

SUBJECT: History

UNIT: AMERICA: Post-war 1945-73



Post War Culture: American Dream

TV-Ownership increased dramatically and affected people's attitudes and spending. 1948 less than 1% of people owned a TV. By 1958, 83% had them. Most popular shows were soap operas, children shows and sport- consumerism

Teenagers- Teenagers emerged as a distinct social group- they were old enough to be independent, had money to spend but had no work or family responsibilities. Teenagers identified themselves from their parents through different clothing, leisure activities and music e.g Elvis

Post War Economy

Time of great prosperity- on average American earned 3 times the average wage of in the UK. Part of American Dream was to own your own home filled with the latest goods such as a well-stocked fridge. **Consumer Boom** and goods bought on hire purchase or with the first credit card. People tempted by advertisements on TV. Middle-class people moved out of cities into **suburbs** where there was more space and a better quality of life.

Civil Rights Movement 1950s: Legal Challenges

Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka 1954- 1954 NAACP helped mount legal challenge on school segregation. Linda Brown, an African American girl who had to walk past white schools to get to a black school. Linda Brown won her case. **IMPACT:** Declared that school segregation was unconstitutional and therefore the laws had to change. Some states refused to comply.

Rosa Parks & Montgomery Bus Boycott 1956- 1955 Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger, although the law said she should. She was arrested. **Bus Boycott-** The MIA (Montgomery Improvement Association) was formed to help organise a bus boycott. Its first leader was Martin Luther King. **IMPACT-** Passenger numbers fell dramatically. The bus company's profits fell by 65% . Over 10,000 people turned out to hear MLK speak. In **1956, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on buses was illegal.** This also applied to other public spaces. This was the first success for non-violent direct action- showed how powerful people working together could have an impact.

Little Rock 1957- Orval Faubus (governor) ordered to let 9 black students attend Little Rock High School. "Little Rock Nine". He refused as said it could not integrate as it was not able to keep students safe. **IMPACT:** President Eisenhower sent troops to enforce integration- they stayed for 6 weeks. State intervened- showed support from the president.

McCarthyism: Fear of Communism

Why? Cold War caused nuclear arms race between USA and USSR 1949 China fell to Communism increasing the fear that Communism would spread across the world. Made ordinary people anxious and made the government worried about spies stealing their nuclear secrets and destroying American way of life.

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

Set up to investigate suspected Communists. After the war, they investigated famous film stars. If refused to answer questions led them to being jailed for a year. Some stars blacklisted.

Joseph McCarthy (senator and member of HUAC)

McCarthyism was named after Senator Joseph McCarthy. It means extreme anti-Communism. Fear of 'Reds under the bed'. McCarthy's hearings were shown live on TV- accused many politicians and actors etc using smears. Hearings were televised and careers ruined. FBI had files on 1 million suspects.

Civil Rights Movement 1960s

Non-violent direct action : Groups included SNCC (Student non-violent Coordinating Committee), CORE (Congress of Racial Equality)

Sit-ins- Began by SNCC with segregated cafe in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960. They sat on white seats in food hall and refused to move. Within a week there were 400. Black students used 'white' seats. **IMPACT:** The companies changed their policy and 126 cities desegregated by the end of 1960.

Freedom Rides- Began May 1961 by CORE. Mixed groups of black and white students travelled by interstate bus into areas that were ignoring the order to desegregate. Freedom Riders were attacked by white mobs and arrested by police. President Kennedy had to step in to stop the violence and arrests. **IMPACT:** Publicity and support of President

March on Washington 1963- All African-Americans still did not have right to vote. To pressure for civil rights bill MLK arranged a speech at Washington. Over 200,000 black people and 50,000 white people marched to Washington to pressure President Kennedy to introduce a Civil Rights Bill. MLK gave his famous 'I have a dream speech'. **IMPACT:** **Civil Rights Bill** (see BELOW)

Violent/radical action

Nation of Islam- Malcolm X- he was critical of MLK and wanted to create a separate black state. **Black Power-** Stokely Carmichael set out radical view-Olympics- world stage. **Black Panthers-** 2,000 members thought that black people should arm themselves and force white people to give them equality. Clashes with police- killing 9 officers. **1965-67 Race Riots-** Watts area of Los Angeles. The cause was poor relations between the police and African Americans

IMPACT: Gained national press attention. However, their actions alarmed many white Americans. Some argue that violence slowed the pace of change.

Civil Rights Acts

1964 Civil Rights Acts: made it illegal to discriminate against people in housing and employment

1965 Voting Rights Act: allowed states to ensure that voting took place properly. It also removed reading tests as a qualification to vote

1968 Civil Rights Act: stopped discrimination in housing based on race, religion, nation of origin or gender

1960s Reform: JFK & LBJ

Kennedy 1961-63- This 'New Frontier' tackled **poverty**. Increased minimum wage and improving inner-city housing . Supported Civil Rights and sent soldiers to protect students e.g. the Freedom Riders. Attempted to improve education by introducing federal rather than state funding but this was over ruled by Southern statesmen in Congress who did not agree with support for Civil Rights Bill. Assassinated 1963.

LBJ (Lyndon B Johnson) became president when Kennedy died.

He declared war on poverty and that he wanted to create a '**Great Society**'. **1964: Economic Opportunities Act-** Improved education and training for disadvantaged young people so they could find work. **1964: Development Act-** Provided money to remove slum housing. **1965: Medicare and Medicaid-** medical insurance for over 65s and hospital care for the poor. **IMPACT:** These acts helped African Americans as they were most likely to live in poverty and were low earners. He also introduced the first Civil Rights Bill in 1964.

Women

1950s: After the war, it was thought that a woman's place was in the home. Often employed in 'female jobs' nursing, teaching and secretarial work. A growing number of women in the late 1950s particularly middle-class women became frustrated.

1960s: 1966 the National Organization of Women (NOW) was formed. In 1968, it created a bill of rights calling the government to ban sex discrimination at work, guarantee maternity leave, provide equal education and training, allow access to abortion and contraception. **1963: Equal Pay Act-** set the principle of equal pay for men and women

1970s: 1972: Equal Rights Amendment Act- women still only earned 70% of what men earned for doing the same job. Supreme Court decision ensure contraception was legally available to unmarried women just as it was available to married couples. **1973 Roe vs Wade-** Supreme Court decision made abortion in the first three months legal. This gave women more independence