulge, raged until the end of January. Some ninety thousand Americans were killed, wounded, or lost in action. Nevertheless, the Germans were turned back, and Hitler's forces were so spent that they could never again mount offensive operations.

## Confronting the Holocaust

The Holocaust, Hitler's plan to kill the Jews of Europe, had begun as early as 1933, with the construction of Dachau, the first of more than forty thousand camps for incarcerating Jews, submitting them to forced labor, or exterminating them. Eventually, six extermination camps were established between 1941 and 1945 in Polish territory. Jewish men, women, and children from throughout Europe were transported to these camps in Germany and other areas under Nazi control. Although the majority of the people in the camps were Jews, the Nazis sent Roma (gypsies), gays and lesbians, Jehovah's



*A U.S. senator, and member of a congressional committee investigating Nazi atrocities, views the evidence first hand at Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar, Germany, in the summer of 1945.*



Witnesses, and political opponents to the camps as well. Some prisoners were put to work at hard labor; many of them subsequently died of disease or starvation. Most of those sent to the extermination camps were killed upon arrival with poisoned gas. Ultimately, some eleven million people died in the camps. As Soviet troops began to advance from the east and U.S. forces from the west, camp guards attempted to hide the evidence of their crimes by destroying records and camp buildings, and marching surviving prisoners away from the sites.

## Felix L. Sparks on the Liberation of Dachau

The horrors of the concentration camps remained with the soldiers who liberated them long after the war had ended. Below is an excerpt of the recollection of one soldier.

Our first experience with the camp came as a traumatic shock. The first evidence of the horrors to come was a string of forty railway cars on a railway spur leading into the camp. Each car was filled with emaciated human corpses, both men and women. A hasty search by the stunned infantry soldiers revealed no signs of life among the hundreds of still bodies, over two thousand in all.

It was in this atmosphere of human depravity, degradation and death that the soldiers of my battalion then entered the camp itself. Almost all of the SS command guarding the camp had fled before our arrival, leaving behind about two hundred lower ranking members of the command. There was some sporadic firing of weapons. As we approached the confinement area, the scene numbed my senses. Dante's *Inferno* seemed pale compared to the real hell of Dachau. A row of small cement structures near the prison entrance contained a coal-fired crematorium, a gas chamber, and



rooms piled high with naked and emaciated corpses. As I turned to look over the prison yard with un-believing eyes, I saw a large number of dead inmates lying where they had fallen in the last few hours or days before our arrival. Since all of the bodies were in various stages of decomposition, the stench of death was overpowering. The men of the 45th Infantry Division were hardened combat veterans. We had been in combat almost two years at that point. While we were accustomed to death, we were not able to comprehend the type of death that we encountered at Dachau.

—Felix L. Sparks, remarks at the U.S. Holocaust Museum, May 8, 1995

Listen to the [accounts of Holocaust survivors](#) by clicking on “Listen Now” below the name of the person whose story you wish to hear.

## YALTA AND PREPARING FOR VICTORY

The last time the Big Three met was in early February 1945 at Yalta in the Soviet Union. Roosevelt was sick, and Stalin's armies were pushing the German army back towards Berlin from the east. Churchill and Roosevelt thus had to accept a number of compromises that strengthened Stalin's position in eastern Europe. In particular, they agreed to allow the Communist government installed by the Soviet Union in Poland to remain in power until free elections took place. For his part, Stalin reaffirmed his commitment, first voiced at Tehran, to enter the war against Japan following



the surrender of Germany. He also agreed that the Soviet Union would participate in the United Nations, a new peacekeeping body intended to replace the League of Nations. The Big Three left Yalta with many details remaining unclear, planning to finalize plans for the treatment of Germany and the shape of postwar Europe at a later conference. However, Roosevelt did not live to attend the next meeting. He died on April 12, 1945, and Harry S. Truman became president.

By April 1945, Soviet forces had reached Berlin, and both the U.S. and British Allies were pushing up against Germany's last defenses in the western part of the nation. Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945. On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. The war in Europe was over, and the Allies and liberated regions celebrated the end of the long ordeal. Germany was thoroughly defeated; its industries and cities were badly damaged.



*Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin Roosevelt, and Premier Joseph Stalin made final plans for the defeat of Nazi Germany at Yalta in February 1945.*

The victorious Allies set about determining what to do to rebuild Europe at the Potsdam Summit Conference in July 1945. Attending the conference were Stalin, Truman, and Churchill, now the outgoing prime minister, as well as the new British prime minister, Clement Atlee. Plans to divide Germany and Austria, and their capital cities, into four zones—to be occupied by the British, French, Americans, and Soviets—a subject discussed at Yalta, were finalized. In addition, the Allies agreed to dismantle Germany's heavy industry in order to make it impossible for the country to produce more armaments.



## Section Summary

Upon entering the war, President Roosevelt believed that the greatest threat to the long-term survival of democracy and freedom would be a German victory. Hence, he entered into an alliance with British prime minister Winston Churchill and Soviet premier Joseph Stalin to defeat the common enemy while also seeking to lay the foundation for a peaceful postwar world in which the United States would play a major and permanent role. Appeasement and nonintervention had been proven to be shortsighted and tragic policies that failed to provide security and peace either for the United States or for the world.

With the aid of the British, the United States invaded North Africa and from there invaded Europe by way of Italy. However, the cross-channel invasion of Europe through France that Stalin had long called for did not come until 1944, by which time the Soviets had turned the tide of battle in eastern Europe. The liberation of Hitler's concentration camps forced Allied nations to confront the grisly horrors that had been taking place as the war unfolded. The Big Three met for one last time in February 1945, at Yalta, where Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to several conditions that strengthened Stalin's position. They planned to finalize their plans at a later conference, but Roosevelt died two months later.



### *Review Question*

1. What did Roosevelt mean to achieve with his demand for Germany and Japan's unconditional surrender?
2. What were the phases of the Holocaust?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Roosevelt believed that his demand for an unconditional surrender from Germany and Japan would serve several purposes: It would provide reassurance to the Soviet Union of the nation's loyalty, prepare the Axis nations for a complete postwar transformation, and prevent any other nations from engaging in negotiations that would undermine the Big Three's plans for the defeated belligerents.
2. The first prison camps for Jews and other "enemies" of the Nazis were built in Germany in 1933. Following the invasion of eastern Europe, more camps, including extermination camps, were built in areas conquered by the Nazis. People, primarily Jews, were shipped to these camps from throughout Nazi-controlled Europe.



## *Glossary*

**Big Three** the nickname given to the leaders of the three major Allied nations: Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin

**D-day** June 6, 1944, the date of the invasion of Normandy, France, by British, Canadian, and American forces, which opened a second front in Europe



# 157. The Pacific Theater and the Atomic Bomb

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the strategy employed against the Japanese and some of the significant battles of the Pacific campaign
- Describe the effects of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- Analyze the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan

Japanese forces won a series of early victories against Allied forces from December 1941 to May 1942. They seized Guam and Wake Island from the United States, and streamed through Malaysia and Thailand into the Philippines and through the Dutch East Indies. By February 1942, they were threatening Australia. The Allies turned the tide in May and June 1942, at the Battle of Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway. The Battle of Midway witnessed the first Japanese naval defeat since the nineteenth century. Shortly after the American victory, U.S. forces invaded Guadalcanal and New Guinea. Slowly, throughout 1943, the United States engaged in a campaign of “island hopping,” gradually moving across the Pacific to Japan. In 1944, the United States, seized Saipan and won the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Progressively, American forces drew closer to the strategically important targets of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.



## THE PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

During the 1930s, Americans had caught glimpses of Japanese armies in action and grew increasingly sympathetic towards war-torn China. Stories of Japanese atrocities bordering on genocide and the shock of the attack on Pearl Harbor intensified racial animosity toward the Japanese. Wartime propaganda portrayed Japanese soldiers as uncivilized and barbaric, sometimes even inhuman, unlike America's German foes. Admiral William Halsey spoke for many Americans when he urged them to "Kill Japs! Kill Japs! Kill more Japs!" Stories of the dispiriting defeats at Bataan and the Japanese capture of the Philippines at Corregidor in 1942 revealed the Japanese cruelty and mistreatment of Americans. The "Bataan Death March," during which as many as 650 American and 10,000 Filipino prisoners of war died, intensified anti-Japanese feelings. Kamikaze attacks that took place towards the end of the war were regarded as proof of the irrationality of Japanese martial values and mindless loyalty to Emperor Hirohito.





(a)



(b)

*Anti-Japanese propaganda often portrayed the Japanese as inhuman (a). In addition to emphasizing the supposed apish features of the Japanese (b), this poster depicts the victim as a white woman, undoubtedly to increase American horror even more.*

Despite the Allies' Europe First strategy, American forces took the resources that they could assemble and swung into action as quickly as they could to blunt the Japanese advance. Infuriated by stories of defeat at the hands of the allegedly racially inferior Japanese, many high-ranking American military leaders demanded that greater attention be paid to the Pacific campaign. Rather than simply wait for the invasion of France to begin, naval and army officers such as General Douglas MacArthur argued that American resources should be deployed in the Pacific to reclaim territory seized by Japan.



In the Pacific, MacArthur and the Allied forces pursued an island hopping strategy that bypassed certain island strongholds held by the Japanese that were of little or no strategic value. By seizing locations from which Japanese communications and transportation routes could be disrupted or destroyed, the Allies advanced towards Japan without engaging the



*American forces come ashore on Iwo Jima. Their vehicles had difficulty moving on the beach's volcanic sands. Troops endured shelling by Japanese troops on Mount Suribachi, the mountain in the background.*

thousands of Japanese stationed on garrisoned islands. The goal was to advance American air strength close enough to Japan proper to achieve air superiority over the home islands; the nation could then be bombed into submission or at least weakened in preparation for an amphibious assault. By February 1945, American forces had reached the island of Iwo Jima. Iwo Jima was originally meant to serve as a forward air base for fighter planes, providing cover for long-distance bombing raids on Japan. Two months later, an even larger engagement, the hardest fought and bloodiest battle of the Pacific theater, took place as American forces invaded Okinawa. The battle raged from April 1945 well into July 1945; the island was finally secured at the cost of seventeen thousand American soldiers killed and thirty-six thousand wounded. Japanese forces lost over 100,000 troops. Perhaps as many as 150,000 civilians perished as well.

## DROPPING THE ATOMIC BOMB

All belligerents in World War II sought to develop powerful and devastating weaponry. As early as 1939, German scientists had discovered how to split uranium atoms, the technology that would



ultimately allow for the creation of the atomic bomb. Albert Einstein, who had emigrated to the United States in 1933 to escape the Nazis, urged President Roosevelt to launch an American atomic research project, and Roosevelt agreed to do so, with reservations. In late 1941, the program received its code name: the Manhattan Project. Located at Los Alamos, New Mexico, the Manhattan Project ultimately employed 150,000 people and cost some \$2 billion. In July 1945, the project's scientists successfully tested the first atomic bomb.

In the spring of 1945, the military began to prepare for the possible use of an atomic bomb by choosing appropriate targets. Suspecting that the immediate bomb blast would extend over one mile and secondary effects would include fire damage, a compact city of significant military value with densely built frame buildings seemed to be the best target. Eventually, the city of Hiroshima, the headquarters of the Japanese Second Army, and the communications and supply hub for all of southern Japan, was chosen. The city of Kokura was chosen as the primary target of the second bomb, and Nagasaki, an industrial center producing war materiel and the largest seaport in southern Japan, was selected as a secondary target.

The *Enola Gay*, a B-29 bomber named after its pilot's mother, dropped an atomic bomb known as "Little Boy" on Hiroshima at 8:15 a.m. A huge mushroom cloud rose above the city. Survivors sitting down for breakfast or preparing to go to school recalled seeing a bright light and then being blown across the room. The immense heat of the blast melted stone and metal, and ignited fires throughout the city. One man later recalled watching his mother and brother burn to death as fire consumed their home. A female survivor, a child at the time of the attack, remembered finding the body of her mother, which had been reduced to ashes and fell apart as she touched it. Two-thirds of the buildings in Hiroshima were destroyed. Within an hour after the bombing, radioactive "black rain" began to fall. Approximately seventy thousand people died in the original blast. The same number would later die of radiation



poisoning. When Japan refused to surrender, a second atomic bomb, named Fat Man, was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. At least sixty thousand people were killed at Nagasaki. Kokura, the primary target, had been shrouded in clouds on that morning and thus had escaped destruction. It is impossible to say with certainty how many died in the two attacks; the heat of the bomb blasts incinerated or vaporized many of the victims.



(a)



(b)

According to estimates, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (a) together killed anywhere from 125,000 to over 250,000 people. The so-called Genbaku (A-Bomb) Dome, now the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, was the only building left standing near the Hiroshima bomb's hypocenter (b).

Visit the [Atomic Bomb Museum site](#) to read the accounts of survivors Hiroshi Morishita and Shizuko Nishimoto.



The decision to use nuclear weapons is widely debated. Why exactly did the United States deploy an atomic bomb? The fierce resistance that the Japanese forces mounted during their early campaigns led American planners to believe that any invasion of the Japanese home islands would be exceedingly bloody. According to some estimates, as many as 250,000 Americans might die in securing a final victory. Such considerations undoubtedly influenced President Truman's decision. Truman, who had not known about the Manhattan Project until Roosevelt's death, also may not have realized how truly destructive it was. Indeed, some of the scientists who had built the bomb were surprised by its power. One question that has not been fully answered is why the United States dropped the second bomb on Nagasaki. As some scholars have noted, if Truman's intention was to eliminate the need for a home island invasion, he could have given Japan more time to respond after bombing Hiroshima. He did not, however. The second bombing may have been intended to send a message to Stalin, who was becoming intransigent regarding postwar Europe. If it is indeed true that Truman had political motivations for using the bombs, then the destruction of Nagasaki might have been the first salvo of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. And yet, other historians have pointed out that the war had unleashed such massive atrocities against civilians by all belligerents—the United States included—that by the summer of 1945, the president no longer needed any particular reason to use his entire nuclear arsenal.

## THE WAR ENDS

Whatever the true reasons for their use, the bombs had the desired effect of getting Japan to surrender. Even before the atomic attacks, the conventional bombings of Japan, the defeat of its forces in the field, and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war had convinced the Imperial Council that they had to end the war. They had hoped



to negotiate the terms of the peace, but Emperor Hirohito intervened after the destruction of Nagasaki and accepted unconditional surrender. Although many Japanese shuddered at the humiliation of defeat, most were relieved that the war was over. Japan's industries and cities had been thoroughly destroyed, and the immediate future looked bleak as they awaited their fate at the hands of the American occupation forces.

The victors had yet another nation to rebuild and reform, but the war was finally over. Following the surrender, the Japanese colony of Korea was divided along the thirty-eighth parallel; the Soviet Union was given control of the northern half and the United States was given control of the southern portion. In Europe, as had been agreed upon at a meeting of the Allies in Potsdam in the summer of 1945, Germany was divided into four occupation zones that would be controlled by Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States, respectively. The city of Berlin was similarly split into four. Plans were made to prosecute war criminals in both Japan and Germany. In October 1945, the United Nations was created. People around the world celebrated the end of the conflict, but America's use of atomic bombs and disagreements between the United States and the Soviet Union at Yalta and Potsdam would contribute to ongoing instability in the postwar world.

## Section Summary

The way in which the United States fought the war in the Pacific was fueled by fear of Japanese imperialistic aggression, as well as anger over Japan's attack on Pearl



Harbor and its mistreatment of its enemies. It was also influenced by a long history of American racism towards Asians that dated back to the nineteenth century. From hostile anti-Japanese propaganda to the use of two atomic bombs on Japanese cities, America's actions during the Pacific campaign were far more aggressive than they were in the European theater. Using the strategy of island hopping, the United States was able to get within striking distance of Japan. Only once they adopted this strategy were the Allied troops able to turn the tide against what had been a series of challenging Japanese victories. The war ended with Japan's surrender.

The combined Allied forces had successfully waged a crusade against Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan. The United States, forced to abandon a policy of nonintervention outside the Western Hemisphere, had been able to mobilize itself and produce the weapons and the warriors necessary to defeat its enemies. Following World War II, America would never again retreat from the global stage, and its early mastery of nuclear weapons would make it the dominant force in the postwar world.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1048>



## *Review Questions*

1. What purpose did the Allied strategy of island hopping serve?
2. Why might President Truman have made the decision to drop the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki?

## *Answers to Review Questions*

1. Allied forces intentionally avoided Japanese-held island strongholds that did not serve them strategically, instead securing locations that allowed them to interfere with Japanese communications and transportation routes. In this way, the Allies made their way towards Japan with limited military engagement. The goal was to get close enough to the Japanese home islands to achieve air superiority, paving the way for Allied assaults by air or water.
2. Truman wanted to end the war quickly and save lives by avoiding an invasion of the Japanese home islands. However, he might have achieved this by waiting for a definitive response from Japan following the bombing of Hiroshima. Truman may also have wanted to demonstrate America's power to the Soviet Union and hoped that the unleashing of his nuclear arsenal would send a strong message to Stalin.



## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. Given that the Japanese war against China began in 1937 and German aggression began in Europe in 1936, why was it not until 1941 that the United States joined the war against the Axis powers? Was the decision to stay out of the war until 1941 a wise one on the part of the United States?
2. Should the United States have done more to help European Jews during the 1930s? What could it have done?
3. In what ways did World War II improve the status of women and African Americans in the United States?
4. Should the U.S. government have ordered the internment of Japanese Americans? Does the fear of espionage or sabotage justify depriving American citizens of their rights?
5. Did the United States make the right decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan?

## *Glossary*

**Enola Gay** the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima

**Manhattan Project** the code name given to the research project that developed the atomic bomb



## 158. Videos: World War II

In part one, you will learn how the United States got into the war, and just how involved America was before Congress actually declared war. The video will actually talk a little about the military tactics involved and get into some of the weaponry involved, specifically the huge amount of aerial bombing that characterized the war, and the atomic bombs that ended the war in the Pacific.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=197#oembed-1>

In part two, you will learn about World War II as it was lived on the home front. You'll learn about how the war changed the country as a whole, and changed how Americans thought about their country. The video talks about the government control of war production, and how the war probably helped to end the Great Depression. A broader implementation of the income tax, the growth of large corporations, and the development of the West Coast as a manufacturing center were also results of the war. The war positively changed the roles of women and African Americans, but it was pretty terrible for the Japanese Americans who were interred in camps. In short, World War II changed America's role in the world, changed American life at home, and eventually spawned the History Channel.

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One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=197#oembed-2>



PART XXV

# WORLD WAR II READER







# 159. Primary Source Images: World War II

The 1930s and 1940s were trying times. A global economic crisis gave way to a global war that would become the deadliest and most destructive in human history. Perhaps 80 million lost their lives during World War II. The war saw industrialized genocide and nearly threatened the eradication of an entire people. It also unleashed the most fearsome wartime technology that has ever been used in war. It And when it ended, the United States found itself alone as the world's greatest superpower, armed with the world's greatest economy and looking forward to a prosperous consumers' economy. But of course the war would raise as many questions as it would settle: it unleashed new social forces at home and abroad that would confront new generations of Americans to come.



## Tuskegee Airmen (1941)



*Photograph, 1941. Via Wikimedia.*

The Tuskegee Airmen stand at attention as Major James A. Ellison returns the salute of Mac Ross, one of the first graduates of the Tuskegee cadets. The photograph shows the pride and poise of the Tuskegee Airmen, who continued a tradition of African Americans honorably serving a country that still considered them second-class citizens.

<!-- .entry-description -->



## WWII Posters



Recruiting Publicity Bureau, US Women's Army Corps Recruiting Poster (1943); Unknown, "Let's Go Get 'Em." Beck Engraving Co. (1942).

This pair of US Military recruiting posters demonstrates the way that two branches of the military—the Marines and the Women's Army Corps—borrowed techniques from advertising professionals to “sell” a romantic vision of war to Americans. These two images take different strategies: one shows Marines at war in a lush jungle, reminding viewers that the war was taking place in exotic lands, the other depicted women taking on new jobs as a patriotic duty. Bradshaw Crandall, “Are you a girl with a star-spangled heart?”



# 160. Primary Source: Nazi Party Platform (1920)

TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT 1708-PS

*Edited by: Dr. Robert Ley*

*Published by: Central Publishing House of the N.S.D.A.P.*

*Franz Eher, successor Munich*

## The program of the NSDAP

The program is the political foundation of the NSDAP and accordingly the primary political law of the State. It has been made brief and clear intentionally.

All legal precepts must be applied in the spirit of the party program.

Since the taking over of control, the Fuehrer has succeeded in the realization of essential portions of the Party program from the fundamentals to the detail.

The Party Program of the NSDAP was proclaimed on the 24 February 1920 by Adolf Hitler at the first large Party gathering in Munich and since that day has remained unaltered. Within the national socialist philosophy is summarized in 25 points:

1. We demand the unification of all Germans in the Greater Germany on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples.
2. We demand equality of rights for the German people in respect to the other nations; abrogation of the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain.
3. We demand land and territory (colonies) for the sustenance of our people, and colonization for our surplus population.
4. Only a member of the race can be a citizen. A member of the



race can only be one who is of German blood, without consideration of creed. Consequently no Jew can be a member of the race.

5. Whoever has no citizenship is to be able to live in Germany only as a guest, and must be under the authority of legislation for foreigners.

6. The right to determine matters concerning administration and law belongs only to the citizen. Therefore we demand that every public office, of any sort whatsoever, whether in the Reich, the county or municipality, be filled only by citizens. We combat the corrupting parliamentary economy, office-holding only according to party inclinations without consideration of character or abilities.

7. We demand that the state be charged first with providing the opportunity for a livelihood and way of life for the citizens. If it is impossible to sustain the total population of the State, then the members of foreign nations (non-citizens) are to be expelled from the Reich.

8. Any further immigration of non-citizens is to be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans, who have immigrated to Germany since the 2 August 1914, be forced immediately to leave the Reich.

9. All citizens must have equal rights and obligations.

10. The first obligation of every citizen must be to work both spiritually and physically. The activity of individuals is not to counteract the interests of the universality, but must have its result within the framework of the whole for the benefit of all. Consequently we demand:

11. Abolition of unearned (work and labour) incomes. Breaking of rent-slavery.

12. In consideration of the monstrous sacrifice in property and blood that each war demands of the people personal enrichment through a war must be designated as a crime against the people. Therefore we demand the total confiscation of all war profits.

13. We demand the nationalization of all (previous) associated industries (trusts).

14. We demand a division of profits of all heavy industries.

15. We demand an expansion on a large scale of old age welfare.



16. We demand the creation of a healthy middle class and its conservation, immediate communalization of the great warehouses and their being leased at low cost to small firms, the utmost consideration of all small firms in contracts with the State, county or municipality.

17. We demand a land reform suitable to our needs, provision of a law for the free expropriation of land for the purposes of public utility, abolition of taxes on land and prevention of all speculation in land.

18. We demand struggle without consideration against those whose activity is injurious to the general interest. Common national criminals, usurers, Schieber and so forth are to be punished with death, without consideration of confession or race.

19. We demand substitution of a German common law in place of the Roman Law serving a materialistic world-order.

20. The state is to be responsible for a fundamental reconstruction of our whole national education program, to enable every capable and industrious German to obtain higher education and subsequently introduction into leading positions. The plans of instruction of all educational institutions are to conform with the experiences of practical life. The comprehension of the concept of the State must be striven for by the school [Staatsbuergerkunde] as early as the beginning of understanding. We demand the education at the expense of the State of outstanding intellectually gifted children of poor parents without consideration of position or profession.

21. The State is to care for the elevating national health by protecting the mother and child, by outlawing child-labor, by the encouragement of physical fitness, by means of the legal establishment of a gymnastic and sport obligation, by the utmost support of all organizations concerned with the physical instruction of the young.

22. We demand abolition of the mercenary troops and formation of a national army.

23. We demand legal opposition to known lies and their



promulgation through the press. In order to enable the provision of a German press, we demand, that: a. All writers and employees of the newspapers appearing in the German language be members of the race: b. Non-German newspapers be required to have the express permission of the State to be published. They may not be printed in the German language: c. Non-Germans are forbidden by law any financial interest in German publications, or any influence on them, and as punishment for violations the closing of such a publication as well as the immediate expulsion from the Reich of the non-German concerned. Publications which are counter to the general good are to be forbidden. We demand legal prosecution of artistic and literary forms which exert a destructive influence on our national life, and the closure of organizations opposing the above made demands.

24. We demand freedom of religion for all religious denominations within the state so long as they do not endanger its existence or oppose the moral senses of the Germanic race. The Party as such advocates the standpoint of a positive Christianity without binding itself confessionally to any one denomination. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit within and around us, and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our nation can only succeed from within on the framework: common utility precedes individual utility.

25. For the execution of all of this we demand the formation of a strong central power in the Reich. Unlimited authority of the central parliament over the whole Reich and its organizations in general. The forming of state and profession chambers for the execution of the laws made by the Reich within the various states of the confederation. The leaders of the Party promise, if necessary by sacrificing their own lives, to support by the execution of the points set forth above without consideration.

Adolf Hitler proclaimed the following explanation for this program on the 13 April 1928:

Explanation

Regarding the false interpretations of Point 17 of the program of



the NSDAP on the part of our opponents, the following definition is necessary:

“Since the NSDAP stands on the platform of private ownership it happens that the passage” gratuitous expropriation concerns only the creation of legal opportunities to expropriate if necessary, land which has been illegally acquired or is not administered from the view-point of the national welfare. This is directed primarily against the Jewish land-speculation companies.

**Source:**

Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression Volume IV

Office of the United States Chief Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality

Washington, DC : United States Government Printing Office, 1946



## 161. Primary Source: Charles A. Lindbergh, “America First” (1941)

*Charles Lindbergh won international fame in 1927 after completing the first non-stop, solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. As Hitler’s armies marched across the European continent, many Americans began to imagine American participation in the war. Charles Lindbergh and the America First Committee, advocating “America First,” championed American isolationism.*

There are many ... interventionists in America, but there are more people among us of a different type. That is why you and I are assembled here tonight. There is a policy open to this nation that will lead to success—a policy that leaves us free to follow our own way of life, and to develop our own civilization. It is not a new and untried idea. It was advocated by Washington. It was incorporated in the Monroe Doctrine. Under its guidance, the United States became the greatest nation in the world.

It is based upon the belief that the security of a nation lies in the strength and character of its own people. It recommends the maintenance of armed forces sufficient to defend this hemisphere from attack by any combination of foreign powers. It demands faith in an independent American destiny. This is the policy of the America First Committee today. It is a policy not of isolation, but of independence; not of defeat, but of courage. It is a policy that led this nation to success during the most trying years of our history, and it is a policy that will lead us to success again.

We have weakened ourselves for many months, and still worse, we have divided our own people by this dabbling in Europe’s wars. While we should have been concentrating on American defense we have been forced to argue over foreign quarrels. We must turn our



eyes and our faith back to our own country before it is too late. And when we do this, a different vista opens before us. Practically every difficulty we would face in invading Europe becomes an asset to us in defending America. Our enemy, and not we, would then have the problem of transporting millions of troops across the ocean and landing them on a hostile shore. They, and not we, would have to furnish the convoys to transport guns and trucks and munitions and fuel across three thousand miles of water. Our battleships and submarines would then be fighting close to their home bases. We would then do the bombing from the air and the torpedoing at sea. And if any part of an enemy convoy should ever pass our Navy and our air force, they would still be faced with the guns of our coast artillery and behind them the divisions of our Army.

The United States is better situated from a military standpoint than any other nation in the world. Even in our present condition of unpreparedness no foreign power is in a position to invade us today. If we concentrate on our own defenses and build the strength that this nation should maintain, no foreign army will every attempt to land on American shores.

War is not inevitable for this country. Such a claim is defeatism in the true sense. No one can make us fight abroad unless we ourselves are willing to do so. No one will attempt to fight us here if we arm ourselves as a great nation should be armed. Over a hundred million people in this nation are opposed to entering the war. If the principles of democracy mean anything at all, that is reason enough for us to stay out. If we are forced into a war against the wishes of an overwhelming majority of our people, we will have proved democracy such a failure at home that there will be little use of fighting for it abroad.

The time has come when those of us who believe in an independent American destiny must band together and organize for strength. We have been led toward war by a minority of our people. This minority has power. It has influence. It has a loud voice. But it does not represent the American people. During the last several years I have traveled over this country from one end to the other. I



have talked to many hundreds of men and women, and I have letters from tens of thousands more, who feel the same way as you and I.

Most of these people have no influence or power. Most of them have no means of expressing their convictions, except by their vote which has always been against this war. They are the citizens who have had to work too hard at their daily jobs to organize political meetings. Hitherto, they have relied upon their vote to express their feelings; but now they find that it is hardly remembered except in the oratory of a political campaign. These people—the majority of hardworking American citizens, are with us. They are the true strength of our country. And they are beginning to realize, as you and I, that there are times when we must sacrifice our normal interests in life in order to insure the safety and the welfare of our nation.

Such a time has come. Such a crisis is here. That is why the America First Committee has been formed—to give voice to the people who have no newspaper, or newsreel, or radio station at their command; to the people who must do the paying, and the fighting, and the dying if this country enters the war.

Whether or not we do enter the war rests upon the shoulders of you in this audience, upon us here on this platform, upon meetings of this kind that are being held by Americans in every section of the United States today. It depends upon the action we take, and the courage we show at this time. If you believe in an independent destiny for America, if you believe that this country should not enter the war in Europe, we ask you to join the America First Committee in its stand. We ask you to share our faith in the ability of this nation to defend itself, to develop its own civilization, and to contribute to the progress of mankind in a more constructive and intelligent way than has yet been found by the warring nations of Europe. We need your support, and we need it now. The time to act is here.

[Source: Charles A. Lindbergh, address delivered at the America First Committee meeting in New York City, April 23, 1941. Available online via Teaching American History,



[http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/charles-a-lindberghs-address-in-new-york/.](http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/charles-a-lindberghs-address-in-new-york/)]



## 162. Primary Source: The Atlantic Charter (1941)

*The leaders of the United States and United Kingdom signed the Atlantic Charter in August 1941. The short document neatly outlined an idealized vision for political and economic order of the postwar world.*

AUGUST 14, 1941

The President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means



of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measure which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Winston S. Churchill

[Available online via The Avalan Project,  
<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>.]



## 163. Primary Source: FDR, Executive Order No. 9066 (1942)

*During World War II, the federal government removed over 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese descent (both foreign-born “issei” and native-born “nisei”) from the West Coast and interned in camps. President Roosevelt authorized the internments with his Executive Order No. 9066, issued on February 19, 1942.*

Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locality shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supersede the responsibility and authority of the



Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas.

I hereby further authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the said Military Commanders to take such other steps as he or the appropriate Military Commander may deem advisable to enforce compliance with the restrictions applicable to each Military area hereinabove authorized to be designated, including the use of Federal troops and other Federal Agencies, with authority to accept assistance of state and local agencies.

I hereby further authorize and direct all Executive Departments, independent establishments and other Federal Agencies, to assist the Secretary of War or the said Military Commanders in carrying out this Executive Order, including the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, transportation, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities, and services.

This order shall not be construed as modifying or limiting in any way the authority heretofore granted under Executive Order No. 8972, dated December 12, 1941, nor shall it be construed as limiting or modifying the duty and responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with respect to the investigation of alleged acts of sabotage or the duty and responsibility of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, prescribing regulations for the conduct and control of alien enemies, except as such duty and responsibility is superseded by the designation of military areas hereunder.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

The White House,

February 19, 1942.

[Source: Executive Order No. 9066, February 19, 1942. Available online via *History Matters*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5154>.]



# 164. Primary Source Videos: Propaganda Cartoons

Consider the following as you watch the following propaganda cartoons:

- How does each film portray “the enemy?”
- Which one gets the worse treatment? Why do you think that is?

## Der Fuehrer’s Face

Der Fuehrer’s Face in a spoof off a popular song at the time that was made into a propaganda music video.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=204#oembed-1>

## Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips

Bugs Bunny defends a Pacific island from Japanese invasion.

(Ep. 32) – [Bugs Bunny Nips The Nips](#) by [tranghuyen0213](#)



# Tokyo Jokio

Tokyo Jokio was a cartoon introducing Americans to Japanese culture and society.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=204#oembed-2>



# 165. Primary Source: Harry Truman Announcing the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima (1945)

*On August 6, 1945, Harry Truman disclosed to the American public that the United States had detonated an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan.*

THE WHITE HOUSE

Washington, D.C.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima and destroyed its usefulness to the enemy. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of TNT. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British "Grand Slam" which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present form these bombs are now in production and even more powerful forms are in development.

It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.

Before 1939, it was the accepted belief of scientists that it was theoretically possible to release atomic energy. But no one knew any practical method of doing it. By 1942, however, we knew that the Germans were working feverishly to find a way to add atomic energy to the other engines of war with which they hoped to



enslave the world. But they failed. We may be grateful to Providence that the Germans got the V-1's and V-2's late and in limited quantities and even more grateful that they did not get the atomic bomb at all.

The battle of the laboratories held fateful risks for us as well as the battles of the air, land, and sea, and we have now won the battle of the laboratories as we have won the other battles.

Beginning in 1940, before Pearl Harbor, scientific knowledge useful in was pooled between the United States and Great Britain, and many priceless helps to our victories have come from that arrangement. Under that general policy the research on the atomic bomb was begun. With American and British scientists working together we entered the race of discovery against the Germans.

The United States had available the large number of scientists of distinction in the many needed areas of knowledge. It had the tremendous industrial and financial resources necessary for the project and they could be devoted to it without undue impairment of other vital war work. In the United States the laboratory work and the production plants, on which a substantial start had already been made, would be out of reach of enemy bombing, while at that time Britain was exposed to constant air attack and was still threatened with the possibility of invasion. For these reasons Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt agreed that it was wise to carry on the project here. We now have two great plants and many lesser works devoted to the production of atomic power. Employment during peak construction numbered 125,000 and over 65,000 individuals are even now engaged in operating the plants. Many have worked there for two and a half years. Few know what they have been producing. They see great quantities of material going in and they see nothing coming out of these plants, for the physical size of the explosive charge is exceedingly small. We have spent two billion dollars on the greatest scientific gamble in history — and won.

But the greatest marvel is not the size of the enterprise, its secrecy, nor its cost, but the achievement of scientific brains in



putting together infinitely complex pieces of knowledge held by many men in different fields of science into a workable plan. And hardly less marvelous has been the capacity of industry to design and of labor to operate, the machines and methods to do things never done before so that the brainchild of many minds came forth in physical shape and performed as it was supposed to do. Both science and industry worked under the direction of the United States Army, which achieved a unique success in managing so diverse a problem in the advancement of knowledge in an amazingly short time. It is doubtful if such another combination could be got together in the world. What has been done is the greatest achievement of organized science in history. It was done under pressure and without failure.

We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan's power to make war.

It was to spare the Japanese people from utter destruction that the ultimatum of July 26 was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum. If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such number that and power as they have not yet seen and with the fighting skill of which they are already well aware.

...

I shall recommend that the Congress of the United States consider promptly the establishment of an appropriate commission to control the production and use of atomic power within the United States. I shall give further consideration and make further recommendations to the Congress as to how atomic power can become a powerful and forceful influence towards the maintenance of world peace.

[Source: Harry S. Truman Library, "Army Press Notes," box 4,



Papers of Eben A. Ayers. Available online via [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/bomb/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1945-08-06&documentid=59&pagenumber=1.](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/bomb/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1945-08-06&documentid=59&pagenumber=1.)]



# 166. Primary Source: Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945)

*Vietnam, which had been colonized by the French and then by the Japanese, declared their independence from colonial rule—particularly the re-imposition of a French colonial regime—in the aftermath of Japan’s defeat in World War II. Proclaimed by Ho Chi Minh in September 1945, Vietnam’s Declaration of Independence reflected back the early promises of the Allies in World War II and even borrowed directly from the American Declaration of Independence.*

“All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: “All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights.”

Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty.



They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes in the North, the Center and the South of Vietnam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being united.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood.

They have fettered public opinion; they have practiced obscurantism against our people.

To weaken our race they have forced us to use opium and alcohol.

In the field of economics, they have fleeced us to the backbone, impoverished our people, and devastated our land.

They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests, and our raw materials. They have monopolized the issuing of bank-notes and the export trade.

They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to a state of extreme poverty.

They have hampered the prospering of our national bourgeoisie; they have mercilessly exploited our workers.

In the autumn of 1940, when the Japanese Fascists violated Indochina's territory to establish new bases in their fight against the Allies, the French imperialists went down on their bended knees and handed over our country to them.

Thus, from that date, our people were subjected to the double yoke of the French and the Japanese. Their sufferings and miseries increased. The result was that from the end of last year to the beginning of this year, from Quang Tri province to the North of Vietnam, more than two million of our fellow-citizens died from starvation. On March 9, the French troops were disarmed by the Japanese. The French colonialists either fled or surrendered showing that not only were they incapable of "protecting" us, but that, in the span of five years, they had twice sold our country to the Japanese.

On several occasions before March 9, the Vietminh League urged the French to ally themselves with it against the Japanese. Instead of



agreeing to this proposal, the French colonialists so intensified their terrorist activities against the Vietminh members that before fleeing they massacred a great number of our political prisoners detained at Yen Bay and Caobang.

Notwithstanding all this, our fellow-citizens have always manifested toward the French a tolerant and humane attitude. Even after the Japanese putsch of March 1945, the Vietminh League helped many Frenchmen to cross the frontier, rescued some of them from Japanese jails, and protected French lives and property.

From the autumn of 1940, our country had in fact ceased to be a French colony and had become a Japanese possession.

After the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies, our whole people rose to regain our national sovereignty and to found the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The truth is that we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French.

The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated. Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. Our people at the same time have overthrown the monarchic regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries. In its place has been established the present Democratic Republic.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France; we repeal all the international obligation that France has so far subscribed to on behalf of Vietnam and we abolish all the special rights the French have unlawfully acquired in our Fatherland.

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country.

We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination



and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.

A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eight years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the Fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country—and in fact is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty.

[Source: Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works* Vol. 3, (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960–62), 17–21. Available online via <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5139/>.]



PART XXVI

POST-WAR PROSPERITY  
AND COLD WAR FEARS,  
1945-1960







# 167. Introduction

*Is This Tomorrow?*, a 1947 comic book, highlights one way that the federal government and some Americans revived popular sentiment in opposition to Communism. The United States and the Soviet Union, allies during World War II, had different visions for the postwar world. As Joseph Stalin, premier of the Soviet Union, tightened his grip on the countries of Eastern Europe, Americans began to fear that it was his goal to spread the Communist revolution throughout the world and make newly independent nations puppets of the Soviet Union. To enlist as many Americans as possible in the fight against Soviet domination, the U.S.

government and purveyors of popular culture churned out propaganda intended to convince average citizens of the dangers posed by the Soviet Union. Artwork such as the cover of *Is This Tomorrow?*, which depicts Russians attacking Americans, including a struggling woman and an African American veteran still wearing his uniform, played upon postwar fears of Communism and of a future war with the Soviet Union. These fears dominated American life following World War II and affected foreign policy, military



*Is This Tomorrow?* warned Americans about the potential horrors of living under a Communist dictatorship. Postwar propaganda such as this comic book, the cover of which showed invading Russians attacking Americans and the U.S. flag in flames, served to drum up fear during the Cold War.



strategy, urban planning, popular culture, and the civil rights movement.

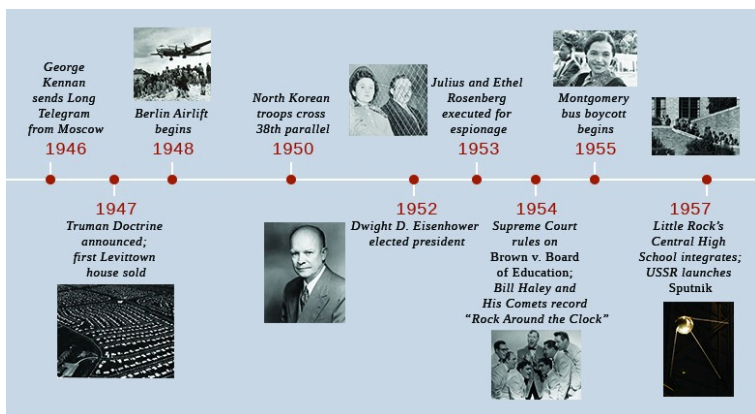


# 168. The Challenges of Peacetime

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the issues that the nation faced during demobilization
- Explain the goals and objectives of the Truman administration
- Evaluate the actions taken by the U.S. government to address the concerns of returning veterans



(credit: "1953": modification of work by Library of Congress)



The decade and a half immediately following the end of World War II was one in which middle- and working-class Americans hoped for a better life than the one they lived before the war. These hopes were tainted by fears of economic hardship, as many who experienced the Great Depression feared a return to economic decline. Others clamored for the opportunity to spend the savings they had accumulated through long hours on the job during the war when consumer goods were rarely available.

African Americans who had served in the armed forces and worked in the defense industry did not wish to return to “normal.” Instead, they wanted the same rights and opportunities that other Americans had. Still other citizens were less concerned with the economy or civil rights; instead, they looked with suspicion at the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe. What would happen now that the United States and the Soviet Union were no longer allies, and the other nations that had long helped maintain a balance of power were left seriously damaged by the war? Harry Truman, president for less than a year when the war ended, was charged with addressing all of these concerns and giving the American people a “fair deal.”

## DEMOBILIZATION AND THE RETURN TO CIVILIAN LIFE

The most immediate task to be completed after World War II was demobilizing the military and reintegrating the veterans into civilian life. In response to popular pressure and concerns over the budget, the United States sought to demobilize its armed forces as quickly as possible. Many servicemen, labeled the “Ohio boys” (Over the Hill in October), threatened to vote Republican if they were not home by Christmas 1946. Understandably, this placed a great deal of pressure



on the still-inexperienced president to shrink the size of the U.S. military.

Not everyone wanted the government to reduce America's military might, however. Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal and Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson warned Truman in October 1945 that an overly rapid demobilization jeopardized the nation's strategic position in the world. While Truman agreed with their assessment, he felt powerless to put a halt to demobilization. In response to mounting political pressure, the government reduced the size of the U.S. military from a high of 12 million in June 1945 to 1.5 million in June 1947—still more troops than the nation ever had in arms during peacetime. Soldiers and sailors were not the only ones dismissed from service. As the war drew to a close, millions of women working the jobs of men who had gone off to fight were dismissed by their employers, often because the demand for war materiel had declined and because government propaganda encouraged them to go home to make way for the returning troops. While most women workers surveyed at the end of the war wished to keep their jobs (75–90 percent, depending on the study), many did in fact leave them. Nevertheless, throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s, women continued to make up approximately one-third of the U.S. labor force.

Readjustment to postwar life was difficult for the returning troops. The U.S. Army estimated that as many as 20 percent of its casualties were psychological. Although many eagerly awaited their return to civilian status, others feared that they would not be able to resume a humdrum existence after the experience of fighting on the front lines. Veterans also worried that they wouldn't find work and that civilian defense workers were better positioned to take advantage of the new jobs opening up in the peacetime economy. Some felt that their wives and children would not welcome their presence, and some children did indeed resent the return of fathers who threatened to disrupt the mother-child household. Those on the home front worried as well. Doctors warned fiancées, wives,



and mothers that soldiers might return with psychological problems that would make them difficult to live with.

## The GI Bill of Rights

Well before the end of the war, Congress had passed one of the most significant and far-reaching pieces of legislation to ease veterans' transition into civilian life: the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, also known as the GI Bill. Every honorably discharged veteran who had seen active duty, but not necessarily combat, was eligible to receive a year's worth of unemployment compensation. This provision not only calmed veterans' fears regarding their ability to support themselves, but it also prevented large numbers of men—as well as some women—from suddenly entering a job market that did not have enough positions for them. Another way that the GI Bill averted a glut in the labor market was by giving returning veterans the opportunity to pursue an education; it paid for tuition at a college or vocational school, and gave them a stipend to live on while they completed their studies.

The result was a dramatic increase in the number of students—especially male ones—enrolled in American colleges and universities. In 1940, only 5.5 percent of American men had a college degree. By 1950, that percentage had increased to 7.3 percent, as more than two million servicemen took advantage of the benefits offered by the GI Bill to



*President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, or GI Bill, on June 22, 1944, just weeks after the Allied invasion of Normandy, France, and more than a year before the end of the war.*



complete college. The numbers continued to grow throughout the 1950s. Upon graduation, these men were prepared for skilled blue-collar or white-collar jobs that paved the way for many to enter the middle class. The creation of a well-educated, skilled labor force helped the U.S. economy as well. Other benefits offered by the GI Bill included low-interest loans to purchase homes or start small businesses.

However, not all veterans were able to take advantage of the GI Bill. African American veterans could use their educational benefits only to attend schools that accepted black students. The approximately nine thousand servicemen and women who were dishonorably discharged because they were gay or lesbian were ineligible for GI Bill benefits. Benefits for some Mexican American veterans, mainly in Texas, were also denied or delayed.

## The Return of the Japanese

While most veterans received assistance to help in their adjustment to postwar life, others returned home to an uncertain future without the promise of government aid to help them resume their prewar lives. Japanese Americans from the West Coast who had been interned during the war also confronted the task of rebuilding their lives. In December 1944, Franklin Roosevelt had declared an end to the forced relocation of Japanese Americans, and as of January 1945, they were free to return to their homes. In many areas, however, neighbors clung to their prejudices and denounced those of Japanese descent as disloyal and dangerous. These feelings had been worsened by wartime propaganda, which often featured horrific accounts of Japanese mistreatment of prisoners, and by the statements of military officers to the effect that the Japanese were inherently savage. Facing such animosity, many Japanese American families chose to move elsewhere. Those who did return often found that in their absence, “friends” and neighbors had sold



possessions that had been left with them for safekeeping. Many homes had been vandalized and farms destroyed. When Japanese Americans reopened their businesses, former customers sometimes boycotted them.

For more on the [experiences of Japanese Americans](#) after internment, read about their return to communities in Oregon after World War II.

## THE FAIR DEAL

Early in his presidency, Truman sought to build on the promises of Roosevelt's New Deal. Besides demobilizing the armed forces and preparing for the homecoming of servicemen and women, he also had to guide the nation through the process of returning to a peacetime economy. To this end, he proposed an ambitious program of social legislation that included establishing a federal minimum wage, expanding Social Security and public housing, and prohibiting child labor. Wartime price controls were retained for some items but removed from others, like meat. In his 1949 inaugural address, Truman referred to his programs as the "Fair Deal," a nod to his predecessor's New Deal. He wanted the Fair Deal to include Americans of color and became the first president to address the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He also took decisive steps towards extending civil rights to African Americans by establishing, by executive order in December 1946, a Presidential Committee on Civil Rights to investigate racial discrimination in the United States. Truman also desegregated the armed forces, again by executive order, in July



1948, overriding many objections that the military was no place for social experimentation.

Congress, however, which was dominated by Republicans and southern conservative Democrats, refused to pass more “radical” pieces of legislation, such as a bill providing for national healthcare. The American Medical Association spent some \$1.5 million to defeat Truman’s healthcare proposal, which it sought to discredit as socialized medicine in order to appeal to Americans’ fear of Communism. The same Congress also refused to make lynching a federal crime or outlaw the poll tax that reduced the access of poor Americans to the ballot box. Congress also rejected a bill that would have made Roosevelt’s Fair Employment Practices Committee, which prohibited racial discrimination by companies doing business with the federal government, permanent. At the same time, they passed many conservative pieces of legislation. For example, the Taft-Hartley Act, which limited the power of unions, became law despite Truman’s veto.

## Section Summary

At the end of World War II, U.S. servicemen and women returned to civilian life, and all hoped the prosperity of the war years would continue. The GI Bill eased many veterans’ return by providing them with unemployment compensation, low-interest loans, and money to further their education; however, African American, Mexican American, and gay veterans were often unable to take advantage of these benefits fully or



at all. Meanwhile, Japanese Americans faced an uphill struggle in their attempts to return to normalcy, and many women who had made significant professional gains in wartime found themselves dismissed from their positions. President Harry Truman attempted to extend Roosevelt's New Deal with his own Fair Deal, which had the goal of improving wages, housing, and healthcare, and protecting the rights of African Americans. Confronted by a Congress dominated by Republicans and southern Democrats, however, Truman was able to achieve only some of his goals.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1049>

### *Review Question*

1. How did the GI Bill help veterans return to civilian life? What were its limitations?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The GI Bill provided returning veterans with a year of unemployment compensation, so they did not have to worry about finding jobs immediately. It allowed



them to receive low-interest loans to buy homes or start businesses, and it paid for tuition for those who wished to attend college or vocational school. However, African American veterans could use their educational benefits only to attend schools that accepted black students, and some Mexican American veterans had difficulty gaining access to their benefits. Also, because those who had received a dishonorable discharge were not eligible, thousands of gay and lesbian servicemen and women who had been dishonorably discharged for their sexual orientation were unable to receive benefits.

## *Glossary*

**Fair Deal** President Harry Truman's program of economic and social reform

**GI Bill** a program that gave substantial benefits to those who served in World War II



# 169. The Cold War

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how and why the Cold War emerged in the wake of World War II
- Describe the steps taken by the U.S. government to oppose Communist expansion in Europe and Asia
- Discuss the government's efforts to root out Communist influences in the United States

As World War II drew to a close, the alliance that had made the United States and the Soviet Union partners in their defeat of the Axis powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—began to fall apart. Both sides realized that their visions for the future of Europe and the world were incompatible. Joseph Stalin, the premier of the Soviet Union, wished to retain hold of Eastern Europe and establish Communist, pro-Soviet governments there, in an effort to both expand Soviet influence and protect the Soviet Union from future invasions. He also sought to bring Communist revolution to Asia and to developing nations elsewhere in the world. The United States wanted to expand its influence as well by protecting or installing democratic governments throughout the world. It sought to combat the influence of the Soviet Union by forming alliances with Asian, African, and Latin American nations, and by helping these countries to establish or expand prosperous, free-market economies. The end of the war left the industrialized nations of Europe and Asia physically devastated and economically exhausted by years of



invasion, battle, and bombardment. With Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and China reduced to shadows of their former selves, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the last two superpowers and quickly found themselves locked in a contest for military, economic, social, technological, and ideological supremacy.

## FROM ISOLATIONISM TO ENGAGEMENT

The United States had a long history of avoiding foreign alliances that might require the commitment of its troops abroad. However, in accepting the realities of the post-World War II world, in which traditional powers like Great Britain or France were no longer strong enough to police the globe, the United States realized that it would have to make a permanent change in its foreign policy, shifting from relative isolation to active engagement.

On assuming the office of president upon the death of Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman was already troubled by Soviet actions in Europe. He disliked the concessions made by Roosevelt at Yalta, which had allowed the Soviet Union to install a Communist government in Poland. At the Potsdam conference, held from July 17 to August 2, 1945, Truman also opposed Stalin's plans to demand large reparations from Germany. He feared the burden that this would impose on Germany might lead to another cycle of German rearmament and aggression—a fear based on that nation's development after World War I.



Although the United States and the Soviet Union did finally reach an agreement at Potsdam, this was the final occasion on which they cooperated for quite some time. Each remained convinced that its own economic and political systems were superior to the other's, and the two superpowers quickly found themselves drawn into conflict. The decades-long struggle between them for



*At the postwar conference in Potsdam, Germany, Harry Truman stands between Joseph Stalin (right) and Clement Atlee (left). Atlee became prime minister of Great Britain, replacing Winston Churchill, while the conference was taking place.*

technological and ideological supremacy became known as the Cold War. So called because it did not include direct military confrontation between Soviet and U.S. troops, the Cold War was fought with a variety of other weapons: espionage and surveillance, political assassinations, propaganda, and the formation of alliances with other nations. It also became an arms race, as both countries competed to build the greatest stockpile of nuclear weapons, and proxy wars were fought on their behalf, primarily by the citizens of poorer nations, such as Korea and Vietnam.

## CONTAINMENT ABROAD

In February 1946, George Kennan, a State Department official stationed at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, sent an eight-thousand-word message to Washington, DC. In what became known as the “Long Telegram,” Kennan maintained that Soviet leaders believed that the only way to protect the Soviet Union was to destroy “rival” nations and their influence over weaker nations. According to Kennan, the Soviet Union was not so much a revolutionary regime



as a totalitarian bureaucracy that was unable to accept the prospect of a peaceful coexistence of the United States and itself. He advised that the best way to thwart Soviet plans for the world was to contain Soviet influence—primarily through economic policy—to those places where it already existed and prevent its political expansion into new areas. This strategy, which came to be known as the policy of containment, formed the basis for U.S. foreign policy and military decision making for more than thirty years.

As Communist governments came to power elsewhere in the world, American policymakers extended their strategy of containment to what became known as the domino theory under the Eisenhower administration: Neighbors to Communist nations, so was the assumption, were likely to succumb to the same allegedly dangerous and infectious ideology. Like dominos toppling one another, entire regions would eventually be controlled by the Soviets. The demand for anti-Communist containment appeared as early as March 1946 in a speech by Winston Churchill, in which he referred to an Iron Curtain that divided Europe into the “free” West and the Communist East controlled by the Soviet Union.

The commitment to containing Soviet expansion made necessary the ability to mount a strong military offense and defense. In pursuit of this goal, the U.S. military was reorganized under the National Security Act of 1947. This act streamlined the government in matters of security by creating the National Security Council and establishing the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to conduct surveillance and espionage in foreign nations. It also created the Department of the Air Force, which was combined with the Departments of the Army and Navy in 1949 to form one Department of Defense.

## The Truman Doctrine

In Europe, the end of World War II witnessed the rise of a number



of internal struggles for control of countries that had been occupied by Nazi Germany. Great Britain occupied Greece as the Nazi regime there collapsed. The British aided the authoritarian government of Greece in its battles against Greek Communists. In March 1947, Great Britain announced that it could no longer afford the cost of supporting government military activities and withdrew from participation in the Greek civil war. Stepping into this power vacuum, the United States announced the Truman Doctrine, which offered support to Greece and Turkey in the form of financial assistance, weaponry, and troops to help train their militaries and bolster their governments against Communism. Eventually, the program was expanded to include any state trying to withstand a Communist takeover. The Truman Doctrine thus became a hallmark of U.S. Cold War policy.

## The Truman Doctrine

In 1947, Great Britain, which had assumed responsibility for the disarming of German troops in Greece at the end of World War II, could no longer afford to provide financial support for the authoritarian Greek government, which was attempting to win a civil war against Greek leftist rebels. President Truman, unwilling to allow a Communist government to come to power there, requested Congress to provide funds for the government of Greece to continue its fight against the rebels. Truman also requested aid for the government of Turkey to fight the forces of Communism in that country. He said:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful



hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as to the East.

The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive.

The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.

If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation.

Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events.

I am confident that the Congress will face these responsibilities squarely.

What role is Truman suggesting that the United States assume in the postwar world? Does the United States still assume this role?

## The Marshall Plan

By 1946, the American economy was growing significantly. At the same time, the economic situation in Europe was disastrous. The war had turned much of Western Europe into a battlefield, and the rebuilding of factories, public transportation systems, and power stations progressed exceedingly slowly. Starvation loomed as a real possibility for many. As a result of these conditions, Communism was making significant inroads in both Italy and France. These concerns led Truman, along with Secretary of State George C. Marshall, to propose to Congress the European Recovery Program, popularly known as the Marshall Plan. Between its implantation in



April 1948 and its termination in 1951, this program gave \$13 billion in economic aid to European nations.

Truman's motivation was economic and political, as well as humanitarian. The plan stipulated that the European nations had to work together in order to receive aid, thus enforcing unity through enticement, while seeking to undercut the political popularity of French and Italian Communists and dissuading moderates from forming coalition governments with them. Likewise, much of the money had to be spent on American goods, boosting the postwar economy of the United States as well as the American cultural presence in Europe. Stalin regarded the program as a form of bribery. The Soviet Union refused to accept aid from the Marshall Plan, even though it could have done so, and forbade the Communist states of Eastern Europe to accept U.S. funds as well. Those states that did accept aid began to experience an economic recovery.

## **George C. Marshall and the Nobel Peace Prize**

The youngest child of a Pennsylvania businessman and Democrat, George C. Marshall chose a military career. He attended the Virginia Military Institute, was a veteran of World War I, and spent the rest of his life either in the military or otherwise in the service of his country, including as President Truman's Secretary of State. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953, the only soldier to ever receive that honor. Below is an excerpt of his remarks as he accepted the award.





*During World War II, George C. Marshall was responsible for expanding the 189,000-member U.S. Army into a modern, fighting force of eight million by 1942. As Secretary of State under Truman, he proposed the European Recovery Program to aid European economies struggling after the war.*

There has been considerable comment over the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to a soldier. I am afraid this does not seem as remarkable to me as it quite evidently appears to others. I know a great deal of the horrors and tragedies of war. Today, as chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission, it is my duty to supervise the construction and maintenance of military cemeteries in many countries overseas, particularly in Western Europe. The cost of war in human lives is constantly spread before me, written neatly in many ledgers whose columns are gravestones. I am deeply moved to find some means or method of avoiding another



calamity of war. Almost daily I hear from the wives, or mothers, or families of the fallen. The tragedy of the aftermath is almost constantly before me.

I share with you an active concern for some practical method for avoiding war. . . . A very strong military posture is vitally necessary today. How long it must continue I am not prepared to estimate, but I am sure that it is too narrow a basis on which to build a dependable, long-enduring peace. The guarantee for a long continued peace will depend on other factors in addition to a moderated military strength, and no less important. Perhaps the most important single factor will be a spiritual regeneration to develop goodwill, faith, and understanding among nations. Economic factors will undoubtedly play an important part. Agreements to secure a balance of power, however disagreeable they may seem, must likewise be considered. And with all these there must be wisdom and the will to act on that wisdom.

What steps did Marshall recommend be taken to maintain a lasting peace? To what extent have today's nations heeded his advice?

## Showdown in Europe

The lack of consensus with the Soviets on the future of Germany led the United States, Great Britain, and France to support joining their respective occupation zones into a single, independent state. In December 1946, they took steps to do so, but the Soviet Union did not wish the western zones of the country to unify under a democratic, pro-capitalist government. The Soviet Union also feared the possibility of a unified West Berlin, located entirely within the Soviet sector. Three days after the western allies authorized the introduction of a new currency in Western Germany—the Deutsche Mark—Stalin ordered all land and water



routes to the western zones of the city Berlin to be cut off in June 1948. Hoping to starve the western parts of the city into submission, the Berlin blockade was also a test of the emerging U.S. policy of containment.

Unwilling to abandon Berlin, the United States, Great Britain, and France began to deliver all needed supplies to West Berlin by air. In April 1949, the three countries joined Canada and eight Western European nations to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an alliance pledging its members to mutual defense in the event of attack. On May 12, 1949, a year and approximately two million tons of supplies later, the Soviets admitted defeat and ended the blockade of Berlin. On May 23, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), consisting of the unified western zones and commonly referred to as West Germany, was formed. The Soviets responded by creating the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany, in October 1949.



(a)



(b)

American C-47 transport planes (a) are loaded with staged supplies at a French airport before taking off for Berlin. Residents of Berlin wait for a U.S. plane (b) carrying needed supplies to land at Tempelhof Airport in the American sector of the city.



## CONTAINMENT AT HOME

In 1949, two incidents severely disrupted American confidence in the ability of the United States to contain the spread of Communism and limit Soviet power in the world. First, on August 29, 1949, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb—no longer did the United States have a monopoly on nuclear power. A few months later, on October 1, 1949, Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Zedong announced the triumph of the Chinese Communists over their Nationalist foes in a civil war that had been raging since 1927. The Nationalist forces, under their leader Chiang Kai-shek, departed for Taiwan in December 1949.

Immediately, there were suspicions that spies had passed bomb-making secrets to the Soviets and that Communist sympathizers in the U.S. State Department had hidden information that might have enabled the United States to ward off the Communist victory in China. Indeed, in February 1950, Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy, a Republican, charged in a speech that the State Department was filled with Communists. Also in 1950, the imprisonment in Great Britain of Klaus Fuchs, a German-born physicist who had worked on the Manhattan Project and was then convicted of passing nuclear secrets to the Soviets, increased American fears. Information given by Fuchs to the British implicated a number of American citizens as well. The most infamous trial of suspected American spies was that of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed in June 1953 despite a lack of evidence against them. Several decades later, evidence was found that Julius, but not Ethel, had in fact given information to the Soviet Union.

Fears that Communists within the United States were jeopardizing the country's security had existed even before the victory of Mao Zedong and the arrest and conviction of the atomic spies. Roosevelt's New Deal and Truman's Fair Deal were often criticized as "socialist," which many mistakenly associated with Communism, and Democrats were often branded Communists by



Republicans. In response, on March 21, 1947, Truman signed Executive Order 9835, which provided the Federal Bureau of Investigation with broad powers to investigate federal employees and identify potential security risks. State and municipal governments instituted their own loyalty boards to find and dismiss potentially disloyal workers.

In addition to loyalty review boards, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), established in 1938 to investigate suspected Nazi sympathizers, after World War II also sought to root out suspected Communists in business, academia, and the media. HUAC was particularly interested in Hollywood because it feared that Communist sympathizers might use motion pictures as pro-Soviet propaganda. Witnesses were subpoenaed and required to testify before the committee; refusal could result in imprisonment. Those who invoked Fifth Amendment protections, or were otherwise suspected of Communist sympathies, often lost their jobs or found themselves on a blacklist, which prevented them from securing employment. Notable artists who were blacklisted in the 1940s and 1950s include composer Leonard Bernstein, novelist Dashiell Hammett, playwright and screenwriter Lillian Hellman, actor and singer Paul Robeson, and musician Artie Shaw.

## TO THE TRENCHES AGAIN

Just as the U.S. government feared the possibility of Communist infiltration of the United States, so too was it alert for signs that Communist forces were on the move elsewhere. The Soviet Union had been granted control of the northern half of the Korean peninsula at the end of World War II, and the United States had control of the southern portion. The Soviets displayed little interest in extending its power into South Korea, and Stalin did not wish to risk confrontation with the United States over Korea. North Korea's leaders, however, wished to reunify the peninsula under Communist



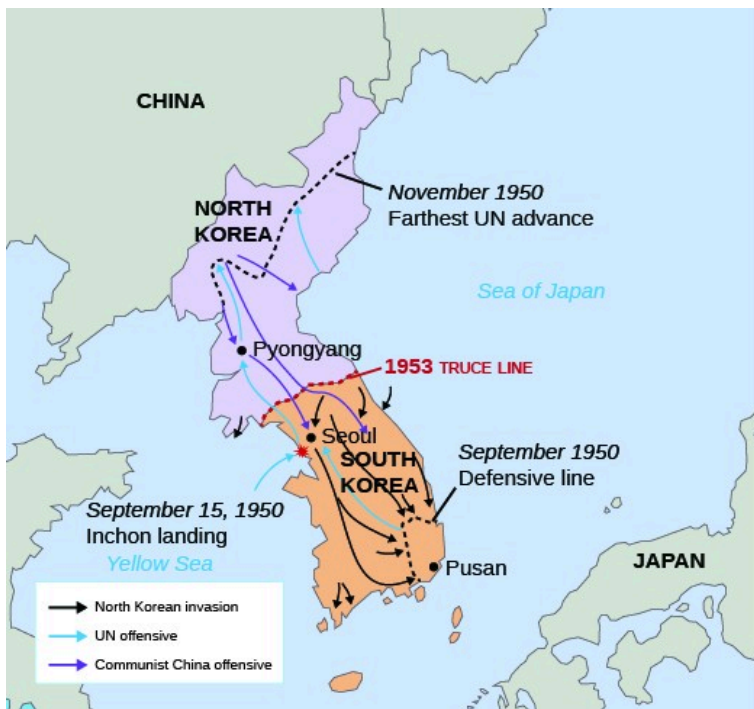
rule. In April 1950, Stalin finally gave permission to North Korea's leader Kim Il Sung to invade South Korea and provided the North Koreans with weapons and military advisors.

On June 25, 1950, troops of the North Korean People's Democratic Army crossed the thirty-eighth parallel, the border between North and South Korea. The first major test of the U.S. policy of containment in Asia had begun, for the domino theory held that a victory by North Korea might lead to further Communist expansion in Asia, in the virtual backyard of the United States' chief new ally in East Asia—Japan. The United Nations (UN), which had been established in 1945, was quick to react. On June 27, the UN Security Council denounced North Korea's actions and called upon UN members to help South Korea defeat the invading forces. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the Soviet Union could have vetoed the action, but it had boycotted UN meetings following the awarding of China's seat on the Security Council to Taiwan instead of to Mao Zedong's People's Republic of China.

On June 27, Truman ordered U.S. military forces into South Korea. They established a defensive line on the far southern part of the Korean peninsula near the town of Pusan. A U.S.-led invasion at Inchon on September 15 halted the North Korean advance and turned it into a retreat. As North Korean forces moved back across the thirty-eighth parallel, UN forces under the command of U.S. General Douglas MacArthur followed. MacArthur's goal was not only to drive the North Korean army out of South Korea but to destroy Communist North Korea as well. At this stage, he had the support of President Truman; however, as UN forces approached the Yalu River, the border between China and North Korea, MacArthur's and Truman's objectives diverged. Chinese premier Zhou Enlai, who had provided supplies and military advisors for North Korea before the conflict began, sent troops into battle to support North Korea and caught U.S. troops by surprise. Following a costly retreat from North Korea's Chosin Reservoir, a swift advance of Chinese and North Korean forces and another invasion of Seoul, MacArthur urged Truman to deploy nuclear weapons against China. Truman,



however, did not wish to risk a broader war in Asia. MacArthur criticized Truman's decision and voiced his disagreement in a letter to a Republican congressman, who subsequently allowed the letter to become public. In April 1951, Truman accused MacArthur of insubordination and relieved him of his command. The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed, calling the escalation MacArthur had called for "the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy." Nonetheless, the public gave MacArthur a hero's welcome in New York with the largest ticker tape parade in the nation's history.



After the initial invasion of South Korea by the North Korean People's Democratic Army, the United Nations established a defensive line in the southern part of the country. The landing at Incheon in September reversed the tide of the war and allowed UN forces under General Douglas MacArthur to retake the city of Seoul, which had fallen to North Korean troops in the early days of the war.



By July 1951, the UN forces had recovered from the setbacks earlier in the year and pushed North Korean and Chinese forces back across the thirty-eighth parallel, and peace talks began. However, combat raged on for more than two additional years. The primary source of contention was the fate of prisoners of war. The Chinese and North Koreans insisted that their prisoners be returned to them, but many of these men did not wish to be repatriated. Finally, an armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953. A border between North and South Korea, one quite close to the original thirty-eighth parallel line, was agreed upon. A demilitarized zone between the two nations was established, and both sides agreed that prisoners of war would be allowed to choose whether to be returned to their homelands. Five million people died in the three-year conflict. Of these, around 36,500 were U.S. soldiers; a majority were Korean civilians.

Read [firsthand accounts](#) of U.S. soldiers who served in Korea, including prisoners of war.

As the war in Korea came to an end, so did one of the most frightening anti-Communist campaigns in the United States. After charging the U.S. State Department with harboring Communists, Senator Joseph McCarthy had continued to make similar accusations against other government agencies.

Prominent Republicans like Senator Robert Taft and Congressman Richard



Senator Joseph McCarthy (left) consults with Roy Cohn (right) during the Army-McCarthy hearings. Cohn, a lawyer who worked for McCarthy, was responsible for investigating State Department libraries overseas for “subversive” books.

Nixon regarded McCarthy as an asset who targeted Democratic



politicians, and they supported his actions. In 1953, as chair of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, McCarthy investigated the Voice of America, which broadcast news and pro-U.S. propaganda to foreign countries, and the State Department's overseas libraries. After an aborted effort to investigate Protestant clergy, McCarthy turned his attention to the U.S. Army. This proved to be the end of the senator's political career. From April to June 1954, the Army-McCarthy Hearings were televised, and the American public, able to witness his use of intimidation and innuendo firsthand, rejected McCarthy's approach to rooting out Communism in the United States. In December 1954, the U.S. Senate officially condemned his actions with a censure, ending his prospects for political leadership.

One particularly heinous aspect of the hunt for Communists in the United States, likened by playwright Arthur Miller to the witch hunts of old, was its effort to root out gay men and lesbians employed by the government. Many anti-Communists, including McCarthy, believed that gay men, referred to by Senator Everett Dirksen as "lavender lads," were morally weak and thus were particularly likely to betray their country. Many also believed that lesbians and gay men were prone to being blackmailed by Soviet agents because of their sexual orientation, which at the time was regarded by psychiatrists as a form of mental illness.

## Section Summary

Joy at the ending of World War II was quickly replaced by fears of conflict with the Soviet Union. The Cold War



heated up as both the United States and Soviet Union struggled for world dominance. Fearing Soviet expansion, the United States committed itself to assisting countries whose governments faced overthrow by Communist forces and gave billions of dollars to war-torn Europe to help it rebuild. While the United States achieved victory in its thwarting of Soviet attempts to cut Berlin off from the West, the nation was less successful in its attempts to prevent Communist expansion in Korea. The development of atomic weapons by the Soviet Union and the arrest of Soviet spies in the United States and Britain roused fears in the United States that Communist agents were seeking to destroy the nation from within. Loyalty board investigations and hearings before House and Senate committees attempted to root out Soviet sympathizers in the federal government and in other sectors of American society, including Hollywood and the military.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1050>

### *Review Question*

1. What was agreed to at the armistice talks between North and South Korea?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The border between North and South Korea was established close to the original line along the thirty-eighth parallel, with a demilitarized zone serving as a buffer. Prisoners of war were free to decide whether they wanted to be returned home.

## *Glossary*

**blacklist** a list of people suspected of having Communist sympathies who were denied work as a result

**Cold War** the prolonged period of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, based on ideological conflicts and competition for military, economic, social, and technological superiority, and marked by surveillance and espionage, political assassinations, an arms race, attempts to secure alliances with developing nations, and proxy wars

**containment** the U.S. policy that sought to limit the expansion of Communism abroad

**domino theory** the theory that if Communism made inroads in one nation, surrounding nations would also succumb one by one, like a chain of dominos toppling one another

**Iron Curtain** a term coined by Winston Churchill to refer



to portions of Eastern Europe that the Soviet Union had incorporated into its sphere of influence and that no longer were free to manage their own affairs

**Marshall Plan** a program giving billions of dollars of U.S. aid to European countries to prevent them from turning to Communism



## 170. Video: The Cold War

This videos teaches you about the Cold War, which was the decades long conflict between the USA and the USSR. The Cold War was called cold because of the lack of actual fighting, but this is inaccurate. There was plenty of fighting, from Korea to Viet Nam to Afghanistan, but we'll get into that stuff next week. This week we'll talk about how the Cold War started. In short it grew out of World War II. Basically, the Soviets occupied eastern Europe, and the US supported western Europe. This setup would spill across the world, with client states on both sides.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=211#oembed-1>



# 171. Video: The Cold War in Asia

This video teaches you about the Cold War as it unfolded in Asia. The Cold War was occasionally hot, and a lot of that heat was generated in Asia. This is starting to sound weird with the hot/cold thing, so let's just say that the United States struggle against communist expansion escalated to full-blown, boots on the ground war in Korea and Vietnam. In both of these cases, the United States sent soldiers to intervene in civil wars that it looked like communists might win. That's a bit of a simplification, but this video will explain it all to you.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=212#oembed-1>



# 172. The American Dream

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe President Dwight D. Eisenhower's domestic and foreign policies
- Discuss gender roles in the 1950s
- Discuss the growth of the suburbs and the effect of suburbanization on American society

Against the backdrop of the Cold War, Americans dedicated themselves to building a peaceful and prosperous society after the deprivation and instability of the Great Depression and World War II. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the general who led the United States to victory in Europe in 1945, proved to be the perfect president for the new era. Lacking strong conservative positions, he steered a middle path between conservatism and liberalism, and presided over a peacetime decade of economic growth and social conformity. In foreign affairs, Eisenhower's New Look policy simultaneously expanded the nation's nuclear arsenal and prevented the expansion of the defense budget for conventional forces.

## **WE LIKE IKE**

After Harry Truman declined to run again for the presidency, the



election of 1952 emerged as a contest between the Democratic nominee, Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson, and Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had directed American forces in Europe during World War II. Eisenhower campaigned largely on a promise to end the war in Korea, a conflict the public had grown weary of fighting. He also vowed to fight Communism both at home and abroad, a commitment he demonstrated by choosing as his running mate Richard M. Nixon, a congressman who had made a name for himself by pursuing Communists, notably former State Department employee and suspected Soviet agent Alger Hiss.

In 1952, Eisenhower supporters enthusiastically proclaimed “We Like Ike,” and Eisenhower defeated Stevenson by winning 54 percent of the popular vote and 87 percent of the electoral vote. When he assumed office in 1953, Eisenhower employed a leadership style he had developed during his years of military service. He was calm and willing to delegate authority regarding domestic affairs to his cabinet members, allowing him to focus his own efforts on foreign policy. Unlike many earlier presidents, such

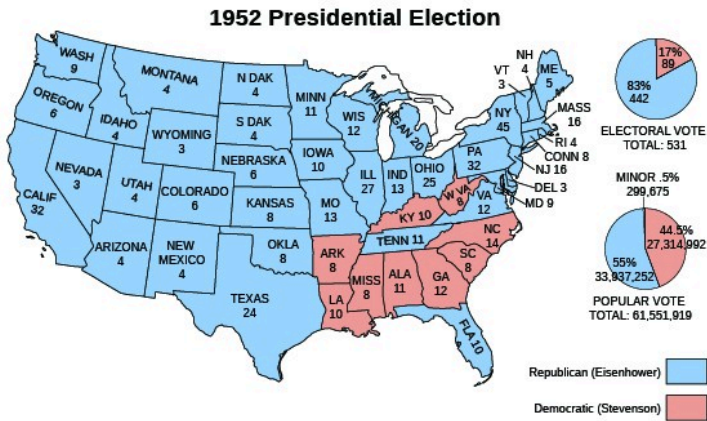


*Dwight D. Eisenhower was the perfect presidential candidate in 1952. He had never before run for office or even cast a vote, and thus had no political record to be challenged or criticized.*

as Harry Truman, Eisenhower was largely nonpartisan and consistently sought a middle ground between liberalism and conservatism. He strove to balance the federal budget, which appealed to conservative Republicans, but retained much of the New Deal and even expanded Social Security. He maintained high levels of defense spending but, in his farewell speech in 1961, warned about the growth of the military-industrial complex, the matrix of



relationships between officials in the Department of Defense and executives in the defense industry who all benefited from increases in defense spending. He disliked the tactics of Joseph McCarthy but did not oppose him directly, preferring to remain above the fray. He saw himself as a leader called upon to do his best for his country, not as a politician engaged in a contest for advantage over rivals.



The above map shows the resounding victory of Dwight D. Eisenhower over Adlai Stevenson in the 1952 election. Stevenson carried only the South, where whites had voted for Democratic Party candidates since the time of the Civil War.

In keeping with his goal of a balanced budget, Eisenhower switched the emphasis in defense from larger conventional forces to greater stockpiles of nuclear weapons. His New Look strategy embraced nuclear “massive retaliation,” a plan for nuclear response to a first Soviet strike so devastating that the attackers would not be able to respond. Some labeled this approach “Mutually Assured Destruction” or MAD.

Part of preparing for a possible war with the Soviet Union was informing the American public what to do in the event of a nuclear attack. The government provided instructions for building and



equipping bomb shelters in the basement or backyard, and some cities constructed municipal shelters. Schools purchased dog tags to help identify students in the aftermath of an attack and showed children instructional films telling them what to do if atomic bombs were dropped on the city where they lived.

## **“A Guide for Surviving Nuclear War”**

To prepare its citizens for the possibility of nuclear war, in 1950, the U.S. government published and distributed informative pamphlets such as “A Guide for Surviving Nuclear War” excerpted here.

Just like fire bombs and ordinary high explosives, atomic weapons cause most of their death and damage by blast and heat. So first let's look at a few things you can do to escape these two dangers.

Even if you have only a second's warning, there is one important thing you can do to lessen your chances of injury by blast: Fall flat on your face.

More than half of all wounds are the result of being bodily tossed about or being struck by falling and flying objects. If you lie down flat, you are least likely to be thrown about. If you have time to pick a good spot, there is less chance of your being struck by flying glass and other things.

If you are inside a building, the best place to flatten out is close against the cellar wall. If you haven't time to get down there, lie down along an inside wall, or duck under a bed or table. . . .

If caught out-of-doors, either drop down alongside the base of a good substantial building—avoid flimsy, wooden ones likely to be blown over on top of you—or else jump in any handy ditch or gutter.

When you fall flat to protect yourself from a bombing,



don't look up to see what is coming. Even during the daylight hours, the flash from a bursting A-bomb can cause several moments of blindness, if you're facing that way. To prevent it, bury your face in your arms and hold it there for 10 to 12 seconds after the explosion. . . .

If you work in the open, always wear full-length, loose-fitting, light-colored clothes in time of emergency. Never go around with your sleeves rolled up. Always wear a hat—the brim could save you a serious face burn.

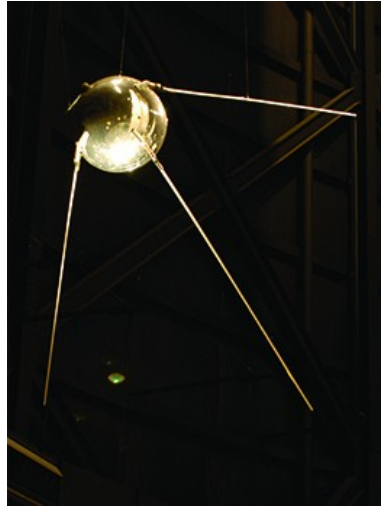
What do you think was the purpose of these directions? Do you think they could actually help people survive an atomic bomb blast? If not, why publish such booklets?

View this [short instructional film](#) made in 1951 that teaches elementary school children what to do in the event an atomic bomb is dropped. Why do you think officials tried to convey the message that a nuclear attack was survivable?

Government and industry allocated enormous amounts of money to the research and development of more powerful weapons. This investment generated rapid strides in missile technology as well as increasingly sensitive radar. Computers that could react more quickly than humans and thereby shoot down speeding missiles were also investigated. Many scientists on both sides of the Cold War, including captured Germans such as rocket engineer Werner von Braun, worked on these devices. An early success for the West came in 1950, when Alan Turing, a British mathematician who had broken Germany's Enigma code during World War II, created a machine that mimicked human thought. His discoveries led scientists to consider the possibility of developing true artificial intelligence.



However, the United States often feared that the Soviets were making greater strides in developing technology with potential military applications. This was especially true following the Soviet Union's launch of *Sputnik*, the first manmade satellite, in October 1957. In September 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, which pumped over \$775 million into educational programs over four years, especially those programs that focused on math and science. Congressional appropriations to the National Science Foundation also increased by \$100 million in a single year, from \$34 million in 1958 to \$134 million in 1959. One consequence of this increased funding was the growth of science and engineering programs at American universities.



*The launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik frightened many in the United States, who feared that Soviet technology had surpassed their own. To calm these fears, Americans domesticated Sputnik, creating children's games based on it and using its shape as a decorative motif.*

In the diplomatic sphere, Eisenhower pushed Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to take a firmer stance against the Soviets to reassure European allies of continued American support. At the same time, keenly sensing that the stalemate in Korea had cost Truman his popularity, Eisenhower worked to avoid being drawn into foreign wars. Thus, when the French found themselves fighting Vietnamese Communists for control of France's former colony of Indochina, Eisenhower provided money but not troops. Likewise, the United States took no steps when Hungary attempted to break away from Soviet domination in 1956. The United States also refused to be drawn in when Great Britain, France, and Israel invaded the



Suez Canal Zone following Egypt's nationalization of the canal in 1956. Indeed, Eisenhower, wishing to avoid conflict with the Soviet Union, threatened to impose economic sanctions on the invading countries if they did not withdraw.

## SUBURBANIZATION

Although the Eisenhower years were marked by fear of the Soviet Union and its military might, they were also a time of peace and prosperity. Even as many Americans remained mired in poverty, many others with limited economic opportunities, like African Americans or union workers, were better off financially in the 1950s and rose into the ranks of the middle class. Wishing to build the secure life that the Great Depression had deprived their parents of, young men and women married in record numbers and purchased homes where they could start families of their own. In 1940, the rate of homeownership in the United States was 43.6 percent. By 1960, it was almost 62 percent. Many of these newly purchased homes had been built in the new suburban areas that began to encircle American cities after the war. Although middle-class families had begun to move to the suburbs beginning in the nineteenth century, suburban growth accelerated rapidly after World War II.

Several factors contributed to this development. During World War II, the United States had suffered from a housing shortage, especially in cities with shipyards or large defense plants. Now that the war was over, real estate developers and contractors rushed to alleviate the scarcity. Unused land on the fringes of American cities provided the perfect place for new housing, which attracted not only the middle class, which had long sought homes outside the crowded cities, but also blue-collar workers who took advantage of the low-interest mortgages offered by the GI Bill.

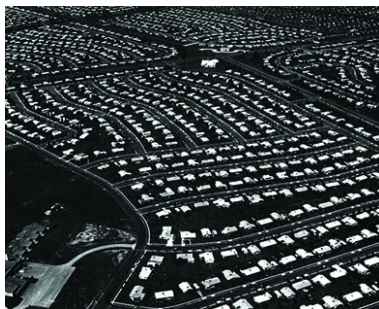
An additional factor was the use of prefabricated construction techniques pioneered during World War II, which allowed houses



complete with plumbing, electrical wiring, and appliances to be built and painted in a day. Employing these methods, developers built acres of inexpensive tract housing throughout the country. One of the first developers to take advantage of this method was William Levitt, who purchased farmland in Nassau County, Long Island, in 1947 and built thousands of prefabricated houses. The new community was named Levittown.

Levitt's houses cost only \$8,000 and could be bought with little or no down payment. The first day they were offered for sale, more than one thousand were purchased. Levitt went on to build similar developments, also called Levittown, in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. As developers around the country rushed to emulate him, the name Levittown became synonymous with suburban tract housing, in which entire neighborhoods were built to either a single plan or a mere handful of designs. The houses were so similar that workers told of coming home late at night and walking into the wrong one. Levittown homes were similar in other ways as well; most were owned by white families. Levitt used restrictive language in his agreements with potential homeowners to ensure that only whites would live in his communities.

In the decade between 1950 and 1960, the suburbs grew by 46 percent. The transition from urban to suburban life exerted profound effects on both the economy and society. For example, fifteen of the largest U.S. cities saw their tax bases shrink significantly in the postwar period, and the apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives shifted to the suburbs and away from urban areas.



*This aerial view of Levittown, Pennsylvania, reveals acres of standardized homes. The roads were curved to prevent cars from speeding through the residential community that was home to many young families.*



The development of the suburbs also increased reliance on the automobile for transportation. Suburban men drove to work in nearby cities or, when possible, were driven to commuter rail stations by their wives. In the early years of suburban development, before schools, parks, and supermarkets were built, access to an automobile was crucial, and the pressure on families to purchase a second one was strong. As families rushed to purchase them, the annual production of passenger cars leaped from 2.2 million to 8 million between 1946 and 1955, and by 1960, about 20 percent of suburban families owned two cars. The growing number of cars on the road changed consumption patterns, and drive-in and drive-through convenience stores, restaurants, and movie theaters began to dot the landscape. The first McDonalds opened in San Bernardino, California, in 1954 to cater to drivers in a hurry.

As drivers jammed highways and small streets in record numbers, cities and states rushed to build additional roadways and ease congestion. To help finance these massive construction efforts, states began taxing gasoline, and the federal government provided hundreds of thousands of dollars for the construction of the interstate highway system. The resulting construction projects, designed to make it easier for suburbanites to commute to and from cities, often destroyed urban working-class neighborhoods. Increased funding for highway construction also left less



*In the late 1940s, a network of newly constructed highways connected suburban Long Island with Manhattan. The nation's new road network also served a military purpose; interstate highways made it easier to deploy troops in the event of a national emergency.*



money for public transportation, making it impossible for those who could not afford automobiles to live in the suburbs.

## THE ORGANIZATION MAN

As the government poured money into the defense industry and into universities that conducted research for the government, the economy boomed. The construction and automobile industries employed thousands, as did the industries they relied upon: steel, oil and gasoline refining, rubber, and lumber. As people moved into new homes, their purchases of appliances, carpeting, furniture, and home decorations spurred growth in other industries. The building of miles of roads also employed thousands. Unemployment was low, and wages for members of both the working and middle classes were high.

Following World War II, the majority of white Americans were members of the middle class, based on such criteria as education, income, and home ownership. Even most blue-collar families could afford such elements of a middle-class lifestyle as new cars, suburban homes, and regular vacations. Most African Americans, however, were not members of the middle class. In 1950, the median income for white families was \$20,656, whereas for black families it was \$11,203. By 1960, when the average white family earned \$28,485 a year, blacks still lagged behind at \$15,786; nevertheless, this represented a more than 40 percent increase in African American income in the space of a decade.

While working-class men found jobs in factories and on construction crews, those in the middle class often worked for corporations that, as a result of government spending, had grown substantially during World War II and were still getting larger. Such corporations, far too large to allow managers to form personal relationships with all of their subordinates, valued conformity to company rules and standards above all else. In his best-selling book



*The Organization Man*, however, William H. Whyte criticized the notion that conformity was the best path to success and self-fulfillment.

Conformity was still the watchword of suburban life: Many neighborhoods had rules mandating what types of clotheslines could be used and prohibited residents from parking their cars on the street. Above all, conforming to societal norms meant marrying young and having children. In the post-World War II period, marriage rates rose; the average age at first marriage dropped to twenty-three for men and twenty for women. Between 1946 and 1964, married couples also gave birth to the largest generation in U.S. history to date; this baby boom resulted in the cohort known as the baby boomers. Conformity also required that the wives of both working- and middle-class men stay home and raise children instead of working for wages outside the home. Most conformed to this norm, at least while their children were young. Nevertheless, 40 percent of women with young children and half of women with older children sought at least part-time employment. They did so partly out of necessity and partly to pay for the new elements of “the good life”—second cars, vacations, and college education for their children.

The children born during the baby boom were members of a more privileged generation than their parents had been. Entire industries sprang up to cater to their need for clothing, toys, games, books, and breakfast cereals. For the first time in U.S. history, attending high school was an experience shared by the majority, regardless of race or region. As the baby boomers grew into adolescence, marketers realized that they not only controlled large amounts of disposable income earned at part-time jobs, but they exerted a great deal of influence over their parents’ purchases as well. Madison Avenue began to appeal to teenage interests. Boys yearned for cars, and girls of all ethnicities wanted boyfriends who had them. New fashion magazines for adolescent girls, such as *Seventeen*, advertised the latest clothing and cosmetics, and teen romance magazines, like *Copper Romance*, a publication for young African



American women, filled drugstore racks. The music and movie industries also altered their products to appeal to affluent adolescents who were growing tired of parental constraints.

## Section Summary

In 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower became president of the United States. Fiscally conservative but ideologically moderate, he sought to balance the budget while building a strong system of national defense. This defense policy led to a greater emphasis on the possible use of nuclear weapons in any confrontation with the Soviet Union. Committed to maintaining peace, however, Eisenhower avoided engaging the United States in foreign conflicts; during his presidency, the economy boomed. Young Americans married in record numbers, moved to the growing suburbs, and gave birth to the largest generation to date in U.S. history. As middle-class adults, they conformed to the requirements of corporate jobs and suburban life, while their privileged children enjoyed a consumer culture tailored to their desires.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1051>



## *Review Question*

1. How did suburbanization help the economy?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The construction of houses meant more work for people in the construction trades, including plumbers and electricians, and for those who worked in the lumber and appliance industries. The growth of the suburbs also led to a boom in the manufacture and sale of automobiles, which, in turn, created jobs for those in the steel, rubber, and oil industries.

## *Glossary*

**baby boom** a marked increase in the U.S. birthrate during 1946–1964

**Levittowns** suburban housing developments consisting of acres of mass-produced homes

**massive retaliation** a defense strategy, sometimes called “mutually assured destruction” or MAD, adopted by



Eisenhower that called for launching a large-scale nuclear attack on the Soviet Union in response to a first Soviet strike at the United States

**military-industrial complex** the matrix of relationships between officials in the Defense Department and executives in the defense industry who all benefited from increases in defense spending

**Sputnik** the first manmade orbital satellite, launched by the Soviet Union in October 1957



# 173. Popular Culture and Mass Media

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe Americans' different responses to rock and roll music
- Discuss the way contemporary movies and television reflected postwar American society

With a greater generational consciousness than previous generations, the baby boomers sought to define and redefine their identities in numerous ways. Music, especially rock and roll, reflected their desire to rebel against adult authority. Other forms of popular culture, such as movies and television, sought to entertain, while reinforcing values such as religious faith, patriotism, and conformity to societal norms.

## ROCKING AROUND THE CLOCK

In the late 1940s, some white country musicians began to experiment with the rhythms of the blues, a decades-old musical genre of rural southern blacks. This experimentation led to the creation of a new musical form known as rockabilly, and by the



1950s, rockabilly had developed into rock and roll. Rock and roll music celebrated themes such as young love and freedom from the oppression of middle-class society. It quickly grew in favor among American teens, thanks largely to the efforts of disc jockey Alan Freed, who named and popularized the music by playing it on the radio in Cleveland, where he also organized the first rock and roll concert, and later in New York.

The theme of rebellion against authority, present in many rock and roll songs, appealed to teens. In 1954, Bill Haley and His Comets provided youth with an anthem for their rebellion—"Rock Around the Clock." The song, used in the 1955 movie *Blackboard Jungle* about a white teacher at a troubled inner-city high school, seemed to be calling for teens to declare their independence from adult control.



(a)



(b)

The band Bill Haley and His Comets (a) was among the first to launch the new genre of rock and roll. Their hit song "Rock Around the Clock" supposedly caused some teens to break into violent behavior when they heard it. Chuck Berry (b) was a performer who combined rhythm and blues and rock and roll. He dazzled crowds with guitar solos and electrifying performances.

Haley illustrated how white artists could take musical motifs from the African American community and achieve mainstream success. Teen heartthrob Elvis Presley rose to stardom doing the same. Thus, besides encouraging a feeling of youthful rebellion, rock and roll



also began to tear down color barriers, as white youths sought out African American musicians such as Chuck Berry and Little Richard.

While youth had found an outlet for their feelings and concerns, parents were much less enthused about rock and roll and the values it seemed to promote. Many regarded the music as a threat to American values. When Elvis Presley appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, a popular television variety program, the camera deliberately focused on his torso and did not show his swiveling hips or legs shaking in time to the music. Despite adults' dislike of the genre, or perhaps because of it, more than 68 percent of the music played on the radio in 1956 was rock and roll.

## HOLLYWOOD ON THE DEFENSIVE

At first, Hollywood encountered difficulties in adjusting to the post-World War II environment. Although domestic audiences reached a record high in 1946 and the war's end meant expanding international markets too, the groundwork for the eventual dismantling of the traditional studio system was laid in 1948, with a landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court. Previously, film studios had owned their own movie theater chains in which they exhibited the films they produced; however, in *United States v. Paramount Pictures, Inc.*, this vertical integration of the industry—the complete control by one firm of the production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures—was deemed a violation of antitrust laws.



The HUAC hearings also targeted Hollywood. When Senator McCarthy called eleven “unfriendly witnesses” to testify before Congress about Communism in the film industry in October 1947, only playwright Bertolt Brecht answered questions. The other ten, who refused to testify, were cited for contempt of Congress on November 24. The next day, film executives declared that the so-called “Hollywood Ten” would no



*One of the original Hollywood Ten, director Edward Dmytryk publicly announced he had once been a Communist and, in April 1951, answered questions and “named names” before the House Committee on Un-American Activities.*

longer be employed in the industry until they had sworn they were not Communists. Eventually, more than three hundred actors, screenwriters, directors, musicians, and other entertainment professionals were placed on the industry blacklist. Some never worked in Hollywood again; others directed films or wrote screenplays under assumed names.

Watch a [1953 episode of a popular television show](#) from the 1950s, *I Led Three Lives*, the highly fictionalized story of a member of a Communist organization who is also an FBI informant.

Hollywood reacted aggressively to these various challenges. Filmmakers tried new techniques, like CinemaScope and Cinerama, which allowed movies to be shown on large screens and in 3-D. Audiences were drawn to movies not because of gimmicks, however, but because of the stories they told. Dramas and romantic comedies continued to be popular fare for adults, and, to appeal to teens,



studios produced large numbers of horror films and movies starring music idols such as Elvis. Many films took espionage, a timely topic, as their subject matter, and science fiction hits such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, about a small town whose inhabitants fall prey to space aliens, played on audience fears of both Communist invasion and nuclear technology.

## THE TRIUMPH OF TELEVISION

By far the greatest challenge to Hollywood, however, came from the relatively new medium of television. Although the technology had been developed in the late 1920s, through much of the 1940s, only a fairly small audience of the wealthy had access to it. As a result, programming was limited. With the post-World War II economic boom, all this changed. Where there had been only 178,000 televisions in homes in 1948, by 1955, over three-quarters of a million U.S. households, about half of all homes, had television.

Various types of programs were broadcast on the handful of major networks: situation comedies, variety programs, game shows, soap operas, talk shows, medical dramas, adventure series, cartoons, and police procedurals. Many comedies presented an idealized image of white suburban family life: Happy housewife mothers, wise fathers, and mischievous but not dangerously rebellious children were constants on shows like *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father*



*An American family relaxes in front of their television set in 1958. Many gathered not only to watch the programming but also to eat dinner. The marketing of small folding tray tables and frozen “TV dinners” encouraged such behavior.*



*Knows Best* in the late 1950s. These shows also reinforced certain perspectives on the values of individualism and family—values that came to be redefined as “American” in opposition to alleged Communist collectivism. Westerns, which stressed unity in the face of danger and the ability to survive in hostile environments, were popular too. Programming designed specifically for children began to emerge with shows such as *Captain Kangaroo*, *Romper Room*, and *The Mickey Mouse Club* designed to appeal to members of the baby boom.

## Section Summary

Young Americans in the postwar period had more disposable income and enjoyed greater material comfort than their forebears. These factors allowed them to devote more time and money to leisure activities and the consumption of popular culture. Rock and roll, which drew from African American roots in the blues, embraced themes popular among teenagers, such as young love and rebellion against authority. At the same time, traditional forms of entertainment, such as motion pictures, came under increasing competition from a relatively new technology, television.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1052>



### *Review Question*

1. What challenges did Hollywood face in the 1950s?

### *Review Question*

1. Antitrust lawsuits deprived studios of their theaters, and the careers of many actors, directors, and screenwriters were destroyed by Senator McCarthy's blacklist of suspected Communists. Meanwhile, the new technology of television drew audiences away from the movies by providing convenient at-home entertainment.

### *Glossary*

**rock and roll** a musical form popular among the baby boomers that encompassed styles ranging from country to blues, and embraced themes such as youthful rebellion and love



# 174. The African American Struggle for Civil Rights

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how Presidents Truman and Eisenhower addressed civil rights issues
- Discuss efforts by African Americans to end discrimination and segregation
- Describe southern whites' response to the civil rights movement

In the aftermath of World War II, African Americans began to mount organized resistance to racially discriminatory policies in force throughout much of the United States. In the South, they used a combination of legal challenges and grassroots activism to begin dismantling the racial segregation that had stood for nearly a century following the end of Reconstruction. Community activists and civil rights leaders targeted racially discriminatory housing practices, segregated transportation, and legal requirements that African Americans and whites be educated separately. While many of these challenges were successful, life did not necessarily improve for African Americans. Hostile whites fought these changes in any way they could, including by resorting to violence.



## EARLY VICTORIES

During World War II, many African Americans had supported the “Double-V Campaign,” which called on them to defeat foreign enemies while simultaneously fighting against segregation and discrimination at home. After World War II ended, many returned home to discover that, despite their sacrifices, the United States was not willing to extend them any greater rights than they had enjoyed before the war. Particularly rankling was the fact that although African American veterans were legally entitled to draw benefits under the GI Bill, discriminatory practices prevented them from doing so. For example, many banks would not give them mortgages if they wished to buy homes in predominantly African American neighborhoods, which banks often considered too risky an investment. However, African Americans who attempted to purchase homes in white neighborhoods often found themselves unable to do so because of real estate covenants that prevented owners from selling their property to blacks. Indeed, when a black family purchased a Levittown house in 1957, they were subjected to harassment and threats of violence.

For a look at the [experiences of an African American family](#) that tried to move to a white suburban community, view the 1957 documentary *Crisis in Levittown*.

The postwar era, however, saw African Americans make greater use of the courts to defend their rights. In 1944, an African American woman, Irene Morgan, was arrested in Virginia for refusing to give up her seat on an interstate bus and sued to have her conviction overturned. In *Morgan v. the Commonwealth of Virginia* in 1946, the

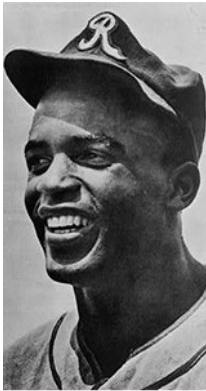


U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the conviction should be overturned because it violated the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution. This victory emboldened some civil rights activists to launch the Journey of Reconciliation, a bus trip taken by eight African American men and eight white men through the states of the Upper South to test the South's enforcement of the *Morgan* decision.

Other victories followed. In 1948, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that courts could not enforce real estate covenants that restricted the purchase or sale of property based on race. In 1950, the NAACP brought a case before the U.S. Supreme Court that they hoped would help to undermine the concept of "separate but equal" as espoused in the 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which gave legal sanction to segregated school systems. *Sweatt v. Painter* was a case brought by Herman Marion Sweatt, who sued the University of Texas for denying him admission to its law school because state law prohibited integrated education. Texas attempted to form a separate law school for African Americans only, but in its decision on the case, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected this solution, holding that the separate school provided neither equal facilities nor "intangibles," such as the ability to form relationships with other future lawyers, that a professional school should provide.

Not all efforts to enact desegregation required the use of the courts, however. On April 15, 1947, Jackie Robinson started for the Brooklyn Dodgers, playing first base. He was the first African American to play baseball in the National League, breaking the color barrier. Although African Americans had their own baseball teams in the Negro Leagues, Robinson opened the gates for them to play in direct competition with white players in the major leagues. Other African American athletes also began to challenge the segregation of American sports. At the 1948 Summer Olympics, Alice Coachman, an African American, was the only American woman to take a gold medal in the games. These changes, while symbolically significant, were mere cracks in the wall of segregation.





(a)



(b)

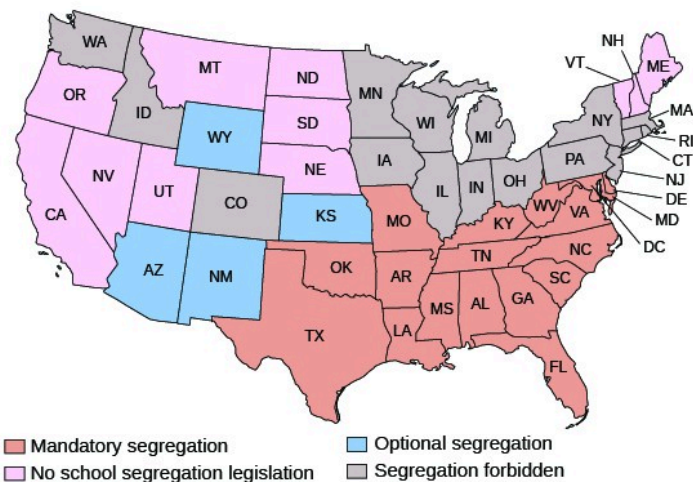
Baseball legend Jackie Robinson (a) was active in the civil rights movement. He served on the NAACP's board of directors and helped to found an African American-owned bank. Alice Coachman (b), who competed in track and field at Tuskegee University, was the first black woman to win an Olympic gold medal.

## DESEGREGATION AND INTEGRATION

Until 1954, racial segregation in education was not only legal but was required in seventeen states and permissible in several others. Utilizing evidence provided in sociological studies conducted by Kenneth Clark and Gunnar Myrdal, however, Thurgood Marshall, then chief counsel for the NAACP, successfully argued the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* before the U.S. Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Earl Warren. Marshall showed that the practice of segregation in public schools made African American students feel inferior. Even if the facilities provided were equal in nature, the Court noted in its decision, the very fact that some students were separated from others on the basis of their race made segregation unconstitutional.



## U.S. School Segregation prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*



This map shows those states in which racial segregation in public education was required by law before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In 1960, four years later, fewer than 10 percent of southern African American students attended the same schools as white students.

## Thurgood Marshall on Fighting Racism

As a law student in 1933, Thurgood Marshall was recruited by his mentor Charles Hamilton Houston to assist in gathering information for the defense of a black man in Virginia accused of killing two white women. His continued close association with Houston led Marshall to aggressively defend blacks in the court system and to use the courts as the weapon by which equal rights might be extracted from the U.S. Constitution and a white racist system. Houston also suggested that it would be important to establish legal precedents regarding the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of separate but equal.



By 1938, Marshall had become “Mr. Civil Rights” and formally organized the NAACP’s Legal Defense and Education Fund in 1940 to garner the resources to take on cases to break the racist justice system of America. A direct result of Marshall’s energies and commitment was his 1940 victory in a Supreme Court case, *Chambers v. Florida*, which held that confessions obtained by violence and torture were inadmissible in a court of law. His most well-known case was *Brown v. Board*



*In 1956, NAACP leaders (from left to right) Henry L. Moon, Roy Wilkins, Herbert Hill, and Thurgood Marshall present a new poster in the campaign against southern white racism. Marshall successfully argued the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) before the U.S. Supreme Court and later became the court’s first African American justice.*

*of Education* in 1954, which held that state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students were unconstitutional.

Later in life, Marshall reflected on his career fighting racism in a speech at Howard Law School in 1978:

Be aware of that myth, that everything is going to be all right. Don’t give in. I add that, because it seems to me, that what we need to do today is to refocus. Back in the 30s and 40s, we could go no place but to court. We knew then, the court was not the final solution. Many of us knew the final solution would have to be politics, if for no other reason, politics is cheaper than lawsuits. So now we have both. We have our legal arm, and we have our political arm. Let’s use them both. And don’t listen to this myth that it can be solved by either or that it has already been solved. Take it from me, it has not been solved.

When Marshall says that the problems of racism have not been solved, to what was he referring?



*Plessy v. Fergusson* had been overturned. The challenge now was to integrate schools. A year later, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered southern school systems to begin desegregation “with all deliberate speed.” Some school districts voluntarily integrated their schools. For many other districts, however, “deliberate speed” was very, very slow.

It soon became clear that enforcing *Brown v. the Board of Education* would require presidential intervention. Eisenhower did not agree with the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision and did not wish to force southern states to integrate their schools. However, as president, he was responsible for doing so. In 1957, Central High School in



*In 1957, U.S. soldiers from the 101st Airborne were called in to escort the Little Rock Nine into and around formerly all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.*

Little Rock, Arkansas, was forced to accept its first nine African American students, who became known as the Little Rock Nine. In response, Arkansas governor Orval Faubus called out the state National Guard to prevent the students from attending classes, removing the troops only after Eisenhower told him to do so. A subsequent attempt by the nine students to attend school resulted in mob violence. Eisenhower then placed the Arkansas National Guard under federal control and sent the U.S. Army’s 101st airborne unit to escort the students to and from school as well as from class to class. This was the first time since the end of Reconstruction that federal troops once more protected the rights of African Americans in the South.

Throughout the course of the school year, the Little Rock Nine were insulted, harassed, and physically assaulted; nevertheless, they returned to school each day. At the end of the school year, the first African American student graduated from Central High. At the beginning of the 1958–1959 school year, Orval Faubus ordered all



Little Rock's public schools closed. In the opinion of white segregationists, keeping all students out of school was preferable to having them attend integrated schools. In 1959, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the school had to be reopened and that the process of desegregation had to proceed.

## WHITE RESPONSES

Efforts to desegregate public schools led to a backlash among most southern whites. Many greeted the *Brown* decision with horror; some World War II veterans questioned how the government they had fought for could betray them in such a fashion. Some white parents promptly withdrew their children from public schools and enrolled them in all-white private academies, many newly created for the sole purpose of keeping white children from attending integrated schools. Often, these “academies” held classes in neighbors’ basements or living rooms.

Other white southerners turned to state legislatures or courts to solve the problem of school integration. Orders to integrate school districts were routinely challenged in court. When the lawsuits proved unsuccessful, many southern school districts responded by closing all public schools, as Orval Faubus had done after Central High School was integrated. One county in Virginia closed its public schools for five years rather than see them integrated. Besides suing school districts, many southern segregationists filed lawsuits against the NAACP, trying to bankrupt the organization. Many national politicians supported the segregationist efforts. In 1956, ninety-six members of Congress signed “The Southern Manifesto,” in which they accused the U.S. Supreme Court of misusing its power and violating the principle of states’ rights, which maintained that states had rights equal to those of the federal government.

Unfortunately, many white southern racists, frightened by challenges to the social order, responded with violence. When Little



Rock's Central High School desegregated, an irate Ku Klux Klansman from a neighboring community sent a letter to the members of the city's school board in which he denounced them as Communists and threatened to kill them. White rage sometimes erupted into murder. In August 1955, both white and black Americans were shocked by the brutality of the murder of Emmett Till. Till, a fourteen-year-old boy from Chicago, had been vacationing with relatives in Mississippi. While visiting a white-owned store, he had made a remark to the white woman behind the counter. A few days later, the husband and brother-in-law of the woman came to the home of Till's relatives in the middle of the night and abducted the boy. Till's beaten and mutilated body was found in a nearby river three days later. Till's mother insisted on an open-casket funeral; she wished to use her son's body to reveal the brutality of southern racism. The murder of a child who had been guilty of no more than a casual remark captured the nation's attention, as did the acquittal of the two men who admitted killing him.

## THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

One of those inspired by Till's death was Rosa Parks, an NAACP member from Montgomery, Alabama, who became the face of the 1955–1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott. City ordinances in Montgomery segregated the city's buses, forcing African American passengers to ride in the back section. They had to enter through the rear of the bus, could not share seats with white passengers, and, if the front of the bus was full and a white passenger requested an African American's seat, had to relinquish their place to the white rider. The bus company also refused to hire African American drivers even though most of the people who rode the buses were black.

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white man, and the Montgomery police arrested her. After being



bailed out of jail, she decided to fight the laws requiring segregation in court. To support her, the Women's Political Council, a group of African American female activists, organized a boycott of Montgomery's buses. News of the boycott spread through newspaper notices and by word of mouth; ministers rallied their congregations to support the Women's Political Council. Their efforts were successful, and forty thousand African American riders did not take the bus on December 5, the first day of the boycott.

Other African American leaders within the city embraced the boycott and maintained it beyond December 5, Rosa Parks' court date. Among them was a young minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. For the next year, black Montgomery residents avoided the city's buses. Some organized carpools. Others paid for rides in African American-owned taxis, whose drivers reduced their fees. Most walked to and from school, work, and church for 381 days, the duration of the boycott. In June 1956, an Alabama federal court found the segregation ordinance unconstitutional. The city appealed, but the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the decision. The city's buses were desegregated.

## Section Summary

After World War II, African American efforts to secure greater civil rights increased across the United States. African American lawyers such as Thurgood Marshall championed cases intended to destroy the Jim Crow system of segregation that had dominated the American South since Reconstruction. The landmark Supreme



Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* prohibited segregation in public schools, but not all school districts integrated willingly, and President Eisenhower had to use the military to desegregate Little Rock's Central High School. The courts and the federal government did not assist African Americans in asserting their rights in other cases. In Montgomery, Alabama, it was the grassroots efforts of African American citizens who boycotted the city's bus system that brought about change. Throughout the region, many white southerners made their opposition to these efforts known. Too often, this opposition manifested itself in violence and tragedy, as in the murder of Emmett Till.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1053>

### *Review Question*

1. What was the significance of *Shelley v. Kraemer*?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. *Shelley v. Kraemer* held that state courts could not enforce agreements that prevented homeowners



from selling to members of particular races. The ruling made it easier for African Americans to purchase houses in neighborhoods of their choosing.

### *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. How did some Americans turn their wartime experiences into lasting personal gains (i.e. better employment, a new home, or an education) after the war was over? Why did others miss out on these opportunities?
2. What was the reason for the breakdown in friendly relations between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II? What were the results of this conflict?
3. How did fear of the Soviet Union and Communism affect American culture and society?
4. What social changes took place in the United States after World War II? What role did the war play in those changes?
5. How did the wartime experiences of African Americans contribute to the drive for greater civil rights after the war?



## *Glossary*

**desegregation** the removal of laws and policies requiring the separation of different racial or ethnic groups

**Little Rock Nine** the nickname for the nine African American high school students who first integrated Little Rock's Central High School

**states' rights** the political belief that states possess authority beyond federal law, which is usually seen as the supreme law of the land, and thus can act in opposition to federal law



# 175. Assignment: Salt of the Earth Movie Review

Salt of the Earth was a film made at the height of the Cold War during McCarthyism. In this assignment, you are to watch the film [Salt of the Earth](#) (which you can also find on YouTube if you prefer) and then take some time to do your own research on McCarthyism and the Hollywood Blacklists. Yes, the film is black and white, but it is very good. The film provides a snapshot of some of the more serious issues of the age; sexism, racism, the plight of labor, and the general fear of communism. When you have finished watching the film and researching, answer the following questions. You will need to do some outside research to provide thoughtful answers. Be sure to thoroughly all the questions and to provide citations for your work. Make sure you give examples from the film in your answers.

- Gender (make sure you give examples)
  1. Wome play a central role in this film? Why do you think that is?
  2. In what ways was being female a disadvantage and in what ways was it an advantage?
  3. What does this tell us about gender roles in the 1950s. Give examples of traditional roles you see challenged
- Race
  1. There are clear racial themes in this film. What are they?
  2. How does this film flip race stereotypes for the 1950s?
  3. Why do you think the director chose to highlight gender and racial issues?



- Unions
  1. Why do you think the film celebrates unions? Give examples.
- This film was blacklisted, why do you think that is? Discuss why it was so controversial when it was made? (Hint – it is more than just the blacklisted director)
- What lessons does this film have for us today?



# 176. Assignment: Women in the 1950s

The 1950s was a golden age in the United States. WWII was over, business was booming, everyone had a house, a car, and a white picket fence. There were, however, sources of discontent brewing beneath the surface, most notably civil rights, women's rights, and youth rebellion.

- Read [How to Be a Good Housewife](#). It's probably not a real document, but the ideas in it are 100% accurate in describing "The Cult of Domesticity" – the role assigned to women in the 1950s.

Answer the following:

1. How would you summarize the list and describe the Cult of Domesticity?
2. Why would the United States want to put such a straitjacket on women in the 1950s? (Hint: what were women able to do during WWII? What were women's rights in the Soviet Union like? How did the US see itself in relation to the Soviet Union? – the answer to these three questions will point you toward the main point)



# 177. Assignment: The Sexual Revolution

Yea, you read that right. This assignment is about women's rights, feminism, and orgasms. Not votes, not jobs, orgasms.

The Sexual Revolution and the Feminist movement were two of the social movements that defined the 1960s and 1970s (both for good and bad). This assignment allows us to look at an area where those two movements intersect.

In 1970 Anne Koedt wrote an article titled "[The Myth of the Female Orgasm](#)" in which she championed women's rights and liberation. She didn't focus on school, career, or even birth control or abortion. Instead she examines social paradigms regarding sexual intimacy and uses it to make a case for feminism. The article is a bit lengthy, but given the subject matter I imagine you shouldn't have too much trouble with it. After reading the article, answer the following:

1. What is her argument, evidence, and logical progression?  
(summarize the document)

Remember to use quotes and specific passages to support your answer.



## 178. Video: Civil Rights and the 1950s

This video teaches you about the early days of the Civil Rights movement. By way of providing context for this, this video also talks a bit about wider America in the 1950s. The 1950s are a deeply nostalgic period for many Americans, but there is more than a little idealizing going on here. The 1950s were a time of economic expansion, new technologies, and a growing middle class. America was becoming a suburban nation thanks to cookie-cutter housing developments like the Levittowns. While the white working class saw their wages and status improve, the proverbial rising tide wasn't lifting all proverbial ships. A lot of people were excluded from the prosperity of the 1950s. Segregation in housing and education made for some serious inequality for African Americans. As a result, the Civil Rights movement was born. The video will talk about the early careers of Martin Luther King, Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, and even Earl Warren. You will learn about *Brown v Board of Education*, and the lesser known *Mendez vs Westminster*, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and all kinds of other stuff.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=219#oembed-1>



# 179. Assignment: Eisenhower's Farewell

After reading the Eisenhower [Farewell Address](#) (or [watching the video of it](#)), answer the following in a paragraph:

- What is the military-industrial complex and how does it work?
- What benefits has it provided to the nation?
- Why should the nation be afraid of it? What dangers does it pose?

Remember to use specific quotes and passages from the speech in support of your answer.



# 180. Extra Credit Assignment: Dr. Strangelove

One of the most famous American films that deals with the Cold War is Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*. Exploring the dangers of Cold War tension, nuclear policy, and military strategy, Kubrick's film depicts "what might happen" in a Cold War worst case scenario.

Watch [Dr. Strangelove](#)\* and complete the attached [film guide](#). Submit it for up to 10 extra credit points me through Blackboard. The answers to the analytical questions need to be about a paragraph in length. The other questions can be just a sentence or two.

The film is rather dense in terms of concepts, while at the same time it's a dark comedy. In the past students have said they had to watch it twice; once to simply get the idea of plot, characters, etc., then a second time to actually start looking for answers to the questions.

\*You will need Microsoft Silverlight installed to be able to watch the film. If your computer doesn't have it you will be prompted to download it when you try to watch the film.

**NOTE:** The analytical questions will require knowledge and comprehension of historical themes and information that lies outside the film. In other words: you will need to use what we've covered in class about the Cold War in order to correctly answer some of them.







PART XXVII

# THE COLD WAR READER







# 181. Primary Source Media: The Cold War

The Cold War was a global political and ideological struggle between capitalist and communist countries, led by the two surviving superpowers of the postwar world: the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). “Cold” because it was never a “hot,” direct shooting war between the United States and the Soviet Union, the generations-long, multifaceted rivalry nevertheless bent the world to its whims. Tensions ran highest, perhaps, during the “first Cold War,” which lasted from the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s, after which followed a period of relaxed tensions and increased communication and cooperation, known by the French term *détente*, until the “second Cold War” interceded from roughly 1979 until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. As the following sources reveal, the Cold War reshaped the world, and in so doing forever altered American life and the generations of Americans that lived within its shadow.



## Atomic Energy Lab 1951-1952



A.C. Gilbert  
Company,  
“U-238  
Atomic  
Energy Lab”  
(1950-51), via  
Wikipedia.

This toy laboratory set was intended to let young people perform small scale experiments with radioactive materials in their own home. Equipped with a small working Geiger Counter, a “cloud chamber,” and samples of radioactive ore, the set’s creator claimed that the government supported its production to help Americans become more comfortable with nuclear energy.

## Duck and Cover (1951)

In 1951, Archer Productions created “Duck and Cover,” a civil defense film funded by the U.S. Federal Civil Defense Administration. The short film, starring Bert the Turtle and shown to Cold War school



children, demonstrates “duck and cover”—a physical position designed to mitigate the effects of a nuclear blast.



## 182. Primary Source: The Truman Doctrine (1947)

*The “Truman Doctrine” directed the United States to actively support anti-communist forces around the world. The following is from President Truman’s March 12, 1947 address before a joint session of congress requesting support for anti-communist regimes in Greece and Turkey.*

I am fully aware of the broad implications involved if the United States extends assistance to Greece and Turkey, and I shall discuss these implications with you at this time.

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations.

To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations. The United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its members. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.

...

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.



One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio; fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.

...

It would be an unspeakable tragedy if these countries, which have struggled so long against overwhelming odds, should lose that victory for which they sacrificed so much. Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the world. Discouragement and possibly failure would quickly be the lot of neighboring peoples striving to maintain their freedom and independence.

Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as to the East.

We must take immediate and resolute action.

...

This is a serious course upon which we embark.

I would not recommend it except that the alternative is much more serious. The United States contributed \$341,000,000,000 toward winning World War II. This is an investment in world freedom and world peace.

...

The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive.



The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.

If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world — and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation.

Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events.

I am confident that the Congress will face these responsibilities squarely.

[Source: President Harry S. Truman's Address Before a Joint Session of Congress, March 12, 1947. Available online via *The Avalon Project* ([http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/trudoc.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp)).]



## 183. Primary Source: NSC-68 (1950)

*In 1950, the National Security Council produced a 58-page, top-secret report proclaiming the threat of Soviet communism. In the new postwar world, the report argued, the United States could no longer retreat toward isolationism without encouraging the aggressive expansion of communism across the globe. The United States, the report said, had to mobilize to ensure the survival of “civilization itself.”*

Within the past thirty-five years the world has experienced two global wars of tremendous violence. It has witnessed two revolutions—the Russian and the Chinese—of extreme scope and intensity. It has also seen the collapse of five empires—the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian, German, Italian, and Japanese—and the drastic decline of two major imperial systems, the British and the French. During the span of one generation, the international distribution of power has been fundamentally altered. For several centuries it had proved impossible for any one nation to gain such preponderant strength that a coalition of other nations could not in time face it with greater strength. The international scene was marked by recurring periods of violence and war, but a system of sovereign and independent states was maintained, over which no state was able to achieve hegemony.

Two complex sets of factors have now basically altered this historic distribution of power. First, the defeat of Germany and Japan and the decline of the British and French Empires have interacted with the development of the United States and the Soviet Union in such a way that power increasingly gravitated to these two centers. Second, the Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the



world. Conflict has, therefore, become endemic and is waged, on the part of the Soviet Union, by violent or non-violent methods in accordance with the dictates of expediency. With the development of increasingly terrifying weapons of mass destruction, every individual faces the ever-present possibility of annihilation should the conflict enter the phase of total war.

...

The issues that face us are momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself. They are issues which will not await our deliberations. With conscience and resolution this Government and the people it represents must now take new and fateful decisions.

... The idea of freedom ... is peculiarly and intolerably subversive of the idea of slavery. But the converse is not true. The implacable purpose of the slave state to eliminate the challenge of freedom has placed the two great powers at opposite poles. It is this fact which gives the present polarization of power the quality of crisis.

... Thus unwillingly our free society finds itself mortally challenged by the Soviet system. No other value system is so wholly irreconcilable with ours, so implacable in its purpose to destroy ours, so capable of turning to its own uses the most dangerous and divisive trends in our own society, no other so skillfully and powerfully evokes the elements of irrationality in human nature everywhere, and no other has the support of a great and growing center of military power.

...

In a shrinking world, which now faces the threat of atomic warfare, it is not an adequate objective merely to seek to check the Kremlin design, for the absence of order among nations is becoming less and less tolerable. This fact imposes on us, in our own interests, the responsibility of world leadership. It demands that we make the attempt, and accept the risks inherent in it, to bring about order and justice by means consistent with the principles of freedom and democracy. ...

...



Compulsion is the negation of freedom, except when it is used to enforce the rights common to all. The resort to force, internally or externally, is therefore a last resort for a free society. The act is permissible only when one individual or groups of individuals within it threaten the basic rights of other individuals or when another society seeks to impose its will upon it. The free society cherishes and protects as fundamental the rights of the minority against the will of a majority, because these rights are the inalienable rights of each and every individual.

... Practical and ideological considerations therefore both impel us to the conclusion that we have no choice but to demonstrate the superiority of the idea of freedom by its constructive application, and to attempt to change the world situation by means short of war in such a way as to frustrate the Kremlin design and hasten the decay of the Soviet system.

For us the role of military power is to serve the national purpose by deterring an attack upon us while we seek by other means to create an environment in which our free society can flourish, and by fighting, if necessary, to defend the integrity and vitality of our free society and to defeat any aggressor. The Kremlin uses Soviet military power to back up and serve the Kremlin design. It does not hesitate to use military force aggressively if that course is expedient in the achievement of its design. The differences between our fundamental purpose and the Kremlin design, therefore, are reflected in our respective attitudes toward and use of military force.

Our free society, confronted by a threat to its basic values, naturally will take such action, including the use of military force, as may be required to protect those values. The integrity of our system will not be jeopardized by any measures, covert or overt, violent or non-violent, which serve the purposes of frustrating the Kremlin design, nor does the necessity for conducting ourselves so as to affirm our values in actions as well as words forbid such measures, provided only they are appropriately calculated to that end and are



not so excessive or misdirected as to make us enemies of the people instead of the evil men who have enslaved them.

[Source: NSC 68: *United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* (April 14, 1950). Available online via Truman Library, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf).]



# 184. Primary Source: Joseph McCarthy on Communism (1950)

*Senator Joseph McCarthy's relentless attacks on suspected communist influence in American government so captivated American attention that "McCarthyism" came to stand in for the fervor of Cold War America's anti-communism. In the following extract, McCarthy depicts what he imagined were the stakes his anti-communist crusades.*

Five years after a world war has been won, men's hearts should anticipate a long peace, and men's minds should be free from the heavy weight that comes with war. But this is not such a period — for this is not a period of peace. This is a time of the Cold War. This is a time when all the world is split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps — a time of a great armaments race. Today we can almost physically hear the mutterings and rumblings of an invigorated god of war. You can see it, feel it, and hear it all the way from the hills of Indochina, from the shores of Formosa right over into the very heart of Europe itself. ...

Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time. And, ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down — they are truly down.

...

Ladies and gentlemen, can there be anyone here tonight who is so blind as to say that the war is not on? Can there be anyone who fails to realize that the communist world has said, "The time is now" — that this is the time for the showdown between the democratic Christian world and the communist atheistic world? Unless we face



this fact, we shall pay the price that must be paid by those who wait too long.

... As one of our outstanding historical figures once said, "When a great democracy is destroyed, it will not be because of enemies from without but rather because of enemies from within." The truth of this statement is becoming terrifyingly clear as we see this country each day losing on every front.

At war's end we were physically the strongest nation on Earth and, at least potentially, the most powerful intellectually and morally. Ours could have been the honor of being a beacon in the desert of destruction, a shining, living proof that civilization was not yet ready to destroy itself. Unfortunately, we have failed miserably and tragically to arise to the opportunity.

The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because our only powerful, potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores, but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this nation. It has not been the less fortunate or members of minority groups who have been selling this nation out, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest nation on earth has had to offer — the finest homes, the finest college education, and the finest jobs in government we can give.

This is glaringly true in the State Department. There the bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths are the ones who have been worst.

... In my opinion the State Department, which is one of the most important government departments, is thoroughly infested with communists.

I have in my hand 57 cases of individuals who would appear to be either card-carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party, but who nevertheless are still helping to shape our foreign policy.

...

This brings us down to the case of one Alger Hiss ....

As you hear this story of high treason, I know that you are saying



to yourself, “Well, why doesn’t the Congress do something about it?” Actually, ladies and gentlemen, one of the important reasons for the graft, the corruption, the dishonesty, the disloyalty, the treason in high government positions — one of the most important reasons why this continues — is a lack of moral uprising on the part of the 140 million American people. In the light of history, however, this is not hard to explain.

It is the result of an emotional hangover and a temporary moral lapse which follows every war. It is the apathy to evil which people who have been subjected to the tremendous evils of war feel. As the people of the world see mass murder, the destruction of defenseless and innocent people, and all of the crime and lack of morals which go with war, they become numb and apathetic. It has always been thus after war. However, the morals of our people have not been destroyed. They still exist. This cloak of numbness and apathy has only needed a spark to rekindle them. Happily, this spark has finally been supplied.

...

He has lighted the spark which is resulting in a moral uprising and will end only when the whole sorry mess of twisted warped thinkers are swept from the national scene so that we may have a new birth of national honesty and decency in government.

[Source: *Congressional Record*, 81<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, pt 2, 1954-56 / U.S. Senate, State Department Loyalty Investigation Committee on Foreign Relations, 81st Congress. Available online via *History Matters* (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6456>).]



# 185. Primary Source Media: The Affluent Society

In the almost two decades after the end of World War II, the American economy witnessed a massive and sustained growth that reshaped American culture through its abundance of consumer goods. Standards of living climbed to unparalleled heights. All income levels shared and inequality plummeted in what some economists have called “the Great Compression.” And yet, American economic progress contained fundamental flaws. The new consumer economy that lifted millions of Americans into its burgeoning middle class also produced inequality. Women struggled to claim equal rights as full participants in American society. The poor struggled to win access to good schools, good healthcare, and good jobs. The same suburbs that gave middle class Americans new space left cities withering in spirals of poverty and crime. The Jim Crow South tenaciously defended segregation and American blacks and other minorities suffered discrimination all across the country. As the following sources suggest, the contradictions of the Affluent Society defined the decade: unrivaled prosperity alongside crippling poverty, expanded opportunity alongside entrenched discrimination, and new liberating lifestyles alongside a stifling conformity.



## 1959 Little Rock Rally



John T. Bledsoe, "Little Rock, 1959. Rally at State Capitol" (Aug 20, 1959). Via Library of Congress.

In 1959, photographer John Bledsoe captured this image of the crowd on the steps of the Arkansas state capitol building, protesting the federally mandated integration of Little Rock's Central High School. This image shows how worries about desegregation were bound up with other concerns, such as the reach of communism and government power.

## "In the Suburbs" (1957)

Redbook made this film to convince advertisers that the magazine would help them attract the white suburban consumers they desired. The "happy go spending, buy it now, young adults of today" are depicted by the film as flocking to the suburbs to escape global and urban turmoil.



# 186. Primary Source: Woody Guthrie, “This Land” (1940-1945)

*“This Land” was written by Woody Guthrie in 1940 and first recorded in 1944 at Folkway Records. According to folk singer Pete Seeger, Guthrie printed the songs’ lyrics and music in 1955 with the note, “This song is Copyrighted in U.S., under Seal of Copyright # 154085, for a period of 28 years, and anybody caught singin it without our permission, will be mighty good friends of ours, cause we don’t give a dern. Publish it. Write it. Sing it. Swing to it. Yodel it. We wrote it, that’s all we wanted to do.” Song lyrics were first published in 1945.*

As I go walking this ribbon of highway  
I see above me this endless skyway  
And all around me the wind keeps saying:  
This land is made for you and me.

*Chorus:*

This land is your land. This land is my land.  
From the Redwood Forest to the New York Island  
The Canadian mountain to the Gulf Stream waters  
This land is made for you and me.

I roam and I ramble and I follow my footsteps  
Till I come to the sands of her mineral desert  
The mist is lifting and the voice is saying:  
This land is made for you and me.

Where the wind is blowing I go a strolling  
The wheat field waving and the dust a rolling  
The fog is lifting and the wind is saying:  
This land is made for you and me.

Nobody living can ever stop me  
As I go walking my freedom highway



Nobody living can make me turn back  
This land is made for you and me.

[Source: Woody Guthrie, "This Land," 10 of *Woody Guthrie's Songs* (1945). Available online via Wikisource ([https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/10\\_of\\_Woody\\_Guthrie%27s\\_Songs/This\\_Land](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/10_of_Woody_Guthrie%27s_Songs/This_Land)).]



# 187. Primary Source: Migrant Farmers and Immigrant Labor (1952)

*During the labor shortages of World War II, the United States' launched the Bracero ("laborer") program to bring Mexican laborers into the United States. The program continued into the 1960s and brought more than a million workers into the United States on short-term contracts. Undocumented immigration continued, however. Congress held hearings and, in the selection below, a migrant worker named Juanita Garcia testifies to Congress about the state of affairs in California's Imperial Valley. Beginning in 1954, Dwight Eisenhower's administration oversaw, with the cooperation of the Mexican government, "Operation Wetback," which empowered to the Border Patrol to crack down upon illegal immigration.*

I work in the field and in the packing sheds. I lost my job in a packing shed about two weeks ago. I was fired because I belonged to the National Farm Labor Union. Every summer our family goes north to work. We pick figs and cotton. My father, my brothers and sisters also work on farms. For poor people like us who are field laborers, making a living has always been hard. Why? Because the ranchers and companies have always taken over.

When I was a small kid my dad had a small farm but he lost it. All of us used to help him. But dad got older and worn out with worries every day. Lots of us kids could not go to school much. Our parents could not afford the expenses. This happened to all kids like us. Difficulties appear here and there every day. Taxes, food, clothing, and everything go up. We all have to eat. Sometimes we sleep under a leaky roof. We have to cover up and keep warm the best way we can in the cold weather.

In the Imperial Valley we have a hard time. It so happens that



the local people who are American citizens cannot get work. Many days we don't work. Some days we work 1 hour. The wetbacks and nationals from Mexico have the whole Imperial Valley. They have invaded not only the Imperial Valley but all the United States. The nationals and wetbacks take any wages the ranchers offer to pay them. The wages get worse every year. Last year most local people got little work. Sometimes they make only \$5 a week. That is not enough to live on, so many people cannot send their children to school.

Many people have lost their homes since 1942 when the nationals and wetbacks started coming. Local people work better but wetbacks and nationals are hired anyway.

Last year they fired some people from the shed because they had nationals to take their jobs. There was a strike. We got all the strikers out at 4:30 in the morning. The cops were on the streets escorting the nationals and wetbacks to the fields. The cops had guns. The ranchers had guns, too. They took the wetbacks in their brand-new cars through our picket line. They took the nationals from the camps to break our strike. They had 5,000 scabs that were nationals. We told the Mexican consul about this. We told the Labor Department. They were supposed to take the nationals out of the strike. They never did take them away.

It looks like the big companies in agriculture are running the United States. All of us local people went on strike. The whole valley was hungry because nobody worked at all. The melons rotted in the fields. We went out and arrested the wetbacks who were living in caves and on the ditches and we took them to the border patrol. But the national scabs kept working. Isn't the Government supposed to help us poor people? Can't it act fast in cases like this?

[Source: Subcommittee on Labor and Labor-Management Relations, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, *Migratory Labor: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Labor and Labor-Management Relations of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, Eighty-Second Congress* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952). Available



online via Digital History ([http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=595](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=595)).]



# 188. Primary Source: Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Atoms for Peace” (1953)

*In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower spoke to the United Nations’ General Assembly about the possibilities of peace in “the atomic age.”*

I feel impelled to speak today in a language that in a sense is new, one which I, who have spent so much of my life in the military profession, would have preferred never to use. That new language is the language of atomic warfare.

The atomic age has moved forward at such a pace that every citizen of the world should have some comprehension, at least in comparative terms, of the extent of this development, of the utmost significance to every one of us. Clearly, if the peoples of the world are to conduct an intelligent search for peace, they must be armed with the significant facts of today’s existence.

...

On 16 July 1945, the United States set off the world’s biggest atomic explosion. Since that date in 1945, the United States of America has conducted forty-two test explosions. Atomic bombs are more than twenty-five times as powerful as the weapons with which the atomic age dawned, while hydrogen weapons are in the ranges of millions of tons of TNT equivalent.

Today, the United States stockpile of atomic weapons, which, of course, increases daily, exceeds by many times the total equivalent of the total of all bombs and all shells that came from every plane and every gun in every theatre of war in all the years of the Second World War. A single air group whether afloat or land based, can now deliver to any reachable target a destructive cargo exceeding in power all the bombs that fell on Britain in all the Second World War.

...



If at one time the United States possessed what might have been called a monopoly of atomic power, that monopoly ceased to exist several years ago. Therefore, although our earlier start has permitted us to accumulate what is today a great quantitative advantage, the atomic realities of today comprehend two facts of even greater significance. First, the knowledge now possessed by several nations will eventually be shared by others, possibly all others.

Second, even a vast superiority in numbers of weapons, and a consequent capability of devastating retaliation, is no preventive, of itself, against the fearful material damage and toll of human lives that would be inflicted by surprise aggression.

... To pause there would be to confirm the hopeless finality of a belief that two atomic colossi are doomed malevolently to eye each other indefinitely across a trembling world. To stop there would be to accept helplessly the probability of civilization destroyed, the annihilation of the irreplaceable heritage of mankind handed down to us from generation to generation, and the condemnation of mankind to begin all over again the age-old struggle upward from savagery towards decency, and right, and justice. Surely no sane member of the human race could discover victory in such desolation. Could anyone wish his name to be coupled by history with such human degradation and destruction? Occasional pages of history do record the faces of the "great destroyers", but the whole book of history reveals mankind's never-ending quest for peace and mankind's God-given capacity to build.

It is with the book of history, and not with isolated pages, that the United States will ever wish to be identified. My country wants to be constructive, not destructive. It wants agreements, not wars, among nations. It wants itself to live in freedom and in the confidence that the peoples of every other nation enjoy equally the right of choosing their own way of life.

So my country's purpose is to help us to move out of the dark chamber of horrors into the light, to find a way by which the minds



of men, the hopes of men, the souls of men everywhere, can move forward towards peace and happiness and well-being.

... The gravity of the time is such that every new avenue of peace, no matter how dimly discernible, should be explored.

... The United States, heeding the suggestion of the General Assembly of the United Nations, is instantly prepared to meet privately with such other countries as may be “principally involved”, to seek “an acceptable solution” to the atomic armaments race which overshadows not only the peace, but the very life, of the world.

We shall carry into these private or diplomatic talks a new conception. The United States would seek more than the mere reduction or elimination of atomic materials for military purposes. It is not enough to take this weapon out of the hands of the soldiers. It must be put into the hands of those who will know how to strip its military casing and adapt it to the arts of peace.

The United States knows that if the fearful trend of atomic military build-up can be reversed, this greatest of destructive forces can be developed into a great boon, for the benefit of all mankind. The United States knows that peaceful power from atomic energy is no dream of the future. The capability, already proved, is here today. Who can doubt that, if the entire body of the world’s scientists and engineers had adequate amounts of fissionable material with which to test and develop their ideas, this capability would rapidly be transformed into universal, efficient and economic usage?

To hasten the day when fear of the atom will begin to disappear from the minds the people and the governments of the East and West, there are certain steps that can be taken now.

...

I would be prepared to submit to the Congress of the United States, and with every expectation of approval, any such plan that would, first, encourage world-wide investigation into the most effective peacetime uses of fissionable material, and with the certainty that the investigators had all the material needed for the conducting of all experiments that were appropriate; second, begin



to diminish the potential destructive power of the world's atomic stockpiles; third, allow all peoples of all nations to see that, in this enlightened age, the great Powers of the earth, both of the East and of the West, are interested in human aspirations first rather than in building up the armaments of war; fourth, open up a new channel for peaceful discussion and initiative at least a new approach to the many difficult problems that must be solved in both private and public conversations if the world is to shake off the inertia imposed by fear and is to make positive progress towards peace.

Against the dark background of the atomic bomb, the United States does not wish merely to present strength, but also the desire and the hope for peace. The coming months will be fraught with fateful decisions. In this Assembly, in the capitals and military headquarters of the world, in the hearts of men everywhere, be they governed or governors, may they be the decisions which will lead this world out of fear and into peace.

To the making of these fateful decisions, the United States pledges before you, and therefore before the world, its determination to help solve the fearful atomic dilemma – to devote its entire heart and mind to finding the way by which the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life.

[Source: Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Atoms for Peace,” Speech before the United Nations General Assembly, New York City, New York (December 8, 1953). Available online via Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library ([http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online\\_documents/atoms\\_for\\_peace/Binder13.pdf](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/atoms_for_peace/Binder13.pdf)).]



## 189. Primary Source: Hernandez v. Texas (1954)

*Pete Hernandez, a migrant worker, was tried for the murder of his employer, Joe Espinosa, in Edna, Texas, in 1950. Hernandez was convicted by an all-white jury. His lawyers appealed. They argued that Hernandez was entitled to a jury “of his peers” and that systematic exclusion of Mexican Americans violated constitutional law. In a unanimous decision, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Mexican Americans—and all “classes”—were entitled to the “equal protection” articulated in the Fourteenth Amendment.*

The petitioner, Pete Hernandez, was indicted for the murder of one Joe Espinosa by a grand jury in Jackson County, Texas. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed the judgment of the trial court. Prior to the trial, the petitioner, by his counsel, offered timely motions to quash the indictment and the jury panel. He alleged that persons of Mexican descent were systematically excluded from service as jury commissioners, grand jurors, and petit jurors, although there were such persons fully qualified to serve residing in Jackson County. The petitioner asserted that exclusion of this class deprived him, as a member of the class, of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. ...

In numerous decisions, this Court has held that it is a denial of the equal protection of the laws to try a defendant of a particular race or color under an indictment issued by a grand jury, or before a petit jury, from which all persons of his race or color have, solely because of that race or color, been excluded by the State, whether acting through its legislature, its courts, or its executive or administrative officers. Although the Court has had little occasion to rule on the question directly, it has been recognized since *Strauder v. State of West Virginia*, that the exclusion of a class of persons from jury



service on grounds other than race or color may also deprive a defendant who is a member of that class of the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws. The State of Texas would have us hold that there are only two classes—white and Negro—within the contemplation of the Fourteenth Amendment. The decisions of this Court do not support that view. And, except where the question presented involves the exclusion of persons of Mexican descent from juries, Texas courts have taken a broader view of the scope of the equal protection clause.

Throughout our history differences in race and color have defined easily identifiable groups which have at times required the aid of the courts in securing equal treatment under the laws. But community prejudices are not static, and from time to time other differences from the community norm may define other groups which need the same protection. Whether such a group exists within a community is a question of fact. When the existence of a distinct class is demonstrated, and it is further shown that the laws, as written or as applied, single out that class for different treatment not based on some reasonable classification, the guarantees of the Constitution have been violated. The Fourteenth Amendment is not directed solely against discrimination due to a “two-class theory”—that is, based upon differences between “white” and Negro.

... The exclusion of otherwise eligible persons from jury service solely because of their ancestry or national origin is discrimination prohibited by the Fourteenth Amendment. ...

The petitioner’s initial burden in substantiating his charge of group discrimination was to prove that persons of Mexican descent constitute a separate class in Jackson County, distinct from “whites.” One method by which this may be demonstrated is by showing the attitude of the community. Here the testimony of responsible officials and citizens contained the admission that residents of the community distinguished between “white” and “Mexican.” The participation of persons of Mexican descent in business and community groups was shown to be slight. Until very recent times, children of Mexican descent were required to attend a segregated



school for the first four grades. At least one restaurant in town prominently displayed a sign announcing “No Mexicans Served.” On the courthouse grounds at the time of the hearing, there were two men’s toilets, one unmarked, and the other marked “Colored Men” and “Hombres Aqui” (“Men Here”). ...

Having established the existence of a class, petitioner was then charged with the burden of proving discrimination. To do so, he relied on the pattern of proof established by *Norris v. State of Alabama*. In that case, proof that Negroes constituted a substantial segment of the population of the jurisdiction, that some Negroes were qualified to serve as jurors, and that none had been called for jury service over an extended period of time, was held to constitute prima facie proof of the systematic exclusion of Negroes from jury service. This holding, sometimes called the “rule of exclusion,” has been applied in other cases, and it is available in supplying proof of discrimination against any delineated class.

The petitioner established that 14% of the population of Jackson County were persons with Mexican or Latin American surnames, and that 11% of the males over 21 bore such names. The County Tax Assessor testified that 6 or 7 percent of the freeholders on the tax rolls of the County were persons of Mexican descent. The State of Texas stipulated that “for the last twenty-five years there is no record of any person with a Mexican or Latin American name having served on a jury commission, grand jury or petit jury in Jackson County.” The parties also stipulated that “there are some male persons of Mexican or Latin American descent in Jackson County who, by virtue of being citizens, freeholders, and having all other legal prerequisites to jury service, are eligible to serve as members of a jury commission, grand jury and/or petit jury.”

...

To say that this decision revives the rejected contention that the Fourteenth Amendment requires proportional representation of all the component ethnic groups of the community on every jury ignores the facts. The petitioner did not seek proportional representation, nor did he claim a right to have persons of Mexican



descent sit on the particular juries which he faced. His only claim is the right to be indicted and tried by juries from which all members of his class are not systematically excluded—juries selected from among all qualified persons regardless of national origin or descent. To this much, he is entitled by the Constitution.

[Source: *Hernandez v. Texas*, 347 U.S. 475 (1954).]



# 190. Primary Source: Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)

*In 1896, the United States Supreme Court declared in Plessy v. Ferguson that the doctrine of “separate but equal” was constitutional. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court overturned that decision and ruled unanimously against school segregation.*

These cases come to us from the state of Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. They are premised on different facts and different local conditions, but a common legal question justifies their consideration together in this consolidated opinion.

In each of the cases, minors of the Negro race, through their legal representatives, seek the aid of the courts in obtaining admission to the public schools of their community on a nonsegregated basis. In each instance, they had been denied admission to schools attended by white children under laws requiring or permitting segregation according to race. This segregation was alleged to deprive the plaintiffs of the equal protection of the laws under the Fourteenth Amendment. In each of the cases other than the Delaware case, a three-judge federal district court denied relief to the plaintiffs on the so-called “separate but equal” doctrine announced by this court in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537. Under that doctrine, equality of treatment is accorded when the races are provided substantially equal facilities, even though these facilities be separate. ...

The plaintiffs contend that segregated public schools are not “equal” and cannot be made “equal,” and that hence they are deprived of the equal protection of the laws. Because of the obvious importance of the question presented, the court took jurisdiction. Argument was heard in the 1952 term, and reargument was heard this term on certain questions propounded by the court.



...

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.

In *Sweatt v. Painter*, *supra*, in finding that a segregated law school for Negroes could not provide them equal educational opportunities, this court relied in large part on “those qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which make for greatness in a law school.” In *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, *supra*, the court, in requiring that a Negro admitted to a white graduate school be treated like all other students, again resorted to intangible considerations: “ ... His ability to study, to engage in discussions and exchange views with other students, and, in general, to learn his profession.” Such considerations apply with added force to children in grade and high schools. To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. The effect of this separation on their educational



opportunities was well stated by the finding in the Kansas case by a court which nevertheless felt compelled to rule against the Negro plaintiffs:

“Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system.”

Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, this finding is amply supported by modern authority. Any language in *Plessy v. Ferguson* contrary to this finding is rejected.

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. ...

Because these are class actions, because of the wide applicability of this decision, and because of the great variety of local conditions, the formulation of decrees in these cases presents problems of considerable complexity. On reargument, the consideration of appropriate relief was necessarily subordinated to the primary question — the constitutionality of segregation in public education. We have now announced that such segregation is a denial of the equal protection of the laws. ...

[Source: *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). Available online via National Archives (<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=87&page=transcript>).]



# 191. Primary Source: Richard Nixon on the American Standard of Living (1959)

*As Cold War tensions eased, exhibitions allowed for Americans and Soviets to survey the other's culture and way of life. In 1959, the Russians held an exhibition in New York, and the Americans in Moscow. A videotaped discussion between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev, the so-called "Kitchen Debate," won Richard Nixon acclaim at home for his articulate defense of the American standard of living. In the following extract from July 24, 1959, Nixon opened the American Exhibition in Moscow.*

I am honored on behalf of President Eisenhower to open this American Exhibition in Moscow... Among the questions which some might raise with regard to our Exhibition are these: To what extent does this Exhibition accurately present life in the United States as it really is? Can only the wealthy people afford the things exhibited here? What about the inequality, the injustice, the other weaknesses which are supposed to be inevitable in a Capitalist society?

...

Let us start with some of the things in this Exhibit. You will see a house, a car, a television set — each the newest and most modern of its type we can produce. But can only the rich in the United States afford such things? If this were the case we would have to include in our definition of rich the millions of America's wage earners.

Let us take, for example, our 16 million factory workers. The average weekly wage of a factory worker in America is \$90.54. With this income he can buy and afford to own a house, a television set, and a car in the price range of those you will see in this Exhibit.



What is more, the great majority of American wage earners have done exactly that.

Putting it another way, there are 44 million families in the United States. Twenty-five million of these families live in houses or apartments that have as much or more floor space than the one you see in this Exhibit. Thirty-one million families own their own homes and the land on which they are built. America's 44 million families own a total of 56 million cars, 50 million television sets and 143 million radio sets. And they buy an average of 9 dresses and suits and 14 pairs of shoes per family per year.

Why do I cite these figures? ... [W]hat these statistics do dramatically demonstrate is this: That the United States, the world's largest capitalist country, has from the standpoint of distribution of wealth come closest to the ideal of prosperity for all in a classless society.

As our revered Abraham Lincoln said "...We do not propose any war upon capital; we do wish to allow the humblest man an equal chance to get rich with everybody else."

The 67 million American wage earners are not the down-trodden masses depicted by the critics of capitalism in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. They hold their heads high as they proudly enjoy the highest standard of living of any people in the world's history.

The caricature of capitalism as a predatory, monopolist dominated society, is as hopelessly out of date, as far as the United States is concerned, as a wooden plow.

This does not mean that we have solved all of our problems. Many of you have heard about the problem of unemployment in the United States. What is not so well known is that the average period that these unemployed were out of work even during our recent recession was less than three months. And during that period the unemployed had an average income from unemployment insurance funds of \$131.49 per month. The day has passed in the United States when the unemployed were left to shift for themselves.

The same can be said for the aged, the sick, and others who are



unable to earn enough to provide an adequate standard of living. An expanded program of Social Security combined with other government and private programs provides aid and assistance for those who are unable to care for themselves. For example, the average retired couple on Social Security in the United States receives an income of \$116 per month apart from the additional amounts they receive from private pensions and savings accounts.

What about the strikes which take place in our economy the latest example of which is the steel strike which is going on? The answer is that here we have a firsthand example of how a free economy works. The workers right to join with other workers in a union and to bargain collectively with management is recognized and protected by law. No man or woman in the United States can be forced to work for wages he considers to be inadequate or under conditions he believes are unsatisfactory.

Another problem which causes us concern is that of racial discrimination in our country. We are making great progress in solving this problem but we shall never be satisfied until we make the American ideal of equality of opportunity a reality for every citizen regardless of his race, creed or color.

We have other problems in our society but we are confident that for us our system of government provides the best means for solving them.

...

The Soviet Exhibition in New York and the American Exhibition which we open tonight are dramatic examples of what a great future lies in store for all of us if we can devote the tremendous energies of our peoples and the resources of our countries to the ways of peace rather than the ways of war.

The last half of the twentieth century can be the darkest or the brightest page in the history of civilization. The decision is in our hands to make. The genius of the men who produced the magnificent achievements represented by these two Exhibitions can be directed either to the destruction of civilization or to the creation of the best life that men have ever enjoyed on this earth.



[Source: *Bulletin* (The Department of State) XLI (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office: August 17, 1959), 227-236. Available online via The Internet Archive ([https://archive.org/details/departmentofstat411959unit\\_0](https://archive.org/details/departmentofstat411959unit_0)).]







PART XXVIII

CONTESTING FUTURES:  
AMERICA IN THE 1960S







## 192. Introduction

The 1960s was a decade of hope, change, and war that witnessed an important shift in American culture. Citizens from all walks of life sought to expand the meaning of the American promise. Their efforts helped unravel the national consensus and laid bare a far more fragmented society. As a result, men and women from all ethnic groups attempted to reform American society to make it more equitable. The United States also began to take unprecedented steps to exert what it believed to be a positive influence on the world. At the same time, the country's role in Vietnam revealed the limits of military power and the contradictions of U.S. foreign

policy. The posthumous portrait of John F. Kennedy captures this mix of the era's promise and defeat. His election encouraged many to work for a better future, not just for the middle class but for the marginalized as well. Kennedy's running mate, Lyndon B. Johnson, also envisioned a country characterized by the social and economic freedoms established during the New Deal years. Kennedy's assassination in 1963, and the assassinations five years later of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, made it dramatically



*In Aaron Shikler's official portrait of John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1970), the president stands with arms folded, apparently deep in thought. The portrait was painted seven years after Kennedy's death, at the request of his widow, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. It depicts the president with his head down, because Shikler did not wish to paint the dead man's eyes.*



clear that not all Americans shared this vision of a more inclusive democracy.

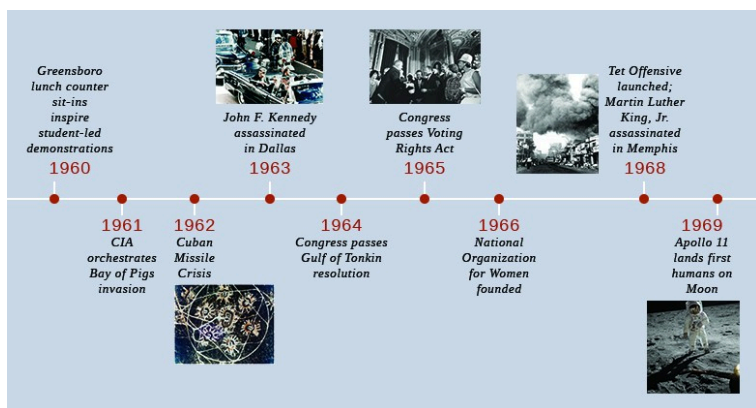


# 193. The Kennedy Promise

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Assess Kennedy's Cold War strategy
- Describe Kennedy's contribution to the civil rights movement



In the 1950s, President Dwight D. Eisenhower presided over a United States that prized conformity over change. Although change naturally occurred, as it does in every era, it was slow and greeted warily. By the 1960s, however, the pace of change had quickened and its scope broadened, as restive and energetic waves of World War II veterans and baby boomers of both sexes and all ethnicities began to make their influence felt politically, economically, and culturally.



No one symbolized the hopes and energies of the new decade more than John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the nation's new, young, and seemingly healthful, president. Kennedy had emphasized the country's aspirations and challenges as a "new frontier" when accepting his party's nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, California.

## THE NEW FRONTIER

The son of Joseph P. Kennedy, a wealthy Boston business owner and former ambassador to Great Britain, John F. Kennedy graduated from Harvard University and went on to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1946. Even though he was young and inexperienced, his reputation as a war hero who had saved the crew of his PT boat after it was destroyed by the Japanese helped him to win election over more seasoned candidates, as did his father's fortune. In 1952, he was elected to the U.S. Senate for the first of two terms. For many, including Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., a historian and member of Kennedy's administration, Kennedy represented a bright, shining future in which the United States would lead the way in solving the most daunting problems facing the world.

Kennedy's popular reputation as a great politician undoubtedly owes much to the style and attitude he personified. He and his wife Jacqueline conveyed a sense of optimism and youthfulness. "Jackie" was an elegant first lady who wore designer dresses, served French food in the White House, and invited classical musicians to entertain at state functions. "Jack" Kennedy, or JFK, went sailing off the coast of his family's Cape Cod estate and socialized with celebrities. Few knew that behind Kennedy's healthful and sporty image was a gravely ill man whose wartime injuries caused him daily agony.





(a)



(b)

*John F. Kennedy and first lady Jacqueline, shown here in the White House in 1962 (a) and watching the America's Cup race that same year (b), brought youth, glamour, and optimism to Washington, DC, and the nation.*

Nowhere was Kennedy's style more evident than in the first televised presidential debate held on September 23, 1960, between him and his Republican opponent Vice President Richard M. Nixon. Seventy million viewers watched the debate on television; millions more heard it on the radio. Radio listeners judged Nixon the winner, whereas those who watched the debate on television believed the more telegenic Kennedy made the better showing.

View television footage of the first [Kennedy-Nixon debate](#) at the JFK Presidential Library and Museum.

Kennedy did not appeal to all voters, however. Many feared that because he was Roman Catholic, his decisions would be influenced by the Pope. Even traditional Democratic supporters, like the head of the United Auto Workers, Walter Reuther, feared that a Catholic candidate would lose the support of Protestants. Many southern



Democrats also disliked Kennedy because of his liberal position on civil rights. To shore up support for Kennedy in the South, Lyndon B. Johnson, the Protestant Texan who was Senate majority leader, was added to the Democratic ticket as the vice presidential candidate. In the end, Kennedy won the election by the closest margin since 1888, defeating Nixon with only 0.01 percent more of the record sixty-seven million votes cast. His victory in the Electoral College was greater: 303 electoral votes to Nixon's 219. Kennedy's win made him both the youngest man elected to the presidency and the first U.S. president born in the twentieth century.

Kennedy dedicated his inaugural address to the theme of a new future for the United States. "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country," he challenged his fellow Americans. His lofty goals ranged from fighting poverty to winning the space race against the Soviet Union with a moon landing. He assembled an administration of energetic people assured of their ability to shape the future. Dean Rusk was named secretary of state. Robert McNamara, the former president of Ford Motor Company, became secretary of defense. Kennedy appointed his younger brother Robert as attorney general, much to the chagrin of many who viewed the appointment as a blatant example of nepotism.

Kennedy's domestic reform plans remained hampered, however, by his narrow victory and lack of support from members of his own party, especially southern Democrats. As a result, he remained hesitant to propose new civil rights legislation. His achievements came primarily in poverty relief and care for the disabled. Unemployment benefits were expanded, the food stamps program was piloted, and the school lunch program was extended to more students. In October 1963, the passage of the Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act increased support for public mental health services.



## KENNEDY THE COLD WARRIOR

Kennedy focused most of his energies on foreign policy, an arena in which he had been interested since his college years and in which, like all presidents, he was less constrained by the dictates of Congress. Kennedy, who had promised in his inaugural address to protect the interests of the “free world,” engaged in Cold War politics on a variety of fronts. For example, in response to the lead that the Soviets had taken in the space race when Yuri Gagarin became the first human to successfully orbit the earth, Kennedy urged Congress to not only put a man into space but also land an American on the moon, a goal finally accomplished in 1969. This investment advanced a variety of military technologies, especially the nation’s long-range missile capability, resulting in numerous profitable spin-offs for the aviation and communication industries. It also funded a growing middle class of government workers, engineers, and defense contractors in states ranging from California to Texas to Florida—a region that would come to be known as the Sun Belt—becoming a symbol of American technological superiority. At the same time, however, the use of massive federal resources for space technologies did not change the economic outlook for low-income communities and underprivileged regions.





*On May 5, 1961, Alan Shepard became the first American to travel into space, as millions across the country watched the television coverage of his Apollo 11 mission, including Vice President Johnson, President Kennedy, and Jacqueline Kennedy in the White House. (credit: National Archives and Records Administration)*

To counter Soviet influence in the developing world, Kennedy supported a variety of measures. One of these was the Alliance for Progress, which collaborated with the governments of Latin American countries to promote economic growth and social stability in nations whose populations might find themselves drawn to communism. Kennedy also established the Agency for International Development to oversee the distribution of foreign aid, and he founded the Peace Corps, which recruited idealistic young people to undertake humanitarian projects in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He hoped that by augmenting the food supply and improving healthcare and education, the U.S. government could encourage developing nations to align themselves with the United States and reject Soviet or Chinese overtures. The first group of Peace Corps volunteers departed for the four corners of the globe in 1961, serving as an instrument of “soft power” in the Cold War.

Kennedy’s various aid projects, like the Peace Corps, fit closely with his administration’s flexible response, which Robert McNamara



advocated as a better alternative to the all-or-nothing defensive strategy of mutually assured destruction favored during Eisenhower's presidency. The plan was to develop different strategies, tactics, and even military capabilities to respond more appropriately to small or medium-sized insurgencies, and political or diplomatic crises. One component of flexible response was the Green Berets, a U.S. Army Special Forces unit trained in counterinsurgency—the military suppression of rebel and nationalist groups in foreign nations. Much of the Kennedy administration's new approach to defense, however, remained focused on the ability and willingness of the United States to wage both conventional and nuclear warfare, and Kennedy continued to call for increases in the American nuclear arsenal.

## Cuba

Kennedy's multifaceted approach to national defense is exemplified by his careful handling of the Communist government of Fidel Castro in Cuba. In January 1959, following the overthrow of the corrupt and dictatorial regime of Fulgencio Batista, Castro assumed leadership of the new Cuban government. The progressive reforms he began indicated that he favored Communism, and his pro-Soviet foreign policy frightened the Eisenhower administration, which asked the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to find a way to remove him from power. Rather than have the U.S. military invade the small island nation, less than one hundred miles from Florida, and risk the world's criticism, the CIA instead trained a small force of Cuban exiles for the job. After landing at the Bay of Pigs on the Cuban coast, these insurgents, the CIA believed, would inspire their countrymen to rise up and topple Castro's regime. The United States also promised air support for the invasion.

Kennedy agreed to support the previous administration's plans, and on April 17, 1961, approximately fourteen hundred Cuban exiles



stormed ashore at the designated spot. However, Kennedy feared domestic criticism and worried about Soviet retaliation elsewhere in the world, such as Berlin. He cancelled the anticipated air support, which enabled the Cuban army to easily defeat the insurgents. The hoped-for uprising of the Cuban people also failed to occur. The surviving members of the exile army were taken into custody.

The Bay of Pigs invasion was a major foreign policy disaster for President Kennedy and highlighted Cuba's military vulnerability to the Castro administration. The following year, the Soviet Union sent troops and technicians to Cuba to strengthen its new ally against further U.S. military plots. Then, on October 14, U.S. spy planes took aerial photographs that confirmed the presence of long-range ballistic missile sites in Cuba. The United States was now within easy reach of Soviet nuclear warheads.



(a)



(b)

*This low-level U.S. Navy photograph of San Cristobal, Cuba, clearly shows one of the sites built to launch intermediate-range missiles at the United States (a). As the date indicates, it was taken on the last day of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Following the crisis, Kennedy met with the reconnaissance pilots who flew the Cuban missions (b). credit a: modification of work by National Archives and Records Administration; credit b: modification of work by Central Intelligence Agency)*

On October 22, Kennedy demanded that Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev remove the missiles. He also ordered a naval quarantine placed around Cuba to prevent Soviet ships from approaching.



Despite his use of the word “quarantine” instead of “blockade,” for a blockade was considered an act of war, a potential war with the Soviet Union was nevertheless on the president’s mind. As U.S. ships headed for Cuba, the army was told to prepare for war, and Kennedy appeared on national television to declare his intention to defend the Western Hemisphere from Soviet aggression.

The world held its breath awaiting the Soviet reply. Realizing how serious the United States was, Khrushchev sought a peaceful solution to the crisis, overruling those in his government who urged a harder stance. Behind the scenes, Robert Kennedy and Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin worked toward a compromise that would allow both superpowers to back down without either side’s seeming intimidated by the other. On October 26, Khrushchev agreed to remove the Russian missiles in exchange for Kennedy’s promise not to invade Cuba. On October 27, Kennedy’s agreement was made public, and the crisis ended. Not made public, but nevertheless part of the agreement, was Kennedy’s promise to remove U.S. warheads from Turkey, as close to Soviet targets as the Cuban missiles had been to American ones.

The showdown between the United States and the Soviet Union over Cuba’s missiles had put the world on the brink of a nuclear war. Both sides already had long-range bombers with nuclear weapons airborne or ready for launch, and were only hours away from the first strike. In the long run, this nearly catastrophic example of nuclear brinksmanship ended up making the world safer. A telephone “hot line” was installed, linking Washington and Moscow to avert future crises, and in 1963, Kennedy and Khrushchev signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty, prohibiting tests of nuclear weapons in Earth’s atmosphere.

## Vietnam

Cuba was not the only arena in which the United States sought



to contain the advance of Communism. In Indochina, nationalist independence movements, most notably Vietnam's Viet Minh under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, had strong Communist sympathies. President Harry S. Truman had no love for France's colonial regime in Southeast Asia but did not want to risk the loyalty of its Western European ally against the Soviet Union. In 1950, the Truman administration sent a small military advisory group to Vietnam and provided financial aid to help France defeat the Viet Minh.

In 1954, Vietnamese forces finally defeated the French, and the country was temporarily divided at the seventeenth parallel. Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh controlled the North. In the South, the last Vietnamese emperor and ally to France, Bao Dai, named the French-educated, anti-Communist Ngo Dinh Diem as his prime minister. But Diem refused to abide by the Geneva Accords, the treaty ending the conflict that called for countrywide national elections in 1956, with the victor to rule a reunified nation. After a fraudulent election in the South in 1955, he ousted Bao Dai and proclaimed himself president of the Republic of Vietnam. He cancelled the 1956 elections in the South and began to round up Communists and supporters of Ho Chi Minh, who won the election in the North.

Realizing that Diem would never agree to the reunification of the country under Ho Chi Minh's leadership, the North Vietnamese began efforts to overthrow the government of the South by encouraging insurgents to attack South Vietnamese officials. By 1960, North Vietnam had also created the National Liberation Front (NLF) to resist Diem and carry out an insurgency in the South. The United States, fearing the spread of Communism under



*Following the French retreat from Indochina, the United States stepped in to prevent what it believed was a building Communist threat in the region. Under President Kennedy's leadership, the United States sent thousands of military advisors to Vietnam. (credit: Abbie Rowe)*



Ho Chi Minh, supported Diem, assuming he would create a democratic, pro-Western government in South Vietnam. However, Diem's oppressive and corrupt government made him a very unpopular ruler, particularly with farmers, students, and Buddhists, and many in the South actively assisted the NLF and North Vietnam in trying to overthrow his government.

When Kennedy took office, Diem's government was faltering. Continuing the policies of the Eisenhower administration, Kennedy supplied Diem with money and military advisors to prop up his government. By November 1963, there were sixteen thousand U.S. troops in Vietnam, training members of that country's special forces and flying air missions that dumped defoliant chemicals on the countryside to expose North Vietnamese and NLF forces and supply routes. A few weeks before Kennedy's own death, Diem and his brother Nhu were assassinated by South Vietnamese military officers after U.S. officials had indicated their support for a new regime.

## TENTATIVE STEPS TOWARD CIVIL RIGHTS

Cold War concerns, which guided U.S. policy in Cuba and Vietnam, also motivated the Kennedy administration's steps toward racial equality. Realizing that legal segregation and widespread discrimination hurt the country's chances of gaining allies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the federal government increased efforts to secure the civil rights of African Americans in the 1960s. During his presidential campaign, Kennedy had intimated his support for civil rights, and his efforts to secure the release of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., who was arrested following a demonstration, won him the African American vote. Lacking widespread backing in Congress, however, and anxious not to



offend white southerners, Kennedy was cautious in assisting African Americans in their fight for full citizenship rights.

His strongest focus was on securing the voting rights of African Americans. Kennedy feared the loss of support from southern white Democrats and the impact a struggle over civil rights could have on his foreign policy agenda as well as on his reelection in 1964. But he thought voter registration drives far preferable to the boycotts, sit-ins, and integration marches that had generated such intense global media coverage in previous years. Encouraged by Congress's passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1960, which permitted federal courts to appoint referees to guarantee that qualified persons would be registered to vote, Kennedy focused on the passage of a constitutional amendment outlawing poll taxes, a tactic that southern states used to disenfranchise African American voters. Originally proposed by President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights, the idea had been largely forgotten during Eisenhower's time in office. Kennedy, however, revived it and convinced Spessard Holland, a conservative Florida senator, to introduce the proposed amendment in Congress. It passed both houses of Congress and was sent to the states for ratification in September 1962.



Kennedy also reacted to the demands of the civil rights movement for equality in education. For example, when African American student James Meredith, encouraged by Kennedy's speeches, attempted to enroll at the segregated University of Mississippi in 1962, riots broke out on campus. The president responded by sending the U.S. Army and National Guard to Oxford, Mississippi, to support the U.S. Marshals that his brother Robert, the attorney general, had dispatched.



*Escorted by a U.S. marshal and the assistant attorney general for civil rights, James Meredith (center) enters the University of Mississippi over the riotous protests of white southerners. Meredith later attempted a “March against Fear” in 1966 to protest the inability of southern African Americans to vote. His walk ended when a passing motorist shot and wounded him. (credit: Library of Congress)*

Following similar violence at the University of Alabama when two African American students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, attempted to enroll in 1963, Kennedy responded with a bill that would give the federal government greater power to enforce school desegregation, prohibit segregation in public accommodations, and outlaw discrimination in employment. Kennedy would not live to see his bill enacted; it would become law during Lyndon Johnson's administration as the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

## TRAGEDY IN DALLAS

Although his stance on civil rights had won him support in the African American community and his steely performance during the Cuban Missile Crisis had led his overall popularity to surge, Kennedy understood that he had to solidify his base in the South to secure his reelection. On November 21, 1963, he accompanied Lyndon Johnson



to Texas to rally his supporters. The next day, shots rang out as Kennedy's motorcade made its way through the streets of Dallas. Seriously injured, Kennedy was rushed to Parkland Hospital and pronounced dead.

The gunfire that killed Kennedy appeared to come from the upper stories of the Texas School Book Depository building; later that day, Lee Harvey Oswald, an employee at the depository and a trained sniper, was arrested. Two days later, while being transferred from Dallas police headquarters to the county jail, Oswald was shot and killed by Jack Ruby, a local nightclub owner who claimed he acted to avenge the president.

Almost immediately, rumors began to circulate regarding the Kennedy assassination, and conspiracy theorists, pointing to the unlikely coincidence of Oswald's murder a few days after Kennedy's, began to propose alternate theories about the events. To quiet the rumors and allay fears that the



*Lee Harvey Oswald (center) was arrested at the Texas Theatre in Dallas a few hours after shooting President Kennedy.*

government was hiding evidence, Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy's successor, appointed a fact-finding commission headed by Earl Warren, chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, to examine all the evidence and render a verdict. The Warren Commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone and there had been no conspiracy. The commission's ruling failed to satisfy many, and multiple theories have sprung up over time. No credible evidence has ever been uncovered, however, to prove either that someone other than Oswald murdered Kennedy or that Oswald acted with co-conspirators.



## Section Summary

The arrival of the Kennedys in the White House seemed to signal a new age of youth, optimism, and confidence. Kennedy spoke of a “new frontier” and promoted the expansion of programs to aid the poor, protect African Americans’ right to vote, and improve African Americans’ employment and education opportunities. For the most part, however, Kennedy focused on foreign policy and countering the threat of Communism—especially in Cuba, where he successfully defused the Cuban Missile Crisis, and in Vietnam, to which he sent advisors and troops to support the South Vietnamese government. The tragedy of Kennedy’s assassination in Dallas brought an early end to the era, leaving Americans to wonder whether his vice president and successor, Lyndon Johnson, would bring Kennedy’s vision for the nation to fruition.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1054>

### *Review Question*

1. What steps did Kennedy take to combat



Communism?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Kennedy's economic development programs, supported by the Peace Corps, were intended to reduce poverty in developing nations so their citizens would be less attracted to Communism. After the Bay of Pigs invasion failed to overthrow the government of Fidel Castro, Kennedy demanded that the Soviet Union remove intermediate-range missiles from Cuba. He also increased support for the anti-Communist government in South Vietnam and sent advisors and troops to train the South Vietnamese army.

### *Glossary*

**counterinsurgency** a new military strategy under the Kennedy administration to suppress nationalist independence movements and rebel groups in the developing world

**flexible response** a military strategy that allows for the



possibility of responding to threats in a variety of ways, including counterinsurgency, conventional war, and nuclear strikes

**naval quarantine** Kennedy's use of ships to prevent Soviet access to Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis



# 194. Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the major accomplishments of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society
- Identify the legal advances made in the area of civil rights
- Explain how Lyndon Johnson deepened the American commitment in Vietnam

On November 27, 1963, a few days after taking the oath of office, President Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress and vowed to accomplish the goals that John F. Kennedy had set and to expand the role of the federal government in securing economic opportunity and civil rights for all. Johnson brought to his presidency a vision of a Great Society in which everyone could share in the opportunities for a better life that the United States offered, and in which the words “liberty and justice for all” would have real meaning.



# THE GREAT SOCIETY

In May 1964, in a speech at the University of Michigan, Lyndon Johnson described in detail his vision of the Great Society he planned to create. When the Eighty-Ninth Congress convened the following January, he and his supporters began their effort to turn the promise into reality. By combatting racial discrimination and attempting to eliminate poverty, the reforms of the Johnson administration changed the nation.



(a)



(b)

*In a speech at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on May 22, 1964 (a), President Johnson announced some of his goals for the Great Society. These included rebuilding cities, preserving the natural environment, and improving education. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in his hometown of Johnson City, Texas, alongside his childhood schoolteacher, Kate Deadrich Loney (b). (credit a: modification of work by Cecil Stoughton)*

One of the chief pieces of legislation that Congress passed in 1965 was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Johnson, a former teacher, realized that a lack of education was the primary cause of poverty and other social problems. Educational reform was thus an important pillar of the society he hoped to build. This act provided increased federal funding to both elementary and



secondary schools, allocating more than \$1 billion for the purchase of books and library materials, and the creation of educational programs for disadvantaged children. The Higher Education Act, signed into law the same year, provided scholarships and low-interest loans for the poor, increased federal funding for colleges and universities, and created a corps of teachers to serve schools in impoverished areas.

Education was not the only area toward which Johnson directed his attention. Consumer protection laws were also passed that improved the safety of meat and poultry, placed warning labels on cigarette packages, required “truth in lending” by creditors, and set safety standards for motor vehicles. Funds were provided to improve public transportation and to fund high-speed mass transit. To protect the environment, the Johnson administration created laws protecting air and water quality, regulating the disposal of solid waste, preserving wilderness areas, and protecting endangered species. All of these laws fit within Johnson’s plan to make the United States a better place to live. Perhaps influenced by Kennedy’s commitment to the arts, Johnson also signed legislation creating the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, which provided funding for artists and scholars. The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 authorized the creation of the private, not-for-profit Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which helped launch the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) in 1970.

In 1965, the Johnson administration also encouraged Congress to pass the Immigration and Nationality Act, which essentially overturned legislation from the 1920s that had favored immigrants from western and northern Europe over those from eastern and southern Europe. The law lifted severe restrictions on immigration from Asia and gave preference to immigrants with family ties in the United States and immigrants with desirable skills. Although the measure seemed less significant than many of the other legislative victories of the Johnson administration at the time, it opened the door for a new era in immigration and made possible the formation



of Asian and Latin American immigrant communities in the following decades.

While these laws touched on important aspects of the Great Society, the centerpiece of Johnson's plan was the eradication of poverty in the United States. The war on poverty, as he termed it, was fought on many fronts. The 1965 Housing and Urban Development Act offered grants to improve city housing and subsidized rents for the poor. The Model Cities program likewise provided money for urban development projects and the building of public housing.

The Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964 established and funded a variety of programs to assist the poor in finding jobs. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), first administered by President Kennedy's brother-in-law Sargent Shriver, coordinated programs such as the Jobs Corps and the Neighborhood Youth Corps, which provided job training programs and work experience for the disadvantaged. Volunteers in Service to America recruited people to offer educational programs and other community services in poor areas, just as the Peace Corps did abroad. The Community Action Program, also under the OEO, funded local Community Action Agencies, organizations created and managed by residents of disadvantaged communities to improve their own lives and those of their neighbors. The Head Start program, intended to prepare low-income children for elementary school, was also under the OEO until it was transferred to Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1969.



The EOA fought rural poverty by providing low-interest loans to those wishing to improve their farms or start businesses. EOA funds were also used to provide housing and education for migrant farm workers. Other legislation created jobs in Appalachia, one of the poorest regions in the United States, and brought programs to Indian reservations. One of EOA's successes was the Rough



*President Johnson visits a poor family in Appalachia in 1964. Government initiatives designed to combat poverty helped rural communities like this one by providing low-interest loans and housing. (credit: Cecil Stoughton)*

Rock Demonstration School on the Navajo Reservation that, while respecting Navajo traditions and culture, also trained people for careers and jobs outside the reservation.

The Johnson administration, realizing the nation's elderly were among its poorest and most disadvantaged citizens, passed the Social Security Act of 1965. The most profound change made by this act was the creation of Medicare, a program to pay the medical expenses of those over sixty-five. Although opposed by the American Medical Association, which feared the creation of a national healthcare system, the new program was supported by most citizens because it would benefit all social classes, not just the poor. The act and subsequent amendments to it also provided coverage for self-employed people in certain occupations and expanded the number of disabled who qualified for benefits. The following year, the Medicaid program allotted federal funds to pay for medical care for the poor.



## JOHNSON'S COMMITMENT TO CIVIL RIGHTS

The eradication of poverty was matched in importance by the Great Society's advancement of civil rights. Indeed, the condition of the poor could not be alleviated if racial discrimination limited their access to jobs, education, and housing. Realizing this, Johnson drove the long-awaited civil rights act, proposed by Kennedy in June 1963 in the wake of riots at the University of Alabama, through Congress. Under Kennedy's leadership, the bill had passed the House of Representatives but was stalled in the Senate by a filibuster. Johnson, a master politician, marshaled his considerable personal influence and memories of his fallen predecessor to break the filibuster. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the most far-reaching civil rights act yet passed by Congress, banned discrimination in public accommodations, sought to aid schools in efforts to desegregate, and prohibited federal funding of programs that permitted racial segregation. Further, it barred discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or gender, and established an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.



Protecting African Americans' right to vote was as important as ending racial inequality in the United States. In January 1964, the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, prohibiting the imposition of poll taxes on voters, was finally ratified. Poverty would no longer serve as an obstacle to voting. Other impediments remained, however. Attempts to register southern African American voters encountered white resistance, and protests against this interference often met with violence. On March 7, 1965, a planned protest march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery,



*African American marchers in Selma, Alabama, were attacked by state police officers in 1965, and the resulting “Bloody Sunday” helped create support for the civil rights movement among northern whites. (credit: Library of Congress)*

turned into “Bloody Sunday” when marchers crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge encountered a cordon of state police, wielding batons and tear gas. Images of white brutality appeared on television screens throughout the nation and in newspapers around the world.

Deeply disturbed by the violence in Alabama and the refusal of Governor George Wallace to address it, Johnson introduced a bill in Congress that would remove obstacles for African American voters and lend federal support to their cause. His proposal, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, prohibited states and local governments from passing laws that discriminated against voters on the basis of race. Literacy tests and other barriers to voting that had kept ethnic minorities from the polls were thus outlawed. Following the passage of the act, a quarter of a million African Americans registered to vote, and by 1967, the majority of African Americans had done so. Johnson’s final piece of civil rights legislation was the Civil Rights



Act of 1968, which prohibited discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, national origin, or religion.



(a)



(b)

*The Voting Rights Act (a) was signed into law on August 6, 1965, in the presence of major figures of the civil rights movement, including Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. (b).*

## INCREASED COMMITMENT IN VIETNAM

Building the Great Society had been Lyndon Johnson's biggest priority, and he effectively used his decades of experience in building legislative majorities in a style that ranged from diplomacy to quid pro quo deals to bullying. In the summer of 1964, he deployed these political skills to secure congressional approval for a new strategy in Vietnam—with fateful consequences.

President Johnson had never been the cold warrior Kennedy was, but believed that the credibility of the nation and his office depended on maintaining a foreign policy of containment. When, on August 2, the U.S. destroyer USS *Maddox* conducted an arguably provocative intelligence-gathering mission in the gulf of Tonkin, it reported an attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. Two days later, the *Maddox* was supposedly struck again, and a second ship,



the USS *Turner Joy*, reported that it also had been fired upon. The North Vietnamese denied the second attack, and Johnson himself doubted the reliability of the crews' report. The National Security Agency has since revealed that the August 4 attacks did not occur. Relying on information available at the time, however, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara reported to Congress that U.S. ships had been fired upon in international waters while conducting routine operations. On August 10, with only two dissenting votes, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, giving President Johnson the authority to use military force in Vietnam without asking Congress for a declaration of war. The resolution dramatically increased the power of the U.S. president and transformed the American role in Vietnam from advisor to combatant.

In 1965, large-scale U.S. bombing of North Vietnam began. The intent of the campaign, which lasted three years under various names, was to force the North to end its support for the insurgency in the South. More than 200,000 U.S. combat troops were also sent to South Vietnam. At first, most of the American public supported the president's actions in Vietnam. Support began to ebb, however, as more troops were deployed. Frustrated by losses suffered by the South's Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), General William Westmoreland called for the United States to take more responsibility for fighting the war. By April 1966, more Americans were being killed in battle than ARVN troops. Johnson, however, maintained that the war could be won if the United States stayed the course, and in November 1967, Westmoreland proclaimed the end was in sight.

To hear one soldier's story about his time in Vietnam, listen to [Sergeant Charles G. Richardson's recollections](#) of his experience on the ground and his reflections on his military service.





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pimaushistory2/?p=237#oembed-1](https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=237#oembed-1)

Westmoreland's predictions were called into question, however, when in January 1968, the North Vietnamese launched their most aggressive assault on the South, deploying close to eighty-five thousand troops. During the Tet Offensive, as these attacks were known, nearly one hundred cities in the South were attacked, including the capital of Saigon. In heavy fighting, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces recaptured all the points taken by the enemy.





(a)



(b)

*During the 1968 Tet Offensive, North Vietnamese and South Communist rebel armies known as Viet Cong attacked South Vietnamese and U.S. targets throughout Vietnam (a), with Saigon as the focus (b). Tet, the lunar New Year, was an important holiday in Vietnam and temporary ceasefires usually took place at this time. (credit a: modification of work by Central Intelligence Agency)*

Although North Vietnamese forces suffered far more casualties than the roughly forty-one hundred U.S. soldiers killed, public opinion in the United States, fueled by graphic images provided in unprecedented media coverage, turned against the war. Disastrous surprise attacks like the Tet Offensive persuaded many that the war would not be over soon and raised doubts about whether Johnson's administration was telling the truth about the real state of affairs. In May 1968, with over 400,000 U.S. soldiers in Vietnam, Johnson began peace talks with the North.

It was too late to save Johnson himself, however. Many of the most outspoken critics of the war were Democratic politicians whose opposition began to erode unity within the party. Minnesota senator Eugene McCarthy, who had called for an end to the war



and the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, received nearly as many votes in the New Hampshire presidential primary as Johnson did, even though he had been expected to fare very poorly. McCarthy's success in New Hampshire encouraged Robert Kennedy to announce his candidacy as well. Johnson, suffering health problems and realizing his actions in Vietnam had hurt his public standing, announced that he would not seek reelection and withdrew from the 1968 presidential race.

## THE END OF THE GREAT SOCIETY

Perhaps the greatest casualty of the nation's war in Vietnam was the Great Society. As the war escalated, the money spent to fund it also increased, leaving less to pay for the many social programs Johnson had created to lift Americans out of poverty. Johnson knew he could not achieve his Great Society while spending money to wage the war. He was unwilling to withdraw from Vietnam, however, for fear that the world would perceive this action as evidence of American failure and doubt the ability of the United States to carry out its responsibilities as a superpower.

Vietnam doomed the Great Society in other ways as well. Dreams of racial harmony suffered, as many African Americans, angered by the failure of Johnson's programs to alleviate severe poverty in the inner cities, rioted in frustration. Their anger was heightened by the fact that a disproportionate number of African Americans were fighting and dying in Vietnam. Nearly two-thirds of eligible African Americans were drafted, whereas draft deferments for college, exemptions for skilled workers in the military industrial complex, and officer training programs allowed white middle-class youth to either avoid the draft or volunteer for a military branch of their choice. As a result, less than one-third of white men were drafted.

Although the Great Society failed to eliminate suffering or increase civil rights to the extent that Johnson wished, it made



a significant difference in people's lives. By the end of Johnson's administration, the percentage of people living below the poverty line had been cut nearly in half. While more people of color than whites continued to live in poverty, the percentage of poor African Americans had decreased dramatically. The creation of Medicare and Medicaid as well as the expansion of Social Security benefits and welfare payments improved the lives of many, while increased federal funding for education enabled more people to attend college than ever before. Conservative critics argued that, by expanding the responsibilities of the federal government to care for the poor, Johnson had hurt both taxpayers and the poor themselves. Aid to the poor, many maintained, would not only fail to solve the problem of poverty but would also encourage people to become dependent on government "handouts" and lose their desire and ability to care for themselves—an argument that many found intuitively compelling but which lacked conclusive evidence. These same critics also accused Johnson of saddling the United States with a large debt as a result of the deficit spending (funded by borrowing) in which he had engaged.

## Section Summary

Lyndon Johnson began his administration with dreams of fulfilling his fallen predecessor's civil rights initiative and accomplishing his own plans to improve lives by eradicating poverty in the United States. His social programs, investments in education, support for the arts, and commitment to civil rights changed the



lives of countless people and transformed society in many ways. However, Johnson's insistence on maintaining American commitments in Vietnam, a policy begun by his predecessors, hurt both his ability to realize his vision of the Great Society and his support among the American people.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1055>

### *Review Question*

1. How did the actions of the Johnson administration improve the lives of African Americans?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The social programs of the Great Society, such as Medicaid, job training programs, and rent subsidies, helped many poor African Americans. All African American citizens were aided by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ended discrimination in employment and prohibited segregation in public accommodations; the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited literacy tests and other racially



discriminatory restrictions on voting; and the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which outlawed discrimination in housing.

## *Glossary*

**Great Society** Lyndon Johnson's plan to eliminate poverty and racial injustice in the United States and to improve the lives of all Americans

**war on poverty** Lyndon Johnson's plan to end poverty in the United States through the extension of federal benefits, job training programs, and funding for community development



# 195. The Civil Rights Movement Marches On

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the strategies of the African American civil rights movement in the 1960s
- Discuss the rise and philosophy of Black Power
- Identify achievements of the Mexican American civil rights movement in the 1960s

During the 1960s, the federal government, encouraged by both genuine concern for the dispossessed and the realities of the Cold War, had increased its efforts to protect civil rights and ensure equal economic and educational opportunities for all. However, most of the credit for progress toward racial equality in the United States lies with grassroots activists. Indeed, it was campaigns and demonstrations by ordinary people that spurred the federal government to action. Although the African American civil rights movement was the most prominent of the crusades for racial justice, other ethnic minorities also worked to seize their piece of the American dream during the promising years of the 1960s. Many were influenced by the African American cause and often used similar tactics.



## CHANGE FROM THE BOTTOM UP

For many people inspired by the victories of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the glacial pace of progress in the segregated South was frustrating if not intolerable. In some places, such as Greensboro, North Carolina, local NAACP chapters had been influenced by whites who provided financing for the organization. This aid, together with the belief that more forceful efforts at reform would only increase white resistance, had persuaded some African American organizations to pursue a “politics of moderation” instead of attempting to radically alter the status quo. Martin Luther King Jr.’s inspirational appeal for peaceful change in the city of Greensboro in 1958, however, planted the seed for a more assertive civil rights movement.

On February 1, 1960, four sophomores at the North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College in Greensboro—Ezell Blair, Jr., Joseph McNeil, David Richmond, and Franklin McCain—entered the local Woolworth’s and sat at the lunch counter. The lunch counter was segregated, and they were refused service as they knew they would be. They had specifically chosen Woolworth’s, because it was a national chain and was thus believed to be especially vulnerable to negative publicity. Over the next few days, more protesters joined the four sophomores. Hostile whites responded with threats and taunted the students by pouring sugar and ketchup on their heads. The successful six-month-long Greensboro sit-in initiated the student phase of the African American civil rights movement and, within two months, the sit-in movement had spread to fifty-four cities in nine states.



In the words of grassroots civil rights activist Ella Baker, the students at Woolworth's wanted more than a hamburger; the movement they helped launch was about empowerment. Baker pushed for a "participatory Democracy" that built on the grassroots campaigns of active citizens instead of deferring to the leadership of educated elites and experts. As a result of her



*Businesses such as this one were among those that became targets of activists protesting segregation. Segregated businesses could be found throughout the United States; this one was located in Ohio. (credit: Library of Congress)*

actions, in April 1960, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed to carry the battle forward. Within a year, more than one hundred cities had desegregated at least some public accommodations in response to student-led demonstrations. The sit-ins inspired other forms of nonviolent protest intended to desegregate public spaces. "Sleep-ins" occupied motel lobbies, "read-ins" filled public libraries, and churches became the sites of "pray-ins."

Students also took part in the 1961 "freedom rides" sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and SNCC. The intent of the African American and white volunteers who undertook these bus rides south was to test enforcement of a U.S. Supreme Court decision prohibiting segregation on interstate transportation and to protest segregated waiting rooms in southern terminals. Departing Washington, DC, on May 4, the volunteers headed south on buses that challenged the seating order of Jim Crow segregation. Whites would ride in the back, African-Americans would sit in the front, and on other occasions, riders of different races would share the same bench seat. The freedom riders encountered little difficulty until they reached Rock Hill, South Carolina, where a mob severely beat John Lewis, a freedom rider who later became chairman of SNCC. The danger increased as the riders continued through Georgia into



Alabama, where one of the two buses was firebombed outside the town of Anniston. The second group continued to Birmingham, where the riders were attacked by the Ku Klux Klan as they attempted to disembark at the city bus station. The remaining volunteers continued to Mississippi, where they were arrested when they attempted to desegregate the waiting rooms in the Jackson bus terminal.



*Civil rights activists Bayard Rustin, Andrew Young, Rep. William Fitts Ryan, James Farmer, and John Lewis (l to r) in a newspaper photograph from 1965.*

## FREE BY '63 (OR '64 OR '65)

The grassroots efforts of people like the Freedom Riders to change discriminatory laws and longstanding racist traditions grew more widely known in the mid-1960s. The approaching centennial of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation spawned the slogan "Free by '63" among civil rights activists. As African Americans increased their calls for full rights for all Americans, many civil rights groups changed their tactics to reflect this new urgency.

Perhaps the most famous of the civil rights-era demonstrations was the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, held in August



1963, on the one hundredth anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Its purpose was to pressure President Kennedy to act on his promises regarding civil rights. The date was the eighth anniversary of the brutal racist murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi. As the crowd gathered outside the Lincoln Memorial and spilled across the National Mall, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his most famous speech. In "I Have a Dream," King called for an end to racial injustice in the United States and envisioned a harmonious, integrated society. The speech marked the high point of the civil rights movement and established the legitimacy of its goals. However, it did not prevent white terrorism in the South, nor did it permanently sustain the tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience.



(a)



(b)

*During the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (a), a huge crowd gathered on the National Mall (b) to hear the speakers. Although thousands attended, many of the march's organizers had hoped that enough people would come to Washington to shut down the city.*

Other gatherings of civil rights activists ended tragically, and some demonstrations were intended to provoke a hostile response from whites and thus reveal the inhumanity of the Jim Crow laws and their supporters. In 1963, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) led by Martin Luther King, Jr. mounted protests in some 186 cities throughout the South. The campaign in



Birmingham that began in April and extended into the fall of 1963 attracted the most notice, however, when a peaceful protest was met with violence by police, who attacked demonstrators, including children, with fire hoses and dogs. The world looked on in horror as innocent people were assaulted and thousands arrested. King himself was jailed on Easter Sunday, 1963, and, in response to the pleas of white clergymen for peace and patience, he penned one of the most significant documents of the struggle—"Letter from a Birmingham Jail." In the letter, King argued that African Americans had waited patiently for more than three hundred years to be given the rights that all human beings deserved; the time for waiting was over.

## Letter from a Birmingham Jail

By 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. had become one of the most prominent leaders of the civil rights movement, and he continued to espouse nonviolent civil disobedience as a way of registering African American resistance against unfair, discriminatory, and racist laws and behaviors. While the campaign in Birmingham began with an African American boycott of white businesses to end discrimination in employment practices and public segregation, it became a fight over free speech when King was arrested for violating a local injunction against demonstrations. King wrote his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" in response to an op-ed by eight white Alabama clergymen who complained about the SCLC's fiery tactics and argued that social change needed to be pursued gradually. The letter criticizes those who did not support the cause of civil rights:

In spite of my shattered dreams of the past, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership in the community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, serve as the channel through which our just grievances could get to the power



structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed. I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshippers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers say follow this decree because integration is morally right and the Negro is your brother. In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, “Those are social issues with which the Gospel has no real concern,” and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely other-worldly religion which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular.

Since its publication, the “Letter” has become one of the most cogent, impassioned, and succinct statements of the aspirations of the civil rights movement and the frustration over the glacial pace of progress in achieving justice and equality for all Americans.

What civil rights tactics raised the objections of the white clergymen King addressed in his letter? Why?

Some of the greatest violence during this era was aimed at those who attempted to register African Americans to vote. In 1964, SNCC, working with other civil rights groups, initiated its Mississippi Summer Project, also known as Freedom Summer. The purpose was to register African American voters in one of the most racist states in the nation. Volunteers also built “freedom schools” and community centers. SNCC invited hundreds of white middle-class students, mostly from the North, to help in the task. Many volunteers were harassed, beaten, and arrested, and African American homes and churches were burned. Three civil rights workers, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, were killed by the Ku Klux Klan. That summer, civil rights activists



Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, and Robert Parris Moses formally organized the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) as an alternative to the all-white Mississippi Democratic Party. The Democratic National Convention's organizers, however, would allow only two MFDP delegates to be seated, and they were confined to the roles of nonvoting observers.

The vision of whites and African Americans working together peacefully to end racial injustice suffered a severe blow with the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee, in April 1968. King had gone there to support sanitation workers trying to unionize. In the city, he found a divided civil rights movement; older activists who supported



*Many businesses, such as those in this neighborhood at the intersection of 7th and N Streets in NW, Washington, DC, were destroyed in riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

his policy of nonviolence were being challenged by younger African Americans who advocated a more militant approach. On April 4, King was shot and killed while standing on the balcony of his motel. Within hours, the nation's cities exploded with violence as angry African Americans, shocked by his murder, burned and looted inner-city neighborhoods across the country. While whites recoiled from news about the riots in fear and dismay, they also criticized African Americans for destroying their own neighborhoods; they did not realize that most of the violence was directed against businesses that were not owned by blacks and that treated African American customers with suspicion and hostility.



# BLACK FRUSTRATION, BLACK POWER

The episodes of violence that accompanied Martin Luther King Jr.'s murder were but the latest in a string of urban riots that had shaken the United States since the mid-1960s. Between 1964 and 1968, there were 329 riots in 257 cities across the nation. In 1964, riots broke out in Harlem and other African American neighborhoods. In 1965, a traffic stop set in motion a chain of events that culminated in riots in Watts, an African American neighborhood in Los Angeles. Thousands of businesses were destroyed, and, by the time the violence ended, thirty-four people were dead, most of them African Americans killed by the Los Angeles police and the National Guard. More riots took place in 1966 and 1967.

Frustration and anger lay at the heart of these disruptions. Despite the programs of the Great Society, good healthcare, job opportunities, and safe housing were abysmally lacking in urban African American neighborhoods in cities throughout the country, including in the North and West, where discrimination was less overt but just as crippling. In the eyes of many rioters, the federal government either could not or would not end their suffering, and most existing civil rights groups and their leaders had been unable to achieve significant results toward racial justice and equality. Disillusioned, many African Americans turned to those with more radical ideas about how best to obtain equality and justice.

Watch “Troops Patrol L.A.” to see how the [1965 Watts Riots](#) were presented in newsreel footage of the day.





One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You

can view them online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=238#oembed-1>

Within the chorus of voices calling for integration and legal equality were many that more stridently demanded empowerment and thus supported Black Power. Black Power meant a variety of things. One of the most famous users of the term was Stokely Carmichael, the chairman of SNCC, who later changed his name to Kwame Ture. For Carmichael, Black Power was the power of African Americans to unite as a political force and create their own institutions apart from white-dominated ones, an idea first suggested in the 1920s by political leader and orator Marcus Garvey. Like Garvey, Carmichael became an advocate of black separatism, arguing that African Americans should live apart from whites and solve their problems for themselves. In keeping with this philosophy, Carmichael expelled SNCC's white members. He left SNCC in 1967 and later joined the Black Panthers (see below).

Long before Carmichael began to call for separatism, the Nation of Islam, founded in 1930, had advocated the same thing. In the 1960s, its most famous member was Malcolm X, born Malcolm Little. The Nation of Islam advocated the separation of white Americans and African Americans because of a belief that African Americans could not thrive in an atmosphere of white racism. Indeed, in a 1963 interview, Malcolm X, discussing the teachings of the head of the



Nation of Islam in America, Elijah Muhammad, referred to white people as “devils” more than a dozen times. Rejecting the nonviolent strategy of other civil rights activists, he maintained that violence in the face of violence was appropriate.



(a)



(b)

*Stokely Carmichael (a), one of the most famous and outspoken advocates of Black Power, is surrounded by members of the media after speaking at Michigan State University in 1967. Malcolm X (b) was raised in a family influenced by Marcus Garvey and persecuted for its outspoken support of civil rights. While serving a stint in prison for armed robbery, he was introduced to and committed himself to the Nation of Islam. (credit b: modification of work by Library of Congress)*

In 1964, after a trip to Africa, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam to found the Organization of Afro-American Unity with the goal of achieving freedom, justice, and equality “by any means necessary.” His views regarding black-white relations changed somewhat thereafter, but he remained fiercely committed to the cause of African American empowerment. On February 21, 1965, he was killed by members of the Nation of Islam. Stokely Carmichael later recalled that Malcolm X had provided an intellectual basis for Black



Nationalism and given legitimacy to the use of violence in achieving the goals of Black Power.

## The New Negro

In a roundtable conversation in October 1961, Malcolm X suggested that a “New Negro” was coming to the fore. The term and concept of a “New Negro” arose during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and was revived during the civil rights movements of the 1960s.

“I think there is a new so-called Negro. We don’t recognize the term ‘Negro’ but I really believe that there’s a new so-called Negro here in America. He not only is impatient. Not only is he dissatisfied, not only is he disillusioned, but he’s getting very angry. And whereas the so-called Negro in the past was willing to sit around and wait for someone else to change his condition or correct his condition, there’s a growing tendency on the part of a vast number of so-called Negroes today to take action themselves, not to sit and wait for someone else to correct the situation. This, in my opinion, is primarily what has produced this new Negro. He is not willing to wait. He thinks that what he wants is right, what he wants is just, and since these things are just and right, it’s wrong to sit around and wait for someone else to correct a nasty condition when they get ready.”

In what ways were Martin Luther King, Jr. and the members of SNCC “New Negroes?”

Unlike Stokely Carmichael and the Nation of Islam, most Black Power advocates did not believe African Americans needed to separate themselves from white society. The Black Panther Party, founded in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, believed African Americans were as much the victims of



capitalism as of white racism. Accordingly, the group espoused Marxist teachings, and called for jobs, housing, and education, as well as protection from police brutality and exemption from military service in their Ten Point Program. The Black Panthers also patrolled the streets of African American neighborhoods to protect residents from police brutality, yet sometimes beat and murdered those who did not agree with their cause and tactics. Their militant attitude and advocacy of armed self-defense attracted many young men but also led to many encounters with the police, which sometimes included arrests and even shootouts, such as those that took place in Los Angeles, Chicago and Carbondale, Illinois.

The self-empowerment philosophy of Black Power influenced mainstream civil rights groups such as the National Economic Growth Reconstruction Organization (NEGRO), which sold bonds and operated a clothing factory and construction company in New York, and the Opportunities Industrialization Center in Philadelphia, which provided job training and placement—by 1969, it had branches in seventy cities. Black Power was also part of a much larger process of cultural change. The 1960s composed a decade not only of Black Power but also of Black Pride. African American abolitionist John S. Rock had coined the phrase “Black Is Beautiful” in 1858, but in the 1960s, it became an important part of efforts within the African American community to raise self-esteem and encourage pride in African ancestry. Black Pride urged African Americans to reclaim their African heritage and, to promote group solidarity, to substitute African and African-inspired cultural practices, such as handshakes, hairstyles, and dress, for white practices. One of the many cultural products of this movement was the popular television music program *Soul Train*, created by Don Cornelius in 1969, which celebrated black culture and aesthetics.





*When the Jackson Five appeared on Soul Train, each of the five brothers sported a large afro, a symbol of Black Pride in the 1960s and 70s.*

## THE MEXICAN AMERICAN FIGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

The African American bid for full citizenship was surely the most visible of the battles for civil rights taking place in the United States. However, other minority groups that had been legally discriminated against or otherwise denied access to economic and educational opportunities began to increase efforts to secure their rights in the 1960s. Like the African American movement, the Mexican American civil rights movement won its earliest victories in the federal courts. In 1947, in *Mendez v. Westminster*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that segregating children of Hispanic descent was unconstitutional. In 1954, the same year as *Brown v. Board of Education*, Mexican Americans prevailed in *Hernandez v. Texas*, when the U.S. Supreme Court extended the protections of the Fourteenth Amendment to all ethnic groups in the United States.

The highest-profile struggle of the Mexican American civil rights movement was the fight that Caesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta waged in the fields of California to organize migrant farm workers. In 1962, Chavez and Huerta founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). In 1965, when Filipino grape pickers led by Filipino American Larry Itliong went on strike to call attention to their plight, Chavez lent his support. Workers organized by the



NFWA also went on strike, and the two organizations merged to form the United Farm Workers. When Chavez asked American consumers to boycott grapes, politically conscious people around the country heeded his call, and many unionized longshoremen refused to unload grape shipments. In 1966, Chavez led striking workers to the state capitol in Sacramento, further publicizing the cause. Martin Luther King, Jr. telegraphed words of encouragement to Chavez, whom he called a “brother.” The strike ended in 1970 when California farmers recognized the right of farm workers to unionize. However, the farm workers did not gain all they sought, and the larger struggle did not end.

The equivalent of the Black Power movement among Mexican Americans was the Chicano Movement. Proudly adopting a derogatory term for Mexican Americans, Chicano activists demanded increased political power for Mexican Americans, education that recognized their cultural heritage, and the restoration of



*Cesar Chavez was influenced by the nonviolent philosophy of Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi. In 1968, he emulated Gandhi by engaging in a hunger strike.*

lands taken from them at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. One of the founding members, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, launched the Crusade for Justice in Denver in 1965, to provide jobs, legal services, and healthcare for Mexican Americans. From this movement arose La Raza Unida, a political party that attracted many Mexican American college students. Elsewhere, Reies López Tijerina fought for years to reclaim lost and illegally expropriated ancestral lands in New Mexico; he was one of the co-sponsors of the Poor People’s March on Washington in 1967.



## Section Summary

The African American civil rights movement made significant progress in the 1960s. While Congress played a role by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968, the actions of civil rights groups such as CORE, the SCLC, and SNCC were instrumental in forging new paths, pioneering new techniques and strategies, and achieving breakthrough successes. Civil rights activists engaged in sit-ins, freedom rides, and protest marches, and registered African American voters. Despite the movement's many achievements, however, many grew frustrated with the slow pace of change, the failure of the Great Society to alleviate poverty, and the persistence of violence against African Americans, particularly the tragic 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Many African Americans in the mid- to late 1960s adopted the ideology of Black Power, which promoted their work within their own communities to redress problems without the aid of whites. The Mexican American civil rights movement, led largely by Cesar Chavez, also made significant progress at this time. The emergence of the Chicano Movement signaled Mexican Americans' determination to seize their political power, celebrate their cultural heritage, and demand their citizenship rights.



### *Review Question*

1. How did the message of Black Power advocates differ from that of more mainstream civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr.?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. King and his followers strove for racial integration and the political inclusion of African Americans. They also urged for the use of nonviolent tactics to achieve their goals. Black Power advocates, in contrast, believed that African Americans should seek solutions without the aid of whites. Many also promoted black separatism and accepted the use of violence.

### *Glossary*

**black separatism** an ideology that called upon African Americans to reject integration with the white community and, in some cases, to physically separate themselves from



whites in order to create and preserve their self-determination

**Black Power** a political ideology encouraging African Americans to create their own institutions and develop their own economic resources independent of whites

**Black Pride** a cultural movement among African Americans to encourage pride in their African heritage and to substitute African and African American art forms, behaviors, and cultural products for those of whites



# 196. Challenging the Status Quo

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the goals and activities of SDS, the Free Speech Movement, and the antiwar movement
- Explain the rise, goals, and activities of the women's movement

By the 1960s, a generation of white Americans raised in prosperity and steeped in the culture of conformity of the 1950s had come of age. However, many of these baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) rejected the conformity and luxuries that their parents had provided. These young, middle-class Americans, especially those fortunate enough to attend college when many of their working-class and African American contemporaries were being sent to Vietnam, began to organize to fight for their own rights and end the war that was claiming the lives of so many.

## THE NEW LEFT

By 1960, about one-third of the U.S. population was living in the suburbs; during the 1960s, the average family income rose by 33



percent. Material culture blossomed, and at the end of the decade, 70 percent of American families owned washing machines, 83 percent had refrigerators or freezers, and almost 80 percent had at least one car. Entertainment occupied a larger part of both working- and middle-class leisure hours. By 1960, American consumers were spending \$85 billion a year on entertainment, double the spending of the preceding decade; by 1969, about 79 percent of American households had black-and-white televisions, and 31 percent could afford color sets. Movies and sports were regular aspects of the weekly routine, and the family vacation became an annual custom for both the middle and working class.

Meanwhile, baby boomers, many raised in this environment of affluence, streamed into universities across the nation in unprecedented numbers looking to “find” themselves. Instead, they found traditional systems that forced them to take required courses, confined them to rigid programs of study, and surrounded them with rules limiting what they could do in their free time. These young people were only too willing to take up Kennedy’s call to action, and many did so by joining the civil rights movement. To them, it seemed only right for the children of the “greatest generation” to help those less privileged to fight battles for justice and equality. The more radical aligned themselves with the New Left, activists of the 1960s who rejected the staid liberalism of the Democratic Party. New Left organizations sought reform in areas such as civil rights and women’s rights, campaigned for free speech and more liberal policies toward drug use, and condemned the war in Vietnam.

One of the most prominent New Left groups was Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Organized in 1960, SDS held its first meeting at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Its philosophy was expressed in its manifesto, the Port Huron Statement, written by Tom Hayden and adopted in 1962, affirming the group’s dedication to fighting economic inequality and discrimination. It called for greater participation in the democratic process by ordinary people, advocated civil disobedience, and rejected the anti-Communist



position held by most other groups committed to social reform in the United States.

Read the full text of the [Port Huron Statement](#) by Tom Hayden.

SDS members demanded that universities allow more student participation in university governance and shed their entanglements with the military-industrial complex. They sought to rouse the poor to political action to defeat poverty and racism. In the summer of 1964, a small group of SDS members moved into the uptown district of Chicago and tried to take on racism and poverty through community organization. Under the umbrella of their Economic Research and Action Project, they created JOIN (Jobs or Income Now) to address problems of urban poverty and resisted plans to displace the poor under the guise of urban renewal. They also called for police review boards to end police brutality, organized free breakfast programs, and started social and recreational clubs for neighborhood youth. Eventually, the movement fissured over whether to remain a campus-based student organization or a community-based development organization.

During the same time that SDS became active in Chicago, another student movement emerged on the West Coast, when actions by student activists at the University of California, Berkeley, led to the formation of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement in 1964. University rules prohibited the solicitation of funds for political causes by anyone other than members of the student Democratic and Republican organizations, and restricted advocacy of political causes on campus. In October 1964, when a student handing out literature for CORE refused to show campus police officers his student ID card, he was promptly arrested. Instantly, the campus police car was surrounded by angry students, who refused to let the



vehicle move for thirty-two hours until the student was released. In December, students organized a massive sit-in to resolve the issue of political activities on campus. While unsuccessful in the short term, the movement inspired student activism on campuses throughout the country.

A target of many student groups was the war in Vietnam. In April 1965, SDS organized a march on Washington for peace; about twenty thousand people attended. That same week, the faculty at the University of Michigan suspended classes and conducted a 24-hour “teach-in” on the war. The idea quickly spread, and on May 15, the first national “teach-in” was held at 122 colleges and universities across the nation. Originally



*Students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison protested the war in Vietnam in 1965. Their actions were typical of many on college campuses across the country during the 1960s. (credit: "Yarnalgo"/Flickr)*

designed to be a debate on the pros and cons of the war, at Berkeley, the teach-ins became massive antiwar rallies. By the end of that year, there had been antiwar rallies in some sixty cities.

## Blue Jeans: The Uniform of Nonconformist Radicalism

Overwhelmingly, young cultural warriors and social activists of the 1960s, trying to escape the shackles of what they perceived to be limits on their freedoms, adopted blue jeans as the uniform of their generation. Originally worn by manual laborers because of their near-indestructibility, blue jeans were commonly associated with cowboys, the quintessential icon of American independence. During



the 1930s, jeans were adopted by a broader customer base as a result of the popularity of cowboy movies and dude ranch vacations. After World War II, Levi Strauss, their original manufacturer, began to market them east of the Mississippi, and competitors such as Wrangler and Lee fought for a share of the market. In the 1950s, youths testing the limits of middle-class conformity adopted them in imitation of movie stars like James Dean. By the 1960s, jeans became even more closely associated with youthful rebellion against tradition, a symbol available to everyone, rich and poor, black and white, men and women.

What other styles and behaviors of the 1960s expressed nonconformity, and how?

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

On the national scene, the civil rights movement was creating a climate of protest and claiming rights and new roles in society for people of color. Women played significant roles in organizations fighting for civil rights like SNCC and SDS. However, they often found that those organizations, enlightened as they might be about racial issues or the war in Vietnam, could still be influenced by patriarchal ideas of male superiority. Two members of SNCC, Casey Hayden and Mary King, presented some of their concerns about their organization's treatment of women in a document entitled "On the Position of Women in SNCC." Stokely Carmichael responded that the appropriate position for women in SNCC was "prone."

Just as the abolitionist movement made nineteenth-century women more aware of their lack of power and encouraged them to form the first women's rights movement, the protest movements of the 1960s inspired many white and middle-class women to create their own organized movement for greater rights. Not all were young women engaged in social protest. Many were older, married women who found the traditional roles of housewife and mother



unfulfilling. In 1963, writer and feminist Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in which she contested the post-World War II belief that it was women's destiny to marry and bear children. Friedan's book was a best-seller and began to raise the consciousness of many women who agreed that homemaking in the suburbs sapped them of their individualism and left them unsatisfied.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, and religion, also prohibited, in Title VII, discrimination on the basis of sex. Ironically, protection for women had been included at the suggestion of a Virginia congressman in an attempt to *prevent* the act's passage; his reasoning seemed to be that, while a white man might accept that African Americans needed and deserved protection from discrimination, the idea that women deserved equality with men would be far too radical for any of his male colleagues to contemplate. Nevertheless, the act passed, although the struggle to achieve equal pay for equal work continues today.

Medical science also contributed a tool to assist women in their liberation. In 1960, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the birth control pill, freeing women from the restrictions of pregnancy and childbearing. Women who were able to limit, delay, and prevent reproduction were freer to work, attend college, and delay marriage. Within five years of the pill's approval, some six million women were using it.

The pill was the first medicine ever intended to be taken by people who were not sick. Even conservatives saw it as a possible means of making marriages stronger by removing the fear of an unwanted pregnancy and improving the health of women. Its opponents, however, argued that it would promote sexual promiscuity, undermine the institutions of marriage and the family, and destroy the moral code of the nation. By the early 1960s, thirty states had made it a criminal offense to sell contraceptive devices.



In 1966, the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed and proceeded to set an agenda for the feminist movement. Framed by a statement of purpose written by Friedan, the agenda began by proclaiming NOW's goal to make possible women's participation in all aspects of American life and to gain for

them all the rights enjoyed by men. Among the specific goals was the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (yet to be adopted).

More radical feminists, like their colleagues in other movements, were dissatisfied with merely redressing economic issues and devised their own brand of consciousness-raising events and symbolic attacks on women's oppression. The most famous of these was an event staged in September 1968 by New York Radical Women. Protesting stereotypical notions of femininity and rejecting traditional gender expectations, the group demonstrated at the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to bring attention to the contest's—and society's—exploitation of women. The protestors crowned a sheep Miss America and then tossed instruments of women's oppression, including high-heeled shoes, curlers, girdles, and bras, into a "freedom trash can." News accounts famously, and incorrectly, described the protest as a "bra burning."



*Early members of NOW discuss the problems faced by American women. Betty Friedan is second from the left. (credit: Smithsonian Institution Archives)*



## Section Summary

During the 1960s, many people rejected traditional roles and expectations. Influenced and inspired by the civil rights movement, college students of the baby boomer generation and women of all ages began to fight to secure a stronger role in American society. As members of groups like SDS and NOW asserted their rights and strove for equality for themselves and others, they upended many accepted norms and set groundbreaking social and legal changes in motion. Many of their successes continue to be felt today, while other goals remain unfulfilled.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1057>

### *Review Question*

1. In what ways did the birth control pill help to liberate women?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The birth control pill enabled women to prevent or delay pregnancy, and thus marriage, and to limit the number of children they had. The freedom to control their reproduction also allowed women more opportunity to pursue higher education and work for pay outside the home.

## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. Describe the changing role of the federal government in the 1960s. What new roles and responsibilities did the government assume? In your opinion, can the government effect permanent social change? Why or why not?
2. Discuss how and why various groups of people within American society began to challenge and criticize the nation's way of life in the 1960s. Were their criticisms valid? What were some of the goals of these groups, and how did they go about achieving them?
3. In your opinion, what is the most effective method for changing society—voting, challenges in the courts, nonviolent civil disobedience, or violence? What evidence can you provide from actual events in the 1960s to support your argument?



4. Were groups that advocated the use of violence in the 1960s justified in doing so? Why or why not?
5. Discuss how the United States became engaged in the Vietnam War. What were some of the results of that engagement?

## *Glossary*

**Port Huron Statement** the political manifesto of Students for a Democratic Society that called for social reform, nonviolent protest, and greater participation in the democratic process by ordinary Americans

**Title VII** the section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of gender



# 197. Assignment: Black Panther Party Platform

Though legally successful in the mid 1960s, the battle for civil rights continued on into the 1970s. It seems that not everybody has the same idea of what it means to be “equal,” especially in the area of race relations. Everyone knows about Martin Luther King, Jr’s “dream,” but not everyone was catching the dream, even within the black community. King represented the middle ground, but what about the radical fringe? After reading the [Black Panther Party Platform](#) answer the following in a paragraph:

1. What’s the general message? How does it compare with King’s “[I have a Dream](#)” speech? Do they have the same dream? How was the Black Panther Party an obstacle to King’s dream of a racially integrated society?







PART XXIX

# THE SIXTIES READER







## 198. Primary Source Images: The 1960s

Perhaps no decade is so immortalized in American memory as the 1960s. Couched in the colorful rhetoric of peace and love, complemented by stirring images of the civil rights movement, and fondly remembered for its music, art, and activism, for many the decade brought hopes for a more inclusive, forward-thinking nation. But the decade was also plagued by strife, tragedy, and chaos. It was the decade of the Vietnam War, of inner-city riots, and assassinations that seemed to symbolize the crushing of a new generation's idealism. A decade of struggle and disillusionment rocked by social, cultural, and political upheaval, the 1960s are remembered because so much changed, and because so much did not. The following sources offer insight into the decade's impactful history.

### Selma March (1965)



*From Selma to Montgomery, 1965. Library of Congress.*



Civil rights activists protested against the injustice of segregation in a variety of ways. Here, in 1965, marchers, some carrying American flags, march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to champion African American voting rights.

## LBJ and Civil Rights Leaders (1964)



Photograph, January 18, 1964. Wikimedia.

*As civil rights demonstrations rocked the American South, civil rights legislation made its way through Washington D.C. Here, President Lyndon B. Johnson sits with civil rights leaders in the White House.*



## Women's Liberation March 1970



Warren K. Leffler,  
Women's  
Liberation  
March from  
Farrugut  
Square to  
Lafayette  
Park in  
Washington,  
D.C. 1970. Via  
Library of  
Congress.

American popular feminism accelerated throughout the 1960s. The slogan “Women’s Liberation” accompanied a growing women’s movement but also alarmed conservative Americans. In this 1970 photograph, women march in Washington D.C. carrying signs reading, “Women Demand Equality,” “I’m a Second Class Citizen,” and “Women’s Liberation.”

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## 199. Primary Source: John F. Kennedy on the Separation of Church and State (1960)

*American Anti-Catholicism had softened in the aftermath of World War II, but no Catholic had ever been elected president and Protestant Americans had long been suspicious of Catholic politicians when John F. Kennedy ran for the presidency in 1960. (Al Smith, the first Catholic presidential candidate, was roundly defeated in 1928 owing in large part to popular anti-Catholic prejudice). On September 12, 1960, Kennedy addressed the Greater Houston Ministerial Association and he not only allayed popular fears of his Catholic faith, he delivered a seminal statement on the separation of church and state*

... Because I am a Catholic, and no Catholic has ever been elected President, the real issues in this campaign have been obscured—perhaps deliberately, in some quarters less responsible than this. So it is apparently necessary for me to state once again—not what kind of church I believe in, for that should be important only to me—but what kind of America I believe in.

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute—where no Catholic prelate would tell the President (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote—where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference—and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish—where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source—where no



religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials—and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

For while this year it may be a Catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been, and may someday be again, a Jew—or a Quaker—or a Unitarian—or a Baptist. It was Virginia's harassment of Baptist preachers, for example, that helped lead to Jefferson's statute of religious freedom. Today I may be the victim—but tomorrow it may be you—until the whole fabric of our harmonious society is ripped at a time of great national peril.

Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end—where all men and all churches are treated as equal—where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice—where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind—and where Catholics, Protestants and Jews, at both the lay and pastoral level, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood.

That is the kind of America in which I believe. And it represents the kind of Presidency in which I believe—a great office that must neither be humbled by making it the instrument of any one religious group nor tarnished by arbitrarily withholding its occupancy from the members of any one religious group. I believe in a President whose religious views are his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the Nation or imposed by the Nation upon him as a condition to holding that office.

[Source: John F. Kennedy, "Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association" (September 12, 1960). Available online via The Miller Center (<http://millercenter.org/president/kennedy/speeches/speech-3363>).]



## 200. Primary Source: Eisenhower's Farewell (1961)

### **President Dwight Eisenhower: Farewell to the Nation, January 17, 1961**

We now stand ten years past the midpoint of a century that has witnessed four major wars among great nations. Three of these involved our own country. Despite these holocausts America is today the strongest, the most influential and most productive nation in the world. Understandably proud of this pre-eminence, we yet realize that America's leadership and prestige depend, not merely upon our unmatched material progress, riches and military strength, but on how we use our power in the interests of world peace and human betterment.

Throughout America's adventure in free government, such basic purposes have been to keep the peace; to foster progress in human achievement, and to enhance liberty, dignity and integrity among peoples and among nations.

To strive for less would be unworthy of a free and religious people.

Any failure traceable to arrogance or our lack of comprehension or readiness to sacrifice would inflict upon us a grievous hurt, both at home and abroad.

Progress toward these noble goals is persistently threatened by the conflict now engulfing the world. It commands our whole attention, absorbs our very beings. We face a hostile ideology global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method. Unhappily the danger it poses promises to be of indefinite duration. To meet it successfully, there is called for, not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis, but rather those which enable us to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint



the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle – with liberty the stake. Only thus shall we remain, despite every provocation, on our charted course toward permanent peace and human betterment.

Crises there will continue to be. In meeting them, whether foreign or domestic, great or small, there is a recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties. A huge increase in the newer elements of our defenses; development of unrealistic programs to cure every ill in agriculture; a dramatic expansion in basic and applied research – these and many other possibilities, each possibly promising in itself, may be suggested as the only way to the road we wish to travel.

But each proposal must be weighed in light of a broader consideration; the need to maintain balance in and among national programs – balance between the private and the public economy, balance between the cost and hoped for advantages – balance between the clearly necessary and the comfortably desirable; balance between our essential requirements as a nation and the duties imposed by the nation upon the individual; balance between the actions of the moment and the national welfare of the future. Good judgment seeks balance and progress; lack of it eventually finds imbalance and frustration.

The record of many decades stands as proof that our people and their Government have, in the main, understood these truths and have responded to them well in the face of threat and stress.

But threats, new in kind or degree, constantly arise.

Of these, I mention two only.

A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction.

Our military organization today bears little relation to that known by any of my predecessors in peacetime, or indeed by the fighting men of World War II or Korea.

Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with



time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations.

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence – economic, political, even spiritual – is felt in every city, every Statehouse, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.

Akin to, and largely responsible for the sweeping changes in our industrial-military posture, has been the technological revolution during recent decades.

In this revolution, research has become central, it also becomes more formalized, complex, and costly. A steadily increasing share is conducted for, by, or at the direction of, the Federal government.

Today, the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields. In the same fashion, the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution in the conduct of research. Partly because of the huge



costs involved, a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity. For every old blackboard there are now hundreds of new electronic computers.

The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present – and is gravely to be regarded.

Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.

It is the task of statesmanship to mold, to balance, and to integrate these and other forces, new and old, within the principles of our democratic system – ever aiming toward the supreme goals of our free society.

**Source:** from *The Department of State Bulletin*, XLIV, No. 1128 (February 6, 1961), pp. 179-182.



# 201. Primary Source: Barry Goldwater, Republican Nomination Acceptance Speech (1964)

*In 1964, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona accepted the Republican Party's nomination for the presidency. In his speech, Goldwater refused to apologize for his strict conservative politics. "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice," he said, and "moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."*

... The good Lord raised this mighty Republic to be a home for the brave and to flourish as the land of the free—not to stagnate in the swampland of collectivism, not to cringe before the bully of communism.

Now, my fellow Americans, the tide has been running against freedom. Our people have followed false prophets. We must, and we shall, return to proven ways— not because they are old, but because they are true. We must, and we shall, set the tide running again in the cause of freedom. And this party, with its every action, every word, every breath, and every heartbeat, has but a single resolve, and that is freedom – freedom made orderly for this nation by our constitutional government; freedom under a government limited by laws of nature and of nature's God; freedom – balanced so that liberty lacking order will not become the slavery of the prison cell; balanced so that liberty lacking order will not become the license of the mob and of the jungle.

Now, we Americans understand freedom. We have earned it, we have lived for it, and we have died for it. This Nation and its people are freedom's model in a searching world. We can be freedom's missionaries in a doubting world. But, ladies and gentlemen, first we



must renew freedom's mission in our own hearts and in our own homes.

During four futile years, the administration which we shall replace has distorted and lost that faith. It has talked and talked and talked and talked the words of freedom. Now, failures cement the wall of shame in Berlin. Failures blot the sands of shame at the Bay of Pigs. Failures mark the slow death of freedom in Laos. Failures infest the jungles of Vietnam. And failures haunt the houses of our once great alliances and undermine the greatest bulwark ever erected by free nations – the NATO community. Failures proclaim lost leadership, obscure purpose, weakening wills, and the risk of inciting our sworn enemies to new aggressions and to new excesses. Because of this administration we are tonight a world divided – we are a Nation becalmed. We have lost the brisk pace of diversity and the genius of individual creativity. We are plodding at a pace set by centralized planning, red tape, rules without responsibility, and regimentation without recourse.

Rather than useful jobs in our country, people have been offered bureaucratic “make work,” rather than moral leadership, they have been given bread and circuses, spectacles, and, yes, they have even been given scandals. Tonight there is violence in our streets, corruption in our highest offices, aimlessness among our youth, anxiety among our elders and there is a virtual despair among the many who look beyond material success for the inner meaning of their lives. Where examples of morality should be set, the opposite is seen. Small men, seeking great wealth or power, have too often and too long turned even the highest levels of public service into mere personal opportunity.

Now, certainly, simple honesty is not too much to demand of men in government. We find it in most. Republicans demand it from everyone. They demand it from everyone no matter how exalted or protected his position might be. The growing menace in our country tonight, to personal safety, to life, to limb and property, in homes, in churches, on the playgrounds, and places of business, particularly



in our great cities, is the mounting concern, or should be, of every thoughtful citizen in the United States.

Security from domestic violence, no less than from foreign aggression, is the most elementary and fundamental purpose of any government, and a government that cannot fulfill that purpose is one that cannot long command the loyalty of its citizens. History shows us – demonstrates that nothing – nothing prepares the way for tyranny more than the failure of public officials to keep the streets from bullies and marauders.

...

Today, as then, but more urgently and more broadly than then, the task of preserving and enlarging freedom at home and safeguarding it from the forces of tyranny abroad is great enough to challenge all our resources and to require all our strength. Anyone who joins us in all sincerity, we welcome. Those who do not care for our cause, we don't expect to enter our ranks in any case. And let our Republicanism, so focused and so dedicated, not be made fuzzy and futile by unthinking and stupid labels.

I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.

[Source: Barry Goldwater, "Republican Nomination Acceptance Speech" (July 16, 1964). Available online via *The American Presidency Project* (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25973>).]



## 202. Primary Source: Lyndon Johnson on Voting Rights and the American Promise (1965)

*On March 15, 1965, Lyndon Baines Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress to push for the Voting Rights Act. In his speech, Johnson not only advocated policy, he borrowed the language of the civil rights movement and tied the movement to American history.*

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the Congress:

I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of democracy.

...

At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama.

There, long-suffering men and women peacefully protested the denial of their rights as Americans. Many were brutally assaulted. One good man, a man of God, was killed.

There is no cause for pride in what has happened in Selma. There is no cause for self-satisfaction in the long denial of equal rights of millions of Americans. But there is cause for hope and for faith in our democracy in what is happening here tonight.

For the cries of pain and the hymns and protests of oppressed people have summoned into convocation all the majesty of this great Government—the Government of the greatest Nation on earth.

Our mission is at once the oldest and the most basic of this country: to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man.

In our time we have come to live with moments of great crisis. Our lives have been marked with debate about great issues; issues of war and peace, issues of prosperity and depression. But rarely in any



time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved Nation.

The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such an issue. And should we defeat every enemy, should we double our wealth and conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation.

...

This was the first nation in the history of the world to be founded with a purpose. The great phrases of that purpose still sound in every American heart, North and South: "All men are created equal"—"government by consent of the governed"—"give me liberty or give me death." Well, those are not just clever words, or those are not just empty theories. In their name Americans have fought and died for two centuries, and tonight around the world they stand there as guardians of our liberty, risking their lives.

Those words are a promise to every citizen that he shall share in the dignity of man. This dignity cannot be found in a man's possessions; it cannot be found in his power, or in his position. It really rests on his right to be treated as a man equal in opportunity to all others. It says that he shall share in freedom, he shall choose his leaders, educate his children, and provide for his family according to his ability and his merits as a human being.

To apply any other test—to deny a man his hopes because of his color or race, his religion or the place of his birth—is not only to do injustice, it is to deny America and to dishonor the dead who gave their lives for American freedom.

...

To those who seek to avoid action by their National Government in their own communities; who want to and who seek to maintain purely local control over elections, the answer is simple:

Open your polling places to all your people.

Allow men and women to register and vote whatever the color of their skin.



Extend the rights of citizenship to every citizen of this land.

...

So I ask you to join me in working long hours—nights and weekends, if necessary—to pass this bill. And I don't make that request lightly. For from the window where I sit with the problems of our country I recognize that outside this chamber is the outraged conscience of a nation, the grave concern of many nations, and the harsh judgment of history on our acts.

But even if we pass this bill, the battle will not be over. What happened in Selma is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and State of America. It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessings of American life.

Their cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice.

And we shall overcome.

...

My first job after college was as a teacher in Cotulla, Texas, in a small Mexican-American school. Few of them could speak English, and I couldn't speak much Spanish. My students were poor and they often came to class without breakfast, hungry. They knew even in their youth the pain of prejudice. They never seemed to know why people disliked them. But they knew it was so, because I saw it in their eyes. I often walked home late in the afternoon, after the classes were finished, wishing there was more that I could do. But all I knew was to teach them the little that I knew, hoping that it might help them against the hardships that lay ahead.

Somehow you never forget what poverty and hatred can do when you see its scars on the hopeful face of a young child.

I never thought then, in 1928, that I would be standing here in 1965. It never even occurred to me in my fondest dreams that I might have the chance to help the sons and daughters of those students and to help people like them all over this country.

But now I do have that chance—and I'll let you in on a secret—I mean to use it. And I hope that you will use it with me.



...

[Source: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson*, 1965. Volume I, entry 107 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), 281-287. Available online via LBJ Library (<http://www.lbjlibrary.org/lyndon-baines-johnson/speeches-films/president-johnsons-special-message-to-the-congress-the-american-promise>).]



# 203. Primary Source: Lyndon Johnson, Howard University Commencement Address (1965)

*On June 4, 1965, President Johnson delivered the commencement address at Howard University, the nation's most prominent historically black university. In his address, Johnson explained why "opportunity" was not enough to ensure the civil rights of disadvantaged Americans.*

...

The voting rights bill will be the latest, and among the most important, in a long series of victories. But this victory—as Winston Churchill said of another triumph for freedom—"is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

That beginning is freedom; and the barriers to that freedom are tumbling down. Freedom is the right to share, share fully and equally, in American society—to vote, to hold a job, to enter a public place, to go to school. It is the right to be treated in every part of our national life as a person equal in dignity and promise to all others.

But freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please.

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, "you are free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.

Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.



This is the next and the more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.

...

For what is justice?

It is to fulfill the fair expectations of man.

Thus, American justice is a very special thing. For, from the first, this has been a land of towering expectations. It was to be a nation where each man could be ruled by the common consent of all—enshrined in law, given life by institutions, guided by men themselves subject to its rule. And all—all of every station and origin—would be touched equally in obligation and in liberty.

...

So, it is the glorious opportunity of this generation to end the one huge wrong of the American Nation and, in so doing, to find America for ourselves, with the same immense thrill of discovery which gripped those who first began to realize that here, at last, was a home for freedom.

All it will take is for all of us to understand what this country is and what this country must become.

The Scripture promises: "I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out."

Together, and with millions more, we can light that candle of understanding in the heart of all America.

And, once lit, it will never again go out.

[Source: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson*, 1965. Volume II, entry 301, pp. 635-640. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1966. Available online via LBJ Library (<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650604.asp>).]



## 204. Primary Source: National Organization for Women, “Statement of Purpose” (1966)

*The National Organization for Women was founded in 1966 by prominent American feminists, including Betty Friedan, Shirley Chisholm, and others. The organization’s “statement of purpose” laid out the goals of the organization and the targets of its feminist vision.*

We, men and women, who hereby constitute ourselves as the National Organization for Women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders.

The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.

We believe the time has come to move beyond the abstract argument, discussion and symposia over the status and special nature of women which has raged in America in recent years; the time has come to confront, with concrete action, the conditions that now prevent women from enjoying the equality of opportunity and freedom of which is their right, as individual Americans, and as human beings.

NOW is dedicated to the proposition that women, first and foremost, are human beings, who like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential. We believe that women can achieve such equality only by accepting to the full the challenges and responsibilities they share with all other



people in our society, as part of the decision-making mainstream of American political, economic and social life.

We organize to initiate or support action, nationally, or in any part of this nation, by individuals or organizations, to break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women in government, industry, and professions, the churches, the political parties, the judiciary, the labor unions, in education, science, medicine, law, religion and every other field of importance in American society. Enormous changes taking place in our society make it both possible and urgently necessary to advance the unfinished revolution of women toward true equality now. With a life span lengthened to nearly 75 years it is no longer either necessary or possible for women to devote the greatest part of their lives to child-rearing; yet childbearing and rearing which continues to be a most important part of most women's lives — still is used to justify barring women from equal professional and economic participation and advance.

...

Despite all the talk about the status of American women in recent years, the actual position of women in the United States has declined, and is declining, to an alarming degree throughout the 1950's and '60s. Although 46.4% of all American women between the ages of 18 and 65 now work outside the home, the overwhelming majority — 75% — are in routine clerical, sales, or factory jobs, or they are household workers, cleaning women, hospital attendants. About two-thirds of Negro women workers are in the lowest paid service occupations. Working women are becoming increasingly — not less — concentrated on the bottom of the job ladder. As a consequence, full-time women workers today earn on the average only 60% of what men earn, and that wage gap has been increasing over the past twenty-five years in every major industry group. In 1964, of all women with a yearly income, 89% earned under \$5,000 a year; behalf of all full-time year round women workers earned less than \$3,690; only 1.4% of full-time year round women workers had an annual income of \$10,000 or more.



Further, with higher education increasingly essential in today's society, too few women are entering and finishing college or going on to graduate or professional school. Today, women earn only one in three of the B.A.'s and M.A.'s granted, and one in ten of the Ph.D.'s.

In all the professions considered of importance to society, and in the executive ranks of industry and government, women are losing ground. Where they are present it is only a token handful. Women comprise less than 1% of federal judges; less than 4% of all lawyers; 7% of doctors. Yet women represent 51% of the U.S. population. And, increasingly men are replacing women in the top positions in secondary and elementary schools, in social work, and in libraries — once thought to be women's fields.

Official pronouncements of the advance in the status of women hide not only the reality of this dangerous decline, but the fact that nothing is being done to stop it. ...

Discrimination in employment on the basis of sex is now prohibited by federal law, in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. ...The Commission has not made clear its intention to enforce the law with the same seriousness on behalf of women as of other victims of discrimination. ... Until now, too few women's organizations and official spokesmen have been willing to speak out against these dangers facing women. Too many women have been restrained by the fear of being called "feminist."

There is no civil rights movement to speak for women, as there has been for Negroes and other victims of discrimination. The National Organization for Women must therefore begin to speak.

We believe that the power of American law, and the protection guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to the civil rights of all individuals, must be effectively applied and enforced to isolate and remove patterns of sex discrimination, to ensure equality of opportunity in employment and education, and equality of civil and political rights and responsibilities on behalf of women, as well as for Negroes and other deprived groups.

We realize that women's problems are linked to many broader questions of social justice; their solution will require concerted



action by many groups. Therefore, convinced that human rights for all are indivisible, we expect to give active support to the common cause of equal rights for all those who suffer discrimination and deprivation, and we call upon other organizations committed to such goals to support our efforts toward equality for women.

...

We believe that this nation has a capacity at least as great as other nations, to innovate new social institutions which will enable women to enjoy true equality of opportunity and responsibility in society, without conflict with their responsibilities as mothers and homemakers.... Above all, we reject the assumption that these problems are the unique responsibility of each individual woman, rather than a basic social dilemma which society must solve. True equality of opportunity and freedom of choice for women requires such practical, and possible innovations as a nationwide network of child-care center which will make unnecessary for women to retire completely from society until their children are grown, and national programs to provide retraining for women who have chosen the care for their own children full-time.

...

In the interest of the human dignity of women, we will protest, and endeavor to change, the false image of women now prevalent in the mass media, and in the texts, ceremonies, laws, and practices of our major social institutions. Such images perpetuate contempt for women by society and by women for themselves. We are similarly opposed to all policies and practices — in church, state, college, factory, or office which, in the guise of protectiveness, not only deny opportunities but also foster in women self-denigration, dependence, and evasion of responsibility, undermine their confidence in their own abilities and foster contempt for women.

...

We believe that women will do most to create a new image of women by acting now, and by speaking out in behalf of their own equality, freedom, and human dignity — not in pleas for special privilege, nor in enmity toward men, who are also victims of the



current, half-equality between the sexes — but in an active, self-respecting partnership with men. By so doing, women will develop confidence in their own ability to determine actively, in partnership with men, the conditions of their life, their choices, their future and their society.

[Source: National Organization for Women, “Statement of Purpose” (October 29, 1966). Available online via *The National Organization for Women* (<http://now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose/>).]



## 205. Primary Source: The Black Panther Party Platform (1966)

*The **Ten-Point Program**, or **The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense Ten-Point Platform and Program**, is a set of guidelines to the Black Panther Party and states their ideals and ways of operation, a “combination of a Bill of Rights and a Declaration of Independence.”*

*The document was created in 1966 by the founders of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, whose political thoughts lay within the realm of Marxism and Black Nationalism. Each one of the statements were put in place for all of the Black Panther Party members to live by and actively practice every day. The Ten-Point program was released on May 15, 1967 in the second issue of the party’s weekly newspaper, *The Black Panther*. All succeeding 537 issues contained the program, titled “What We Want Now!”*

*The Ten Point Program comprised two sections: The first, titled “What We Want Now!” described what the Black Panther Party wants from what they would describe as the racist leaders of American Society. The second section, titled “What We Believe,” outlines the philosophical views of the party and the rights that African Americans should have, but are denied. It is structured similarly to the United States Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution.*

*“What We Believe” expands on the first section, making demands of what will be deemed sufficient payment for the injustices committed against the Black Community. For example, one section states that, “We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as a restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people”. It continues to state that “We will accept this payment in currency which will be distributed*



*to our many communities.” Newton and Seale believed that the Black community had been deprived of these benefits over the years, and that the only way to correct this injustice was in repayment of assets that had been lost to them over many years of slavery.*

The sections read as follows:

**What We Want Now!**

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the white men of our Black Community. (later changed to “we want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our black and oppressed communities.”)
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society.
6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

**What We Believe:**

1. We believe that Black People will not be free until we are able to determine our own destiny.
2. We believe that the federal government is responsible and



obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the White American business men will not give full employment, the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as redistribution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities: the Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered 6,000,000 Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over 50,000,000 Black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.
4. We believe that if the White landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make a decent housing for its people.
5. We believe in an educational system that will give our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.
6. We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.
7. We believe we can end police brutality in our Black community by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community from racist police oppression



and brutality. The second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States gives us the right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

8. We believe that all Black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
9. We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peers. A peer is a persons from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical, and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the Black community from which the Black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of “the average reasoning man” of the Black community.
10. When in the course of human events, it become necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature’s god entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, and that all men are created equal that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its power in such a form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be



changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accused. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, and their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards of their future security.<sup>[2]</sup>



## 206. Primary Source: George M. Garcia, Vietnam Veteran, Oral Interview (1969/2012)

*In 2012, George Garcia sat down to be interviewed about his experiences as a corporal in the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. Alternating between English and Spanish, Garcia told of early life in Brownsville, Texas, his time as a U.S. Marine in Vietnam, and his experience coming home from the war.*

**George M. Garcia:**

“ When I first arrived, I arrived in Da Nang. And I’ll never forget because I was only 18 years young. I was — you know, I was freshly out of high school. And at that time — I have to tell you this so you can have a picture of it because it wasn’t just cut and dry. Like I told you, coming from the [Rio Grande] Valley, especially for me that I had never been exposed to anything like this ...

... in our particular company, which was Company F, you know, we were always in mission. ... And from that day forward — I arrived there January 3rd of 1969. And from that point until the day I left, we were always on a mission. Always. We all had different missions. ...

...

I don’t know if I should or not, but I can share with you the second month in February, I think I was still 18 maybe going on 19. It was pretty close on my 19th year. We have what we call — you know what — you know what it means friendly fire?

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

Yes.

**George M. Garcia:**

Okay. We were — again, we were in a mission. We had received a report to seek and destroy and our jets had — they were ahead of us. They had destroyed this area. Supposedly there were enemies



there and they went ahead and destroy — and it was up for us to seek and destroy — to see and make sure there was no enemy left. So — anyway, supposedly the jets had already cleared the area. And so we continued to march. And usually our battalion commander does the calling and the clearing to stop the cease firing. Well, what happened that particular afternoon, our battalion failed to tell one of the pilots to cease fire and that — that pilot came back and they dropped bombs on us.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

Oh, no.

**George M. Garcia:**

It was the most — you know, the most horrible day of my life. I was — (spoke Spanish) — I was either turning just 19 there or I had just turned 19. I don't recall because it's — that happened in 1969 in February. And it was horrible. I mean, I remember — I mean, all the dust flying. It was — there was sand in that area and you could see all the sand flying all over the place. And you could hear the screaming and the yelling. And — (spoke Spanish) — our first platoon got wiped out.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

How big — how many men?

**George M. Garcia:**

We must have lost approximately about 30, 35. And I looked up because I could hear — and then there was a whistling sound. I kept hearing something like a whistling sound. And I didn't know at the time that it was — it was what we call a shrapnel from the bomb. And it hit me right here. It burned me. It cut me right here, but at the time I didn't pay attention. I just took it off, you know, but it was — it was strange because it was coming in real — you could hear woo woo woo and coming real fast. And then I didn't think too much about it until afterwards, but the strange thing about it, it didn't penetrate it.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

So it just hit you in your neck area?

**George M. Garcia:**



Yeah, right here.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

But it didn't break the skin?

**George M. Garcia:**

It did, but it didn't go all the way in. That's what's so strange. And, you know, it just like hit me and it stopped right there. It — you know, it cut me and burned me, but I took it off. But I couldn't understand — at the time I didn't think about it because I was concerned about the men.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

Sure.

**George M. Garcia:**

It was not until after when I found out about it that it was so strange it didn't get — it didn't go all the way because it was coming fast. So, anyway, I got up and I kept moving forward, you know. And I had a hard time seeing because there was a lot of dust and the sand and all that. And so when I saw the — you know, when I saw all those men that were killed, it was just horrible. And they were, you know, without their limbs and their eyes and at that moment, you know, I — at that moment I — I wanted to lose — it was — I had to make a quick decision. Either I would — (spoke Spanish) — I was about to lose my mind or take it all, you know. And so it was a moment of seconds I decided to take all the pain, what I was seeing inside of me. It's there in front of me. So I just told myself, I'll just take everything that I'm seeing. So that's how I was able to keep my sanity. And I — (spoke Spanish) — I was real young and that was the first trauma that I — that I faced.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

How did you survive it?

**George M. Garcia:**

That's how I survived it.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

Luck?

**George M. Garcia:**

No.



**Julia M. Hernandez:**

I mean the bombing.

**George M. Garcia:**

There's no luck.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

The bombing.

**George M. Garcia:**

There's no — there's no luck, because — (spoke Spanish) — there's no luck in war at all. I don't believe there's luck, you know. Just God's grace and those men that were — those men that we lost, I understand it now — I didn't understand then — because I even pleaded with God during my time that I was there — somewhere down the road I did — I yelled out to God because — (spoke Spanish) — I was losing a lot of my friends and I asked God to take me, not to take them. But coming back to February, as I was able to keep my insanity from that — from that day, that's how I survived the war, because it was such a horrible war, Vietnam, that — that's how I was able to save my sanity. And then we had to — then we have to bag the bodies. We had bodies we wouldn't — we couldn't even find because they were so well destroyed, I mean. And to this day I haven't forgotten. That's why they were going to award me a Purple Heart because of my — when I got hit. And I couldn't accept it. I told them I would not accept because I felt that my wound was nothing compared to what I had seen. I didn't feel worthy of it. So I declined that — I declined that — that Purple Heart. I just felt very unworthy, even today. I always felt that I made the right decision and the right — to this very day.

**Julia M. Hernandez:**

Right.

**George M. Garcia:**

Yeah.

[Source: Interview with George M. Garcia (October 6, 2012). Available online via the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress (<https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.88006/>).]











PART XXX

POLITICAL STORMS AT  
HOME AND ABROAD,  
1968-1980

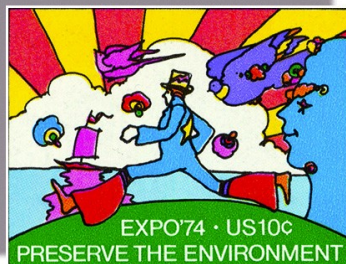






## 207. Introduction

From May 4 to November 4, 1974, a universal exposition was held in the city of Spokane, Washington. This world's fair, Expo '74, and the postage stamp issued to commemorate it, reflected many of the issues and interests of the 1970s. The stamp features psychedelic colors, and the character of the Cosmic Runner in the center wears bellbottoms, a popular fashion at the time. The theme of the fair was the environment, a subject beginning to be of



*Pop artist Peter Max designed this postage stamp to commemorate Expo '74, a world's fair held in Spokane, Washington. The fair's theme was the natural environment. Unfortunately, and ironically, gasoline shortages prevented many from attending the exposition.*

great concern to people in the United States, especially the younger generation and those in the hippie counterculture. In the 1970s, the environment, social justice, distrust of the government, and a desire to end the war in Vietnam—the concerns and attitudes of younger people, women, gays and lesbians, and people of color—began to draw the attention of the mainstream as well.

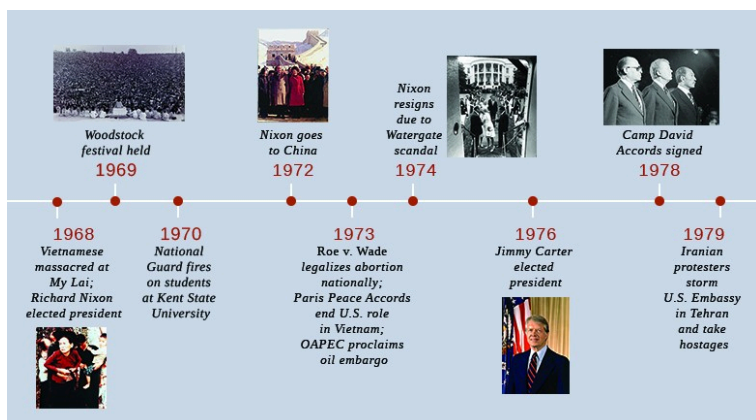


# 208. Identity Politics in a Fractured Society

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the counterculture of the 1960s
- Explain the origins of the American Indian Movement and its major activities
- Assess the significance of the gay rights and women's liberation movements



The political divisions that plagued the United States in the 1960s were reflected in the rise of identity politics in the 1970s. As people



lost hope of reuniting as a society with common interests and goals, many focused on issues of significance to the subgroups to which they belonged, based on culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and religion.

## HIPPIES AND THE COUNTERCULTURE

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many young people came to embrace a new wave of cultural dissent. The counterculture offered an alternative to the bland homogeneity of American middle-class life, patriarchal family structures, self-discipline, unquestioning patriotism, and the acquisition of property. In fact, there were many alternative cultures.

“Hippies” rejected the conventions of traditional society. Men sported beards and grew their hair long; both men and women wore clothing from non-Western cultures, defied their parents, rejected social etiquettes and manners, and turned to music as an expression of their sense of self. Casual sex between unmarried men and women was acceptable. Drug use, especially of marijuana and psychedelic drugs like LSD and peyote, was common. Most hippies were also deeply attracted to the ideas of peace and freedom. They protested the war in Vietnam and preached a doctrine of personal freedom to be and act as one wished.

Some hippies dropped out of mainstream society altogether and expressed their disillusionment with the cultural and spiritual limitations of American freedom. They joined communes, usually in rural areas, to share a desire to live closer to nature, respect for the earth, a dislike of modern life, and a disdain for wealth and material goods. Many communes grew their own organic food. Others abolished the concept of private property, and all members shared willingly with one another. Some sought to abolish



traditional ideas regarding love and marriage, and free love was practiced openly. One of the most famous communes was The Farm, established in Tennessee in 1971. Residents adopted a blend of Christian and Asian beliefs. They shared housing, owned no private property except tools and clothing, advocated nonviolence, and tried to live as one with nature, becoming vegetarians and avoiding the use of animal products. They smoked marijuana in an effort to reach a higher state of consciousness and to achieve a feeling of oneness and harmony.

Music, especially rock and folk music, occupied an important place in the counterculture. Concerts provided the opportunity to form seemingly impromptu communities to celebrate youth, rebellion, and individuality. In mid-August 1969, nearly 400,000 people attended a music festival in rural Bethel, New York, many for free. They jammed roads throughout the state, and



*The crowd at Woodstock greatly exceeded the fifty thousand expected. Mark Goff covered Woodstock as a young freelance reporter for Kaleidoscope, a Milwaukee-based alternative newspaper, and captured this image of Swami Sachidananda, who declared music “the celestial sound that controls the whole universe” at the opening ceremony.*

thousands had to be turned around and sent home. Thirty-two acts performed for a crowd that partook freely of marijuana, LSD, and alcohol during the rainy three-day event that became known as Woodstock (after the nearby town) and became the cultural touchstone of a generation. No other event better symbolized the cultural independence and freedom of Americans coming of age in the 1960s.



## Glenn Weiser on Attending Woodstock

On the way to Woodstock, Glenn Weiser remembers that the crowds were so large they essentially turned it into a free concert:

As we got closer to the site [on Thursday, August 14, 1969] we heard that so many people had already arrived that the crowd had torn down the fences enclosing the festival grounds (in fact they were never put up to begin with). Everyone was being allowed in for free. . . .

Early on Friday afternoon about a dozen of us got together and spread out some blankets on the grass at a spot about a third of the way up the hill on stage right and then dropped LSD. I took Orange Sunshine, a strong, clean dose in an orange tab that was perhaps the best street acid ever. Underground chemists in southern California had made millions of doses, and the nation was flooded with it that summer. We smoked some tasty black hashish to amuse ourselves while waiting for the acid to hit, and sat back to groove along with Richie Havens.

In two hours we were all soaring, and everything was just fine. In fact, it couldn't have been better—there I was with my beautiful hometown friends, higher than a church steeple and listening to wonderful music in the cool summer weather of the Catskills. After all, the dirty little secret of the late '60s was that psychedelic drugs taken in a pleasant setting could be completely exhilarating.

—Glenn Weiser, “Woodstock 1969 Remembered”

In this account, Glenn Weiser describes both the music and his drug use. What social trends did Woodstock reflect? How might the festival have influenced American culture and society, both aesthetically and behaviorally?



## AMERICAN INDIAN PROTEST

As the young, primarily white men and women who became hippies strove to create new identities for themselves, they borrowed liberally from other cultures, including that of Native Americans. At the same time, many Indians were themselves seeking to maintain their culture or retrieve elements that had been lost. In 1968, a group of Indian activists, including Dennis Banks, George Mitchell, and Clyde Bellecourt, convened a gathering of two hundred people in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and formed the American Indian Movement (AIM). The organizers were urban dwellers frustrated by decades of poverty and discrimination. In 1970, the average life expectancy of Indians was forty-six years compared to the national average of sixty-nine. The suicide rate was twice that of the general population, and the infant mortality rate was the highest in the country. Half of all Indians lived on reservations, where unemployment reached 50 percent. Among those in cities, 20 percent lived below the poverty line.





(a)



(b)

*This teepee was erected on the National Mall near the Washington Monument as part of an AIM demonstration (a). Note that the AIM flag (b) combines an Indian silhouette with the peace sign, the ubiquitous symbol of the 1960s and '70s.*

On November 20, 1969, a small group of Indian activists landed on Alcatraz Island (the former site of a notorious federal prison) in San Francisco Bay. They announced plans to build an American Indian cultural center, including a history museum, an ecology center, and a spiritual sanctuary. People on the mainland provided supplies by boat, and celebrities visited Alcatraz to publicize the cause. More people joined the occupiers until, at one point, they numbered about four hundred. From the beginning, the federal government negotiated with them to persuade them to leave. They were reluctant to accede, but over time, the occupiers began to drift away of their own accord. Government forces removed the final holdouts on June 11, 1971, nineteen months after the occupation began.

## Proclamation to the Great White Father and All



# His People

In occupying Alcatraz Island, Indian activists sought to call attention to their grievances and expectations about what America should mean. At the beginning of the nineteen-month occupation, Mohawk Richard Oakes delivered the following proclamation:

We, the native Americans, re-claim the land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery.

We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land, and hereby offer the following treaty:

We will purchase said Alcatraz Island for twenty-four dollars (\$24) in glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man's purchase of a similar island about 300 years ago. . . .

We feel that this so-called Alcatraz Island is more than suitable for an Indian Reservation, as determined by the white man's own standards. By this we mean that this place resembles most Indian reservations in that:

1. It is isolated from modern facilities, and without adequate means of transportation.
2. It has no fresh running water.
3. It has inadequate sanitation facilities.
4. There are no oil or mineral rights.
5. There is no industry and so unemployment is very great.
6. There are no health care facilities.
7. The soil is rocky and non-productive; and the land does not support game.
8. There are no educational facilities.
9. The population has always exceeded the land base.
10. The population has always been held as prisoners and kept dependent upon others.

Further, it would be fitting and symbolic that ships from



all over the world, entering the Golden Gate, would first see Indian land, and thus be reminded of the true history of this nation. This tiny island would be a symbol of the great lands once ruled by free and noble Indians.

What does the Alcatraz Proclamation reveal about the Indian view of U.S. history?

Listen to Richard Oakes, one of the leaders of the Alcatraz Island occupation, as he reads the [Alcatraz Proclamation](#) aloud.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You

can view them online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=253#oembed-1>

The next major demonstration came in 1972 when AIM members and others marched on Washington, DC—a journey they called the “Trail of Broken Treaties”—and occupied the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The group presented a list of demands, which included improved housing, education, and economic opportunities in Indian communities; the drafting of new treaties; the return of Indian lands; and protections for native religions and culture.

The most dramatic event staged by AIM was the occupation of the Indian community of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in February 1973. Wounded Knee, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, had historical significance: It was the site of an 1890 massacre of



members of the Lakota tribe by the U.S. Army. AIM went to the reservation following the failure of a group of Oglala to impeach the tribal president Dick Wilson, whom they accused of corruption and the use of strong-arm tactics to silence critics. AIM used the occasion to criticize the U.S. government for failing to live up to its treaties with native peoples.

The federal government surrounded the area with U.S. marshals, FBI agents, and other law enforcement forces. A siege ensued that lasted seventy-one days, with frequent gunfire from both sides, wounding a U.S. marshal as well as an FBI agent, and killing two Indians. The government did very little to meet the protesters' demands. Two AIM leaders, Dennis Banks and Russell Means, were arrested, but charges were later dismissed. The Nixon administration had already halted the federal policy of termination and restored millions of acres to tribes. Increased funding for Indian education, healthcare, legal services, housing, and economic development followed, along with the hiring of more Indian employees in the BIA.

## GAY RIGHTS

Combined with the sexual revolution and the feminist movement of the 1960s, the counterculture helped establish a climate that fostered the struggle for gay and lesbian rights. Many gay rights groups were founded in Los Angeles and San Francisco, cities that were administrative centers in the network of U.S. military installations and the places where many gay men suffered dishonorable discharges. The first postwar organization for homosexual civil rights, the Mattachine Society, was launched in Los Angeles in 1950. The first national organization for lesbians, the Daughters of Bilitis, was founded in San Francisco five years later. In 1966, the city became home to the world's first organization for



transsexual people, the National Transsexual Counseling Unit, and in 1967, the Sexual Freedom League of San Francisco was born.

Through these organizations and others, gay and lesbian activists fought against the criminalization and discrimination of their sexual identities on a number of occasions throughout the 1960s, employing strategies of both protests and litigation. However, the most famous event in the gay rights movement took place not in San Francisco but in New York City. Early in the morning of June 28, 1969, police raided a Greenwich Village gay bar called the Stonewall Inn. Although such raids were common, the response of the Stonewall patrons was anything but. As the police prepared to arrest many of the customers, especially transsexuals and cross-dressers, who were particular targets for police harassment, a crowd began to gather. Angered by the brutal treatment of the prisoners, the crowd attacked. Beer bottles and bricks were thrown. The police barricaded themselves inside the bar and waited for reinforcements. The riot continued for several hours and resumed the following night. Shortly thereafter, the Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists' Alliance were formed, and began to protest discrimination, homophobia, and violence against gay people, promoting gay liberation and gay pride.

With a call for gay men and women to "come out"—a consciousness-raising campaign that shared many principles with the counterculture, gay and lesbian communities moved from the urban underground into the political sphere. Gay rights activists protested strongly against the official position of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), which categorized homosexuality as a mental illness and often resulted in job loss, loss of custody, and other serious personal consequences. By 1974, the APA had ceased to classify homosexuality as a form of mental illness but continued to consider it a "sexual orientation disturbance." Nevertheless, in 1974, Kathy Kozachenko became the first openly lesbian woman voted into office in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1977, Harvey Milk became California's first openly gay man elected to public office, although his service on San Francisco's board of supervisors, along



with that of San Francisco mayor George Moscone, was cut short by the bullet of disgruntled former city supervisor Dan White.

## MAYBE NOT NOW

The feminist push for greater rights continued through the 1970s. The media often ridiculed feminists as “women’s libbers” and focused on more radical organizations like W.I.T.C.H. (Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), a loose association of activist groups. Many reporters stressed the most unusual goals of the most radical women—calls for the abolition of marriage and demands that manholes be renamed “personholes.”



*In 1970, supporters of equal rights for women marched in Washington, DC.*

The majority of feminists, however, sought meaningful accomplishments. In the 1970s, they opened battered women’s shelters and successfully fought for protection from employment discrimination for pregnant women, reform of rape laws (such as the abolition of laws requiring a witness to corroborate a woman’s



report of rape), criminalization of domestic violence, and funding for schools that sought to counter sexist stereotypes of women. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* affirmed a number of state laws under which abortions obtained during the first three months of pregnancy were legal. This made a nontherapeutic abortion a legal medical procedure nationwide.

Many advances in women's rights were the result of women's greater engagement in politics. For example, Patsy Mink, the first Asian American woman elected to Congress, was the co-author of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title IX of which prohibits sex discrimination in education. Mink had been interested in fighting discrimination in education since her youth, when she opposed racial segregation in campus housing while a student at the University of Nebraska. She went to law school after being denied admission to medical school because of her gender. Like Mink, many other women sought and won political office, many with the help of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC). In 1971, the NWPC was formed by Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, and other leading feminists to encourage women's participation in political parties, elect women to office, and raise money for their campaigns.





(a)



(b)

*Patsy Mink (a), a Japanese American from Hawaii, was the first Asian American woman elected to the House of Representatives. In her successful 1970 congressional campaign, Bella Abzug (b) declared, "This woman's place is in the House... the House of Representatives!"*

The ultimate political goal of the National Organization for Women (NOW) was the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The amendment passed Congress in March 1972, and was sent to the states for ratification with a deadline of seven years for passage; if the amendment was not ratified by thirty-eight states by 1979, it would die. Twenty-two states ratified the ERA in 1972, and eight more in 1973. In the next two years, only four states voted for the amendment. In 1979, still four votes short, the amendment received a brief reprieve when Congress agreed to a three-year extension, but it never passed, as the result of the well-organized opposition of Christian and other socially conservative, grassroots organizations.



## Section Summary

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Indians, gays and lesbians, and women organized to change discriminatory laws and pursue government support for their interests, a strategy known as identity politics. Others, disenchanted with the status quo, distanced themselves from white, middle-class America by forming their own countercultures centered on a desire for peace, the rejection of material goods and traditional morality, concern for the environment, and drug use in pursuit of spiritual revelations. These groups, whose aims and tactics posed a challenge to the existing state of affairs, often met with hostility from individuals, local officials, and the U.S. government alike. Still, they persisted, determined to further their goals and secure for themselves the rights and privileges to which they were entitled as American citizens.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1058>

### *Review Question*

1. What kinds of values did hippies adopt?



## *Answer to Review Question*

1. Although hippie culture was not entirely homogenous, many hippies desired peace, rejected traditional social values, and sought to live a nonmaterialistic existence close to nature. Many also used drugs both recreationally and as a way to achieve greater spiritual insight.

## *Glossary*

**counterculture** a culture that develops in opposition to the dominant culture of a society

**identity politics** political movements or actions intended to further the interests of a particular group membership, based on culture, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, or sexual orientation



## 209. Video: The 1960s in America

This video teaches you about a time of relative tumult in the United States, the 1960s. America was changing rapidly in the 1960s, and rights movements were at the forefront of those changes. Civil Rights were dominant, but the 60s also saw growth in the Women's Movement, the LGBT rights movement, the Latino rights movement, and the American Indian movement. Also, Americans began to pay a bit more attention to the environment. All this change happened against the backdrop of the Cold War and the Rise of Conservatism. It was just wild. This video will teach you about sit-ins, Freedom Rides, The March on Washington, MLK, JFK, LBJ, and NOW. Man, that is a lot of initialisms. And one acronym.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=254#oembed-1>



# 210. Coming Apart, Coming Together

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the factors responsible for Richard Nixon's election in 1968
- Describe the splintering of the Democratic Party in 1968
- Discuss Richard Nixon's economic policies
- Discuss the major successes of Richard Nixon's foreign policy

The presidential election of 1968 revealed a rupture of the New Deal coalition that had come together under Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s. The Democrats were divided by internal dissension over the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the challenges of the New Left. Meanwhile, the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon, won voters in the South, Southwest, and northern suburbs by appealing to their anxieties about civil rights, women's rights, antiwar protests, and the counterculture taking place around them. Nixon spent his first term in office pushing measures that slowed the progress of civil rights and sought to restore economic stability. His greatest triumphs were in foreign policy. But his largest priority throughout his first term was his reelection in 1972.



## THE “NEW NIXON”

The Republicans held their 1968 national convention from August 5–8 in Miami, Florida. Richard Nixon quickly emerged as the frontrunner for the nomination, ahead of Nelson Rockefeller and Ronald Reagan. This success was not accidental: From 1962, when he lost his bid for the governorship of California, to 1968, Nixon had been collecting political credits by branding himself as a candidate who could appeal to mainstream voters and by tirelessly working for other Republican candidates. In 1964, for example, he vigorously supported Barry Goldwater’s presidential bid and thus built good relationships with the new conservative movement in the Republican Party.

Although Goldwater lost the 1964 election, his vigorous rejection of New Deal state and social legislation, along with his support of states’ rights, proved popular in the Deep South, which had resisted federal efforts at racial integration. Taking a lesson from Goldwater’s experience, Nixon also employed a southern strategy in 1968. Denouncing segregation and the denial of the vote to African Americans, he nevertheless maintained that southern states be allowed to pursue racial equality at their own pace and criticized forced integration. Nixon thus garnered the support of South Carolina’s senior senator and avid segregationist Strom Thurmond, which helped him win the Republican nomination on the first ballot.

Nixon also courted northern, blue-collar workers, whom he later called the silent majority, to acknowledge their belief that their voices were seldom heard. These voters feared the social changes taking place in the country: Antiwar protests challenged their own sense of patriotism and civic duty, whereas the recreational use of new drugs threatened their cherished principles of self-discipline, and urban riots invoked the specter of a racial reckoning. Government action on behalf of the marginalized raised the question of whether its traditional constituency—the white middle class—would lose its privileged place in American politics. Some felt



left behind as the government turned to the problems of African Americans. Nixon's promises of stability and his emphasis on law and order appealed to them. He portrayed himself as a fervent patriot who would take a strong stand against racial unrest and antiwar protests. Nixon harshly critiqued Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, and he promised a secret plan to end the war in Vietnam honorably and bring home the troops. He also promised to reform the Supreme Court, which he contended had gone too far in "coddling criminals." Under Chief Justice Earl Warren, the court had used the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to grant those accused under state law the ability to defend themselves and secure protections against unlawful search and seizure, cruel and unusual punishment, and self-incrimination.

Nixon had found the political capital that would ensure his victory in the suburbs, which produced more votes than either urban or rural areas. He championed "middle America," which was fed up with social convulsions, and called upon the country to come together. His running mate, Spiro T. Agnew, a former governor of Maryland, blasted the Democratic ticket as fiscally irresponsible and "soft on communism." Nixon and Agnew's message thus appealed to northern middle-class and blue-collar whites as well as southern whites who had fled to the suburbs in the wake of the Supreme Court's pro-integration decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.





(a)



(b)

*On the 1968 campaign trail, Richard Nixon flashes his famous “V for Victory” gesture (a). Nixon’s strategy was to appeal to working- and middle-class suburbanites. This image of him in the White House bowling alley seems calculated to appeal to his core constituency (b).*

## DEMOCRATS IN DISARRAY

By contrast, in early 1968, the political constituency that Lyndon Johnson had cobbled together to win the presidency in 1964 seemed to be falling apart. When Eugene McCarthy, the Democratic senator from Minnesota, announced that he would challenge Johnson in the primaries in an explicitly antiwar campaign, Johnson was overwhelmingly favored by Democratic voters. But then the Tet Offensive in Vietnam exploded on American television screens on January 31, playing out on the nightly news for weeks. On February 27, Walter Cronkite, a highly respected television journalist, offered his opinion that the war in Vietnam was unwinnable. When the votes were counted in New Hampshire on March 12, McCarthy had won twenty of the state’s twenty-four delegates.



McCarthy's popularity encouraged Robert (Bobby) Kennedy to also enter the race. Realizing that his war policies could unleash a divisive fight within his own party for the nomination, Johnson announced his withdrawal on March 31, fracturing the Democratic Party. One faction consisted of the traditional party leaders who appealed to unionized, blue-collar constituents and white ethnics (Americans with recent European immigrant backgrounds). This group fell in behind Johnson's vice president, Hubert H. Humphrey, who took up the mainstream party's torch



*In his brother's (John F. Kennedy's) administration, Robert (Bobby) Kennedy had served as attorney general and had spoken out about racial equality.*

almost immediately after Johnson's announcement. The second group consisted of idealistic young activists who had slogged through the snows of New Hampshire to give McCarthy a boost and saw themselves as the future of the Democratic Party. The third group, composed of Catholics, African Americans and other minorities, and some of the young, antiwar element, galvanized around Robert Kennedy. Finally, there were the southern Democrats, the Dixiecrats, who opposed the advances made by the civil rights movement. Some found themselves attracted to the Republican candidate Richard Nixon. Many others, however, supported the third-party candidacy of segregationist George C. Wallace, the former governor of Alabama. Wallace won close to ten million votes, which was 13.5 percent of all votes cast. He was



particularly popular in the South, where he carried five states and received forty-six Electoral College votes.

Kennedy and McCarthy fiercely contested the remaining primaries of the 1968 season. There were only fifteen at that time. McCarthy beat Kennedy handily in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Kennedy took Indiana and Nebraska before losing Oregon to McCarthy. Kennedy's only hope was that a strong enough showing in the California primary on June 4 might swing uncommitted delegates his way. He did manage to beat McCarthy, winning 46 percent of the vote to McCarthy's 42 percent, but it was a fruitless victory. As he attempted to exit the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles after his victory speech, Kennedy was shot; he died twenty-six hours later. His killer, Sirhan B. Sirhan, a Jordanian immigrant, had allegedly targeted him for advocating military support for Israel in its conflict with neighboring Arab states.

Going into the nominating convention in Chicago in 1968, Humphrey, who promised to pursue the "Politics of Joy," seemed clearly in command of the regular party apparatus. But the national debates over civil rights, student protests, and the Vietnam War had made 1968 a particularly anguished year, and many people felt anything but joyful. Some party factions hoped to make their voices heard; others wished to disrupt the convention altogether. Among them were antiwar protestors, hippies, and Yippies—members of the leftist, anarchistic Youth International Party organized by Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman—who called for the establishment of a new nation consisting of cooperative institutions to replace those currently in existence. To demonstrate their contempt for "the establishment" and the proceedings inside the hall, the Yippies nominated a pig named Pigasus for president.

A chaotic scene developed inside the convention hall and outside at Grant Park, where the protesters camped. Chicago's mayor, Richard J. Daley, was anxious to demonstrate that he could maintain law and order, especially because several days of destructive rioting had followed the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. earlier that year. He thus let loose a force of twelve thousand police officers, six



thousand members of the Illinois National Guard, and six thousand U.S. Army soldiers. Television cameras caught what later became known as a “police riot”: Armed officers made their way into crowds of law-abiding protesters, clubbing anyone they encountered and setting off tear gas canisters. The protesters fought back. Inside the convention hall, a Democratic senator from Connecticut called for adjournment, whereas other delegates insisted on proceeding. Ironically, Hubert Humphrey received the nomination and gave an acceptance speech in which he spoke in support of “law and order.” When the convention ended, Rubin, Hoffman, and five other protesters (called the “Chicago Seven”) were placed on trial for inciting a riot.



(a)



(b)

*Despite facing charges following events at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Abbie Hoffman continued to protest the war on campuses across the country, as here (a) at the University of Oklahoma. Jerry Rubin (b) visited the campus of the University of Buffalo in March 1970, just one month after his conviction in the Chicago Seven trial. (credit a: modification of work by Richard O. Barry)*



Listen to Yippie activist [Jerry Rubin's 1970 interview](#) with Cleveland news journalist Dorothy Fuldheim.

## THE DOMESTIC NIXON

The images of violence and the impression of things spinning out of control seriously damaged Humphrey's chances for victory. Many liberals and young antiwar activists, disappointed by his selection over McCarthy and still shocked by the death of Robert Kennedy, did not vote for Humphrey. Others turned against him because of his failure to chastise the Chicago police for their violence. Some resented the fact that Humphrey had received 1,759 delegates on the first ballot at the convention, nearly three times the number won by McCarthy, even though in the primaries, he had received only 2 percent of the popular vote. Many loyal Democratic voters at home, shocked by the violence they saw on television, turned away from their party, which seemed to have attracted dangerous "radicals," and began to consider Nixon's promises of law and order.

As the Democratic Party collapsed, Nixon successfully campaigned for the votes of both working- and middle-class white Americans, winning the 1968 election. Although Humphrey received nearly the same percentage of the popular vote, Nixon easily won the Electoral College, gaining 301 votes to Humphrey's 191 and Wallace's 46.

Once elected, Nixon began to pursue a policy of deliberate neglect of the civil rights movement and the needs of ethnic minorities. For example, in 1969, for the first time in fifteen years, federal lawyers sided with the state of Mississippi when it sought to slow the pace of school desegregation. Similarly, Nixon consistently



showed his opposition to busing to achieve racial desegregation. He saw that restricting African American activity was a way of undercutting a source of votes for the Democratic Party and sought to overhaul the provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In March 1970, he commented that he did not believe an “open” America had to be homogeneous or fully integrated, maintaining that it was “natural” for members of ethnic groups to live together in their own enclaves. In other policy areas, especially economic ones, Nixon was either moderate or supportive of the progress of African Americans; for example, he expanded affirmative action, a program begun during the Johnson administration to improve employment and educational opportunities for racial minorities.

Although Nixon always kept his eye on the political environment, the economy required attention. The nation had enjoyed seven years of expansion since 1961, but inflation (a general rise in prices) was threatening to constrict the purchasing power of the American consumer and therefore curtail economic expansion. Nixon tried to appeal to fiscal conservatives in the Republican Party, reach out to disaffected Democrats, and, at the same time, work with a Democratic Party-controlled Congress. As a result, Nixon’s approach to the economy seemed erratic. Despite the heavy criticisms he had leveled against the Great Society, he embraced and expanded many of its features. In 1969, he signed a tax bill that eliminated the investment tax credit and moved some two million of the poorest people off the tax rolls altogether. He federalized the food stamp program and established national eligibility requirements, and signed into law the automatic adjustments for inflation of Social Security payments. On the other hand, he won the praise of conservatives with his “New Federalism”—drastically expanding the use of federal “block grants” to states to spend as they wished without strings attached.

By mid-1970, a recession was beginning and unemployment was 6.2 percent, twice the level under Johnson. After earlier efforts at controlling inflation with controlled federal spending—economists assumed that reduced federal spending and borrowing would curb



the amount of money in circulation and stabilize prices—Nixon proposed a budget with an \$11 billion deficit in 1971. The hope was that more federal funds in the economy would stimulate investment and job creation. When the unemployment rate refused to budge the following year, he proposed a budget with a \$25 billion deficit. At the same time, he tried to fight continuing inflation by freezing wages and prices for ninety days, which proved to be only a temporary fix. The combination of unemployment and rising prices posed an unfamiliar challenge to economists whose fiscal policies of either expanding or contracting federal spending could only address one side of the problem at the cost of the other. This phenomenon of “stagflation”—a term that combined the economic conditions of stagnation and inflation—outlived the Nixon administration, enduring into the early 1980s.

The origins of the nation’s new economic troubles were not just a matter of policy. Postwar industrial development in Asia and Western Europe—especially in Germany and Japan—had created serious competition to American businesses. By 1971, American appetites for imports left foreign central banks with billions of U.S. currency, which had been fixed to gold in the international monetary and trade agreement of Bretton Woods back in 1944. When foreign dollar holdings exceeded U.S. gold reserves in 1971, President Nixon allowed the dollar to flow freely against the price of gold. This caused an immediate 8 percent devaluation of the dollar, made American goods cheaper abroad, and stimulated exports. Nixon’s move also marked the beginning of the end of the dollar’s dominance in international trade.

The situation was made worse in October 1973, when Syria and Egypt jointly attacked Israel to recover territory that had been lost in 1967, starting the Yom Kippur War. The Soviet Union significantly aided its allies, Egypt and Syria, and the United States supported Israel, earning the enmity of Arab nations. In retaliation, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) imposed an embargo on oil shipments to the United States from October 1973 to March 1974. The ensuing shortage of oil pushed



its price from three dollars a barrel to twelve dollars a barrel. The average price of gasoline in the United States shot from thirty-eight cents a gallon before the embargo to fifty-five cents a gallon in June 1974, and the prices of other goods whose manufacture and transportation relied on oil or gas also rose and did not come down. The oil embargo had a lasting impact on the economy and underscored the nation's interdependency with international political and economic developments.

Faced with high fuel prices, American consumers panicked. Gas stations limited the amount customers could purchase and closed on Sundays as supplies ran low. To conserve oil, Congress reduced the speed limit on interstate highways to fifty-five miles per hour. People were asked to turn down their thermostats, and automobile manufacturers in Detroit explored the possibility of building more fuel-efficient cars. Even after the embargo ended, prices continued to rise, and by the end of the Nixon years in 1974, inflation had soared to 12.2 percent.





(a)



(b)

*The oil shortage triggered a rush to purchase gasoline, and gas stations around the country were choked with cars waiting to fill up. Eventually, fuel shortages caused gas stations to develop various ways to ration gasoline to their customers (a), such as the “flag policy” used by gas dealers in Oregon (b).*

Although Nixon's economic and civil rights policies differed from those of his predecessors, in other areas, he followed their lead. President Kennedy had committed the nation to putting a man on the moon before the end of the decade. Nixon, like Johnson before him, supported significant budget allocations to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to achieve this goal. On July 20, 1969, hundreds of millions of people around the world watched as astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin walked on the surface of the moon and planted the U.S. flag. Watching from the White House, President Nixon spoke to the astronauts via satellite phone. The entire project cost the American taxpayer some \$25 billion, approximately 4 percent of the nation's gross national product, and was such a source of pride for the



nation that the Soviet Union and China refused to televise it. Coming amid all the struggles and crises that the country was enduring, the moon landing gave citizens a sense of accomplishment that stood in stark contrast to the foreign policy failures, growing economic challenges, and escalating divisions at home.

## NIXON THE DIPLOMAT

Despite the many domestic issues on Nixon's agenda, he prioritized foreign policy and clearly preferred bold and dramatic actions in that arena. Realizing that five major economic powers—the United States, Western Europe, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan—dominated world affairs, he sought opportunities for the United States to pit the others against each other. In 1969, he announced a new Cold War principle known as the Nixon Doctrine, a policy whereby the United States would continue to assist its allies but would not assume the responsibility of defending the entire non-Communist world. Other nations, like Japan, needed to assume more of the burden of defending themselves.



Playing what was later referred to as “the China card,” Nixon abruptly reversed two decades of U.S. diplomatic sanctions and hostility to the Communist regime in the People’s Republic of China, when he announced, in August 1971, that he would personally travel to Beijing and meet with China’s leader, Chairman Mao Zedong, in February 1972. Nixon hoped that opening up to the Chinese government would prompt its bitter rival, the Soviet Union, to compete for global influence and seek a more productive relationship with the United States. He also hoped that establishing a friendly relationship with China



*President Nixon and First Lady Patricia Nixon visited the Great Wall on their 1972 trip to China. The Chinese showed them the sights and hosted a banquet for them in the Great Hall of the People. Nixon was the first U.S. president to visit China following the Communist victory in the civil war in 1949.*

would isolate North Vietnam and ease a peace settlement, allowing the United States to extract its troops from the war honorably. Concurring that the Soviet Union should be restrained from making advances in Asia, Nixon and Chinese premier Zhou Enlai agreed to disagree on several issues and ended up signing a friendship treaty. They promised to work towards establishing trade between the two nations and to eventually establishing full diplomatic relations with each other.

Continuing his strategy of pitting one Communist nation against another, in May 1972, Nixon made another newsworthy trip, traveling to Moscow to meet with the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. The two discussed a policy of *détente*, a relaxation of tensions between their nations, and signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), which limited each side to deploying only



two antiballistic missile systems. It also limited the number of nuclear missiles maintained by each country. In 1974, a protocol was signed that reduced antiballistic missile sites to one per country, since neither country had yet begun to build its second system. Moreover, the two sides signed agreements to allow scientific and technological exchanges, and promised to work towards a joint space mission.

## Section Summary

When a new Republican constituency of moderate southerners and northern, blue-collar workers voted Richard Nixon into the White House in 1968, many were hopeful. In the wake of antiwar and civil rights protests, and the chaos of the 1968 Democratic National Convention, many Americans welcomed Nixon's promise to uphold law and order. During his first term, Nixon strode a moderate, middle path in domestic affairs, attempting with little success to solve the problems of inflation and unemployment through a combination of austerity and deficit spending. He made substantial progress in foreign policy, however, establishing diplomatic relations with China for the first time since the Communist Revolution and entering into a policy of détente with the Soviet Union.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1059>



### *Review Question*

1. What caused the rifts in the Democratic Party in the 1968 election?

### *Review Question*

1. Many Democrats disliked the fact that Hubert Humphrey had won the Party's nomination, even though he had done poorly in all the primaries. In November, many who had supported antiwar candidates Eugene McCarthy and the late Robert Kennedy refused to vote. Others voted for segregationist George Wallace. Some working-class Democrats also voted for Richard Nixon.

### *Glossary*

**détente** the relaxation of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union

**Dixiecrats** conservative southern Democrats who



opposed integration and the other goals of the African American civil rights movement

**silent majority** a majority whose political will is usually not heard—in this case, northern, white, blue-collar voters

**southern strategy** a political strategy that called for appealing to southern whites by resisting calls for greater advancements in civil rights

**stagflation** high inflation combined with high unemployment and slow economic growth

**Yippies** the Youth International Party, a political party formed in 1967, which called for the establishment of a New Nation consisting of cooperative institutions that would replace those currently in existence



## 2II. Video: The Rise of Conservatism

This video teaches you about the rise of the conservative movement in United States politics. So, the sixties are often remembered for the liberal changes that the decade brought to America, but lest you forget, Richard Nixon was elected to the presidency during the sixties. The conservative movement didn't start with Nixon though. Modern conservatism really entered mainstream consciousness during the 1964 presidential contest between incumbent president and Kennedy torch-bearer Lyndon B Johnson, and Republican senator Barry Goldwater. While Goldwater never had a shot in the election, he used the campaign to talk about all kinds of conservative ideas. At the same time, several varying groups, including libertarian conservatives and moral conservatives, began to work together. Goldwater's trailblazing and coalition building would pay off in 1968 when Richard Nixon was elected to the White House, and politics changed forever when Nixon resigned over the Watergate scandal. You'll also learn about the ERA, EPA, OSHA, the NTSB, and several other acronyms and initialisms.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=256#oembed-1>



## 212. Vietnam: The Downward Spiral

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the events that fueled antiwar sentiment in the Vietnam era
- Explain Nixon's steps to withdraw the United States from the conflict in South Vietnam

As early as 1967, critics of the war in Vietnam had begun to call for the repeal of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which gave President Johnson the authority to conduct military operations in Vietnam in defense of an ally, South Vietnam. Nixon initially opposed the repeal efforts, claiming that doing so might have consequences that reached far beyond Vietnam. Nevertheless, by 1969, he was beginning troop withdrawals from Vietnam while simultaneously looking for a “knockout blow” against the North Vietnamese. In sum, the Nixon administration was in need of an exit strategy.



The escalation of the war, however, made an easy withdrawal increasingly difficult. Officially, the United States was the ally and partner of the South Vietnamese, whose “hearts and minds” it was trying to win through a combination of military assistance and economic development. In reality, however, U.S. soldiers, who



*U.S. soldiers in Hue in 1968 at during the Tet Offensive. The frustrating experience of fighting the seemingly unwinnable war left many soldiers, and the public in general, disillusioned with the government.*

found themselves fighting in an inhospitable environment thousands of miles from home to protect people who often resented their presence and aided their enemies, came to regard the Vietnamese as backward, cowardly people and the government of South Vietnam as hopelessly inefficient and corrupt. Instead of winning “hearts and minds,” U.S. warfare in Vietnam cost the lives and limbs of U.S. troops and millions of Vietnamese combatants and civilians.

For their part, the North Vietnamese forces and the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam also used brutal tactics to terrorize and kill their opponents or effectively control their territory. Political assassinations and forced indoctrination were common. Captured U.S. soldiers frequently endured torture and imprisonment.

## MY LAI

Racism on the part of some U.S. soldiers and a desire to retaliate against those they perceived to be responsible for harming U.S. troops affected the conduct of the war. A war correspondent who served in Vietnam noted, “In motivating the GI to fight by appealing



to his racist feelings, the United States military discovered that it had liberated an emotion over which it was to lose control.” It was not unusual for U.S. soldiers to evacuate and burn villages suspected of shielding Viet Cong fighters, both to deprive the enemy of potential support and to enact revenge for enemy brutality. Troops shot at farmers’ water buffalo for target practice. American and South Vietnamese use of napalm, a jellied gasoline that sticks to the objects it burns, was common. Originally developed to burn down structures during World War II, in Vietnam, it was directed against human beings as well, as had occurred during the Korean War.

## **Vietnam Veterans against the War Statement**

Many U.S. soldiers disapproved of the actions of their fellow troops. Indeed, a group of Vietnam veterans formed the organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Small at first, it grew to perhaps as many as twenty thousand members. In April 1971, John Kerry, a former lieutenant in the U.S. Navy and a member of VVAW, testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations about conditions in Vietnam based on his personal observations:

I would like to talk on behalf of all those veterans and say that several months ago in Detroit we had an investigation at which over 150 honorably discharged, and many very highly decorated, veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia. These were not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command. . . . They relived the absolute horror of what this country, in a sense, made them do.

They told stories that at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads . . . randomly shot at civilians, razed villages . . . and generally ravaged the countryside of



South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country. . . .

We could come back to this country, we could be quiet, we could hold our silence, we could not tell what went on in Vietnam, but we feel because of what threatens this country, not the reds [Communists], but the crimes which we are committing that threaten it, that we have to speak out.

—John Kerry, April 23, 1971

In what way did the actions of U.S. soldiers in Vietnam threaten the United States?

On March 16, 1968, men from the U.S. Army's Twenty-Third Infantry Division committed one of the most notorious atrocities of the war. About one hundred soldiers commanded by Captain Ernest Medina were sent to destroy the village of My Lai, which was suspected of hiding Viet Cong fighters. Although there was later disagreement regarding the captain's exact words, the platoon leaders believed the order to destroy the enemy included killing women and children. Having suffered twenty-eight casualties in the past three months, the men of Charlie Company were under severe stress and extremely apprehensive as they approached the village. Two platoons entered it, shooting randomly. A group of seventy to eighty unarmed people, including children and infants, were forced into an irrigation ditch by members of the First Platoon under the command of Lt. William L. Calley, Jr. Despite their proclamations of innocence, the villagers were shot. Houses were set on fire, and as the inhabitants tried to flee, they were killed with rifles, machine guns, and grenades. The U.S. troops were never fired upon, and one soldier later testified that he did not see any man who looked like a Viet Cong fighter.



The precise number of civilians killed that day is unclear: The numbers range from 347 to 504. None were armed. Although not all the soldiers in My Lai took part in the killings, no one attempted to stop the massacre before the arrival by helicopter of Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, who, along with his crew, attempted to evacuate women and children. Upon returning to his base, Thompson immediately reported the events taking place at My Lai. Shortly thereafter, Medina ordered Charlie Company to cease fire.



*Vietnamese civilians in My Lai await their fate. They were shot a few minutes after this 1968 photograph was taken.*

Although Thompson's crewmembers confirmed his account, none of the men from Charlie Company gave a report, and a cover-up began almost immediately. The army first claimed that 150 people, the majority of them Viet Cong, had been killed during a firefight with Charlie Company.

Hearing details from friends in Charlie Company, a helicopter gunner by the name of Ron Ridenhour began to conduct his own investigation and, in April 1969, wrote to thirty members of Congress, demanding an investigation. By September 1969, the army charged Lt. Calley with premeditated murder. Many Americans were horrified at the graphic footage of the massacre; the incident confirmed their belief that the war was unjust and not being fought on behalf of the Vietnamese people. However, nearly half of the respondents to a Minnesota poll did not believe that the incident at My Lai had actually happened. U.S. soldiers could not possibly do such horrible things, they felt; they were certain that American goals in Vietnam were honorable and speculated that the antiwar



movement had concocted the story to generate sympathy for the enemy.

Calley was found guilty in March 1971, and sentenced to life in prison. Nationwide, hundreds of thousands of Americans joined a “Free Calley” campaign. Two days later, President Nixon released him from custody and placed him under house arrest at Fort Benning, Georgia. In August of that same year, Calley’s sentence was reduced to twenty years, and in September 1974, he was paroled. The only soldier convicted in the massacre, he spent a total of three-and-a-half years under house arrest for his crimes.

## BATTLES AT HOME

As the conflict wore on and reports of brutalities increased, the antiwar movement grew in strength. To take the political pressure off himself and his administration, and find a way to exit Vietnam “with honor,” Nixon began the process of Vietnamization, turning more responsibility for the war over to South Vietnamese forces by training them and providing American weaponry, while withdrawing U.S. troops from the field. At the same time, however, Nixon authorized the bombing of neighboring Cambodia, which had declared its neutrality, in an effort to destroy North Vietnamese and Viet Cong bases within that country and cut off supply routes between North and South Vietnam. The bombing was kept secret from both Congress and the American public. In April 1970, Nixon decided to follow up with an invasion of Cambodia.

The invasion could not be kept secret, and when Nixon announced it on television on April 30, 1970, protests sprang up across the country. The most tragic and politically damaging occurred on May 1, 1970, at Kent State University in Ohio. Violence erupted in the town of Kent after an initial student demonstration on campus, and the next day, the mayor asked Ohio’s governor to send in the National Guard. Troops were sent to the university’s



campus, where students had set fire to the ROTC building and were fighting off firemen and policemen trying to extinguish it. The National Guard used teargas to break up the demonstration, and several students were arrested.



(a)



(b)

On April 30, 1970, Richard Nixon announces plans for the Cambodia Campaign (a), provoking protests on college campuses across the country. Within days, the governor of Ohio had called in the National Guard in response to student demonstrations at Kent State University. Bill Whitbeck, who was a student majoring in photo illustration at Kent State University in May 1970, captured this image (b) on campus on May 3, one day before the shootings that would result in four student deaths. (credit b: modification of work by Bill Whitbeck)

Tensions came to a head on May 4. Although campus officials had called off a planned demonstration, some fifteen hundred to two thousand students assembled, throwing rocks at a security officer who ordered them to leave. Seventy-seven members of the National Guard, with bayonets attached to their rifles, approached the students. After forcing most of them to retreat, the troops seemed to depart. Then, for reasons that are still unknown, they halted and turned; many began to fire at the students. Nine students were wounded; four were killed. Two of the dead had simply been crossing campus on their way to class. Peace was finally restored when a faculty member pleaded with the remaining students to leave.



Read the *New York Times* account of the [shootings at Kent State University](#) and view (under the headline) one of the most iconic photographs in American history.

News of the Kent State shootings shocked students around the country. Millions refused to attend class, as strikes were held at hundreds of colleges and high schools across the United States. On May 8, an antiwar protest took place in New York City, and the next day, 100,000 protesters assembled in Washington, DC. Not everyone sympathized with the slain students, however. Nixon had earlier referred to student demonstrators as “bums,” and construction workers attacked the New York City protestors. A Gallup poll revealed that most Americans blamed the students for the tragic events at Kent State.

On May 15, a similar tragedy took place at Jackson State College, an African American college in Jackson, Mississippi. Once again, students gathered on campus to protest the invasion of Cambodia, setting fires and throwing rocks. The police arrived to disperse the protesters, who had gathered outside a women’s dormitory. Shortly after midnight, the police opened fire with shotguns. The dormitory windows shattered, showering people with broken glass. Twelve were wounded, and two young men, one a student at the college and the other a local high school student, were killed.

## PULLING OUT OF THE QUAGMIRE

Ongoing protests, campus violence, and the expansion of the war into Cambodia deeply disillusioned Americans about their role in Vietnam. Understanding the nation’s mood, Nixon dropped his opposition to a repeal of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964.



In January 1971, he signed Congress's revocation of the notorious blanket military authorization. Gallup polls taken in May of that year revealed that only 28 percent of the respondents supported the war; many felt it was not only a mistake but also immoral.

Just as influential as antiwar protests and campus violence in turning people against the war was the publication of documents the media dubbed the Pentagon Papers in June 1971. These were excerpts from a study prepared during the Johnson administration that revealed the true nature of the conflict in Vietnam. The public learned for the first time that the United States had been planning to oust Ngo Dinh Diem from the South Vietnamese government, that Johnson meant to expand the U.S. role in Vietnam and bomb North Vietnam even as he stated publicly that he had no intentions of doing so, and that his administration had sought to deliberately provoke North Vietnamese attacks in order to justify escalating American involvement. Copies of the study had been given to the *New York Times* and other newspapers by Daniel Ellsberg, one of the military analysts who had contributed to it. To avoid setting a precedent by allowing the press to publish confidential documents, Nixon's attorney general, John Mitchell, sought an injunction against the *New York Times* to prevent its publication of future articles based on the Pentagon Papers. The newspaper appealed. On June 30, 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the government could not prevent the publication of the articles.

Realizing that he must end the war but reluctant to make it look as though the United States was admitting its failure to subdue a small Asian nation, Nixon began maneuvering to secure favorable peace terms from the North Vietnamese. Thanks to his diplomatic efforts in China and the Soviet Union, those two nations cautioned North Vietnam to use restraint. The loss of strong support by their patrons, together with intensive bombing of Hanoi and the mining of crucial North Vietnamese harbors by U.S. forces, made the North Vietnamese more willing to negotiate.

Nixon's actions had also won him popular support at home. By the 1972 election, voters again favored his Vietnam policy by a ratio of



two to one. On January 27, 1973, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger signed an accord with Le Duc Tho, the chief negotiator for the North Vietnamese, ending American participation in the war. The United States was given sixty days to withdraw its troops, and North Vietnam was allowed to keep its forces in places it currently occupied. This meant that over 100,000 northern soldiers would remain in the South—ideally situated to continue the war with South Vietnam. The United States left behind a small number of military advisors as well as equipment, and Congress continued to approve funds for South Vietnam, but considerably less than in earlier years. So the war continued, but it was clear the South could not hope to defeat the North.

As the end was nearing, the United States conducted several operations to evacuate children from the South. On the morning of April 29, 1975, as North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces moved through the outskirts of Saigon, orders were given to evacuate Americans and South Vietnamese who had supported the United States. Unable to use the airport, helicopters ferried Americans and Vietnamese refugees who had fled to the American embassy to ships off the coast. North Vietnamese forces entered Saigon the next day, and the South surrendered.

The war had cost the lives of more than 1.5 million Vietnamese combatants and civilians, as well as over 58,000 U.S. troops. But the war had caused another, more intangible casualty: the loss of consensus, confidence, and a sense of moral high ground in the American political culture.



## Section Summary

As the war in Vietnam raged on, Americans were horrified to hear of atrocities committed by U.S. soldiers, such as the 1968 massacre of villagers at My Lai. To try to end the conflict, Nixon escalated it by bombing Hanoi and invading Cambodia; his actions provoked massive antiwar demonstrations in the United States that often ended in violence, such as the tragic shooting of unarmed student protestors at Kent State University in 1970. The 1971 release of the Pentagon Papers revealed the true nature of the war to an increasingly disapproving and disenchanted public. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger eventually drafted a peace treaty with North Vietnam, and, after handing over responsibility for the war to South Vietnam, the United States withdrew its troops in 1973. South Vietnam surrendered to the North two years later.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1060>

### *Review Question*

1. According to John Kerry, how did many U.S.



soldiers treat Vietnamese civilians?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. According to John Kerry's testimony, Vietnamese civilians were often subjected to shocking violence. Soldiers raped, mutilated, shot at, and brutally murdered civilians. Troops also intentionally destroyed Vietnamese villages, well beyond the destruction typically wrought by war.

### *Glossary*

**Pentagon Papers** government documents leaked to the *New York Times* that revealed the true nature of the conflict in Vietnam and turned many definitively against the war

**Vietnamization** the Nixon administration's policy of turning over responsibility for the defense of South Vietnam to Vietnamese forces



# 213. Watergate: Nixon's Domestic Nightmare

## *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the actions that Nixon and his confederates took to ensure his reelection in 1972
- Explain the significance of the Watergate crisis
- Describe Gerald Ford's domestic policies and achievements in foreign affairs

Feeling the pressure of domestic antiwar sentiment and desiring a decisive victory, Nixon went into the 1972 reelection season having attempted to fashion a “new majority” of moderate southerners and northern, working-class whites. The Democrats, responding to the chaos and failings of the Chicago convention, had instituted new rules on how delegates were chosen, which they hoped would broaden participation and the appeal of the party. Nixon proved unbeatable, however. Even evidence that his administration had broken the law failed to keep him from winning the White House.

## THE ELECTION OF 1972

Following the 1968 nominating convention in Chicago, the process



of selecting delegates for the Democratic National Convention was redesigned. The new rules, set by a commission led by George McGovern, awarded delegates based on candidates' performance in state primaries. As a result, a candidate who won no primaries could not receive the party's nomination, as Hubert Humphrey had done in Chicago. This system gave a greater voice to people who voted in the primaries and reduced the influence of party leaders and power brokers.



(a)



(b)

*In November 1968, Shirley Chisholm (a) became the first African American woman to be elected to the House of Representatives. In January 1972, she announced her intention to run for the Democratic presidential nomination. The nomination eventually went to George McGovern (b), an outspoken opponent of the war in Vietnam.*

It also led to a more inclusive political environment in which Shirley Chisholm received 156 votes for the Democratic nomination on the first ballot ([link](#)). Eventually, the nomination went to George McGovern, a strong opponent of the Vietnam War. Many Democrats refused to support his campaign, however. Working- and middle-class voters turned against him too after allegations that he supported women's right to an abortion and the decriminalization



of drug use. McGovern's initial support of vice presidential candidate Thomas Eagleton in the face of revelations that Eagleton had undergone electroshock treatment for depression, followed by his withdrawal of that support and acceptance of Eagleton's resignation, also made McGovern look indecisive and unorganized.

Nixon and the Republicans led from the start. To increase their advantage, they attempted to paint McGovern as a radical leftist who favored amnesty for draft dodgers. In the Electoral College, McGovern carried only Massachusetts and Washington, DC. Nixon won a decisive victory of 520 electoral votes to McGovern's 17. One Democrat described his role in McGovern's campaign as "recreation director on the Titanic."

## HIGH CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS

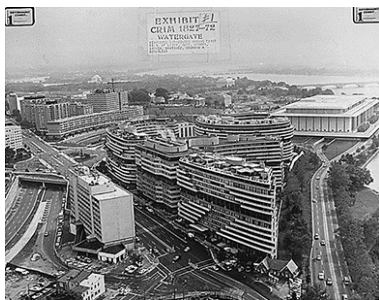
Nixon's victory over a Democratic party in disarray was the most remarkable landslide since Franklin D. Roosevelt's reelection in 1936. But Nixon's victory was short-lived, however, for it was soon discovered that he and members of his administration had routinely engaged in unethical and illegal behavior during his first term. Following the publication of the Pentagon Papers, for instance, the "plumbers," a group of men used by the White House to spy on the president's opponents and stop leaks to the press, broke into the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist to steal Ellsberg's file and learn information that might damage his reputation.

During the presidential campaign, the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP) decided to play "dirty tricks" on Nixon's opponents. Before the New Hampshire Democratic primary, a forged letter supposedly written by Democratic-hopeful Edmund Muskie in which he insulted French Canadians, one of the state's largest ethnic groups, was leaked to the press. Men were assigned to spy on both McGovern and Senator Edward Kennedy. One of them managed to masquerade as a reporter on board McGovern's



press plane. Men pretending to work for the campaigns of Nixon's Democratic opponents contacted vendors in various states to rent or purchase materials for rallies; the rallies were never held, of course, and Democratic politicians were accused of failing to pay the bills they owed.

CREEP's most notorious operation, however, was its break-in at the offices of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in the Watergate office complex in Washington, DC, as well as its subsequent cover-up. On the evening of June 17, 1972, the police arrested five men inside DNC headquarters. According to a plan originally proposed by CREEP's general counsel and White House plumber G.



*The Watergate hotel and office complex, located on the Potomac River next to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, was the scene of the 1972 burglary and attempted wiretapping that eventually brought down the presidency of Richard Nixon.*

Gordon Liddy, the men were to wiretap DNC telephones. The FBI quickly discovered that two of the men had E. Howard Hunt's name in their address books. Hunt was a former CIA officer and also one of the plumbers. In the following weeks, yet more connections were found between the burglars and CREEP, and in October 1972, the FBI revealed evidence of illegal intelligence gathering by CREEP for the purpose of sabotaging the Democratic Party. Nixon won his reelection handily in November. Had the president and his reelection team not pursued a strategy of dirty tricks, Richard Nixon would have governed his second term with one of the largest political leads in the twentieth century.

In the weeks following the Watergate break-in, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, reporters for *The Washington Post*, received information from several anonymous sources, including one known to them only as "Deep Throat," that led them to realize the White House was deeply implicated in the break-in. As the press focused



on other events, Woodward and Bernstein continued to dig and publish their findings, keeping the public's attention on the unfolding scandal. Years later, Deep Throat was revealed to be Mark Felt, then the FBI's associate director.

## THE WATERGATE CRISIS

Initially, Nixon was able to hide his connection to the break-in and the other wrongdoings alleged against members of CREEP. However, by early 1973, the situation quickly began to unravel. In January, the Watergate burglars were convicted, along with Hunt and Liddy. Trial judge John Sirica was not convinced that all the guilty had been discovered. In February, confronted with evidence that people close to the president were connected to the burglary, the Senate appointed the Watergate Committee to investigate. Ten days later, in his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, L. Patrick Gray, acting director of the FBI, admitted destroying evidence taken from Hunt's safe by John Dean, the White House counsel, after the burglars were caught.

On March 23, 1973, Judge Sirica publicly read a letter from one of the Watergate burglars, alleging that perjury had been committed during the trial. Less than two weeks later, Jeb Magruder, a deputy director of CREEP, admitted lying under oath and indicated that Dean and John Mitchell, who had resigned as attorney general to become the director of CREEP, were also involved in the break-in and its cover-up. Dean confessed, and on April 30, Nixon fired him and requested the resignation of his aides John Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, also implicated. To defuse criticism and avoid suspicion that he was participating in a cover-up, Nixon also announced the resignation of the current attorney general, Richard Kleindienst, a close friend, and appointed Elliott Richardson to the position. In May 1973, Richardson named Archibald Cox special prosecutor to investigate the Watergate affair.



Throughout the spring and the long, hot summer of 1973, Americans sat glued to their television screens, as the major networks took turns broadcasting the Senate hearings. One by one, disgraced former members of the administration confessed, or denied, their role in the Watergate scandal. Dean testified that Nixon was involved in the conspiracy, allegations the president denied. In March 1974, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Mitchell were indicted and charged with conspiracy.

Without evidence clearly implicating the president, the investigation might have ended if not for the testimony of Alexander Butterfield, a low-ranking member of the administration, that a voice-activated recording system had been installed in the Oval Office. The President's most intimate conversations had been caught on tape. Cox and the Senate subpoenaed them.

Listen to [excerpts](#) from Nixon's White House tapes. Some of the recordings are a bit difficult to hear because of static. Transcripts are also available at this [site](#).

Nixon, however, refused to hand the tapes over and cited executive privilege, the right of the president to refuse certain subpoenas. When he offered to supply summaries of the conversations, Cox refused. On October 20, 1973, in an event that became known as the Saturday Night Massacre, Nixon ordered Attorney General Richardson to fire Cox. Richardson refused and resigned, as did Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus when confronted with the same order. Control of the Justice Department then fell to Solicitor General Robert Bork, who complied with Nixon's order. In December, the House Judiciary Committee began its own investigation to determine whether there was enough evidence of wrongdoing to impeach the president.



The public was enraged by Nixon's actions. It seemed as though the president had placed himself above the law. Telegrams flooded the White House. The House of Representatives began to discuss impeachment. In April 1974, when Nixon agreed to release transcripts of the tapes, it was too little, too late. Yet,



*In April 1974, President Richard Nixon prepares to address the nation to clarify his position on releasing the White House tapes.*

while revealing nothing about Nixon's knowledge of Watergate, the transcripts showed him to be coarse, dishonest, and cruel.

At the end of its hearings, in July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee voted to impeach. However, before the full House could vote, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered Nixon to release the actual tapes of his conversations, not just transcripts or summaries. One of the tapes revealed that he had in fact been told about White House involvement in the Watergate break-in shortly after it occurred. In a speech on August 5, 1974, Nixon, pleading a poor memory, accepted blame for the Watergate scandal. Warned by other Republicans that he would be found guilty by the Senate and removed from office, he resigned the presidency on August 8.

Nixon's resignation, which took effect the next day, did not make the Watergate scandal vanish. Instead, it fed a growing suspicion of government felt by many. The events of Vietnam had already showed that the government could not be trusted to protect the interests of the people or tell them the truth. For many, Watergate confirmed these beliefs, and the suffix “-gate” attached to a word has since come to mean a political scandal.



## FORD NOT A LINCOLN

When Gerald R. Ford took the oath of office on August 9, 1974, he understood that his most pressing task was to help the country move beyond the Watergate scandal. His declaration that “Our long national nightmare is over. . . . [O]ur great Republic is a government of laws and not of men” was met with almost universal applause.

It was indeed an unprecedented time. Ford was the first vice president chosen under the terms of the Twenty-Fifth Amendment, which provides for the appointment of a vice president in the event the incumbent dies or resigns; Nixon had appointed Ford, a longtime House representative from Michigan known for his honesty, following the resignation of embattled vice president Spiro T. Agnew over a charge of failing to report income—a lenient charge since this income stemmed from bribes he had received as the governor of Maryland. Ford was also the first vice president to take office after a sitting president’s resignation, and the only chief executive never elected either president or vice president. One of his first actions as president was to grant Richard Nixon a full pardon. Ford thus prevented Nixon’s indictment for any crimes he may have committed in office and ended criminal investigations into his actions. The public reacted with suspicion and outrage. Many were convinced that the extent of Nixon’s wrongdoings would now never been known and he would never be called to account for them. When Ford chose to run for the presidency in 1976, the pardon returned to haunt him.



As president, Ford confronted monumental issues, such as inflation, a depressed economy, and chronic energy shortages. He established his policies during his first year in office, despite opposition from a heavily Democratic Congress. In October 1974, he labeled inflation the country's most dangerous public enemy and sought a grassroots campaign



*In one of his first actions as president, Gerald R. Ford announced a full pardon for Richard Nixon on September 8, 1974. Nixon had appointed Ford vice president after the resignation of Spiro Agnew.*

to curtail it by encouraging people to be disciplined in their consuming habits and increase their savings. The campaign was titled “Whip Inflation Now” and was advertised on brightly colored “Win” buttons volunteers were to wear. When recession became the nation's most serious domestic problem, Ford shifted to measures aimed at stimulating the economy. Still fearing inflation, however, he vetoed a number of nonmilitary appropriations bills that would have increased the already-large budget deficit.

Ford's economic policies ultimately proved unsuccessful. Because of opposition from a Democratic Congress, his foreign policy accomplishments were also limited. When he requested money to assist the South Vietnamese government in its effort to repel North Vietnamese forces, Congress refused. Ford was more successful in other parts of the world. He continued Nixon's policy of détente with the Soviet Union, and he and Secretary of State Kissinger achieved further progress in the second round of SALT talks. In August 1975, Ford went to Finland and signed the Helsinki Accords with Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev. This agreement essentially accepted the territorial boundaries that had been established at the end of World War II in 1945. It also exacted a pledge from the signatory nations that they would protect human rights within their countries. Many immigrants to the United States protested Ford's actions, because it seemed as though he had accepted the status



quo and left their homelands under Soviet domination. Others considered it a belated American acceptance of the world as it really was.

## Section Summary

In 1972, President Nixon faced an easy reelection against a Democratic Party in disarray. But even before his landslide victory, evidence had surfaced that the White House was involved in the break-in at the DNC's headquarters at the Watergate office complex. As the investigation unfolded, the depths to which Nixon and his advisers had sunk became clear. Some twenty-five of Nixon's aides were indicted for criminal activity, and he became the first president impeached since Andrew Johnson and the first to resign from office. His successor, Gerald Ford, was unable to solve the pressing problems the United States faced or erase the stain of Watergate.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1061>

### *Review Question*

1. In what types of unethical and illegal activities did



the White House plumbers and the “dirty tricks” squad engage?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The White House plumbers spied on Nixon’s political opponents and engineered ways to embarrass them. They attempted to locate information with which to discredit Daniel Ellsberg by stealing files from the office of his psychiatrist, and they broke into DNC headquarters in the Watergate complex with the intention of wiretapping the phones.

### *Glossary*

**Deep Throat** the anonymous source, later revealed to be associate director of the FBI Mark Felt, who supplied reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein with information about White House involvement in the Watergate break-in

**executive privilege** the right of the U.S. president to refuse subpoenas requiring him to disclose private



communications on the grounds that this might interfere with the functioning of the executive branch

**plumbers** men used by the White House to spy on and sabotage President Nixon's opponents and stop leaks to the press



## 214. Jimmy Carter in the Aftermath of the Storm

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain why Gerald Ford lost the election of 1976
- Describe Jimmy Carter's domestic and foreign policy achievements
- Discuss how the Iranian hostage crisis affected the Carter presidency

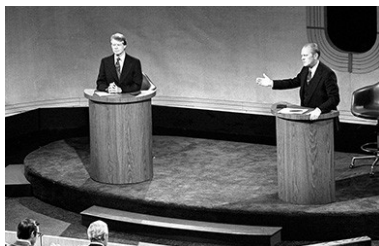
At his inauguration in January 1977, President Jimmy Carter began his speech by thanking outgoing president Gerald Ford for all he had done to “heal” the scars left by Watergate. American gratitude had not been great enough to return Ford to the Oval Office, but enthusiasm for the new president was not much greater in the new atmosphere of disillusionment with political leaders. Indeed, Carter won his party's nomination and the presidency largely because the Democratic leadership had been decimated by assassination and the taint of Vietnam, and he had carefully positioned himself as an outsider who could not be blamed for current policies. Ultimately, Carter's presidency proved a lackluster one that was marked by economic stagnation at home and humiliation overseas.



## THE ELECTION OF 1976

President Ford won the Republican nomination for the presidency in 1976, narrowly defeating former California governor Ronald Reagan, but he lost the election to his Democratic opponent Jimmy Carter. Carter ran on an “anti-Washington” ticket, making a virtue of his lack of experience in what was increasingly seen as the corrupt politics of the nation’s capital. Accepting his party’s nomination, the former governor of Georgia pledged to combat racism and sexism as well as overhaul the tax structure. He openly proclaimed his faith as a born-again Christian and promised to change the welfare system and provide comprehensive healthcare coverage for neglected citizens who deserved compassion. Most importantly, Jimmy Carter promised that he would “never lie.”

Ford’s pardon of Richard Nixon had alienated many Republicans. That, combined with the stagnant economy, cost him votes, and Jimmy Carter, an engineer and former naval officer who portrayed himself as a humble peanut farmer, prevailed, carrying all the southern states, except Virginia and Oklahoma. Ford did well in the West, but Carter received 50 percent of the popular vote to Ford’s 48 percent, and 297 electoral votes to Ford’s 240.



*President Gerald Ford (right) and Democratic challenger Jimmy Carter duelled in Philadelphia in 1976, during the first televised presidential debate since that between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy in 1960.*

In the mid-1970s, the United States celebrated the two-hundredth anniversary of its independence from



Great Britain. Peruse the [collection of patriotic bicentennial memorabilia](#) at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

## ON THE INSIDE

Making a virtue of his lack of political experience, especially in Washington, Jimmy Carter took office with less practical experience in executive leadership and the workings of the national government than any president since Calvin Coolidge. His first executive act was to fulfill a campaign pledge to grant unconditional amnesty to young men who had evaded the draft during the Vietnam War. Despite the early promise of his rhetoric, within a couple of years of his taking office, liberal Democrats claimed Carter was the most conservative Democratic president since Grover Cleveland.

In trying to manage the relatively high unemployment rate of 7.5 percent and inflation that had risen into the double digits by 1978, Carter was only marginally effective. His tax reform measure of 1977 was weak and failed to close the grossest of loopholes. His deregulation of major industries, such as aviation and trucking, was intended to force large companies to become more competitive. Consumers benefited in some ways: For example, airlines offered cheaper fares to beat their competitors. However, some companies, like Pan American World Airways, instead went out of business. Carter also expanded various social programs, improved housing for the elderly, and took steps to improve workplace safety.

Because the high cost of fuel continued to hinder economic expansion, the creation of an energy program became a central



focus of his administration. Carter stressed energy conservation, encouraging people to insulate their houses and rewarding them with tax credits if they did so, and pushing for the use of coal, nuclear power, and alternative energy sources such as solar power to replace oil and natural gas. To this end, Carter created the Department of Energy.

## CARTER AND A NEW DIRECTION IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Carter believed that U.S. foreign policy should be founded upon deeply held moral principles and national values. The mission in Vietnam had failed, he argued, because American actions there were contrary to moral values. His dedication to peace and human rights significantly changed the way that the United States



*President Jimmy Carter meets with Egypt's Anwar Sadat (left) and Israel's Menachem Begin (right) at Camp David in 1978. Sadat was assassinated in 1981, partly because of his willingness to make peace with Israel.*

conducted its foreign affairs. He improved relations with China, ended military support to Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, and helped arrange for the Panama Canal to be returned to Panamanian control in 1999. He agreed to a new round of talks with the Soviet Union (SALT II) and brought Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat to the United States to discuss peace between their countries. Their meetings at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, led to the signing of the Camp David Accords in September 1978. This in turn resulted in the drafting of a historic peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979.



Despite achieving many successes in the area of foreign policy, Carter made a more controversial decision in response to the Soviet Union's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. In January 1980, he declared that if the USSR did not withdraw its forces, the United States would boycott the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow. The Soviets did not retreat, and the United States did not send a team to Moscow. Only about half of the American public supported this decision, and despite Carter's call for other countries to join the boycott, very few did so.

## HOSTAGES TO HISTORY

Carter's biggest foreign policy problem was the Iranian hostage crisis, whose roots lay in the 1950s. In 1953, the United States had assisted Great Britain in the overthrow of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, a rival of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the shah of Iran. Mossadegh had sought greater Iranian control over the nation's oil wealth, which was claimed by British companies. Following the coup, the shah assumed complete control of Iran's government. He then disposed of political enemies and eliminated dissent through the use of SAVAK, a secret police force trained by the United States. The United States also supplied the shah's government with billions of dollars in aid. As Iran's oil revenue grew, especially after the 1973 oil embargo against the United States, the pace of its economic development and the size of its educated middle class also increased, and the country became less dependent on U.S. aid. Its population increasingly blamed the United States for the death of Iranian democracy and faulted it for its consistent support of Israel.

Despite the shah's unpopularity among his own people, the result of both his brutal policies and his desire to Westernize Iran, the United States supported his regime. In February 1979, the shah was overthrown when revolution broke out, and a few months later,



he departed for the United States for medical treatment. The long history of U.S. support for him and its offer of refuge greatly angered Iranian revolutionaries. On November 4, 1979, a group of Iranian students and activists, including Islamic fundamentalists who wished to end the Westernization and secularization of Iran, invaded the American embassy in Tehran and seized sixty-six embassy employees. The women and African Americans were soon released, leaving fifty-three men as hostages. Negotiations failed to free them, and in April 1980, a rescue attempt fell through when the aircraft sent to transport them crashed. Another hostage was released when he developed serious medical problems. President Carter's inability to free the other captives hurt his performance in the 1980 elections. The fifty-two men still held in Iran were finally freed on January 20, 1981, the day Ronald Reagan took office as president.

Carter's handling of the crisis appeared even less effective in the way the media portrayed it publicly. This contributed to a growing sense of malaise, a feeling that the United States' best days were behind it and the country had entered a period of decline. This belief



*The fifty-two American hostages return from Iran in January 1981. They had been held for 444 days.*

was compounded by continuing economic problems, and the oil shortage and subsequent rise in prices that followed the Iranian Revolution. The president's decision to import less oil to the United States and remove price controls on oil and gasoline did not help matters. In 1979, Carter sought to reassure the nation and the rest of the world, especially the Soviet Union, that the United States was still able to defend its interests. To dissuade the Soviets from making additional inroads in southwest Asia, he proposed the Carter Doctrine, which stated that the United States would regard any



attempt to interfere with its interests in the Middle East as an act of aggression to be met with force if necessary.

Carter had failed to solve the nation's problems. Some blamed these problems on dishonest politicians; others blamed the problems on the Cold War obsession with fighting Communism, even in small nations like Vietnam that had little influence on American national interests. Still others faulted American materialism. In 1980, a small but growing group called the Moral Majority faulted Carter for betraying his southern roots and began to seek a return to traditional values.

## Section Summary

Jimmy Carter's administration began with great promise, but his efforts to improve the economy through deregulation largely failed. Carter's attempt at a foreign policy built on the principle of human rights also prompted much criticism, as did his decision to boycott the Summer Olympics in Moscow. On the other hand, he successfully brokered the beginnings of a historic peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Remaining public faith in Carter was dealt a serious blow, however, when he proved unable to free the American hostages in Tehran.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1062>



### *Review Question*

1. What were President Carter's successes in the area of foreign policy?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Carter succeeded in improving U.S. relations with China and engaged in talks with the Soviet Union regarding limiting nuclear weapons. He called attention to human rights abuses on the parts of foreign governments. Finally, he helped Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat lay the groundwork for a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt.

### *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. What common goals did American Indians, gay and lesbian citizens, and women share in their quests for equal rights? How did their agendas differ? What were the differences and similarities in the tactics they used to achieve their aims?
2. In what ways were the policies of Richard Nixon



different from those of his Democratic predecessors John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson? How were Jimmy Carter's policies different from those of Nixon?

3. To what degree did foreign policy issues affect politics and the economy in the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s?
4. What events caused voters to lose faith in the political system and the nation's leaders in the late 1960s and 1970s?
5. In what ways did the goals of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s manifest themselves in the identity politics of the 1970s?

## *Glossary*

**Carter Doctrine** Jimmy Carter's declaration that efforts to interfere with American interests in the Middle East would be considered a act of aggression and be met with force if necessary



## 215. Video: Ford, Carter, and the Economic Malaise

This video teaches you about the economic malaise that beset the United States in the 1970s. A sort of perfect storm of events, it combined the continuing decline of America's manufacturing base and the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, and brought about an stagnant economy, paired with high inflation. Economists with a flair for neologisms and portamenteau words called this "stagflation," and it made people miserable. Two presidential administrations were scuttled at least in part by these economic woes; both Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter are considered failed presidents for many reasons, but largely because of an inability to improve the economy. (hint: In reality, no one person can materially change something as big as the world economy, even if they are president, but one person sure can make a handy scapegoat!) So, by and large, the 70s were a pretty terrible time in America economically.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=260#oembed-1>







PART XXXI

POLITICAL STORMS

READER







## 216. Primary Source Images: The Unraveling

While many Americans in the 1970s continued to celebrate the political and cultural achievements of the previous decade, a more anxious, conservative mood grew across the nation. For some, the United States had not gone nearly far enough to promote greater social equality; for others, the nation had gone too far, unfairly trampling the rights of one group to promote the selfish needs of another. Onto these brewing dissatisfactions the 1970s dumped the divisive remnants of a failed war, the country's greatest political scandal, and an intractable economic crisis. As the following sources lay bare, it seemed as if the nation was ready to unravel.

### New York City Subway (1970)



Erik  
Calonius,  
“Many  
Subway Cars  
in New York  
City Have  
Been  
Spray-Painted  
by Vandals”  
1973. Via  
National  
Archives  
(8464439).

<!-- attachment -->



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“Urban Decay” confronted Americans of the 1960s and 1970s. As the economy sagged and deindustrialization hit much of the country, many Americans associated major cities with poverty and crime. In this 1973 photo, two subway riders sit amid a graffitied subway car in New York City.

<!-- .entry-description -->

## Stop ERA Protest 1977



Warren K. Leffler, Demonstrators opposed to the ERA in front of the White House, 1977, via Library of Congress.

In the 1970s, conservative Americans defeated the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). With high approval ratings, the ERA—which declared, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex”—seemed destined to pass swiftly through state legislatures and become the Twenty-Seventh Amendment, but conservative opposition stopped the Amendment just short of ratification.

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## 217. Primary Source: Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968)

*Riots rocked American cities in the mid-late sixties. Hundreds died, thousands were injured, and thousands of buildings were destroyed. Many communities never recovered. In 1967, devastating riots, particularly in Detroit, Michigan, and Newark, New Jersey, captivated national television audiences. President Lyndon Johnson appointed an 11-person commission, chaired by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, to explain the origins of the riots and recommend policies to prevent them in the future.*

The summer of 1967 again brought racial disorders to American cities, and with them shock, fear and bewilderment to the nation.

The worst came during a two-week period in July, first in Newark and then in Detroit. Each set off a chain reaction in neighboring communities.

On July 28, 1967, the President of the United States established this Commission and directed us to answer three basic questions:

What happened?

Why did it happen?

What can be done to prevent it from happening again?

To respond to these questions, we have undertaken a broad range of studies and investigations. We have visited the riot cities; we have heard many witnesses; we have sought the counsel of experts across the country.

This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.

Reaction to last summer's disorders has quickened the movement



and deepened the division. Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life; they now threaten the future of every American.

This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed. Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution.

To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately, the destruction of basic democratic values.

The alternative is not blind repression or capitulation to lawlessness. It is the realization of common opportunities for all within a single society.

This alternative will require a commitment to national action—compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth. From every American it will require new attitudes, new understanding, and, above all, new will.

The vital needs of the nation must be met; hard choices must be made, and, if necessary, new taxes enacted.

Violence cannot build a better society. Disruption and disorder nourish repression, not justice. They strike at the freedom of every citizen. The community cannot—it will not—tolerate coercion and mob rule.

Violence and destruction must be ended—in the streets of the ghetto and in the lives of people.

Segregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans.

What white Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

It is time now to turn with all the purpose at our command to the major unfinished business of this nation. It is time to adopt strategies for action that will produce quick and visible progress. It is time to make good the promises of American democracy to



all citizens-urban and rural, white and black, Spanish-surname, American Indian, and every minority group.

Our recommendations embrace three basic principles:

- \* To mount programs on a scale equal to the dimension of the problems:

- \* To aim these programs for high impact in the immediate future in order to close the gap between promise and performance;

- \* To undertake new initiatives and experiments that can change the system of failure and frustration that now dominates the ghetto and weakens our society.

These programs will require unprecedented levels of funding and performance, but they neither probe deeper nor demand more than the problems which called them forth. There can be no higher priority for national action and no higher claim on the nation's conscience.

We issue this Report now, four months before the date called for by the President. Much remains that can be learned. Continued study is essential.

As Commissioners we have worked together with a sense of the greatest urgency and have sought to compose whatever differences exist among us. Some differences remain. But the gravity of the problem and the pressing need for action are too clear to allow further delay in the issuance of this Report.

[Source: Kerner Commission, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968).]



## 218. Primary Source: Statement by John Kerry of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (1971)

*On April 23, 1971, a young Vietnam veteran named John Kerry spoke on behalf of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War before the Senate Committee of Foreign Relations. Kerry, later a Massachusetts Senator and 2004 presidential contender, articulated a growing disenchantment with the Vietnam War and delivered a blistering indictment of the reasoning behind its prosecution.*

... In our opinion and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom, which those misfits supposedly abuse, is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy, and it is that kind of hypocrisy which we feel has torn this country apart.

We found that not only was it a civil war, an effort by a people who had for years been seeking their liberation from any colonial influence whatsoever, but also we found that the Vietnamese whom we had enthusiastically molded after our own image were hard put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from.

We found most people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart. They wanted everything to do with the war, particularly with this foreign presence of the United States of America, to leave them alone in



peace, and they practiced the art of survival by siding with whichever military force was present at a particular time, be it Viet Cong, North Vietnamese or American.

We found also that all too often American men were dying in those rice paddies for want of support from their allies. We saw first hand how monies from American taxes were used for a corrupt dictatorial regime. We saw that many people in this country had a one-sided idea of who was kept free by the flag, and blacks provided the highest percentage of casualties. We saw Vietnam ravaged equally by American bombs and search and destroy missions, as well as by Viet Cong terrorism – and yet we listened while this country tried to blame all of the havoc on the Viet Cong.

We rationalized destroying villages in order to save them. We saw America lose her sense of morality as she accepted very coolly a My Lai and refused to give up the image of American soldiers who hand out chocolate bars and chewing gum.

We learned the meaning of free fire zones, shooting anything that moves, and we watched while America placed a cheapness on the lives of orientals.

We watched the United States falsification of body counts, in fact the glorification of body counts. We listened while month after month we were told the back of the enemy was about to break. We fought using weapons against “oriental human beings.” We fought using weapons against those people which I do not believe this country would dream of using were we fighting in the European theater. We watched while men charged up hills because a general said that hill has to be taken, and after losing one platoon or two platoons they marched away to leave the hill for reoccupation by the North Vietnamese. We watched pride allow the most unimportant battles to be blown into extravaganzas, because we couldn’t lose, and we couldn’t retreat, and because it didn’t matter how many American bodies were lost to prove that point, and so there were Hamburger Hills and Khe Sanhs and Hill 81s and Fire Base 6s, and so many others.

Now we are told that the men who fought there must watch



quietly while American lives are lost so that we can exercise the incredible arrogance of Vietnamizing the Vietnamese.

Each day to facilitate the process by which the United States washes her hands of Vietnam someone has to give up his life so that the United States doesn't have to admit something that the entire world already knows, so that we can't say that we have made a mistake. Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be, and these are his words, "the first President to lose a war."

We are asking Americans to think about that because how do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? But we are trying to do that, and we are doing it with thousands of rationalizations ...

[Source: "Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia," *Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninety-Second Congress, First Session* (April-May 1971), (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971). Available online via The Sixties Project ([http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML\\_docs/Sixties.html](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Sixties.html)).]



## 219. Primary Source: Nixon Announcement of China Visit (1971)

*Richard Nixon, who built his political career on anti-communism, worked from the first day of his presidency to normalize relations with the communist People's Republic of China. In 1971, Richard Nixon announced that he would make an unprecedented visit there to advance American-Chinese relations. Here, he explains his intentions.*

Good evening:

I have requested this television time tonight to announce a major development in our efforts to build a lasting peace in the world.

As I have pointed out on a number of occasions over the past 3 years, there can be no stable and enduring peace without the participation of the People's Republic of China and its 750 million people. That is why I have undertaken initiatives in several areas to open the door for more normal relations between our two countries.

In pursuance of that goal, I sent Dr. Kissinger, my Assistant for National Security Affairs, to Peking during his recent world tour for the purpose of having talks with Premier Chou En-lai.

The announcement I shall now read is being issued simultaneously in Peking and in the United States:

Premier Chou En-lai and Dr. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs, held talks in Peking from July 9 to 11, 1971. Knowing of President Nixon's expressed desire to visit the People's Republic of China, Premier Chou En-lai, on behalf of the Government of the People's Republic of China, has extended an invitation to President Nixon to visit China at an appropriate date before May 1972. President Nixon has accepted the invitation with pleasure.



The meeting between the leaders of China and the United States is to seek the normalization of relations between the two countries and also to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides.

In anticipation of the inevitable speculation which will follow this announcement, I want to put our policy in the clearest possible context.

Our action in seeking a new relationship with the People's Republic of China will not be at the expense of our old friends. It is not directed against any other nation. We seek friendly relations with all nations. Any nation can be our friend without being any other nation's enemy.

I have taken this action because of my profound conviction that all nations will gain from a reduction of tensions and a better relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

It is in this spirit that I will undertake what I deeply hope will become a journey for peace, peace not just for our generation but for future generations on this earth we share together.

Thank you and good night.

[Source: Richard Nixon, "Remarks to the Nation Announcing Acceptance of an Invitation To Visit the People's Republic of China," July 15, 1971. Available online via *The American Presidency Project* (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3079>).]



## 220. Primary Source: Barbara Jordan, 1976 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address (1976)

*On July 12, 1976, Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. As Americans sensed a fracturing of American life in the 1970s, Jordan called for Americans to commit themselves to a “national community” and the “common good.” Jordan began by noting she was the first black woman to ever deliver a keynote address at a major party convention and that such a thing would have been almost impossible even a decade earlier.*

Now that I have this grand distinction, what in the world am I supposed to say? I could easily spend this time praising the accomplishments of this party and attacking the Republicans – but I don’t choose to do that. I could list the many problems which Americans have. I could list the problems which cause people to feel cynical, angry, frustrated: problems which include lack of integrity in government; the feeling that the individual no longer counts; the reality of material and spiritual poverty; the feeling that the grand American experiment is failing or has failed. I could recite these problems, and then I could sit down and offer no solutions. But I don’t choose to do that either. The citizens of America expect more. They deserve and they want more than a recital of problems.

We are a people in a quandary about the present. We are a people in search of our future. We are a people in search of a national community. We are a people trying not only to solve the problems of the present, unemployment, inflation, but we are attempting on a larger scale to fulfill the promise of America. We are attempting to



fulfill our national purpose, to create and sustain a society in which all of us are equal.

...

And now we must look to the future. Let us heed the voice of the people and recognize their common sense. If we do not, we not only blaspheme our political heritage, we ignore the common ties that bind all Americans. Many fear the future. Many are distrustful of their leaders, and believe that their voices are never heard. Many seek only to satisfy their private work — wants; to satisfy their private interests. But this is the great danger America faces — that we will cease to be one nation and become instead a collection of interest groups: city against suburb, region against region, individual against individual; each seeking to satisfy private wants. If that happens, who then will speak for America? Who then will speak for the common good?

This is the question which must be answered in 1976: Are we to be one people bound together by common spirit, sharing in a common endeavor; or will we become a divided nation? For all of its uncertainty, we cannot flee the future. We must not become the “New Puritans” and reject our society. We must address and master the future together. It can be done if we restore the belief that we share a sense of national community, that we share a common national endeavor. It can be done.

There is no executive order; there is no law that can require the American people to form a national community. This we must do as individuals, and if we do it as individuals, there is no President of the United States who can veto that decision.

As a first step — As a first step, we must restore our belief in ourselves. We are a generous people, so why can't we be generous with each other? We need to take to heart the words spoken by Thomas Jefferson:

Let us restore the social intercourse — “Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and that affection without which liberty and even life are but dreary things.”

A nation is formed by the willingness of each of us to share in



the responsibility for upholding the common good. A government is invigorated when each one of us is willing to participate in shaping the future of this nation. In this election year, we must define the “common good” and begin again to shape a common future. Let each person do his or her part. If one citizen is unwilling to participate, all of us are going to suffer. For the American idea, though it is shared by all of us, is realized in each one of us.

And now, what are those of us who are elected public officials supposed to do? We call ourselves “public servants” but I’ll tell you this: We as public servants must set an example for the rest of the nation. It is hypocritical for the public official to admonish and exhort the people to uphold the common good if we are derelict in upholding the common good. More is required — More is required of public officials than slogans and handshakes and press releases. More is required. We must hold ourselves strictly accountable. We must provide the people with a vision of the future.

If we promise as public officials, we must deliver. If — If we as public officials propose, we must produce. If we say to the American people, “It is time for you to be sacrificial” — sacrifice. If the public official says that, we [public officials] must be the first to give. We must be. And again, if we make mistakes, we must be willing to admit them. We have to do that. What we have to do is strike a balance between the idea that government should do everything and the idea, the belief, that government ought to do nothing. Strike a balance.

Let there be no illusions about the difficulty of forming this kind of a national community. It’s tough, difficult, not easy. But a spirit of harmony will survive in America only if each of us remembers that we share a common destiny; if each of us remembers, when self-interest and bitterness seem to prevail, that we share a common destiny.

I have confidence that we can form this kind of national community.

[Barbara Jordan, “Keynote Address at the Democratic National Convention” (July 12, 1976). Available online via *American Rhetoric*



([http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/  
barbarajordan1976dnc.html](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barbarajordan1976dnc.html)).]



## 22I. Primary Source: Jimmy Carter, “Crisis of Confidence” (1979)

*On July 15, 1979, amid stagnant economic growth, high inflation, and an energy crisis, Jimmy Carter delivered a televised address to the American people. In it, Carter singled out a pervasive “crisis of confidence” preventing the American people from moving the country forward. A year later, Ronald Reagan would frame his optimistic political campaign in stark contrast to the tone of Carter’s speech, which would be remembered, especially by critics, as the “malaise speech.”*

... Exactly three years ago, on July 15, 1976, I accepted the nomination of my party to run for president of the United States.

I promised you a president who is not isolated from the people, who feels your pain, and who shares your dreams and who draws his strength and his wisdom from you.

... Ten days ago I had planned to speak to you again about a very important subject — energy. For the fifth time I would have described the urgency of the problem and laid out a series of legislative recommendations to the Congress. But as I was preparing to speak, I began to ask myself the same question that I now know has been troubling many of you. Why have we not been able to get together as a nation to resolve our serious energy problem?

...

I know, of course, being president, that government actions and legislation can be very important. That’s why I’ve worked hard to put my campaign promises into law — and I have to admit, with just mixed success. But after listening to the American people I have been reminded again that all the legislation in the world can’t fix what’s wrong with America. So, I want to speak to you first tonight



about a subject even more serious than energy or inflation. I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy.

I do not mean our political and civil liberties. They will endure. And I do not refer to the outward strength of America, a nation that is at peace tonight everywhere in the world, with unmatched economic power and military might.

The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation.

The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America.

The confidence that we have always had as a people is not simply some romantic dream or a proverb in a dusty book that we read just on the Fourth of July.

It is the idea which founded our nation and has guided our development as a people. Confidence in the future has supported everything else — public institutions and private enterprise, our own families, and the very Constitution of the United States. Confidence has defined our course and has served as a link between generations. We've always believed in something called progress. We've always had a faith that the days of our children would be better than our own.

Our people are losing that faith, not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy. As a people we know our past and we are proud of it. Our progress has been part of the living history of America, even the world. We always believed that we were part of a great movement of humanity itself called democracy, involved in the search for freedom, and that belief has always strengthened us in our purpose. But just as we are losing our confidence in the future, we are also beginning to close the door on our past.

In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-



knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We've learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose.

The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. The productivity of American workers is actually dropping, and the willingness of Americans to save for the future has fallen below that of all other people in the Western world.

As you know, there is a growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media, and other institutions. This is not a message of happiness or reassurance, but it is the truth and it is a warning.

These changes did not happen overnight. They've come upon us gradually over the last generation, years that were filled with shocks and tragedy.

...

These wounds are still very deep. They have never been healed. Looking for a way out of this crisis, our people have turned to the Federal government and found it isolated from the mainstream of our nation's life. Washington, D.C., has become an island. The gap between our citizens and our government has never been so wide. The people are looking for honest answers, not easy answers; clear leadership, not false claims and evasiveness and politics as usual.

What you see too often in Washington and elsewhere around the country is a system of government that seems incapable of action. You see a Congress twisted and pulled in every direction by hundreds of well-financed and powerful special interests. You see every extreme position defended to the last vote, almost to the last breath by one unyielding group or another. You often see a balanced



and a fair approach that demands sacrifice, a little sacrifice from everyone, abandoned like an orphan without support and without friends.

Often you see paralysis and stagnation and drift. You don't like it, and neither do I. What can we do?

...

We are at a turning point in our history. There are two paths to choose. One is a path I've warned about tonight, the path that leads to fragmentation and self-interest. Down that road lies a mistaken idea of freedom, the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others. That path would be one of constant conflict between narrow interests ending in chaos and immobility. It is a certain route to failure.

All the traditions of our past, all the lessons of our heritage, all the promises of our future point to another path, the path of common purpose and the restoration of American values. That path leads to true freedom for our nation and ourselves. We can take the first steps down that path as we begin to solve our energy problem.

[Source: Jimmy Carter, "Address to the Nation on Energy and National Goals" (July 15, 1979). Available online via *The American Presidency Project* (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32596>).]







PART XXXII

FROM COLD WAR TO  
CULTURE WARS, 1980-2000

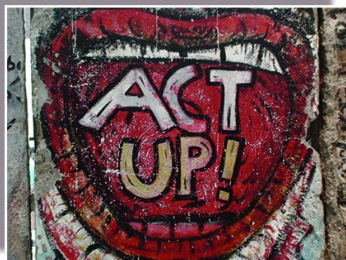






## 222. Introduction

“Act up!” might be called the unofficial slogan of the 1980s. Numerous groups were concerned by what they considered disturbing social, cultural, and political trends in the United States and lobbied for their vision of what the nation should be. Conservative politicians cut taxes for the wealthy and shrank programs for the poor, while conservative Christians blamed the legalization of abortion and the increased visibility of gays and lesbians for weakening the



*This striking piece of graffiti from the Berlin Wall, now housed in the Newseum in Washington, DC, contains the name of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), a group formed in 1987 in New York City to combat the spread of AIDS and the perception that AIDS was the product of immoral behavior.*

American family. When the U.S. Centers for Disease Control first recognized the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in 1981, the Religious Right regarded it as a plague sent by God to punish homosexual men for their “unnatural” behavior. Politicians, many of whom relied on religious conservatives for their votes, largely ignored the AIDS epidemic. In response, gay men and women formed organizations such as ACT UP to draw attention to their cause.

Toward the end of the decade in 1989, protesters from both East and West Berlin began “acting up” and tearing down large chunks of the Berlin Wall, essentially dismantling the Iron Curtain. This symbolic act was the culmination of earlier demonstrations that had swept across Eastern Europe, resulting in the collapse of Communist governments in both Central and Eastern Europe, and marking the beginning of the end of the Cold War.





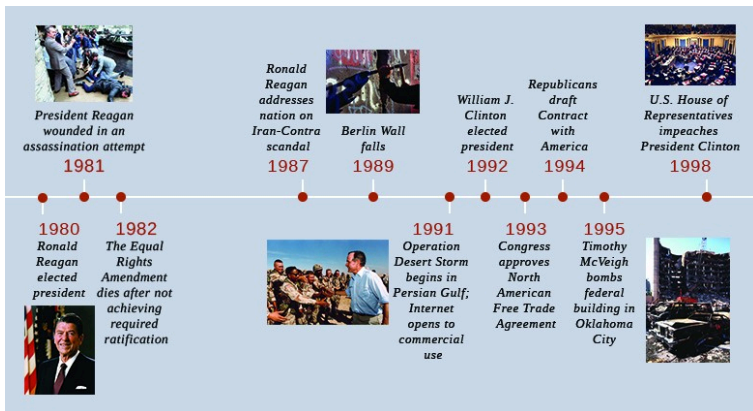


## 223. The Reagan Revolution

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain Ronald Reagan's attitude towards government
- Discuss the Reagan administration's economic policies and their effects on the nation



Ronald Reagan entered the White House in 1981 with strongly conservative values but experience in moderate politics. He appealed to moderates and conservatives anxious about social change and the seeming loss of American power and influence on the world stage. Leading the so-called Reagan Revolution, he appealed to voters with the promise that the principles of



conservatism could halt and revert the social and economic changes of the last generation. Reagan won the White House by citing big government and attempts at social reform as the problem, not the solution. He was able to capture the political capital of an unsettled national mood and, in the process, helped set an agenda and policies that would affect his successors and the political landscape of the nation.

## REAGAN'S EARLY CAREER

Although many of his movie roles and the persona he created for himself seemed to represent traditional values, Reagan's rise to the presidency was an unusual transition from pop cultural significance to political success. Born and raised in the Midwest, he moved to California in 1937 to become a Hollywood actor. He also became a reserve officer in the U.S. Army that same year, but when the country entered World War II, he was excluded from active duty overseas because of poor eyesight and spent the war in the army's First Motion Picture Unit. After the



*In 1961, when Congress began to explore nationwide health insurance for the elderly under Social Security, Reagan made a recording for the American Medical Association in which he denounced the idea—which was later adopted as Medicare—as “socialized medicine.” Such a program, Reagan warned his listeners, was the first step to the nation’s demise as a free society.*

war, he resumed his film career; rose to leadership in the Screen Actors Guild, a Hollywood union; and became a spokesman for General Electric and the host of a television series that the company sponsored. As a young man, he identified politically as a liberal



Democrat, but his distaste for communism, along with the influence of the social conservative values of his second wife, actress Nancy Davis, edged him closer to conservative Republicanism. By 1962, he had formally switched political parties, and in 1964, he actively campaigned for the Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater.

Reagan launched his own political career in 1966 when he successfully ran for governor of California. His opponent was the incumbent Pat Brown, a liberal Democrat who had already served two terms. Reagan, quite undeservedly, blamed Brown for race riots in California and student protests at the University of California at Berkeley. He criticized the Democratic incumbent's increases in taxes and state government, and denounced "big government" and the inequities of taxation in favor of free enterprise. As governor, however, he quickly learned that federal and state laws prohibited the elimination of certain programs and that many programs benefited his constituents. He ended up approving the largest budget in the state's history and approved tax increases on a number of occasions. The contrast between Reagan's rhetoric and practice made up his political skill: capturing the public mood and catering to it, but compromising when necessary.



# REPUBLICANS BACK IN THE WHITE HOUSE

After two unsuccessful Republican primary bids in 1968 and 1976, Reagan won the presidency in 1980. His victory was the result of a combination of dissatisfaction with the presidential leadership of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter in the 1970s and the growth of the New Right. This group of conservative Americans included many very wealthy financial supporters and



*Ronald Reagan campaigns for the presidency with his wife Nancy in South Carolina in 1980. Reagan won in all the Deep South states except Georgia, although he did not come from the South and his opponent Jimmy Carter did.*

emerged in the wake of the social reforms and cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s. Many were evangelical Christians, like those who joined Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, and opposed the legalization of abortion, the feminist movement, and sex education in public schools. Reagan also attracted people, often dubbed neoconservatives, who would not previously have voted for the same candidate as conservative Protestants did. Many were middle- and working-class people who resented the growth of federal and state governments, especially benefit programs, and the subsequent increase in taxes during the late 1960s and 1970s. They favored the tax revolts that swept the nation in the late 1970s under the leadership of predominantly older, white, middle-class Americans, which had succeeded in imposing radical reductions in local property and state income taxes.

Voter turnout reflected this new conservative swing, which not only swept Reagan into the White House but created a Republican majority in the Senate. Only 52 percent of eligible voters went to the polls in 1980, the lowest turnout for a presidential election since



1948. Those who did cast a ballot were older, whiter, and wealthier than those who did not vote. Strong support among white voters, those over forty-five years of age, and those with incomes over \$50,000 proved crucial for Reagan's victory.

## REAGANOMICS

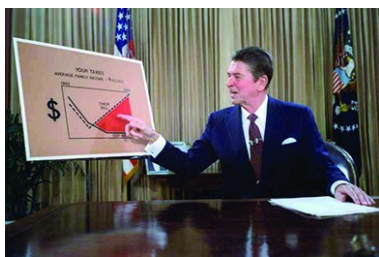
Reagan's primary goal upon taking office was to stimulate the sagging economy while simultaneously cutting both government programs and taxes. His economic policies, called Reaganomics by the press, were based on a theory called supply-side economics, about which many economists were skeptical. Influenced by economist Arthur Laffer of the University of Southern California, Reagan cut income taxes for those at the top of the economic ladder, which was supposed to motivate the rich to invest in businesses, factories, and the stock market in anticipation of high returns. According to Laffer's argument, this would eventually translate into more jobs further down the socioeconomic ladder. Economic growth would also increase the total tax revenue—even at a lower tax rate. In other words, proponents of “trickle-down economics” promised to cut taxes and balance the budget at the same time. Reaganomics also included the deregulation of industry and higher interest rates to control inflation, but these initiatives preceded Reagan and were conceived in the Carter administration.



Many politicians, including Republicans, were wary of Reagan's economic program; even his eventual vice president, George H. W. Bush, had referred to it as "voodoo economics" when competing with him for the Republican presidential nomination. When Reagan proposed a 30 percent cut in taxes to be phased in over his first term in office, Congress balked. Opponents argued that the tax cuts would benefit the rich and not the poor, who needed help the most. In response, Reagan presented his plan directly to the people.

Reagan was an articulate spokesman for his political perspectives and was able to garner support for his policies. Often called "The Great Communicator," he was noted for his ability, honed through years as an actor and spokesperson, to convey a mixture of folksy wisdom, empathy, and concern while taking humorous digs at his

opponents. Indeed, listening to Reagan speak often felt like hearing a favorite uncle recall stories about the "good old days" before big government, expensive social programs, and greedy politicians destroyed the country. Americans found this rhetorical style extremely compelling. Public support for the plan, combined with a surge in the president's popularity after he survived an assassination attempt in March 1981, swayed Congress, including many



*Ronald Reagan outlines his plan for tax reduction legislation in July 1981. Data suggest that the supply-side policies of the 1980s actually produced less investment, slightly slower growth, and a greater decline in wages than the non-supply side policies of the 1990s.*



*President Ronald Reagan signs economic reform legislation at his ranch in California. Note the blue jeans, denim jacket, and cowboy boots he wears.*



Democrats. On July 29, 1981, Congress passed the Economic Recovery Tax Act, which phased in a 25 percent overall reduction in taxes over a period of three years.

## **Richard V. Allen on the Assassination Attempt on Ronald Reagan**

On March 30, 1981, just months into the Reagan presidency, John Hinckley, Jr. attempted to assassinate the president as he left a speaking engagement at the Washington Hilton Hotel. Hinckley wounded Reagan and three others in the attempt. Here, National Security Adviser Richard V. Allen recalls what happened the day President Reagan was shot:

By 2:52 PM I arrived at the White House and went to [Chief of Staff James] Baker's office . . . and we placed a call to Vice President George H. W. Bush. . . .

[W]e sent a message with the few facts we knew: the bullets had been fired and press secretary Jim Brady had been hit, as had a Secret Service agent and a DC policeman. At first, the President was thought to be unscathed.

Jerry Parr, the Secret Service Detail Chief, shoved the President into the limousine, codenamed "Stagecoach," and slammed the doors shut. The driver sped off. Headed back to the safety of the White House, Parr noticed that the red blood at the President's mouth was frothy, indicating an internal injury, and suddenly switched the route to the hospital. . . . Parr saved the President's life. He had lost a serious quantity of blood internally and reached [the emergency room] just in time. . . .

Though the President never lost his sense of humor throughout, and had actually walked into the hospital under



his own power before his knees buckled, his condition became grave.

Why do you think Allen mentions the president's sense of humor and his ability to walk into the hospital on his own? Why might the assassination attempt have helped Reagan achieve some of his political goals, such as getting his tax cuts through Congress?

The largest of the presidential libraries, the [Ronald Reagan Presidential Library](#) contains Reagan's most important speeches and pictures of Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

Reagan was successful at cutting taxes, but he failed to reduce government spending. Although he had long warned about the dangers of big government, he created a new cabinet-level agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the number of federal employees increased during his time in office. He allocated a smaller share of the federal budget to antipoverty programs like Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, rent subsidies, job training programs, and Medicaid, but Social Security and Medicare entitlements, from which his supporters benefited, were left largely untouched except for an increase in payroll taxes to pay for them. Indeed, in 1983, Reagan agreed to a compromise with the Democrats in Congress on a \$165 billion injection of funds to save Social Security, which included this payroll tax increase.

But Reagan seemed less flexible when it came to deregulating industry and weakening the power of labor unions. Banks and savings and loan associations were deregulated. Pollution control was enforced less strictly by the Environmental Protection Agency, and restrictions on logging and drilling for oil on public lands were relaxed. Believing the free market was self-regulating, the Reagan administration had little use for labor unions, and in 1981, the



president fired twelve thousand federal air traffic controllers who had gone on strike to secure better working conditions (which would also have improved the public's safety). His action effectively destroyed the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) and ushered in a new era of labor relations in which, following his example, employers simply replaced striking workers. The weakening of unions contributed to the leveling off of real wages for the average American family during the 1980s.

Reagan's economic policymakers succeeded in breaking the cycle of stagflation that had been plaguing the nation, but at significant cost. In its effort to curb high inflation with dramatically increased interest rates, the Federal Reserve also triggered a deep recession. Inflation did drop, but borrowing became expensive and consumers spent less. In Reagan's first years in office, bankruptcies increased and unemployment reached about 10 percent, its highest level since the Great Depression. Homelessness became a significant problem in cities, a fact the president made light of by suggesting that the press exaggerated the problem and that many homeless people chose to live on the streets. Economic growth resumed in 1983 and gross domestic product grew at an average of 4.5 percent during the rest of his presidency. By the end of Reagan's second term in office, unemployment had dropped to about 5.3 percent, but the nation was nearly \$3 trillion in debt. An increase in defense spending coupled with \$3.6 billion in tax relief for the 162,000 American families with incomes of \$200,000 or more made a balanced budget, one of the president's campaign promises in 1980, impossible to achieve.

The Reagan years were a complicated era of social, economic, and political change, with many trends operating simultaneously and sometimes at cross-purposes. While many suffered, others prospered. The 1970s had been the era of the hippie, and *Newsweek* magazine declared 1984 to be the "year of the Yuppie." Yuppies, whose name derived from "(y)oung, (u)rban (p)rofessionals," were akin to hippies in being young people whose interests, values, and lifestyle influenced American culture, economy, and politics, just



as the hippies' credo had done in the late 1960s and 1970s. Unlike hippies, however, yuppies were materialistic and obsessed with image, comfort, and economic prosperity. Although liberal on some social issues, economically they were conservative. Ironically, some yuppies were former hippies or yuppies, like Jerry Rubin, who gave up his crusade against "the establishment" to become a businessman.

Read more about [yuppie culture](#) and then use the table of contents to access other information about the culture of the 1980s.

## Section Summary

After decades of liberalism and social reform, Ronald Reagan changed the face of American politics by riding a groundswell of conservatism into the White House. Reagan's superior rhetorical skills enabled him to gain widespread support for his plans for the nation. Implementing a series of economic policies dubbed "Reaganomics," the president sought to stimulate the economy while shrinking the size of the federal government and providing relief for the nation's wealthiest taxpayers. During his two terms in office, he cut spending on social programs, while increasing spending on defense. While Reagan was able to break



the cycle of stagflation, his policies also triggered a recession, plunged the nation into a brief period of significant unemployment, and made a balanced budget impossible. In the end, Reagan's policies diminished many Americans' quality of life while enabling more affluent Americans—the “Yuppies” of the 1980s—to prosper.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1063>

### *Review Question*

1. What were the elements of Ronald Reagan's plan for economic reform?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Reagan planned to cut taxes for the wealthy in the hope that these taxpayers would then invest their surplus money in business; this, Reagan believed, would reduce unemployment. Reagan also sought to raise interest rates to curb inflation, cut federal spending on social programs, and deregulate industry. Finally, Reagan hoped—but ultimately



failed—to balance the federal budget.

## *Glossary*

**New Right** a loose coalition of American conservatives, consisting primarily of wealthy businesspeople and evangelical Christians, which developed in response to social changes of the 1960s and 1970s

**Reaganomics** Ronald Reagan's economic policy, which suggested that lowering taxes on the upper income brackets would stimulate investment and economic growth



## 224. Video: The Reagan Revolution

This video teaches you about what is often called the Reagan Era. Mainly, it covers the eight years during which a former actor who had also been governor of the state of California was president of the United States. This video will teach you about Reagan's election victory over the hapless Jimmy Carter, tax cuts, Reagan's Economic Bill of Rights, union busting, and the Iran-Contra among other things. Learn about Reagan's domestic and foreign policy initiatives, and even a little about Bonzo the Chimp.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=271#oembed-1>



## 225. Assignment: American Conservatism

The 1960s was a liberal decade, the 1970s was a mess, and the 1980s was a conservative decade. In 1964, while helping the Goldwater campaign, a young up-and-coming figure in the Republican Party named Ronald Reagan gave a speech titled “[A Time for Choosing](#)” (if you don’t want to read it there you can [watch it here](#)).

This speech became a foundational address in the modern Republican Party, put Reagan on the fast-track to the White House, and defined American Conservatism from then to the present. After reading (or watching) the speech answer the following in a paragraph:

1. What are the main points of the speech? If it’s a time for choosing, what are the choices?
2. How did this speech set the tone for the current political right?



## 226. Political and Cultural Fusions

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the culture wars and political conflicts of the Reagan era
- Describe the Religious Right's response to the issues of the Reagan era

Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980 suggested to conservatives that the days of liberalism were over and the liberal establishment might be dismantled. Many looked forward to the discontinuation of policies like affirmative action. Conservative Christians sought to outlaw abortion and stop the movement for gay and lesbian rights. Republicans, and some moderate Democrats, demanded a return to "traditional" family values, a rhetorical ploy to suggest that male authority over women and children constituted a natural order that women's rights and the New Left had subverted since the 1960s. As the conservative message regarding the evils of government permeated society, distrust of the federal government grew, inspiring some to form organizations and communities that sought complete freedom from government control.



## CREATING CONSERVATIVE POLICY

Ronald Reagan's popularity and effectiveness as a leader drew from his reputation as a man who fought for what he believed in. He was a very articulate spokesperson for a variety of political ideas based on conservative principles and perspectives. Much of the intellectual meat of the Reagan Revolution came from conservative think tanks (policy or advocacy groups) that specifically sought to shape American political and social dialogues. The Heritage Foundation, one such group, soon became the intellectual arm of the conservative movement.

Launched in 1973 with a \$250,000 contribution from Joseph Coors (of Coors Brewing Company) and support from a variety of corporations and conservative foundations, the Heritage Foundation sought to counteract what conservatives believed to be Richard Nixon's acceptance of a liberal consensus on too many issues. In producing its policy position papers and political recommendations to conservative candidates and politicians, it helped contribute to a sanitization of U.S. history and a nostalgic glorification of what it deemed to be traditional values, seemingly threatened by the expansion of political and personal freedoms. The foundation had lent considerable support and encouragement to the conservative dialogues that helped carry Ronald Reagan into office in 1980. Just a year later, it produced a document entitled *Mandate for Leadership* that catalogued some two thousand specific recommendations on how to shrink the size and reach of the federal government and implement a more consistent conservative agenda. The newly elected Reagan administration looked favorably on the recommendations and recruited several of the paper's authors to serve in the White House.

## CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANS AND

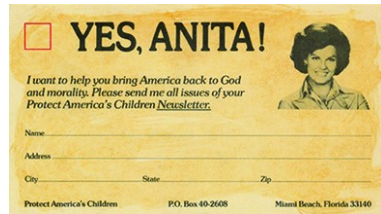


# FAMILY VALUES

Among the strongest supporters of Ronald Reagan's campaign for president were members of the Religious Right, including Christian groups like the Moral Majority, 61 percent of whom voted for him. By 1980, evangelical Christians had become an important political and social force in the United States. Some thirteen hundred radio stations in the country were owned and operated by evangelicals. Christian

television programs, such as Pat Robertson's *The 700 Club* and Jim Bakker's *The PTL (Praise the Lord) Club*, proved enormously popular and raised millions of dollars from viewer contributions. For some, evangelism was a business, but most conservative Christians were true believers who were convinced that premarital and extramarital sex, abortion, drug use, homosexuality, and "irreligious" forms of popular and high culture were responsible for a perceived decline in traditional family values that threatened American society.

Despite the support he received from Christian conservative and family values voters, Reagan was hardly an ideologue when it came to policy. Indeed, he was often quite careful in using hot button, family-value issues to his greatest political advantage. For example, as governor of California, one of the states that ratified the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in its first year, he positioned himself as a supporter of the amendment. When he launched his bid for the Republican nomination in 1976, however, he withdrew his support to gain the backing of more conservative members of his party. This move demonstrated both political savvy and foresight. At the



*This fundraising card was used by Anita Bryant, singer and beauty pageant winner, to gather support for Save Our Children Inc., a political coalition she formed in the late 1970s to overturn a Florida ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. Many of the group's strategies were soon embraced by the Moral Majority.*



time he withdrew his support, the Republican National Convention was still officially backing the amendment. However, in 1980, the party began to qualify its stance, which dovetailed with Reagan's candidacy for the White House.

Reagan believed the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was sufficient protection for women against discrimination. Once in office, he took a mostly neutral position, neither supporting nor working against the ERA. Nor did this middle position appear to hurt him at the polls; he attracted a significant number of votes from women in 1980, and in 1984, he polled 56 percent of the women's vote compared to 44 percent for the Democratic ticket of Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro, the first female candidate for vice president from a major party.

## Phyllis Schlafly and the STOP ERA Movement

In 1972, after a large number of states jumped to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, most observers believed its ultimate ratification by all the necessary states was all but certain. But, a decade later, the amendment died without ever getting the necessary votes. There are many reasons it went down in defeat, but a major one was Phyllis Schlafly.

On the surface, Schlafly's life might suggest that she would naturally support the ERA. After all, she was a well-educated, professional woman who sought advancement in her field and even aspired to high political office. Yet she is a fascinating historical character, precisely because her life and goals don't conform to expected norms.

Schlafly's attack on the ERA was ingenious in its method and effectiveness. Rather than attacking the amendment directly as a gateway to unrestrained and immoral behavior as some had, she couched her opposition in language that was sensitive to both privilege and class. Her instrument was the STOP ERA movement,



with the acronym STOP, standing for “Stop Taking our Privileges.” Schlafly argued that women enjoyed special privileges such as gender-specific restrooms and exemption from the military draft. These, she claimed, would be lost should the ERA be ratified. But she also claimed to stand up for the dignity of being a homemaker and lambasted the feminist movement as elitist. In this, she was keenly aware of the power of class interests. Her organization suggested that privileged women could afford to support the ERA. Working women and poor housewives, however, would ultimately bear the brunt of the loss of protection it would bring. In the end, her tactics were successful in achieving exactly what the movement’s name suggested; she stopped the ERA.

Reagan’s political calculations notwithstanding, his belief that traditional values were threatened by a modern wave of immoral popular culture was genuine. He recognized that nostalgia was a powerful force in politics, and he drew a picture for his audiences of the traditional good old days under attack by immorality and decline. “Those of us who are over thirty-five or so years of age grew up in a different America,” he explained in his farewell address. “We were taught, very directly, what it means to be an American. And we absorbed, almost in the air, a love of country and an appreciation of its institutions. . . . The movies celebrated democratic values and implicitly reinforced the idea that America was special.” But this America, he insisted, was being washed away. “I’m warning of an eradication of the American memory that could result, ultimately, in an erosion of the American spirit.”



Concern over a decline in the country's moral values welled up on both sides of the political aisle. In 1985, anxiety over the messages of the music industry led to the founding of the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), a bipartisan group formed by the wives of prominent Washington politicians including Susan Baker, the wife of Reagan's treasury secretary, James



*Tipper Gore, wife of then-senator (and later vice president) Al Gore, at the 1985 Senate hearings into rating labels proposed by the PMRC, of which she was a cofounder.*

Baker, and Tipper Gore, the wife of then-senator Al Gore, who later became vice president under Bill Clinton. The goal of the PMRC was to limit the ability of children to listen to music with sexual or violent content. Its strategy was to get the recording industry to adopt a voluntary rating system for music and recordings, similar to the Motion Picture Association of America's system for movies.

The organization also produced a list of particularly offensive recordings known as the "filthy fifteen." By August 1985, nearly twenty record companies had agreed to put labels on their recordings indicating "explicit lyrics," but the Senate began hearings on the issue in September. While many parents and a number of witnesses advocated the labels, many in the music industry rejected them as censorship. Twisted Sister's Dee Snider and folk musician John Denver both advised Congress against the restrictions. In the end, the recording industry suggested a voluntary generic label. Its effect on children's exposure to raw language is uncertain, but musicians roundly mocked the effort.

Listen to the testimony of [Dee Snider](#) and [John](#)



[Denver](#) to learn more about the contours of this debate.

## THE AIDS CRISIS

In the early 1980s, doctors noticed a disturbing trend: Young gay men in large cities, especially San Francisco and New York, were being diagnosed with, and eventually dying from, a rare cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma. Because the disease was seen almost exclusively in male homosexuals, it was quickly dubbed "gay cancer." Doctors soon realized it often coincided with other symptoms, including a rare form of pneumonia, and they renamed it "Gay Related Immune Deficiency" (GRID), although people other than gay men, primarily intravenous drug users, were dying from the disease as well. The connection between gay men and GRID—later renamed human immunodeficiency virus/autoimmune deficiency syndrome, or HIV/AIDS—led heterosexuals largely to ignore the growing health crisis in the gay community, wrongly assuming they were safe from its effects. The federal government also overlooked the disease, and calls for more money to research and find the cure were ignored.

Even after it became apparent that heterosexuals could contract the disease through blood transfusions and heterosexual intercourse, HIV/AIDS continued to be associated primarily with the gay community, especially by political and religious conservatives. Indeed, the Religious Right regarded it as a form of divine retribution meant to punish gay men for their "immoral" lifestyle. President Reagan, always politically careful, was reluctant to speak openly about the developing crisis even as thousands faced certain death from the disease.



With little help coming from the government, the gay community quickly began to organize its own response. In 1982, New York City men formed the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), a volunteer organization that operated an information hotline, provided counseling and legal assistance, and raised money for people with HIV/AIDS. Larry Kramer, one of the original members, left in 1983 and formed his own organization, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), in 1987. ACT UP took a more militant approach, holding demonstrations on Wall Street, outside the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and inside the New York Stock Exchange to call attention and shame the government into action. One of the images adopted by the group, a pink triangle paired with the phrase "Silence = Death," captured media attention and quickly became the symbol of the AIDS crisis.





*The pink triangle was originally used in Nazi concentration camps to identify those there for acts of homosexuality. Reclaimed by gay activists in New York as a symbol of resistance and solidarity during the 1970s, it was further transformed as a symbol of governmental inaction in the face of the AIDS epidemic during the 1980s.*

## THE WAR ON DRUGS AND THE ROAD TO MASS INCARCERATION

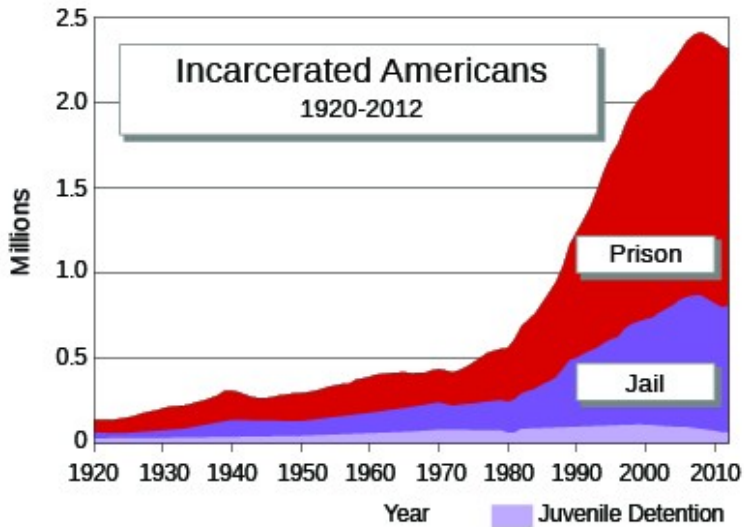
As Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, violent crime in the United States was reaching an all-time high. While there were different reasons for the spike, the most important one was demographics: The primary category of offenders, males between the ages of sixteen and thirty-six, reached an all-time peak as the baby-boomer



generation came of age. But the phenomenon that most politicians honed in on as a cause for violent crime was the abuse of a new, cheap drug dealt illegally on city streets. Crack cocaine, a smokable type of cocaine popular with poorer addicts, was hitting the streets in the 1980s, frightening middle-class Americans. Reagan and other conservatives led a campaign to “get tough on crime” and promised the nation a “war on drugs.” Initiatives like the “Just Say No” campaign led by First Lady Nancy Reagan implied that drug addiction and drug-related crime reflected personal morality.

Nixon had first used the term in 1971, but in the 1980s the “war on drugs” took on an ominous dimension, as politicians scrambled over each other to enact harsher sentences for drug offenses so they could market themselves as tough on crime. State after state switched from variable to mandatory minimum sentences that were exceedingly long and particularly harsh for street drug crimes. The federal government supported the trend with federal sentencing guidelines and additional funds for local law enforcement agencies. This law-and-order movement peaked in the 1990s, when California introduced a “three strikes” law that mandated life imprisonment without parole for any third felony conviction—even nonviolent ones. As a result, prisons became crowded, and states went deep into debt to build more. By the end of the century, the war began to die down as the public lost interest in the problem, the costs of the punishment binge became politically burdensome, and scholars and politicians began to advocate the decriminalization of drug use. By this time, however, hundreds of thousands of people had been incarcerated for drug offenses and the total number of prisoners in the nation had grown four-fold in the last quarter of the century. Particularly glaring were the racial inequities of the new age of mass incarceration, with African Americans being seven times more likely to be in prison.





*This graph of the number of people in jail, prison, and juvenile detention by decade in the United States shows the huge increase in incarceration during the war on drugs that began in the 1980s, during the Reagan administration. (Prisons are long-term state or federal facilities; jails are local, short-term facilities.)*

## Section Summary

The political conservatism of the 1980s and 1990s was matched by the social conservatism of the period. Conservative politicians wished to limit the size and curb the power of the federal government. Conservative think tanks flourished, the Christian Right defeated the



ERA, and bipartisan efforts to add warning labels to explicit music lyrics were the subject of Congressional hearings. HIV/AIDS, which became chiefly and inaccurately associated with the gay community, grew to crisis proportions, as heterosexuals and the federal government failed to act. In response, gay men organized advocacy groups to fight for research on HIV/AIDS. Meanwhile, the so-called war on drugs began a get-tough trend in law enforcement that mandated lengthy sentences for drug-related offenses and hugely increased the American prison population.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1064>

### *Review Question*

1. What were some of the primary values of the Moral Majority?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority believed the country was drifting ever further toward immorality. The evidence they cited included the legalization of



abortion, the feminist movement, and sex education in public schools.

## *Glossary*

**Heritage Foundation** a professional organization conducting research and political advocacy on behalf of its values and perspectives

**HIV/AIDS** a deadly immune deficiency disorder discovered in 1981, and at first largely ignored by politicians because of its prevalence among gay men

**war on drugs** a nationwide political campaign to implement harsh sentences for drug crimes, which produced an explosive growth of the prison population



## 227. Video: George HW Bush and the End of the Cold War

This video teaches you about the end of the Cold War and the presidency of George H.W. Bush. It was neither the best of times, nor the worst of times. On the domestic front, the first president Bush inherited the relative prosperity of the later Reagan years, and watched that prosperity evaporate. That was about all the interest Bush 41 had, domestically, so let's move to foreign policy, which was a bigger deal at this time. The biggie was the end of the Cold War, which is the title of the video, so you know it's important. The collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest deal of Bush's term, and history has assigned the credit to Ronald Reagan. We give the guy a break, and say that he helped. He was certainly expert in foreign policy, having been an envoy to China, ambassador to the United Nations, and head of the CIA. Bush also oversaw the first Gulf War, which was something of a success, in that the primary mission was accomplished, and the vast majority of the troops were home in short order. It didn't do much to address some of the other problems in the region, but we'll get to that in the next few weeks. Along with all this, you'll learn about Bush's actions, or lack thereof, in Somalia and the Balkans, and you'll even be given an opportunity to read Bush's lips.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=274#oembed-1>



## 228. A New World Order

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the successes and failures of Ronald Reagan's foreign policy
- Compare the policies of Ronald Reagan with those of George H. W. Bush
- Explain the causes and results of the Persian Gulf War
- Discuss the events that constituted the end of the Cold War

In addition to reviving the economy and reducing the size of the federal government, Ronald Reagan also wished to restore American stature in the world. He entered the White House a “cold warrior” and referred to the Soviet Union in a 1983 speech as an “evil empire.” Dedicated to upholding even authoritarian governments in foreign countries to keep them safe from Soviet influence, he was also desperate to put to rest Vietnam Syndrome, the reluctance to use military force in foreign countries for fear of embarrassing defeat, which had influenced U.S. foreign policy since the mid-1970s.



# THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Reagan's desire to demonstrate U.S. readiness to use military force abroad sometimes had tragic consequences. In 1983, he sent soldiers to Lebanon as part of a multinational force trying to restore order following an Israeli invasion the year before. On October 23, more than two hundred troops were killed in a barracks bombing in Beirut carried out by Iranian-trained militants known as Hezbollah. In February 1984, Reagan announced that, given intensified fighting, U.S. troops were being withdrawn.



(a)



(b)

*The suicide bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut (a) on April 18, 1983, marked the first of a number of attacks on U.S. targets in the region. Less than six months later, a truck bomb leveled the U.S. Marine barracks at the Beirut airport (b), part of a coordinated attack that killed 299 U.S. and French members of the multinational peacekeeping force in Lebanon.*

Two days after the bombing in Beirut, Reagan and Secretary of State George P. Shultz authorized the invasion of Grenada, a small Caribbean island nation, in an attempt to oust a Communist military junta that had overthrown a moderate regime. Communist Cuba already had troops and technical aid workers stationed on the island and were willing to defend the new regime, but the United States swiftly took command of the situation, and the Cuban soldiers surrendered after two days.



Reagan's intervention in Grenada was intended to send a message to Marxists in Central America. Meanwhile, however, decades of political repression and economic corruption by certain Latin American governments, sometimes generously supported by U.S. foreign aid, had sown deep seeds of revolutionary discontent. In El Salvador, a 1979 civil-military coup had put a military junta in power that was engaged in a civil war against left-leaning guerillas when Reagan took office. His administration supported the right-wing government, which used death squads to silence dissent.

Neighboring Nicaragua was also governed by a largely Marxist-inspired group, the Sandinistas. This organization, led by Daniel Ortega, had overthrown the brutal, right-wing dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza in 1979. Reagan, however, overlooked the legitimate complaints of the Sandinistas and believed that their rule opened the region to Cuban and Soviet influence. A year into his presidency, convinced it was folly to allow the expansion of Soviet and Communist influence in Latin America, he authorized the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to equip and train a group of anti-Sandinista Nicaraguans known as the *Contras* (*contrarevolucionários* or "counter-revolutionaries") to oust Ortega.

Reagan's desire to aid the *Contras* even after Congress ended its support led him, surprisingly, to Iran. In September 1980, Iraq had invaded neighboring Iran and, by 1982, had begun to gain the upper hand. The Iraqis needed weapons, and the Reagan administration, wishing to assist the enemy of its enemy, had agreed to provide Iraqi president Saddam Hussein with money, arms, and military intelligence. In 1983, however, the capture of Americans by Hezbollah forces in Lebanon changed the president's plans. In 1985, he authorized the sale of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles to Iran in exchange for help retrieving three of the American hostages.

A year later, Reagan's National Security Council aide, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, found a way to sell weapons to Iran and secretly use the proceeds to support the Nicaraguan *Contras*—in direct violation of a congressional ban on military aid to the anti-Communist guerillas in that Central American nation. Eventually



the Senate became aware, and North and others were indicted on various charges, which were all dismissed, overturned on appeal, or granted presidential pardon. Reagan, known for delegating much authority to subordinates and unable to “remember” crucial facts and meetings, escaped the scandal with nothing more than criticism for his lax oversight. The nation was divided over the extent to which the president could go to “protect national interests,” and the limits of Congress’s constitutional authority to oversee the activities of the executive branch have yet to be resolved.

Visit the [Brown University site](#) to learn more about the Iran–Contra congressional hearings. Read transcripts of the testimony and watch the video of President Reagan’s address to the nation regarding the operation.

## THE COLD WAR WAXES AND WANES

While trying to shrink the federal budget and the size of government sphere at home, Reagan led an unprecedented military buildup in which money flowed to the Pentagon to pay for expensive new forms of weaponry. The press drew attention to the inefficiency of the nation’s military industrial complex, offering as examples expense bills that included \$640 toilet seats and \$7,400 coffee machines. One of the most controversial aspects of Reagan’s plan was the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which he proposed in 1983. SDI, or “Star Wars,” called for the development of a defensive shield to protect the United States from a Soviet missile strike. Scientists argued that much of the needed technology had not yet been developed and might never be. Others contended that the plan



would violate existing treaties with the Soviet Union and worried about the Soviet response. The system was never built, and the plan, estimated to have cost some \$7.5 billion, was finally abandoned.

Anticipating his reelection campaign in 1984, Reagan began to moderate his position toward the Soviet Union, largely at the initiative of his new counterpart, Mikhail Gorbachev. The new and comparatively young Soviet premier did not want to commit additional funds for another arms race, especially since the war in Afghanistan



*In the East Room of the White House, President Reagan and Soviet general secretary Mikhail Gorbachev sign the 1987 INF Treaty, eliminating one category of nuclear weapons.*

against mujahedeen—Islamic guerilla fighters—had depleted the Soviet Union's resources severely since its invasion of the central Asian nation in 1979. Gorbachev recognized that economic despair at home could easily result in larger political upheavals like those in neighboring Poland, where the Solidarity movement had taken hold. He withdrew troops from Afghanistan, introduced political reforms and new civil liberties at home—known as *perestroika* and *glasnost*—and proposed arms reduction talks with the United States. In 1985, Gorbachev and Reagan met in Geneva to reduce armaments and shrink their respective military budgets. The following year, meeting in Reykjavík, Iceland, they surprised the world by announcing that they would try to eliminate nuclear weapons by 1996. In 1987, they agreed to eliminate a whole category of nuclear weapons when they signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty at the White House. This laid the foundation for future agreements limiting nuclear weapons.



You can view President Reagan delivering one of his most [memorable addresses](#) in 1987. Standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, he called on General Secretary Gorbachev to “tear down this wall.”

## “NO NEW TAXES”

Confident they could win back the White House, Democrats mounted a campaign focused on more effective and competent government under the leadership of Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis. When George H. W. Bush, Reagan’s vice president and Republican nominee, found himself down in the polls, political advisor Lee Atwater launched an aggressively negative media campaign, accusing Dukakis of being soft on crime and connecting his liberal policies to a brutal murder in Massachusetts. More importantly, Bush adopted a largely Reaganesque style on matters of economic policy, promising to shrink government and keep taxes low. These tactics were successful, and the Republican Party retained the White House.

Although he promised to carry on Reagan’s economic legacy, the problems Bush inherited made it difficult to do so. Reagan’s policies of cutting taxes and increasing defense spending had exploded the federal budget deficit, making it three times larger in 1989 than when Reagan took office in 1980. Bush was further constrained by the emphatic pledge he had made at the 1988 Republican Convention—“read my lips: no new taxes”—and found himself in the difficult position of trying to balance the budget and reduce the deficit without breaking his promise. However, he also faced a Congress controlled by the Democrats, who wanted to raise taxes



on the rich, while Republicans thought the government should drastically cut domestic spending. In October, after a brief government shutdown when Bush vetoed the budget Congress delivered, he and Congress reached a compromise with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. The budget included measures to reduce the deficit by both cutting government expenditures and raising taxes, effectively reneging on the “no new taxes” pledge. These economic constraints are one reason why Bush supported a limited domestic agenda of education reform and antidrug efforts, relying on private volunteers and community organizations, which he referred to as “a thousand points of light,” to address most social problems.

When it came to foreign affairs, Bush’s attitude towards the Soviet Union differed little from Reagan’s. Bush sought to ease tensions with America’s rival superpower and stressed the need for peace and cooperation. The desire to avoid angering the Soviets led him to adopt a hands-off approach when, at the beginning of his term, a series of pro-democracy demonstrations broke out across the Communist Eastern Bloc.

In November 1989, the world—including foreign policy experts and espionage agencies from both sides of the Iron Curtain—watched in surprise as peaceful protesters in East Germany marched through checkpoints at the Berlin Wall. Within hours, people from both East and West Berlin flooded the checkpoints and began tearing down large chunks of the wall. Months of earlier demonstrations in East Germany had called on the government to allow citizens to leave the country. These demonstrations were one manifestation of a larger movement sweeping across East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania, which swiftly led to revolutions, most of them peaceful, resulting in the collapse of Communist governments in Central and Eastern Europe.

In Budapest in 1956 and in Prague in 1968, the Soviet Union had restored order through a large show of force. That this didn’t happen in 1989 was an indication to all that the Soviet Union was



itself collapsing. Bush's refusal to gloat or declare victory helped him maintain the relationship with Gorbachev that Reagan had established. In July 1991, Gorbachev and Bush signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START, which committed their countries to reducing their nuclear arsenals by 25 percent. A month later, attempting to stop the changes begun by Gorbachev's reforms, Communist Party hardliners tried to remove him from power. Protests arose throughout the Soviet Union, and by December 1991, the nation had collapsed. In January 1992, twelve former Soviet republics formed the Commonwealth of Independent States to coordinate trade and security measures. The Cold War was over.

## AMERICAN GLOBAL POWER IN THE WAKE OF THE COLD WAR

The dust had barely settled on the crumbling Berlin Wall when the Bush administration announced a bold military intervention in Panama in December 1989. Claiming to act on behalf of human rights, U.S. troops deposed the unpopular dictator and drug smuggler Manuel Noriega swiftly, but former CIA connections between President Bush and Noriega, as well as U.S. interests in maintaining control of the Canal Zone, prompted the United Nations and world public opinion to denounce the invasion as a power grab.

As the Soviet Union was ceasing to be a threat, the Middle East became a source of increased concern. In the wake of its eight-year war with Iran from 1980 to 1988, Iraq had accumulated a significant amount of foreign debt. At the same time, other Arab states had increased their oil production, forcing oil prices down and further hurting Iraq's economy. Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, approached these oil-producing states for assistance, particularly Saudi Arabia and neighboring Kuwait, which Iraq felt directly benefited from its



war with Iran. When talks with these countries broke down, and Iraq found itself politically and economically isolated, Hussein ordered the invasion of oil-rich Kuwait in August 1990. Bush faced his first full-scale international crisis.

In response to the invasion, Bush and his foreign policy team forged an unprecedented international coalition of thirty-four countries, including many members of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the Middle Eastern countries of Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt, to oppose Iraqi aggression. Bush hoped that this coalition would herald the beginning of a “new world order” in which the nations of the world would work together



*George H. W. Bush greets U.S. troops stationed in Saudi Arabia on Thanksgiving Day in 1990. The first troops were deployed there in August 1990, as part of Operation Desert Shield, which was intended to build U.S. military strength in the area in preparation for an eventual military operation.*

to deter belligerence. A deadline was set for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, or face serious consequences. Wary of not having sufficient domestic support for combat, Bush first deployed troops to the area to build up forces in the region and defend Saudi Arabia via Operation Desert Shield. On January 14, Bush succeeded in getting resolutions from Congress authorizing the use of military force against Iraq, and the U.S. then orchestrated an effective air campaign, followed by Operation Desert Storm, a one-hundred-hour land war involving over 500,000 U.S. troops and another 200,000 from twenty-seven other countries, which expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait by the end of February.

Visit the *Frontline* site to read first-person accounts



of [U.S. soldiers' experiences](#) in Operation Desert Storm and view weapons used in battle.

Some controversy arose among Bush's advisors regarding whether to end the war without removing Saddam Hussein from power, but General Colin Powell, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued that to continue to attack a defeated army would be "un-American." Bush agreed and troops began moving out of the area in March 1991. Although Hussein was not removed from power, the war nevertheless suggested that the United States no longer suffered from "Vietnam Syndrome" and would deploy massive military resources if and when it thought necessary. In April 1991, United Nations (UN) Resolution 687 set the terms of the peace, with long-term implications. Its concluding paragraph authorizing the UN to take such steps as necessary to maintain the peace was later taken as the legal justification for the further use of force, as in 1996 and 1998, when Iraq was again bombed. It was also referenced in the lead-up to the second invasion of Iraq in 2003, when it appeared that Iraq was refusing to comply with other UN resolutions.

## A CHANGING DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE

By nearly every measure, Operation Desert Storm was a resounding success. Through deft diplomatic efforts on the international stage, Bush had ensured that many around the world saw the action as legitimate. By making the goals of the military action both clear and limited, he also reassured an American public still skeptical of foreign entanglements. With the Soviet Union vanishing from the



world stage, and the United States demonstrating the extent of its diplomatic influence and military potency with President Bush at the helm, his reelection seemed all but inevitable. Indeed, in March 1991, the president had an approval rating of 89 percent.

Despite Bush's successes internationally, the domestic situation at home was far more complicated. Unlike Reagan, Bush was not a natural culture warrior. Rather, he was a moderate, Connecticut-born Episcopalian, a pragmatic politician, and a life-long civil servant. He was not adept at catering to post-Reagan conservatives as his predecessor had been. By the same token, he appeared incapable of capitalizing on his history of moderation and pragmatism regarding women's rights and access to abortion. Together with a Democratic Senate, Bush broke new ground in civil rights with his support of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a far-reaching law that prohibited discrimination based on disability in public accommodations and by employers.

President Bush's weaknesses as a culture warrior were on full display during the controversy that erupted following his nomination of a new Supreme Court judge. In 1991, Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first African American ever to sit on the Supreme Court, opted to retire, thus opening a position on the court. Thinking he was doing the prudent thing by appealing to multiple interests, Bush nominated Clarence Thomas, another African American but also a strong social conservative. The decision to nominate Thomas, however, proved to be anything but prudent. During Thomas' confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Anita Hill, a lawyer who had worked for Thomas when he was chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), came forward with allegations that he had sexually harassed her when he was her supervisor. Thomas denied the accusations and referred to the televised hearings as a "high tech lynching." He survived the controversy and was appointed to the Supreme Court by a narrow Senate vote of fifty-two to forty-eight. Hill, also African American, noted later in frustration: "I had a gender, he had a race." In the aftermath, however, sexual harassment



of women in the workplace gained public attention, and harassment complaints made to the EEOC increased 50 percent by the fall of 1992. The controversy also reflected poorly on President Bush and may have hurt him with female voters in 1992.

## Section Summary

While Ronald Reagan worked to restrict the influence of the federal government in people's lives, he simultaneously pursued interventionist policies abroad as part of a global Cold War strategy. Eager to cure the United States of "Vietnam Syndrome," he increased the American stockpile of weapons and aided anti-Communist groups in the Caribbean and Central America. The Reagan administration's secret sales of arms to Iran proved disastrous, however, and resulted in indictments for administration officials. With the end of the Cold War, attention shifted to escalating tensions in the Middle East, where an international coalition assembled by George H. W. Bush drove invading Iraqi forces from Kuwait. As Bush discovered in the last years of his presidency, even this almost-flawless exercise in international diplomatic and military power was not enough to calm a changing cultural and political climate at home.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1065>



## *Review Question*

1. What was the Iran-Contra affair about?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. After Congress ended support for the Nicaraguan Contras, President Reagan sought other sources of funding for them. Lt. Col. Oliver North then oversaw a plan by which arms would be sold to Iran and the money received from the sales would be sent to fund the Contras.

## *Glossary*

**Operation Desert Storm** the U.S. name of the war waged from January to April 1991, by coalition forces against Iraq in reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990

**START** a treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union that limited the number of nuclear warheads, ballistic missiles, and strategic bombers held by both sides

**Vietnam Syndrome** reluctance on the part of American



politicians to actively engage U.S. forces in a foreign war for fear of suffering a humiliating defeat



## 229. Bill Clinton and the New Economy

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain political partisanship, antigovernment movements, and economic developments during the Clinton administration
- Discuss President Clinton's foreign policy
- Explain how George W. Bush won the election of 2000

By 1992, many had come to doubt that President George H. W. Bush could solve America's problems. He had alienated conservative Republicans by breaking his pledge not to raise taxes, and some faulted him for failing to remove Saddam Hussein from power during Operation Desert Storm. Furthermore, despite living much of his adult life in Texas, he could not overcome the stereotypes associated with his privileged New England and Ivy League background, which hurt him among working-class Reagan Democrats.



# THE ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE

The contrast between George H. W. Bush and William Jefferson Clinton could not have been greater. Bill Clinton was a baby boomer born in 1946 in Hope, Arkansas. His biological father died in a car wreck three months before he was born. When he was a boy, his mother married Roger Clinton, an alcoholic who abused his family. However, despite a troubled home life, Clinton was an excellent student. He took an interest in politics from an early age. On a high school trip to Washington, DC, he met his political idol, President John F. Kennedy. As a

student at Georgetown University, he supported both the civil rights and antiwar movements and ran for student council president.

In 1968, Clinton received a prestigious Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University. From Oxford he moved on to Yale, where he earned his law degree in 1973. He returned to Arkansas and became a professor at the University of Arkansas's law school. The following year, he tried his hand at state politics, running for Congress, and was narrowly defeated. In 1977, he became attorney general of Arkansas and was elected governor in 1978. Losing the office to his Republican opponent in 1980, he retook the governor's mansion in 1982 and remained governor of Arkansas until 1992, when he announced his candidacy for president.

## A REALISTIC APPROACH TO STUDENT GOVERNMENT



*During his 1967 campaign for student council president at Georgetown University, Bill Clinton told those who voted for him that he would invite them to the White House when he became president of the United States. He kept his promise.*



During his campaign, Bill Clinton described himself as a New Democrat, a member of a faction of the Democratic Party that, like the Republicans, favored free trade and deregulation. He tried to appeal to the middle class by promising higher taxes on the rich and reform of the welfare system. Although Clinton garnered only 43 percent of the popular vote, he easily won in the Electoral College with 370 votes to President Bush's 188. Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot won 19 percent of the popular vote, the best showing by any third-party candidate since 1912. The Democrats took control of both houses of Congress.

## **“IT’S THE ECONOMY, STUPID”**

Clinton took office towards the end of a recession. His administration's plans for fixing the economy included limiting spending and cutting the budget to reduce the nation's \$60 billion deficit, keeping interest rates low to encourage private investment, and eliminating protectionist tariffs. Clinton also hoped to improve employment opportunities by allocating more money for education. In his first term, he expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit, which lowered the tax obligations of working families who were just above the poverty line. Addressing the budget deficit, the Democrats in Congress passed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 without a single Republican vote. The act raised taxes for the top 1.2 percent of the American people, lowered them for fifteen million low-income families, and offered tax breaks to 90 percent of small businesses.

Clinton also strongly supported ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a treaty that eliminated tariffs and trade restrictions among the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The treaty had been negotiated by the Bush administration, and the leaders of all three nations had signed it in December 1992. However, because of strong opposition from American labor unions



and some in Congress who feared the loss of jobs to Mexico, the treaty had not been ratified by the time Clinton took office. To allay the concerns of unions, he added an agreement to protect workers and also one to protect the environment. Congress ratified NAFTA late in 1993. The result was the creation of the world's largest common market in terms of population, including some 425 million people.

During Clinton's administration, the nation began to experience the longest period of economic expansion in its history, almost ten consecutive years. Year after year, job growth increased and the deficit shrank. Increased tax revenue and budget cuts turned the annual national budget deficit from close to \$290 billion in 1992 to a record budget surplus of over \$230 billion in 2000. Reduced government borrowing freed up capital for private-sector use, and lower interest rates in turn fueled more growth. During the Clinton years, more people owned homes than ever before in the country's history (67.7 percent). Inflation dipped to 2.3 percent and the unemployment rate declined, reaching a thirty-year low of 3.9 percent in 2000.

Much of the prosperity of the 1990s was related to technological change and the advent of new information systems. In 1994, the Clinton administration became the first to launch an official White House website and join the revolution of the electronically mediated world. By the 1990s, a new world of instantaneous global exposure was at the fingertips of billions worldwide.

## Hope and Anxiety in the Information Age

While the roots of innovations like personal computers and the Internet go back to the 1960s and massive Department of Defense spending, it was in the 1980s and 90s that these technologies became part of everyday life. Like most technology-driven periods



of transformation, the information age was greeted with a mixture of hope and anxiety upon its arrival.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, computer manufacturers like Apple, Commodore, and Tandy began offering fully assembled personal computers. (Previously, personal computing had been accessible only to those adventurous enough to buy expensive kits that had to be assembled and programmed.) In short order, computers became a fairly common sight in businesses and upper-middle-class homes. Soon, computer owners, even young kids, were launching their own electronic bulletin



*This ad for the Apple II appeared in Byte magazine in 1977.*

board systems, small-scale networks that used modems and phone lines, and sharing information in ways not dreamed of just decades before. Computers, it seemed, held out the promise of a bright, new future for those who knew how to use them.

Casting shadows over the bright dreams of a better tomorrow were fears that the development of computer technology would create a dystopian future in which technology became the instrument of society's undoing. Film audiences watched a teenaged Matthew Broderick hacking into a government computer and starting a nuclear war in *War Games*, Angelina Jolie being chased by a computer genius bent on world domination in *Hackers*, and Sandra Bullock watching helplessly as her life is turned inside out by conspirators who manipulate her virtual identity in *The Net*. Clearly, the idea of digital network connections as the root of our demise resonated in this period of rapid technological change.



## DOMESTIC ISSUES

In addition to shifting the Democratic Party to the moderate center on economic issues, Clinton tried to break new ground on a number of domestic issues and make good on traditional Democratic commitments to the disadvantaged, minority groups, and women. At the same time, he faced the challenge of domestic terrorism when a federal building in Oklahoma City was bombed, killing 168 people and injuring hundreds more.

### Healthcare Reform

An important and popular part of Clinton's domestic agenda was healthcare reform that would make universal healthcare a reality. When the plan was announced in September of the president's first year in office, pollsters and commentators both assumed it would sail through. Many were unhappy with the way the system worked in the United States, where the cost of health insurance seemed increasingly unaffordable for the middle class. Clinton appointed his wife, Hillary Clinton, a Yale Law School graduate and accomplished attorney, to head his Task Force on National Health Care Reform in 1993. The 1,342-page Health Security Act presented to Congress that year sought to offer universal coverage. All Americans were to be covered by a healthcare plan that could not reject them based on pre-existing medical conditions. Employers would be required to provide healthcare for their employees. Limits would be placed on the amount that people would have to pay for services; the poor would not have to pay at all.



The outlook for the plan looked good in 1993; it had the support of a number of institutions like the American Medical Association and the Health Insurance Association of America. But in relatively short order, the political winds changed. As budget battles distracted the administration and the midterm elections of 1994 approached, Republicans began to recognize the strategic benefits of opposing reform. Soon they were mounting fierce opposition to the bill. Moderate conservatives dubbed the reform proposals



*C. Everett Koop, who had served as surgeon general under Ronald Reagan and was a strong advocate of healthcare reform, helped First Lady Hillary Clinton promote the Health Security Act in the fall of 1993.*

“Hillarycare” and argued that the bill was an unwarranted expansion of the powers of the federal government that would interfere with people’s ability to choose the healthcare provider they wanted. Those further to the right argued that healthcare reform was part of a larger and nefarious plot to control the public.

To rally Republican opposition to Clinton and the Democrats, Newt Gingrich and Richard “Dick” Armey, two of the leaders of the Republican minority in the House of Representatives, prepared a document entitled Contract with America, signed by all but two of the Republican representatives. It listed eight specific legislative reforms or initiatives the Republicans would enact if they gained a majority in Congress in the 1994 midterm elections.

View the [Contract with America](#) that the Republican



Party drafted to continue the conservative shift begun by Ronald Reagan, which promised to cut waste and spend taxpayer money responsibly.

Lacking support on both sides, the healthcare bill was never passed and died in Congress. The reform effort finally ended in September 1994. Dislike of the proposed healthcare plan on the part of conservatives and the bold strategy laid out in the Contract with America enabled the Republican Party to win seven Senate seats and fifty-two House seats in the November elections. The Republicans then used their power to push for conservative reforms. One such piece of legislation was the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, signed into law in August 1996. The act set time limits on welfare benefits and required most recipients to begin working within two years of receiving assistance.

## Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Although Clinton had campaigned as an economically conservative New Democrat, he was thought to be socially liberal and, just days after his victory in the 1992 election, he promised to end the fifty-year ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military. However, in January 1993, after taking the oath of office, Clinton amended his promise in order to appease conservatives. Instead of lifting the longstanding ban, the armed forces would adopt a policy of “don't ask, don't tell.” Those on active duty would not be asked their sexual orientation and, if they were gay, they were not to discuss their sexuality openly or they would be dismissed from military service. This compromise satisfied neither conservatives seeking the exclusion of gays nor the gay community, which argued that



homosexuals, like heterosexuals, should be able to live without fear of retribution because of their sexuality.

Clinton again proved himself willing to appease political conservatives when he signed into law the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in September 1996, after both houses of Congress had passed it with such wide margins that a presidential veto could easily be overridden. DOMA defined marriage as a heterosexual union and denied federal benefits to same-sex couples. It also allowed states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages granted by other states. When Clinton signed the bill, he was personally opposed to same-sex marriage. Nevertheless, he disliked DOMA and later called for its repeal. He also later changed his position on same-sex marriage. On other social issues, however, Clinton was more liberal. He appointed openly gay and lesbian men and women to important positions in government and denounced discrimination against people with AIDS. He supported the idea of the ERA and believed that women should receive pay equal to that of men doing the same work. He opposed the use of racial quotas in employment, but he declared affirmative action programs to be necessary.

As a result of his economic successes and his moderate social policies, Clinton defeated Senator Robert Dole in the 1996 presidential election. With 49 percent of the popular vote and 379 electoral votes, he became the first Democrat to win reelection to the presidency since Franklin Roosevelt. Clinton's victory was partly due to a significant gender gap between the parties, with women tending to favor Democratic candidates. In 1992, Clinton won 45 percent of women's votes compared to Bush's 38 percent, and in 1996, he received 54 percent of women's votes while Dole won 38 percent.



## Domestic Terrorism

The fears of those who saw government as little more than a necessary evil appeared to be confirmed in the spring of 1993, when federal and state law enforcement authorities laid siege to the compound of a religious sect called the Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas. The group, which believed the end of world was approaching, was suspected of weapons violations and resisted search-and-arrest warrants with deadly force. A standoff developed that lasted nearly two months and was captured on television each day. A final assault on the compound was made on April 19, and seventy-six men, women, and children died in a fire probably set by members of the sect. Many others committed suicide or were killed by fellow sect members.

During the siege, many antigovernment and militia types came to satisfy their curiosity or show support for those inside. One was Timothy McVeigh, a former U.S. Army infantry soldier. McVeigh had served in Operation Desert Storm in Iraq, earning a bronze star, but he became disillusioned with the military and the government when he was deemed psychologically unfit for the Army Special Forces. He was convinced that the Branch Davidians were victims of government terrorism, and he and his coconspirator, Terry Nichols, determined to avenge them.

Two years later, on the anniversary of the day that the Waco compound burned to the ground, McVeigh parked a rented truck full of explosives in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and blew it up. More than 600 people were injured in the attack and 168 died, including nineteen children at the daycare center inside. McVeigh hoped that his actions would spark a revolution against government control. He and Nichols were both arrested and tried, and McVeigh was executed on June 11, 2001, for the worst act of terrorism committed on American soil. Just a few months later, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 broke that dark record.





(a)



(b)

*The remains of automobiles stand in front of the bombed federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995 (a). More than three hundred nearby buildings were damaged by the blast, an attack perpetrated at least partly to avenge the Waco siege (b) exactly two years earlier.*

## CLINTON AND AMERICAN HEGEMONY

For decades, the contours of the Cold War had largely determined U.S. action abroad. Strategists saw each coup, revolution, and civil war as part of the larger struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. But with the Soviet Union vanquished, the United States was suddenly free of this paradigm, and President Clinton could see international crises in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Africa on their own terms and deal with them accordingly. He envisioned a post-Cold War role in which the United States used its overwhelming military superiority and influence as global policing tools to preserve the peace. This foreign policy strategy had both success and failure.



One notable success was a level of peace in the Middle East. In September 1993, at the White House, Yitzhak Rabin, prime minister of Israel, and Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation

Organization, signed the Oslo Accords, granting some self-rule to Palestinians living in the Israeli-occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and the West

Bank. A year later, the Clinton

administration helped facilitate the second settlement and normalization of relations between Israel and Jordan.

As a small measure of stability was brought to the Middle East, violence erupted in the Balkans. The Communist country of Yugoslavia consisted of six provinces: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Each was occupied by a number of ethnic groups, some of which shared a history of hostile relations. In May 1980, the leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, died. Without him to hold the country together, ethnic tensions increased, and this, along with the breakdown of Communism elsewhere in Europe, led to the breakup of Yugoslavia. In 1991, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia declared their independence. In 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina did as well. Only Serbia and Montenegro remained united as the Serbian-dominated Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Almost immediately, ethnic tensions within Bosnia and Herzegovina escalated into war when Yugoslavian Serbs aided Bosnian Serbs who did not wish to live in an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina. These Bosnian Serbs proclaimed the existence of autonomous Serbian regions within the country and attacked Bosnian Muslims and Croats. During the conflict, the Serbs engaged in genocide, described by some as “ethnic cleansing.” The brutal



*Yitzhak Rabin (left) and Yasser Arafat (right), shown with Bill Clinton, signed the Oslo Accords at the White House on September 13, 1993. Rabin was killed two years later by an Israeli who opposed the treaty.*



conflict also gave rise to the systematic rape of “enemy” women—generally Muslim women exploited by Serbian military or paramilitary forces. The International Criminal Tribunal of Yugoslavia estimated that between twelve thousand and fifty thousand women were raped during the war.

NATO eventually intervened in 1995, and Clinton agreed to U.S. participation in airstrikes against Bosnian Serbs. That year, the Dayton Accords peace settlement was signed in Dayton, Ohio. Four years later, the United States, acting with other NATO members, launched an air campaign against Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia to stop it from attacking ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Although these attacks were not sanctioned by the UN and were criticized by Russia and China, Yugoslavia withdrew its forces from Kosovo in June 1999.

The use of force did not always bring positive results. For example, back in December 1992, George H. W. Bush had sent a contingent of U.S. soldiers to Somalia, initially to protect and distribute relief supplies to civilians as part of a UN mission. Without an effective Somali government, however, the warlords who controlled different regions often stole food, and their forces endangered the lives of UN workers. In 1993, the Clinton administration sent soldiers to capture one of the warlords, Mohammed Farah Aidid, in the city of Mogadishu. The resulting battle proved disastrous. A Black Hawk helicopter was shot down, and U.S. Army Rangers and members of Delta Force spent hours battling their way through the streets; eighty-four soldiers were wounded and nineteen died. The United States withdrew, leaving Somalia to struggle with its own anarchy.

The sting of the Somalia failure probably contributed to Clinton’s reluctance to send U.S. forces to end the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. In the days of brutal colonial rule, Belgian administrators had given control to Tutsi tribal chiefs, although Hutus constituted a majority of the population. Resentment over ethnic privileges, and the discrimination that began then and continued after independence in 1962, erupted into civil war in 1980. The Hutu majority began to slaughter the Tutsi minority and their Hutu supporters. In 1998,



while visiting Rwanda, Clinton apologized for having done nothing to save the lives of the 800,000 massacred in one hundred days of genocidal slaughter.

## IMPEACHMENT

Public attention was diverted from Clinton's foreign policing actions by a series of scandals that marked the last few years of his presidency. From the moment he entered national politics, his opponents had attempted to tie Clinton and his First Lady to a number of loosely defined improprieties, even accusing him of murdering his childhood friend and Deputy White House Counsel Vince Foster. One accusation the Clintons could not shake was of possible improper involvement in a failed real estate venture associated with the Whitewater Development Corporation in Arkansas in the 1970s and 1980s. Kenneth Starr, a former federal appeals court judge, was appointed to investigate the matter in August 1994.

While Starr was never able to prove any wrongdoing, he soon turned up other allegations and his investigative authority was expanded. In May 1994, Paula Jones, a former Arkansas state employee, filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against Bill Clinton. Starr's office began to investigate this case as well. When a federal court dismissed Jones's suit in 1998, her lawyers promptly appealed the decision and submitted a list of other alleged victims of Clinton's harassment. That list included the name of Monica Lewinsky, a young White House intern. Both Lewinsky and Clinton denied under oath that they had had a sexual relationship. The evidence, however, indicated otherwise, and Starr began to investigate the possibility that Clinton had committed perjury. Again, Clinton denied any relationship and even went on national television to assure the American people that he had never had sexual relations with Lewinsky.



However, after receiving a promise of immunity, Lewinsky turned over to Starr evidence of her affair with Clinton, and the president admitted he had indeed had inappropriate relations with her. He nevertheless denied that he had lied under oath. In September, Starr reported to the House of Representatives that he believed Clinton had committed perjury. Voting along partisan lines, the Republican-dominated House of Representatives sent articles of impeachment to the Senate, charging Clinton with lying under oath and obstructing justice. In February 1998, the Senate voted forty-five to fifty-five on the perjury charge and fifty-fifty on obstruction of justice. Although acquitted, Clinton did become the first president to be found in contempt of court. Nevertheless, although he lost his law license, he remained a popular president and left office at the end of his second term with an approval rating of 66 percent, the highest of any U.S. president.



*Floor proceedings in the U.S. Senate during the 1998 impeachment trial of Bill Clinton, who was narrowly acquitted of both charges.*



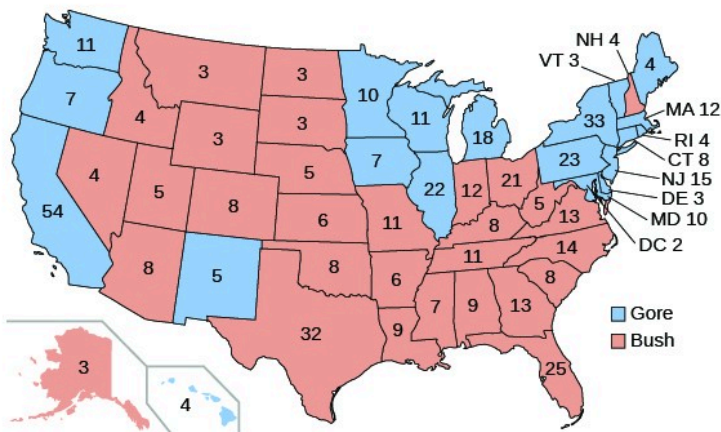
## THE ELECTION OF 2000

Despite Clinton's high approval rating, his vice president and the 2000 Democratic nominee for president, Al Gore, was eager to distance himself from scandal. Unfortunately, he also alienated Clinton loyalists and lost some of the benefit of Clinton's genuine popularity. Gore's desire to emphasize his concern for morality led him to select Connecticut senator Joseph I. Lieberman as his running mate. Lieberman had been quick to denounce Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky. Consumer advocate Ralph Nader ran as the candidate of the Green Party, a party devoted to environmental issues and grassroots activism, and Democrats feared that he would attract votes that Gore might otherwise win.

On the Republican side, where strategists promised to "restore honor and dignity" to the White House, voters were divided between George W. Bush, governor of Texas and eldest son of former president Bush, and John McCain, an Arizona senator and Vietnam War veteran. Bush had the robust support of both the Christian Right and the Republican leadership. His campaign amassed large donations that it used to defeat McCain, himself an outspoken critic of the influence of money in politics. The nomination secured, Bush selected Dick Cheney, part of the Nixon and Ford administrations and secretary of defense under George H. W. Bush, as his running mate.

One hundred million votes were cast in the 2000 election, and Gore topped Bush in the popular vote by 540,000 ballots, or 0.5 percent. The race was so close that news reports declared each candidate the winner at various times during the evening. It all came down to Florida, where early returns called the election in Bush's favor by a mere 527 of 5,825,000 votes. Whoever won Florida would get the state's twenty-five electoral votes and secure the presidency.





*The map shows the results of the 2000 U.S. presidential election. While Bush won in the majority of states, Gore dominated in the more populous ones, winning the popular vote overall.*

Because there seemed to be irregularities in four counties traditionally dominated by Democrats, especially in largely African American precincts, Gore called for a recount of the ballots by hand. Florida's secretary of state, Katherine Harris, set a deadline for the new vote tallies to be submitted, a deadline the counties could not meet. When the Democrats requested an extension, the Florida Supreme Court granted it, but Harris refused to accept the new tallies unless the counties could explain why they had not met the original deadline. When the explanations were submitted, they were rejected. Gore then asked the Florida Supreme Court for an injunction that would prevent Harris from declaring a winner until the recount was finished. On November 26, Harris declared Bush the winner in Florida. Gore protested that not all votes had been recounted by hand. When the Florida Supreme Court ordered the recount to continue, the Republicans appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which decided 5-4 to stop the recount. Bush received Florida's electoral votes and, with a total of 271 votes in the Electoral



College to Gore's 266, became the forty-third president of the United States.

## Section Summary

Bill Clinton's presidency and efforts at remaking the Democratic Party reflect the long-term effects of the Reagan Revolution that preceded him. Reagan benefited from a resurgent conservatism that moved the American political spectrum several degrees to the right. Clinton managed to remake the Democratic Party in ways that effectively institutionalized some of the major tenets of the so-called Reagan Revolution. A "New Democrat," he moved the party significantly to the moderate center and supported the Republican call for law and order, and welfare reform—all while maintaining traditional Democratic commitments to minorities, women, and the disadvantaged, and using the government to stimulate economic growth. Nevertheless, Clinton's legacy was undermined by the shift in the control of Congress to the Republican Party and the loss by his vice president Al Gore in the 2000 presidential election.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1066>



### *Review Question*

1. What were some of the foreign policy successes of the Clinton administration?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Clinton helped to arrange peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, and between Israel and Jordan. During his administration, the United States participated in airstrikes that helped to end Serbian aggression in the region of Kosovo and the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. What were some of the long-term effects of the Reagan Revolution and the rise of conservatives?
2. What events led to the end of the Cold War? What impact did the end of the Cold War have on American politics and foreign policy concerns?
3. Which issues divided Americans most significantly during the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s?



4. In what ways was Bill Clinton a traditional Democrat in the style of Kennedy and Johnson? In what ways was he a conservative, like Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush?
5. Describe American involvement in global affairs during this period. How did American foreign policy change and evolve between 1980 and 2000, in both its focus and its approach?

## *Glossary*

**Contract with America** a list of eight specific legislative reforms or initiatives that Republicans representatives promised to enact if they gained a majority in Congress in the 1994 midterm elections

**gender gap** the statistical differences between the voting preferences of women and men, with women favoring Democratic candidates

**Green Party** a political party founded in 1984 that advocates environmentalism and grassroots democracy



## 230. Video: The Clinton Years, or the 1990s

This video teaches you about the United States as it was in the 1990s. In a previous video, you learned that the old-school Republican George H.W. Bush had lost the 1992 presidential election to a young upstart Democrat from Arkansas named Bill Clinton. Clinton was a bit of a dark horse candidate, having survived a sex scandal during the election, but a third party run by Ross Perot split the vote, and Clinton was inaugurated in 1993. This video will teach you about Clinton's foreign policy agenda, which included NATO action in the Balkans and the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO. This video will also cover some of the domestic successes and failures of the Clinton years, including the failed attempt at healthcare reform, the pretty terrible record on LGBTQ issues, Welfare reform, which got mixed reviews, and the happier issues like the huge improvements in the economy. Also computers. Cheap, effective, readily available computers came along in the 1990s and they kind of changed the world.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=277#oembed-1>







PART XXXIII

# FROM COLD WAR TO CULTURE WARS READER







## 231. Primary Source Media: The Triumph of the Right

Europeans called the Americas “The New World.” But for the millions of Native Americans they encountered, it was anything but. Human beings have lived here for over ten millennia. American history begins with them, the first Americans. But where does their story begin? Native Americans passed stories through the millennia that tell of their creation and values. The arrival of Europeans and resulting Columbian Exchange united two worlds and ten-thousand years of history. Both sides of the world transformed. And neither would ever again be the same. These sources explore the contours of Native American life and the conflicts that resulted from the arrival of Europeans.



## Satellites Imagined in Orbit (1981)



*An artist's concept of various communications satellites in orbit; 11/23/1981.  
Via National Archives (ID: 6364532).*

While Cold War fears still preyed upon Americans, satellite technology and advancements in telecommunications inspired hopes for an interconnected future. Here, an artist in 1981 depicts various satellites in orbit around the Earth.

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## President Reagan and the American Flag (1982)



*President Ronald Reagan, 1982. Via National Archives (198527).*

President Ronald Reagan, a master of the “photo op,” appears here with a row of American flags at his back at a 1982 rally for Senator David Durenberger in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Via National Archives (198527).

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## 232. Primary Source: Ronald Reagan "A Time for Choosing" (1964)

I am going to talk of controversial things. I make no apology for this.

It's time we asked ourselves if we still know the freedoms intended for us by the Founding Fathers. James Madison said, "We base all our experiments on the capacity of mankind for self government."

This idea? that government was beholden to the people, that it had no other source of power is still the newest, most unique idea in all the long history of man's relation to man. This is the issue of this election: Whether we believe in our capacity for self-government or whether we abandon the American Revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capital can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves.

You and I are told we must choose between a left or right, but I suggest there is no such thing as a left or right. There is only an up or down. Up to man's age-old dream-the maximum of individual freedom consistent with order or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism. Regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motives, those who would sacrifice freedom for security have embarked on this downward path. Plutarch warned, "The real destroyer of the liberties of the people is he who spreads among them bounties, donations and benefits."

The Founding Fathers knew a government can't control the economy without controlling people. And they knew when a government sets out to do that, it must use force and coercion to achieve its purpose. So we have come to a time for choosing.

Public servants say, always with the best of intentions, "What greater service we could render if only we had a little more money



and a little more power.” But the truth is that outside of its legitimate function, government does nothing as well or as economically as the private sector.

Yet any time you and I question the schemes of the do-gooders, we’re denounced as being opposed to their humanitarian goals. It seems impossible to legitimately debate their solutions with the assumption that all of us share the desire to help the less fortunate. They tell us we’re always “against,” never “for” anything.

We are for a provision that destitution should not follow unemployment by reason of old age, and to that end we have accepted Social Security as a step toward meeting the problem. However, we are against those entrusted with this program when they practice deception regarding its fiscal shortcomings, when they charge that any criticism of the program means that we want to end payments....

We are for aiding our allies by sharing our material blessings with nations which share our fundamental beliefs, but we are against doling out money government to government, creating bureaucracy, if not socialism, all over the world.

We need true tax reform that will at least make a start toward I restoring for our children the American Dream that wealth is denied to no one, that each individual has the right to fly as high as his strength and ability will take him.... But we can not have such reform while our tax policy is engineered by people who view the tax as a means of achieving changes in our social structure....

Have we the courage and the will to face up to the immorality and discrimination of the progressive tax, and demand a return to traditional proportionate taxation? . . . Today in our country the tax collector’s share is 37 cents of -very dollar earned. Freedom has never been so fragile, so close to slipping from our grasp.

Are you willing to spend time studying the issues, making yourself aware, and then conveying that information to family and friends? Will you resist the temptation to get a government handout for your community? Realize that the doctor’s fight against socialized medicine is your fight. We can’t socialize the doctors without



socializing the patients. Recognize that government invasion of public power is eventually an assault upon your own business. If some among you fear taking a stand because you are afraid of reprisals from customers, clients, or even government, recognize that you are just feeding the crocodile hoping he'll eat you last.

If all of this seems like a great deal of trouble, think what's at stake. We are faced with the most evil enemy mankind has known in his long climb from the swamp to the stars. There can be no security anywhere in the free world if there is no fiscal and economic stability within the United States. Those who ask us to trade our freedom for the soup kitchen of the welfare state are architects of a policy of accommodation.

They say the world has become too complex for simple answers. They are wrong. There are no easy answers, but there are simple answers. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right. Winston Churchill said that "the destiny of man is not measured by material computation. When great forces are on the move in the world, we learn we are spirits-not animals." And he said, "There is something going on in time and space, and beyond time and space, which, whether we like it or not, spells duty."

You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We will preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we will sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children and our children's children say of us we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done.

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source. No permission is granted for commercial use of the Sourcebook.

(c) Paul Halsall May 1998



## 233. Primary Source: First Inaugural Address of Ronald Reagan (1981)

*Ronald Reagan, a former actor, corporate spokesperson, and California governor, won the presidency in 1980 with a potent mix of personal charisma and conservative politics. In his first inaugural address, Reagan famously declared that “government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.”*

... These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed- income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people.

Idle industries have cast workers into unemployment, causing human misery and personal indignity. Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity.

But great as our tax burden is, it has not kept pace with public spending. For decades, we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children's future for the temporary convenience of the present. To continue this long trend is to guarantee tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic upheavals.

You and I, as individuals, can, by borrowing, live beyond our means, but for only a limited period of time. Why, then, should we think that collectively, as a nation, we are not bound by that same limitation?

We must act today in order to preserve tomorrow. And let there



be no misunderstanding—we are going to begin to act, beginning today.

The economic ills we suffer have come upon us over several decades. They will not go away in days, weeks, or months, but they will go away. They will go away because we, as Americans, have the capacity now, as we have had in the past, to do whatever needs to be done to preserve this last and greatest bastion of freedom.

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.

From time to time, we have been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. But if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else? All of us together, in and out of government, must bear the burden. The solutions we seek must be equitable, with no one group singled out to pay a higher price.

...

So, as we begin, let us take inventory. We are a nation that has a government—not the other way around. And this makes us special among the nations of the Earth. Our Government has no power except that granted it by the people. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed.

It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the States or to the people. All of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the States; the States created the Federal Government.

...

If we look to the answer as to why, for so many years, we achieved so much, prospered as no other people on Earth, it was because here, in this land, we unleashed the energy and individual genius of man to a greater extent than has ever been done before. Freedom



and the dignity of the individual have been more available and assured here than in any other place on Earth. The price for this freedom at times has been high, but we have never been unwilling to pay that price.

It is no coincidence that our present troubles parallel and are proportionate to the intervention and intrusion in our lives that result from unnecessary and excessive growth of government. It is time for us to realize that we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams. We are not, as some would have us believe, doomed to an inevitable decline. I do not believe in a fate that will all on us no matter what we do. I do believe in a fate that will fall on us if we do nothing. So, with all the creative energy at our command, let us begin an era of national renewal. Let us renew our determination, our courage, and our strength. And let us renew our faith and our hope.

...

Well, I believe we, the Americans of today, are ready to act worthy of ourselves, ready to do what must be done to ensure happiness and liberty for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

And as we renew ourselves here in our own land, we will be seen as having greater strength throughout the world. We will again be the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom.

[Ronald Reagan: "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1981. Available online via The Avalon Project ([http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/reagan1.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/reagan1.asp)).]



## 234. Primary Source: Jerry Falwell on the “Homosexual Revolution” (1981)

*“Letter from Jerry Falwell on his opposition to homosexuality and asking for support in keeping his “Old-Time Gospel Hour” television program on the air. Falwell writes that the Old Time Gospel Hour “is one of the few major ministries in America crying out against militant homosexuals” (p. 1). The letter is printed on what appears to be lined yellow notepad paper.”*

I refuse to stop speaking out against the sin of homosexuality.

With God as my witness, I pledge that I'll continue to expose the sin of homosexuality to the people of this nation. I believe that the massive homosexual revolution is always a symptom of a nation coming under the judgement of God.

Romans 1:24-28, Paul clearly condemns the sin of homosexuality. In verse 28, when a nation refuses to listen to God's standards of morality, the bible declares, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”

Recently 250,000 homosexuals marched in the streets of San Francisco. Several weeks ago 75,000 more were marching in the streets of Los Angeles. Homosexuals are on the march in this country.

Please remember, that homosexuals do not reproduce! They recruit!

And, many of them are out after my children and your children.

...

And if you will support me with your prayers and offerings, I will continue speaking out—no matter what the opposition says.

You may be sure—militant gays are doing everything they can to silence me!



...

Recently, a homosexual organization came to Lynchburg to demonstrate against me. They held demonstrations outside our offices. They called themselves the “Oral Majority.”

In almost every one of my “I Love America” rallies on the state capitol steps, large groups of homosexuals come and demonstrate against me. They shout obscenities into the air. They lift signs and placards with vulgar words on them.

It sounds a great deal like Sodom and Gomorrah. As I interpret Scripture, when a society becomes like Sodom and Gomorrah, it is not far from destruction.

Some of these people are dangerous.

And they are putting pressure on the networks and local television stations. A recent *TV Guide* told the story of how a homosexual organization censors a great deal of the content of network television programming regarding homosexuality.

Can you believe this? How could the networks grant homosexuals the privilege of censoring what goes on national and prime time television? They certainly do not allow Christian organizations any such privilege. We have never asked for such a privilege.

...

I do not want to frighten the children of America regarding the goals of militant homosexuals in this country. They do demonstrate in the streets. They do have plans to create a unisexual society in this country. They do want to transform America into a modern Sodom and Gomorrah.

...

Will you help me continue to cry out against this sin of homosexuality? ...

...

In Christ,  
Jerry Falwell

1. Let me repeat, a massive homosexual revolution can bring the judgement of God upon this nation. Our children must not be



recruited to a profane lifestyle.”

[Source: Falwell, Jerry. *[Letter from Jerry Falwell on keeping Old Time Gospel Hour on air]*, Letter, August 13, 1981. Available online via The Portal to Texas History (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc177440/>).]



## 235. Primary Source: Statements of AIDS Patients (1983)

*HIV/AIDS confronted Americans in the 1980s. The disease was first associated with gay men (it was initially called Gay-Related Immune Disease, or GRID) and AIDS sufferers fought for recognition of the disease's magnitude, petitioned for research funds, and battled against popular stigma associated with the disease.*

Mrs. BOXER. I wanted to ask the panel, if anyone can address this, if you feel that you are given enough information about the disease, and then the second part, do you think that the gay communities throughout the country, from your knowledge, are being given enough information so that they can perhaps make some changes in their life to try and avoid it ...

Mr. LYON. There is no new information. Every bit of information that has come out has been very widely disseminated. People are hungry for information. The city government, the public health officials, the city of San Francisco have, as far as I am concerned, gone overboard and made information available. Public forums have been held. Many of the health care facilities have asked patients and health care officials to come and explain, "tell us everything you know, give us the information in order that we can dispel many of the fears."

The main problem is there is no new information. It is a rehash over and over and over again of the same information.

Mr. FERRARA. I agree with Mr. Lyon. I believe the problem is more misinformation than lack of information.

I do my best to do as much as I can to dispel misconceptions about the disease. People don't have to be afraid to be in the same room with us, people don't have to be afraid to swim in the same



swimming pool. I believe that gay organizations across the country should be given more information concerning guidelines that can be disseminated to the gay community in terms of—in terms of ways that gay men can protect themselves from the disease, rather than causing the paranoia and hysteria that the information that has been disseminated so far caused.

Mrs. BOXER. Do I have time for one last question? Do you find that you have a support system out in your communities to help you get through this experience? . . .

Mr. CALLEN. I cofounded a support group called Gay Men With AIDS, which is run by those of us gay men who have been diagnosed with the syndrome. It has made the difference for me. It is really what relieved some of the fear on a day-to-day basis. I saw other people fighting for their lives. We share information, we talk about doctors, hospitals, and treatments. For me AIDS was another closet, was another coming out.

When I was first diagnosed there wasn't the terrible stigma that is attached to being diagnosed with AIDS now. So it never occurred to me not to identify myself to my friends as having the disease. But since that time, because of a lot of the misinformation and often hysterical coverage in the media, I know a number of people who refuse to identify themselves to their community, even to their family, as having the syndrome, because there is such tremendous stigma and isolation attached to it. ...

...

Mr. CRAIG. I have a couple of questions, I think reflective of how the gay community is responding. You mentioned earlier, some fears and concerns on your part and the community's part. Has there been, or is there now, because of the fear of this disease, an exodus if you will, from the areas or the communities Mr. McCandless talked about, New York and San Francisco specifically, where the larger number of cases are reported. In places where it seems to be relatively well understood that there are large populations in the gay community—have people left the community out of fear? Are they leaving? . . .



Mr. CALLEN. Many of us go into these specific cities to escape the prejudice that we experience as gay and lesbian people. So where else are we going to go? Also, as was mentioned, our support systems are in these cities—our jobs, where we will get our insurance. For most people there is not the option to go anywhere else. If you are an openly gay person—you have to—most gay people I know tend to congregate in large urban centers, because there is perceived to be greater tolerance. ...

...

Mr. WEISS. ... If there is anything that you want this committee or the Congress or the American people to know about AIDS generally or a particular situation, now is the time to do it. Any and all of you are welcome at this point to make closing comments. Mr. Lyon?

Mr. LYON. I came here today with the hope that this subcommittee would be able to do everything possible to halt the spread of this disease. AIDS has been called the number one health priority of the Nation. It certainly is my No. 1 priority.

I came here today with the hope that this administration would do everything possible, make every resource available—there is no reason this disease cannot be conquered. We do not need infighting, this is not a political issue. This is a health issue. This is not a gay issue. This is a human issue. And I do not intend to be defeated by it. I came here today in the hope that my epitaph would not read that I died of red tape.

...

Mr. CALLEN. Well, as a person with AIDS, I suffer in two basic ways. I suffer from the disease itself, and I suffer from the stigma attached to being diagnosed with this disease. The end to both aspects of this suffering will come only if the vast resources of the Federal Government are turned on this problem.

We need answers to the pressing questions of cause, cure, and contagion. And so the bottom line is, as it almost always is, money. But in order to make that money accomplish something, it has to be well spent. ... I have yet to see a comprehensive plan of attack emerge from the Government. What do they plan to do, in what



order? Is there a master plan for research which is guiding their funding requests? Are they developing an animal model? What treatment options are being pursued? Which have been discarded? Why? ...

...

[Source: Congress, House, Committee on Government Operations, *Federal Response to AIDS: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations*, House of Representatives, 98th Cong., 1st Sess., August 1 and 2, 1983 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983). Available online via History Matters (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6894/>).]



## 236. Primary Source: Statements from The Parents Music Resource Center (1985)

*In 1985, the Senate held hearings on explicit music. The Parents Music Resource Center (1985), founded by the wives of prominent politicians in Washington D.C., publicly denounced lyrics, album covers, and music videos dealing with sex, violence, and drug use. The PRMC pressured music publishers and retailers and singled out artists such as Judas Priest, Prince, AC/DC, Madonna, and Black Sabbath, and Cyndi Lauper. The following is extracted from statements by Susan Baker, the wife of then-Treasury Secretary James Baker, and Tipper Gore, wife of Senator and later Vice President Al Gore, in support of warning labels on music packaging.*

Mrs. BAKER. The Parents Music Resource Center was organized in May of this year by mothers of young children who are very concerned by the growing trend in music toward lyrics that are sexually explicit, excessively violent, or glorify the use of drugs and alcohol.

Our primary purpose is to educate and inform parents about this alarming trend as well as to ask the industry to exercise self-restraint.

It is no secret that today's rock music is a very important part of adolescence and teenagers' lives. It always has been, and we don't question their right to have their own music. We think that is important. They use it to identify and give expression to their feelings, their problems, their joys, sorrows, loves, and values. It wakes them up in the morning and it is in the background as they get dressed for school. It is played on the bus. It is listened to in the cafeteria during lunch. It is played as they do their homework. They



even watch it on MTV now. It is danced to at parties, and puts them to sleep at night.

Because anything that we are exposed to that much has some influence on us, we believe that the music industry has a special responsibility as the message of songs goes from the suggestive to the blatantly explicit.

... While a few outrageous recordings have always existed in the past, the proliferation of songs glorifying rape, sadomasochism, incest, the occult, and suicide by a growing number of bands illustrates this escalating trend that is alarming.

Some have suggested that the records in question are only a minute element in this music. However, these records are not few, and have sold millions of copies, like Prince's "Darling Nikki," about masturbation, sold over 10 million copies. Judas Priest, the one about forced oral sex at gunpoint, has sold over 2 million copies. Quiet Riot, "Metal Health," has songs about explicit sex, over 5 million copies. Motley Crue, "Shout at the Devil," which contains violence and brutality to women, over 2 million copies.

Some say there is no cause for concern. We believe there is. Teen pregnancies and teenage suicide rates are at epidemic proportions today. The Noedeker Report states that in the United States of America we have the highest teen pregnancy rate of any developed country: 96 out of 1,000 teenage girls become pregnant.

Rape is up 7 percent in the latest statistics, and the suicide rates of youth between 16 and 24 has gone up 300 percent in the last three decades while the adult level has remained the same.

There certainly are many causes for these ills in our society, but it is our contention that the pervasive messages aimed at children which promote and glorify suicide, rape, sadomasochism, and so on, have to be numbered among the contributing factors.

Some rock artists actually seem to encourage teen suicide. Ozzie [sic] Osbourne sings "Suicide Solution." Blue Oyster Cult sings "Don't Fear the Reaper." AC/DC sings "Shoot to Thrill." Just last week in Centerpoint, a small Texas town, a young man took his life while listening to the music of AC/DC. He was not the first.



...

Mrs. GORE. We are asking the recording industry to voluntarily assist parents who are concerned by placing a warning label on music products inappropriate for younger children due to explicit sexual or violent lyrics.

The Parents Music Resource Center originally proposed a categorical rating system for explicit material. After many discussions with the record industry, we recognize some of the logistical and economic problems, and have adjusted our original suggestions accordingly. We now propose one generic warning label to inform consumers in the marketplace about lyric content. The labels would apply to all music.

We have asked the record companies to voluntarily label their own products and assume responsibility for making those judgments. We ask the record industry to appoint a one-time panel to recommend a uniform set of criteria which could serve as a policy guide for the individual companies. Those individual recording companies would then in good faith agree to adhere to this standard, and make decisions internally about which records should be labeled according to the industry criteria.

...

The issue here is larger than violent and sexually explicit lyrics. It is one of ideas and ideal freedoms and responsibility in our society. Clearly, there is a tension here, and in a free society there always will be. We are simply asking that these corporate and artistic rights be exercised with responsibility, with sensitivity, and some measure of self-restraint, especially since young minds are at stake. We are talking about preteenagers and young teenagers having access to this material. That is our point of departure and our concern.

[Source: Hearing Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, *Contents of Music and the Lyrics of Records*, 99<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, September 19, 1985, 10-14.]



## 237. Primary Source: Pat Buchanan on the Culture War (1992)

*Pat Buchanan was a conservative journalist who worked in the Nixon and Reagan administrations before running for the Republican presidential nomination in 1992. Although he lost the nomination to George H.W. Bush, he was invited to speak at that year's Republican National Convention, where he delivered a fiery address criticizing liberals and declaring a "culture war" at the heart of American life.*

My friends, like many of you, last month I watched that giant masquerade ball up at Madison Square Garden, where 20,000 liberals and radicals came dressed up as moderates and centrists in the greatest single exhibition of cross-dressing in American political history.

You know, one by one the prophets of doom appeared at the podium. The Reagan decade, they moaned, was a terrible time in America, and they said the only way to prevent worse times is to turn our country's fate and our country's future over to the Party that gave us McGovern, Mondale, Carter, and Michael Dukakis. Where do they find these leaders? No way, my friends. The American people are not going to go back to the discredited liberalism of the 1960s and the failed liberalism of the 1970s, no matter how slick the package in 1992.

...

The presidency, my friends, is also an office that Theodore Roosevelt called America's "bully pulpit." Harry Truman said it was "preeminently a place of moral leadership." George Bush is a defender of right-to-life, and a champion of the Judeo-Christian values and beliefs upon which America was founded.

Mr. Clinton however, has a different agenda. At its top is



unrestricted abortion on demand. When the Irish-Catholic Governor of Pennsylvania, Robert Casey, asked to say a few words on behalf of the 25 million unborn children destroyed since *Roe v Wade*, Bob Casey was told there was no room for him at the podium at Bill Clinton's convention, and no room at the inn. Yet a militant leader of the homosexual rights movement could rise at that same convention and say: "Bill Clinton and Al Gore represent the most pro-lesbian and pro-gay ticket in history." And so they do. Bill Clinton says he supports "school choice"—but only for state-run schools. Parents who send their children to Christian schools, or private schools, or Jewish schools, or Catholic schools, need not apply.

Elect me, and you get "two for the price of one," Mr. Clinton says of his lawyer-spouse. And what does Hillary believe? Well, Hillary believes that 12-year-olds should have the right to sue their parents. And Hillary has compared marriage and the family, as institutions, to slavery and life on an Indian reservation. Well, speak for yourself, Hillary.

This, my friends, is radical feminism. The agenda that Clinton & Clinton would impose on America: abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat units. That's change, all right. But that's not the kind of change America needs. It's not the kind of change America wants. And it's not the kind of change we can abide in a nation we still call "God's country."

...

One year ago I could not have dreamt I would be here tonight. I was just one of many panelists on what President Bush calls "those crazy Sunday talk shows." But I disagreed with the President and so we challenged the President in the Republican primaries, and we fought as best we could. ... Yes, we disagreed with President Bush, but we stand with him for the freedom to choose religious schools, and we stand with him against the amoral idea that gay and lesbian couples should have the same standing in law as married men and women. We stand with President Bush for right-to-life and



for voluntary prayer in the public schools. And we stand against putting our wives and daughters and sisters into combat units of the United States Army. And we also stand with President Bush in favor of the right of small towns and communities to control the raw sewage of pornography that so terribly pollutes our popular culture. We stand with President Bush in favor of federal judges who interpret the law as written, and against would-be Supreme Court justices like Mario Cuomo who think they have a mandate to rewrite the Constitution.

Friends, this election is about more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe and what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself. For this war is for the soul of America. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton & Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side. And so to the Buchanan Brigades out there, we have to come home and stand beside George Bush.

...

Friends, in these wonderful 25 weeks of our campaign, the saddest days were the days of that riot in L.A., the worst riot in American history. But out of that awful tragedy can come a message of hope. Hours after that riot ended, I went down to the Army compound in South Los Angeles, where I met the troopers of the 18th Cavalry who had come to save the city of Los Angeles. An officer of the 18th Cav said, "Mr. Buchanan, I want you to talk to a couple of our troopers. And I went over and I met these young fellows. They couldn't have been 20 years old. They could not have been 20 years old. And they recounted their story.

They had come into Los Angeles late in the evening of the second day, and the rioting was still going on. And two of them walked up a dark street, where the mob had burned and looted every single building on the block but one, a convalescent home for the aged. And the mob was headed in, to ransack and loot the apartments of the terrified old men and women inside. The troopers came up the



street, M-16s at the ready. And the mob threatened and cursed, but the mob retreated because it had met the one thing that could stop it: force, rooted in justice, and backed by moral courage.

Now, "Greater love than this hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend."<sup>1</sup> Here were 19-year-old boys ready to lay down their lives to stop a mob from molesting old people they did not even know. And as those boys took back the streets of Los Angeles, block by block, my friends, we must take back our cities, and take back our culture, and take back our country.

God bless you, and God bless America.

[Source: Buchanan, Patrick J. "Address to the Republican National Convention." August 17, 1992. Houston, TX. Available online via Buchanan.org, <http://buchanan.org/blog/1992-republican-national-convention-speech-148>.]



PART XXXIV

# THE CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY







## 238. Introduction

On the morning of September 11, 2001, hopes that the new century would leave behind the conflicts of the previous one were dashed when two hijacked airliners crashed into the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center. When the first plane struck the north tower, many assumed that the crash was a horrific accident. But then a second plane hit the south tower less than thirty minutes later. People on the

street watched in horror, as some of those trapped in the burning buildings jumped to their deaths and the enormous towers collapsed into dust. In the photo above, the Statue of Liberty appears to look on helplessly, as thick plumes of smoke obscure the Lower Manhattan skyline. The events set in motion by the September 11 attacks would raise fundamental questions about the United States' role in the world, the extent to which privacy should be protected at the cost of security, the definition of exactly who is an American, and the cost of liberty.



*In 2001, almost three thousand people died as a result of the September 11 attacks, when members of the terrorist group al-Qaeda hijacked four planes as part of a coordinated attack on sites in New York City and Washington, DC.*

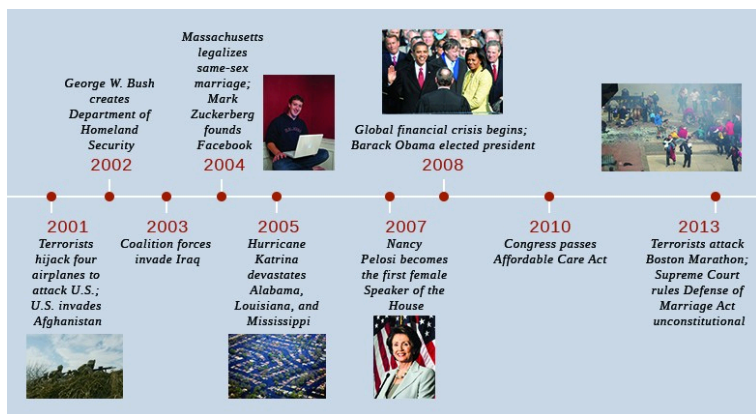


## 239. The War on Terror

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss how the United States responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001
- Explain why the United States went to war against Afghanistan and Iraq
- Describe the treatment of suspected terrorists by U.S. law enforcement agencies and the U.S. military



(credit "2004": modification of work by Elaine and Priscilla Chan; credit "2013": modification of work by Aaron Tang; credit "2001": modification of work by "DVIDSHUB"/Flickr)



As a result of the narrow decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore*, Republican George W. Bush was declared the winner of the 2000 presidential election with a majority in the Electoral College of 271 votes to 266, although he received approximately 540,000 fewer popular votes nationally than his Democratic opponent, Bill Clinton's vice president, Al Gore. Bush had campaigned with a promise of "compassionate conservatism" at home and nonintervention abroad. These platform planks were designed to appeal to those who felt that the Clinton administration's initiatives in the Balkans and Africa had unnecessarily entangled the United States in the conflicts of foreign nations. Bush's 2001 education reform act, dubbed No Child Left Behind, had strong bipartisan support and reflected his domestic interests. But before the president could sign the bill into law, the world changed when terrorists hijacked four American airliners to use them in the deadliest attack on the United States since the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Bush's domestic agenda quickly took a backseat, as the president swiftly changed course from nonintervention in foreign affairs to a "war on terror."

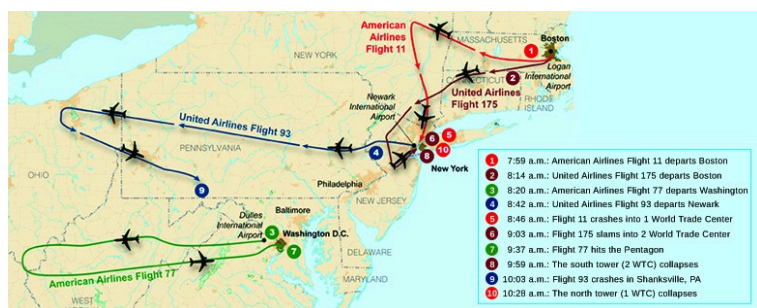
## 9/II

Shortly after takeoff on the morning of September 11, 2001, teams of hijackers from the Islamist terrorist group al-Qaeda seized control of four American airliners. Two of the airplanes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. Morning news programs that were filming the moments after the first impact, then assumed to be an accident, captured and aired live footage of the second plane, as it barreled into the other tower in a flash of fire and smoke. Less than two hours later, the heat from the crash and the explosion of jet fuel caused the upper floors of both buildings to collapse onto the lower floors, reducing both towers



to smoldering rubble. The passengers and crew on both planes, as well as 2,606 people in the two buildings, all died, including 343 New York City firefighters who rushed in to save victims shortly before the towers collapsed.

The third hijacked plane was flown into the Pentagon building in northern Virginia, just outside Washington, DC, killing everyone on board and 125 people on the ground. The fourth plane, also heading towards Washington, crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, when passengers, aware of the other attacks, attempted to storm the cockpit and disarm the hijackers. Everyone on board was killed.



*Three of the four airliners hijacked on September 11, 2001, reached their targets. United 93, presumably on its way to destroy either the Capitol or the White House, was brought down in a field after a struggle between the passengers and the hijackers.*

That evening, President Bush promised the nation that those responsible for the attacks would be brought to justice. Three days later, Congress issued a joint resolution authorizing the president to use all means necessary against the individuals, organizations, or nations involved in the attacks. On September 20, in an address to a joint session of Congress, Bush declared war on terrorism, blamed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden for the attacks, and demanded that the radical Islamic fundamentalists who ruled Afghanistan, the Taliban, turn bin Laden over or face attack by the United States. This speech encapsulated what became known as the Bush



Doctrine, the belief that the United States has the right to protect itself from terrorist acts by engaging in pre-emptive wars or ousting hostile governments in favor of friendly, preferably democratic, regimes.

Read the text of [President Bush's address](#) to Congress declaring a “war on terror.”

World leaders and millions of their citizens expressed support for the United States and condemned the deadly attacks. Russian president Vladimir Putin characterized them as a bold challenge to humanity itself. German chancellor Gerhard Schroder said the events of that day were “not only attacks on the people in the United States, our friends in America, but also against the entire civilized world, against our own freedom, against our own values, values which we share with the American people.” Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and a veteran of several bloody struggles against Israel, was dumbfounded by the news and announced to reporters in Gaza, “We completely condemn this very dangerous attack, and I convey my condolences to the American people, to the American president and to the American administration.

In May 2014, a museum dedicated to the memory of the victims was completed. Watch this [video](#) and learn more about the victims and how the country seeks to remember them.



# GOING TO WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

When it became clear that the mastermind behind the attack was Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi Arabian national who ran his terror network from Afghanistan, the full attention of the United States turned towards Central Asia and the Taliban. Bin Laden had deep roots in Afghanistan. Like many others from around the Islamic world, he had come to the country to oust the Soviet army, which invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Ironically, both bin Laden and the Taliban received material support from the United States at that time. By the late 1980s, the Soviets and the Americans had both left, although bin Laden, by that time the leader of his own terrorist organization, al-Qaeda, remained.

The Taliban refused to turn bin Laden over, and the United States began a bombing campaign in October, allying with the Afghan Northern Alliance, a coalition of tribal leaders opposed to the Taliban.



U.S. air support was soon augmented by ground troops. By November 2001, the Taliban had been ousted from power in

*Marines fight against Taliban forces in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Helmand was a center of Taliban strength. (credit: "DVIDSHUB"/Flickr)*

Afghanistan's capital of Kabul, but bin Laden and his followers had already escaped across the Afghan border to mountain sanctuaries in northern Pakistan.

## IRAQ

At the same time that the U.S. military was taking control of Afghanistan, the Bush administration was looking to a new and



larger war with the country of Iraq. Relations between the United States and Iraq had been strained ever since the Gulf War a decade earlier. Economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations, and American attempts to foster internal revolts against President Saddam Hussein's government, had further tainted the relationship. A faction within the Bush administration, sometimes labeled neoconservatives, believed Iraq's recalcitrance in the face of overwhelming U.S. military superiority represented a dangerous symbol to terrorist groups around the world, recently emboldened by the dramatic success of the al-Qaeda attacks in the United States. Powerful members of this faction, including Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, believed the time to strike Iraq and solve this festering problem was right then, in the wake of 9/11. Others, like Secretary of State Colin Powell, a highly respected veteran of the Vietnam War and former chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were more cautious about initiating combat.

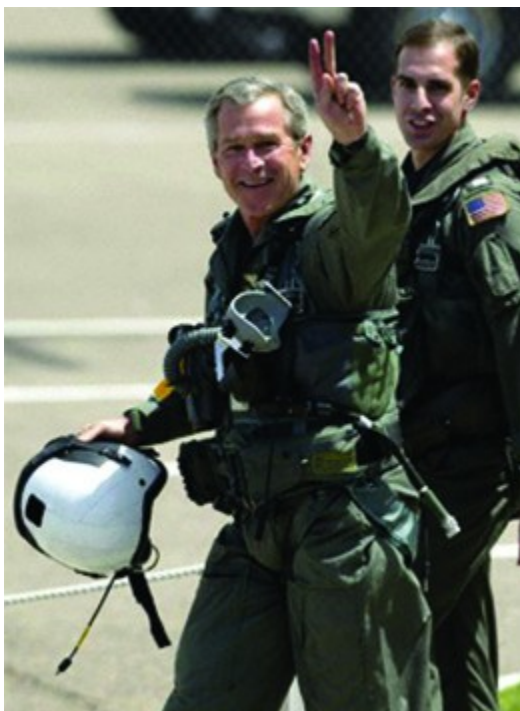
The more militant side won, and the argument for war was gradually laid out for the American people. The immediate impetus to the invasion, it argued, was the fear that Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction (WMDs): nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons capable of wreaking great havoc. Hussein had in fact used WMDs against Iranian forces during his war with Iran in the 1980s, and against the Kurds in northern Iraq in 1988—a time when the United States actively supported the Iraqi dictator. Following the Gulf War, inspectors from the United Nations Special Commission and International Atomic Energy Agency had in fact located and destroyed stockpiles of Iraqi weapons. Those arguing for a new Iraqi invasion insisted, however, that weapons still existed. President Bush himself told the nation in October 2002 that the United States was “facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.” The head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, Hans Blix, dismissed these claims. Blix argued that while Saddam Hussein was not being



entirely forthright, he did not appear to be in possession of WMDs. Despite Blix's findings and his own earlier misgivings, Powell argued in 2003 before the United Nations General Assembly that Hussein had violated UN resolutions. Much of his evidence relied on secret information provided by an informant that was later proven to be false. On March 17, 2003, the United States cut off all relations with Iraq. Two days later, in a coalition with Great Britain, Australia, and Poland, the United States began "Operation Iraqi Freedom" with an invasion of Iraq.

Other arguments supporting the invasion noted the ease with which the operation could be accomplished. In February 2002, some in the Department of Defense were suggesting the war would be "a cakewalk." In November, referencing the short and successful Gulf War of 1990–1991, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld told the American people it was absurd, as some were claiming, that the conflict would degenerate into a long, drawn-out quagmire. "Five days or five weeks or five months, but it certainly isn't going to last any longer than that," he insisted. "It won't be a World War III." And, just days before the start of combat operations in 2003, Vice President Cheney announced that U.S. forces would likely "be greeted as liberators," and the war would be over in "weeks rather than months."





*President Bush gives the victory symbol on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in May 2003, after American troops had completed the capture of Iraq's capitol Baghdad. Yet, by the time the United States finally withdrew its forces from Iraq in 2011, nearly five thousand U.S. soldiers had died.*

Early in the conflict, these predictions seemed to be coming true. The march into Baghdad went fairly smoothly. Soon Americans back home were watching on television as U.S. soldiers and the Iraqi people worked together to topple statues of the deposed leader Hussein around the capital. The reality, however, was far more complex. While American deaths had been few, thousands of Iraqis had died, and the seeds of internal strife and resentment against the United States had been sown. The United States was not prepared for a long period of occupation; it was also not prepared for the



inevitable problems of law and order, or for the violent sectarian conflicts that emerged. Thus, even though Bush proclaimed a U.S. victory in May 2003, on the deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* with the banner “Mission Accomplished” prominently displayed behind him, the celebration proved premature by more than seven years.

## **Lt. General James Conway on the Invasion of Baghdad**

Lt. General James Conway, who commanded the First Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq, answers a reporter’s questions about civilian casualties during the 2003 invasion of Baghdad.

“As a civilian in those early days, one definitely had the sense that the high command had expected something to happen which didn’t. Was that a correct perception?”

—We were told by our intelligence folks that the enemy is carrying civilian clothes in their packs because, as soon as the shooting starts, they’re going put on their civilian clothes and they’re going go home. Well, they put on their civilian clothes, but not to go home. They put on civilian clothes to blend with the civilians and shoot back at us. . . .

“There’s been some criticism of the behavior of the Marines at the Diyala bridge [across the Tigris River into Baghdad] in terms of civilian casualties.”

—Well, after the Third Battalion, Fourth Marines crossed, the resistance was not all gone. . . . They had just fought to take a bridge. They were being counterattacked by enemy forces. Some of the civilian vehicles that wound up with the bullet holes in them contained enemy fighters in uniform with weapons, some of them did not. Again, we’re terribly sorry about the loss of any civilian life where civilians are killed in a battlefield setting. I will guarantee you, it was



not the intent of those Marines to kill civilians. [The civilian casualties happened because the Marines] felt threatened, [and] they were having a tough time distinguishing from an enemy that [is violating] the laws of land warfare by going to civilian clothes, putting his own people at risk. All of those things, I think, [had an] impact [on the behavior of the Marines], and in the end it's very unfortunate that civilians died.

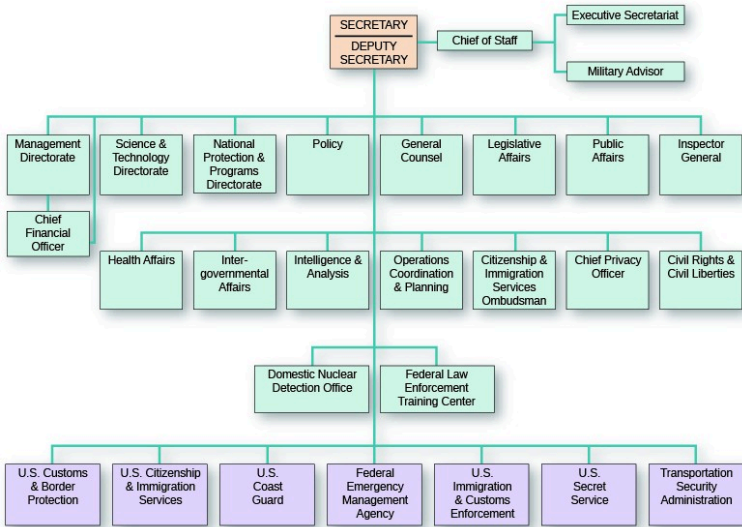
Who in your opinion bears primary responsibility for the deaths of Iraqi civilians?

## DOMESTIC SECURITY

The attacks of September 11 awakened many to the reality that the end of the Cold War did not mean an end to foreign violent threats. Some Americans grew wary of alleged possible enemies in their midst and hate crimes against Muslim Americans—and those thought to be Muslims—surged in the aftermath. Fearing that terrorists might strike within the nation's borders again, and aware of the chronic lack of cooperation among different federal law enforcement agencies, Bush created the Office of Homeland Security in October 2001. The next year, Congress passed the Homeland Security Act, creating the Department of Homeland Security, which centralized control over a number of different government functions in order to better control threats at home. The Bush administration also pushed the USA Patriot Act through Congress, which enabled law enforcement agencies to monitor citizens' e-mails and phone conversations without a warrant.



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY



*The Department of Homeland Security has many duties, including guarding U.S. borders and, as this organizational chart shows, wielding control over the Coast Guard, the Secret Service, U.S. Customs, and a multitude of other law enforcement agencies.*

The Bush administration was fiercely committed to rooting out threats to the United States wherever they originated, and in the weeks after September 11, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) scoured the globe, sweeping up thousands of young Muslim men. Because U.S. law prohibits the use of torture, the CIA transferred some of these prisoners to other nations—a practice known as rendition or extraordinary rendition—where the local authorities can use methods of interrogation not allowed in the United States.

While the CIA operates overseas, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the chief federal law enforcement agency within U.S. national borders. Its activities are limited by, among other things, the Fourth Amendment, which protects citizens against unreasonable searches and seizures. Beginning in 2002,



however, the Bush administration implemented a wide-ranging program of warrantless domestic wiretapping, known as the Terrorist Surveillance Program, by the National Security Agency (NSA). The shaky constitutional basis for this program was ultimately revealed in August 2006, when a federal judge in Detroit ordered the program ended immediately.

The use of unconstitutional wire taps to prosecute the war on terrorism was only one way the new threat challenged authorities in the United States. Another problem was deciding what to do with foreign terrorists captured on the battlefields in Afghanistan and Iraq. In traditional conflicts, where both sides are uniformed combatants, the rules of engagement and the treatment of prisoners of war are clear. But in the new war on terror, extracting intelligence about upcoming attacks became a top priority that superseded human rights and constitutional concerns. For that purpose, the United States began transporting men suspected of being members of al-Qaeda to the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for questioning. The Bush administration labeled the detainees “unlawful combatants,” in an effort to avoid affording them the rights guaranteed to prisoners of war, such as protection from torture, by international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions. Furthermore, the Justice Department argued that the prisoners were unable to sue for their rights in U.S. courts on the grounds that the constitution did not apply to U.S. territories. It was only in 2006 that the Supreme Court ruled in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* that the military tribunals that tried Guantanamo prisoners violated both U.S. federal law and the Geneva Conventions.



## Section Summary

George W. Bush's first term in office began with al-Qaeda's deadly attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Shortly thereafter, the United States found itself at war with Afghanistan, which was accused of harboring the 9/11 mastermind, Osama bin Laden, and his followers. Claiming that Iraq's president Saddam Hussein was building weapons of mass destruction, perhaps with the intent of attacking the United States, the president sent U.S. troops to Iraq as well in 2003. Thousands were killed, and many of the men captured by the United States were imprisoned and sometimes tortured for information. The ease with which Hussein was deposed led the president to declare that the mission in Iraq had been accomplished only a few months after it began. He was, however, mistaken. Meanwhile, the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security and the passage of the Homeland Security Act and USA Patriot Act created new means and levels of surveillance to identify potential threats.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1067>



## *Review Question*

1. In what ways did the U.S. government attempt to deny the rights of prisoners taken in Afghanistan and Iraq?

## *Answer to Review Question*

1. The United States denied the rights of prisoners captured in Afghanistan and Iraq by imprisoning and interrogating them outside of the United States, where they were not protected by U.S. law. The U.S. also classified these prisoners as “unlawful combatants,” so that they would not be entitled to the protections of the Geneva Conventions.

## *Glossary*

**al-Qaeda** a militant Islamist group originally founded by Osama bin Laden

**Bush Doctrine** the belief that the United States has the right to protect itself from terrorist acts by engaging in



pre-emptive wars or ousting hostile governments in favor of friendly, preferably democratic, regimes

**Taliban** a fundamentalist Muslim group that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001

**WMDs** weapons of mass destruction; a class of weapons capable of inflicting massive casualties and physical destruction, such as nuclear bombs or biological and chemical weapons



## 240. The Domestic Mission

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the Bush administration's economic theories and tax policies, and their effects on the American economy
- Explain how the federal government attempted to improve the American public education system
- Describe the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina
- Identify the causes of the Great Recession of 2008 and its effect on the average citizen

By the time George W. Bush became president, the concept of supply-side economics had become an article of faith within the Republican Party. The oft-repeated argument was that tax cuts for the wealthy would allow them to invest more and create jobs for everyone else. This belief in the self-regulatory powers of competition also served as the foundation of Bush's education reform. But by the end of 2008, however, Americans' faith in the dynamics of the free market had been badly shaken. The failure of the homeland security apparatus during Hurricane Katrina and the ongoing challenge of the Iraq War compounded the effects of the bleak economic situation.



## OPENING AND CLOSING THE GAP

The Republican Party platform for the 2000 election offered the American people an opportunity to once again test the rosy expectations of supply-side economics. In 2001, Bush and the Republicans pushed through a \$1.35 trillion tax cut by lowering tax rates across the board but reserving the largest cuts for those in the highest tax brackets. This was in the face of calls by Republicans for a balanced budget, which Bush insisted would happen when the so-called job creators expanded the economy by using their increased income to invest in business.

The cuts were controversial; the rich were getting richer while the middle and lower classes bore a proportionally larger share of the nation's tax burden. Between 1966 and 2001, one-half of the nation's income gained from increased productivity went to the top 0.01 percent of earners. By 2005, dramatic examples of income inequity were increasing; the chief executive of Wal-Mart earned \$15 million that year, roughly 950 times what the company's average associate made. The head of the construction company K. B. Homes made \$150 million, or four thousand times what the average construction worker earned that same year. Even as productivity climbed, workers' incomes stagnated; with a larger share of the wealth, the very rich further solidified their influence on public policy. Left with a smaller share of the economic pie, average workers had fewer resources to improve their lives or contribute to the nation's prosperity by, for example, educating themselves and their children.

Another gap that had been widening for years was the education gap. Some education researchers had argued that American students were being left behind. In 1983, a commission established by Ronald Reagan had published a sobering assessment of the American educational system entitled *A Nation at Risk*. The report argued that American students were more poorly educated than their peers in other countries, especially in areas such as math



and science, and were thus unprepared to compete in the global marketplace. Furthermore, test scores revealed serious educational achievement gaps between white students and students of color. Touting himself as the “education president,” Bush sought to introduce reforms that would close these gaps.

His administration offered two potential solutions to these problems. First, it sought to hold schools accountable for raising standards and enabling students to meet them. The No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in January 2002, erected a system of testing to measure and ultimately improve student performance in reading and math at all schools that received federal funds. Schools whose students performed poorly on the tests would be labeled “in need of improvement.” If poor performance continued, schools could face changes in curricula and teachers, or even the prospect of closure.

The second proposed solution was to give students the opportunity to attend schools with better performance records. Some of these might be charter schools, institutions funded by local tax monies in much the same way as public schools, but able to accept private donations and exempt from some of the rules public schools must follow. During the

administration of George H. W. Bush, the development of charter schools had gathered momentum, and the American Federation of Teachers welcomed them as places to employ innovative teaching methods or offer specialized instruction in particular subjects. President George W. Bush now encouraged states to grant educational funding vouchers to parents, who could use them to pay for a private education for their children if they chose. These



*President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law in January 2002. The act requires school systems to set high standards for students, place “highly qualified” teachers in the classroom, and give military recruiters contact information for students.*



vouchers were funded by tax revenue that would otherwise have gone to public schools.

## THE 2004 ELECTION AND BUSH'S SECOND TERM

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Americans had rallied around their president in a gesture of patriotic loyalty, giving Bush approval ratings of 90 percent. Even following the first few months of the Iraq war, his approval rating remained historically high at approximately 70 percent. But as the 2004 election approached, opposition to the war in Iraq began to grow. While Bush could boast of a number of achievements at home and abroad during his first term, the narrow victory he achieved in 2000 augured poorly for his chances for reelection in 2004 and a successful second term.

### Reelection

As the 2004 campaign ramped up, the president was persistently dogged by rising criticism of the violence of the Iraq war and the fact that his administration's claims of WMDs had been greatly overstated. In the end, no such weapons were ever found. These criticisms were amplified by growing international concern over the treatment of prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp and widespread disgust over the torture conducted by U.S. troops at the prison in Abu Ghraib, Iraq, which surfaced only months before the election.





(a)



(b)

*The first twenty captives were processed at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp on January 11, 2002 (a). From late 2003 to early 2004, prisoners held in Abu Ghraib, Iraq, were tortured and humiliated in a variety of ways (b). U.S. soldiers jumped on and beat them, led them on leashes, made them pose naked, and urinated on them. The release of photographs of the abuse raised an outcry around the world and greatly diminished the already flagging support for American intervention in Iraq.*

In March 2004, an ambush by Iraqi insurgents of a convoy of private military contractors from Blackwater USA in the town of Fallujah west of Baghdad, and the subsequent torture and mutilation of the four captured mercenaries, shocked the American public. But the event also highlighted the growing insurgency against U.S. occupation, the escalating sectarian conflict between the newly empowered Shia Muslims and the minority of the formerly ruling Sunni, and the escalating costs of a war involving a large number of private contractors that, by conservative estimates, approached \$1.7 trillion by 2013. Just as importantly, the American campaign in Iraq had diverted resources from the war against al-Qaeda in



Afghanistan, where U.S. troops were no closer to capturing Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks.

With two hot wars overseas, one of which appeared to be spiraling out of control, the Democrats nominated a decorated Vietnam War veteran, Massachusetts senator John Kerry, to challenge Bush for the presidency. As someone with combat experience, three Purple Hearts, and a foreign policy background, Kerry seemed like the right challenger in a time of war. But



*John Kerry served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War and represented Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate from 1985 to 2013. Here he greets sailors from the USS Sampson. Kerry was sworn in as President Obama's Secretary of State in 2013.*

his record of support for the invasion of Iraq made his criticism of the incumbent less compelling and earned him the byname “Waffler” from Republicans. The Bush campaign also sought to characterize Kerry as an elitist out of touch with regular Americans—Kerry had studied overseas, spoke fluent French, and married a wealthy foreign-born heiress. Republican supporters also unleashed an attack on Kerry’s Vietnam War record, falsely claiming he had lied about his experience and fraudulently received his medals. Kerry’s reluctance to embrace his past leadership of Vietnam Veterans Against the War weakened the enthusiasm of antiwar Americans while opening him up to criticisms from veterans groups. This combination compromised the impact of his challenge to the incumbent in a time of war.

Urged by the Republican Party to “stay the course” with Bush, voters listened. Bush won another narrow victory, and the Republican Party did well overall, picking up four seats in the Senate and increasing its majority there to fifty-five. In the House, the Republican Party gained three seats, adding to its majority there as well. Across the nation, most governorships also went to Republicans, and Republicans dominated many state legislatures.



Despite a narrow win, the president made a bold declaration in his first news conference following the election. “I earned capital in this campaign, political capital, and now I intend to spend it.” The policies on which he chose to spend this political capital included the partial privatization of Social Security and new limits on court-awarded damages in medical malpractice lawsuits. In foreign affairs, Bush promised that the United States would work towards “ending tyranny in the world.” But at home and abroad, the president achieved few of his second-term goals. Instead, his second term in office became associated with the persistent challenge of pacifying Iraq, the failure of the homeland security apparatus during Hurricane Katrina, and the most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression.

## A Failed Domestic Agenda

The Bush administration had planned a series of free-market reforms, but corruption, scandals, and Democrats in Congress made these goals hard to accomplish. Plans to convert Social Security into a private-market mechanism relied on the claim that demographic trends would eventually make the system unaffordable for the shrinking number of young workers, but critics countered that this was easily fixed. Privatization, on the other hand, threatened to derail the mission of the New Deal welfare agency and turn it into a fee generator for stock brokers and Wall Street financiers. Similarly unpopular was the attempt to abolish the estate tax. Labeled the “death tax” by its critics, its abolishment would have benefitted only the wealthiest 1 percent. As a result of the 2003 tax cuts, the growing federal deficit did not help make the case for Republicans.

The nation faced another policy crisis when the Republican-dominated House of Representatives approved a bill making the undocumented status of millions of immigrants a felony and criminalizing the act of employing or knowingly aiding illegal



immigrants. In response, millions of illegal and legal immigrants, along with other critics of the bill, took to the streets in protest. What they saw as the civil rights challenge of their generation, conservatives read as a dangerous challenge to law and national security. Congress eventually agreed on a massive build-up of the U.S. Border Patrol and the construction of a seven-hundred-mile-long fence along the border with Mexico, but the deep divisions over immigration and the status of up to twelve million undocumented immigrants remained unresolved.

## Hurricane Katrina

One event highlighted the nation's economic inequality and racial divisions, as well as the Bush administration's difficulty in addressing them effectively. On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina came ashore and devastated coastal stretches of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The city of New Orleans, no stranger to hurricanes and floods, suffered heavy damage



*Large portions of the city of New Orleans were flooded during Hurricane Katrina. Although most of the city's population managed to evacuate in time, its poorest residents were left behind.*

when the levees, embankments designed to protect against flooding, failed during the storm surge, as the Army Corps of Engineers had warned they might. The flooding killed some fifteen hundred people and so overwhelmed parts of the city that tens of thousands more were trapped and unable to evacuate. Thousands who were elderly, ill, or too poor to own a car followed the mayor's directions and sought refuge at the Superdome, which lacked



adequate food, water, and sanitation. Public services collapsed under the weight of the crisis.

See pictures of the aftermath of [Hurricane Katrina](#) and read and view accounts of survivors of the disaster.

Although the U.S. Coast Guard managed to rescue more than thirty-five thousand people from the stricken city, the response by other federal bodies was less effective. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), an agency charged with assisting state and local governments in times of natural disaster, proved inept at coordinating different agencies and utilizing the rescue infrastructure at its disposal. Critics argued that FEMA was to blame and that its director, Michael D. Brown, a Bush friend and appointee with no background in emergency management, was an example of cronyism at its worst. The failures of FEMA were particularly harmful for an administration that had made “homeland security” its top priority. Supporters of the president, however, argued that the scale of the disaster was such that no amount of preparedness or competence could have allowed federal agencies to cope.

While there was plenty of blame to go around—at the city, state, and national levels—FEMA and the Bush administration got the lion’s share. Even when the president attempted to demonstrate his concern with a personal appearance, the tactic largely backfired. Photographs of him looking down on a flooded New Orleans from the comfort of Air Force One only reinforced the impression of a president detached from the problems of everyday people. Despite his attempts to give an uplifting speech from Jackson Square, he was unable to shake this characterization, and it underscored the disappointments of his second term. On the eve of the 2006 midterm elections, President Bush’s popularity had reached a new low, as a result of the war in Iraq and Hurricane Katrina, and a growing number of Americans feared that his party’s economic



policy benefitted the wealthy first and foremost. Young voters, non-white Americans, and women favored the Democratic ticket by large margins. The elections handed Democrats control of the Senate and House for the first time since 1994, and, in January 2007, California representative Nancy Pelosi became the first female Speaker of the House in the nation's history.

## THE GREAT RECESSION

For most Americans, the millennium had started with economic woes. In March 2001, the U.S. stock market had taken a sharp drop, and the ensuing recession triggered the loss of millions of jobs over the next two years. In response, the Federal Reserve Board cut interest rates to historic lows to encourage consumer spending. By 2002, the economy seemed to be stabilizing somewhat, but few of the manufacturing jobs lost were restored to the national economy. Instead, the “outsourcing” of jobs to China and India became an increasing concern, along with a surge in corporate scandals. After years of reaping tremendous profits in the deregulated energy markets, Houston-based Enron imploded in 2003 over allegations of massive accounting fraud. Its top executives, Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling, received long prison sentences, but their activities were illustrative of a larger trend in the nation's corporate culture that embroiled reputable companies like JP Morgan Chase and the accounting firm Arthur Anderson. In 2003, Bernard Ebbers, the CEO of communications giant WorldCom, was discovered to have inflated his company's assets by as much as \$11 billion, making it the largest accounting scandal in the nation's history. Only five years later, however, Bernard Madoff's Ponzi scheme would reveal even deeper cracks in the nation's financial economy.



## Banks Gone Wild

Notwithstanding economic growth in the 1990s and steadily increasing productivity, wages had remained largely flat relative to inflation since the end of the 1970s; despite the mild recovery, they remained so. To compensate, many consumers were buying on credit, and with interest rates low, financial institutions were eager to oblige them. By 2008, credit card debt had risen to over \$1 trillion. More importantly, banks were making high-risk, high-interest mortgage loans called subprime mortgages to consumers who often misunderstood their complex terms and lacked the ability to make the required payments.

These subprime loans had a devastating impact on the larger economy. In the past, a prospective home buyer went to a local bank for a mortgage loan. Because the bank expected to make a profit in the form of interest charged on the loan, it carefully vetted buyers for their ability to repay. Changes in finance and banking laws in the 1990s and early 2000s, however, allowed lending institutions to securitize their mortgage loans and sell them as bonds, thus separating the financial interests of the lender from the ability of the borrower to repay, and making highly risky loans more attractive to lenders. In other words, banks could afford to make bad loans, because they could sell them and not suffer the financial consequences when borrowers failed to repay.

Once they had purchased the loans, larger investment banks bundled them into huge packages known as collateralized debt obligations (CDOs) and sold them to investors around the world. Even though CDOs consisted of subprime mortgages, credit card debt, and other risky investments, credit ratings agencies had a financial incentive to rate them as very safe. Making matters worse, financial institutions created instruments called credit default swaps, which were essentially a form of insurance on investments. If the investment lost money, the investors would be compensated. This system, sometimes referred to as the securitization food chain,



greatly swelled the housing loan market, especially the market for subprime mortgages, because these loans carried higher interest rates. The result was a housing bubble, in which the value of homes rose year after year based on the ease with which people now could buy them.

## **Banks Gone Broke**

When the real estate market stalled after reaching a peak in 2007, the house of cards built by the country's largest financial institutions came tumbling down. People began to default on their loans, and more than one hundred mortgage lenders went out of business. American International Group (AIG), a multinational insurance company that had insured many of the investments, faced collapse. Other large financial institutions, which had once been prevented by federal regulations from engaging in risky investment practices, found themselves in danger, as they either were besieged by demands for payment or found their demands on their own insurers unmet. The prestigious investment firm Lehman Brothers was completely wiped out in September 2008. Some endangered companies, like Wall Street giant Merrill Lynch, sold themselves to other financial institutions to survive. A financial panic ensued that revealed other fraudulent schemes built on CDOs. The biggest among them was a pyramid scheme organized by the New York financier Bernard Madoff, who had defrauded his investors by at least \$18 billion.

Realizing that the failure of major financial institutions could result in the collapse of the entire U.S. economy, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, authorized a bailout of the Wall Street firm Bear Stearns, although months later, the financial services firm Lehman Brothers was allowed to file for the largest bankruptcy in the nation's history. Members of Congress met with Bernanke and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson in



September 2008, to find a way to head off the crisis. They agreed to use \$700 billion in federal funds to bail out the troubled institutions, and Congress subsequently passed the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, creating the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). One important element of this program was aid to the auto industry: The Bush administration responded to their appeal with an emergency loan of \$17.4 billion—to be executed by his successor after the November election—to stave off the industry's collapse.

The actions of the Federal Reserve, Congress, and the president prevented the complete disintegration of the nation's financial sector and warded off a scenario like that of the Great Depression. However, the bailouts could not prevent a severe recession in the U.S. and world economy. As people lost faith in the economy, stock prices fell by 45 percent. Unable to receive credit from now-wary banks, smaller businesses found that they could not pay suppliers or employees. With houses at record prices and growing economic uncertainty, people stopped buying new homes. As the value of homes decreased, owners were unable to borrow against them to pay off other obligations, such as credit card debt or car loans. More importantly, millions of homeowners who had expected to sell their houses at a profit and pay off their adjustable-rate mortgages were now stuck in houses with values shrinking below their purchasing price and forced to make mortgage payments they could no longer afford.

Without access to credit, consumer spending declined. Some European nations had suffered similar speculation bubbles in housing, but all had bought into the mortgage securities market and suffered the losses of assets, jobs, and demand as a result. International trade slowed, hurting many American businesses. As the Great Recession of 2008 deepened, the situation of ordinary citizens became worse. During the last four months of 2008, one million American workers lost their jobs, and during 2009, another three million found themselves out of work. Under such circumstances, many resented the expensive federal bailout of banks and investment firms. It seemed as if the wealthiest were



being rescued by the taxpayer from the consequences of their imprudent and even corrupt practices.

## Section Summary

When George W. Bush took office in January 2001, he was committed to a Republican agenda. He cut tax rates for the rich and tried to limit the role of government in people's lives, in part by providing students with vouchers to attend charter and private schools, and encouraging religious organizations to provide social services instead of the government. While his tax cuts pushed the United States into a chronically large federal deficit, many of his supply-side economic reforms stalled during his second term. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina underscored the limited capacities of the federal government under Bush to assure homeland security. In combination with increasing discontent over the Iraq War, these events handed Democrats a majority in both houses in 2006. Largely as a result of a deregulated bond market and dubious innovations in home mortgages, the nation reached the pinnacle of a real estate boom in 2007. The threatened collapse of the nations' banks and investment houses required the administration to extend aid to the financial sector. Many resented this bailout of the rich, as ordinary citizens lost jobs and homes in the Great Recession of 2008.



### *Review Question*

1. What are the pros and cons of school vouchers?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. Giving vouchers to public school students enables them to pay to attend better-performing charter or private schools. However, school vouchers take money and good students away from public schools, making it more difficult for those schools to improve.

### *Glossary*

**charter schools** elementary and secondary schools that, although funded by taxpayer money, are allowed to operate independently from some rules and regulations governing public schools

**credit default swaps** financial instruments that pay buyers even if a purchased loan defaults; a form of insurance for risky loans



**Great Recession** the economic recession that began in 2008, following the collapse of the housing boom, and was driven by risky and misleading subprime mortgages and a deregulated bond market

**subprime mortgage** a type of mortgage offered to borrowers with lower credit ratings; subprime loans feature interest rates that are higher (often adjustable) than conventional mortgages to compensate the bank for the increased risk of default



## 24I. Video: Terrorism, War, and Bush

This video teaches you about the tumultuous 2000s in the United States of America, mainly the 2000s that coincide with the presidency of George W. Bush. From the controversial election in 2000, to the events of 9/11 and Bush's prosecution of the War on Terror, the George W. Bush presidency was an eventful one. You will learn about Bush's domestic policies like tax cutting, education reform, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The event that came to pass during Bush's presidency are still very much affecting the United States and the world today.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=290#oembed-1>



## 242. New Century, Old Disputes

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

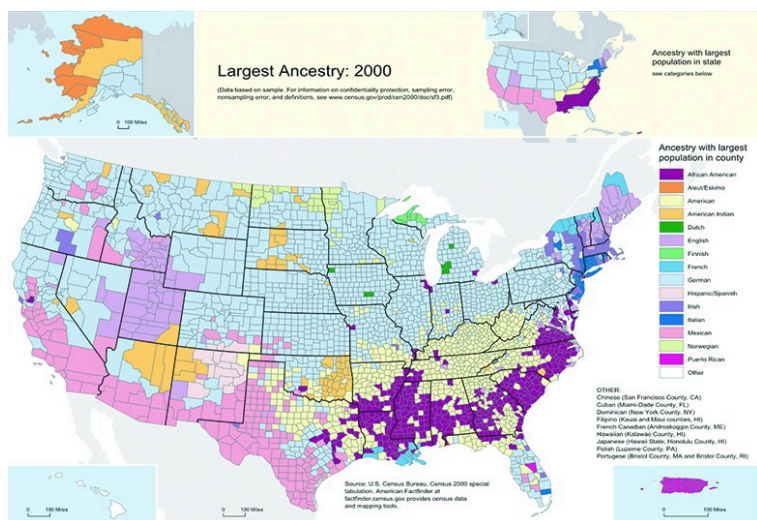
- Describe the efforts to reduce the influence of immigrants on American culture
- Describe the evolution of twenty-first-century American attitudes towards same-sex marriage
- Explain the clash over climate change

As the United States entered the twenty-first century, old disputes continued to rear their heads. Some revolved around what it meant to be American and the rights to full citizenship. Others arose from religious conservatism and the influence of the Religious Right on American culture and society. Debates over gay and lesbian rights continued, and arguments over abortion became more complex and contentious, as science and technology advanced. The clash between faith and science also influenced attitudes about how the government should respond to climate change, with religious conservatives finding allies among political conservatives who favored business over potentially expensive measures to reduce harmful emissions.



# WHO IS AN AMERICAN?

There is nothing new about anxiety over immigration in the United States. For its entire history, citizens have worried about who is entering the country and the changes that might result. Such concerns began to flare once again beginning in the 1980s, as Americans of European ancestry started to recognize the significant demographic changes on the horizon. The number of Americans of color and multiethnic Americans was growing, as was the percentage of people with other than European ancestry. It was clear the white majority would soon be a demographic minority.



This map, based on the 2000 census, indicates the dominant ethnicity in different parts of the country. Note the heavy concentration of African Americans (dark purple) in the South, and the large numbers of those of Mexican ancestry (pink) in California and the Southwest. Why do you think so many in the Upper South are designated as simply American (light yellow)?

The nation's increasing diversity prompted some social conservatives to identify American culture as one of European



heritage, including the drive to legally designate English the official language of the United States. This movement was particularly strong in areas of the country with large Spanish-speaking populations such as Arizona, where, in 2006, three-quarters of voters approved a proposition to make English the official language in the state. Proponents in Arizona and elsewhere argued that these laws were necessary, because recent immigrants, especially Hispanic newcomers, were not being sufficiently acculturated to white, middle-class culture. Opponents countered that English was already the *de facto* official language, and codifying it into law would only amount to unnecessary discrimination.

## Arizona Bans Mexican American Studies

In 2010, Arizona passed a law barring the teaching of any class that promoted “resentment” of students of other races or encouraged “ethnic solidarity.” The ban, to take effect on December 31 of that year, included a popular Mexican American studies program taught at elementary, middle, and high schools in the city of Tucson. The program, which focused on teaching students about Mexican American history and literature, was begun in 1998, to convert high absentee rates and low academic performance among Latino students, and proved highly successful. Public school superintendent Tom Horne objected to the course, however, claiming it encouraged resentment of whites and of the U.S. government, and improperly encouraged students to think of themselves as members of a race instead of as individuals.

Tucson was ordered to end its Mexican American studies program or lose 10 percent of the school system’s funding, approximately \$3 million each month. In 2012, the Tucson school board voted to end the program. A former student and his mother filed a suit in federal court, claiming that the law, which did not prohibit programs teaching Indian students about their culture, was discriminatory



and violated the First Amendment rights of Tucson's students. In March 2013, the court found in favor of the state, ruling that the law was not discriminatory, because it targeted classes, and not students or teachers, and that preventing the teaching of Mexican studies classes did not intrude on students' constitutional rights. The court did, however, declare the part of the law prohibiting classes designed for members of particular ethnic groups to be unconstitutional.

What advantages or disadvantages can you see in an ethnic studies program? How could an ethnic studies course add to our understanding of U.S. history? Explain.

The fear that English-speaking Americans were being outnumbered by a Hispanic population that was not forced to assimilate was sharpened by the concern that far too many were illegally emigrating from Latin America to the United States. The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act proposed by Congress in 2006 sought to simultaneously strengthen security along the U.S.-Mexico border (a task for the Department of Homeland Security), increase the number of temporary "guest workers" allowed in the United States, and provide a pathway for long-term U.S. residents who had entered the country illegally to gain legal status. It also sought to establish English as a "common and unifying language" for the nation. The bill and a similar amended version both failed to become law.

With unemployment rates soaring during the Great Recession, anxiety over illegal immigration rose, even while the incoming flow slowed. State legislatures in Alabama and Arizona passed strict new laws that required police and other officials to verify the immigration status of those they thought had entered the country illegally. In Alabama, the new law made it a crime to rent housing to undocumented immigrants, thus making it difficult for these immigrants to live within the state. Both laws have been challenged in court, and portions have been deemed unconstitutional or otherwise blocked.



Beginning in October 2013, states along the U.S.-Mexico border faced an increase in the immigration of children from a handful of Central American countries. Approximately fifty-two thousand children, some unaccompanied, were taken into custody as they reached the United States. A study by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that 58 percent of those migrants, largely from El Salvador and Honduras, were propelled towards the United States by poverty, violence, and the potential for exploitation in their home countries. Because of a 2008 law originally intended to protect victims of human trafficking, these Central American children are guaranteed a court hearing. Predictably, the crisis has served to underline the need for comprehensive immigration reform. But, as of late 2014, a 2013 Senate immigration reform bill that combines border security with a guest worker program and a path to citizenship has yet to be enacted as law.

## WHAT IS A MARRIAGE?

In the 1990s, the idea of legal, same-sex marriage seemed particularly unlikely; neither of the two main political parties expressed support for it. Things began to change, however, following Vermont's decision to allow same-sex couples to form state-recognized civil unions in which they could enjoy all the legal rights and privileges of marriage. Although it was the intention of the state to create a type of legal relationship equivalent to marriage, it did not use the word "marriage" to describe it.

Following Vermont's lead, several other states legalized same-sex marriages or civil unions among gay and lesbian couples. In 2004, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that barring gays and lesbians from marrying violated the state constitution. The court held that offering same-sex couples the right to form civil unions but not marriage was an act of discrimination, and



Massachusetts became the first state to allow same-sex couples to marry. Not all states followed suit, however, and there was a backlash in several states. Between 1998 and 2012, thirty states banned same-sex marriage either by statute or by amending their constitutions. Other states attempted, unsuccessfully, to do the same. In 2007, the Massachusetts State Legislature rejected a proposed amendment to the state's constitution that would have prohibited such marriages.

Watch this [detailed documentary](#) on the attitudes that prevailed in Colorado in 1992, when the voters of that state approved Amendment 2 to the state's constitution and consequently denied gay and lesbian Coloradans the right to claim relief from local levels of discrimination in public accommodations, housing, or jobs.

While those in support of broadening civil rights to include same-sex marriage were optimistic, those opposed employed new tactics. In 2008, opponents of same-sex marriage in California tried a ballot initiative to define marriage strictly as a union between a man and a woman. Despite strong support for broadening marriage rights, the proposition was successful. This change was just one of dozens that states had been putting in place since the late 1990s to make same-sex marriage unconstitutional at the state level. Like the California proposition, however, many new state constitutional amendments have faced challenges in court. As of 2014, leaders in both political parties are more receptive than ever before to the idea of same-sex marriage.





(a)



(b)

Supporters and protesters of same-sex marriage gather in front of San Francisco's City Hall (a) as the California Supreme Court decides the fate of Proposition 8, a 2008 ballot measure stating that "only marriage between a man and a woman" would be valid in California. Following the Iowa Supreme Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriage, supporters rally in Iowa City on April 3, 2009 (b). The banner displays the Iowa state motto: "Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain." (credit a: modification of work by Jamison Wieser; credit b: modification of work by Alan Light)

Visit the [Pew Research site](#) to read more about the current status of same-sex marriage in the United States and the rest of the world.

## WHY FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Even as mainstream members of both political parties moved closer



together on same-sex marriage, political divisions on scientific debates continued. One increasingly polarizing debate that baffles much of the rest of the world is about global climate change. Despite near unanimity in the scientific community that climate change is real and will have devastating consequences, large segments of the American population, predominantly on the right, continue to insist that it is little more than a complex hoax and a leftist conspiracy. Much of the Republican Party's base denies that global warming is the result of human activity; some deny that the earth is getting hotter at all. This popular denial has had huge global consequences. In 1998, the United States, which produces roughly 36 percent of the greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide that prevent the earth's heat from escaping into space, signed the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement among the world's nations to reduce their emissions of these gases. President Bush objected to the requirement that major industrialized nations limit their emissions to a greater extent than other parts of the world and argued that doing so might hurt the American economy. He announced that the United States would not be bound by the agreement, and it was never ratified by Congress.

Instead, the Bush administration appeared to suppress scientific reporting on climate change. In 2006, the progressive-leaning Union of Concerned Scientists surveyed sixteen hundred climate scientists, asking them about the state of federal climate research. Of those who responded, nearly three-fourths believed that their research had been subjected to new administrative requirements, third-party editing to change their conclusions, or pressure not to use terms such as "global warming." Republican politicians, citing the altered reports, argued that there was no unified opinion among members of the scientific community that humans were damaging the climate.

Countering this rejection of science were the activities of many environmentalists, including Al Gore, Clinton's vice president and Bush's opponent in the disputed 2000 election. As a new member of Congress in 1976, Gore had developed what proved a steady



commitment to environmental issues. In 2004, he established Generation Investment Management, which sought to promote an environmentally responsible system of equity analysis and investment. In 2006, a documentary film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, represented his attempts to educate people about the realities and dangers of global warming, and won the 2007 Academy Award for Best Documentary. Though some of what Gore said was in error, the film's main thrust is in keeping with the weight of scientific evidence. In 2007, as a result of these efforts to "disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change," Gore shared the Nobel Peace Prize with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

## Section Summary

The nation's increasing diversity—and with it, the fact that white Caucasians will soon be a demographic minority—prompted a conservative backlash that continues to manifest itself in debates about immigration. Questions of who is an American and what constitutes a marriage continue to be debated, although the answers are beginning to change. As some states broadened civil rights to include gays and lesbians, groups opposed to these developments sought to impose state constitutional restrictions. From this flurry of activity, however, a new political consensus for expanding marriage rights has begun to emerge. On the issue of climate change, however, polarization has



increased. A strong distrust of science among Americans has divided the political parties and hampered scientific research.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1069>

### *Review Question*

1. What was the result of the Bush administration's unwillingness to recognize that climate change is being accelerated by human activity?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The administration refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and, as a result, the United States has not been required to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Meanwhile, climate scientists have experienced interference with their work. For critics of climate change, this hampering of scientific research and consensus has provided further evidence of the lack of agreed-upon conclusions about climate change.



## *Glossary*

**civil unions** a civil status offered to gay and lesbian couples with the goal of securing the main privileges of marriage without granting them equal status in marriage

**greenhouse gases** gases in the earth's atmosphere, like carbon dioxide, that trap heat and prevent it from radiating into space

**Kyoto Protocol** an international agreement establishing regulations designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the world's industrialized nations



## 243. Hope and Change

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe how Barack Obama's domestic policies differed from those of George W. Bush
- Discuss the important events of the war on terror during Obama's two administrations
- Discuss some of the specific challenges facing the United States as Obama's second term draws to a close

In 2008, American voters, tired of war and dispirited by the economic downturn, elected a relative newcomer to the political scene who inspired them and made them believe that the United States could rise above political partisanship. Barack Obama's story resembled that of many Americans: a multicultural background; a largely absent father; a single working mother; and care provided by maternal grandparents. As president, Obama would face significant challenges, including managing the economic recovery in the wake of the Great Recession, fighting the war on terror inherited from the previous administration, and implementing the healthcare reform upon which he had campaigned.



# OBAMA TAKES OFFICE

Born in Hawaii in 1961 to a Kenyan father and an American woman from Kansas, Obama excelled at school, going on to attend Occidental College in Los Angeles, Columbia University, and finally Harvard Law School, where he became the first African American president of the *Harvard Law Review*. As part of his education, he also spent time in Chicago working as a community organizer to help those displaced by the decline of heavy industry in the early 1980s. Obama first came to national attention when he delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention while running for his first term in the U.S. Senate. Just a couple of years later, he was running for president himself, the first African American nominee for the office from either major political party.

Obama's opponent in 2008 was John McCain, a Vietnam veteran and Republican senator with the reputation of a "maverick" who had occasionally broken ranks with his party to support bipartisan initiatives. The senator from Arizona faced a number of challenges. As the Republican nominee, he remained closely associated with the two disastrous foreign wars initiated under the Bush administration. His late recognition of the economic



John McCain (on the far right) campaigns with his wife Cindy (in green), Sarah Palin (in black), and Palin's husband Todd. Palin was a controversial choice for running mate. The campaign never succeeded in erasing the charges that she was ignorant of foreign policy—, an impression she enforced in her own ad-lib statements. (credit: Rachael Dickson)

catastrophe on the eve of the election did not help matters and further damaged the Republican brand at the polls. At seventy-one, he also had to fight accusations that he was too old for the job, an impression made even more striking by his energetic young



challenger. To minimize this weakness, McCain chose a young but inexperienced running mate, Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska. This tactic backfired, however, when a number of poor performances in television interviews convinced many voters that Palin was not prepared for higher office.

Senator Obama, too, was criticized for his lack of experience with foreign policy, a deficit he remedied by choosing experienced politician Joseph Biden as his running mate. Unlike his Republican opponent, however, Obama offered promises of “hope and change.” By sending out voter reminders on Twitter and connecting with supporters on Facebook, he was able to harness social media and take advantage of grassroots enthusiasm for his candidacy. His youthful vigor drew independents and first-time voters, and he won 95 percent of the African American vote and 44 percent of the white vote.

## Politicking in a New Century

Barack Obama’s campaign seemed to come out of nowhere to overcome the widely supported frontrunner Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries. Having won the nomination, Obama

shot to the top with an exuberant base of youthful supporters who were encouraged and inspired by his appeal to hope and change. Behind the scenes, the Obama campaign was employing technological innovations and advances in social media to both inform and organize its base.

The Obama campaign realized early that the key to political success in the twenty-first century was to energize young voters



*Barack Obama takes the oath of office as the forty-fourth president of the United States. Standing next to him is First Lady Michelle Obama. Like her husband, she graduated from Harvard Law School.*



by reaching them where they were: online. The organizing potential of platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter had never before been tapped—and they were free. The results were groundbreaking. Using these social media platforms, the Obama campaign became an organizing and fundraising machine of epic proportions. During his almost two-year-long campaign, Obama accepted 6.5 million donations, totaling \$500 million. The vast majority of online donations were less than \$100. This accomplishment stunned the political establishment, and they have been quick to adapt. Since 2008, nearly every political campaign has followed in Obama's footsteps, effecting a revolution in campaigning in the United States.

## ECONOMIC AND HEALTHCARE REFORMS

Barack Obama had been elected on a platform of healthcare reform and a wave of frustration over the sinking economy. As he entered office in 2009, he set out to deal with both. Taking charge of the TARP program instituted under George W. Bush to stabilize the country's financial institutions, Obama oversaw the distribution of some \$7.77 trillion designed to help shore up the nation's banking system. Recognizing that the economic downturn also threatened major auto manufacturers in the United States, he sought and received congressional authorization for \$80 billion to help Chrysler and General Motors. The action was controversial, and some characterized it as a government takeover of industry. The money did, however, help the automakers earn a profit by 2011, reversing the trend of consistent losses that had hurt the industry since 2004. It also helped prevent layoffs and wage cuts. By 2013, the automakers had repaid over \$50 billion of bailout funds. Finally, through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA),



the Obama administration pumped almost \$800 billion into the economy to stimulate economic growth and job creation.

More important for Obama supporters than his attempts to restore the economy was that he fulfill his promise to enact comprehensive healthcare reform. Many assumed such reforms would move quickly through Congress, since Democrats had comfortable majorities in both houses, and both Obama and McCain had campaigned on healthcare reform. However, as had occurred years before during President Clinton's first term, opposition groups saw attempts at reform as an opportunity to put the political brakes on the Obama presidency. After months of political wrangling and condemnations of the healthcare reform plan as socialism, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was passed and signed into law.

The act, which created the program known as Obamacare, represented the first significant overhaul of the American healthcare system since the passage of Medicaid in 1965. Its goals were to provide all Americans with access to affordable health insurance, to require that everyone in the United States acquire some form of health insurance, and to lower the costs of healthcare.



*President Obama signs the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law on March 23, 2010, as Vice President Biden, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and others look on. (credit: Pete Souza)*

The plan, which made use of government funding, created private insurance company exchanges to market various insurance packages to enrollees.

Although the plan implemented the market-based reforms that they had supported for years, Republicans refused to vote for it. Following its passage, they called numerous times for its repeal, and more than twenty-four states sued the federal government to stop its implementation. Discontent over the Affordable Care



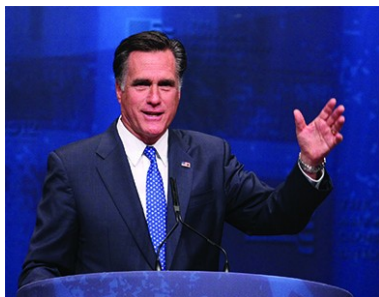
Act helped the Republicans capture the majority in the House of Representatives in the 2010 midterm elections. It also helped spawn the Tea Party, a conservative movement focused primarily on limiting government spending and the size of the federal government.

## THE ELECTION OF 2012

By the 2012 presidential election, the Republicans, convinced Obama was vulnerable because of opposition to his healthcare program and a weak economy, nominated Mitt Romney, a well-known business executive-turned politician who had earlier signed healthcare reform into state law as governor of Massachusetts. Romney had unsuccessfully challenged McCain for the Republican nomination in 2008, but by 2012, he had remade himself politically by moving towards the party's right wing and its newly created Tea Party faction, which was pulling the traditional conservative base further to the right with its strong opposition to abortion, gun control, and immigration.



Romney appealed to a new attitude within the Republican Party. While the percentage of Democrats who agreed that the government should help people unable to provide for themselves had remained relatively stable from 1987 to 2012, at roughly 75 to 79 percent, the percentage of Republicans who felt the same way had decreased from 62 to 40 percent over the same period, with the greatest decline coming after 2007.



*Former governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney became the first member of the Mormon Church to run for president. He claimed his experience as a member of the Mormon lay clergy had made him sympathetic to the needs of the poor, but some of his campaign decisions contradicted this stance. (credit: Mark Taylor)*

Indeed, Romney himself revealed his disdain for people on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder when, at a fundraising event attended by affluent Republicans, he remarked that he did not care to reach the 47 percent of Americans who would always vote for Obama because of their dependence on government assistance. In his eyes, this low-income portion of the population preferred to rely on government social programs instead of trying to improve their own lives.

Read the [transcript](#) of “On the 47 percent,” the [secretly recorded speech](#) given by Mitt Romney at a Republican fundraiser.

Starting out behind Obama in the polls, Romney significantly closed the gap in the first of three presidential debates, when he moved towards more centrist positions on many issues. Obama regained momentum in the remaining two debates and used his bailout of the auto industry to appeal to voters in the key states of Michigan



and Ohio. Romney's remarks about the 47 percent hurt his position among both poor Americans and those who sympathized with them. A long-time critic of FEMA who claimed that it should be eliminated, Romney also likely lost votes in the Northeast when, a week before the election, Hurricane Sandy devastated the New England, New York, and New Jersey coasts. Obama and the federal government had largely rebuilt FEMA since its disastrous showing in New Orleans in 2005, and the agency quickly swung into action to assist the 8.5 million people affected by the disaster.

Obama won the election, but the Republicans retained their hold on the House of Representatives and the Democratic majority in the Senate grew razor-thin. Political bickering and intractable Republican resistance, including a 70 percent increase in filibusters over the 1980s, a refusal to allow a vote on some legislation, such as the 2012 "jobs bill," and the glacial pace at which the Senate confirmed the President's judicial nominations, created political gridlock in Washington, interfering with Obama's ability to secure any important legislative victories.

## ONGOING CHALLENGES

As Obama entered his second term in office, the economy remained stagnant in many areas. On average, American students continued to fall behind their peers in the rest of the world, and the cost of a college education became increasingly unaffordable for many. Problems continued overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan, and another act of terrorism took place on American soil when bombs exploded at the 2013 Boston Marathon. At the same time, the cause of same-sex marriage made significant advances, and Obama was able to secure greater protection for the environment. He raised fuel-efficiency standards for automobiles to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases and required coal-burning power plants to capture their carbon emissions.



## Learning and Earning

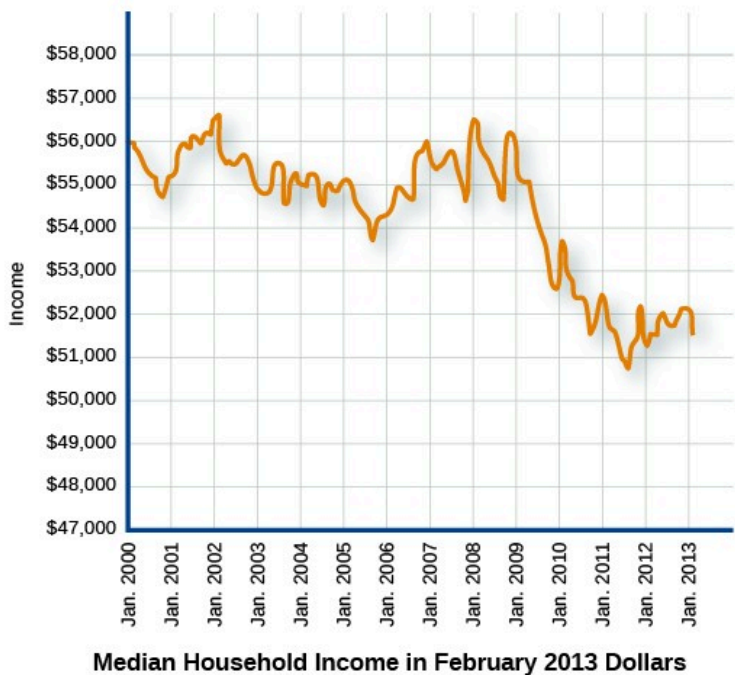
The quality of American education remains a challenge. The global economy is dominated by those nations with the greatest number of “knowledge workers:” people with specialized knowledge and skills like engineers, scientists, doctors, teachers, financial analysts, and computer programmers. Furthermore, American students’ reading, math, and critical thinking skills are less developed than those of their peers in other industrialized nations, including small countries like Estonia.

The Obama administration sought to make higher education more accessible by increasing the amount that students could receive under the federally funded Pell Grant Program, which, by the 2012–13 academic year, helped 9.5 million students pay for their college education. Obama also worked out a compromise with Congress in 2013, which lowered the interest rates charged on student loans. However, college tuition is still growing at a rate of 2 to 3 percent per year, and the debt burden has surpassed the \$1 trillion mark and is likely to increase. With debt upon graduation averaging about \$29,000, students may find their economic options limited. Instead of buying cars or paying for housing, they may have to join the boomerang generation and return to their parents’ homes in order to make their loan payments. Clearly, high levels of debt will affect their career choices and life decisions for the foreseeable future.

Many other Americans continue to be challenged by the state of the economy. Most economists calculate that the Great Recession reached its lowest point in 2009, and the economy has gradually improved since then. The stock market ended 2013 at historic highs, having experienced its biggest percentage gain since 1997. However, despite these gains, the nation struggled to maintain a modest annual growth rate of 2.5 percent after the Great Recession, and the percentage of the population living in poverty continues to hover around 15 percent. Income has decreased, and, as late as 2011, the



unemployment rate was still high in some areas. Eight million full-time workers have been forced into part-time work, whereas 26 million seem to have given up and left the job market.



*Median household income trends reveal a steady downward spiral. The Great Recession may have ended, but many remain worse off than they were in 2008.*

## LGBT Rights

During Barack Obama's second term in office, courts began to counter efforts by conservatives to outlaw same-sex marriage. A series of decisions declared nine states' prohibitions against same-sex marriage to be unconstitutional, and the Supreme Court rejected an attempt to overturn a federal court ruling to that effect



in California in June 2013. Shortly thereafter, the Supreme Court also ruled that the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 was unconstitutional, because it violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. These decisions seem to allow legal challenges in all the states that persist in trying to block same-sex unions.

The struggle against discrimination based on gender identity has also won some significant victories. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education ruled that schools receiving federal funds may not discriminate against transgender students, and a board within the Department of Health and Human Services decided that Medicare should cover sexual reassignment surgery. Although very few people eligible for Medicare are transgender, the decision is still important, because private insurance companies often base their coverage on what Medicare considers appropriate and necessary forms of treatment for various conditions. Undoubtedly, the fight for greater rights for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual) individuals will continue.



## Violence

Another running debate questions the easy accessibility of firearms. Between the spring of 1999, when two teens killed twelve of their classmates, a teacher, and themselves at their high school in Columbine, Colorado, and the early summer of 2014, fifty-two additional shootings or attempted shootings had occurred at schools. Nearly always, the violence was perpetrated by young people with severe mental health problems, as at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012. After killing his mother at home, twenty-year-old Adam Lanza



*A candlelight vigil at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia, in the wake of the 2007 murder of thirty-two people by a student. The incident remains the deadliest school shooting to date. (credit: "alka3en"/Flickr)*

went to the school and fatally shot twenty six- and seven-year-old students, along with six adult staff members, before killing himself. Advocates of stricter gun control noted a clear relationship between access to guns and mass shootings. Gun rights advocates, however, disagreed. They argued that access to guns is merely incidental.

Another shocking act of violence was the attack on the Boston Marathon. On April 15, 2013, shortly before 3:00 p.m., two bombs made from pressure cookers exploded near the finish line. Three people were killed, and more than 250 were injured. Three days later, two suspects were identified, and a manhunt began. Later that night, the two young men, brothers who had immigrated to the United States from Chechnya, killed a campus security officer at



the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, stole a car, and fled. The older, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, was killed in a fight with the police, and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was captured the next day. In his statements to the police, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev reported that he and his brother, who he claimed had planned the attacks, had been influenced by the actions of fellow radical Islamists in Afghanistan and Iraq, but he denied they had been affiliated with any larger terrorist group.



*Bystanders at the finish line of the Boston Marathon help carry the injured to safety after the April 2013 attack. Two bombs exploded only a few seconds and a few hundred yards apart, killing three people. (credit: Aaron Tang)*

## America and the World

In May 2014, President Obama announced that, for the most part, U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan were over. Although a residual force of ninety-eight hundred soldiers will remain to continue training the Afghan army, by 2016, all U.S. troops will have left the country, except for a small number to defend U.S. diplomatic posts.

The years of warfare have brought the United States few rewards.



In Iraq, 4,475 American soldiers died and 32,220 were wounded. In Afghanistan, the toll through February 2013 was 2,165 dead and 18,230 wounded. By some estimates, the total monetary cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could easily reach \$4 trillion, and the Congressional Budget Office believes that the cost of providing medical care for the veterans might climb to \$8 billion by 2020.

In Iraq, the coalition led by then-Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was able to win 92 of the 328 seats in parliament in May 2014, and he seemed poised to begin another term as the country's ruler. The elections, however, did not stem the tide of violence in the country. In June 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a radical Islamist militant group consisting of mostly Sunni Muslims and once affiliated with al-Qaeda, seized control of Sunni-dominated areas of Iraq and Syria. On June 29, 2014, it proclaimed the formation of the Islamic State with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as caliph, the state's political and religious leader.

## Section Summary

Despite Republican resistance and political gridlock in Washington during his first term in office, President Barack Obama oversaw the distribution of the TARP program's \$7.77 trillion to help shore up the nation's banking system, and Congress authorized \$80 billion to help Chrysler and General Motors. The goals of Obama's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) were to provide all Americans with access to affordable health insurance, to require that everyone in the United



States had some form of health insurance, and to lower the costs of healthcare. During his second term, the nation struggled to grow modestly, the percentage of the population living in poverty remained around 15 percent, and unemployment was still high in some areas. Acceptance of same-sex marriage grew, and the United States sharply reduced its military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<https://www.openassessments.org/assessments/1070>

### *Review Question*

1. What has Barack Obama done to make college education more accessible?

### *Answer to Review Question*

1. The Obama administration has sought to make higher education more accessible by increasing the amount of money that students can receive under the federally funded Pell Grant Program, which helps millions pay for college. Obama also worked out a compromise with Congress in 2013 that lowered the



interest rates charged on student loans.

## *Critical Thinking Questions*

1. What factors led to the Great Recession?
2. How have conservatives fared in their efforts to defend “American” culture against an influx of immigrants in the twenty-first century?
3. In what ways are Barack Obama’s ideas regarding the economy, education, and the environment similar to those of Bush, his Republican predecessor? In what ways are they different?
4. How successful has the United States been in achieving its goals in Iraq and Afghanistan?
5. In what ways has the United States become a more heterogeneous and inclusive place in the twenty-first century? In what ways has it become more homogenous and exclusive?

## *Glossary*

**boomerang generation** young people who must return to their parents’ home in order to make ends meet



**Obamacare** the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

**Tea Party** a conservative movement focused primarily on limiting government spending and the size of the federal government



## 244. Video: Obamanation: Crash Course US History #47

This video teaches you about recent history. By which we mean VERY recent history. The video covers the end of George W. Bush's administration presidency of Barack Obama (so far). Some people would say, "It's too soon to try to interpret the historical importance of such recent events!" To those people we answer, "You're right." Nonetheless, it's worthwhile to take a look at the American we live in right now as a way of looking back at how far we've come. Anyway, the video will teach you about Obama's election, some of his policies like the Affordable Care Act, the 2009 stimulus, and the continuation of the war on terror. If you still can't reconcile a history course teaching such recent stuff, just think of this one as a current events episode.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded  
from this version of the text. You can view them online*

here: [https://library.achievingthedream.org/  
pimaushistory2/?p=293#oembed-1](https://library.achievingthedream.org/pimaushistory2/?p=293#oembed-1)



PART XXXV

# TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY READER







## 245. Primary Source Images: The Recent Past

Revolutionary technological change, unprecedented global flows of goods and people and capital, an amorphous and unending “War on Terror,” accelerating inequality, growing diversity, a changing climate, political stalemate: our world is remarkable, frustrating, and dynamic. But it is not an island of circumstance—it is a product of history. The last several decades of American history have culminated in the present, an era of innovation and advancement but also of stark partisan division, sluggish economic growth, widening inequalities, widespread military interventions, and pervasive anxieties about the present and future of the United States. Through boom and bust, national tragedy, foreign wars, and the maturation of a new generation, a new chapter of American history will be written, and when it is, it will be based in part on sources such as the these.

### Ground Zero in New York City (2001)



“911: Ground Zero; 10/03/2001.” From Records of the White House Photo Office, via National Archives (Identifier: 5997364).



A worker stands in front of rubble from the World Trade Center at Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan several weeks after the September 11 attacks.

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## Obama and Philadelphia 2009



*Pete Souza,  
White House,  
reference  
number  
P050809PS-  
0264, via  
Flickr.*

In 2008, Barack Obama became the first African American elected to the presidency. In this official White House photo from May, 2009, 5-year-old Jacob Philadelphia said, “I want to know if my hair is just like yours.”

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# 246. Primary Source: Bill Clinton on Free Trade and Financial Deregulation (1993-2000)

*During his time in office, Bill Clinton passed the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) in 1993, allowing for the free movement of goods between Mexico, the United States, and Canada, signed legislation repealing the Glass-Steagall Act, a major plank of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal banking regulation, and deregulated the trading of derivatives, including credit default swaps, a complicated financial instrument that would play a key role in the 2007-2008 economic crash. In the following signing statements, Clinton offers his support of free trade and deregulation.*

## On the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) (1993)

In a few moments, I will sign the North American Free Trade Act into law. NAFTA will tear down trade barriers between our three nations. It will create the world's largest trade zone and create 200,000 jobs in this country by 1995 alone. The environmental and labor side agreements negotiated by our administration will make this agreement a force for social progress as well as economic growth. Already the confidence we've displayed by ratifying NAFTA has begun to bear fruit. We are now making real progress toward a worldwide trade agreement so significant that it could make the material gains of NAFTA for our country look small by comparison.



Today we have the chance to do what our parents did before us. We have the opportunity to remake the world. For this new era, our national security we now know will be determined as much by our ability to pull down foreign trade barriers as by our ability to breach distant ramparts. Once again, we are leading. And in so doing, we are rediscovering a fundamental truth about ourselves: When we lead, we build security, we build prosperity for our own people.

...

Make no mistake, the global economy with all of its promise and perils is now the central fact of life for hard-working Americans. It has enriched the lives of millions of Americans. But for too many those same winds of change have worn away at the basis of their security. For two decades, most people have worked harder for less. Seemingly secure jobs have been lost. And while America once again is the most productive nation on Earth, this productivity itself holds the seeds of further insecurity. After all, productivity means the same people can produce more or, very often, that fewer people can produce more. This is the world we face.

We cannot stop global change. We cannot repeal the international economic competition that is everywhere. We can only harness the energy to our benefit. Now we must recognize that the only way for a wealthy nation to grow richer is to export, to simply find new customers for the products and services it makes. That, my fellow Americans, is the decision the Congress made when they voted to ratify NAFTA.

...

And now I am pleased that we have the opportunity to secure the biggest breakthrough of all. Negotiators from 112 nations are seeking to conclude negotiations on a new round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade; a historic worldwide trade pact, one that would spur a global economic boon, is now within our grasp. Let me be clear. We cannot, nor should we, settle for a bad GATT agreement. But we will not flag in our efforts to secure a good one in these closing days. We are prepared to make our contributions to the success of this negotiation, but we insist that other nations do



their part as well. We must not squander this opportunity. I call on all the nations of the world to seize this moment and close the deal on a strong GATT agreement within the next week.

I say to everyone, even to our negotiators: Don't rest. Don't sleep. Close the deal....

...

Today, as I sign the North American Free Trade Agreement into law and call for further progress on GATT, I believe we have found our footing. And I ask all of you to be steady, to recognize that there is no turning back from the world of today and tomorrow. We must face the challenges, embrace them with confidence, deal with the problems honestly and openly, and make this world work for all of us. America is where it should be, in the lead, setting the pace, showing the confidence that all of us need to face tomorrow. We are ready to compete, and we can win.

#### On the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (1999)

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 900, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. This historic legislation will modernize our financial services laws, stimulating greater innovation and competition in the financial services industry. America's consumers, our communities, and the economy will reap the benefits of this Act.

Beginning with the introduction of an Administration-sponsored bill in 1997, my Administration has worked vigorously to produce financial services legislation that would not only spur greater competition, but also protect the rights of consumers and guarantee that expanded financial services firms would meet the needs of America's underserved communities. Passage of this legislation by an overwhelming, bipartisan majority of the Congress suggests that we have met that goal.

The Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act makes the most important legislative changes to the structure of the U.S. financial system since the 1930s. Financial services firms will be authorized to conduct a wide range of financial activities, allowing them freedom to innovate in the new economy. The Act repeals provisions of the Glass-Steagall Act that, since the Great Depression, have restricted



affiliations between banks and securities firms. It also amends the Bank Holding Company Act to remove restrictions on affiliations between banks and insurance companies. It grants banks significant new authority to conduct most newly authorized activities through financial subsidiaries.

Removal of barriers to competition will enhance the stability of our financial services system. Financial services firms will be able to diversify their product offerings and thus their sources of revenue. They will also be better equipped to compete in global financial markets.

...

The Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act is a major achievement that will benefit American consumers, communities, and businesses of all sizes. I thank all of those individuals who played a role in the development and passage of this historic legislation.

#### On the Commodity Futures Modernization Act (2000)

The Administration strongly supports the version of H.R. 4541, the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000, that the Administration understands will be considered on the House floor. This legislation would reauthorize the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) and modernize the Nation's legal and regulatory framework regarding over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives transactions and markets. In so doing, H.R. 4541 also would implement many of the unanimous recommendations regarding the treatment of OTC derivatives made by the President's Working Group on Financial Markets, which includes the Secretary of the Treasury and the Chairmen of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

It is important that this legislation be enacted this year because of the meaningful steps it would take in helping to: promote innovation; enhance the transparency and efficiency of derivative markets; maintain the competitiveness of U.S. businesses and markets; and, potentially, reduce systemic risk. H.R. 4541 would accomplish these goals while assuring adequate customer



protection for small investors and protecting the integrity of the underlying securities and futures markets. A failure to modernize the Nation's framework for OTC derivatives during this legislative session would deprive American markets and businesses of these important benefits and could result in the movement of these markets to overseas locations with more updated regulatory regimes. The Administration looks forward to working with members of Congress to improve certain aspects of the bill as it continues through the legislative process.

[Source: William J. Clinton, "Remarks on Signing the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act," December 8, 1993. Available online via *The American Presidency Project* (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46216>); Source: William J. Clinton, "Statement on Signing the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act," November 12, 1999. Available online via *The American Presidency Project* (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=56922>); Source: William J. Clinton, "Statement of Administration Policy: H.R. 4541 – Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000," October 19, 2000. Available online via *The American Presidency Project* (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=74825>).]



## 247. Primary Source: The 9/11 Commission Report, “Reflecting On A Generational Challenge” (2004)

*On July 22, 2004, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States—or, the 9/11 Commission—delivered a 500-plus-page report that investigated the origins of the 9/11 attacks and America’s response and offered policy prescriptions for a post-9/11 world.*

Three years after 9/11, Americans are still thinking and talking about how to protect our nation in this new era. The national debate continues.

Countering terrorism has become, beyond any doubt, the top national security priority for the United States. This shift has occurred with the full support of the Congress, both major political parties, the media, and the American people.

The nation has committed enormous resources to national security and to countering terrorism. Between fiscal year 2001, the last budget adopted before 9/11, and the present fiscal year 2004, total federal spending on defense (including expenditures on both Iraq and Afghanistan), homeland security, and international affairs rose more than 50 percent, from \$354 billion to about \$547 billion. The United States has not experienced such a rapid surge in national security spending since the Korean War.<sup>1</sup>

This pattern has occurred before in American history. The United States faces a sudden crisis and summons a tremendous exertion of national energy. Then, as that surge transforms the landscape,



comes a time for reflection and reevaluation. Some programs and even agencies are discarded; others are invented or redesigned. Private firms and engaged citizens redefine their relationships with government, working through the processes of the American republic.

Now is the time for that reflection and reevaluation. The United States should consider *what to do*-the shape and objectives of a strategy. Americans should also consider *how to do it*-organizing their government in a different way.

### **Defining the Threat**

In the post-9/11 world, threats are defined more by the fault lines within societies than by the territorial boundaries between them. From terrorism to global disease or environmental degradation, the challenges have become transnational rather than international. That is the defining quality of world politics in the twenty-first century.

National security used to be considered by studying foreign frontiers, weighing opposing groups of states, and measuring industrial might. To be dangerous, an enemy had to muster large armies. Threats emerged slowly, often visibly, as weapons were forged, armies conscripted, and units trained and moved into place. Because large states were more powerful, they also had more to lose. They could be deterred.

Now threats can emerge quickly. An organization like al Qaeda, headquartered in a country on the other side of the earth, in a region so poor that electricity or telephones were scarce, could nonetheless scheme to wield weapons of unprecedented destructive power in the largest cities of the United States.

In this sense, 9/11 has taught us that terrorism against American interests “over there” should be regarded just as we regard terrorism against America “over here.” In this same sense, the American homeland is the planet.

But the enemy is not just “terrorism,” some generic evil.<sup>2</sup> This vagueness blurs the strategy. The catastrophic threat at this moment in history is more specific. It is the threat posed



by Islamist terrorism-especially the al Qaeda network, its affiliates, and its ideology.<sup>3</sup>

As we mentioned in chapter 2, Usama Bin Ladin and other Islamist terrorist leaders draw on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within one stream of Islam (a minority tradition), from at least Ibn Taimiyyah, through the founders of Wahhabism, through the Muslim Brotherhood, to Sayyid Qutb. That stream is motivated by religion and does not distinguish politics from religion, thus distorting both. It is further fed by grievances stressed by Bin Ladin and widely felt throughout the Muslim world-against the U.S. military presence in the Middle East, policies perceived as anti-Arab and anti-Muslim, and support of Israel. Bin Ladin and Islamist terrorists mean exactly what they say: to them America is the font of all evil, the “head of the snake,” and it must be converted or destroyed.

It is not a position with which Americans can bargain or negotiate. With it there is no common ground-not even respect for life-on which to begin a dialogue. It can only be destroyed or utterly isolated.

Because the Muslim world has fallen behind the West politically, economically, and militarily for the past three centuries, and because few tolerant or secular Muslim democracies provide alternative models for the future, Bin Ladin’s message finds receptive ears. It has attracted active support from thousands of disaffected young Muslims and resonates powerfully with a far larger number who do not actively support his methods. The resentment of America and the West is deep, even among leaders of relatively successful Muslim states.<sup>4</sup>

Tolerance, the rule of law, political and economic openness, the extension of greater opportunities to women-these cures must come from within Muslim societies themselves. The United States must support such developments.

But this process is likely to be measured in decades, not years. It is a process that will be violently opposed by Islamist terrorist organizations, both inside Muslim countries and in attacks on the



United States and other Western nations. The United States finds itself caught up in a clash *within* a civilization. That clash arises from particular conditions in the Muslim world, conditions that spill over into expatriate Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries.

Our enemy is twofold: al Qaeda, a stateless network of terrorists that struck us on 9/11; and a radical ideological movement in the Islamic world, inspired in part by al Qaeda, which has spawned terrorist groups and violence across the globe. The first enemy is weakened, but continues to pose a grave threat. The second enemy is gathering, and will menace Americans and American interests long after Usama Bin Ladin and his cohorts are killed or captured. Thus our strategy must match our means to two ends: dismantling the al Qaeda network and prevailing in the longer term over the ideology that gives rise to Islamist terrorism.

Islam is not the enemy. It is not synonymous with terror. Nor does Islam teach terror. America and its friends oppose a perversion of Islam, not the great world faith itself. Lives guided by religious faith, including literal beliefs in holy scriptures, are common to every religion, and represent no threat to us.

Other religions have experienced violent internal struggles. With so many diverse adherents, every major religion will spawn violent zealots. Yet understanding and tolerance among people of different faiths can and must prevail.

[Source: National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission report: final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (Washington, D.C., 2004). Available online via *The 9/11 Commission* (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/>).]



## 248. Primary Source: George W. Bush on the Post-9/11 World (2002)

*In his 2002 State of the Union Address, George W. Bush proclaimed that the attacks of September 11 signaled a new, dangerous world that demanded American interventions. Bush identified an “Axis of Evil” and provided a justification for a broad “war on terror.”*

... As we gather tonight, our nation is at war, our economy is in recession, and the civilized world faces unprecedented dangers. ...

We last met in an hour of shock and suffering. In four short months, our nation has comforted the victims, begun to rebuild New York and the Pentagon, rallied a great coalition, captured, arrested, and rid the world of thousands of terrorists, destroyed Afghanistan's terrorist training camps, saved a people from starvation, and freed a country from brutal oppression.

The American flag flies again over our embassy in Kabul. Terrorists who once occupied Afghanistan now occupy cells at Guantanamo Bay. And terrorist leaders who urged followers to sacrifice their lives are running for their own.

...

For many Americans, these four months have brought sorrow, and pain that will never completely go away. Every day a retired firefighter returns to Ground Zero, to feel closer to his two sons who died there. At a memorial in New York, a little boy left his football with a note for his lost father: “Dear Daddy, please take this to heaven. I don't want to play football until I can play with you again some day.”

...

Our cause is just, and it continues. ...



What we have found in Afghanistan confirms that, far from ending there, our war against terror is only beginning. ...

Our nation will continue to be steadfast and patient and persistent in the pursuit of two great objectives. First, we will shut down terrorist camps, disrupt terrorist plans, and bring terrorists to justice. And, second, we must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world.

Our military has put the terror training camps of Afghanistan out of business, yet camps still exist in at least a dozen countries. ... While the most visible military action is in Afghanistan, America is acting elsewhere. ... My hope is that all nations will heed our call, and eliminate the terrorist parasites who threaten their countries and our own. ... But some governments will be timid in the face of terror. And make no mistake about it: If they do not act, America will.

Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens.

Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom.

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections—then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing



danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.

We will work closely with our coalition to deny terrorists and their state sponsors the materials, technology, and expertise to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction. ... And all nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security.

We'll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons.

Our war on terror is well begun, but it is only begun. This campaign may not be finished on our watch—yet it must be and it will be waged on our watch.

We can't stop short. If we stop now—leaving terror camps intact and terror states unchecked—our sense of security would be false and temporary. History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom's fight.

...

None of us would ever wish the evil that was done on September the 11th. Yet after America was attacked, it was as if our entire country looked into a mirror and saw our better selves. We were reminded that we are citizens, with obligations to each other, to our country, and to history. We began to think less of the goods we can accumulate, and more about the good we can do.

For too long our culture has said, "If it feels good, do it." Now America is embracing a new ethic and a new creed: "Let's roll." In the sacrifice of soldiers, the fierce brotherhood of firefighters, and the bravery and generosity of ordinary citizens, we have glimpsed what a new culture of responsibility could look like. We want to be a



nation that serves goals larger than self. We've been offered a unique opportunity, and we must not let this moment pass.

...

Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory.

Thank you all. May God bless.

[Source: George W. Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," January 29, 2002. Available online via The American Presidency Project (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29644>).]



## 249. Primary Source: Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)

*In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in Obergefell v. Hodges that prohibitions against same-sex marriage were unconstitutional. Gay marriage had been a divisive issue in American politics for well over a decade. Many states passed referendums and constitutional amendments barring same-sex marriages and, in 1996, Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act, defining marriage at the federal level as between a man and a woman. In 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Court struck down Massachusetts' state's prohibition, making it the first state to legally marry same-sex couples. More followed and public opinion began to turn. Although President Obama still refused to support it, by 2011 a majority of Americans believed same-sex marriages should be legally recognized. Four years later, the Supreme Court issued its Obergefell decision. The majority opinion, written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, considered the relationship between history and shifting notions of liberty and injustice.*

The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity. The petitioners in these cases seek to find that liberty by marrying someone of the same sex and having their marriages deemed lawful on the same terms and conditions as marriages between persons of the opposite sex.

These cases come from Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee, States that define marriage as a union between one man and one woman. ... The petitioners are 14 same-sex couples and two men whose same-sex partners are deceased. The respondents are state officials responsible for enforcing the laws in question. The petitioners claim the respondents violate the Fourteenth Amendment by denying them the right to marry or to have their



marriages, lawfully performed in another State, given full recognition.

...

The nature of injustice is that we may not always see it in our own times. The generations that wrote and ratified the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment did not presume to know the extent of freedom in all of its dimensions, and so they entrusted to future generations a charter protecting the right of all persons to enjoy liberty as we learn its meaning. When new insight reveals discord between the Constitution's central protections and a received legal stricture, a claim to liberty must be addressed.

...

The limitation of marriage to opposite-sex couples may long have seemed natural and just, but its inconsistency with the central meaning of the fundamental right to marry is now manifest. With that knowledge must come the recognition that laws excluding same-sex couples from the marriage right impose stigma and injury of the kind prohibited by our basic charter.

... [T]he respondents ... assert the petitioners do not seek to exercise the right to marry but rather a new and nonexistent "right to same-sex marriage." ... If rights were defined by who exercised them in the past, then received practices could serve as their own continued justification and new groups could not invoke rights once denied. This Court has rejected that approach, both with respect to the right to marry and the rights of gays and lesbians.

The right to marry is fundamental as a matter of history and tradition, but rights come not from ancient sources alone. They rise, too, from a better informed understanding of how constitutional imperatives define a liberty that remains urgent in our own era. Many who deem same-sex marriage to be wrong reach that conclusion based on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises, and neither they nor their beliefs are disparaged here. But when that sincere, personal opposition becomes enacted law and public policy, the necessary consequence is to put the imprimatur of the State itself on an exclusion that soon



demeans or stigmatizes those whose own liberty is then denied. Under the Constitution, same-sex couples seek in marriage the same legal treatment as opposite-sex couples, and it would disparage their choices and diminish their personhood to deny them this right.

...

Indeed, in interpreting the Equal Protection Clause, the Court has recognized that new insights and societal understandings can reveal unjustified inequality within our most fundamental institutions that once passed unnoticed and unchallenged. ...

It is now clear that the challenged laws burden the liberty of same-sex couples, and it must be further acknowledged that they abridge central precepts of equality. Here the marriage laws enforced by the respondents are in essence unequal: same-sex couples are denied all the benefits afforded to opposite-sex couples and are barred from exercising a fundamental right. Especially against a long history of disapproval of their relationships, this denial to same-sex couples of the right to marry works a grave and continuing harm. The imposition of this disability on gays and lesbians serves to disrespect and subordinate them. And the Equal Protection Clause, like the Due Process Clause, prohibits this unjustified infringement of the fundamental right to marry.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that the right to marry is a fundamental right inherent in the liberty of the person, and under the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment couples of the same-sex may not be deprived of that right and that liberty. The Court now holds that same-sex couples may exercise the fundamental right to marry. No longer may this liberty be denied to them. *Baker v. Nelson* must be and now is overruled, and the State laws challenged by Petitioners in these cases are now held invalid to the extent they exclude same-sex couples from civil marriage on the same terms and conditions as opposite sex couples.

...

No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the



highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is that they do respect it, respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves. Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.

The judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit is reversed.

*It is so ordered.*

[Source: Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2015). Available online via The Supreme Court ([https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556\\_3204.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf)).]



# 250. Primary Source: Barack Obama, Howard University Commencement Address (2016)

*In 2016, President Barack Obama delivered the commencement address at Howard University, the nation's most distinguished historically black university. In it, he urged students to be hardworking yet pragmatic in their quest to achieve "justice and equality and freedom" in American life.*

Given the current state of our political rhetoric and debate, let me say something that may be controversial, and that is this: America is a better place today than it was when I graduated from college.

America is better. The world is better. And stay with me now — race relations are better since I graduated. That's the truth. No, my election did not create a post-racial society. I don't know who was propagating that notion. That was not mine. But the election itself — and the subsequent one — because the first one, folks might have made a mistake. The second one, they knew what they were getting. The election itself was just one indicator of how attitudes had changed.

In my inaugural address, I remarked that just 60 years earlier, my father might not have been served in a D.C. restaurant — at least not certain of them. There were no black CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Very few black judges. Shoot, as Larry Wilmore pointed out last week, a lot of folks didn't even think blacks had the tools to be a quarterback. Today, former Bull Michael Jordan isn't just the greatest basketball player of all time — he owns the team. When I was graduating, the main black hero on TV was Mr. T. Rap and hip hop were counterculture, underground. Now, Shonda Rhimes



owns Thursday night, and Beyoncé runs the world. We're no longer only entertainers, we're producers, studio executives. No longer small business owners — we're CEOs, we're mayors, representatives, Presidents of the United States.

I am not saying gaps do not persist. Obviously, they do. Racism persists. Inequality persists. Don't worry — I'm going to get to that. But I wanted to start, Class of 2016, by opening your eyes to the moment that you are in. If you had to choose one moment in history in which you could be born, and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be — what nationality, what gender, what race, whether you'd be rich or poor, gay or straight, what faith you'd be born into — you wouldn't choose 100 years ago. You wouldn't choose the fifties, or the sixties, or the seventies. You'd choose right now. If you had to choose a time to be, in the words of Lorraine Hansberry, “young, gifted, and black” in America, you would choose right now.

I tell you all this because it's important to note progress. Because to deny how far we've come would do a disservice to the cause of justice, to the legions of foot soldiers; to not only the incredibly accomplished individuals who have already been mentioned, but your mothers and your dads, and grandparents and great grandparents, who marched and toiled and suffered and overcame to make this day possible. I tell you this not to lull you into complacency, but to spur you into action — because there's still so much more work to do, so many more miles to travel. And America needs you to gladly, happily take up that work. You all have some work to do. So enjoy the party, because you're going to be busy.

...

Now, how you do that, how you meet these challenges, how you bring about change will ultimately be up to you. ... [But] I'd like to offer some suggestions for how young leaders like you can fulfill your destiny and shape our collective future — bend it in the direction of justice and equality and freedom.

First of all — and this should not be a problem for this group — be confident in your heritage. ... Second, even as we each embrace our own beautiful, unique, and valid versions of our blackness,



remember the tie that does bind us as African Americans — and that is our particular awareness of injustice and unfairness and struggle. ... Number three: You have to go through life with more than just passion for change; you need a strategy. I'll repeat that. I want you to have passion, but you have to have a strategy. Not just awareness, but action. Not just hashtags, but votes.

You see, change requires more than righteous anger. It requires a program, and it requires organizing. ... To bring about structural change, lasting change, awareness is not enough. It requires changes in law, changes in custom. If you care about mass incarceration, let me ask you: How are you pressuring members of Congress to pass the criminal justice reform bill now pending before them? If you care about better policing, do you know who your district attorney is? Do you know who your state's attorney general is? Do you know the difference? Do you know who appoints the police chief and who writes the police training manual? Find out who they are, what their responsibilities are. Mobilize the community, present them with a plan, work with them to bring about change, hold them accountable if they do not deliver. Passion is vital, but you've got to have a strategy.

... You need allies in a democracy. That's just the way it is. It can be frustrating and it can be slow. But history teaches us that the alternative to democracy is always worse. That's not just true in this country. It's not a black or white thing. Go to any country where the give and take of democracy has been repealed by one-party rule, and I will show you a country that does not work.

And democracy requires compromise, even when you are 100 percent right. This is hard to explain sometimes. You can be completely right, and you still are going to have to engage folks who disagree with you. If you think that the only way forward is to be as uncompromising as possible, you will feel good about yourself, you will enjoy a certain moral purity, but you're not going to get what you want. And if you don't get what you want long enough, you will eventually think the whole system is rigged. And that will lead to more cynicism, and less participation, and a downward spiral of



more injustice and more anger and more despair. And that's never been the source of our progress. That's how we cheat ourselves of progress.

...

... Our democracy gives us a process designed for us to settle our disputes with argument and ideas and votes instead of violence and simple majority rule.

So don't try to shut folks out, don't try to shut them down, no matter how much you might disagree with them. There's been a trend around the country of trying to get colleges to disinvite speakers with a different point of view, or disrupt a politician's rally. Don't do that — no matter how ridiculous or offensive you might find the things that come out of their mouths. ... Let them talk. Let them talk. If you don't, you just make them a victim, and then they can avoid accountability.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't challenge them. Have the confidence to challenge them, the confidence in the rightness of your position. There will be times when you shouldn't compromise your core values, your integrity, and you will have the responsibility to speak up in the face of injustice. But listen. Engage. If the other side has a point, learn from them. If they're wrong, rebut them. Teach them. Beat them on the battlefield of ideas.

...

[Source: Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at Howard University Commencement Ceremony," May 7, 2016. Available online via The White House (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/07/remarks-president-howard-university-commencement-ceremony>).]







PART XXXVI  
APPENDICES







# 25I. The Declaration of Independence

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. —That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. —Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great



Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.



He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high



Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things



which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

*The 56 signatures on the Declaration appear in the positions indicated:*

**Column 1**

**Georgia:**

Button Gwinnett

Lyman Hall

George Walton

**Column 2**

**North Carolina:**

William Hooper

Joseph Hewes

John Penn

**South Carolina:**

Edward Rutledge

Thomas Heyward, Jr.

Thomas Lynch, Jr.

Arthur Middleton

**Column 3**

**Massachusetts:**

John Hancock

**Maryland:**

Samuel Chase

William Paca

Thomas Stone

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

**Virginia:**

George Wythe

Richard Henry Lee

Thomas Jefferson

Benjamin Harrison

Thomas Nelson, Jr.



Francis Lightfoot Lee

Carter Braxton

**Column 4**

**Pennsylvania:**

Robert Morris

Benjamin Rush

Benjamin Franklin

John Morton

George Clymer

James Smith

George Taylor

James Wilson

George Ross

**Delaware:**

Caesar Rodney

George Read

Thomas McKean

**Column 5**

**New York:**

William Floyd

Philip Livingston

Francis Lewis

Lewis Morris

**New Jersey:**

Richard Stockton

John Witherspoon

Francis Hopkinson

John Hart

Abraham Clark

**Column 6**

**New Hampshire:**

Josiah Bartlett

William Whipple

**Massachusetts:**

Samuel Adams



John Adams

Robert Treat Paine

Elbridge Gerry

**Rhode Island:**

Stephen Hopkins

William Ellery

**Connecticut:**

Roger Sherman

Samuel Huntington

William Williams

Oliver Wolcott

**New Hampshire:**

Matthew Thornton



# 252. The Constitution of the United States

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

## **Article. I.**

### **Section. 1.**

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

### **Section. 2.**

The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand,



but each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.

When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

### **Section. 3.**

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies.

No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.

The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.

The Senate shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States.

The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments.



When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present.

Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law.

#### **Section. 4.**

The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.

The Congress shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December, unless they shall by Law appoint a different Day.

#### **Section. 5.**

Each House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each shall constitute a Quorum to do Business; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of absent Members, in such Manner, and under such Penalties as each House may provide.

Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member.

Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in their Judgment require Secrecy; and the Yeas and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those Present, be entered on the Journal.

Neither House, during the Session of Congress, shall, without the



Consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor to any other Place than that in which the two Houses shall be sitting.

**Section. 6.**

The Senators and Representatives shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to be ascertained by Law, and paid out of the Treasury of the United States. They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their Attendance at the Session of their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall not be questioned in any other Place.

No Senator or Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under the Authority of the United States, which shall have been created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been encreased during such time; and no Person holding any Office under the United States, shall be a Member of either House during his Continuance in Office.

**Section. 7.**

All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Amendments as on other Bills.

Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objections to that House in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the Objections at large on their Journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such Reconsideration two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill, it shall be sent, together with the Objections, to the other House, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law. But in all such Cases the Votes of both Houses shall be determined by yeas and Nays, and the Names of the Persons voting for and against the Bill shall be entered on the Journal of each House respectively. If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after



it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their Adjournment prevent its Return, in which Case it shall not be a Law.

Every Order, Resolution, or Vote to which the Concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary (except on a question of Adjournment) shall be presented to the President of the United States; and before the Same shall take Effect, shall be approved by him, or being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by two thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives, according to the Rules and Limitations prescribed in the Case of a Bill.

### **Section. 8.**

The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

To borrow Money on the credit of the United States;

To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes;

To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, and uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States;

To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures;

To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States;

To establish Post Offices and post Roads;

To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries;

To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court;

To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences against the Law of Nations;

To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water;

To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;



To provide and maintain a Navy;

To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;

To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions;

To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;

To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings;—And

To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

#### **Section. 9.**

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it.

No Bill of Attainder or ex post facto Law shall be passed.

No Capitation, or other direct, Tax shall be laid, unless in Proportion to the Census or enumeration herein before directed to be taken.



No Tax or Duty shall be laid on Articles exported from any State.

No Preference shall be given by any Regulation of Commerce or Revenue to the Ports of one State over those of another: nor shall Vessels bound to, or from, one State, be obliged to enter, clear, or pay Duties in another.

No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.

No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.

#### **Section. 10.**

No State shall enter into any Treaty, Alliance, or Confederation; grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal; coin Money; emit Bills of Credit; make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts; pass any Bill of Attainder, ex post facto Law, or Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts, or grant any Title of Nobility.

No State shall, without the Consent of the Congress, lay any Imposts or Duties on Imports or Exports, except what may be absolutely necessary for executing it's inspection Laws: and the net Produce of all Duties and Imposts, laid by any State on Imports or Exports, shall be for the Use of the Treasury of the United States; and all such Laws shall be subject to the Revision and Controul of the Congress.

No State shall, without the Consent of Congress, lay any Duty of Tonnage, keep Troops, or Ships of War in time of Peace, enter into any Agreement or Compact with another State, or with a foreign Power, or engage in War, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent Danger as will not admit of delay.

#### **Article. II.**

##### **Section. 1.**

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United



States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows

Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

The Electors shall meet in their respective States, and vote by Ballot for two Persons, of whom one at least shall not be an Inhabitant of the same State with themselves. And they shall make a List of all the Persons voted for, and of the Number of Votes for each; which List they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the Seat of the Government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate. The President of the Senate shall, in the Presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the Certificates, and the Votes shall then be counted. The Person having the greatest Number of Votes shall be the President, if such Number be a Majority of the whole Number of Electors appointed; and if there be more than one who have such Majority, and have an equal Number of Votes, then the House of Representatives shall immediately chuse by Ballot one of them for President; and if no Person have a Majority, then from the five highest on the List the said House shall in like Manner chuse the President. But in chusing the President, the Votes shall be taken by States, the Representation from each State having one Vote; A quorum for this Purpose shall consist of a Member or Members from two thirds of the States, and a Majority of all the States shall be necessary to a Choice. In every Case, after the Choice of the President, the Person having the greatest Number of Votes of the Electors shall be the Vice President. But if there should remain two or more who have equal Votes, the Senate shall chuse from them by Ballot the Vice President.

The Congress may determine the Time of chusing the Electors,



and the Day on which they shall give their Votes; which Day shall be the same throughout the United States.

No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.

In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President, and the Congress may by Law provide for the Case of Removal, Death, Resignation or Inability, both of the President and Vice President, declaring what Officer shall then act as President, and such Officer shall act accordingly, until the Disability be removed, or a President shall be elected.

The President shall, at stated Times, receive for his Services, a Compensation, which shall neither be encreased nor diminished during the Period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them.

Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation:—"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

## **Section. 2.**

The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States; he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices, and he shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment.



He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

The President shall have Power to fill up all Vacancies that may happen during the Recess of the Senate, by granting Commissions which shall expire at the End of their next Session.

### **Section. 3.**

He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, convene both Houses, or either of them, and in Case of Disagreement between them, with Respect to the Time of Adjournment, he may adjourn them to such Time as he shall think proper; he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

### **Section. 4.**

The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

## **Article III.**

### **Section. 1.**

The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services,



a Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.

### **Section. 2.**

The judicial Power shall extend to all Cases, in Law and Equity, arising under this Constitution, the Laws of the United States, and Treaties made, or which shall be made, under their Authority;—to all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls;—to all Cases of admiralty and maritime Jurisdiction;—to Controversies to which the United States shall be a Party;—to Controversies between two or more States;— between a State and Citizens of another State,—between Citizens of different States,—between Citizens of the same State claiming Lands under Grants of different States, and between a State, or the Citizens thereof, and foreign States, Citizens or Subjects.

In all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party, the supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction. In all the other Cases before mentioned, the supreme Court shall have appellate Jurisdiction, both as to Law and Fact, with such Exceptions, and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.

The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment, shall be by Jury; and such Trial shall be held in the State where the said Crimes shall have been committed; but when not committed within any State, the Trial shall be at such Place or Places as the Congress may by Law have directed.

### **Section. 3.**

Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

### **Article. IV.**



**Section. 1.**

Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State. And the Congress may by general Laws prescribe the Manner in which such Acts, Records and Proceedings shall be proved, and the Effect thereof.

**Section. 2.**

The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.

A Person charged in any State with Treason, Felony, or other Crime, who shall flee from Justice, and be found in another State, shall on Demand of the executive Authority of the State from which he fled, be delivered up, to be removed to the State having Jurisdiction of the Crime.

No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.

**Section. 3.**

New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.

The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State.

**Section. 4.**

The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the



Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened), against domestic Violence.

**Article. V.**

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth Section of the first Article; and that no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate.

**Article. VI.**

All Debts contracted and Engagements entered into, before the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be as valid against the United States under this Constitution, as under the Confederation.

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

**Article. VII.**

The Ratification of the Conventions of nine States, shall be



sufficient for the Establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying the Same.

Done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven and of the Independance of the United States of America the Twelfth In witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,

G. Washington

*Presidt and deputy from Virginia*

**Delaware**

Geo: Read

Gunning Bedford jun

John Dickinson

Richard Bassett

Jaco: Broom

**Maryland**

James McHenry

Dan of St Thos. Jenifer

Danl. Carroll

**Virginia**

John Blair

James Madison Jr.

**North Carolina**

Wm. Blount

Richd. Dobbs Spaight

Hu Williamson

**South Carolina**

J. Rutledge

Charles Cotesworth Pinckney

Charles Pinckney

Pierce Butler

**Georgia**

William Few

Abr Baldwin

**New Hampshire**



John Langdon  
Nicholas Gilman

**Massachusetts**

Nathaniel Gorham  
Rufus King

**Connecticut**

Wm. Saml. Johnson  
Roger Sherman

**New York**

Alexander Hamilton

**New Jersey**

Wil: Livingston  
David Brearley  
Wm. Paterson  
Jona: Dayton

**Pennsylvania**

B Franklin  
Thomas Mifflin  
Robt. Morris  
Geo. Clymer  
Thos. FitzSimons  
Jared Ingersoll  
James Wilson  
Gouv Morris

**Constitutional Amendments**

The U.S. Bill of Rights (Amendments 1–10)

**The Preamble to The Bill of Rights**

Congress of the United States begun and held at the City of New-York, on Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.

The Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as



extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, two thirds of both Houses concurring, that the following Articles be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States, as amendments to the Constitution of the United States, all, or any of which Articles, when ratified by three fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution; viz.

Articles in addition to, and Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, proposed by Congress, and ratified by the Legislatures of the several States, pursuant to the fifth Article of the original Constitution.

Note: The following text is a transcription of the first ten amendments to the Constitution in their original form. These amendments were ratified December 15, 1791, and form what is known as the “Bill of Rights.”

#### **Amendment I**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

#### **Amendment II**

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

#### **Amendment III**

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

#### **Amendment IV**

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable



cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

#### **Amendment V**

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

#### **Amendment VI**

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

#### **Amendment VII**

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

#### **Amendment VIII**

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

#### **Amendment IX**

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

#### **Amendment X**

The powers not delegated to the United States by the



Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

#### **Amendment XI**

The Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by Citizens or Subjects of any Foreign State.

#### **Amendment XII**

The Electors shall meet in their respective states and vote by ballot for President and Vice-President, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as President, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President, and they shall make distinct lists of all persons voted for as President, and of all persons voted for as Vice-President, and of the number of votes for each, which lists they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the seat of the government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate; — the President of the Senate shall, in the presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the certificates and the votes shall then be counted; — The person having the greatest number of votes for President, shall be the President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed; and if no person have such majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President. But in choosing the President, the votes shall be taken by states, the representation from each state having one vote; a quorum for this purpose shall consist of a member or members from two-thirds of the states, and a majority of all the states shall be necessary to a choice. [And if the House of Representatives shall not choose a President whenever the right of choice shall devolve upon them, before the fourth day of March next following, then the Vice-President shall act as President, as in case of the death or other constitutional disability of the President. —]\* The person having the greatest number of votes



as Vice-President, shall be the Vice-President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed, and if no person have a majority, then from the two highest numbers on the list, the Senate shall choose the Vice-President; a quorum for the purpose shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of Senators, and a majority of the whole number shall be necessary to a choice. But no person constitutionally ineligible to the office of President shall be eligible to that of Vice-President of the United States.

*\*Superseded by Section 3 of the 20th amendment.*

### **Amendment XIII**

#### **Section 1.**

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

#### **Section 2.**

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

### **Amendment XIV**

#### **Section 1.**

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

#### **Section 2.**

Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the



members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age,\* and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

### **Section 3.**

No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

### **Section 4.**

The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

### **Section 5.**

The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

*\*Changed by Section 1 of the 26th amendment.*

## **Amendment XV**

### **Section 1.**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be



denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude—

### **Section 2.**

The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

### **Amendment XVI**

The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration.

### **Amendment XVII**

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote. The electors in each State shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State legislatures.

When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: *Provided*, That the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election as the legislature may direct.

This amendment shall not be so construed as to affect the election or term of any Senator chosen before it becomes valid as part of the Constitution.

### **Amendment XVIII**

#### **Section 1.**

After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

#### **Section 2.**

The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



### **Section 3.**

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

### **Amendment XIX**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

### **Amendment XX**

#### **Section 1.**

The terms of the President and the Vice President shall end at noon on the 20th day of January, and the terms of Senators and Representatives at noon on the 3d day of January, of the years in which such terms would have ended if this article had not been ratified; and the terms of their successors shall then begin.

#### **Section 2.**

The Congress shall assemble at least once in every year, and such meeting shall begin at noon on the 3d day of January, unless they shall by law appoint a different day.

#### **Section 3.**

If, at the time fixed for the beginning of the term of the President, the President elect shall have died, the Vice President elect shall become President. If a President shall not have been chosen before the time fixed for the beginning of his term, or if the President elect shall have failed to qualify, then the Vice President elect shall act as President until a President shall have qualified; and the Congress may by law provide for the case wherein neither a President elect nor a Vice President elect shall have qualified, declaring who shall then act as President, or the manner in which one who is to act shall be selected, and such person shall act accordingly until a President or Vice President shall have qualified.

#### **Section 4.**



The Congress may by law provide for the case of the death of any of the persons from whom the House of Representatives may choose a President whenever the right of choice shall have devolved upon them, and for the case of the death of any of the persons from whom the Senate may choose a Vice President whenever the right of choice shall have devolved upon them.

#### **Section 5.**

Sections 1 and 2 shall take effect on the 15th day of October following the ratification of this article.

#### **Section 6.**

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years from the date of its submission.

### **Amendment XXI**

#### **Section 1.**

The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

#### **Section 2.**

The transportation or importation into any State, Territory, or possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of intoxicating liquors, in violation of the laws thereof, is hereby prohibited.

#### **Section 3.**

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by conventions in the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

### **Amendment XXII**

#### **Section 1.**

No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of the President more than once. But this Article shall not apply



to any person holding the office of President when this Article was proposed by the Congress, and shall not prevent any person who may be holding the office of President, or acting as President, during the term within which this Article becomes operative from holding the office of President or acting as President during the remainder of such term.

#### **Section 2.**

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years from the date of its submission to the States by the Congress.

### **Amendment XXIII**

#### **Section 1.**

The District constituting the seat of Government of the United States shall appoint in such manner as the Congress may direct:

A number of electors of President and Vice President equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives in Congress to which the District would be entitled if it were a State, but in no event more than the least populous State; they shall be in addition to those appointed by the States, but they shall be considered, for the purposes of the election of President and Vice President, to be electors appointed by a State; and they shall meet in the District and perform such duties as provided by the twelfth article of amendment.

#### **Section 2.**

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

### **Amendment XXIV**

#### **Section 1.**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.

#### **Section 2.**



The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

## **Amendment XXV**

### **Section 1.**

In case of the removal of the President from office or of his death or resignation, the Vice President shall become President.

### **Section 2.**

Whenever there is a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the President shall nominate a Vice President who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote of both Houses of Congress.

### **Section 3.**

Whenever the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

### **Section 4.**

Whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.

Thereafter, when the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that no inability exists, he shall resume the powers and duties of his office unless the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive department or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit within four days to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the



powers and duties of his office. Thereupon Congress shall decide the issue, assembling within forty-eight hours for that purpose if not in session. If the Congress, within twenty-one days after receipt of the latter written declaration, or, if Congress is not in session, within twenty-one days after Congress is required to assemble, determines by two-thirds vote of both Houses that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall continue to discharge the same as Acting President; otherwise, the President shall resume the powers and duties of his office.

### **Amendment XXVI**

#### **Section 1.**

The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

#### **Section 2.**

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

### **Amendment XXVII**

No law, varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and Representatives, shall take effect, until an election of Representatives shall have intervened.



# 253. Presidents of the United States of America



## Presidents of the United States of America

Order	Election Year	President
1	1788–1789	George Washington
1	1792	George Washington
2	1796	John Adams
3	1800	Thomas Jefferson
3	1804	Thomas Jefferson
4	1808	James Madison
4	1812	James Madison
5	1816	James Monroe
5	1820	James Monroe
6	1824	John Quincy Adams
7	1828	Andrew Jackson
7	1832	Andrew Jackson
8	1836	Martin Van Buren
9	1840	William Henry Harrison
10	1840	John Tyler
11	1844	James K. Polk
12	1848	Zachary Taylor
13	1848	Mallard Fillmore
14	1852	Franklin Pierce
15	1856	James Buchanan
16	1860	Abraham Lincoln
16	1864	Abraham Lincoln
17	1864	Andrew Johnson
18	1868	Ulysses S. Grant
18	1872	Ulysses S. Grant
19	1876	Rutherford B. Hayes
20	1880	James A. Garfield
21	1880	Chester A. Arthur



<b>Order</b>	<b>Election Year</b>	<b>President</b>
22	1884	Grover Cleveland
23	1888	Benjamin Harrison
24	1892	Grover Cleveland
25	1896	William McKinley
25	1900	William McKinley
26	1904	Theodore Roosevelt
27	1908	William Howard Taft
28	1912	Woodrow Wilson
28	1916	Woodrow Wilson
29	1920	Warren G. Harding
30	1924	Calvin Coolidge
31	1928	Herbert Hoover
32	1932	Franklin D. Roosevelt
32	1936	Franklin D. Roosevelt
32	1940	Franklin D. Roosevelt
32	1944	Franklin D. Roosevelt
33	1948	Harry S. Truman
34	1952	Dwight D. Eisenhower
34	1956	Dwight D. Eisenhower
35	1960	John F. Kennedy
36	1964	Lyndon B. Johnson
37	1968	Richard Nixon
37	1972	Richard Nixon
38	1972	Gerald Ford
39	1976	Jimmy Carter
40	1980	Ronald Reagan
40	1984	Ronald Reagan
41	1988	George H. W. Bush
42	1992	Bill Clinton



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Order	Election Year	President
42	1996	Bill Clinton
43	2000	George W. Bush
43	2004	George W. Bush
44	2008	Barack Obama
44	2012	Barack Obama

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## 254. U.S. Political Map



(credit: U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, The National Atlas of the United States of America/[nationalatlas.gov](http://nationalatlas.gov))



## 255. U.S. Topographical Map





# 256. United States Population Chart

United States Population Chart <sup>1</sup>			
Census Year	Population	Census Year	Population
1610	350	1820	9,638,453
1620	2,302	1830	12,866,020
1630	4,646	1840	17,069,453
1640	26,634	1850	23,191,876
1650	50,368	1860	31,443,321
1660	75,058	1870	38,558,371
1670	111,935	1880	50,189,209
1680	151,507	1890	62,979,766
1690	210,372	1900	76,212,168
1700	250,888	1910	92,228,496
1710	331,711	1920	106,021,537
1720	466,185	1930	123,202,624
1730	629,445	1940	132,164,569
1740	905,563	1950	151,325,798
1750	1,170,760	1960	179,323,175
1760	1,593,625	1970	203,211,926
1770	2,148,076	1980	226,656,805
1780	2,780,369	1990	248,709,873
1790	3,929,214	2000	281,421,906
1800	5,308,483	2010	308,745,538
1810	7,239,881		



## Footnotes

- [1.](#) Population figures for the decades before the first U.S. census in 1790 are estimates.



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