AMERICAN YAWP 2ND EDITION



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American YAWP 2nd Edition

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1: American Origins

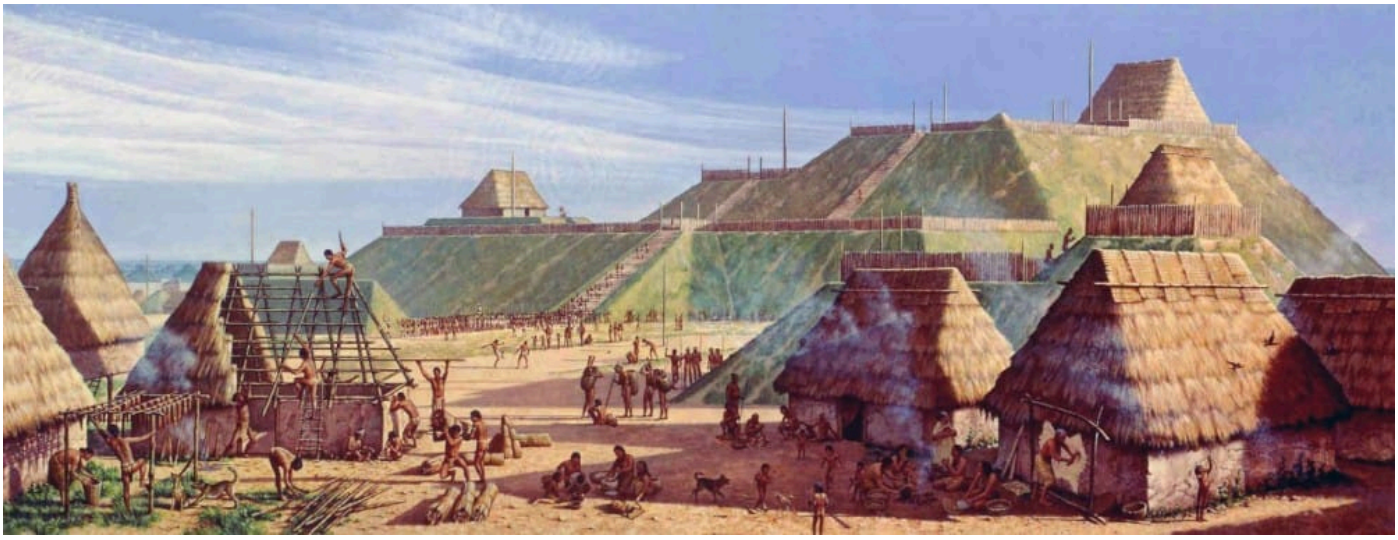


Figure 1.1. One of the most advanced and influential settlements of the 12th century, Cahokia was located across from the Mississippi River in present-day St. Louis. At that time, it possessed a population greater than London. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site.

I. Introduction

Millions of Indigenous people called the Americas home long before Europeans arrived and labeled North and South America the "New World." While new to Europeans, this land had inhabitants for millennia before colonization. By the time Europeans crossed the Atlantic, Native people spoke hundreds of languages, built diverse political systems, created cultures adapted to hundreds of distinct environments—human beings lived and loved and lost. Kinship ties knit ancient Indigenous communities together over distance, time, and space. Each community possessed unique art forms and spiritual practices and participated in extensive trade networks where they exchanged items such as salt, pottery, shell jewelry, and even bison meat. Political units ranged from small family units to vast empires. These continents teemed with life. Massive piles of discarded material, including shells, testify to past ways of living.[1] Other communities were careful to leave no trace.

Because there was no mention of North America or its peoples in the Bible, many Europeans were confused by its existence. Spanish missionary José de Acosta (1540–1600) was puzzled over where the continent's Indigenous people had originated. Even more puzzling were the diverse kinds of peoples and cultures that the Europeans encountered. When the Spanish arrived in 1519, Tenochtitlán—later Mexico City—rivaled the world's largest cities.[2] The Spanish could scarcely believe what they saw: 70,000 buildings, housing perhaps 250,000 people, all built on a lake and connected by causeways and canals. Spanish soldier Bernal Díaz del Castillo later recalled, "When we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments."[3] What was foreign for these new arrivals had emerged over vast stretches of time. The origins of America begin with its first inhabitants and their many cultures, polities, and lives.

II. First Americans

Indigenous peoples recount origin stories in the form of maps, inscriptions, paintings, wampum belts, or other weavings. Other historic tales are told through dances, songs, or story cycles told on specific occasions.[4] All transmit sacred knowledge of previous generations to the ears of current-day listeners.[5] The many different creation stories reflect the diversity found within Indigenous cultures and polities. These stories serve as both history and testaments to the power and endurance of these communities.

The origin stories of land, plants, and animal relatives are equally important as are the stories of human emergence, as they teach

about the interconnectedness of all beings. Cherokee people explain that long ago, before humans, the Sky World was inhabited only by animals such as Rabbit, Bear, and Possum, which were much bigger than they are now. When Sky World became too crowded, all the animals gathered in council and decided to explore the waters below to look for land. Only Dayunisi, the Water Beetle, could dive deep enough to bring up mud from the Under World to make an in-between world, Elohi, where everyone could live.[6] According to a Lenape (Delaware) tradition, the Earth was made when Sky Woman fell down to the watery world and, with the help of Beaver, Goose, and Muskrat, landed safely on the back of the Great Turtle. Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people teach that Sky Woman brought Tobacco and Strawberry with her from Sky World; as she danced, the clay under her feet expanded to become the Earth. This is Turtle Island, or North America.



Figure 1.2. Sky Woman, a central figure in the Haudenosaunee creation story, is shown here falling from the heavens to land on a great turtle. The turtle and other animals lift her out of the water with earth, which she uses to form Turtle Island. Ernest Smith, 1936. Wikimedia.

Indigenous American stories hold thousands of years of information, and most are specific to the places from which they come. For example, Utes explain how the Creator once gave Coyote a bag of sticks with instructions not to open it until he reached the mountains. When Coyote disobeyed, people came streaming out, speaking many different languages. Coyote closed the bag again and took it to the mountains, where the Ute people were the last to emerge.[7]

Some stories recount how people came into existence through the process of migration. For example, Anishinaabe families place their origins on the waters of the Northeast but tell of being led by a megis (white shell) to their homelands where food grows on water. That food was manoomin (wild rice). Traveling by canoe and dogsled, the Anishinaabe family paused in seven different places, including on a turtle-shaped island and at the rapids of Bawating (Sault Ste. Marie), where Great Beaver built a dam between Lakes Huron and Superior.[8] At this place, the Confederacy of the Three Fires was born: Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi.[9]

Indigenous stories of creation and migration, passed down from generation to generation, contain remembrances and instructions for relationships, obligations, and ways of being. They also speak to understandings of power and connection. Kinship relationships, in particular, have enabled the adaptation to changing environments and the preservation of this complex history.[10] Whether emerging from the earth, water, or sky; formed by a creator; or migrating from elsewhere, current-day Indigenous American communities recount histories in America that date long before human memory.

III. Beginnings and Arrivals

Conventionally, archaeologists, anthropologists, and climatologists have focused on migration histories and excavation sites to understand America's past. By studying pottery fragments, tree rings, genetic signatures, or ice cores, for example, they have constructed a story that claims the Americas were once a "new world" for all. These scholars' ancestors—the majority of whom arrived in the Americas over the last five centuries—assert a different kind of timeline for human presence on the continent, one that is not without its own historical and political context.[11]

On many points, Western and traditional Indigenous knowledge sources converge. Oral, linguistic, ecological, archaeological, and genetic evidence illustrates a great deal of diversity, with numerous groups migrating, settling, and traveling, potentially from many different points of origin, over thousands of years.[12] Results from combined archaeological, linguistic, and climatic data, for example, emphasize the arrival of two distinct yet diverse ancient "founding" populations from what is currently Siberia in Asia. Western scientists estimate that these people arrived along the Pacific coast between 24,000 and 15,000 years ago. Around 1,000 years later, overland arrivals began, followed by more coastal migration around 12,000 years ago.[13]

Low sea levels exposed the continental shelf along the northern Pacific Rim, an area called Beringia, named after the waters of the Bering Strait that would later flood it. This was an open area of exposed sea floor stretching over six hundred miles across, which hosted different species of grasses and other low vegetation. Giant fauna grazed across the volcanic steppe-tundra landscape, crossing back and forth between the places now called Siberia and Alaska.[14] North of the Bering Strait, the East Siberian Arctic Shelf, which crosses the central and eastern Siberian Arctic, was also a potential route for transarctic crossings.[15]

Indigenous ancestors took advantage of the lower sea levels to navigate along and between the Pacific Rim islands, following the currents and marine life, to arrive on the Northwest Coast of North America—then a 2,500-mile stretch of ice from the Bering Strait to current-day Washington State.[16] There is evidence of early landings and migrations elsewhere as well. For example, fossilized human footprints at White Sands National Park, in what is now called New Mexico, point to humans walking there 23,000 years ago.[17]

As the climate became increasingly warmer and wetter, about 19,000 years ago, glaciers around the globe began to melt. Ice sheets up to two miles thick experienced cycles of freezing and thawing, creating new landscapes with new lakes and valleys. Vast amounts of melted freshwater flowed into the oceans, raising sea levels and creating new waterways. The warming planet and glacial terrain meant that ice-free lands could host new plant, animal, and human life.[18] Some Indigenous travelers followed their four-legged relatives onto these newly dry lands.

Around 16,000 years ago, Indigenous navigators crossed the seas and voyaged along the largely unobstructed and island-rich Pacific coast, settling where local ecosystems permitted. As these skilled ancestors piloted the ocean waves and inlets, they located coves and rivers with plentiful fish, shellfish, and other marine gifts, as well as pathways further inland.[19]

In the coastal Pacific Northwest, Native groups lived alongside salmon-filled rivers and celebrated the generosity of nut-bearing trees. They used nets, dams, and traps to fish, and then dried or smoked their caches. At Haida Gwaii, an archipelago off the coast of British Columbia, people fished, hunted whales and seals, and traveled in cedar log canoes.[20] As sea levels rose, some Indigenous ancestors moved inland to escape the floodwaters and find new food sources.



Figure 1.3. Yup'ik masks are used in ritualistic dances by Shamans to connect the natural and spiritual worlds. This mask includes the figure of a seal, a traditional food for the Indigenous people of Alaska. Wikipedia.

On the tundra, plains, and prairies, hunting communities followed caribou and bison herds, moving according to seasonal patterns.

Following great riverways also led inland: the Columbia and the Snake in the Northwest, for example, lead to the headwaters of the Upper Missouri Basin in the mountains of today's Montana and Wyoming, and the waters flow from there to the Lower Missouri and Mississippi. In the Southwest, archaeological evidence points to settlements in Central Texas around 14,500 years ago.[21] At this time, coastal Mid-Atlantic forests would have comprised a rich ecozone of grasslands with a mixed variety of coniferous and deciduous trees, including spruce, pine, birch, and oak.[22] Evidence also records human settlement off what is now Maryland's Eastern Shore on Parson's Island around 14,500 years ago, as well. Further south, the shallow wetlands of the Gulf Coastal Plains served then, as now, as a rich biome for waterfowl and aquatic life, and provided a myriad of ways to navigate the region, whether on foot or by dugout canoe.[23]

Archaeologists believe the Na Dene, the ancestors of the Apache and Navajo (or Diné), traveled the Bering Strait between 10,000 and 8,000 BCE, in small bands of hunter-gatherers, before eventually traveling to what would be the American Southwest.[24] Archaeological evidence indicates that around 3000 BCE, the next wave of migrators were the ancestors of the Aleut and Inuit peoples, who would eventually relocate to the Aleutian and Pribilof islands of current-day Alaska.[25]

These were times of rapid change that required adaptability, careful observation, and skill to respond to extreme climates. The Great Plains provided grazing areas for large animals like bison and mammoths, while the colder weather further north opened areas perfect for other midsize mammals, like caribou. Despite the disappearance of most megafauna by this time, the abundant fish and wildlife—such as bear, deer, possum, rabbit, raccoon, and squirrel—as well as nut trees and berries made for accessible food sources.[26] Indigenous hunters developed sophisticated techniques for hunting bison and caribou in drives, which required the cooperation of large groups rather than the efforts of individuals or small bands.[27] Those large animals that survived the end of the glacial age—bison, caribou, elk, moose, pronghorn, mountain goat, mountain sheep, and muskox—were hunted seasonally and socially, providing more opportunities for family, cultural, and material exchanges.[28] These people built social and political arrangements to coordinate hunting and to organize their relationships.

Before the end of the last glacial cycle—a period about 11,700 years ago—Indigenous ancestors crossed the ice, waters, and exposed lands; some traveled in small, nimble bands while other groups seasonally expanded into larger communities with more developed political structures. In mountains, prairies, deserts, and forests, the cultures and polities of America's first peoples were as varied as the continent's geography. Indigenous peoples made their lives alongside the rest of the beings in their environments, moving and changing according to their own desires and needs. As the climate began to stabilize around 6,000 years ago, Indigenous communities began to leave behind more physical traces of their presence on the land. By the medieval warm period (around 950 CE), Indigenous communities found it easier to increasingly turn to agriculture to meet both their nutrition needs and to help maintain political structures. Agriculture made settlement and the creation of cities possible, and Indigenous leaders seized on the possibilities of agriculture to secure their power. By the end of the fifteenth century, Indigenous populations in the Western Hemisphere would reach one hundred million, with two-fifths in North America. Meanwhile, the population of Europe was only around fifty million.[29]

IV. Continent-Wide Changes

In the Mississippi Valley, Indigenous ancestors long enjoyed abundant fish and wildlife along the river. Rivers and streams that fed the Mississippi slowed, allowing silt to build up, creating the rich alluvial plains that would later be known as the American Bottomlands renowned for its agricultural potential.[30] Moreover, as the weather extremes that had characterized so much of early Indigenous life abated, summers became longer and rain more predictable. As a result, people who had mainly been foragers, hunters, and fisherfolk found it more feasible to cultivate domesticated plants. These choices made by Indigenous leaders had considerable social and political implications. Indigenous women especially contributed to the growth of agriculture as they learned to domesticate wild plants and cultivate new ones.[31]

Some communities developed what has been called the Eastern Agricultural Complex, where wild plant relatives were selected and managed into larger and more dependable crops. Others continued to practice mixed and seasonally dependent ways of making their lives by combining the gathering of wild foods, hunting, and fishing, with deliberate cultivation. Today, 10,000-year-old bottle-gourd seeds in Florida tell of the people who carefully tended and harvested the crop.[32] Further south, evidence of some of the earliest plants to be grown has been found in the caves of current-day Mexico. There, preserved ancient specimens of chili peppers, avocados, prickly pear cactus, squash, beans, and maize reveal what the community members were growing. Indigenous farmers also supplemented their diet with rabbit, deer, fish, and other wild relatives.

Agriculture served a variety of political structures. Ancestors of the Menominee created an agricultural site called Anaem Omot in

northern Wisconsin around 1000 CE that served individual families in a largely decentralized egalitarian society. Corn, climbing beans, and winter squash were grown intensively on raised fields.[33] Other communities used agriculture to enable larger, more hierarchical political structures.

The Maya in modern-day Mexico and Central America were the first to care for a species of wild grasses to cultivate into maize (corn) as early as 8,700 years ago.[34] These farmers identified, observed, and selected the largest and hardiest of these plants, pollinating them until their kernels and stalks grew bigger, taller, and stronger, eventually creating a plant similar to the corn we know today. Knowledge held by one Indigenous community eventually found its way to others, and maize spread to the Gulf coast area around 6,000 years ago. It was high in caloric content, easily dried and stored, and, on Mesoamerica's warm and fertile Gulf Coast, could sometimes be harvested twice a year. Maize required complex irrigation systems, leading to further agriculture development even in the more arid climates of North America.[35]

At what is now called Watson Brake, Louisiana, 5,400 years ago Indigenous peoples began creating possibly the oldest monumental earthen architecture on the continent.[36] The structure comprises eleven earthworks connected by ridges into an oval formation that is nearly nine hundred feet across. The sophistication and precision involved in these projects speak to cultural creativity, technical expertise, and political coordination. In addition to hunting deer, fishing, and foraging for nuts, the people also raised some of the earliest wild crops on the continent: goosefoot, knotweed, and marsh elder. Other foodstuffs eventually domesticated in the Mississippi River Valley included sunflowers and gourds.[37]

Later in northeastern Louisiana, Indigenous travelers and traders began to work on an immense space of public architecture known as Poverty Point. Over a period of six hundred years, people used basketfuls of dirt to create a complex of concentric, crescent-shaped earthworks that aligned with celestial configurations. This sacred geometry, carried out with the help of an extremely accurate measurement system based on equilateral triangles, was later used across the eastern Mississippi Valley. Although hundreds of people lived among the earthworks, the site seems to have been most important as a place of trade: artifacts and stone materials recovered there have come from as far as eight hundred miles away—from the Appalachian Mountains to the hills of Iowa. Artisans decorated stone and ceramic pieces with images of owls, other birds, and panthers. Rather than a farming community, the people at Poverty Point gathered nuts, seeds, and wild fruits; they fished and hunted turtles, deer, and alligators. The residents also used "cooking balls," small clay spheres that when heated and covered could be used to cook meat.



Figure 1.4. These small decorative clay objects are representative of the earliest artifacts discovered from Poverty Point, Louisiana. Spherical or geometric in shape, these clay fired objects are thought to have been used as artificial cooking stones. Wikimedia.

Around 4,500 years ago, in the area along the current borderlands of southwestern Texas and northwestern Coahuila, artists in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands painted scenes in red, black, yellow, and white on the walls of rock shelters and shallow caves. This rock art, featuring panthers, deer, human figures, serpents, and geometric shapes, holds stories and knowledge sacred to the peoples of this place, and is a reminder of their presence today.

In those days, bison ranged across much of the continent but concentrated on the Great Plains, the largest grassland in North

and South America. A warming climate led to a longer bison breeding season and the expansion of short-grass prairie—perfect for bison sustenance—even during periodic drought. Roughly 4,800 years ago, Indigenous peoples began making pemmican, a food consisting of pounded and dried bison meat mixed with fat and berries. Pemmican is particularly suited to seasonally mobile lifestyles because it serves as a complete, portable, and lasting energy source.

In the Pacific Northwest, the Kwakwaka'wakw, Tlingits, Haidas, and hundreds of other communities speaking dozens of languages thrived in a land with a moderate climate, lush forests, and many rivers. They depended on salmon for survival, and this important relative was treated with respect. Its image represented prosperity, life, and renewal: salmon images decorated and continue to decorate poles, baskets, canoes, oars, and other tools. Each season, as salmon were spotted for the first time, the Coastal Salish people and others celebrated the First Salmon Ceremony.[38] Sustainable harvesting practices ensured the survival of salmon populations. Massive cedar canoes, as long as fifty feet and carrying as many as twenty men, also enabled extensive fishing expeditions in the Pacific Ocean, where skilled fishermen caught halibut, sturgeon, and other fish, sometimes hauling thousands of pounds in a single canoe.[39]



Figure 1.5. In a First Salmon Ceremony, bones from the first salmon harvest are returned to the water to honor and give thanks for their annual return. Seen here is a celebration in which the Kwantlen First Nation elders are wearing ceremonial clothing. Wikimedia.

Around 3,200 years ago, in the highlands of the regions now called Veracruz on the Gulf Coast, Olmec people were growing maize along with avocado, cacao, beans, squash, and yucca.[40] Olmec people made rubber balls from the latex of the local rubber tree, which they used in a ball game that became popular across the Mesoamerican region. Besides the ball game, Olmec society produced many other notable inventions. They developed the Long Count Calendar, which was among the first mathematical expressions of the concept of zero and would be used later by the Maya. Olmecs developed a writing system more advanced than those in Europe at the time. Their artwork included colossal busts made from volcanic rock. These monumental stone sculptures often depicted rulers and weighed up to forty tons.[41] The Olmec also carved masks and smaller figurines from greenstone, jade, and clay with distinct coffee-bean-shaped eyes. Their trade networks reached across the isthmus of Mexico, and their artistic styles were imitated for hundreds of years.

V. Political Change

With surplus food came the ability to support more people, necessitating newer, larger political structures. The Pacific Northwest became one of the most densely populated regions of North America. There, a unique social organization centered on elaborate feasts, called potlatches, developed. These potlatches celebrated births and weddings and determined social status. Hosts demonstrated their wealth and power by entertaining guests with food, artwork, and performances. The more the hosts gave away, the more prestige and power they had within the group. Some would save for decades to host an extravagant potlatch that would, in turn, give them greater respect and power within the community. Potlatches also served as a vehicle for political activity. Tlingit potlatches, for instance, can be understood as a way of managing conflicts, including competing land and resource claims, the selection of clan leaders, the establishment and reaffirmation of alliances, and resolving individual disputes.[42]



Figure 1.6. This 19th-century reproduction depicts a Haida Chieftain's home. These houses were typically thirty to sixty feet in length and width and made of cedar beams. This one has a sea wolf, whale, a female shaman, and three watchmen, all of which are aspects of their kinship identities and spiritual beliefs. Wikipedia.

With developments in agricultural technology came the ability—and need—for the centralization of large numbers of people. Agriculture flourished in the fertile river valleys between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic Ocean, an area known as the Eastern Woodlands, as well as irrigated areas of the Southwest. The hands required to maintain these crops were many, and some groups—such as the large population at Cahokia, a massive city in the Mississippi River Valley—relied on coerced labor made possible through extended empires. For others, food security enabled them to pursue artistic, administrative, and spiritual activities. It also enabled the growth of large advanced early societies, such as that at Tenochtitlán in the Valley of Mexico, Cahokia along the Mississippi River, and ancestral Puebloan communities in the desert oasis areas of the Greater Southwest.

Maize arrived in the US Southwest from different parts of Mexico about 3,200 years ago, carried by travelers and by exchanging seeds along trade networks. It spread from there across the Great Plains to the eastern half of the continent over 2,000 years ago, reaching the far north about 1,000 years later.[43]

Corn, however, did not become a dominant food source right away, but as a highly nutritious food, it continues to hold an important spiritual and cultural place in many Native communities. Hopi stories, for example, tell of Muingwu, the kachina spirit, who grew corn from his body, along with watermelon and squash; Kiché Maya recount that the maize god, Hun Hunahpu, mixed corn and water together to create the first humans; Penobscot stories explain that corn is a gift from the body of First Mother.[44]



Figure 1.8. Restored Teotihuacan façade from the Temple of the Feathered Serpent (Teotihuacan), painted red with gold and jade decorations. Museum of National Anthropology.

One of the largest of these corn-supported cities was Teotihuacán in current-day central Mexico, northeast of Mexico City. This community, which had a population of at least 25,000 people and likely more, was made up of neighborhoods populated by ethnically distinct groups of people who came from across Mesoamerica. One of the earliest influences of the sociopolitical integration of the Mesoamerican culture was the previously mentioned Olmec. The architecture in Teotihuacán included large pyramids, especially the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon. Later Nahuatl-speaking peoples in Mexico, including the Aztecs and Toltecs, considered Teotihuacan the birthplace of the gods. After the long and slow fall of Teotihuacán, the Toltec rose to power, acquiring many skills from its descendants, including woven textiles, architecture, and astronomy. Buildings, sculptures, markets, libraries, and universities populated the Toltec cities. The Toltec continued a highly centralized, theocratic government, but the palace held more power than the temple. The extensive and rapid development of Toltec cities was made possible by a rather stable government based on the control of water.[45]

In the Southwest, about 2,500 years ago, ancestors of current-day Pueblo people, sometimes called Hohokam (or Huhugam), invented sophisticated irrigation systems to raise crops in the desert near current-day Phoenix, Arizona. The canals they built with clay and digging sticks routed river water into their gardens, irrigating cotton fields as well as the Three Sisters—corn, beans, and squash. The canal system was more than eight hundred miles of trunk lines, with hundreds of miles of branches. The longest known canal measured twenty miles.[46]

From 2,900 to 1,500 years ago, in the area now known as the Fraser River Valley of British Columbia, ancestors of Stó:lō–Coast Salish peoples lived on salmon, elk, and shellfish, as well as whales, seals, and sea otters that they hunted with hooks and harpoons from large canoes of red cedar. Indeed, many people of the Pacific Northwest built elaborate plank houses out of the region's abundant cedar trees. The five-hundred-foot-long Suquamish Oleman House (or Old Man House), for instance, rested on the banks of Puget Sound.[47] Giant cedar trees were also carved and painted in the shape of animals or other figures to tell stories and express identities. These poles (later called totem poles by anthropologists) became the most recognizable art form of the Pacific Northwest, but people also carved masks and other wooden items, such as hand drums and rattles, out of the region's great trees.



Figure 1.7. 14th-century ancestral Hopi bowl from Navajo County, Arizona, with four stylized birds in a circle connected to a diamond in the center of the bowl. National Museum of the American Indian. Wikipedia.

Indigenous communities across North America were connected by kin, politics, and culture, and sustained by long-distance trading routes. The Mississippi River, for example, served as an important trade artery, but all of the continent's waterways were vital to transportation and communication. The community at Poverty Point (in what is currently Louisiana) had access to copper from present-day Canada and flint from modern-day Indiana. Sheets of mica found at the sacred Serpent Mound site near the Ohio River came from the Allegheny Mountains in the northeast, and obsidian from nearby earthworks originated from the Yellowstone River area near present-day Montana. Turquoise from the Greater Southwest could be found further south at Teotihuacan.

In the Southwest, ancestral Puebloan people, the Anasazi (sometimes referred to as Basketmakers), adapted to a wetter climate by growing corn and using the regional grasses to create beautifully woven baskets, mats, and sandals. They lived in the desert lowlands, largely in homes made of wood and adobe. Sophisticated irrigation practices, agriculture, extensive trading networks, and the domestication of animals like dogs and turkeys supported an expanding population. Earlier, Puebloan communities lived on the lowlands and built their homes on wooden posts.

As the climate warmed, however, more people began moving to the nearby mesas to escape the heat. As the climate dried out, many people followed the pinyon trees and animals, to find water for their crops and communities. In the highlands, communities switched from living in wooden pit houses to structures made of quarried stone embedded into cliffs, such as those at Chaco Canyon in present-day New Mexico. Some of these residential structures were massive, such as Pueblo Bonito, which housed hundreds of Puebloan people, stretched over two acres, and rose five stories high. Copper bells, turquoise decorations, and bright macaw feathers decorated its six hundred rooms.[48] Homes like those at Pueblo Bonito included a small dugout room, or kiva, which played an important role in a variety of ceremonies and served as the center for Puebloan life and culture. Additionally, Puebloan people carefully charted the stars and designed their homes in line with the path of the sun and moon.[49] Between 900 and 1300 CE, as many as 15,000 Pueblo people lived in the Chaco Canyon complex.[50] These individuals constructed intricate road systems spanning hundreds of miles that would connect communities and trade routes across the region.

Chaco Canyon inhabitants appear to have faced several ecological challenges, including a severe drought in 1130 CE that ultimately caused them to disperse into smaller settlements. However, Chaco remains a site of spiritual and cultural importance.



Figure 1.9. Native people in the Southwest began constructing these highly defensible cliff dwellings in 1190 CE and continued expanding and refurbishing them until 1260 CE before abandoning them around 1300 CE. Andreas F. Borchert, Mesa Verde National Park Cliff Palace. Wikimedia. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany.

Similarly, in the Pacific Northwest, a persistent drought provoked change, and not just in terms of increased risk of forest fire. Less rain meant that salmon yields would be less predictable. These changes nudged networks away from rivers and toward overland trail systems.[51] Root crops, especially camas bulbs, became particularly important in Salish communities as winter food. Camas prairies were tended and harvested with care followed by ceremony in the springtime. The prairies themselves were host to important medicine and edible plants. Frequent fires increased the availability of wildlife, berries, and other wild foods and medicines.

The same arid climate system affected the Mississippian peoples of the American Midwest and Southeast. Roughly one thousand years ago, the largest Mississippian settlement, Cahokia, located just east of modern-day St. Louis, peaked at a population of perhaps as many as 30,000 people. It rivaled contemporary European cities in size. No city north of modern Mexico, in fact, would match Cahokia's peak population levels until after the American Revolution. The city itself spanned 2,000 acres. The center was marked by what is known today as Monks Mound, a large earthen hill that rose ten stories high. Its base was larger than that of the pyramids in Egypt. Scholars believe that, as with many of the peoples who lived in the Eastern Woodlands, life and death in Cahokia was linked to the movement of the stars, sun, and moon, and their ceremonial earthwork structures reflected these important structuring forces. They were also places of important economic exchange and political intrigue.

Cahokia became a key trading center partly because of its position near the Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers. These rivers created networks that stretched from the Great Lakes to the American Southeast. Archaeologists have identified materials such as seashells that traveled over a thousand miles to reach the center of this civilization. Cahokia hummed with the sounds of thousands upon thousands of pilgrims, traders, warriors, and settlers. Corn was one of the factors that enabled such a large community to exist, even though its cultivation often depended on people who had been subjugated in warfare.[52]

The size of Cahokia and extent of its influence suggests that the city relied on a hierarchical system of chiefdoms and tributaries, enabled by sustained social stratification and frequent warfare. War captives were seized, forming an important part of the economy in the North American Southeast. Unlike the later transatlantic slave trade, Native American slavery was not based on holding people as property, nor was it always a permanent condition. Instead, Native Americans understood the enslaved as people who lacked kinship networks. Very often, a formerly enslaved person could become a fully integrated member of the community. Therefore, adoption or marriage could enable an enslaved person to enter a kinship network and join the community. Indeed, slavery and captive trading became an important way that many Native communities grew and gained or maintained power in many areas of the continent.[53]



Figure 1.10. An artist's rendering of Cahokia reveals a vast urban center with a gigantic Monk's Mound or temple. The center is surrounded by a stockade fence and includes smaller dwellings made of wattle and daub scattered throughout. The image captures Cahokia at its height when its population outpaced cities like London during the same time period. Prepared by Bill Isminger and Mark Esarey with artwork by Greg Harlin. From the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site.

Around 1050 CE, Cahokia's population expanded exponentially by almost 500 percent in one generation.[54] Moreover, new groups of incoming peoples were absorbed into the city and its supporting communities. But by 1300 CE, the once-powerful city collapsed. Scholars previously pointed to ecological disaster or slow depopulation through emigration, but new research into the causes of the city's decline instead emphasize mounting warfare, indicated by defensive stockades, or perhaps internal political tensions made worse by environmental changes.[55] After its decline, the successor states to Cahokia restructured as small tribal republics.[56]

People influenced by Cahokia are often called Mississippian, and their ways of living profoundly shaped Southeastern societies.[57] Historians suggest that Cahokian evangelists and emissaries spread news of their new religious beliefs and practices, including the specialization of labor and architectural styles. The people along the Black Warrior River, for example, renovated their city, including elements of Mississippian architecture such as pyramids and a large central plaza. Labor and agricultural practices, in particular, aided communities struggling to feed and house their inhabitants. Later, smaller communities sent their young people to learn from villagers on the Black Warrior River. In this way, the culture of Cahokia would endure. For example, the Lady of Cofitachequi ruled over a Mississippian community in the lands between the future Carolinas and the lower Mississippi River, where Spanish settlers encountered her in 1540.[58]

Politically and socially, Mississippians were organized into chiefdoms. Chiefs, usually male, inherited their authority through maternal bloodlines. Traditionally matrilineal, Mississippian women were empowered by their control over agricultural food production. Historian Christina Snyder suggests that the Lady of Cofitachequi may have risen to power due to a lack of a legitimate male heir after deaths from a recent widespread disease. The Lady's power stemmed from her authority over access to the kingdom's food, trade, and weapons, and the support of her people, which allowed her to make decisions and alliances for the kingdom.[59]



Figure 1.11. This photograph shows one of the two tallest mounds in the Great Temple Mound Complex at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, Georgia, it measures fifty five feet in height. The mounds were built in a pyramid shape but flat top. They were likely home to the chief or second chief during the Mississippian period. Photograph from 2015. Wikipedia.

Some of the largest and most concentrated populations in North America two thousand years ago were the Puebloan groups (centered in the current-day US Southwest and northwestern Mexico), the Mississippian groups living along the Great River and its tributaries, and the Mesoamerican groups of the areas now known as Central America, central Mexico, and the Yucatán.

In present-day northern Guatemala and the Mexican state of Tabasco, the Maya built the city-states of Chichen Itza, Mayapan, and Uxmal, which housed massive temples and sustained large populations. There, a combined priesthood and nobility governed the rest of the population. In the further reaches of Maya territory, ordinary villages retained clan structures where they worked the nobles' fields, paid rent for land use, and contributed labor and taxes for the construction of roads, nobles' houses, and other structures.[60] Ultimately, the Maya constructed a complex and long-lasting civilization with written language, advanced mathematics, and stunningly accurate calendars.[61]

VI. Continuities

By the turn of the first millennium, one thousand years ago, most Native North American people in what is now the United States lived in small communities tied by kinship networks. The Cherokee, for example, emerged after the Mississippian mound-building period, reflecting a shift in political economy and social organization away from the more seemingly urban and hierarchical mode illustrated by Cahokia.[62] The Cherokee and many other communities understood four-legged and two-legged creatures as their relatives, and some communities adopted clan or band systems as ways of organizing families across space, time, and species and dividing social roles and responsibilities.

Archaeological evidence suggests that ancestors living at Poverty Point in what is now Louisiana likely possessed a highly organized political society, despite the fact that they did not practice agriculture. This hypothesis about political authority is based upon the required planning and construction needed to create the expansive amphitheater found there. Its construction employed very sophisticated mathematics and skilled labor. Poverty Point challenges interpretations that suggest Native societies were organized in only two ways: advanced, complex hierarchical civilizations made possible by highly productive farming or less complex ones with chiefs and a council, as seen in hunter/foraging people.[63]

Some communities traced their ancestry through their mothers or were matrilineal, including the Gitksan and Cherokee. In these cases, biological fathers often joined the mothers' extended families; sometimes a mother's brothers (the child's uncles) took on more direct roles in child raising than biological fathers. Mothers often wielded enormous influence at local levels, and men's identities and influence often depended on their relationships to women. Indigenous societies, meanwhile, generally afforded greater sexual and marital freedom than European cultures. Women, for instance, often chose their husbands, and divorce was often a relatively straightforward process.[64]

Many Indigenous groups across the continent used shifting cultivation, in which farmers cut the forest, burned the undergrowth, and then planted seeds in the nutrient-rich ashes. When crop yields began to decline, farmers moved to another field and allowed the land to recover and the forest to regrow before again cutting the forest, burning the undergrowth, and restarting the cycle. In Eastern Woodland areas, from the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River to the Atlantic coast, Indigenous communities managed their forest resources by burning underbrush to create vast, parklike hunting grounds. Fire management was especially important to clear the ground for planting the Three Sisters crops of corn, beans, and squash. These three crops together supplied most of the energy, fiber, vitamins, and minerals that humans need. When planted in small, raised hills, corn provides support for bean vines to grow upward. The bean plants provide nitrogen in the soil for corn, while squash gathers water with its broad leaves and provides shade to keep the soil protected. In this region, the rich soil and use of specialized tools enabled effective and sustainable farming practices, producing high yields without overburdening the soil.[65]

Assuring food security in this region was a gender- and age-specific responsibility. Women held power in many ways, including reproduction and also their authority over the earth's fertility through agriculture.[66] Gender work roles were more flexible and equitable than those practiced by Europeans. One Hidatsa woman described how her father helped her mother in caring for the children. Similarly, Luther Standing Bear recalled that if a man was home from hunting for a few days, he "busied himself in many ways, lightening the work of the woman." Indigenous men and women were partners who cared for one another and worked together for the good of the family.[67] Anthropologist Eleanor Leacock explains, "Nothing in the structure of egalitarian band societies necessitated special deference to men. There were no economic and social liabilities that bound women to be more sensitive to men's needs and feelings than vice versa."[68]

Women engaged in permanent, intensive agriculture using hand tools like hoes, adzes, and diggers. Children and the elderly also had roles in collecting wild foods and medicines from the land. And while adult men usually hunted and fished, big game hunting—such as for bison or caribou—was a social and ritualistic event that relied on the talents of most of the community working together, and respected the death of the hunted. Women took part by cleaning and curing hides, which became their property.



Figure 1.12. The Navajo artist Andrew Tsihnahjinnie painted this portal of Navaho women weaving and preparing food. Andrew Tsihnahjinnie, "Navajo Women," 1934. Smithsonian American Art Museum. Wikimedia.

Generally, spiritual practices, understandings of property, and political arrangements differed markedly from European ways. Spiritual power permeated their worlds in tangible and accessible ways. Some Indigenous people believed that all living things contained a spirit.[69] In many cases, this power could be appealed to and harnessed through ceremony, song, or dance. Indigenous religions were often also inclusivist, that is, they allowed individuals to incorporate new religious beliefs or practices to understand the changing world.[70]

Native governments were and continue to be complex. Before colonization, Eastern Woodland societies were more democratic than their European counterparts. Traditionally, any adult, male or female, was able to speak at council meetings. In most instances, the government included a chief and a tribal council that worked together to govern and guide their communities.

Chiefs were respected people chosen by their communities based on their demonstrated leadership and wisdom. They offered guidance and helped resolve disputes, but even the most powerful rulers of the Eastern Woodlands did not operate like kings.

Councils continue to include elected members of the tribe who advocate for their people and pass laws to govern their nation. Indigenous communities usually valued group autonomy over individual interests. The system of decision-making was based on consensus instead of majority rule. However, when an agreement could not be reached, the dissenters would leave the community, forming one of their own nearby.[71]

Other communities, like that at Cahokia or in Tenochtitlán, had more hierarchical and less democratic governments. Coastal foraging societies in the Northwest were also less democratic, resembling feudal Europe with ruling nobles and a hereditary ranking system. Commoners provided labor in these "courtly societies."[72]

Alternatively, the Muskogees (Creeks) and Seminoles had three branches of government, each led by the communities' elite clans: the military, civil administration, and the branch that handled sacred rituals. Typically, women were not involved in leadership affairs within these communities. However, women of the Haudenosaunee and Cherokee held more political authority. Among the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras, certain women would choose their male council representatives for the clan.[73] Clan mothers among the Haudenosaunee would select chiefs, determine farming rights, adjudicate legal disputes, and wield other forms of power in the community.[74]

Various land systems existed in Indigenous communities. However, generally, Native Americans saw land as a resource individuals had the right to use, not as a commodity to be owned, bought, and sold. As leadership varied in Native communities, they were typically judged by how well they could provide for their people. Generosity was valued in leadership, and extreme starvation was mostly avoided. For example, Powhatan, an Indigenous ruler in what is now Virginia, was known for his generosity and would redistribute 90 percent of his collected resources, paying specific attention to the neediest among his people.[75]

Knowledge in Native communities was communicated in many ways. For example, Ojibwes used birch-bark scrolls to record medical treatments, recipes, songs, stories, and more. Other Eastern Woodland peoples wove plant fibers, embroidered skins with porcupine quills, and modeled the earth to make sites of complex ceremonial meaning. On the Plains, artisans wove buffalo hair and painted on buffalo skins; in the Pacific Northwest, artisans carved great cedar poles and decorated large wooden houses. Maya, Zapotec, and Nahua ancestors in Mesoamerica painted their histories on plant-derived textiles or hides and carved them into stone. Khipu technology was developed between 600 CE and 1000 CE in central Peru. It was a knotted string device recording various histories and constructed in binary code that remains unbroken to this day.[76] Only 600 khipu pieces remain today, as most were destroyed by Spanish colonists.



Figure 1.13. Birch bark scroll from the White Earth Reservation contains a recorded historical account of a battle on the ice between the Chippewa and the Dakota Indians in 1797. Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.

According to their histories, the ancestors of the Nahua people moved into the Valley of Mexico from their homeland of Aztlán in the North around 1100 CE. Soon, other Nahua ancestral groups founded small city-states known as altepetl. The related Mexica

group founded their altepetl, Tenochtitlán, on an island in the middle of the lake in current-day Mexico City in 1325. Almost one hundred years later, in 1427, Tenochtitlán—with the three altepetl Texcoco, Tlacopan, and Huexotzinco—went to war and conquered its former ally, the Tepaneca altepetl of Azcapotzalco. The victors consolidated their power into the Triple Alliance of Tenochtitlán, Texcoco, and Tlacopan, also known as the Aztec Empire.

The Aztec state depended on irrigated agriculture, with corn as its main focus along with beans, pumpkins, cacao, tomatoes, tobacco, cotton, and other crops, for their dense population. They constructed dams, canals, and fortress structures made of stone. Tenochtitlán had elaborate markets and received raw goods from all areas of the Americas. Turquoise from the Pueblos in the US Southwest was used as a means of exchange for valuable commodities.[77]

This arrangement of related peoples went on to dominate first the Valley of Mexico, exacting tribute from enemy and vassal populations alike. The Triple Alliance ruled through a decentralized network of subject peoples that paid regular tribute—including everything from corn and other foodstuffs to luxury goods such as jade, cacao, and gold—and provided troops and captives for the empire. Triple Alliance forces would spread to the Gulf Coast and as far south as current-day Honduras, exacting tribute and erecting Mexica-style governments, architecture, and other cultural monuments along the way. In Tenochtitlán, a massive pyramid temple, the Templo Mayor, was located at the city center (its ruins can still be found in the center of Mexico City today), a testament to Mexica power.

This was also a time of severe drought and famine. The ruler of Texcoco altepetl, Nezahualcoyotl (1402–1472) helped solve the problem of drought and famine by building a massive aqueduct and irrigation system for Texcoco and allied Tenochtitlán, then ruled by Moctezuma I (ca. 1398–1469). Much of the city of Tenochtitlán was fed by crops grown on large artificial islands called chinampas, constructed by dredging mud and rich sediment from the bottom of the lake and depositing it over time to form plots of land. Additionally, massive marketplaces facilitated the movement of local and faraway goods. By the time Moctezuma II Xocoyotzin (ca. 1466–1520) came to lead the Triple Alliance in 1502, Tenochtitlán's Mexica—also known as the "Aztecs"—were the dominant military and economic power in the region.

In the Eastern Woodlands to the north, many Native American societies lived in smaller, dispersed communities to take advantage of rich soils and abundant rivers and streams. Along the St. Lawrence River, Iroquoian-speaking Wendat and Haudenosaunee peoples lived near Anishinaabeg and Innu communities, and their kinship and trade ties stretched from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes and on to the Mississippi River.

Lenape people farmed the bottomlands throughout the Hudson and Delaware River watersheds in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. During planting and harvesting seasons, they gathered in larger groups to coordinate their labor and take advantage of local abundance. As proficient fishers, they organized seasonal fish camps and wove nets, baskets, mats, and a variety of household materials from the rushes found along the streams, rivers, and coasts.



Figure 1.14. 1870 Delaware bandolier bag with intricate beading. This style of shoulder bag is believed to have originated as a result of the Indian Removal Act. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Wikimedia, Creative Commons.

Dispersed and relatively independent, hundreds of Lenape settlements were nonetheless bound together by oral histories,

ceremonial traditions, consensus-based political organization, kinship networks, and a shared clan system. Marriage occurred between clans, and matrilineal lines organized the society. For example, a married man would join the clan of his wife. Additionally, Lenape women wielded authority over marriages, households, agricultural production and the selection of leaders, called sachems.[78] Sachems governed Lenape communities by the consent of their people, and acquired their authority by demonstrating wisdom and experience. Large gatherings occurred for ceremonial purposes or to make important decisions, and the sachems spoke for their people in councils that included men, women, and elders.

Between 600 to 1,000 years ago, the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois Confederacy—from the region now called New York and Ontario—developed the political system they still hold today. It was created out of the necessity to end war and broker peace. With droughts, competing tributary systems, and other challenges, many Indigenous people of the Northeast and Great Lakes found themselves at war both within their own and against other groups.[79] During this time, a man later called "The Peacemaker," who had been born north of Lake Ontario and raised by his mother and grandmother, crossed the lands to spread his message of peace and his system for ending wars. The first person who supported Peacemaker was a woman from the Erie Nation called Jigonhasse. She gave Peacemaker lodging and food and pledged to help him spread peace. Another person, a man from the Onondaga nation called Hiawatha, became Peacemaker's spokesperson.

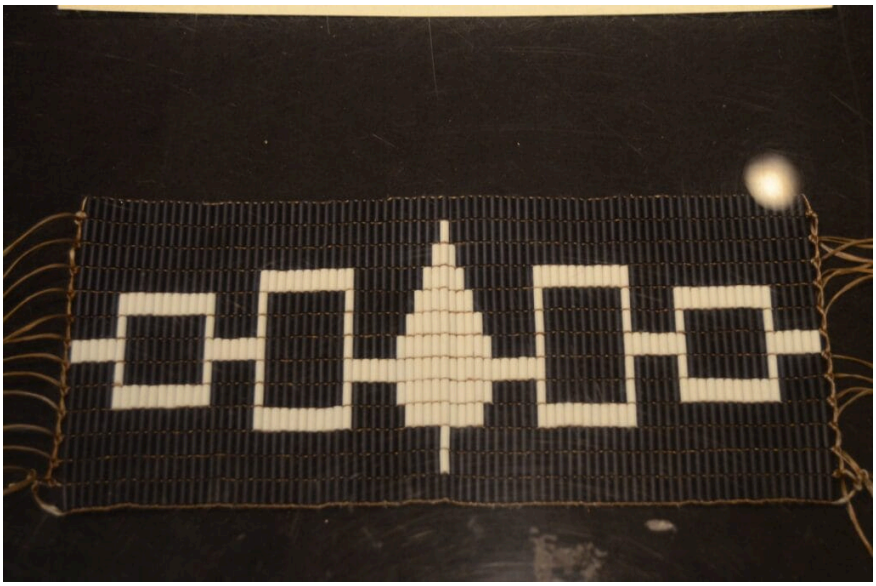


Figure 1.15. This belt, known as the Hiawatha Belt, symbolizes the unity of the five original Haudenosaunee nations. The traditional shell bead or wampum was used by many Eastern Woodlanders. Each tree or square represents a tribe of the original five nations, and the line connecting them represents the path of peace. This symbol now serves as the flag of the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Flickr, Creative Commons.

Eventually, Peacemaker gathered leaders from all five Haudenosaunee families—Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca—and invited them to join the Great League of Peace. At that time, the nations were divided into small hereditary sachemdoms, but the Great League would be represented centrally by fifty sachems chosen by the traditional Clan Mothers.[80] But one tyrannical leader from Onondaga, Tadadaho, initially refused, but with the help of Jigonhasse and Hiawatha, Tadadaho agreed to join the League. Peacemaker promised that he would henceforth preside over the Council, and that the ceremonial fire would always be kept at Onondaga. Then, Peacemaker uprooted a white pine tree and called on everyone to bury their weapons beneath its roots. The white pine's branches came to symbolize the branches of peace, which would shelter any nation that joined the League. Later, the founders of the US government would be inspired by the Haudenosaunee League and its federal system when they built their own nation. In the nineteenth century, the League would expand to include the Tuscaroras.

VII. Conclusion

The Americas have been filled with a diverse and dynamic array of communities for millennia. The arrival of Europeans five centuries ago dramatically altered the political economy of North America. The resulting global exchange of people, animals, plants, and microbes—what some scholars benignly call the Columbian Exchange—disrupted longstanding structures of power and belonging, inaugurated centuries of violence, unleashed biological terror, and revolutionized the history of the world. However, these actions began the second—not the first—chapter in the long American yawp.

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2: Making an Atlantic World



Figure 2.1. View of Lisbon and the Tagus River in the 16th century with Portuguese sailing ships Caravel and Carrack. Copper Engraving by Frans Hogenberg and from Civitates Orbis Terrarum. Wikimedia Commons.

I. Introduction

Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Portugal and Spain developed imperial systems based on the islands and coastlines of the Atlantic Ocean. These systems were rooted in the commercial, cultural, legal, and military traditions of the Mediterranean world, but over time, they gave rise to entirely new societies that connected North and South America with Africa, Europe, and Asia. Beginning with the conquest and colonization of the Canary Islands, the Spanish Atlantic extended westward to the Caribbean, and from there to the mainland. Having usurped the great empires of Mesoamerica and the Andes, Spanish claims to the Philippines, in the heart of the Pacific world, meant that a truly global empire had been established. Meanwhile, having occupied the uninhabited islands off its coast during the 1400s, Portugal focused its efforts in the south Atlantic, especially the territories that became Brazil and Angola, as well as bases throughout the Indian Ocean. Each of these systems expanded gradually, often with substantial lulls between periods of frenzied activity, in ways that created increasingly interdependent commercial zones. One of the enduring consequences of this interdependence was the spread of plants, animals, and microorganisms from one continent to another. Historians call this the Columbian Exchange. As Old World biota spread throughout the Atlantic basin, the massive transfer of human populations, along with their cultures, languages, and religions, followed. The result was "a new world for all," as one historian has put it, but cultural creativity was the product of survivalism amid pain, loss, and rupture.[1]

Yet, in the year 1400, few could have predicted that the struggling kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula (today's Spain and Portugal) would emerge as global powers over the next two centuries. Indeed, explaining late medieval Europe's economic and territorial expansion, and the development of capitalism more broadly, have been some of the most challenging questions addressed by modern historians. This chapter qualifies Europe's post-1400 expansion by framing the varying motives, strategies, and consequences of colonialism, as well as the limits of imperial control. Of special interest are the economic, political, and social arrangements, all of them predicated on hierarchies of one kind or another, that the Iberians used to manage their overseas empires.

II. Europe Enters the Atlantic

The intensity of contact between two old worlds intensified after 1492, but trade and technology had been making the globe a more connected place for centuries. Between 800 and 1400 CE, voyagers from Polynesia discovered and populated the Hawaiian Islands. Sailing across the Pacific Ocean in massive canoes, these well-prepared travelers brought family members, seedlings,

animals, and tools. By the time contact between Polynesia and Hawai'i ceased around 1400, Inuit peoples had completed their settlement of the Arctic, which had taken them from Siberia to Greenland. These migrations were some of the most epic in human history, yet little is known about them outside of their own cultures. Embarking long before Europeans sought a direct route to the "Indies," Arab traders, bringing with them sailing technology, Islam, and a written language, had been active in the Indian Ocean world from the eleventh century onward. Between 1405 and 1433, China launched seven maritime expeditions led by Zheng He, a Muslim eunuch who became the Ming Dynasty's greatest admiral. Intended to open trade and announce China's power in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, Zheng He's fleets included tens of thousands of sailors and soldiers, carried on ships that dwarfed those sailing in the Mediterranean. The admiral's fifth and sixth expeditions reached the coast of East Africa, a vibrant commercial region where Swahili city-states met the Islamic world. However, following these voyages, China's leaders turned inward, seeking a continental empire.[2]



Figure 2.2. A Kangnido world map created in Korea in 1402 depicts the Old World, stretching from Africa and Europe in the West to Japan in the East. It is one of the oldest surviving maps of East Asia and includes the historic capitals of China. Wikimedia.

The people of western Eurasia, whose territories were shaped by several peninsulas and surrounded by hundreds of islands, also developed a strong maritime tradition. At their peak, Scandinavian seafarers sailed as far east as Constantinople and raided settlements as far south as North Africa. Toward the end of the first millennium, they established colonies in Iceland and southern Greenland, where several thousand Norse lived by raising livestock, fishing, and trading with their kin back in Norway. Around the year 1000, Leif Erikson reached Newfoundland in present-day Canada. Unlike Greenland and Iceland, however, the Norse colony of Vinland failed within a decade. Culturally and geographically isolated, the Norse were driven back to the sea by some combination of limited resources, inhospitable weather, food shortages, and Inuit resistance. The Norse ventures were largely unheard of beyond Scandinavia, and over the next few centuries, the north Atlantic was visited only sporadically by Basque, English, and Norman fishers.

For the most part, European merchants were drawn toward Asia. They were led eastward by the enterprising traders of the Mediterranean, especially those from Genoa and Venice, who managed outposts at Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), the capital of the Byzantine Empire. This gave Italian merchants access to the Black Sea, as well as the Silk Road, a network of routes that connected the Islamic world with China. Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, a sequence of Christian holy wars, known as the Crusades, failed to conquer the Holy Land from Muslim forces, but they did spark greater commercial interest in Asia. So it was that the Venetian Marco Polo, alongside his father and uncle, spent twenty-five years traveling across central Asia and China. His account of these travels gave European audiences their first introduction to China, sparking further interest. During the 1300s west-east trade was facilitated by the power of the Mongol khans, whose empire was built on war but eventually brought political stability, the so-called Pax Mongolica, that long-distance trade depended upon. With demand increasing, Asian goods, principally porcelain, spices, silks, and tea, flooded European markets. This trade created new wealth, represented by the merchant guilds of cities from Seville to Bruges. Since goods and information moved together, the late medieval era was also a time of intellectual ferment. Emerging from the crisis of the fourteenth century, Europeans rediscovered or adopted Greek, Roman, and Muslim knowledge in what became known as the Renaissance, or rebirth. Universities were founded, and Latin Christendom's first books were printed. Commercial integration was ultimately brought to a halt by the Black Death, an outbreak of bubonic plague, and the expansion of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, which captured Constantinople in 1453. Led by the Genoese, Mediterranean

merchants sought alternative trade routes. Eventually, they looked outward to the Atlantic.[3]

Prompted by the intensifying competition for resources and markets, fractious European polities consolidated under the authority of the most powerful warlords. Looking to the legacy of ancient Rome for inspiration, these rulers styled themselves as dukes, kings, and even emperors. By negotiating compromises with the bishops of Rome and selling offices to the nobility, they managed to centralize authority under a single sovereign. Furthermore, almost constant warfare between rival kingdoms led to deepening ties between monarchs and merchants. Unlike the privileged church and nobility, merchants had ready access to cash and were not exempt from most taxes. Over the course of the early modern period (1400–1800), the centralization of military and taxation powers created Europe's nation-states, and the conditions for further expansion.

In what became Spain, the 1469 marriage of Fernando of Aragon and Isabel of Castile joined two of the most powerful kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. In this region, the Crusades were just winding down. With the surrender of Granada, Europe's last independent Muslim city-state, the combined forces of Castile, Aragon, Portugal, and their allies concluded eight centuries of intermittent warfare. Mythologized as the Reconquista (reconquest), this protracted conflict involved plenty of diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchange between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. But in the aftermath of their victory, the Catholic monarchs compelled the remaining Muslims, known as the Moors, as well as Sephardic Jews to either convert to Christianity or leave. Similarly, beginning in 1496 Portugal attempted to forcibly convert or expel its Jewish population. Those who converted became known as New Christians, and to police the authenticity of their faith, the Catholic Church established the office of the Inquisition. This long history of begrudging toleration and repressive violence had a strong influence on Iberian encounters with the peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

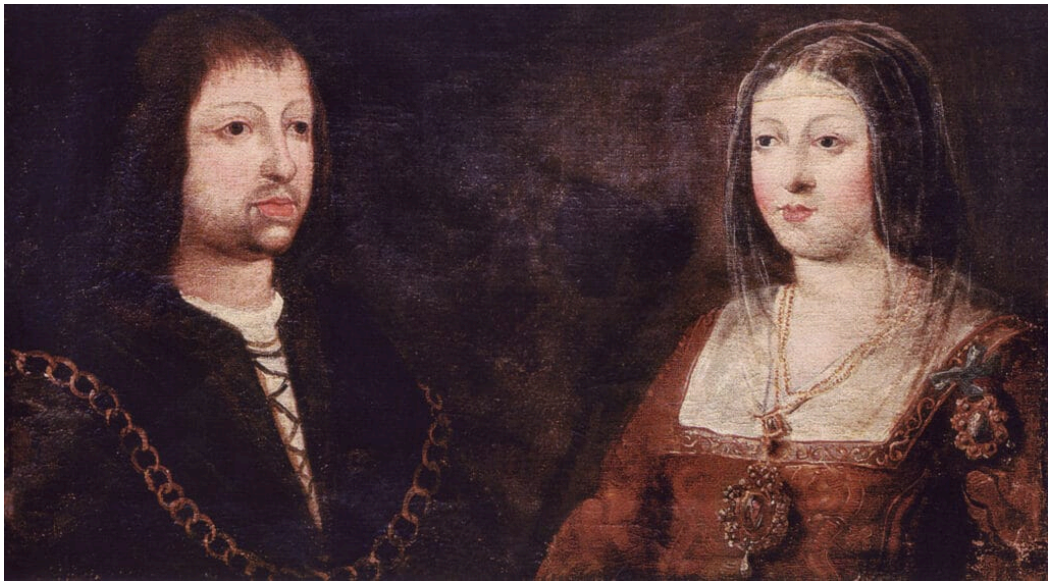


Figure 2.3. Fifteenth-century wedding portrait of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile. Avila Madrigal de las Altas Torres, Convento de las Augustinas. Wikimedia.

Having consolidated their control over both the military and merchant classes, Iberian monarchs sought to bypass the Islamic world and gain more direct access to the goods and markets of Africa and Asia. The rulers of Portugal invested heavily and acted aggressively in securing access to trade. From his estate on the coast of southern Portugal, Infante Dom Henrique (known in English as Prince Henry the Navigator) had long coveted access to the African gold and spice supply blocked by the Moors of Morocco. In 1415, he sponsored an amphibious attack on the Moroccan port city of Ceuta, which gave Portugal a foothold on mainland North Africa, and, it was hoped, a link to the trans-Saharan caravans that brought gold from the south. In the meantime, more ports were seized and a string of forts established from which to launch slave and livestock raids.

The prince also sponsored developments in research and technology. In the fifteenth century, Portuguese sailors perfected the astrolabe, a tool to calculate latitude, and the caravel, a ship well suited for exploration. Both were technological breakthroughs. Complimenting the magnetic compass, which had been adopted from the Chinese, the astrolabe allowed for more precise navigation. Combining maneuverability, thanks to the triangular lateen sails invented by Arab sailors, with a deep draft for carrying larger cargoes, the caravel could handle the Atlantic's rough seas. Improving technologies went hand in hand with the dissemination of cartographic and oceanic knowledge. The Atlantic is an enormous ocean, with distinct wind patterns and currents acting as conduits for those who learned how to use them. Otherwise, voyages were largely restricted by the impossibility of a return trip. Italian and Iberian mariners eventually realized they had to sail further west, into the open ocean, before catching

the currents to West Africa (known to Europeans as Guinea), or using the Gulf Stream to cruise home from the coast of North America. It should be remembered that these successes built upon a series of intimidating failures. In 1291, for example, Venice's Vivaldi brothers sailed into the Atlantic in search of India and were never seen again.[4]

The archipelagos of the eastern Atlantic, including the Azores, the Madeiras, the Canary Islands, and the Cape Verde Islands, were Spain and Portugal's first overseas colonies. They proved to be important models for later settlements, as well as staging grounds for contacting the coasts of sub-Saharan Africa, and eventually for crossing the Atlantic. Although Roman geographers knew them as the Fortunate Isles, Europeans had lost awareness of the Canaries for centuries. Beginning in the early fifteenth century, Norman knights, backed by the kings of Castile and Portugal, launched invasions that relied on divide-and-rule politics to gain a foothold. New patterns of human and ecological destruction followed. Isolated from the mainlands of Europe and Africa for millennia, the native peoples of the Canary Islands—distantly related to the Berbers and known as the Guanches—were hunted as slaves, ravaged by diseases, and assimilated into Iberian society. This protracted demographic disaster presaged the one experienced by many Native American populations upon the arrival of the Spanish. Yet the successes of Guanche resistance, which relied mostly on stone-age weapons, also hinted at the limits of European power. In 1494, a Guanche force routed a Spanish army on Tenerife, inflicting nearly a thousand casualties, and the final campaign to conquer the islands only concluded in 1497.



Figure 2.4. Illustration of Indigenous inhabitants of the Canary Islands referred to as Guanches. "Canarios" by Leonardo Torriani, 1590. Wikimedia Commons.

Amid the wars of conquest, these islands became the first in the Atlantic World where sugar was cultivated by enslaved workers on large-scale plantations. Southern European trading empires like those managed by the Genoese, Catalans, Aragonese, and Venetians entered the Levantine commerce in sugar and slaves in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Portuguese learned the sugar-growing process from Italian merchants, who acted as middlemen between them and the Muslim Mediterranean, where plantations were worked mainly by enslaved Africans and Slavic-speaking Eastern Europeans. Transplanted to the rich volcanic soils of the Madeiras and São Tomé, sugar and its byproducts became widely popular and wildly profitable. It was a difficult crop to grow, but on the Atlantic islands the Portuguese had found fertile and defensible sites to support production. From São Tomé, the technology, techniques, and brutal labor regime of the plantation system was transported to the Caribbean and Brazil.[5]

III. North and West Africa to 1500

While Portuguese crews reconnoitered the coast of Africa, the continent's peoples, regions, and goods had long intrigued European travelers but for the most part were known to them mainly through Muslim or Italian intermediaries such as Ibn Battuta, Alvise Cadamosto, or Leo Africanus. The Catalan Atlas, a map of the known world as understood by the Jewish cartographers who produced it around 1375, vividly illustrates the European association of West Africa with powerful rulers who controlled an immense supply of gold. Depicted on the map is Mansa Musa, ruler of the Mali Empire, who wears a gilded crown while holding a scepter in one hand and a golden orb in the other. During Musa's 1324 pilgrimage to Mecca, an essential duty for every devout Muslim, his spending during a layover in Egypt allegedly caused the price of gold to drop for several years. Besides gold, sub-Saharan Africa beckoned Europeans with rumors that a lost crusader had founded a Christian kingdom near what is

today Ethiopia. For their part, Africa's sub-Saharan societies from Mali to Tanzania had long been in contact with the wider world through the Islamic trade networks that connected them to the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean.

Like the Americas, Africa was shaped by the great diversity of its political and religious systems. The continent's peoples lived in stateless band societies, small towns, and great empires, while practicing Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and thousands of animistic faiths. Like people everywhere, their identities were primarily local and mediated by extended family ties. The expansion of Islam in Africa began with the eighth-century conquests that carried Arab armies from Egypt to Morocco. From there, the faith was spread across the Sahara Desert by merchants and clerics to a region Arabs called the Sahel, meaning "shore," where the savanna and desert meet. Once a barrier, the Sahara became a highway to the Sahel thanks to the camel caravans and oases that sustained them during the two-month crossing. This region was watered by the Niger River, whose valley supported the rise of Gao and Timbuktu, the great trading cities whose market in gold, slaves, and salt drew travelers across the sands. From the 1100s to the 1500s, the western Sahel was the core of several empires, including that of Mali and Songhay. Their rulers were mostly Muslim, and until the nineteenth century Islam in sub-Saharan Africa remained a mostly elite and urban religion. Many of the first converts were kings who sought otherworldly alternatives after traditional rituals failed to alleviate droughts or similar problems. Paired with a written language (Arabic), as a universal law code Islam also appealed to Sahel kings who wished to tax, trade, and extract tribute. In converting to Islam, African kings like Mansa Musa announced their readiness to reach across the Sahara and do business with the Muslim-dominated Mediterranean. By the 1300s, Timbuktu's skyline included several mosques, and the city had become renowned as a center of Islamic learning as well as trade.[6]

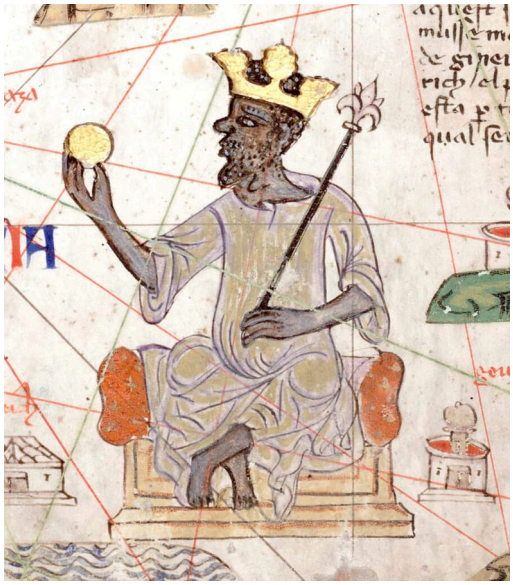


Figure 2.5. Colored illustration of Mansa Musa, the ninth ruler of Mali during the kingdom's height in the 14th century. Mansa is shown atop his throne holding a gold coin. Attributed to cartographer Abraham Cresques. This image is from a Catalan Atlas. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Wikimedia Commons.

Blending economic and religious motivations, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to make sustained contact with African societies when they established small bases, usually not more than a few dozen men, along the Atlantic coast during the fifteenth century. Portuguese trading posts, called feitorias ("factories"), dealt in gold, slaves, and spices, and the profits funded further trade and exploration of the coast in a stop-and-start pattern. Embarking in 1497, Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope to reach East Africa and India before making the return journey two years later. In 1500, the crown dispatched Pedro Álvares Cabral to follow up on da Gama's voyage, but his ships were blown too far west and made landfall in Brazil. Falling on Portugal's side of the imaginary line created by the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided the Atlantic between Spanish and Portuguese spheres, Brazil was initially a marginal colony. During the early 1500s, Portuguese and later French ships arrived to reprovision and trade with the Natives for valuable dyewoods. Beginning in the 1530s, the Portuguese crown became more involved in backing colonization, and its forces succeeded in driving off the French. Small but permanent settlements were built along the coast, where merchants and soldiers began experimenting with sugar production and raiding the local Indigenous peoples for slaves. Following a series of slave uprisings and droughts, most of São Tomé's merchant community migrated to Brazil, bringing with them capital, enslaved Africans, and sugar-making technology. In what became a recurring pattern, it was Portugal's policies in Kongo (present-day Angola) that determined the course of Brazil's colonial history.

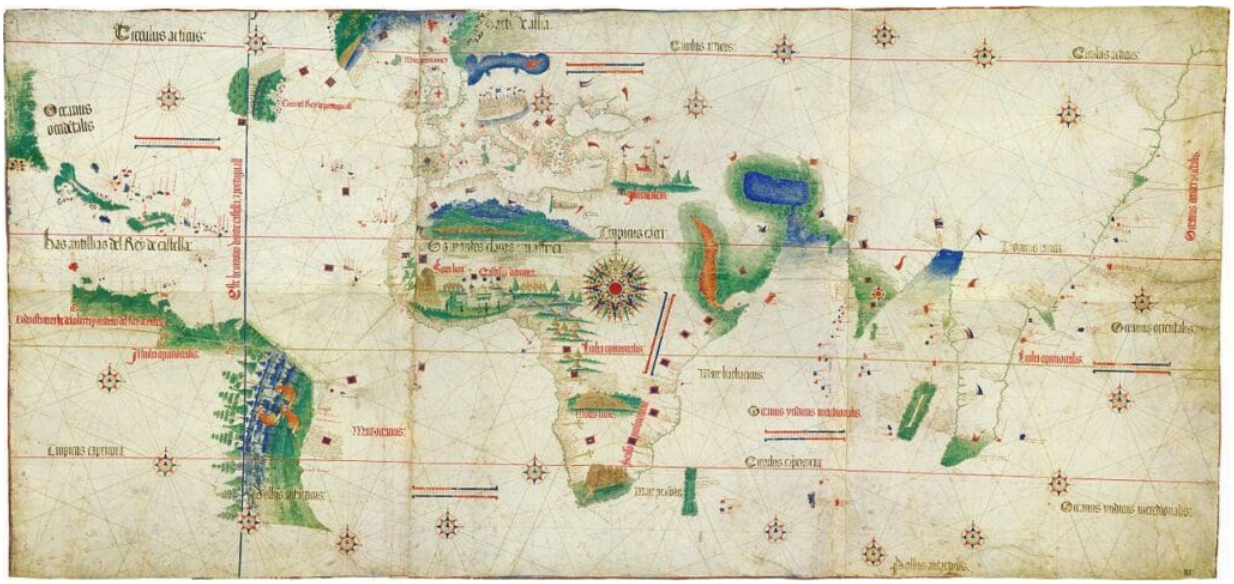


Figure 2.6. By the fifteenth century, the Portuguese had established forts and colonies on islands and along the rim of the Atlantic Ocean; other major European countries soon followed. An anonymous cartographer created this map, known as the Cantino Map, the earliest known map of European exploration in the New World, to depict these holdings and argue for the greatness of his native Portugal. Cantino planisphere (1502), Biblioteca Estense, Modena, Italy. Wikimedia.

The relationship between the kingdoms of Kongo and Portugal had auspicious beginnings. In 1491, King Nzinga a Nkuwu was baptized and took the name João I in honor of his new ally, João II of Portugal. An embassy was sent to Lisbon, and the king's successor, Afonso I, continued to foster good relations. One Kongolese prince was schooled in Rome and ordained as a bishop. Like the conversions to Islam in the Sahel, Christianization in the Kongo was largely an elite practice involving the royal family, nobility, and courtiers. Most central Africans continued to practice a variety of animistic religions, and in any case, Kongolese Catholicism incorporated aspects of local traditions, such as the veneration of ancestors. Kinship also strengthened ties between the Portuguese and the Kongolese. A small, overwhelmingly male population remained along the coast to trade with their African counterparts, and Portuguese merchants soon married elite women, creating a bicultural Luso-African merchant community centered at São Tomé, Cape Verde, and Luanda. Gold, ivory, and malagueta pepper were highly sought after, but the most lucrative traffic was increasingly the trade in enslaved human beings.

IV. Origins of the Slave Trade

Scholars continue to debate the structures of the Atlantic slave trade, which began during the fifteenth century and continued until the late nineteenth century. Across some four hundred years, it is estimated that over 12 million Black people were enslaved and deported to the Americas. Belonging to hundreds of different languages and cultures, most of the victims were sent to Brazil or the Caribbean. From a present-day North American perspective, it may be all too easy to forget that between 1500 and 1800, three Africans arrived in the Americas for every European. An unknown number of people were killed in Africa during the wars and raids caused by slaving. What is certain is that the Atlantic slave trade had a devastating impact on the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora in the Americas. The scale and scope of the Atlantic slave trade also varied considerably over time. Some African states refused to participate in the trade, while others, like Benin, did so for only a few decades. Ultimately, by commodifying human bodies, institutionalizing racism, and generating enormous fortunes, slavery utterly transformed the societies, cultures, and environments of the Atlantic World. Furthermore, the Atlantic traffic was, along with networks in the Indian Ocean, one of several long-distance slave trades that persisted across the early modern and modern eras.

More recently, historians have looked at medieval prejudices, the price of sugar, and the demand for labor in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic to locate the slave trade's origins. Having destroyed or assimilated the Guanche peoples of the Canaries, Portugal's would-be planters needed a new supply of workers to cultivate sugar, a labor-intensive crop. They first turned to the trade relationships that merchants had established with African city-states at the mouth of the Senegal and Gambia rivers. Since the 1440s, Portuguese sailors operating along the Senegambian coast in search of gold or a route to Asia had also kidnapped people to sell in southern Europe. Peasants provided the primary agricultural labor force in mainland Europe, so these African captives were valued primarily as domestic servants owned by elite families in Seville and Lisbon, which soon had a substantial African community, including free Black Christians. With the development of sugar plantations on the archipelagos of the eastern Atlantic, enslaved Africans soon became the primary work force on these valuable islands.[7]

Because Africans both controlled the trade and were its victims, the relationship between anti-Black racism and the slave trade has proved even more vexing. It is important to recognize that sixteenth-century Africans, like their European contemporaries, did not act according to the ethnic, national, or racial identities that exist today. At the beginning of this slave-trading system, African leaders sold war captives—who by custom forfeited their freedom if captured during battle—for Portuguese guns, iron, and manufactured goods. In these early exchanges, slavery was a byproduct of war, but slave-taking eventually became the reason for most conflicts. As the slave trade became increasingly lucrative, it ensnared more and more victims, including people who had fallen into debt or been accused of witchcraft. Observing the Senegambia slave trade during the 1500s, a Portuguese Jesuit remarked that "as long as witches are sold, they will be uncovered daily."[8] Europeans justified their actions by claiming that the people they enslaved would be rescued from paganism and converted to Christianity, a hypocrisy that was eventually normalized by the denial of Black people's humanity and the entrenchment of racism. Profit was the driving force behind Atlantic slavery, and justifications were constantly contrived in the pursuit of wealth.



Figure 2.7. The first trading post built on the Gulf of Guinea and the oldest European building south of the Sahara. The Elmina Castle was established as a trade settlement by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century and became one of the largest and most important markets for enslaved Africans. "View of the castle of Elmina on the north-west side, seen from the river. Located on the Gold Coast in Guinea," in Atlas Blaeu van der Hem, c. 1665–1668. Wikimedia.

In West-Central Africa, the destructive relationship between war and slavery intensified during the 1560s when bands of nomadic warriors, known as the Jagas, invaded Kongo from the east. Portuguese forces helped King Álvaro I fight off the invaders, but the price of their support was greater meddling in Kongo's affairs. While Kongolese kings had become increasingly wary of enmeshing themselves in the slave trade, the merchants of São Tomé insisted on a steady supply of war captives. With the crown's support, in 1575 Paulo Dias de Novais began the first European attempt to conquer a region of mainland Africa in what became the colony of Angola. Proceeding from his base at Luanda, over the next decade Novais's forces marched up the Kwanza River, taking captives, making alliances, and building forts. When Novais died in 1589, Portugal took control of the colony by sending royal governors and more troops. Serving short, three-year terms in a deadly disease environment, Angola's governors wanted to get rich quickly, so they aligned themselves with the slavers of Brazil and São Tomé. After Portuguese forces sent from Brazil recaptured Angola from the Dutch, who seized much of Portugal's empire between the 1620s and 1640s, the two colonies strengthened their commercial and political ties, often beyond Lisbon's supervision. Having allied with the Dutch against their common enemy, Kongo's rulers continued their efforts to oust the Portuguese, but in 1665, at the Battle of Mwbila, the Portuguese and their Jaga allies defeated the royal army and killed King Antonio I. For the next century, Angola, Kongo, and neighboring states descended into a series of civil wars that generated hundreds of thousands of captives for the sugar plantations of Brazil.[9]

V. Spanish Exploration and Conquests

As Portugal consolidated its access to Africa and Asia, Spain yearned for its own path to empire. Christopher Columbus, a Genoese captain who had studied under Portuguese navigators, promised that opportunity. Born in 1451, just a few years before Constantinople fell to the Ottomans and blocked the land route to China, Columbus was a typical member of Genoa's far-flung merchant cohort—he was married to the daughter of a Madeira planter and had worked in West Africa's gold and slave trade. An

experienced mariner and avid reader, when he died in 1506, Columbus still believed that the Caribbean islands were part of an archipelago off the coast of Japan. Modern-day recognition of Columbus as the leading figure of a so-called Age of Discovery belies the very gradual, episodic, and fundamentally uncertain nature of European expansion between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Columbus, like other educated Asians and Europeans of the fifteenth century, knew the world was round. So, while it was technically possible to reach Asia by sailing west from Europe—thereby avoiding Italian or Arab middlemen—the earth's vast size would doom even the greatest caravels to starvation and thirst long before they reached their destination. In a critical but fortuitous miscalculation, Columbus underestimated the size of the globe by a full two-thirds and therefore believed it was possible. After unsuccessfully seeking support for his proposed expedition in several European courts, he convinced Isabel and Fernando of Spain to provide him with three ships, which set sail from the Canaries in 1492. Columbus was both confoundingly wrong about the size of the Earth and spectacularly lucky that a massive continent lurked in his path. After two months at sea, the three ships and their ninety men landed in the modern-day Bahamas.

The Taínos, speakers of an Arawakan language, populated the largest Caribbean islands, what came to be called Hispaniola (today's Dominican Republic and Haiti), Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and the Bahamas. At their bustling towns, they traded, fished, and grew corn, yams, and cassava. The Taínos' rivals were the Kalinagos, also known as the Caribs, who inhabited the smaller islands of the eastern Caribbean. Over the preceding centuries the Kalinagos had used their canoes and military prowess to create a trading and raiding zone that stretched from northern South America to the Lesser Antilles. Despite their impressive settlements and commercial networks, Columbus described the Taínos as childlike innocents: "These people are . . . very gentle, not knowing what is evil, nor the sins of murder or theft," he reported to the Spanish crown. "I assure your Highenesses that there is no better land nor people. They love their neighbors as themselves, and their speech is the sweetest and gentlest in the world, and always with a smile."[10] By contrast, the Caribs (from which the word "cannibal" derives) were cast as ferocious savages—and thus legitimate targets for the Spanish invaders to kill or enslave.

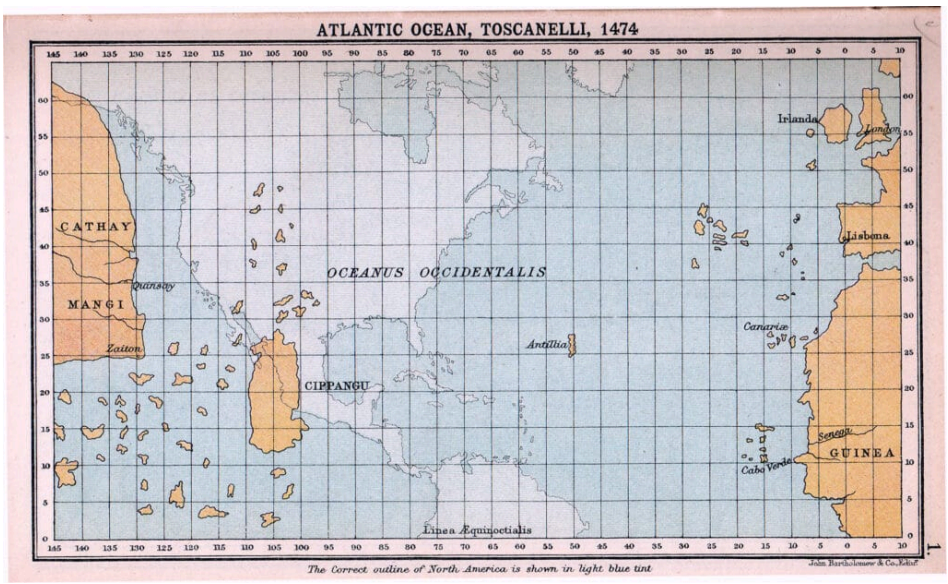


Figure 2.8. Christopher Columbus believed that the globe was much smaller than it actually was. This map contrasts what he expected to find in brown and what actually existed in gray. Cippangu meant Japan, and Cathay, China. Map of the Atlantic Ocean according to Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli (1474). Wikimedia.

Despite his initial praise for Taíno culture, Columbus had come for wealth, and at first, he found little. However, he noticed that some Native elites wore small gold ornaments. This changed everything. When Columbus returned to Spain, he left a few dozen men on Hispaniola and ordered them to find and secure the source of the gold. He arrived at the Spanish court to great acclaim and quickly worked to outfit a return voyage. Building upon precedents established in the Canaries, Spain's strategies and motives were clear from the beginning. If outfitted for a return voyage, Columbus promised to procure gold and enslaved laborers, claiming that "with fifty men [the Indians] can all be subjugated and made to do what is required of them."[11] He was outfitted with seventeen ships and over one thousand men in what turned out to be the second of four voyages that he made to the Caribbean. As the gold supply ran out and previously friendly Taíno leaders refused demands for tribute, the invaders embarked on a vicious campaign to extract every possible ounce of wealth from the Caribbean by enslaving its inhabitants. These captives were put to work in the gold fields or on the sugar plantations that eventually replaced them. Returning from his second voyage in 1496,

Columbus' cargo included over three hundred enslaved and branded Taínos, many of whom died on the way. The combination of new diseases and Spanish violence destroyed the Taínos within a few decades of contact.

As news of Columbus's conquest spread back to Europe, ambitious Spaniards poured into the Americas seeking wealth and fame. Among them were members of the next generation of conquistadors, including Francisco Pizarro and Hernán Cortés, whose expeditions spread outward from bases in the Caribbean. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who fought alongside Cortés, described their motives succinctly: "We came here to serve God and the king, and also to get rich."[12]

As Spain's overseas empire expanded, the next generation of conquistadors encountered the empires of Central and South America, which dwarfed the city-states of North America. The most powerful Maya city-states had collapsed before European arrival, likely because of droughts and unsustainable agricultural practices, but this decline was concurrent with the rise of another Native American empire: the Aztecs.

Opportunistic migrants from distant lands to the north, the Mexicas (as the Aztecs called themselves) moved south into the Valley of Mexico and parlayed a series of alliances into control of an empire centered at Tenochtitlán. Founded in 1325, Tenochtitlán was an awe-inspiring city built on a series of natural and human-made islands in the middle of Lake Texcoco. Much of the city was fed by crops grown on large artificial islands called chinampas, which the Aztecs constructed by dredging rich sediment from the bottom of the lake and depositing it over time to form new landscapes. Tenochtitlán was also a holy city: a massive pyramid temple was located at the center and complemented by smaller temples and palaces.

From their island city, the Aztecs controlled or influenced much of central and southern Mesoamerica. Allied with two other city-states, Aztec rulers governed through a decentralized network of subject peoples that paid regular tribute—including everything from the most basic items, such as corn, beans, and other foodstuffs, to luxury goods such as jade, cacao, and gold—and provided troops for the empire. Meanwhile, nearby kingdoms, including the Tarascans to the northwest and the remains of Maya city-states on the Yucatán peninsula, chafed at Aztec power. Mesoamerica's political rivalries would play a decisive role in shaping events after Hernán Cortés, an ambitious notary who had won riches in the conquest of Cuba, organized an invasion of Mexico. Defying Cuba's governor, who hoped to lead the expedition himself, in 1519, Cortés landed six hundred men on the coast and founded the town of Veracruz.



Figure 2.9. Sixteenth-century historical map of Tenochtitlán, capital city of the powerful Mexica (Aztec) empire. The beautiful city was built on an island in Lake Texcoco and included causeways and a huge pyramid known as Temple Mayor, where the gods Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc were honored. Wikimedia.

Diplomacy, treachery, and alliance politics, not firearms or horses, were the real tools of the ensuing conquest. Relying on a Native translator, whom he called Doña Marina and whom Mexican folklore denounces as La Malinche, Cortés gathered information and allies. Through intrigue, brutality, and the exploitation of political divisions, he enlisted Native allies, defeated Spanish rivals, and marched on Tenochtitlán. Through persuasion, the Spaniards entered the capital peacefully. Cortés then took Emperor Montezuma hostage and used him to gain control of the empire's gold and silver reserves. Eventually, the Aztecs revolted, and Montezuma was killed. In a desperate retreat, mythologized by the survivors as la noche triste ("the night of sorrows"), the Spanish fought through thousands of Indigenous soldiers and across canals to flee the city. Cortés and his lieutenants regrouped,

recruited more Native troops, captured Spanish reinforcements, and, in 1521, besieged Tenochtitlán. The eighty-five-day siege cut off food and fresh water. As starvation set in, smallpox ravaged the inhabitants. One Spanish observer said it "spread over the people as great destruction. Some it covered on all parts—their faces, their heads, their breasts, and so on. There was great havoc. Very many died of it. . . . They could not move; they could not stir."[13] The Spaniards and their allies then sacked the city. The temples were plundered and fifteen thousand died. After two years of war and sickness, the combined forces of Habsburg Spain and its Mesoamerican allies had toppled the Aztecs and acquired great fortunes. Greater crimes would follow.



Figure 2.10. The Spanish relied on Indigenous allies. The Tlaxcala were among the most important Spanish allies in their conquest. This sixteenth-century drawing depicts the Spanish and their Tlaxcalan allies fighting against the Purépecha. Wikimedia.

Farther south, along the Andes Mountains, the Quechuas managed a vast empire, far larger and more powerful than that of the Aztecs. From their capital of Cuzco in the Andean highlands, the Incas, as the Quechuan kings were called, used conquest and colonization to build an empire that stretched through the western half of South America, from present-day Ecuador to central Chile and Argentina. Generals, bureaucrats, and engineers were important functionaries in this far-flung domain with multiple provinces and active military frontiers. Terraces were cut into the sides of mountains to farm fertile soil, and by the 1400s, a thousand miles of roads and bridges tied together perhaps twelve million people. Similar to the situation in Mesoamerica, unrest between the Incas and conquered groups created tensions and left the empire vulnerable to invaders. Carried along trade networks by human hosts, plagues spread in advance of the Spanish and hit the Inca Empire in 1525. Epidemics ravaged the population, cutting the empire's population in half and killing Emperor Huayna Capac and many members of his family. A bloody war of succession ensued between two half-brothers, Huascar and Atahualpa.

It was into this dynastic chaos that Francisco Pizarro intervened after he landed a small force on the Pacific coast and marched inland. Pizarro drew from the same playbook as Cortés, for he relied heavily on deceit and Native allies to seize power. Yet after executing Atahualpa and occupying Cuzco in 1533, the conquest of the Inca Empire became a drawn-out affair that involved defeating armies led by Atahualpa's generals and a civil war between Spanish factions, each of which relied on mostly Native troops. Pizarro was assassinated by his rivals in 1541, and a year later, his brother Gonzalo led a revolt that threatened to create an American kingdom separate from Spain. Gonzalo and the other leading rebels were eventually captured and executed, but it was only in 1572 that the last Inca, who ruled an independent state in the jungles east of Peru, was defeated.[14]



Figure 2.11. This Peruvian painting depicts Manco Cápac in the early 13th century. He may have been one of the founders of the Incan Civilization in Cuzco. Brooklyn Museum. Wikimedia.

VII. Spanish America

After the conquests of Mexico and Peru, Habsburg Spain began restructuring its overseas possessions, which now belonged to an empire of global proportions. Already the king of Spain, when Charles V became the Holy Roman Emperor in 1519 his domains included lands from Austria to Castile, and the wealth generated by the conquests of Cortés and Pizarro allowed him to dream of a universal monarchy—power unseen since the glory days of Rome. Yet like its ancient predecessors, the Spanish Empire was a patchwork of regions and cultures that strained managerial capacities, even as it generated enormous wealth for the metropole.

Building upon the infrastructure of the great Native American empires, the new imperial cores of highland Peru and central Mexico were marked by cities, highways, and mines. From the Spanish perspective, urbanization was an important part of imposing law and order on a new environment and its peoples. The great metropolis of Mexico City was built directly upon the ruins of Tenochtitlán, with the stones of the Templo Mayor used to construct a cathedral and the viceroy's palace. In 1573, Philip II codified directives for founding new cities, which were supposed to have a grid of wide streets surrounding a central plaza, itself lined by a church, armory, and other administrative buildings.[15] The reality on the ground often proved quite different. Usually constructed near Indigenous towns or trade routes, many colonial settlements sprang up haphazardly as mineral strikes were made from the mid-sixteenth century onward. The outstanding example is Potosí, in modern-day Bolivia, where silver was found in the 1540s. Within a few years, shanties, shops, and mining camps, home to over two hundred thousand people, choked the lowlands around the mountain. Complemented by the 1546 discovery of silver at Zacatecas, in northern Mexico, the new mining centers powered the Habsburg ambitions. The importance of American silver to funding Spain's armies and fleets only became greater once the Protestant Reformation solidified anti-Spanish resistance by the English and Dutch.

The emerging empire managed labor relations through a system known as the encomienda. In this feudal arrangement, the crown awarded Indigenous laborers, generally the adult population of multiple villages, to elite colonists (called encomenderos). Encomiendas granted workers and tribute as well. Furthermore, these vast estates could be subdivided and inherited, creating the basis of wealth for the conquistadors and their descendants. The system was rife with the abuse of Native workers, and it also threatened to create a colonial nobility that was independent of royal control. In response, Charles V and his successors asserted greater authority over their overseas possessions.



Figure 2.12. Illustration of Spanish conquistadors' atrocities in the conquest of Hispaniola by Flemish artist Theodor de Bry. One soldier prepares to hurl a child against a wall while hungers are hung above flames. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Wikimedia.

Not all Spaniards supported these injustices. In fact, a planter-turned-friar, Bartolomé de Las Casas, traveled to the New World in 1502 and later wrote an exposé of the atrocities being committed. Appealing to the sensibilities of the king and queen, who had instructed Columbus to convert the Natives to Christianity, Las Casas described Spanish brutalities in gory detail. Along with witnessing victims torn apart by war dogs, Las Casas "saw with these Eyes of mine the Spaniards for no other reason, but only to gratify their bloody mindedness, cut off the Hands, Noses, and Ears, both of Indians and Indianesses."[16] The writing of Las Casas and other reports of the conquest were later used by Dutch and English propagandists to craft a narrative known as the Black Legend in which Spaniards, and Catholics more broadly, were depicted as uniquely vicious and greedy. In fact, none of Europe's colonial powers had a monopoly on hypocrisy. Nevertheless, the scale of this initial destruction was remarkable. By the 1520s, the Indigenous population of Hispaniola had collapsed, and many of the surrounding islands had been emptied by Spanish slave raiders, who left behind herds of feral pigs and cattle. Historians' estimates of the island's precontact population range from fewer than one million to as many as eight million (Las Casas estimated it at three million). In a few short years, they were practically gone. "Who in future generations will believe this?" Las Casas wondered. "I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it."[17]

In 1542, due in part to Las Casas's efforts, the crown promulgated the New Laws of the Indies for the Good Treatment and Preservation of the Indians, which revoked many of the conquistadors' privileges and prohibited new grants of encomiendas. In Peru, the encomenderos' resentment of the new policies erupted into an armed rebellion against the crown led by Gonzalo Pizarro. After crushing this revolt, the crown replaced the encomienda system with the repartimiento. Intended as a milder tribute system, the repartimiento facilitated many of the previous abuses, and the rapacious exploitation of the Native population continued. On the other hand, important lessons were learned and precedents established. Through a combination of exemplary punishment and compromise, the crown had withstood a major challenge and learned to govern in partnership with local elites.

The administration of the Aztec and Inca Empires was taken over by the crown through the establishment of two viceroyalties, New Spain in 1535 and Peru in 1544. Reporting to the Council of the Indies, based in Seville, the viceroys were always high-ranking noblemen born in Spain, and only the archbishops sent to the Americas rivaled them in prestige and authority. Simultaneously imposing imperial governance and checking the viceroys' power were the judicial councils composed of leading urban colonists, called audiencias. Crown-appointed governors were the legal and military executives who headed individual provinces, in turn supported by the municipal councils (cabildos) of chartered towns (villas). Meanwhile, Spanish migrants poured into the New World, with some 225,000 arriving during the sixteenth century. Often single, young, and male, these people emigrated for the promises of land, wealth, and social advancement. Laborers, craftsmen, soldiers, clerks, and priests all came in large numbers, but Indigenous people always constituted a majority and were therefore incorporated into colonial life by necessity. In theory, Native peoples constituted a social sphere outside of the Spanish world, the so-called república de indios, in which they were managed by traditional leaders. Drawn by employment opportunities and desperate to escape the drudgery of encomiendas, thousands of Indians flocked to cities like Cuzco, Lima, or Mexico City. However, Native incorporation into urban spaces and the related process of acculturation did not mean equality.[18]



Figure 2.13. In this startling image from the Kingsborough Codex (a book written and drawn by native Mesoamericans), a well-dressed Spaniard is shown pulling the hair of a bleeding, severely injured indigenous person. The drawing was part of a complaint about Spanish abuses of their encomiendas. Wikimedia.

Intersecting ideas about class, gender, and race structured social hierarchy in Spanish America. The Iberian society transplanted to the Americas was fundamentally patriarchal—guided by the ideal of a senior man who protected subservient members of his household (wife, children, and employees) in exchange for their labor and obedience. Intended to be a microcosm of the monarchical state, for noblemen, patriarchy achieved its full expression in the great estates that encompassed an urban residence and rural lands worked by servants and slaves. Yet there were simply too few Spanish women in the Americas to support the natural growth of a purely European-descended population. Legal precedents already existed in Iberia for managing the consequences of extramarital affairs, practices that were then applied to the relationships between Spanish men and Black and Native women. Building upon histories of intercultural encounter in the Mediterranean world, where Muslims and Christians had been capturing and converting each other for centuries, the Spanish tolerated and sometimes even supported interracial marriages. Beginning with baptism, illegitimate mixed-race children were thus formally recognized while remaining subordinate; indeed, the line between servant and relative was often blurred.

The frequency of cross-cultural sex, often coerced, manifested new, racialized systems of social control. Regularized in the mid-1600s but rooted in older practices for excluding Moors and Jews, the sistema de castas (caste system) organized individuals into various ethno-racial groups based on their supposed "purity of blood." Not surprisingly, Spaniards (españoles) were at the top of this hierarchy. Although the first generation of conquistadors and encomenderos dominated colonial society, they soon had to make room for other European migrants and the rising population of American-born colonists, called criollos. Mestizos, an elastic term used to describe those of mixed European, Black, and Indigenous heritage, ranked below españoles in the emerging racial order. Nevertheless, this idealized system of social control and the reality of life in the colonies were two different things. Spanish fathers of sufficient status might shield their mestizo children from racial prejudice, and wealthy mestizos married Europeans to "whiten" their family lines. In frontier areas where there were fewer colonists, it was often easier for mestizo families to emphasize their European heritage and thereby construct differences between themselves and Native groups. Such was the case on the frontiers of Portuguese Brazil, or Spanish Texas.



Figure 2.14. Spanish caste painting showing 16 racial classifications in Spanish colonies in the Americas, 18th century. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia. Museo Nacional del Virreinato. Wikimedia.

Mestizos soon made up a large portion of the colonial population, and by the early 1700s, more than one-third of all marriages bridged the Spanish-Indigenous divide. The result was a level of mixture (mestizaje) that distinguished Spanish America's hybrid culture, one where African, Iberian, and Indigenous languages, religions, fashions, and cuisines commingled. In 1531, a poor Indigenous man named Juan Diego reported that he was visited by the Virgin Mary, who appeared as a dark-skinned, Nahuatl-speaking Indigenous woman. Reports of miracles spread across Mexico, and the Virgen de Guadalupe became a national icon for a new mestizo society.[19]



Figure 2.15. Our Lady of Guadalupe is perhaps the most culturally important and extensively reproduced Mexican-Catholic image. In this iconic image, Mary stands atop the tilma (peasant cloak) of Juan Diego, on which, according to his story, appeared the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Throughout Mexican history, the story and image of Our Lady of Guadalupe have been a unifying national symbol. Mexican retablo of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 19th century. Anonymous Mexican Painter. El Paso Museum of Art. Wikimedia.

Finally, in 1546, a group of Basque prospectors located silver deposits near what became the city of Zacatecas. The Mexican counterpart to the mines of Potosí, the silver of Zacatecas fueled the ambitions of the Habsburg dynasty. The extraction of precious metals came at a steep environmental cost. Forests were cut and burned to fire the smelters that refined the ore, leaving behind slag, cinders, and mercury. Hundreds of thousands of sheep were unleashed on Mexico's grasslands, followed by droughts and erosion. Pulled by the silver rush, colonists and their livestock provoked one of the longest conflicts in American history, the Chichimeca War of 1550–1600. Used to describe the seminomadic peoples of the mountainous and arid region north of

Mesoamerica, chichimeca was a Nahuatl word equivalent to the European term “barbarian. ” More accurately, the Chichimecas were an alliance of several nations who organized to defend their homelands in the face of miners, ranchers, and slavers. The effectiveness of the Chichimecas’ guerilla tactics led to the deployment of royal troops, the construction of fortified bases, and armed escorts to guard the silver-laden convoys. After military and church officials debated the issue, the king sanctioned a total war of fuego y sangre (fire and blood) that permitted the enslavement of Chichimeca prisoners. The intertwining of war and slaving only hardened Chichimeca resistance, and by 1585 the war had become a bloody stalemate.[20]

Biology magnified the devastating impact of the European invasion. Separated from the Old World, its domesticated animals, and its immunological history, Native Americans lived free from the terrible diseases that ravaged populations in Asia, Europe, and Africa. Because of this relative isolation, Native Americans lacked the acquired immunities that Europeans and Africans had developed over centuries of exposure to deadly epidemics, like malaria and various poxes. So, when the newcomers arrived in the Americas they unleashed a host of new plagues—smallpox, typhus, influenza, diphtheria, measles, and hepatitis, to name a few—that devastated Native communities. Rape was used as a weapon of war by European armies, and sexual violence on a massive scale produced a more virulent strain of syphilis, leading to more deaths. The ability of the survivors to remain healthy and reproduce was also compromised by trauma, malnutrition, and other social determinants of health. In short, war, slaving, and epidemics worked together to scythe Indigenous populations. Some scholars estimate that as much as 90 percent of the population of the Americas perished within the first century and a half of European contact, a demographic cataclysm known as the Great Dying.[21]

VIII. Spanish North America

The great wealth from Spanish America was centered in Central and South America, but Spain ventured north as well. As mestizo societies developed in the mining and urban centers, privately financed military expeditions, called entradas, were organized to find other Indigenous empires to plunder. Led by veteran conquistadors, these expeditions included hundreds of soldiers, priests, guides, and enslaved people, supported by enormous numbers of livestock.

Juan Ponce de León, the conqueror of Puerto Rico, landed in Florida in 1513 in search of gold and enslaved laborers. The reality of staunch Indigenous resistance and a swampy coastline never aligned with Ponce de León’s imagination, and in Florida, he found only an early grave, courtesy of a poisoned arrow by the Calusa peoples. With the exploration of the Gulf of Mexico and the coast of California between the 1520s and 1540s, as the contours of the North American mainland came into focus, others tried where Ponce de León had failed.

In 1528, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca joined Pánfilo de Nárvaez’s expedition from Cuba to find the Río de las Palmas, 125 miles south of the Rio Grande, but due to consecutive storms and the powerful Gulf Stream, they erroneously landed on the west coast of Florida. After being separated from their supply ships, they built rafts in hopes of sailing again to their destination. Unfortunately, the crew shipwrecked on the coast of present-day Texas and embarked on a remarkable multiyear odyssey that took them from the Texas coast all the way to Sonora.

This epic trek further spread diseases and led to a host of disasters due to language barriers and the Spaniards’ insistence on their superiority. For example, when the explorers encountered the Tocobaga in the Tampa Bay area, they found shipwrecked European crates, each containing a dead body. The Tocobaga had treated the deceased Europeans with respect by carefully wrapping them in valuable painted skins, but Fray Juan Suarez, the accompanying bishop, misinterpreted the act as “devilish idolatry” and had the crates and bodies burned, despite being on sacred ground. Afterward, relations between the Spaniards and Tocobaga quickly deteriorated, and the explorers were expelled.

As the group traversed the coast, they glimpsed corn fields and gold pieces among the local Uzita. After laborious questioning, they learned of the Apalachee people who were said to have more of each. The crew left to find the Apalachee where they hoped to seize riches to rival Tenochtitlán. Along the way, the group found marshes, canopies of pine trees, and several rivers, which served as borders between Indigenous groups. When the expeditioners crossed rivers, they encountered different territories where they were treated as trespassers, especially when they devoured local corn fields.

One day, the Timucua, led by Chief Dulchanchellin, approached the camp and communicated using signs and exchanged gifts. After painstaking deliberation, the Spaniards understood these were enemies of the Apalachee who were willing to lead them in the right direction. Finally, in mid-June of 1528, the men came within sight of the Apalachee, the largest and most complex chiefdom occupying the Florida Peninsula, and one of the few powerful chiefdoms from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.[22]



Figure 2.16. A Timucuan village in Northern Florida with three indigenous people. Two women carry food and other items, and a man has drawn his bow and arrow. Oil painting by artist Allyn Cox. Architect of the Capitol. Wikimedia.

The Apalachee had extensive agricultural practices, organized hierarchical societies, and long-distance trade routes. Their capital city, Anhaica, was at its center, where a paramount chief lived, projecting influence over several outlying capitals, and where subordinate village chiefs ruled over their surrounding small lands. Early seventeenth-century witnesses estimate populations from 30,000 to 34,000 in the Apalachee region.[23]

Captain Nárvaez ordered Cabeza de Vaca to attack an outlying Apalachee village, using women and children as hostages to trade for the village chief. To the Spaniards' surprise, they were met with an organized militant resistance and were forced to retreat. The captured chief convinced the expeditioners to go back to the coast and toward the Aute. In doing so, he protected his people by driving the Spaniards away from the capital and toward an enemy. The Apalachee would continue to maintain a stronghold in the area until the eighteenth century.

Desperate for survival, the expedition turned for the Gulf Coast near present-day St. Marks to build rafts and sail toward the coast of Mexico. Unfortunately, the rafts were again shipwrecked on the coast of modern-day Texas with fewer than eighty survivors, and Nárvaez perished en route.[24]

Near present-day Galveston, de Vaca and his men encountered a band of Karankawa who provided the expeditioners with food and wept for their fallen men before carrying the Spaniards to their village for refuge. Soon, the castaways would overstay their welcome by failing to pull their own weight, and a relationship between guest and host deteriorated into master and slave. For the next six years, the castaways endured harsh, trivial work, including carrying wood, digging for roots, and fetching water, while facing violence for minor infractions. Because the Karankawa did not engage in the slave trade generally, de Vaca and his men found opportunities to leave one clan for another.[25]

By 1529, the remaining Spaniards left for New Spain and abandoned Cabeza de Vaca before he became a neutral broker for the Charrucos. He traded "sea beads," shells, and fruit for hides, glue, and flint before finding three other Spaniards and eventually making their escape together.[26] In September 1534, de Vaca and the three men ventured through south Texas to present-day Mexico, where they were considered respectable healers. In their captivity, they had occasionally joined healing ceremonies and made signs of the cross on the sick and injured. Thus, they were refashioned as medicine men.[27] In 1535, near west Texas, de Vaca completed the first recorded surgical procedure in the American Southwest. An Avavares man was struck by an arrowhead below the shoulder. De Vaca cut open the wound, extracted the weapon, and stitched the wound closed. The arrowhead and the story were passed around Indigenous communities. As a result, they were met with celebration festivals and considered holy men. The Spaniards' growing reputation ultimately led to their safe return to Mexico City, as from then on, the foursome were accompanied by thousands of natives who willingly followed de Vaca's orders throughout his travels.[28] Women traveled ahead as guides to ensure safe passage since the men might have been mistaken for a war party.

De Vaca's experience was unusual for a European. Along the journey, he learned to speak six different Indigenous languages and

navigate a host of Indigenous customs. He also found New World maize (corn), the American buffalo, and signs of copper.[29] To survive, he adapted to Indigenous life, embracing herbal cures and encouraging a softer approach to Native relations. Upon his return to Mexico City, he attempted to continue ritual gift giving, a practice he learned on his travels; however, the concept did not align with Spanish ideas of tribute and subjugation.[30] De Vaca's stories of the Indigenous interior, including tantalizing stories of great cities, prompted another round of attempted conquests.

Meanwhile, sponsored by the wealth of his wife's family and the viceroy's favoritism, between 1540 and 1542, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado led an entrada that rampaged across the Southwest and Great Plains. Like all Habsburg armies, Coronado's was a truly international and multiethnic force, including Tlaxcalan guides, African porters, Flemish mercenaries, and even a Scottish bugler. On July 7, 1540, having reached the upper Rio Grande, Coronado's army found Hawikuh, a small town of Zuni (Pueblo people), so named because their clustered, multistory adobe buildings resembled Spanish villages.[31]

Pueblo Indians are believed to be descendants of the Anasazi, Mogollon, or Hohokam cultures. Acoma, Zuni, Hopi, and Tewa are among the most recognizable tribal names. Pueblos are a diverse people with some shared cultural practices. For example, western Pueblos are matrilineal (women owned homes and fields) while eastern tribes such as the Acoma and Laguna are organized by moieties (dual organization). They also have as many as seven different languages.[32]

Native to the Southwest, Pueblo culture was shaped by its harsh environment. All practiced some form of farming, but the nature of it changed based on geography. For instance, the Zuni and Hopi practiced dry farming, while others near the Rio Grande dug irrigation ditches. As the population swelled, housing structures shifted from pit houses to surface dwelling rooms with storage rooms.[33] In the 1300s, due to the Great Drought and overpopulation, the Pueblo people migrated south to northeast Arizona, Texas, and northwestern New Mexico. The move led to another change in housing to adobe brick, multistoried, attached homes or limestone cliff dwellings with attached adobe structures like those at Mesa Verde, Chaco Canyon, and Pueblo Bonita, developed around the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[34]

Upon Coronado's arrival, Zuni and Spaniards alike eyed one another suspiciously. Coronado promptly had the Requerimiento read—a 1513 royal decree that Spain had the divine right to possess New World territories and subjugate Native peoples—demanding that the Zuni accept Spanish rule and embrace Christianity, despite their incomprehension of the words. He also informed them that resistance would be met with a loss of land, their lives, or enslavement. The Zuni reacted first by drawing a line of sacred corn not to be crossed by the Spaniards. When that did not work, they fired arrows at the Spanish party, resulting in the destruction of the village.[35] The explorers ventured deeper into the interior of current-day New Mexico, where they met Tiwa-speaking people near current-day Albuquerque.[36]



Figure 2.17. Zuni Kachina doll, often carved of cottonwood root, served as messengers to the gods. The colors and regalia indicated the doll's unique purpose. Brooklyn Museum, 1903. World History Encyclopedia. Creative Commons.

After besieging and occupying a dozen towns over the winter of 1540–1541, Coronado's army was led westward onto the grasslands in search of the fabled city of Quivira (central Kansas). His guide was an Indigenous man, known as the Turk, whose

real mission was to get the Spaniards so hopelessly lost that they could never return to terrorize the Pueblos. Along the way, the Coronado expedition came across Tiguex, scattered villages of the Tigua people. Pedro de Castaneda described the encounter, noting their clothing and labor division. While initially very hospitable, the Tigua became hostile when the adventurers continued to exhaust their food stores and one soldier raped a woman. The ensuing violence led to many fatalities.[37] Although Coronado and some of his men made it back, his failure made clear the limits of conquest. Coronado's visit is still remembered today by the Pueblo, who depict him on a dancing horse holding a sword.[38] Without the sugar-friendly climate of the Caribbean or large Indigenous empires to coopt and extort, the vast North American interior offered little incentive for renewed invasions. Still, smaller expeditions combed northern Mexico all the way to the Rio Grande, looking for people to enslave if no other resources could be found.[39]

Even as Spaniards were exploring the North American interior, they were simultaneously looking for strategic locations along the Pacific Coast. Tales of Amazonian women in a land of paradise stoked people's imagination. For example, a Spanish writer wrote, "Know that to the right hand of the Indies was an island called California, very near the region of the Terrestrial Paradise, which was populated by black women, without there being any men among them. . . . They were of vigorous bodies and strong and ardent hearts of great strength . . . Their arms were all of gold. . . . In all the island there was no . . . other metal whatsoever."[40]

In reality, the Native people of California were fishermen, farmers, and hunters in much the same way as other parts of North America. There were six cultural areas and roughly one hundred dialects before Spanish contact. In Southern and Central California (Serrano and Cahuilla), acorns were the primary food source, while Northern California Indians (Ipai and Tipai) were hunter/gatherer societies. Coastal Indians (Chumash and Tongva) relied on seafood and built canoes of driftwood.[41]

Indians of the Monterey region on the Central Coast, the Children of the Coyote, were aware of various Spaniard's expeditions in North America from interior Natives and those in Baja California. After his victory in Tenochtitlán, Cortés dispatched explorations along the Pacific Coast that met with little success. In 1533, Fortún Jiménez sailed into the southeastern part of the Baja peninsula and was met by Guaycura warriors. He and most of his men perished. Those who returned spoke of pearls and gold. Still, it was not until 1542 that veteran conquistador Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo arrived at the bay of San Diego. Upon landing, he was met with fear and hostility, which he assuaged with gifts. The Ipai retold stories of other men killing many Native people. Upon Cabrillo's death, his second in command, Bartolomé Ferrer, explored 1,200 miles up the Pacific Coast and claimed it for Spain. Permanent occupation would not come until 1789 when an expedition led by Franciscan Father Junípero Serra established a mission and presidio at current-day San Diego.[42]



Figure 2.18. Sunrise Chumash crossing from the Channel Islands Harbor to Santa Cruz Island in a traditionally built tomol, plank canoe. These crossings were rites of passage in celebration of the Chumash's connection to the sea. Photo by Robert Schwemmer/NOAA. Wikimedia.

Burdened by the mounting costs of war in America and Europe, Spain shifted its colonizing strategies toward the end of the sixteenth century. The popes provided religious sanction for the Iberian conquests from the start, but in his 1573 reforms, Philip II emphasized alternative methods for subjugating Indigenous peoples. With the rhetoric of conquest giving way to that of pacification, converting Native peoples became a greater priority. This ideological imperative was only heightened by the

Reformation as Native American converts were seen as a way of compensating for the loss of rebellious Protestant subjects in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Indeed, religious institutions like the Inquisition were always understood as mechanisms for enforcing orthodoxy. Colonists and most sedentary Natives were already being ministered to by the secular clergy, which included officials from parish priests all the way to the bishops who ran the viceregal dioceses. However, along the frontier between Spanish colonies and Indigenous homelands, a different set of ecclesiastical institutions led the way. Organized by mendicant orders, most prominently the Franciscans and Jesuits, missions and missionaries became the vehicles for subjugating North America's largely nonsedentary Indigenous peoples. Taking vows of poverty in emulation of the apostles, most missionaries were highly educated men who combined a medieval Christian mysticism with a fervent desire to bring "heathen" peoples to the "true faith." Embedding themselves in Native communities, they learned local languages, challenged the authority of Indigenous shamans, and encouraged people to live in more nucleated settlements where they could take up European-style agriculture. Seeing themselves as Christian soldiers fighting to redeem the New World from Satan's grasp, the aggressive attitude of many missionaries led them to martyrdom.



Figure 2.19. Spanish Mission map depicting twenty-one Franciscan missions in Alta California. Wikimedia.

One of the first, and most promising, mission fields was the Franciscan experiment in the remote northern province of New Mexico. Juan de Oñate, a Zacatecas silver baron who was related by marriage to both Montezuma and Cortés, was determined to revive Coronado's efforts to conquer the Pueblo villagers of the Rio Grande. After years of preparation, in 1598 he led four hundred settlers, soldiers, and Franciscan missionaries from north of the Río Conchos, crossed the Rio Grande at El Paso and established headquarters at San Juan, New Mexico. This trip was different from earlier military ones: Oñate was determined to establish a permanent colony. Like other seventeenth-century colonies, New Mexico had violent beginnings. After Oñate sacked the mesa-top village of Acoma for resisting his invasion, his troops slaughtered nearly half of its roughly 1,500 inhabitants, including women and children. Oñate ordered one foot cut off every surviving male over age fifteen, and he enslaved the remaining women and children. This theatrical brutality reflected the Spaniards' siege mentality as they attempted to rule through force and terror. As Oñate put it in a letter, "The greatest force we possess is the prestige of the Spanish nation, by fear of which the Indians have been kept in check."[43] Carried along Indigenous trade networks, impressions of the Spaniards as cruel and treacherous strangers became widespread among Apaches, Pueblos, Navajos, and other nations. Although Oñate's colonizing efforts ultimately failed, Franciscans stayed to save the "field of souls the Church could not ignore."[44]

Franciscan priests compelled Indigenous people to build churches, plow the fields, and perform other rigorous tasks. However, Pueblos accepted new town governments alongside their own existing ones. Priests forbade traditional Native ceremonies and practices, but the Pueblo persisted by combining new and old traditions. Kachina dolls and prayer sticks were forbidden and destroyed. Meanwhile, they sought to change other key elements of native society as well.



Figure 2.20. The San Miguel Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was originally built in 1610 by Franciscans. It is the oldest Catholic Church in the United States. The walls are made of adobe walls approximately 5 feet thick. Wikipedia.

One significant cultural difference between European and Indigenous cultures was their concepts of women's power and sexuality. Traditionally, Pueblo women wielded significant authority due to their control of agriculture and their fertility. In the Native world, sexuality is associated with fertility and regeneration, reproduction (of offspring and their labor), and the incorporation of husbands and their labor. According to historian Ramón A. Gutiérrez, Pueblo women "were empowered through their sexuality." Although they experienced full sexual freedom and premarital sex was common, in most cases, women were faithful upon marriage. Sexuality was not constrained by the heteronormative model, nor was it viewed as shameful or something to be hidden. Rather, it was natural, and some might say spiritual.[45] The church sought to lessen women's power and influence, fearing that it might emasculate men. Missionaries attempted to reform Native sexual behavior (especially premarital sex and polygamy) as part of the attempt to Christianize and Hispanicize them. They kept men and women in separate living quarters to ostensibly protect the women, even those who were married. Lustful thoughts were met with lashes and actions, public punishment, and humiliation.

Violence, poverty, and isolation marked New Mexico's early history. Santa Fe, the first permanent European settlement in the Southwest, was established in 1610, but few Spaniards relocated to the struggling colony because of the distance from Mexico City and the rugged environment. Without mines, extracting tribute from the Pueblos and enslaving the Apaches became the main source of wealth for New Mexico's governors. For their part, some fifty Franciscan friars had established dozens of missions and secured a few hundred converts by the 1630s. Yet beneath the veneer of control and conversion lurked seething discontents.[46]

IX. Conclusion

European expansion into the Americas introduced both settlers and European authorities to a new situation—an abundance of land and a scarcity of labor. Portuguese, Dutch, and English ships became the conduits for Africans forced to America. The western coast of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, and the west-central coast were the sources of African captives. Wars of expansion and raiding parties produced captives who could be sold in coastal factories. African slave traders bartered for European finished goods such as beads, cloth, rum, firearms, and metal wares.

Though ravaged by disease and warfare, Native Americans forged middle grounds, resisted with violence, and accommodated and adapted to the challenges of colonialism. Some adaptations were met with little resistance, such as the adoption of the Spanish language, while others, like priests' attempts to eliminate elements of Indigenous religions, caused conflict. Contact with Europeans continued to shape the patterns of life throughout the New World for hundreds of years. But the Europeans kept coming.

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3: Colliding Cultures



Figure 3.1. The first modern atlas, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, by Abraham Ortelius, World, 1572. Wikimedia.

I. Introduction

While the Spanish solidified control over Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean, other European powers challenged Spanish colonial ventures in the Americas. During the sixteenth century, the Portuguese began to establish permanent settlements on the coasts of Brazil. The French made headways in Canada and the Caribbean. The Dutch established colonies in North America, the Caribbean, and Brazil. The English captured Jamaica from the Spanish and established settlements in the Caribbean and extensively on the Atlantic seaboard of North America. By the end of the seventeenth century, Spain, Portugal, France, England, the Dutch, Sweden, and Denmark all established permanent settlements in the Americas. Colonial competition over the exploitation of the resources of the Americas had begun.

All the while, the vast majority of people inhabiting the Americas were Indigenous peoples. Native Americans lived in thousands of different polities and nations spanning both continents from pole to pole. Outside of Spanish conquests in Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean, Native peoples overwhelmingly controlled most of the Americas, and their power was unrivaled in the interior. But in the sixteenth century, Native American and Indigenous peoples underwent immense changes in response to climate change, the introduction of European and African diseases, mass migrations, and trade with Europeans. In many ways, by the end of the seventeenth century, the Americas had become a New World for peoples of African, Asian, European, and Native American descent.

II. New Worlds: Native and Atlantic

The seventeenth century was a time of drastic change for Native American and Indigenous peoples. In North America, changes began with the abandonment of large settlements like Cahokia and Chaco Canyon in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries at the beginning of the Little Ice Age (fourteenth–nineteenth centuries). Agricultural productivity declined in North America as the Earth's axis tilted slightly. This cooled the Northern Hemisphere a few degrees annually, shortening the average growing seasons and thus leading to political instability in the paramount chiefdoms of the Mississippian civilization. Mass migrations across the continent intensified as Native people sought better opportunities. Some Native polities moved away from large, centralized chiefdoms toward more egalitarian, decentralized communities.[1]

But numerous Native paramount chiefdoms persisted into the seventeenth century: the Apalachee in Florida, Cofitachequi in the Carolinas, Coosa and Tascaluza in Alabama and Georgia, the Powhatan in Virginia, the Caddo in Texas and Louisiana, and the Casqui, Anlico, and Quigualtam along the Mississippi River. A chiefdom consisted of a centralized political and religious center

with outlying towns of about one thousand to five thousand people. Paramount chiefdoms were made up of a few or dozens of those centralized chiefdoms led by a single ruler or ruling family. In the Southwest, Native communities were organized into farming communities that the Spanish called pueblos that could have thousands of inhabitants, such as in the Zuni, Hopi, Tiguex, Pecos, Jemez, Taos, and Acoma communities.[2]



Figure 3.2. This nineteenth-century illustration of the Lady of Cofitachequi tells us more about American distortions of the period than it does the reality of Indigenous diplomacy. The Cofitachequi kingdom stretched throughout much of what is now South Carolina. Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto invaded Cofitachequi, but eventually pushed beyond its boundaries, and the Cofitachequi continued to rule the region for a century and a half. "Indian princess presenting a pearl necklace to Hernando de Soto during his journeys to South Carolina, 1500-1542." Engraved by John William Orr, 1858. Library of Congress. Wikimedia Commons.

The introduction of Eastern Hemisphere diseases also had devastating effects on Native American and Indigenous populations, who lacked prior exposure and immunity. Estimates of death due to foreign pathogens, subsequent infections, and famine range between 30 percent and 90 percent of the populations of the Americas. Certain Native populations who had sustained contact with Europeans and Africans experienced catastrophic depopulation. For example, in the Caribbean, European colonialism and the enslavement of Native peoples exacerbated the spread of disease. Working enslaved people to exhaustion made them more susceptible to infections, and the capture of new slaves for the replacement of deceased enslaved people further spread disease in a vicious cycle that had severe consequences.[3] However, away from sustained contact with Europeans and Africans, epidemics had dire local effects but did not spread across the continent in one catastrophic wave of disease. Various microbes and pathogens spread locally through Native and colonial networks as a series of epidemics that repeated every seven to ten years for over two centuries. Instead of a single mass epidemic, Native peoples from 1550 to 1750 experienced waves of new pathogens, leading over time to catastrophic population losses and fundamental social changes.

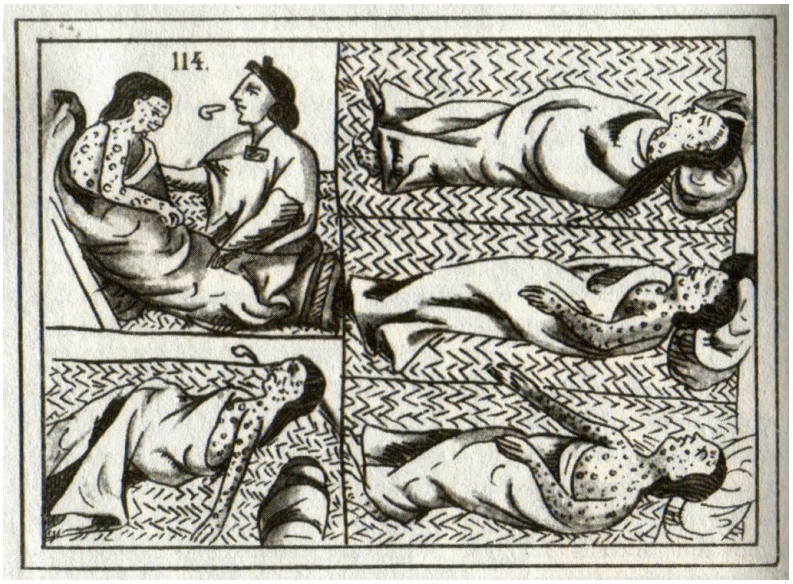


Figure 3.3. This sixteenth-century Aztec drawing shows the suffering of a typical victim of smallpox. Smallpox and other contagious diseases brought by European explorers devastated Native populations in the Americas, killing approximately ninety percent. Wikimedia.

Scholars have recently begun to call these social changes among Native American and Indigenous peoples the Seventeenth-Century Transformation or a Native New World. Native peoples responded to climate change and epidemic diseases with social, religious, and political change. Native communities were also transformed by the introduction of European goods, particularly metal wares, firearms, and linens. New flora and fauna were also introduced, like horses, pigs, and peaches. Trade between Native groups and with Europeans for access to those goods became increasingly important over the seventeenth century. Native people traded food, animal furs and skins, luxury items, clothing, and Native captives with Europeans. Competition among Native peoples over resources for trade intensified conflict and led to diplomatic alliances during this period, leading to the formation of many of the present-day Native nations. Native peoples were not static. The Americas were undergoing transformational changes that predated the arrival of Europeans and Africans. Yet many of those changes would only intensify over the next century as Native peoples adapted to an increasingly changing world.[4]

The world changed for Europeans and Africans as well. Through cultural, economic, and social collisions including exchanges of materials, biology, DNA, and ideas, Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous Americans changed through contact with one another and with new social and physical environments. New communities were created, destroyed, and recreated in processes of transformation and exchange that altered the history of Africa, Europe, North America, and South America. The Atlantic that connects these four continents serves as the stage where human beings prompted these changes. For this reason, historians have begun to refer to the period of first contact between these peoples (fourteenth–fifteenth centuries) until the nineteenth century as the Atlantic World.[5]

The movement of goods and biology (plants, animals, people, and pathogens) across the Atlantic has often been described as the Columbian Exchange. This interchange across the Atlantic had profound effects on people and environments across the globe as new industrial goods, food items, animals, textiles, plants, and diseases spread—or went extinct or out of use—alongside human migrations.[6] But Atlantic history moves beyond just the exchange of goods to understand how communities reacted and adapted to those changes. Indigenous Americans, Africans, and Europeans all went through processes of creation and destruction in the Atlantic. They created new societies, transformed their politics and religions, and adapted to new problems and opportunities that arose. Atlantic history is more than the exchange of goods and living beings. It is as much about the exchange of ideas: the meaning of slavery and freedom, owning and occupying land and territory, which religion offered salvation, the roles of women in society, and many more.[7]

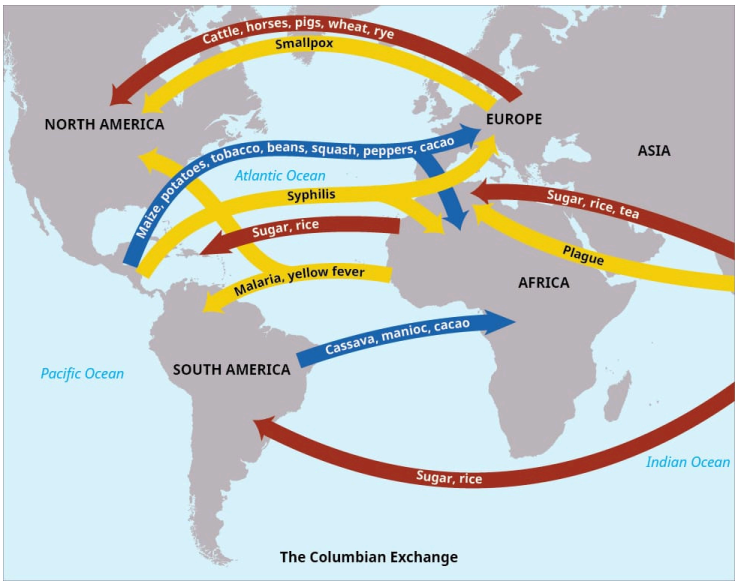


Figure 3.4. This graphic depicts several of the most influential non-human aspects of the Columbian Exchange. Americas, Europe, From the Americas to Europe, Africa, and Asia, flowed beans, corn, cocoa, peanuts, peppers, pineapples, potatoes, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, squash, tomatoes, tobacco, turkey, and vanilla. From Europe, Africa, and Asia to the Americas: bananas, citrus fruits, coffee beans, disease – smallpox, influenza, typhus, measles, malaria, diphtheria, whooping cough – grains, grapes, honeybees, livestock – cattle, sheep, pigs, horses – olives, onions, peaches and pears, sugarcane, and turnips. OER Project, CC BY-NC 4.0.

For example, free and enslaved Africans were forced to create new societies in the Americas and Europe, while communities in Africa changed drastically through trade and interaction with Europeans. As discussed earlier, Native Americans adapted to a changing New World due to the introduction of new goods, slavery, disease, migration, and climate change. Europeans adapted their societies, economies, politics, and religions to new environments and through interactions with each other, Native peoples, and Africans. The connection of people from four continents transformed the Atlantic World in both creative and destructive ways. This chapter highlights some of those transformations between the 1560s and 1660s.

III. Challenging Spain

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Spanish colonists fought frequently with Florida's Native peoples as well as with other Europeans. The Spanish launched expeditions into the interior of southeastern North America in attempts to find large metropolitan Native communities with precious metals similar to the Aztecs in Mexico and the Inca in Peru. Native peoples opposed, avoided, misled, and cooperated with these expeditions to get Spanish soldiers to move beyond their own communities. In 1526, Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón established a colony near Sapelo Sound on the coast of Georgia that collapsed within months of Ayllón's death due to illness. In 1539, Hernando de Soto, a veteran of Pizarro's expedition to Peru, landed an army near Tampa Bay and began to move up the Florida coast. De Soto and his men traversed the Southeast for four years until De Soto's death in 1542. The Spanish survivors abandoned the expedition, built boats, and sailed down the Mississippi River to Mexico. De Soto's invasion depended upon ransacking Native communities and taking Native captives in a futile search for material wealth. The expedition came into direct conflict with dozens of Native polities and led directly to the destruction of the Tascaluza paramount chiefdom in Central Alabama after the battle of Mabila in 1540. De Soto's invasion disrupted Native communities in the region, who found their leaders could not protect their people or crops from Spanish invasions. This often led to a reordering of Native political and social organizations. Native communities adapted in the face of the Spanish invasion while limiting the advance of Spanish colonialism in North America.[8]

But Spain made inroads in Florida. In the 1560s, Spain expelled French Protestants, called Huguenots, from the area near modern-day Jacksonville in northeast Florida. In 1586, English privateer Sir Francis Drake burned the wooden settlement of St. Augustine, but Spain quickly rebuilt it. At the dawn of the seventeenth century, Spain's reach in Florida extended from the mouth of the St. Johns River south to the environs of St. Augustine—an area of roughly a thousand square miles. The Spaniards attempted to duplicate methods for establishing control used previously in Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Andes. The Crown granted missionaries the right to live among Timucua and Guale villagers in the late 1500s and early 1600s and encouraged settlement through the encomienda system (grants of Native labor).[9]

In the 1630s, the mission system extended into the Apalachee district in the Florida panhandle. The Apalachee, one of the most

powerful nations in Florida at the time of contact, claimed the territory from the modern Florida–Georgia border to the Gulf of Mexico. Apalachee farmers grew an abundance of corn and other crops. Native American traders carried surplus products east along the Camino Real (the royal road) that connected the western anchor of the mission system with St. Augustine. Spanish settlers drove cattle eastward across the St. Johns River and established ranches as far west as Apalachee. Still, Spain held Florida tenuously.



Figure 3.5. This early sixteenth-century map referred to the southeastern coast of North America as Tierra de Ayllon, named after the Spanish official who charted much of the region for Spain. Diego Ribero, 1529. Maps such as these inspired later attempts to establish colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. Wikipedia.

Native peoples challenged Spanish control in Florida, particularly over the expanding mission system. Missions were violent, exploitative endeavors that depended upon Native headmen and headwomen providing laborers and resources on behalf of missionaries and Spanish troops in return for Spanish gifts and support for Native leaders. The Timucuan peoples in central Florida began to reject the missionaries in their communities for their abusive labor demands and prohibitions of Native religious and social practices. Timucuans also blamed friars for the devastating effects of disease on their communities. In 1656, Timucuans rallied together an alliance of towns and began attacking the few Spaniards and enslaved Africans in their communities. Timucuans appealed to the Apalachee for support, who rejected their overtures in favor of the Spanish. The Apalachee attacked Timucuan towns and helped the Spanish apprehend the leaders of the rebellion. The Spanish executed eleven Timucuan leaders, displaying their bodies across Timucua as a warning against further rebellion. The Timucuan rebellion made clear that Spanish power and the mission system in Florida depended upon alliances with Native peoples.[10]

While Spain plundered the New World, unrest plagued Europe. The Reformation threw England and France, the two European powers capable of contesting Spain, into turmoil. Long and expensive conflicts drained time, resources, and lives. Millions died from religious violence in France alone. As the violence diminished in Europe, however, religious and political rivalries continued in the New World.

The Spanish exploitation of New Spain's riches inspired European monarchs to invest in exploration and conquest. Reports of Spanish atrocities spread throughout Europe and provided a humanitarian justification for European colonization. An English reprint of the writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas bore the sensational title "Popery Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colours: Or, a Faithful Narrative of the Horrid and Unexampled Massacres, Butcheries, and all manners of Cruelties that Hell and Malice could invent, committed by the Popish Spanish." An English writer explained that Native Americans "were simple and plain men, and lived without great labour," but in their lust for gold the Spaniards "forced the people (that were not used to labour) to stand all the daie in the hot sun gathering gold in the sand of the rivers. By this means a great number of them (not used to such pains) died, and a great number of them (seeing themselves brought from so quiet a life to such misery and slavery) of desperation killed themselves. And many would not marry, because they would not have their children slaves to the Spaniards."[11] The Spanish accused their critics of fostering a "Black Legend." The Black Legend drew on religious differences and political rivalries. Spain had successful conquests in France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands and left many in those nations yearning to break free from Spanish influence. English writers argued that Spanish barbarities were foiling a tremendous opportunity for the expansion of Christianity across the globe and that a benevolent conquest of the New World by non-Spanish monarchies offered the surest

salvation of the New World's pagan masses. With these religious justifications and with obvious economic motives, Spain's rivals arrived in the New World.



Figure 3.6. Other Europeans gleefully relayed Spanish atrocities to justify their own desires for conquest and plunder. This engraving by Theodore Bry shows a Spanish man feeding killed Indigenous women and children to his dogs. Wikipedia.

The French

The French crown subsidized exploration in the early sixteenth century. Early French explorers sought a fabled Northwest Passage, a mythical waterway passing through the North American continent to Asia. Despite the wealth of the New World, Asia's riches still beckoned to Europeans. Canada's St. Lawrence River appeared to be such a passage, stretching deep into the continent and into the Great Lakes. French colonial possessions centered on these bodies of water (and, later, down the Mississippi River to the port of New Orleans).

French expeditions to North America began in 1534 when Jacques Cartier explored Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence in present-day Canada. In 1535, Cartier returned and sailed up the St. Lawrence River, where he encountered Iroquoian peoples at the towns of Stadacona and Hochelaga, capturing the headman of Stadacona, Donnacona, and returning to France with him, where Donnacona later died. Cartier returned in 1541 to Stadacona and established a colony near there at Cap Rouge, Quebec, that was abandoned due to disease and starvation in 1543. The French did not attempt to establish a colony again in Canada for over fifty years.



Figure 3.7. This depicts New Orleans in 1726 when it was an eight-year-old French frontier settlement. Jean-Pierre Lassus, Veüe et Perspective de la Nouvelle Orleans, 1726, Centre des archives d'outre-mer, France. Wikimedia.

In 1603, the French returned to Canada to establish Port Royal in Acadia (Nova Scotia) and launched trading expeditions that stretched down the Atlantic coast as far as Cape Cod. French colonization developed through investment from private trading

companies. The needs of the fur trade set the future pattern of French colonization. Founded in 1608 under the leadership of Samuel de Champlain, Quebec provided the foothold for what would become New France. Established among Montagnais and Algonquian communities, French fur traders placed a higher value on cooperating with Indigenous people than on establishing a successful French colonial footprint. Asserting dominance in the region could have been to their own detriment, as it might have compromised their access to skilled Native American trappers who provided the furs and therefore wealth. Few Frenchmen traveled to the New World to settle permanently. By the 1660s, around 3,200 French colonists lived in small communities on the St. Lawrence River in Quebec (1608), Trois-Rivières (1634), and Montreal (1642). Many persecuted French Protestants (Huguenots) sought to emigrate after France criminalized Protestantism in 1685, but all non-Catholics were forbidden in New France.[12]

The French preference for trade over permanent settlement fostered more cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships with Native Americans than was typical among the Spanish and English. Perhaps eager to debunk the anti-Catholic elements of the Black Legend, the French worked to cultivate cooperation with Native Americans. Jesuit missionaries, for instance, adopted different conversion strategies than the Spanish Franciscans. Spanish missionaries brought Natives into enclosed missions, whereas Jesuits more often lived with or alongside Indigenous people. Many French fur traders married Native American women.[13] The offspring of Native American women and French men were so common in New France that the French developed a word for these children, Métis (meaning "mixed," similar to Spanish mestizos). The Wendat people developed a particularly close relationship with the French, and many converted to Christianity and engaged in the fur trade. But close relationships with the French would come at a high cost. The Wendat were decimated by the ravages of European disease, and entanglements in French and Dutch conflicts proved disastrous.[14] Despite this, some Native peoples maintained alliances with the French.

The French sent missionaries into Native communities and established missions, like Kahnawake, on the St. Lawrence River south of Montreal. Missions attracted Native converts like Kateri (Catherine) Tekakwitha, a woman born in Gandaouagué in the 1650s to a Mohawk man and an Algonquian captive. Kateri was afflicted at a young age with smallpox and lost most of her family to the disease. She converted to Catholicism, moved to Kahnawake, and took vows of chastity. Through abstention, fasting, and flagellation, Kateri suffered for her new faith and died slowly of disease at the age of twenty-four. She was canonized as a Catholic saint in 2012. Her story demonstrates the changing world for Native peoples in the seventeenth century alongside the suffering and religious fervor that epidemic disease could bring about.[15]



Figure 3.8. In 1690, the Jesuit priest Claude Chauchetière painted this portrait of Kateri Tekakwitha (Mohawk/Algonquin). Tekakwitha was baptized as Catherine in 1676. She would eventually be canonized as a Catholic saint in 2012. Wikipedia.

Pressure from the powerful Haudenosaunee in the east pushed many Algonquian-speaking peoples, like Kateri's mother, toward French territory in the mid-seventeenth century, and together they crafted what historians have called a "middle ground," a kind of cross-cultural space that allowed for Native and European interaction, negotiation, and accommodation. This was particularly true for the region upriver from Montreal to the western Great Lakes that became known as the pays d'en haut, the "upper country," in New France. In the upper country, French traders created trade and kinship connections with Algonquian-speakers (Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Sauk, Meskwaki, Kickapoo, Illini, Miami, Mascouten, and others), Iroquoian-speakers (Wendat and Petuns), and Siouan-speakers (Winnebago). French traders adopted—sometimes clumsily—the gift-giving and mediation strategies expected of Native leaders. Natives similarly engaged in the impersonal European market and adapted—often

haphazardly—to European laws. Familial and trading alliances with Native communities provided the backbone of French authority in New France.

The Great Lakes "middle ground" experienced tumultuous success throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries until English colonial officials and American settlers swarmed the region. The pressures of European expansion strained even the closest bonds.[16]

The Dutch

The Netherlands, a small maritime nation with great wealth, achieved considerable colonial success. In 1581, the Netherlands had officially broken away from the Habsburgs and won a reputation as the freest of the new European nations. Dutch women maintained separate legal identities from their husbands and could therefore hold property and inherit full estates.

Ravaged by the turmoil of the Reformation, the Dutch embraced greater religious tolerance and freedom of the press than other European nations.[17] Radical Protestants, Catholics, and Jews flocked to the Netherlands. The English Pilgrims, for instance, fled first to the Netherlands before sailing to the New World years later. The Netherlands built its colonial empire through the work of experienced merchants and skilled sailors. The Dutch were the most advanced capitalists in the modern world and marshaled extensive financial resources by creating innovative financial organizations such as the Amsterdam Stock Exchange and the Dutch East India Company. Although the Dutch offered liberties, they offered very little democracy—power remained in the hands of only a few. And Dutch liberties certainly had their limits. The Dutch advanced the slave trade and brought enslaved Africans with them to the New World. Slavery was an essential part of Dutch capitalist triumphs.

Sharing the European hunger for access to Asia, in 1609 the Dutch commissioned Englishman Henry Hudson to discover the fabled Northwest Passage through North America. He failed, of course, but found the Hudson River, claiming modern-day New York for the Dutch, where later Dutch merchants returned to trade European goods for furs with local Munsee, Mahican, Lenape, and other Algonquian groups. There, they established New Netherland in 1614, an essential part of the Dutch New World empire. The Netherlands chartered the Dutch West India Company in 1621 and established colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and North America. The island of Manhattan provided a launching pad to support its Caribbean colonies and attack Spanish trade.

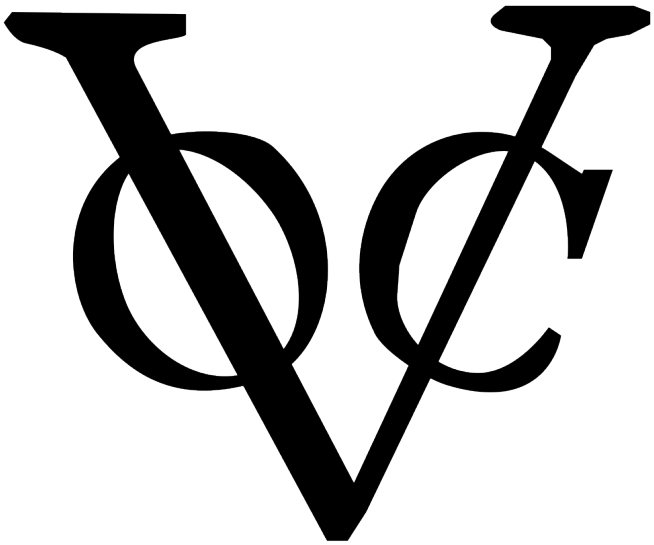


Figure 3.9. The logo of the Dutch East India Company, established in 1602. It was one of the first joint-stock companies in the world and exerted vast influence across the globe with quasi-governmental powers, including the right to negotiate treaties and create its own coins. Wikipedia.

Spiteful of the Spanish and mindful of the Black Legend, the Dutch were determined not to repeat Spanish atrocities. They fashioned guidelines for New Netherland that conformed to the ideas of Hugo Grotius, a legal philosopher who believed that Native peoples possessed the same natural rights as Europeans. Colony leaders insisted that land be purchased; in 1626, Peter Minuit therefore "bought" Manhattan from the Munsee people.[18] Despite the seemingly honorable intentions, it is likely the Dutch paid the wrong people for the land (either intentionally or unintentionally) or that the Munsee and the Dutch understood the transaction in very different terms. Transactions like these illustrated both the Dutch attempt to find a more peaceful process of

colonization and the inconsistency between European and Native American understandings of property.

Like the French, the Dutch sought to profit, not to conquer. Trade with Native peoples became New Netherland's central economic activity. Dutch traders carried wampum along Native trade routes and exchanged it for beaver pelts. Wampum (otgóä in Iroquoian) consisted of shell beads from the southern New England and Chesapeake coasts, fashioned by Algonquian and Iroquoian women to create a valued ceremonial and diplomatic commodity. Native women labored to string the white and purple beads together into bands or belts for specific diplomatic or ceremonial purposes, speaking the words of the agreement into the beads, imbuing wampum with communal and spiritual power. In colonial exchanges, wampum became a currency that could buy anything from a loaf of bread to a plot of land.[19]

In addition to developing these trading networks, the Dutch also established farms, settlements, and lumber camps. The West India Company directors implemented the patroon system to encourage colonization. The patroon system granted large estates to wealthy landlords, who subsequently paid passage for tenant farmers to work their land. Expanding Dutch settlements correlated with deteriorating relations with local Native Americans. In the interior of the continent, the Dutch retained valuable alliances with the Iroquois to maintain Beverwijck, modern-day Albany, as a hub for the fur trade.[20] In the places where the Dutch built permanent settlements, the ideals of peaceful colonization succumbed to the settlers' increasing demand for land. Armed conflicts erupted as colonial settlements encroached on Native villages and hunting lands while trade exacerbated conflict between Native peoples over access to Dutch goods. Profit and peace, it seemed, could not coexist.



Figure 3.10. This 1660 map, the Castellano Plan, was drafted by surveyor Jacques Cortelyou and depicts the original Dutch settlement, the City of Amsterdam in New Netherland, located on the southern tip of Manhattan. Wikipedia.

Labor shortages, meanwhile, crippled Dutch colonization. The patroon system failed to bring enough tenants, and the colony could not attract a sufficient number of indentured servants to satisfy the colony's backers. In response, the colony imported eleven enslaved people owned by the company in 1626, the same year that Minuit purchased Manhattan. Enslaved laborers were tasked with building New Amsterdam (modern-day New York City), including a defensive wall along the northern edge of the colony (the site of modern-day Wall Street). They created its roads and maintained its all-important port. Fears of racial mixing led the Dutch to import enslaved women, enabling the formation of African Dutch families. The colony's first African marriage occurred in 1641, and by 1650, there were at least five hundred enslaved Africans in the colony. By 1660, New Amsterdam had the largest urban enslaved population on the continent.[21]

As was typical of the practice of African slavery in much of the early seventeenth century, Dutch slavery in New Amsterdam was less comprehensively exploitative than later systems of American slavery. Some enslaved Africans, for instance, successfully sued for back wages. When several enslaved people owned by the company fought for the colony against the Munsee, they petitioned for their freedom and won a kind of "half freedom" that allowed them to work their own land in return for paying a large tithe, or tax, to their enslavers. The children of these "half-free" laborers remained held in bondage by the West India Company, however. The Dutch, who so proudly touted their liberties, grappled with the reality of African slavery, and some New Netherlanders protested the enslavement of Christianized Africans. The economic goals of the colony slowly crowded out these cultural and religious objections, and the much-boasted-of liberties of the Dutch came to exist alongside increasingly brutal systems of slavery.

The Haudenosaunee

Beginning in the sixteenth century, Five Iroquoian nations that occupied territories south and east of Lake Ontario formed the Great League of Peace, better known as the Haudenosaunee ("people of the longhouse") or the Five Nations Iroquois. The Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk formed a new religious and political coalition centered on the spiritual message of Deganawidah, who used words of condolence to remove grief from the Iroquoian leader Hiawatha. These words of condolence and diplomatic alliances between Iroquoian sachems (headmen) were created to establish nonviolent means of conflict resolution within the Great League, to end the cycle of mourning wars between the Five Nations. Mourning wars were raids to take enemies captive, intended to ease the suffering of the matrilineal (female descent) households who had lost loved ones. By ending the cycle of violent reprisals between league members, the Haudenosaunee were able to establish themselves as the dominant power in the eastern Great Lakes until the American Revolution.[22]



Figure 3.11. A 1730 map of the Five Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Darlington Collection. Wikipedia.

But peace within the League did not mean peace outside of the League. Over the first decades of the sixteenth century, the Haudenosaunee found themselves cut off from access to new European settlements and the trade they provided from the French on the St. Lawrence River, the English in New England and the Chesapeake, and the Dutch in the Hudson River Valley. The Haudenosaunee sought access to whelk and quahog clam shells from the Atlantic coasts that, when sewn together, made wampum, and furs for trade with Europeans from the fertile forests of the Ohio River Valley and Canada. With the establishment of Fort Orange (present-day Albany) by the Dutch in 1614 in the heart of the Hudson Valley, the Mohawks sought to monopolize trade with the Dutch by cutting off Mahican and other Algonquian traders to the north and west from access to the fort. The Haudenosaunee began raiding Algonquian and other Iroquoian-speaking people's trade caravans to use stolen furs as trade goods with the Dutch. These raids set off a series of conflicts with neighboring peoples over the next decades, including against Mahicans (1624), St. Lawrence Iroquois (1630s), Wenros (1638), Wendat (1640s), Petuns (1650), Algonquians (1650), Neutrals (1651), Eries (1657), and Susquehannocks (1663).[23]

As the scale and pace of conflicts intensified, the Haudenosaunee looked to replace lost loved ones by incorporating captives taken from their enemies and adopting them into their matrilineal households. This drive to replace population losses fueled further conflict. Due to their expanding trade, raids, and adoption of outsiders, the Haudenosaunee became exposed to epidemic diseases brought by Europeans and Africans. The first recorded instances of smallpox among the Five Nations date to 1633 and again in 1640–1641. The subsequent population losses due to disease fueled further mourning wars to take captives to replace lost loved ones. Through this strategy of maintaining peace within the Iroquoian League and subjecting outside nations to violence, the Haudenosaunee scattered dozens of Native nations across the Great Lakes, the Ohio River Valley, the St. Lawrence River Valley, western New England, and the northern Chesapeake. In 1675, the Haudenosaunee allied themselves with the English and attacked the alliance of Algonquian Native peoples led by Metacom, ensuring the survival of the New England colonies and the defeat of Metacom in King Philip's War. The alliance formed between the English and Haudenosaunee in 1676 became known as the Covenant Chain, a series of alliances between the two nations that lasted until the Seven Years' War. By 1675, the Haudenosaunee established themselves as the major power on the Great Lakes.[24]

The Portuguese

The Portuguese had been leaders in Atlantic navigation, well ahead of Columbus's voyage. But the incredible wealth flowing from New Spain piqued the rivalry between the two Iberian countries and accelerated Portuguese colonization efforts. This rivalry created a crisis within the Catholic world as Spain and Portugal squared off in a battle for colonial supremacy. The pope had earlier intervened and divided the New World with the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Land east of the Tordesillas Meridian, an imaginary line dividing the North Atlantic and South America, would be given to Portugal, whereas land west of the line was reserved for Spanish conquest. In return for the license to conquer, both Portugal and Spain were instructed to treat the natives with Christian compassion and to bring them under the protection of the church.

Lucrative colonies in Africa and India initially preoccupied Portugal, but by 1530, the Portuguese turned their attention to the land that would become Brazil, driving out French traders and establishing permanent settlements at São Vicente (São Paulo), Salvador, and Rio de Janeiro. Two industries powered early colonial Brazil: sugar and the slave trade. In fact, over the entire history of the Atlantic slave trade, more Africans were enslaved in Brazil than in any other colony in the Atlantic World. By the eighteenth century, gold and diamond mines were discovered in the interior of São Paulo and Bahia, leading to expansion westward and the further colonization of Brazil.



Figure 3.12. Portuguese map from 1574 showing the fifteen hereditary captaincy colonies of Brazil. Pernambuco and São Vicente were the only two to achieve success due to their sugar cane farming. Biblioteca Nacional da Ajuda. Wikipedia.

Jesuit missionaries brought Christianity to Brazil, but strong elements of African and Native spirituality mixed with orthodox Catholicism to create a unique religious culture. This culture resulted from the demographics of Brazilian slavery. High mortality rates on sugar plantations required a steady influx of new enslaved laborers, thus perpetuating the cultural connection between Brazil and Africa. The reliance on new imports of enslaved laborers increased the likelihood of resistance, however, and those who escaped slavery managed to create several free settlements, called quilombos. These settlements drew from both enslaved Africans and Natives, and despite frequent attacks, several endured throughout the long history of Brazilian slavery.[25]

From 1580 to 1640, the Portuguese Crown was held by Philip II of Spain, leading to the period known as Iberian Unification—although, under the same monarch, Spanish and Portuguese imperial possessions were ruled separately. Conflict between Portuguese and Spanish colonists, and especially with Native communities, continued in the Río de la Plata, particularly over São Paulo colonists enslaving Native Guaraní peoples in the region.[26] In Brazil these conflicts intensified when the Dutch invaded, looking to expand their own colonial possessions and profit from the sugar and slave trades. The Dutch attacked Salvador and were repulsed in 1624, but conquered the northeastern portion of Brazil in 1630 when the Dutch West India Company established its capital at Maurisstad (Recife). Brazilian colonists, including many free and formerly enslaved people of African descent like Henrique Dias, opposed Dutch occupation and Spanish overlordship.[27]

The Dutch invasion was about more than seizing the profitable sugar plantations of northeastern Brazil; they also sought to dominate the Atlantic slave trade by seizing Elmina in present-day Ghana in 1637. Once Portuguese independence from Spain was restored in 1640, the Dutch used the dissolution of the Iberian monarchy to expand in Africa by seizing Portuguese colonies

in Luanda in Angola, São Tomé, and Ano Bom (in present-day Equatorial Guinea) in 1641.[28] The Portuguese ousted the Dutch from Brazil in 1654, with peace between the two nations resolved in 1661.[29] Colonial competition over territory and the slave trade led to almost constant levels of warfare between European powers who sought to exploit the human and nonhuman resources of the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

New Sweden

Sweden joined the effort to colonize North America in 1638 when the Swedish South Company settled Swedes, Finns, and Dutch colonists at Fort Christina in what is now Wilmington, Delaware. The colony was plagued by slow communication and divided loyalties between Dutch investors who wanted immediate return on their investments and Swedish colonists and investors who wanted to expand the Swedish imperial project. Indigenous Lenape and Susquehannock communities initially welcomed New Swedish traders into Delaware Bay as new sources of European goods from small European communities that did not threaten Native towns. New Sweden was conquered by the Dutch in 1655, who subsequently were overtaken by the English, who renamed the New Netherland colony New York in 1664. As colonies changed territorial hands in the mid-seventeenth century, Swedes, Dutch, Finns, Germans, and other Europeans who colonized the Delaware Valley maintained their communal identity at a local level by being loyal subjects to whichever imperial power ruled their communities. They serve as a prime example of the diversity and persistence of colonial identity through maintaining local sovereignty by pledging allegiance to new imperial regimes.[30]

IV. English Colonization

New World colonization won support in England amid a time of rising English fortunes among the wealthy, a tense Spanish rivalry, and mounting internal social unrest. The island's population increased from fewer than three million in 1500 to over five million by the middle of the seventeenth century.[31] The skyrocketing cost of land coincided with plummeting farming income. Rents and prices rose, but wages stagnated. Moreover, movements to enclose public land—sparked by the transition of English landholders from agriculture to livestock raising—evicted tenants from the land and created hordes of landless, jobless peasants who haunted the cities and countryside.[32] But supporters of English colonization always touted more than economic gains and mere national self-interest. They claimed to be doing God's work. Many claimed that colonization would glorify God, England, and Protestantism by Christianizing the New World's pagan peoples. The English—and other European Protestant colonizers—imagined themselves superior to the Spanish, who still bore the Black Legend stereotype of inhuman cruelty. English colonization, supporters argued, would prove that superiority.

In his 1584 "Discourse on Western Planting," Richard Hakluyt amassed the supposed religious, moral, and exceptional economic benefits of colonization. He repeated the Black Legend of Spanish New World terrorism and attacked the sins of Catholic Spain. He promised that English colonization could strike a blow against Spanish heresy and bring the Protestant religion to the New World. English interference, Hakluyt suggested, might provide the only salvation from Catholic rule in the New World. The New World, too, he said, offered obvious economic advantages. Expanded trade, he argued, would not only bring profit but also provide work for England's jobless poor. A Christian enterprise, a blow against Spain, an economic stimulus, and a social safety valve all beckoned the English toward a commitment to colonization.[33]

This noble rhetoric veiled the coarse economic motives that brought England to the New World. England's merchants lacked estates, but they had new plans to build wealth. By collaborating with new government-sponsored trading monopolies and employing financial innovations such as joint-stock companies, England's merchants sought to improve on the Dutch economic system. Spain was extracting enormous material wealth from the New World—why shouldn't England? Joint-stock companies, the ancestors of modern corporations, became the initial instruments of colonization. With government monopolies, shared profits, and managed risks, these money-making ventures could attract and manage the vast capital needed for colonization. In 1606, James I approved the formation of the Virginia Company (named after Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen).

Rather than formal colonization, however, the most successful early English ventures in the New World were a form of state-sponsored piracy known as privateering. Queen Elizabeth sponsored sailors, or "Sea Dogges," such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, to plunder Spanish ships and towns in the Americas. Privateers earned a substantial profit both for themselves and for the English crown. England practiced piracy on a scale, one historian wrote, "that transforms crime into politics."[34] Francis Drake harried Spanish ships throughout the Western Hemisphere and raided Spanish caravans as far away as the coast of Peru on the Pacific Ocean. With Protestant-Catholic tensions already running high, English privateering provoked Spain. Tensions worsened after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic. In 1588, King Philip II of Spain unleashed the fabled Armada. With 130 ships, 8,000 sailors, and 18,000 soldiers, Spain launched the largest invasion in history to destroy the British Navy and depose Elizabeth. The smaller and swifter English ships successfully harassed the armada, forcing it to retreat to the Netherlands for

reinforcements. But then a fluke storm, celebrated in England as the “Protestant wind,” annihilated the remainder of the fleet.[35] The destruction of the armada changed the course of world history. It not only saved England and secured English Protestantism, but it also opened the seas to English expansion and paved the way for England’s colonial future.



Figure 3.13. This oil painting depicts the Battle of Gravelines in 1588 between the Spanish Armada and the English Fleet when King Philip II of Spain attempted to invade England. Elizabeth I and the Spanish Armada. Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London. Wikipedia.

English colonization would look very different from Spanish or French colonization. England had long been trying to conquer Catholic Ireland. Rather than integrating with the Irish and trying to convert them to Protestantism, England more often simply seized land through violence and pushed out the former inhabitants, leaving them to move elsewhere or to die. These same tactics would later be deployed in North American invasions against Native peoples.

English colonization, however, began haltingly. Sir Humphrey Gilbert labored throughout the late sixteenth century to establish a colony in Newfoundland but failed. In 1587, with a predominantly male cohort of 150 English colonizers, John White reestablished an abandoned settlement on North Carolina’s Roanoke Island. Supply shortages prompted White to return to England for additional support, but the Spanish Armada and the mobilization of British naval efforts stranded him in Britain for several years. When he finally returned to Roanoke, he found the colony abandoned. What befell the failed colony? White found the word Croatoan carved into a tree or a post in the abandoned colony. Historians presume the colonists, short of food, may have fled for a nearby island of that name and encountered its settled Native population. Others offer violence as an explanation. Regardless, the English colonists were never heard from again. When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, no Englishmen had yet established a permanent North American colony.

V. Jamestown

After King James made peace with the Spanish in 1604, colonization took on a new appeal. The Virginia Company, established in 1606, hoped to find gold and silver as well as other valuable trading commodities in the New World: glass, iron, furs, pitch, tar, and anything else the country could supply. In April 1607, Englishmen aboard three ships—the Susan Constant, the Godspeed, and the Discovery—sailed forty miles up the James River (named for the English king) in present-day Virginia (named for Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen) and settled on just such a place. But the location was a disaster. Indigenous people had ignored the peninsula for two reasons: terrible soil hampered agriculture, and brackish tidal water led to debilitating disease. Despite these setbacks, the English built Jamestown, the first permanent English colony in the present-day United States.

The English had not entered a wilderness but had arrived in what Algonquian-speakers called Tsennacommacah. Wahunsenacawh, the mamanatowick (paramount chief) whom the English called Powhatan, led over ten thousand Algonquian-speaking people in the Chesapeake living in over thirty separate polities known collectively as the Powhatan.[36] They burned vast acreage to clear brush and create sprawling artificial, parklike grasslands so they could easily hunt deer, elk, and bison. The Powhatan raised corn, beans, squash, and possibly sunflowers, rotating acreage throughout the Chesapeake. Without plows, manure, or draft animals, the Powhatan produced a remarkable number of calories cheaply and efficiently.



Figure 3.14. Incolarum Virginiae piscandi ratio (The Method of Fishing of the Inhabitants of Virginia), c. 1590. This image depicts Algonquian people using fire, spears, and traps to catch fish in the tidewaters of Virginia. Engraving by Theodor de Bry after John White's watercolor. The Mariners' Museum, Newport News. The Encyclopedia Virginia.

Jamestown was a profit-seeking venture backed by investors. The colonists were mostly gentlemen and proved entirely unprepared for the challenges ahead. They hoped for easy riches but found none. As John Smith later complained, they "would rather starve than work."[37] And so they did. Disease and starvation ravaged the colonists, thanks in part to the peninsula's unhealthy location and the fact that supplies from England arrived sporadically or spoiled. Fewer than half of the original colonists survived the first nine months.

John Smith, a yeoman's son and capable leader, took command of the crippled colony and promised, "He that will not work shall not eat." He navigated Native American diplomacy, claiming that he was captured and sentenced to death, but that Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas, intervened to save his life. She would later marry another colonist, John Rolfe, and die in England.



Figure 3.15. "Village of Secoton," drawn by John White. A central street links houses surrounded by fields of corn. In the lower part, dancers take part in a religious ceremony, 1585. Wikimedia.

Powhatan kept the English alive that first winter. The Powhatan had welcomed the English and placed a high value on metal ax-heads, kettles, tools, and guns, and eagerly traded furs and other abundant goods for them. With ten thousand confederated natives and with food in abundance, Indigenous people had little to fear and much to gain from the isolated outpost of sick and dying Englishmen. But as the English settlements expanded, they began to demand control over the movement of people

and goods in areas of English control. This led to the first Anglo-Powhatan War (1609–1614) where the Powhatans attempted to preserve their control over trade and tribute in the Tidewater by cutting off food supplies to the English and besieging the newly constructed James Fort. The English successfully created relationships with other Native communities outside of Powhatan control, like the Patawomecks and Chickahominies, ensuring the colony's survival. By 1614, tensions eased with the marriage of Pocahontas to John Rolfe, but the boundaries of English-controlled territories remained.[38]

Despite reinforcements, the English continued to die. Four hundred settlers arrived in 1609, but the overwhelmed colony entered a desperate "starving time" in the winter of 1609–1610. Supplies were lost at sea. Relations with Native Americans deteriorated, and the colonists fought a kind of slow-burning guerrilla war with the Powhatan. Disaster loomed for the colony. The settlers ate everything they could, roaming the woods for nuts and berries. They boiled leather. They dug up graves to eat the corpses of their former neighbors. One man was executed for killing and eating his wife. Some years later, George Percy recalled the colonists' desperation during these years, when he served as the colony's president: "Having fed upon our horses and other beasts as long as they lasted, we were glad to make shift with vermin as dogs, cats, rats and mice . . . as to eat boots shoes or any other leather. . . . And now famine beginning to look ghastly and pale in every face, that nothing was spared to maintain life and to doe those things which seam incredible, as to dig up dead corpses out of graves and to eat them."[39] Archaeological excavations in 2012 exhumed the bones of a fourteen-year-old girl that exhibited signs of cannibalism.[40] All but sixty settlers would die by the summer of 1610.

Little improved over the next several years. By 1616, 80 percent of all English immigrants who had arrived in Jamestown had perished. England's first American colony was a catastrophe. The colony was reorganized, though the colony still limped along as a starving, commercially disastrous tragedy. The colonists were unable to find any profitable commodities and remained dependent on Native Americans and sporadic shipments from England for food. But then, tobacco saved Jamestown.

By the time King James I described tobacco as a "noxious weed, . . . loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, and dangerous to the lungs," it had already taken Europe by storm. In 1616, John Rolfe crossed tobacco strains from Trinidad and Guiana and planted Virginia's first tobacco crop. In 1617, the colony sent its first cargo of tobacco back to England. The "noxious weed," a native of the New World, fetched a high price in Europe, and the tobacco boom began in Virginia and then later spread to Maryland. Within fifteen years, American colonists were exporting over 500,000 pounds of tobacco per year. Within forty years, they were exporting 15 million.[41]

Tobacco changed everything. It saved Virginia from ruin, incentivized further colonization, and laid the groundwork for what would become the United States. With a new market open, Virginia drew not only merchants and traders but also settlers. Colonists came in droves. They were mostly young, mostly male, and mostly indentured servants who signed contracts called indentures that bonded them to employers for a period of years in return for passage across the ocean. But even the rough terms of servitude were no match for the promise of land and potential profits that beckoned English farmers. Despite these lures, there were not enough colonists. Tobacco was a labor-intensive crop, and ambitious planters, with seemingly limitless land before them, lacked only laborers to escalate their wealth and status. The colony's great labor vacuum inspired the creation of the "headright policy" in 1618: any person who migrated to Virginia would automatically receive fifty acres of land, and any immigrant whose passage they paid would entitle them to fifty acres more.



Figure 3.16. A Map of Virginia: With a Description of the Countrey, the Commodities, People, Government, and Religion. Discovered and described by Captain John Smith, 1612. Engraving by William Hole. Wikipedia.

In 1619, the Virginia Company established the House of Burgesses, a limited representative body composed of white landowners that first met in Jamestown. That same year, a Dutch slave ship sold twenty Africans to the Virginia colonists. Southern slavery was born.

Soon the tobacco-growing colonists expanded beyond the bounds of Jamestown's deadly peninsula. When it became clear that the English were not merely intent on maintaining a small trading post but sought a permanent, ever-expanding colony, conflict with the Powhatan Confederacy became almost inevitable. Powhatan died in 1622 and was succeeded by his brother, Opechancanough, who promised to drive the land-hungry colonists back into the sea. He launched a surprise attack, and in a single day (March 22, 1622) killed over 350 colonists, or one-third of all the colonists in Virginia, marking the beginning of the Second Anglo-Powhatan War (1622–1632).[42] The colonists retaliated and perpetuated massacres on Indigenous settlements many times over. The surprise attack freed the colonists to drive Native Americans off their land. The governor of Virginia declared it colonial policy to achieve the "expulsion of the savages to gain the free range of the country."[43] War and disease tilted the balance of power decisively toward the English colonizers as they drove Powhatan communities inland to the fall-line on the James River.

In the midst of the Second-Anglo Powhatan War, English colonist William Claiborne established a trading post in 1629 on present-day Kent Island, Maryland, trading European goods and firearms to the Susquehannock communities living along the Northern Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. The Susquehannocks had recently migrated southward from the Susquehanna Valley due to pressure from the Haudenosaunee and the potential for trade with coastal Algonquian peoples and Europeans. After initial conflicts, the Susquehannocks established kinship connections with the Lenape peoples of Delaware Bay who were frequently trading with the Dutch in New Netherlands and Swedes in New Sweden. But in 1638, English agents of the recently established colony of Maryland (1632) declared Claiborne a pirate and seized his trading post, demanding that the Susquehannocks trade with Maryland instead. The Susquehannocks refused. Maryland colonists quickly established trading relationships with the Piscataways, enemies of the Susquehannocks, which fueled conflict between the two Indigenous nations until the Susquehannocks signed a peace treaty with Maryland in 1652. For Maryland, like Virginia, competition over trade with Native peoples and expanding settlements exacerbated conflict between Native nations and with English colonists.[44]

To sustain expansion in Virginia, the Virginia Company invested in the importation of English indentured servants and particularly unmarried women. Colonial administrators worried about unmarried men refusing to settle on lands without marriage prospects. Therefore, the Virginia Company encouraged the importation of 147 women between 1620 and 1622, placing a per-head price of 120 pounds of tobacco on the purchase of these women for marriage. While more women arrived, the plan was a failure, as the disparity of unmarried men to women only increased over the seventeenth century. This unbalanced sex ratio led to violent competition over women, premarital sex, cohabitation between male and female servants, and interracial sex and marriages.[45]

As the territory and population of the Virginia colony expanded, English colonists brought to the New World particular visions of racial, cultural, and religious supremacy. Despite starving in the shadow of the Powhatan Confederacy, English colonists

nevertheless judged themselves physically, spiritually, and technologically superior to Native peoples in North America. Christianity, metallurgy, intensive agriculture, transatlantic navigation, and even wheat farming all magnified English self-regard. This sense of superiority, when coupled with outbreaks of violence, left the English feeling entitled to Indigenous lands and resources.

Spanish conquerors established the framework for the Atlantic slave trade over a century before the first chained Africans arrived at Jamestown. Even Bartolomé de Las Casas, celebrated for his pleas to save Native Americans from colonial butchery, for a time recommended that Indigenous labor be replaced by importing Africans. Early English settlers from the Caribbean and Atlantic coast of North America mostly imitated European ideas of African inferiority. “Race” followed the expansion of slavery across the Atlantic World. Skin color and race suddenly seemed fixed. Englishmen equated Africans with categorical blackness and blackness with sin, “the handmaid and symbol of baseness.”[46] An English essayist in 1695 wrote that “a negro will always be a negro, carry him to Greenland, feed him chalk, feed and manage him never so many ways.”[47] More and more Europeans embraced the notion that Europeans and Africans were of distinct races. Others now preached that the Old Testament God cursed Ham, the son of Noah, and doomed Black people to perpetual enslavement.

And yet in the early years of American slavery, ideas about race were not yet fixed, and the practice of slavery was not yet codified. The first generations of Africans in English North America faced miserable conditions, but, in contrast to later American history, their initial servitude was not necessarily permanent, heritable, or even particularly disgraceful. Africans were definitively set apart as fundamentally different from their white counterparts and faced longer terms of service and harsher punishments, but, like the indentured white servants whisked away from English slums, some of the first Africans in North America also worked for only a set number of years before becoming free landowners themselves. The Angolan Anthony Johnson, for instance, was sold into servitude but fulfilled his indenture and became a prosperous tobacco planter and enslaver himself.[48] Compulsory labor in Virginia was hard labor, particularly on tobacco plantations. The shared work—often side by side—between white servants and enslaved Black and Native people of both sexes created what one scholar has called a “peculiar brand of equality.”[49] But this egalitarianism was based on harsh treatment of laborers and would increasingly become racialized over time. Slavery in seventeenth-century America had yet to be legally tied to Blackness.

In 1622, at the dawn of the tobacco boom, Jamestown still seemed a failure. By the end of the Second Anglo-Powhatan War in 1632, the rise of tobacco and the displacement of the Powhatan turned the tide. Colonists escaped the deadly peninsula, and immigrants poured into the colony to grow tobacco and turn a profit for the Crown. But in 1644, Opechancanough launched another devastating attack on the Virginia colony, killing over four hundred colonists, starting the Third Anglo-Powhatan War. Like in 1622, the Powhatan sought to reassert their own boundaries in the face of expanding English settlement on their territories. The English responded by invading Powhatan lands, and sacking and burning towns, corn fields, and religious structures. In 1646, Opechancanough was captured during peace talks and taken prisoner. He was murdered in Jamestown later that year by an English colonist. The peace treaty of 1646, negotiated with Opechancanough’s successor, Necotowance, declared the Powhatans and their Pamunkey allies tributaries of the Virginia Colony and subjects of the Crown in return for the protection of their lands. The English used the sale of captive Natives and lands to pay for the conflict. The English colony restricted the mobility of Native peoples and confined the Pamunkey to a locale they still inhabit today. The Third Anglo-Powhatan War marked the destruction of the Powhatan as a paramount chiefdom and scattered Native communities into the interior or allocated them to small towns as tributary subjects of the Crown.[50]

As the Virginia colony expanded and defined its boundaries and power over Native peoples, the reliance on the enslavement of Native and African laborers increased. By the end of the seventeenth century, enslaved Africans largely replaced indentured servants as the main source of colonial labor. In 1662, the Virginia Assembly tied enslaved status for children to the status of the mother, enslaving the children of enslaved women, and imposed stricter fines for interracial sex.[51] Conflict with Native peoples continued as planters and former indentured servants sought new lands and Indigenous captives, culminating in the Susquehannock War of 1676. As the seventeenth century progressed, Virginia’s success as a colony increasingly depended on the importation of enslaved Africans, a trend that only amplified in the eighteenth century.

VI. New England

English colonists arrived in New England to establish the Plymouth Colony in 1620, in what local Abenaki-speakers call Wôpanâak (Dawnland) or Ndakinna (Our Land). Colonists were stunned to initially be greeted by Indigenous men who spoke English: Samoset of the Wabanaki and Squanto of Patuxet warmly welcomed the colonists by bartering goods. Samoset and Squanto had experience trading with English vessels in the region, and Squanto, like other Indigenous men and women, had previously endured English captivity before being returned by English seamen. By 1621, the Plymouth Colony established a treaty of friendship and alliance

with the Wampanoag people under the leader Ousamequin, who was known by his title of great sachem (Massasoit). This treaty of reciprocity with the Wampanoags allowed the English to establish settlements in a peaceful environment, ironically encouraging further colonization.[52]

The English colonies in New England established from 1620 onward were founded with loftier goals than those in Virginia. Although migrants to New England expected economic profit, religious motives directed the rhetoric and much of the reality of these colonies. Not every English person who moved to New England during the seventeenth century was a Puritan, but Puritans dominated the politics, religion, and culture of New England. Even after 1700, the region's Puritan inheritance shaped many aspects of its history.

The term Puritan began as an insult, and its recipients usually referred to each other as "the godly" if they used a specific term at all. Puritans believed that the Church of England had not distanced itself far enough from Catholicism since Henry VIII broke with Rome in the 1530s. They largely agreed with European Calvinists—followers of theologian John Calvin—on matters of religious doctrine. Calvinists (and Puritans) believed that humankind was redeemed by God's grace alone, and that the fate of an individual's immortal soul was predestined. The happy minority that God had already chosen to save were known among English Puritans as the Elect. Calvinists also argued that the decoration of churches, reliance on ornate ceremony, and corrupt priesthood obscured God's message. They believed that reading the Bible was the best way to understand God.

Puritans were stereotyped by their enemies as dour killjoys, and the exaggeration has endured. It is certainly true that the Puritans' disdain for excess and opposition to many holidays popular in Europe (including Christmas, which, as Puritans never tired of reminding everyone, the Bible never told anyone to celebrate) lent themselves to caricature. But Puritans understood themselves as advocating a reasonable middle path in a corrupt world. It would never occur to a Puritan, for example, to abstain from alcohol or sex.



Figure 3.17. Seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The History Project (UC Davis).

During the first century after the English Reformation (ca. 1530–1630) Puritans sought to "purify" the Church of England of all practices that smacked of Catholicism, advocating a simpler worship service, the abolition of ornate churches, and other reforms. They had some success in pushing the Church of England in a more Calvinist direction, but with the coronation of King Charles I (r. 1625–1649), the Puritans gained an implacable foe that cast English Puritans as excessive and dangerous. Facing growing persecution, the Puritans began the Great Migration, during which about twenty thousand people traveled to New England between 1630 and 1640. The Puritans (unlike the small band of separatist "Pilgrims" who founded Plymouth Colony in 1620) remained committed to reforming the Church of England but temporarily decamped to North America to accomplish this task. Leaders like John Winthrop insisted they were not separating from, or abandoning, England but were rather forming a godly community in America that would be a "City on a Hill" and an example for reformers back home.[53] The Puritans did not seek to create a haven of religious toleration, a notion that they—along with nearly all European Christians—regarded as ridiculous at best and dangerous at worst.

While the Puritans did not succeed in building a godly utopia in New England, a combination of Puritan traits with several

external factors created colonies wildly different from any other region settled by English people. Unlike those heading to Virginia, colonists in New England—Plymouth (1620), Massachusetts Bay (1630), Connecticut (1636), and Rhode Island (1636)—generally arrived in family groups. Most New England immigrants were small landholders in England, a class that the contemporary English called the "middling sort." When they arrived in New England, they tended to replicate their home environments, founding towns composed of independent landholders. The New England climate and soil made large-scale plantation agriculture impractical, so the system of large landholders using masses of enslaved laborers or indentured servants to grow labor-intensive crops largely failed. But small numbers of enslaved Africans did arrive in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638 aboard the Salem-based vessel Desire.[54] Evidence exists of an enslaved woman being sexually assaulted by another enslaved man at the order of their Anglican enslaver, Samuel Maverick, in 1638. By the seventeenth century, over a thousand enslaved and free Africans lived in New England. Other Puritans made their fortunes as enslavers on Caribbean sugar islands, and New England merchants profited as suppliers of provisions and enslaved laborers to those colonies.

Although New England colonies could boast wealthy landholding elites, the disparity of wealth in the region remained narrow compared to the Chesapeake, Carolina, or the Caribbean. Instead, seventeenth-century New England was characterized by a broadly shared, modest prosperity based on a mixed economy dependent on small farms, shops, fishing, lumber, shipbuilding, and trade with Native peoples and the Atlantic World.

A combination of environmental factors and the Puritan social ethos produced a region of remarkable health and stability during the seventeenth century. New England immigrants avoided most of the deadly outbreaks of tropical disease that turned the Chesapeake colonies into graveyards. Disease, in fact, only aided English settlement and relations to Native Americans. In contrast to other English colonists who had to contend with powerful Native American neighbors, the Puritans confronted the stunned survivors of a biological catastrophe. A lethal pandemic of smallpox during the 1610s and subsequent epidemics killed as much as 90 percent of the region's Native American population over the next two hundred years. Many survivors welcomed the English as potential allies against rival nations who had escaped the catastrophe. The relatively healthy environment, coupled with political stability and the predominance of family groups among early immigrants, allowed the New England population to grow to 91,000 people by 1700 from only 21,000 immigrants. In contrast, 120,000 English went to the Chesapeake, and only 85,000 white colonists remained in 1700.[55]

The New England Puritans set out to build their utopia by creating communities of the godly. Groups of men, often from the same region of England, applied to the colony's General Court for land grants.[56] They generally divided part of the land for immediate use while keeping much of the rest as "commons" or undivided land for future generations. The town's inhabitants collectively decided the size of each settler's home lot based on their current wealth and status. Besides oversight of property, the town restricted membership, and new arrivals needed to apply for admission. Those who gained admittance could participate in town governments that, while not democratic by modern standards, nevertheless had broadly popular involvement. All male property holders could vote in town meetings and choose the selectmen, assessors, constables, and other officials from among themselves to conduct the daily affairs of government. Upon their founding, towns wrote covenants, reflecting the Puritan belief in God's covenant with his people. Towns sought to arbitrate disputes and contain strife, as did the church. Wayward or divergent individuals were persuaded, corrected, or coerced. Popular conceptions of Puritans as hardened authoritarians are exaggerated, but if persuasion and arbitration failed, people who did not conform to community norms were punished or removed. Massachusetts banished Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams, and other religious dissenters like the Quakers.

New England colonists' relationships with Native peoples deteriorated within the first generation of settlement. In the 1630s, Pequot communities in present-day Connecticut began to have conflict with the Dutch, English, and Narragansetts over trade in the prized clam shells from the coasts used to make wampum. Pequots regularly exacted tribute payments from neighboring Narragansetts and Montauk communities. When the Pequots killed two English traders, Narragansetts and Mohegans decided to create an alliance with the English and attacked the Pequots.[57]

In May 1637, an armed contingent of English Puritans from Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and Connecticut colonies trekked into Pequot territory that was claimed by New England. Referring to themselves as the "Sword of the Lord," this military force intended to attack "that insolent and barbarous Nation, called the Pequots." In the resulting violence, Puritans put the Mystic community to the torch, beginning with the north and south ends of the town. As Pequot men, women, and children tried to escape the blaze, other soldiers waited with swords and guns. One commander estimated that of the "four hundred souls in this Fort . . . not above five of them escaped out of our hands," although another counted near "six or seven hundred" dead. In a span of less than two months, the English Puritans boasted that the Pequot "were drove out of their country, and slain by the sword, to the number of fifteen hundred."[58] Those Pequots who did not flee were enslaved and either distributed among New England households or sold to the Caribbean.[59]

The Pequot War began out of competition over access to natural resources and disputes over tribute payments between Native communities. Once the English committed, the conflict had devastating outcomes for the Pequots. The devastation of the Pequots provided safety and stability for the fledgling New England colonies to expand settlements further. Narragansetts and Mohegans also benefitted for a time from the victory over the Pequots but would join the Wampanoags in their conflict with the English in King Philip's War in 1675.

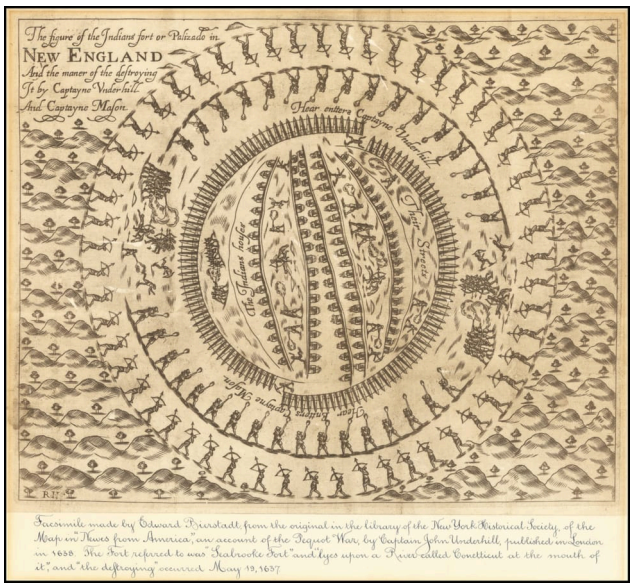


Figure 3.18. This engraving depicts the Mystic Massacre, where Connecticut settlers, along with Narragansett and Mohegan allies, set fire to a Pequot settlement and then slaughtered those who tried to escape. From John Underhill, Newes from America, London, 1638. Wikipedia.

Although by many measures colonization in New England succeeded, its Puritan leaders failed in their own mission to create a utopian community that would inspire their fellows back in England. They tended to focus their disappointment on the younger generation. "But alas!" Increase Mather lamented, "That so many of the younger Generation have so early corrupted their [the founders'] doings!"[60] The jeremiad, a sermon lamenting the fallen state of New England due to its straying from its early virtuous path, became a staple of late-seventeenth-century Puritan literature.

Yet the jeremiad could not stop the effects of prosperity. The population spread and grew more diverse. Many, if not most, New Englanders retained strong ties to their Calvinist roots into the eighteenth century, but the Puritans (who became Congregationalists) struggled against a rising tide of religious pluralism. On December 25, 1727, Judge Samuel Sewell noted in his diary that a new Anglican minister "keeps the day in his new Church at Braintrey: people flock thither."[61] Previously forbidden holidays like Christmas were celebrated publicly in church and privately in homes. Puritan minister Cotton Mather discovered on Christmas 1711 that "a number of young people of both sexes, belonging, many of them, to my flock, had . . . a Frolick, a reveling Feast, and a Ball, which discovers their Corruption."[62] Despite the lamentations of the Mathers and other Puritan leaders of their failure, they left an enduring mark on New England culture and society that endured long after the region's residents ceased to be called "Puritan."

VII. Conclusion

The fledgling settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts paled in importance when compared to the sugar colonies of the Caribbean. Valued more as marginal investments and social safety valves where the poor could be released, these colonies nonetheless created a foothold for Britain on a vast North American continent. And although the seventeenth century would be fraught for Britain—religious, social, and political upheavals would behead one king and force another to flee his throne—settlers in Massachusetts and Virginia were nonetheless tied together by the emerging Atlantic economy. While commodities such as tobacco and sugar fueled new markets in Europe, the economy grew increasingly dependent on enslaved labor. Enslaved Africans transported across the Atlantic would further complicate the collision of cultures in the Americas. The Native slave trade expanded, spurring on cycles of violence, migration, and disease as Native communities adapted to the arrival of Europeans and Africans. The creation and maintenance of a slave system would spark new understandings of human difference and new modes of social control. The economic exchanges of the new Atlantic economy would not only generate great wealth and exploitation, but would also lead to new cultural systems and new identities for the inhabitants of at least four continents.

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4: British North America



Figure 4.1. The Old Plantation, c. 1790–1800. This watercolor shows enslaved people dancing on a plantation in South Carolina. Unidentified artist. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum. Wikimedia.

I. Introduction

Whether they came as servants, enslaved laborers, free farmers, religious refugees, or powerful planters, the men and women of the American colonies created new worlds. Over the course of the seventeenth century, Native Americans in North America saw fledgling settlements become beachheads of vast new populations that increasingly monopolized resources and transformed the land. While events in England—religious conflict, civil war, and nation-building projects—profoundly influenced colonial development, one constant was that the people kept coming. By 1700, the English population in the Americas was 260,000, whereas that of its main European rival, New France, was just 15,000.[1]

By this time, however, a novel system of racial slavery had become indispensable to England's empire in America. Colonial planters initially relied on the labor of English servants, but in the second half of the seventeenth century, they increasingly turned to enslaved people of African descent. While the vast majority of enslaved people in British America labored on sugar plantations in the Caribbean, slavery was central to regional economies on the continent as well. A new Atlantic system that connected the continents of Europe, Africa, and the Americas would shape North American society through the eighteenth century and beyond.

II. Slavery and the Making of Race

Slavery existed in Europe and the Americas before colonization. Though the institution had largely died out in northern Europe by the thirteenth century, it persisted in the south and east. Slavery also existed in America before the arrival of Europeans, with war captivity the most common form of bondage among Native peoples in North America. The commercial system of racial slavery that would develop in the early modern European empires was, however, historically unprecedented.

European colonizers enslaved large numbers of Native Americans in the seventeenth century. Contemporary European legal thought held that enslaving prisoners of war was not only legal but more merciful than killing captives outright. After the Pequot War (1636–1637), Massachusetts Bay colonists sold hundreds of Native Americans into slavery in the West Indies. A few years later, Dutch settlers in the Mid-Atlantic colony of New Netherland enslaved Algonquians during both Governor Kieft's War (1641–1645) and the two Esopus Wars (1659–1663). The Dutch sent these war captives to English-settled Bermuda as well as Curaçao, a Dutch plantation colony in the southern Caribbean. The English enslaved hundreds of Native Americans during King Philip's War (1675–1676), an Indigenous uprising against the encroachments of New England colonists. New England colonists also tried to send enslaved Native Americans to Barbados, but the Barbados Assembly refused to import them for fear they would

encourage rebellion.

In later years, wars in Florida, South Carolina, and the Mississippi Valley produced even more enslaved Native Americans. Some wars emerged from contests between Native Americans and colonists for land, while others were manufactured as pretenses for acquiring captives. Some were not wars at all, but merely illegal raids performed by slave traders. Historians estimate that between 24,000 and 51,000 Native Americans were forced into slavery throughout the southern colonies between 1670 and 1715.[2] While some enslaved Native Americans remained in the region, many were exported through Charles Town, South Carolina, to other ports in the British Atlantic—most likely to Barbados, Jamaica, and Bermuda.

Disease, as well as brutal conditions of violence and starvation, decimated the enslaved Native population. The fierce resistance of captives and the diplomatic difficulties the enslavement of Native Americans caused led colonial governments to discourage Indian slavery, although it never ceased entirely as long as slavery was a legal institution.

Desirous of a more stable workforce, English planters increasingly looked to Africa for labor power. Spanish and Portuguese colonizers began bringing captive Africans to the Americas in the early 1500s, and enslaved people grew tobacco on the island of Hispaniola as early as the 1530s. By 1641, well before slavery became widespread in the English colonies, more than five hundred thousand people of African descent labored on plantations and in mines in Spanish and Portuguese colonies.[3] By the 1670s, however, English merchants had become Europe's leading slave traders, and a majority of people in England's West Indian colonies were enslaved.

Africans' terrifying journey across the Atlantic, known as the Middle Passage, was the middle leg of three distinct journeys from Africa to the Americas. First was an overland journey in Africa to a coastal slave-trading factory, often a trek of hundreds of miles. Second—the middle—was an oceanic trip lasting from one to six months in a slave ship. Third was acculturation (known as "seasoning") and transportation to the American mine, plantation, or other location where enslaved people were forced to labor. In total, between 11 and 12 million Africans were forced across the Atlantic between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, with about 2 million deaths at sea as well as an additional several million dying after capture in Africa or following their arrival in the Americas.[4]

Conditions aboard slave ships were miserable. Disease was rampant and provisions were scarce; some were driven to suicide. Alexander Falconbridge, a slave ship surgeon, described the sufferings of enslaved Africans from shipboard infections and close quarters in the hold. Dysentery, known as "the bloody flux," left captives lying in pools of excrement. Chained in small spaces in the hold, enslaved people could lose so much skin and flesh from chafing against metal and timber that their bones protruded. Other sources detailed rapes, whippings, and diseases like smallpox and conjunctivitis aboard slave ships.[5]

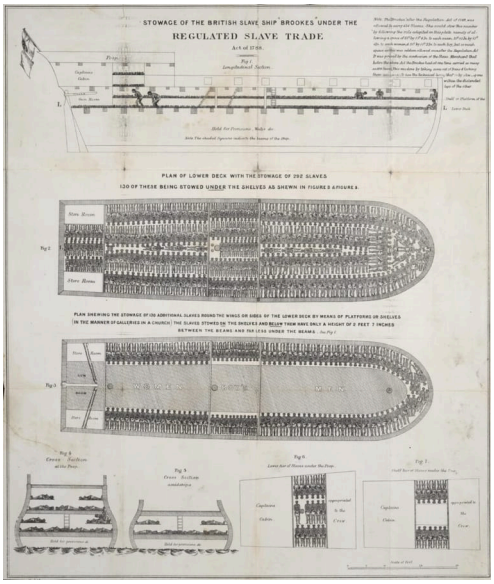


Figure 4.2. Slave ships transported 11–12 million Africans to destinations in North and South America, but it was not until the end of the 18th century that any regulation was introduced. The Brookes print dates to after the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788, but still shows enslaved Africans chained in rows using iron leg shackles. The slave ship Brookes was allowed to carry up to 454 enslaved people, allotting 6 feet (1.8 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each man; 5 feet 10 inches (1.78 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each woman, and 5 feet (1.5 m) by 1 foot 2 inches (0.36 m) to each child, but one slave trader alleged that before 1788, the ship carried as many as 609 enslaved Africans. Stowage of the British slave ship Brookes under the regulated slave trade act of 1788, 1789. Wikimedia.

For most of the seventeenth century, however, England's colonial labor force was composed primarily of English indentured servants. Economically dependent on tobacco production by the 1620s, Virginia planters drew on Elizabethan poor laws to create indentured servitude, whereby impoverished English people would labor for four or five years in America in exchange for passage across the Atlantic. On tobacco plantations, these workers prepared the land and planted seeds early in the year, usually around Christmas, and tended the seedbeds through early spring. The ground was tilled until the harvest in late summer or early fall, when tobacco leaves were cut and dried before being rolled and packed into hogsheads for sale.

Virginia planters began importing enslaved Africans in greater numbers after the mid-seventeenth century. In 1643, African women were made "tithable," or taxable, which associated African women's work with agricultural labor and therefore distinguished English from African women.[6] The English cultural ideal was to have enough hired hands and servants working on a farm so that wives and daughters did not have to partake in field work. Instead, white women were expected to labor in dairy sheds, small gardens, and kitchens. Despite this ideal, white women did participate in agricultural labor in the colonies. Although English servants continued to labor on tobacco plantations, by the early 1700s, most workers in the Chesapeake were enslaved.

The transition to slave labor occurred far earlier in England's Caribbean colonies. Colonists began experimenting with sugar production in the Caribbean in the 1640s, and within a few decades, sugar was England's most profitable colonial commodity. While working in the tobacco fields of the Chesapeake was strenuous and oppressive, the labor regime on sugar plantations was even more brutal. The cultivation of sugarcane required a long growing season of between twelve and sixteen months, with long workdays of twelve hours or more. In the hot Caribbean sun, groups of enslaved men and women labored under the supervision of white overseers, with whipping and other physical punishments a constant threat.

Large plantations had their own sugar mill, boiling house, and curing house. In addition to requiring a highly skilled labor force, the work was extremely dangerous since cane had to be processed quickly—within three days—or the sugar would spoil. During harvest season, sugar mills operated without stopping, with work shifts lasting eighteen hours or longer. According to the Barbados planter Edward Littleton, "If a stiller slip into a rum-cistern, it is sudden death; for it stifles in a moment. If a mill-feeder be catched by the finger, his whole body is drawn in, and he is squeezed to pieces. If a boiler get any part into the scalding sugar, it sticks like glue, or birdlime, and 'tis hard to save either limb or life."[7]



Figure 4.3. "View of the castle of Elmina on the north-west side, seen from the river. Located on the Gold Coast in Guinea," in Atlas Blaeu van der Hem, c. 1665–1668. The first trading post built on the Gulf of Guinea and the oldest European building south of the Sahara, Elmina Castle, was established as a trade settlement by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. The fort became one of the largest and most important markets for enslaved Africans along the Atlantic slave trade. Wikimedia.

For planters, a major benefit of slavery over servant labor was that enslaved people were held for life. As early as 1636, less than a decade after its founding, the governor and council of Barbados announced that Indians and Africans arriving on the island would be held in bondage in perpetuity. A key turning point in the English slave system came in the 1660s, however, when legislatures in Barbados and Virginia established legal systems that made new racial categories central to legal status. The Barbados Slave Code of 1661, which characterized "Negroes" as similar to "other goods and Chattels," was the first comprehensive slave code in America.[8] In 1662, Virginia made the condition of slavery heritable from the mother, a response to questions over the status of the children of English men and African women. All children born to enslaved women would be enslaved for life, whether the father was white or Black, enslaved or free. These laws were soon copied by all of England's American colonies, marking a crucial moment in the making of modern racial ideology.[9]

Slavers often landed in the British West Indies, where captive Africans were seasoned in places like Barbados. Charleston, South Carolina, became the leading entry point for the slave trade on the mainland. The founding of Charleston ("Charles Town" until the 1780s) in 1670 was viewed as a serious threat by the Spanish in neighboring Florida, who began construction of Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine in response. In 1693, the Spanish king issued the Decree of Sanctuary, which granted freedom to enslaved people fleeing the English colonies if they converted to Catholicism and swore an oath of loyalty to Spain.[10] The presence of Africans who bore arms and served in the Spanish militia testifies to the different conceptions of race among the English and Spanish in America.

Despite extreme exploitation and oppression, enslaved people created families and communities that gave meaning to their lives. Though their marriages were not recognized in colonial law, Black men and women formed lasting relationships. Some enslaved men and women married "abroad"—that is, they married individuals who were not owned by the same enslaver and did not live on the same plantation. These husbands and wives had to travel miles at a time, typically only once a week on Sundays, to visit their spouses. Communal bonds were also forged on Sundays, when enslaved individuals gathered in festive celebration after spending time cultivating their own plots of land. Seasonal religious holidays were also important times of feasting, dancing, and music, which maintained African traditions while also contributing to the formation of distinctive African American cultures.

Enslaved people also devised ways to resist exploitation. In colonial cities, enslaved men and women "hired themselves out," a process whereby they could earn wages from local employers when not laboring for slaveholders. This allowed many to establish a measure of economic independence, with some even able to purchase their freedom. On market days in cities like Charleston, enslaved people gathered, sold goods, exchanged information, and socialized. Laborers on tobacco, rice, and sugar plantations engaged in work slowdowns, feigned illness, broke tools, and even went on strike over poor working conditions. They also ran away, sometimes in collusion with European servants, and planned rebellions to overthrow the slave system. Authorities discovered servant and slave conspiracies regularly in Virginia and Barbados beginning in the 1640s, and plans for revolt continued through the eighteenth century.

The fusion of European and African practices created novel creole cultures in the Americas, especially in ethnically diverse regions like the Mid-Atlantic colonies of New York and Pennsylvania.[11] Many foods associated with Africans, such as cassava, were originally imported to West Africa as part of the slave trade and were then adopted by African cooks before being brought to the Americas, where they are still consumed. West African rhythms and melodies live on in new forms today in music as varied as religious spirituals and synthesized drumbeats. African influences also appear in the basket making and language of the Gullah people on the Carolina coastal islands. The impact of African cultures in the early modern Americas was profound and remains evident today.

III. Turmoil in Britain

Sixteenth-century England was rife with religious conflict. While Spain plundered the New World and built an empire, Catholic and Protestant English monarchs vied for supremacy and attacked their opponents as heretics. While a religious settlement under Queen Elizabeth made Protestantism the official religion of the realm, "godly" Protestants (termed "Puritans" by their critics) believed the Church of England retained ceremonies and practices that were essentially Catholic. In the 1620s and 1630s large numbers of these dissenters traveled to the New World in the hopes of creating a truly godly community, though others continued the struggle in England. By the 1640s, political and economic conflicts between Parliament and the Crown merged with long-simmering religious tensions. The result was a series of bloody civil wars that encompassed England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Colonists reacted in a variety of ways to these wars, but all were affected by these years of turmoil.

Following a series of battles between royalists and parliamentarians in 1642–1646 and 1648–1649, King Charles I was defeated and executed for treason. On May 19, 1649, Parliament declared England to be a republic, though in 1653 the Commonwealth of England became a protectorate under the military leader Oliver Cromwell. These changes redefined England's relationship with its American colonies, as the new government under Cromwell attempted to consolidate its hold over its overseas territories.



Figure 4.4. King Charles I, pictured wearing the blue sash of the Order of the Garter, listens to his commanders discuss strategy for the first battle of the First English Civil War. Since all previous compromises between the king had failed, both sides raised large armies. The Battle of Edgehill ended indecisively, leading to four years of war. It was also part of a series of wars (the English Civil War) that established the Commonwealth of England in 1649. Charles Landseer, *The Eve of the Battle of Edge Hill, 1642*, 1845. Wikimedia.

During the Civil Wars of the 1640s, the political and economic elite in the Chesapeake sympathized with the Crown, while religious dissenters in the New England colonies tended to favor Parliament. During the war, the colonies officially remained neutral; however, they feared that support for either side could involve them in war. Even Massachusetts Bay, which nurtured ties to radical Protestants in Parliament, maintained neutrality.

Charles's execution challenged American neutrality. Six colonies, including Virginia and Barbados, declared allegiance to the dead monarch's son, Charles II. Parliament responded with an act in 1650 that levied an economic embargo on the rebelling colonies, forcing them to accept Parliament's authority. Parliament argued that America had been "planted at the Cost, and settled" by the English nation, and that it, as the embodiment of that commonwealth, possessed ultimate jurisdiction over the colonies.[12] It followed the embargo with the Navigation Act of 1651, which compelled merchants in every colony to ship goods directly to

England in English ships. Parliament sought to bind the colonies more closely to England and prevent other European nations, especially the Dutch, from interfering with its American possessions.

Continuing political turmoil, exacerbated by Cromwell's death in 1658, led to the return of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660. The Restoration was followed by further attempts to integrate and profit from the empire. This included the granting of new "proprietary" colonies to royal favorites, the imposition of new Navigation Acts, and the establishment of a new executive council known as the Lords of Trade and Plantations.



Figure 4.5. England found itself in crisis after the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, leading in time to the reestablishment of the monarchy. On his thirtieth birthday (May 29, 1660), Charles II sailed from the Netherlands to his restoration after nine years in exile. He was received in London with great acclaim, as depicted in this contemporary painting. Lieve Verschuler, *The Arrival of King Charles II of England in Rotterdam, 24 May 1660*. c. 1660–1665. Wikimedia.

Following Charles II's death in 1685, his brother James, Duke of York, became king. James II imposed additional imperial reforms, including the creation of the Dominion of New England in 1686, which consolidated New York, New Jersey, and the New England colonies into one administrative unit. While this was ostensibly an attempt to counter the military threat from French Canada, English colonists greatly resented the loss of their autonomy. The Dominion's governor, Sir Edmund Andros, did little to assuage fears of arbitrary power when he forced colonists into military service for a campaign against Native Americans in Maine in early 1687. For many colonists, impressment signified the imposition of arbitrary power on a free people.

James II's Catholicism and admiration for absolutist rule in countries like France also generated suspicion and resentment in England. His push for toleration of Catholics and dissenters brought him into conflict with Parliament and the Anglican establishment, and in 1688, a bishop from the Anglican Church and six nobles offered the English throne to James's Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband, Prince William. When William landed in southwest England with a massive naval fleet, James fled to France. This coup was called the Glorious Revolution and was accomplished with little bloodshed in England but considerable violence in Ireland. After nearly half a century of social and political turbulence, the 1689 Bill of Rights established a constitutional monarchy that secured a Protestant succession, legislative supremacy for Parliament, and the individual rights of English subjects.



Figure 4.6. James II, 1633- 1701, wearing gold-embossed armor and red silk bows. This portrait dates to his accession to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland in 1685. Wikimedia.

Though imperial authorities in the Americas attempted to keep the events of 1688 secret, colonists soon learned of developments in England. News of James's deposition was followed by popular risings against colonial administrators in Boston, New York City, and Maryland. The rebellions were quickly suppressed, however, and colonial governments declared allegiance to William and Mary. For many free colonists, the Revolution of 1688 was indeed "glorious" as it united them in a Protestant empire that stood counter to Catholic tyranny and absolutism, a religion and form of government embodied by France. The political system established in England and its empire after 1688 would last until the revolutionary rupture of the 1770s.

IV. New Colonies

By the time of the Glorious Revolution, the English Empire in America had grown significantly from its fragile beginnings in the Chesapeake Bay in 1607. From New England in the north to the Carolinas in the south, England established a large, contiguous territorial presence along the Atlantic seaboard in addition to its colonies in the Caribbean.

A number of new colonies were established in the 1630s. In 1632, King Charles I granted a territory of about 12 million acres in the Chesapeake Bay to Cecilius Calvert, second Lord of Baltimore, a Catholic who named his colony Maryland after the king's Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria of France. In addition to aiming to profit from overseas plantations, Calvert intended his colony to be a refuge for his fellow Catholics. Most early migrants to Maryland were Protestants, however, and most of these were dissenters from neighboring Virginia who resented authorities' attempts to impose adherence to the Church of England. In 1650, Maryland Puritans revolted and set up a government that prohibited both Catholicism and Anglicanism. Though the Calvert family regained control in 1658, religious tensions in Maryland persisted. Two years after the Glorious Revolution, the Calverts lost control of the province, and Maryland became a royal colony.

In New England, the colonies of Connecticut, New Haven, and Rhode Island were also created in the 1630s. The increasingly populous area around Boston led Thomas Hooker and his congregation to leave Massachusetts and establish Connecticut in 1636. Two years later, John Davenport, Theophilus Eaton, and other Puritans settled in the Quinnipiac River Valley area of Connecticut and established New Haven, which was officially organized in 1643. New Haven would be absorbed into Connecticut in 1665, but its religious tradition endured with the creation of Yale College in 1701.

Religious radicals founded Rhode Island in 1636. After negotiating for the land with the local Narragansett sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi, Roger Williams and other colonists agreed on an egalitarian constitution that established religious and political freedom in the colony. The following year, Anne Hutchinson, expelled from Massachusetts for leading private religious meetings ("conventicles") and challenging the authority of the colony's clergymen, settled near Providence. Others soon arrived, and the colony was granted a charter by Parliament in 1644. Because of Rhode Island's policy of toleration, it became a haven for Quakers, Jews, and other persecuted religious groups. In 1663, Charles II granted the colony a royal charter establishing the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Colonies were also established in New England's south. The Mid-Atlantic region between New England and the Chesapeake Bay possessed significant natural advantages. The region's climate was healthier than the Chesapeake and more temperate than New England, and had three highly navigable rivers: the Susquehanna, the Delaware, and the Hudson. In 1664, the English conquered the region claimed by New Netherland, which Charles then awarded to his brother James, Duke of York, creating the colony of New York.

Shortly after obtaining his new colony, James granted the territory between the Hudson and Delaware rivers to two English noblemen. These lands were split into two distinct colonies, East Jersey and West Jersey. East Jersey was settled by Dutch, English, and Scottish migrants; West Jersey was populated primarily by English Quakers. Proprietors of both Jerseys sought to have tenants cultivate the land and promised Protestants who came to the territory religious liberty and an elected assembly. While in 1702 the Crown reunited East and West Jersey and made the province a royal colony, social tensions originating in the founding decades would persist well into the revolutionary era.

Charles II issued charters for a number of other proprietary colonies after the Restoration. Carolina, situated between Virginia and Spanish Florida, was granted to eight Lords Proprietors in 1663. The Lords Proprietor offered incentives to potential settlers that included religious tolerance, political representation, exemption from fees, and large land grants. Significant numbers of former indentured servants and Quakers already inhabited the Albemarle Sound region, having fled Virginia in the 1650s. These groups' desire for independence and successful resistance to the authority of the Lords Proprietor led to the creation of the separate province of North Carolina in 1691.[13]



Figure 4.8. A map of the British Empire in America with the French and Spanish settlements adjacent thereto. Henry Popple, 1733. Library of Congress. Wikimedia.

English settlers also came to Carolina from Barbados. In 1670, three ships of migrants from Barbados arrived at the mouth of the Ashley River, where they founded Charles Town. Many of these settlers brought enslaved people to the colony, who cultivated rice and indigo on large plantations along Carolina's coast. Though operating within an English commercial agricultural framework, the expansion of rice production in the 1690s integrated African, Native, and Latin American farming practices. The importance of African knowledge and labor to the economy is indicated by the fact that by the 1710s. South Carolina was the first province in North America to have a majority Black population.[14]

The last proprietary colony, Pennsylvania, was established by one of West Jersey's proprietors, a man named William Penn. The son of an admiral in the Royal Navy, Penn became a Quaker in 1666 (by this time officially the Religious Society of Friends, or simply "Friends"). As repayment for his father's support during the Restoration, in 1681, Charles II granted the younger Penn a vast province of about forty-five thousand square miles west of the Delaware River.



Figure 4.7. Color portrait of British Quaker William Penn wearing a suit of armor, 1666. Penn, the founder of "Penn's Woods," or Pennsylvania, established the colony on Quaker ideals. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Library of Congress. Wikimedia.

As a radical religious group founded during the Commonwealth of the 1650s, Quakers experienced waves of official persecution after the return of the monarchy in 1660. This experience led the founders of Pennsylvania to enact a constitution founded on principles of religious toleration. Quakers' commitment to nonviolence also inspired a policy of peaceful relations with the region's Native Americans, with land obtained through purchase rather than force. A combination of freedom of conscience, cheap land, representative government, and high wages fostered the colony's rapid growth, with people from across Europe settling in the province. In 1685, Penn noted that the people of Pennsylvania "are a collection of diverse nations in Europe, as French, Dutch, Germans, Swedes, Danes, Finns, Scotch, and English; and of the last equal to all the rest."[15]

While conditions were favorable for free immigrants of modest means, a general colonial demand for labor led Pennsylvanians to eagerly purchase enslaved people. In 1684, the Bristol vessel Isabella arrived in Philadelphia with 150 captive Africans on board, who were quickly purchased by colonists. While many wealthy Philadelphia Quakers, William Penn included, purchased enslaved Africans, a minority of Quakers opposed the institution. In 1688, Friends from Germantown, outside of Philadelphia, submitted the first formal antislavery petition in America. In 1693, the Quaker George Keith published *An Exhortation & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes in Philadelphia*, the first printed antislavery tract in English America.[16]

Though this small group of Pennsylvania Quakers inaugurated a tradition of antislavery activism in America, slavery would be crucial to the Mid-Atlantic economy. The wheat grown by farmers in the Delaware and Hudson River Valleys found its largest market in the West Indies, where it fed the islands' enslaved workforce. And in the rapidly growing urban centers of Philadelphia and New York City, enslaved people constituted around 10 to 20 percent of the town populations, respectively. In British America, enslaved people labored in urban workshops, shipyards, and homes as well as on rice, tobacco, and sugar plantations.

V. Riot, Rebellion, and Revolt

Violence was endemic in seventeenth-century North America. Clashes from the northeastern New England colonies to the Spanish Empire in the southwest demonstrated how colonial expansion produced major conflict between Europeans and Native Americans, and within the colonies themselves.

In New England, the Pequot War of 1637 devastated Pequot communities and provided the New England colonies with security and space for expanded settlements. But in the face of colonial expansion, the Narragansetts and Mohegans, who had been allies of the English against the Pequots, chose to side with the Wampanoags when war with the English broke out again a generation later. This produced a more violent conflict in 1675 known as King Philip's War, bringing a decisive end to Native American power in New England.

In the winter of 1675, the body of John Sassamon, a Harvard-educated Christian Wampanoag, was found under the ice of a nearby pond. A fellow Native American convert informed English authorities that three warriors under the local sachem named Metacom, known to the English as King Philip, had killed Sassamon, who had previously accused Metacom of planning an offensive against

the English. The three alleged killers appeared before the Plymouth court in June 1675. They were found guilty of murder and executed. Several weeks later, a group of Wampanoags killed nine English colonists in the town of Swansea.

Like most other New England sachems, Metacom had entered into covenants of "submission" to various colonies, viewing the arrangements as relationships of protection and reciprocity rather than subjugation. Native Americans and the English lived, traded, worshipped, and arbitrated local disputes with each other before 1675, but the execution of three of Metacom's men at the hands of Plymouth Colony epitomized what many Native Americans viewed as the growing inequality of that relationship. The Wampanoags who attacked Swansea may have sought to restore balance or to retaliate for the recent executions. Neither they nor anyone else sought to engulf all of New England in war, but that is what happened. Authorities in Plymouth sprang into action, enlisting help from the neighboring colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Metacom and his followers eluded colonial forces in the summer of 1675, striking at more Plymouth towns as they moved northwest. Some groups joined his forces, while others remained neutral or supported the English. The war badly divided some Indigenous communities. Metacom himself had little control over events as panic and violence spread throughout New England in the autumn of 1675. English mistrust of neutral Native Americans, sometimes accompanied by demands that they surrender their weapons, pushed many into the war. By the end of 1675, most of the Native Americans of present-day western and central Massachusetts had entered the war, laying waste to nearby English towns like Deerfield, Hadley, and Brookfield. Colonial forces, spurning the military assistance of allies such as the Mohegans, proved unable to locate the more mobile Native communities or intercept attacks.

The English compounded their problems by attacking the powerful and neutral Narragansetts of Rhode Island in December 1675. In an action called the Great Swamp Fight, a thousand Englishmen put the main Narragansett village to the torch, gunning down as many as a thousand Narragansett men, women, and children as they fled the maelstrom. The surviving Narragansetts joined those already fighting the English. Between February and April 1676, Native forces devastated a succession of English towns closer and closer to Boston.

The tide turned in the spring of 1676. The New England colonies took the advice of men like Benjamin Church, who urged the greater use of Native allies, including Pequots and Mohegans, to find and fight the mobile warriors. As the combatants were unable to plant crops and forced to live off the land, their will to continue the struggle waned as companies of English and Native allies pursued them. Growing numbers of fighters fled the region, switched sides, or surrendered in the spring and summer. Colonial forces finally caught up with Metacom in August 1676, and the sachem was slain by a Christian Native American fighting with the English.

The war permanently altered the political and demographic landscape of New England. Between 800 and 1,000 English and at least 3,000 Native Americans perished in the fourteen-month conflict. Thousands of others fled the region or were sold into slavery. In 1670, Native Americans comprised roughly 25 percent of New England's population; a decade later, they made up perhaps 10 percent.[17] The war's brutality also encouraged a growing hatred of all Indigenous people among many New England colonists. Though the fighting ceased in 1676, the bitter legacy of King Philip's War lived on.



Figure 4.9. The Examination of a Witch depicts the trial of Quaker preacher Mary Fisher in 1656. This trial took place in a tavern in Boston, where many of the depositions for the Salem witch trials took place. Oil on canvas by Tompkins Harrison Matteson, 1853. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. Wikimedia.

Sixteen years later, New England faced a new fear: the supernatural. Beginning in early 1692 and culminating in 1693, Salem Town, Salem Village, Ipswich, and Andover all tried women and men as witches. Paranoia swept through the region, and fourteen women and six men were executed. Five other individuals died in prison. The causes of the trials are numerous and include local rivalries, political turmoil, the enduring trauma of war, faulty legal procedure where accusing others became a method of self-defense, or perhaps even low-level environmental contamination. Enduring tensions with Native people framed the events, however, and a Native American or African woman named Tituba, enslaved by the local minister, was at the center of the tragedy.[18]

Native American communities in Virginia had already been decimated by wars in 1622 and 1644. But a new clash arose in Virginia the same year that New Englanders crushed Metacom's forces. This conflict, known as Bacon's Rebellion, grew out of tensions between Native Americans and English settlers as well as tensions between wealthy English landowners and poor settlers, many of them former indentured servants, who pushed west into territory controlled by Native Americans.

Bacon's Rebellion began, appropriately enough, with an argument over a pig. In the summer of 1675, a group of Doeg people visited Thomas Mathew on his plantation in northern Virginia to collect a debt that he owed them. When Mathew refused to pay, they took some of his pigs to settle the debt. This "theft" sparked a series of raids and counterraids. The Susquehannock people were caught in the crossfire when the militia mistook them for Doegs, leaving fourteen dead. A similar pattern of escalating violence then repeated itself: the Susquehannocks retaliated by killing colonists in Virginia and Maryland, and the English marshaled their forces and laid siege to the Susquehannocks. The conflict became uglier after the militia executed a delegation of Susquehannock ambassadors under a flag of truce. A few parties of warriors intent on revenge launched raids along the frontier and killed dozens of English colonists.

The sudden and unpredictable violence of the Susquehannock War triggered a political crisis in Virginia. Panicked colonists fled en masse from the vulnerable frontiers, flooding into coastal communities and begging the government for help. But the cautious governor, Sir William Berkeley, did not send an army after the Susquehannocks. He worried that a full-scale war would inevitably drag other Native Americans into the conflict, turning allies into deadly enemies. Berkeley therefore insisted on a defensive strategy centered on a string of new fortifications to protect the frontier and strict instructions not to antagonize friendly Native people. The plan, however, only angered and terrified colonists. Building contracts for the forts went to Berkeley's wealthy friends, who conveniently decided that their own plantations were the most strategically vital. Colonists denounced the government as a corrupt band of oligarchs more interested in lining their pockets than protecting the people.

By the spring of 1676, a group of frontier settlers took matters into their own hands. Naming the charismatic young Nathaniel Bacon as their leader, these self-styled "volunteers" proclaimed that they took up arms in defense of their homes and families. They took pains to assure Berkeley that they intended no disloyalty, but Berkeley feared a coup and branded the volunteers as traitors. Berkeley finally mobilized an army, not to pursue the Susquehannocks, but to crush the colonists' rebellion. His drastic response catapulted a small band of angry settlers into full-fledged rebels whose survival necessitated bringing down the colonial government.

Bacon and the rebels stalked the Susquehannocks as well as friendly Native Americans like the Pamunkeys and the Occaneechi. The rebels became convinced that there was a massive Native conspiracy to destroy the English. Berkeley's stubborn persistence in defending allied Native Americans and destroying the rebels led Bacon to accuse the governor of conspiring with a "powerful cabal" of elite planters and with "the protected and darling Indians" to slaughter his English enemies.[19]

In the early summer of 1676, Bacon's neighbors elected him their burgess and sent him to Jamestown to confront Berkeley. Berkeley soon had Bacon arrested and forced the rebel leader into the humiliating position of publicly begging forgiveness for his treason. Bacon swallowed this indignity but turned the tables by gathering an army of followers and surrounding the State House, demanding that Berkeley name him the general of Virginia and bless his universal war against Native Americans. Instead, the seventy-year-old governor stepped onto the field in front of the crowd of angry men, unafraid, and called Bacon a traitor to his face. Then he tore open his shirt and dared Bacon to shoot him in the heart if he was so intent on overthrowing his government. "Here!" he shouted before the crowd, "shoot me, before God, it is a fair mark. Shoot!" When Bacon hesitated, Berkeley drew his sword and challenged the young man to a duel, knowing that Bacon could neither back down from a challenge without looking like a coward nor kill him without making himself into a villain. Instead, Bacon resorted to bluster and blasphemy. Threatening to slaughter the entire assembly, if necessary, he cursed, "God damn my blood, I came for a commission, and a commission I will have before I go."[20] Berkeley stood defiant, but the cowed burgesses finally prevailed upon him to grant Bacon's request. Virginia had its general, and Bacon had his war.

After this dramatic showdown in Jamestown, Bacon's Rebellion quickly spiraled out of control. Berkeley slowly rebuilt his loyalist army, forcing Bacon to divert his attention to the coasts and away from Native Americans. But most rebels were more interested in defending their homes and families than in fighting other Englishmen, and they deserted in droves at every rumor of Native activity. In many places, the "rebellion" was less an organized military campaign than a collection of local grievances and personal rivalries. Both rebels and loyalists smelled the opportunities for plunder, seizing their rivals' estates and confiscating their property.

For a small but vocal minority of rebels, however, the rebellion became an ideological revolution. Sarah Drummond, wife of rebel leader William Drummond, advocated independence from England and the formation of a Virginian Republic, declaring, "I fear the power of England no more than a broken straw."[21] Others struggled for a different kind of independence: white servants and enslaved Black people fought side by side in both armies after Bacon's faction promised freedom for military service.

The rebels steadily lost ground and ultimately suffered a crushing defeat. Bacon died of typhus in the autumn of 1676, and his successors surrendered to Berkeley in January 1677. Berkeley summarily tried and executed the rebel leadership in a succession of kangaroo courts-martial. Before long, however, the royal fleet arrived, bearing over a thousand red-coated troops and a royal commission of investigation charged with restoring order to the colony. The commissioners replaced the governor and dispatched Berkeley to London, where he died in disgrace.

But the conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion was uncertain, and the maintenance of order remained precarious for years afterward. The garrison of royal troops discouraged both incursion by Native Americans and insurrection by discontented colonists, allowing the king to continue profiting from tobacco revenues. The end of armed resistance did not mean a resolution to the underlying tensions destabilizing colonial society. Native Americans inside Virginia remained an embattled minority, and those outside Virginia remained a threat. Elite planters continued to grow rich by exploiting indentured servants and enslaved people while marginalizing small farmers. Virginia legislators did recognize the extent of popular hostility toward colonial rule, however, and improved the social and political conditions of poor white Virginians in the years after the rebellion. During the same period, the increasing availability of enslaved workers through the Atlantic slave trade contributed to planters' large-scale adoption of slave labor in the Chesapeake.

Just a few years after Bacon's Rebellion, the Spanish experienced their own tumult in the area of contemporary New Mexico. The Spanish had maintained control in the region in part by suppressing Native American beliefs. Friars aggressively enforced Catholic practice, burning native idols and masks and other sacred objects, and banishing traditional spiritual practices. In 1680, the Puebloan religious leader Popé, who had been arrested and whipped for "sorcery" five years earlier, led various Puebloan groups in rebellion. Several thousand Puebloan warriors razed the Spanish countryside and besieged Santa Fe. They killed 400 in the town, including 21 Franciscan priests, and allowed 2,000 other Spaniards and Christian Puebloans to flee. It was perhaps the greatest act of Indigenous resistance in North American history.

The Puebloans in New Mexico eradicated all traces of Spanish rule. They destroyed churches and threw themselves into rivers to wash away their Christian baptisms. "The God of the Christians is dead," Popé proclaimed, and the Puebloans resumed traditional spiritual practices.[22] The Spanish were exiled for twelve years. They returned in 1692, weakened, to reconquer New Mexico.



Figure 4.10. Built sometime between 1000 and 1450 AD, the multi-storied Taos Pueblo is made of adobe brick and located near modern-day Taos, New Mexico. It functioned as a base for the leader Popé during the Pueblo Revolt. Luca Galuzzi (photographer), Taos Pueblo, 2007. Wikimedia. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license.

The late seventeenth century was a time of great violence and turmoil. Bacon's Rebellion turned white Virginians against one another, King Philip's War shattered Native American resistance in New England, and the Pueblo Revolt struck a major blow to Spanish power. It would take several more decades before similar patterns erupted in Carolina and Pennsylvania, but the constant advance of European settlements provoked conflict in these areas as well.

In 1715, the Yamasee, Carolina's closest allies and most lucrative trading partners, turned against the colony and nearly destroyed it entirely. Writing from Carolina to London, the settler George Rodd believed the Yamasee wanted nothing less than "the whole continent and to kill us or chase us all out."[23] The Yamasee would eventually advance within miles of Charles Town.

The Yamasee War's first victims were traders. The governor had dispatched two of the colony's most prominent men to visit and pacify a Yamasee council following rumors of native unrest. The Yamasee quickly proved the fears well founded by killing the emissaries and every English trader they could corral.

The Yamasee, like many other Native Americans, had come to depend on English courts as much as the flintlock rifles and ammunition that traders offered them for enslaved laborers and animal skins. Feuds between English agents had crippled the court of trade and shut down all diplomacy, provoking the violent Yamasee reprisal. Most villages in the southeast sent at least a few warriors to join what quickly became a struggle against the colony that united various Native American peoples.

Yet Charles Town ultimately survived the onslaught by preserving one crucial alliance, with the Cherokee. By 1717, the conflict had largely died out, and the only remaining threat was roaming Yamasee bands operating from Spanish Florida. Most Native American villages returned to terms with Carolina and resumed trading. The lucrative trade in enslaved Native Americans, however, which had consumed fifty thousand souls in five decades, largely dwindled after the war. The danger was too high for traders, and the colonies discovered even greater profits by importing Africans to work new rice plantations. Herein lies the birth of the Old South, that expanse of plantations that created untold wealth and misery. Native Americans retained the strongest militaries in the region, but they never again threatened the survival of English colonies.

If a colony existed where peace with Indigenous people might continue, it would be Pennsylvania. While William Penn and other early settlers never doubted that the English would appropriate Native lands, he demanded that his colonists obtain these territories through purchase rather than violence. Though Pennsylvanians maintained relatively peaceful relations with Native Americans, immigration and land speculation increased the demand for land. Coercive and fraudulent methods of negotiation became increasingly prominent. The Walking Purchase of 1737 was emblematic of both colonists' desire for cheap land and the changing relationship between Pennsylvanians and their Native neighbors.

Through treaty negotiation in 1737, Native Delaware leaders agreed to sell Pennsylvania all of the land that a man could walk in a day and a half, a common measurement used by Delawares in evaluating distances. John and Thomas Penn, joined by the land speculator and longtime friend of the Penns, James Logan, hired a team of skilled runners to complete the "walk" on a

prepared trail. The runners traveled from Wrightstown to the present-day town of Jim Thorpe, and proprietary officials then drew the new boundary line perpendicular to the runners' route, extending northeast to the Delaware River. The colonial government thus measured out a tract much larger than the Delaware had originally intended to sell, roughly 1,200 square miles. As a result, Delaware-proprietary relations suffered. Many Delaware left the lands in question and migrated westward to join Shawnee and other Delaware already living in the Ohio Valley. There they established diplomatic and trade relationships with the French. Memories of the suspect purchase endured into the 1750s and became a chief point of contention between the Pennsylvania government and the Delaware people during the upcoming Seven Years' War.[24]

VI. Conclusion

The century after the founding of Jamestown saw the establishment and maturation of a distinctive English imperial system. From tiny outposts on the periphery of the Atlantic World, by the early eighteenth century, the American colonies were large territories in a powerful British Empire. War, Native expropriation, slavery, and social conflict were central to the creation of a prosperous colonial society that helped make England a global power. The settlement of 1689 established a political system ideologically premised on liberty and property, with which British American colonists strongly identified. At the same time, religious and ethnic diversity, along with novel systems of unfree labor, laid the foundation for an American society that was very different from England.

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This chapter was edited by Daniel Johnson, with content contributions by Gregory Ablavsky, James Ambuske, Carolyn Arena, L. D. Burnett, Lori Daggar, Max Flomen, Hendrick Isom, D. Andrew Johnson, Daniel Johnson, Matthew Kruer, Brenda Lakhani, Joseph Locke, Samantha Miller, Melissa Morris, Bryan Rindfleisch, Emily Romeo, John Saillant, Ian Saxine, Marie Stango, Luke Willert, Ben Wright, Caroline Wright, and Miller Shores Wright.

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5: Colonial Society



Figure 5.1. Charles Willson Peale and the Peale Family, c. 1771–1773. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, object #1867.298.

I. Introduction

Eighteenth-century American culture moved in competing, and at times contradictory, directions. Even as commercial, military, and social ties between Great Britain and the North American colonies tightened, a new, distinctly American culture began to form, binding together colonists from New Hampshire to Georgia. Meanwhile, immigrants from other European nations alongside Indigenous Americans and enslaved Africans created an increasingly diverse colonial population. All these different identities—women, men, and fluid people of all backgrounds, whether Indigenous American, European, and African—led distinct lives within different communities and sovereignties. While life in the thirteen colonies was shaped in part by European practices and participation in the larger Atlantic World, emerging cultural patterns increasingly transformed colonial North America into a society distinct from that of Great Britain.

II. Consumption and Trade in the British Atlantic

Transatlantic trade greatly enriched Britain, and it also created high standards of living for many North American colonists. This two-way relationship reinforced the colonial feeling of commonality with British culture. It was not until trade relations, disturbed by political changes and the demands of warfare, became strained in the 1760s that colonists began to question these ties.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, developments in manufacturing, transportation, and the availability of credit increased the opportunity for colonists to purchase consumer goods. Instead of making their own tools, clothes, and utensils, colonists increasingly purchased luxury items made by specialized artisans and manufacturers. As the incomes of Americans rose and the prices of these commodities fell, these items shifted from luxuries to common goods. The average person's ability to spend money on consumer goods became a sign of their respectability. Historians have referred to this process as the "consumer revolution."[1]

Britain relied on the colonies as a source of raw materials, such as lumber and tobacco. Both Anglo and Indigenous Americans engaged with new forms of trade and financing that increased their ability to buy or utilize British-made goods. But the ways in which colonists paid for these goods varied sharply from those in Britain. When settlers first arrived in North America, they typically carried very little British money with them. Discovering no precious metals (and lacking the Crown's authority to mint coins), colonists relied on barter and nontraditional forms of exchange, including everything from nails to the wampum used by Indigenous American polities in the Northeast. To deal with the lack of currency, many colonies resorted to "commodity money,"

which varied from place to place. In Virginia, for example, the colonial legislature stipulated a rate of exchange for tobacco, standardizing it as a form of money in the colony. Commodities could be cumbersome and difficult to transport, so a system of notes developed. These notes allowed individuals to deposit a certain amount of tobacco in a warehouse and receive a note bearing the value of the deposit that could be traded as money. In 1690, colonial Massachusetts became the first place in the Western Hemisphere to issue paper bills to be used as money.[2] These notes, called bills of credit, were issued for finite periods of time on the colony's credit and varied in denomination.



Figure 5.2. Painting of the Harlowe Family based on Samuel Richardson's "Clarissa." Artist Joseph Highmore, 1745–1747. Wikimedia.

While this system of notes provided colonists with a much-needed medium for exchange, it was not without its problems. Currency that worked in Virginia might be worthless in Pennsylvania. Colonists and officials in Britain debated whether it was right or desirable to use mere paper, as opposed to gold or silver, as a medium of exchange. Paper money tended to lose value quicker than coins and was often counterfeited. These problems, as well as British merchants' reluctance to accept depreciated paper notes, caused the Board of Trade to restrict the usage of paper money in the Currency Acts of 1751 and 1763. Paper money was not the only medium of exchange, however. Colonists also used metal coins. Barter and the extension of credit—which could take the form of bills of exchange, akin to modern-day personal checks—remained important forces throughout the colonial period. Still, trade between colonies was greatly hampered by the lack of standardized money.

Businesses on both sides of the Atlantic advertised both their goods and promises of obtaining credit. The consistent availability of credit allowed families of modest means to buy consumer items previously available only to elites. Cheap consumption allowed middle-class Americans to match many of the trends in clothing, food, and household decor that traditionally marked the wealthiest, aristocratic classes. Anglo Americans, often seen by their London peers as provincial or less cultivated, could present themselves as lords and ladies of their own communities by purchasing and displaying British-made goods. Visiting the home of a successful businessman in Boston, John Adams described "the Furniture, which alone cost a thousand Pounds sterling. A seat it is for a noble Man, a Prince. The Turkey Carpets, the painted Hangings, the Marble Table, the rich Beds with crimson Damask Curtains and Counterpins, the beautiful Chimney Clock, the Spacious Garden, are the most magnificent of any thing I have seen."[3] But many worried about the consequences of rising consumerism. A writer for the Boston Evening Post remarked on this new practice of purchasing status: "For 'tis well known how Credit is a mighty inducement with many People to purchase this and the other Thing which they may well enough do without."[4] Colonial Americans became more likely to find themselves in debt, whether to their local shopkeeper or a prominent London merchant, creating new feelings of dependence.

Of course, the thirteen continental colonies were not the only British colonies in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, they were considerably less important to the Crown than the sugar-producing islands of the Caribbean, including Jamaica, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, Grenada, St. Vincent, and Dominica. These British colonies were also inextricably connected to the continental colonies. Caribbean plantations dedicated nearly all of their land to the wildly profitable crop of sugarcane, so North American colonies sold surplus food and raw materials to these wealthy island colonies. Lumber was in high demand, especially in Barbados, where planters nearly deforested the island to make room for sugar plantations. To compensate for a lack of lumber, Barbadian colonists ordered house frames from New England. These prefabricated frames were sent via ships from which planters transported them to their plantations. Caribbean colonists also relied on the continental colonies for livestock, purchasing cattle

and horses. The most lucrative exchange of all was the slave trade, with disastrous consequences.

Connections between the Caribbean and North America brought commercial benefits to both regions. Those living on the continent relied on the Caribbean colonists to satisfy their craving for sugar and other goods like mahogany. British colonists in the Caribbean began cultivating sugar in the 1640s, and sugar took the Atlantic World by storm. In fact, by 1680, sugar exports from the tiny island of Barbados were valued more than the total exports of all the continental colonies.[5] Jamaica, acquired by the Crown in 1655, surpassed Barbados in sugar production toward the end of the seventeenth century. North American colonists, like Britons around the world, craved sugar to sweeten their tea and food. Colonial elites also sought to decorate their parlors and dining rooms with the silky, polished surfaces of rare mahogany as opposed to local wood. While the bulk of this in-demand material went to Britain and Europe, New England merchants imported the wood from the Caribbean, where it was then transformed into exquisite furniture for those who could afford it.



Figure 5.3. The Mill Yard Grinding sugar cane in a windmill, 1823. Image of ten views of Antigua to show the sugar-making process and enslaved laborers. Wikimedia.

Women were integral to trade and consumption in eighteenth-century cities. Many were active in the marketplace, managing stalls, trading goods, utilizing credit, and placing advertisements for goods.[6] For example, tavern owner Abigail Stoneman enticed guests by offering billiards tables, and she regularly bought and sold merchandise from Atlantic merchants, many of whom she boarded. Stoneman was an exceptionally successful businessperson, but women with smaller businesses also employed similar tactics.[7]

Trade with Indigenous people also enriched the empire. Indigenous people consumed European guns, alcohol, kettles, knives, woolen blankets, and other everyday items. Europeans, in turn, purchased furs, deer hides, handicrafts, copper, and food. By the 1750s, the horse trade fundamentally changed trade patterns among many Indigenous people, especially in the West, and allowed some tribal nations to subjugate those with fewer animals. For example, the Ute and Comanche alliance regularly raided Navajo, Pawnee, and Jicarilla Apache in Arizona and New Mexico.[8] The horse also increased the gap between men's and women's work, and, in the case of the Oceti Sakowin, altered the lifestyle of its people from a matrilineal to a patrilineal society.[9]

These systems of trade all existed with the purpose of enriching Great Britain. To ensure that profits ended up in Britain, Parliament imposed taxes on trade under the Navigation Acts. These taxes intertwined consumption with politics. Prior to 1763, Britain found that enforcing the regulatory laws they passed was difficult and often cost them more than the duty revenue they would bring in. As a result, colonists found it relatively easy to violate the law and trade with foreign nations, pirates, or smugglers. Customs officials were bribed easily, and it was not uncommon to see Dutch, French, or West Indies ships laden with prohibited goods in American ports. When smugglers were caught, their American peers often acquitted them. British officials estimated that nearly £700,000 worth of illicit goods was brought into the American colonies annually.[10] Pirates also helped to perpetuate the illegal trading activities by providing a buffer between merchants and foreign ships.

Beginning with the Sugar Act in 1764 and continuing with the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts, Parliament levied taxes on

sugar, paper, lead, glass, and tea, all products that contributed to colonists' sense of gentility. In response, colonists organized nonimportation agreements and reverted to domestic products. Homespun cloth became a political statement by women such as the Daughters of Liberty as they boycotted British-made goods. A writer in the Essex Gazette in 1769 proclaimed, "I presume there never was a Time when, or a Place where, the Spinning Wheel could more influence the Affairs of Men, than at present."[11]

The consumer revolution fueled the growth of colonial cities. Cities in colonial America were crossroads for the movement of people and goods, and one in twenty colonists lived in cities by 1775.[12] Some cities grew organically over time, while others were planned from the start. New York's and Boston's seventeenth-century street plans reflected the haphazard arrangement of medieval cities in Europe. In other cities like Philadelphia and Charleston, civic leaders laid out urban plans according to calculated systems of regular blocks and squares. Planners in Annapolis and Williamsburg also imposed regularity and order over their city streets through the placement of government, civic, and educational buildings.



Figure 5.4. A South-East View of the City of Boston in North America, by J. Carwitham, c1731-1736. Yale Center for British Art. Wikipedia.

By 1775, Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston were the five largest cities in British North America. Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charleston had populations of approximately 40,000, 25,000, 16,000, and 12,000 people, respectively.[13] Urban society was highly stratified. At the base of the social ladder were the laboring classes, which included both enslaved and free people ranging from apprentices to master craftsmen. While the legal status and rights of enslaved people were more flexible in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries than after the establishment of the United States, their position was always more vulnerable than that of free working people. Next came the middling sort: shopkeepers, artisans, and skilled mariners. Above them stood the merchant elites, who tended to be actively involved in the city's social and political affairs, as well as in the buying, selling, and trading of goods. Enslaved men and women had a visible presence in both Northern and Southern cities.

Many enslaved people lived in rural areas and performed agricultural labor, but not exclusively so. In port cities, enslaved laborers often worked as domestic servants and in skilled trades: distilleries, shipyards, lumberyards, and ropewalks. Between 1725 and 1775, slavery became increasingly significant in the Northern colonies as urban residents sought greater participation in the maritime economy. Massachusetts was the first slave-holding colony in New England. New York traced its connections to slavery and the slave trade back to the Dutch settlers of New Netherland in the seventeenth century.[14] Philadelphia also became an active site of the Atlantic slave trade, and enslaved people accounted for nearly 8 percent of the city's population in 1770.[15] In Southern cities, including Charleston, urban slavery played an important role in the market economy. Enslaved people, both rural and urban, made up the majority of the working population on the eve of the American Revolution.

III. Slavery, Antislavery, and Atlantic Exchange

Slavery was a transatlantic institution, but it developed distinct characteristics in British North America. By 1750, slavery was legal in every North American colony, while local economic imperatives, demographic trends, and cultural practices all contributed to distinct experiences and structures, especially for those who lived under enslavement or participated directly in its practices.

Virginia, the oldest of the English mainland colonies, imported its first enslaved laborers in 1619. Virginia planters built larger and larger estates and guaranteed that these estates would remain intact by primogeniture (in which a family's estate would descend to the eldest male heir) and entail (a gendered legal procedure that prevented the breakup and sale of estates).[16] This distribution of property, which kept wealth and property consolidated, guaranteed that the great planters would dominate social and economic life in the Chesapeake. This system also fostered an economy dominated by tobacco. By 1750, there were approximately one hundred thousand enslaved Africans in Virginia, at least 40 percent of the colony's total population.[17] Most of these enslaved people worked on large estates under the gang system of labor, working from dawn to dusk in groups with close supervision by a white overseer or enslaved "driver" who could use physical force to compel labor.[18]



Figure 5.5. Cartouche on Fry-Jefferson Map, 1751. This cartouche of Colonial Virginia depicts enslaved people preparing tobacco for shipping while plantation owners conduct business. Library of Virginia. Library of Congress.

Virginians used the law to protect the interests of enslavers. In 1705 the House of Burgesses passed its first comprehensive slave code. Earlier laws had already guaranteed that the children of enslaved women would be born enslaved with the doctrine of partus sequiter ventrem (follows the womb), conversion to Christianity would not lead to freedom, and enslavers could not free their enslaved laborers unless they transported them out of the colony.[19] Enslavers could not be convicted of murder for killing an enslaved person; conversely, any Black Virginian who merely struck a white colonist would be severely whipped. Virginia planters used the law to maximize the profitability of their enslaved laborers and invasively regulate every aspect of their daily lives.

In South Carolina and Georgia, slavery was also central to colonial life, but specific local conditions created a very different system. Georgia was founded by a philanthropic group that included James Oglethorpe. The trustees originally banned slavery from the colony. But by 1750, slavery was legal throughout the region. South Carolina had been a slave colony from its founding and, by 1750, was the only mainland colony with a majority enslaved African population. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, coauthored by the philosopher John Locke in 1669, explicitly legalized slavery from the very beginning. Many early settlers in Carolina were enslavers from British Caribbean sugar islands, and they brought their brutal slave codes with them.[20] Defiant enslaved people could be legally beaten, branded, mutilated, and even castrated. In 1740 a new law stated that killing a rebellious enslaved person was not a crime and even the murder of an enslaved person was treated as a minor misdemeanor. South Carolina also banned the freeing of enslaved laborers unless the freed person left the colony.[21]

Despite these brutal regimes, there were several factors that enabled enslaved people in South Carolina to claim more independence in their daily lives than in other parts of colonial North America. Rice, the staple crop underpinning the early Carolina economy, was widely cultivated in West Africa, and planters commonly requested that merchants sell them enslaved laborers skilled in the complex process of rice cultivation. Enslaved people from Senegambia were particularly prized.[22] The expertise of these enslaved people contributed to one of the most lucrative economies in the colonies.[23] The swampy conditions of rice plantations, however, fostered dangerous diseases. Malaria and other tropical diseases spread and caused many enslavers to live away from their plantations. These elites, who commonly owned a number of plantations, typically lived in Charleston townhouses to avoid the diseases of the rice fields. West Africans, however, were far more likely to have a level of immunity to malaria (due to a genetic trait that also contributes to higher levels of sickle cell anemia), reinforcing planters' racist belief that

Africans were particularly suited to labor in tropical environments.

With plantation owners often far from home, Carolina's enslaved laborers had less direct oversight than those in the Chesapeake. Furthermore, many Carolina rice plantations used the task system to organize enslaved laborers. Under this system, enslaved laborers were given a number of specific tasks to complete in a day. Once those tasks were complete, enslaved people often had time to grow their own crops on garden plots allotted by their enslavers. Thriving underground markets allowed enslaved people here a degree of economic autonomy. Enslaved people in Carolina also had an unparalleled degree of cultural autonomy. This autonomy, coupled with the frequent arrival of African people, enabled a culture that retained many African practices.[24] Syncretic languages like Gullah and Geechee contained many borrowed African terms, and traditional African basket weaving (often combined with Native American techniques) survives in the region to this day.

This unique Lowcountry culture contributed to the Stono Rebellion in September 1739. On a Sunday morning while planters attended church, a group of about eighty enslaved people set out for Spanish Florida under a banner that read "Liberty!," burning plantations and killing at least twenty white settlers as they marched. They were headed for Fort Mose, a free Black settlement on the Georgia-Florida border, emboldened by the Spanish Empire's offer of freedom to anyone enslaved by the English. The local militia defeated the rebels in battle, captured and executed many of the enslaved people, and sold others to the sugar plantations of the West Indies. Though the rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful, it was a violent reminder that enslaved people would fight for freedom.

Slavery was also an important institution in the Mid-Atlantic colonies. While New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania never developed plantation economies, enslaved laborers were often employed on larger farms growing cereal grains. Enslaved Africans worked alongside European tenant farmers on New York's Hudson Valley patroonships, huge tracts of land granted to a few early Dutch families. As previously mentioned, enslaved people were integral to the daily life of Philadelphia, New York City, and other ports where they worked in the maritime trades and domestic service. New York City's economy was so reliant on slavery that over 40 percent of its population was enslaved by 1700, while 15 to 20 percent of Pennsylvania's colonial population was enslaved by 1750.[25]

In New York in particular, the high density of enslaved people and a particularly diverse European population increased the threat of rebellion because of unique opportunities for connection. A 1712 slave rebellion in New York City resulted in the deaths of 9 white colonists. In retribution, 21 enslaved people were executed and 6 others died by suicide before they could be burned alive. In 1741, authorities uncovered another planned rebellion by enslaved Africans and poor Black and white men. The panicked response only stopped after 32 Black men, both enslaved and free, were executed alongside 5 poor white men. Another 70 were deported, likely to the sugarcane fields of the West Indies.[26]



Figure 5.6. This 1758 painting depicts Rhode Island ship captains frolicking in a Surinam tavern while being served by enslaved people. John G. Greenwood, Sea Captain's Carousing in Surinam. Wikipedia.

Increasingly disturbed by the growth of enslavement in the region, Quakers were the first group to turn against slavery. Quaker beliefs in radical nonviolence and the fundamental equality of all human souls made slavery hard to justify. Most commentators

argued that slavery originated in war, where captives were enslaved rather than executed. To pacifist Quakers, then, the very foundation of slavery was illegitimate. Furthermore, Quaker belief in the equality of souls challenged the racial basis of slavery. By 1758, Quakers in Pennsylvania disowned members who engaged in the slave trade, and by 1772 slave-owning Quakers could be expelled from their meetings. These local activities in Pennsylvania had broad implications as the decision to ban slavery and slave trading was debated in Quaker meetings throughout the English-speaking world. The free Black population in Philadelphia and other Northern cities also continually advocated against slavery.

Slavery as a system of labor was more limited in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, though it was present and legal throughout the region. The absence of cash crops like tobacco or rice minimized the economic use of slavery. In Massachusetts, only about 2 percent of the population was enslaved as late as the 1760s. The few enslaved people in the colony were concentrated in Boston along with a sizable free Black community that made up about 10 percent of the city's population.[27] While slavery itself never really took root in New England, the slave trade was a central element of the region's economy. Every major port in the region participated to some extent in the transatlantic trade—Newport, Rhode Island, alone had at least 150 ships active in the trade by 1740—and New England also provided foodstuffs and manufactured goods to West Indian plantations.[28]

IV. Pursuing Political and Religious Freedoms

As consumption, trade, and their reliance on enslavement drew the colonies closer to Great Britain, civics and government gradually split them further apart. Democracy in Europe more closely resembled oligarchies rather than republics, with only elite members of society eligible to serve in elected positions. Most European states did not hold regular elections, with Britain and the Dutch Republic being two exceptions. However, even in these countries, only a tiny portion of males could vote. In the North American colonies, by contrast, white male suffrage was more widespread. In addition to having greater popular involvement, the colonial government also had more power in a variety of areas. Assemblies and legislatures regulated businesses, imposed new taxes, occasionally cared for the poor in their communities, built roads and bridges, and made most decisions concerning education. Colonial Americans sued often, which in turn led to more power for local judges and more prestige in jury service. Thus, lawyers became extremely important in American society and, in turn, played a greater role in American politics.

American society was less tightly controlled than European society. This led to the rise of various interest groups, each at odds with the other. These various interest groups arose based on commonalities in various areas. Some commonalities arose over class-based distinctions, while others were due to ethnic or religious ties. One of the major differences between modern politics and colonial political culture was the lack of distinct, continuous political parties. The most common disagreement in colonial politics was between the elected assemblies and the royal governor. Generally, the various colonial legislatures were divided into factions who either supported or opposed the current governor's political ideology.

Political structures in the colonies fell under one of three main categories: provincial (New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia), proprietary (Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland), and charter (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut). Provincial colonies were the most tightly controlled by the Crown. The British king appointed all provincial governors, who could veto any decision made by their colony's legislative assemblies. Proprietary colonies had a similar structure, with one important difference: governors were appointed by a lord proprietor, an individual who had purchased or received the rights to the colony from the Crown. Proprietary colonies, therefore, often had more freedoms and liberties than other North American colonies. Charter colonies had the most complex system of government: they were formed by political corporations or interest groups that drew up a charter clearly delineating powers between the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of government. Rather than having appointed governors, charter colonies elected their own from among property-owning men in the colony.

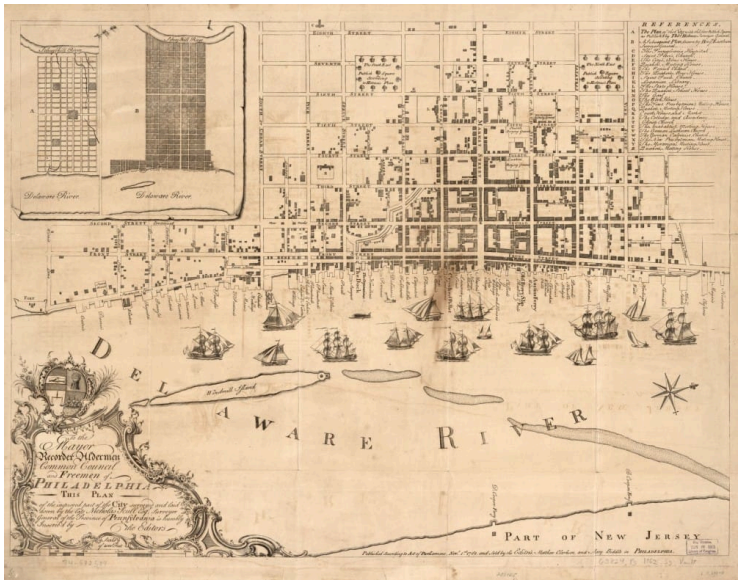


Figure 5.7. Nicholas Scull, "To the mayor, recorder, aldermen, common council, and freemen of Philadelphia this plan of the improved part of the city surveyed and laid down by the late Nicholas Scull," Philadelphia, 1762. Library of Congress.

After the governor, the colonial government was separated into two main divisions: the council and the assembly. The council was essentially the governor's cabinet, often composed of prominent individuals within the colony, such as the head of the militia or the attorney general. The governor appointed these men, although the appointments were often subject to approval from Parliament. The assembly was composed of elected, property-owning men whose official goal was to ensure that colonial law conformed to English law. The colonial assemblies approved new taxes and the colonial budgets. However, many of these assemblies saw it as their duty to check the power of the governor and ensure that he did not take too much power within the colonial government. Unlike Parliament, most of the men who were elected to an assembly came from local districts, with their constituency able to hold their elected officials accountable to promises made.

An elected assembly was an offshoot of the idea of civic duty, the notion that men had a responsibility to support and uphold the government through voting, paying taxes, and service in the militia. Americans firmly accepted the idea of a social contract, the idea that government was put in place by the people. Philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke pioneered this idea, and there is evidence to suggest that these writers influenced the colonists. While in practice, elites controlled colonial politics, in theory, many colonists believed in the notion of equality before the law and opposed special treatment for any members of colonial society.

Whether African Americans, Indigenous Americans, and women of all backgrounds would be included in this notion of equality before the law was far less clear. Women's roles in the family became particularly complicated, as many historians view this period as a significant time of transition.[29] Anglo-American families during the colonial period differed from their European counterparts. Widely available land and plentiful natural resources allowed for greater fertility and thus encouraged more people to marry earlier in life. Yet while young marriages and large families were common throughout the colonial period, family sizes started to shrink by the end of the 1700s as Anglo-American wives asserted more control over their own bodies.

New ideas governing romantic love helped change the nature of husband-wife relationships. Deriving from sentimentalism, a contemporary literary movement, and the increasing popularity of novels, especially among women, many Anglo-Americans began to view marriage as an emotionally fulfilling relationship rather than a strictly economic partnership. Referring to one another as "Beloved of my Soul" or "My More Than Friend," newspaper editor John Fenno and his wife Mary Curtis Fenno illustrate what some historians refer to as the "companionate ideal."[30] While away from his wife, John felt a "vacuum in my existence," a sentiment returned by Mary's "Doting Heart."[31] Indeed, after independence, wives began to not only provide emotional sustenance to their husbands but also inculcate the principles of republican citizenship as "republican wives."[32]

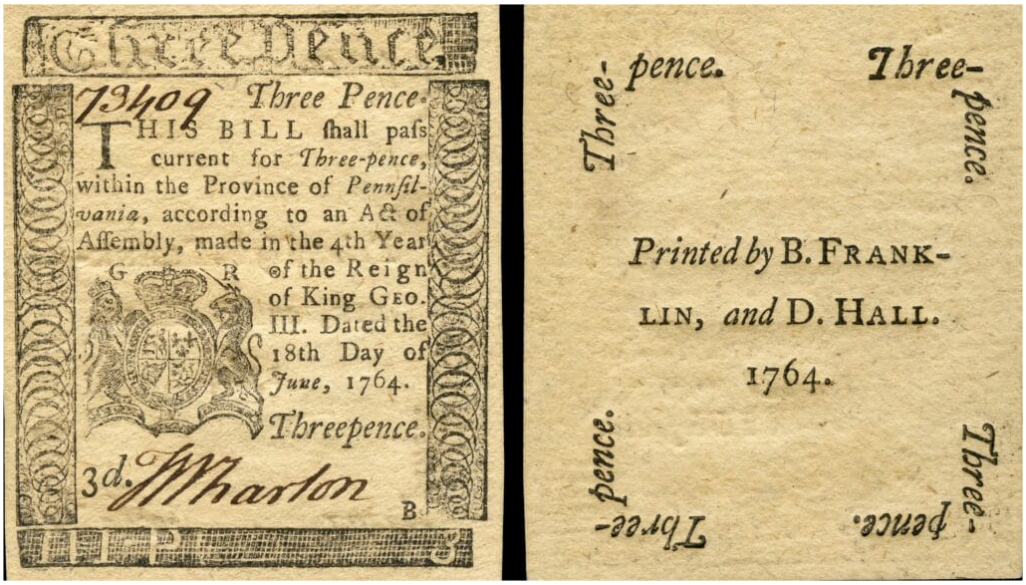
Marriage opened new emotional and practical realms for some but remained oppressive for others. For the millions of Americans bound in chattel slavery, marriage remained an informal arrangement rather than a codified legal relationship. For white Anglo-American women, the legal practice of coverture meant that women lost all their political and economic rights to their husbands after marriage. Divorce rates rose throughout the 1790s, as did less formal cases of abandonment. Newspapers published advertisements by deserted men and women denouncing their partners. Known as "elopement notices," they cataloged the

misbehaviors of deviant spouses, such as wives' "indecent manner," a way of implying sexual impropriety. As violence and inequality continued in many American marriages, wives in return highlighted their husbands' "drunken fits" and violent rages. One woman chillingly noted that her partner "presented his gun at my breast . . . and swore he would kill me."[33]

That couples would turn to newspapers as a source of expression illustrates the importance of what historians often call print culture.[34] Print culture includes a wide range of factors contributing to how books and other printed objects are made, including the relationship between the author and the publisher, the technical constraints of the printer, and the tastes of readers. In colonial America, regional differences in daily life impacted the way colonists made and used printed matter. However, all the colonies dealt with threats of censorship and control from imperial supervision. In particular, content about imperial versus colonial government policy often stirred considerable controversy.

From the establishment of Virginia in 1607, printing was either regarded as an unnecessary luxury given such harsh living conditions or actively discouraged. The governor of Virginia, Sir William Berkeley, summed up the attitude of the ruling class in 1671: "I thank God there are no free schools nor printing . . . for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy . . . and printing has divulged them."[35] Ironically, the circulation of handwritten tracts contributed to Berkeley's undoing. The popularity of Nathaniel Bacon's uprising was in part due to widely circulated tracts questioning Berkeley's competence. Berkeley's harsh repression of Bacon's Rebellion was equally well documented. It was only after Berkeley's death in 1677 that the idea of printing in the Southern colonies was revived. William Nuthead, an experienced English printer, set up shop in 1682, although the next governor of the colony, Thomas Culpeper, forbade Nuthead from completing a single project. It was not until William Parks set up his printing shop in Annapolis in 1726 that the Chesapeake had a stable local trade in printing and books.

Print culture was very different in New England. Puritans had a longstanding respect for print, stemming from their belief that everyone should regularly read the Bible. Unfortunately, New England's authors were content to publish in London, making the foundations of Stephen Daye's first print shop in 1639 very shaky. Typically, printers made their money from printing sheets, not books to be bound. The case was similar in Massachusetts, where the first printed work was a "Freeman's Oath" broadside.[36] The first book was not issued until 1640, the Bay Psalm Book, of which eleven known copies survive. Daye's contemporaries recognized the significance of his printing, and he was awarded 140 acres of land. The next large project, the first Bible to be printed in America, was undertaken by Samuel Green and Marmaduke Johnson and published in 1660. That same year, the Eliot Bible, named for its translator John Eliot, was printed in the Natick dialect of Algonquin nations as part of an effort to convert Native people to Christianity.



Three pence bills from Colonial Pennsylvania. Signed by Thomas Wharton. Printed by Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, 1764. Wikimedia. The front features ornate borders, a coat of arms, and text stating it's valid currency for three pence within Pennsylvania according to King George III's act. The signature of "Wharton" appears at bottom. The reverse shows "Three pence" and printer information.

Massachusetts remained the center of colonial printing for a hundred years, until Philadelphia overtook Boston in 1770. Philadelphia's rise as the printing capital of the colonies began with two important features: first, the arrival of Benjamin Franklin, a scholar and businessman, in 1723, and second, waves of German immigrants who created a demand for a German-language press. From the mid-1730s, Christopher Sauer, and later his son, met the demand for German-language newspapers and religious

texts. Nevertheless, Franklin was singular in his influence, transforming the book trade in addition to creating public learning initiatives such as the Library Company and the Academy of Philadelphia. His Autobiography offers one of the most detailed glimpses of life in an eighteenth-century print shop. Franklin's Philadelphia enjoyed a flurry of newspapers, pamphlets, and books for sale. The flurry would only grow in 1776 when the Philadelphia printer Robert Bell issued hundreds of thousands of copies of Thomas Paine's revolutionary Common Sense.

Debates on religious expression continued throughout the eighteenth century. In 1711, a group of New England ministers published a collection of sermons titled Early Piety. The most famous minister, Increase Mather, wrote the preface. In it he asked the question, "What did our forefathers come into this wilderness for?"[37] His answer was simple: to test their faith against the challenges of America and win. The grandchildren of the first settlers had been born into the comfort of well-established colonies and worried that their faith had suffered. This sense of inferiority sent colonists looking for a reinvigorated religious experience. The result came to be known as the Great Awakening, a series of religious revivals that had a leveling effect on colonists and led to a shared understanding of Protestantism. George Whitefield preached, "Father Abraham, whom have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians? No! Any Presbyterians? No! Any Independents or Methodists? No, No, No! Whom have you there? We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christians."[38]

Only with hindsight does the Great Awakening look like a unified movement. The first revivals began unexpectedly in the Congregational churches of New England in the 1730s and then spread through the 1740s and 1750s to Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists in the rest of the thirteen colonies. Different places at different times experienced revivals of different intensities. Yet in all of these communities, colonists discussed the same need to strip their lives of worldly concerns and return to a more pious lifestyle. The form it took was something of a contradiction. Preachers became key figures in encouraging individuals to find a personal relationship with God.

The first signs of religious revival appeared in Jonathan Edwards's congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards was a theologian who shared the faith of the early Puritan settlers. In particular, he believed in the idea of predestination, in which God had long ago decided who was damned and who was saved. However, Edwards worried that his congregation had stopped searching their souls and were merely doing good works to prove they were saved. With a missionary zeal, Edwards preached against worldly sins and called for his congregation to look inward for signs of God's saving grace. His most famous sermon was "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Suddenly, in the winter of 1734, these sermons sent his congregation into violent convulsions. The spasms first appeared among known sinners in the community. Over the next six months the physical symptoms spread to half of the six-hundred-person congregation. Edwards shared the work of his revival in a widely circulated pamphlet.

Over the next decade itinerant preachers were more successful in spreading the spirit of revival around America. These preachers had the same spiritual goal as Edwards but brought with them a new religious experience. They abandoned traditional sermons in favor of outside meetings where they could whip the congregation into an emotional frenzy to reveal evidence of saving grace. Many religious leaders were suspicious of the enthusiasm and message of these revivals, but colonists flocked to the spectacle. Benjamin Franklin, upon hearing George Whitefield, shared how the sermon moved him. He wrote, "I perceived he intended to finish with a Collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my Pocket a Handful of Copper Money, three or four silver Dollars, and five Pistoles [Spanish coins] in Gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the Coppers. Another Stroke of his Oratory made me asham'd of that, and determin'd me to give the Silver; and he finish'd so admirably, that I emptied my Pocket wholly into the Collector's Dish, Gold and all."[39]



Figure 5.9. George Whitefield is shown supported by two women, “Hypocrisy” and “Deceit”. The image also includes other visual indications of the engraver’s disapproval of Whitefield, including a monkey and jester’s staff in the right-hand corner. C. Corbett, publisher, “Enthusiasm display’d: or, the Moor Fields congregation,” 1739. Library of Congress.

George Whitefield was the most famous of the itinerant preachers. According to Whitefield, the only type of faith that pleased God was heartfelt. The established churches too often only encouraged apathy. “The Christian World is dead asleep,” he explained. “Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it.”[40] He would be that voice. Whitefield was a former actor with a dramatic style of preaching and a simple message. Thundering against sin and for Jesus Christ, Whitefield invited everyone to be born again. It worked. Through the 1730s, he traveled from New York to South Carolina, converting ordinary people of all ages. “I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence,” wrote an elite woman in Philadelphia, “broken only by an occasional half suppressed sob.”[41] A farmer recorded the powerful impact this rhetoric could have: “And my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by God’s blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.”[42] The number of people trying to hear Whitefield’s message was so large that he preached in the meadows at the edges of cities. Contemporaries regularly testified to crowds of thousands, and in one case over twenty thousand in Philadelphia. Whitefield and the other itinerant preachers had achieved what Edwards could not: making the revivals popular.

Ultimately the religious revivals became a victim of the preachers’ success. As itinerant preachers became more experimental, they alienated as many people as they converted. In 1742, one preacher from Connecticut, James Davenport, persuaded his congregation that he had special knowledge from God. To be saved, they had to dance naked in circles at night while screaming and laughing. Or they could burn the books he disapproved of. Either way, such extremism demonstrated for many that revivalism had gone wrong.[43] A divide appeared by the 1740s and 1750s between “New Lights,” who still believed in a revived faith, and “Old Lights,” who thought it was deluded nonsense.



Figure 5.10. Christ Church, Virginia. Library of Congress.

By the 1760s, the religious revivals had petered out; however, they left a profound impact on America. Leaders like Edwards and Whitefield encouraged individuals to question the world around them. This idea reformed religion in America and created a language of individualism that promised to change everything else. If you challenged the church, what other authority figures might you question? The Great Awakening provided a language of individualism, reinforced in print culture, which reappeared in the call for independence. While prerevolutionary America had profoundly oligarchical qualities, the groundwork was laid for a more republican society. However, society did not transform easily overnight. It would take intense, often physical, conflict to change colonial life.

V. Indigenous Nations Respond

Europeans continued to populate the American South (by the Spanish) and East (by the British and French), forcing Indigenous people into northern and westward migration. Despite the population growth in the colonies, Indigenous nations still held most of the power in North America. Native American migration, coupled with European conflicts, brought new opportunities for conflict and diplomacy between Indigenous nations and their European neighbors.

After the Tuscarora and Yamasee Wars in the early 1710s, the Tuscarora relocated to New York, joining the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) League. The League consisted of six Iroquoian nations, the Mohawks, Onondaga, Oneidas, Cayuga, Seneca, and the last to join, the Tuscarora, forming one of the world's oldest participatory democracies. They called themselves Haudenosaunee, meaning "people building the longhouse," but were often referred to as the Iroquois, an Algonquian derogatory word meaning "real snakes." They were also sometimes referred to as the League of Five (later Six) Nations.

The Haudenosaunee remained enemies with the French in the North and eventually entered into the Covenant Chain agreement in 1744 with the Northern British colonies. The Chain recognized trade agreements, established British sovereignty over the areas settled by the colonies, while also recognizing Haudenosaunee dominion over Indigenous peoples between the Hudson and Mississippi Rivers.[44] Later, when the Mohawks announced they intended to end the agreement, British colonists acted quickly to secure alliances. In 1754, colonial delegates and 150 League delegates traveled to Albany to discuss a plan of alliance that was proposed by Benjamin Franklin, who admired their political system.[45]

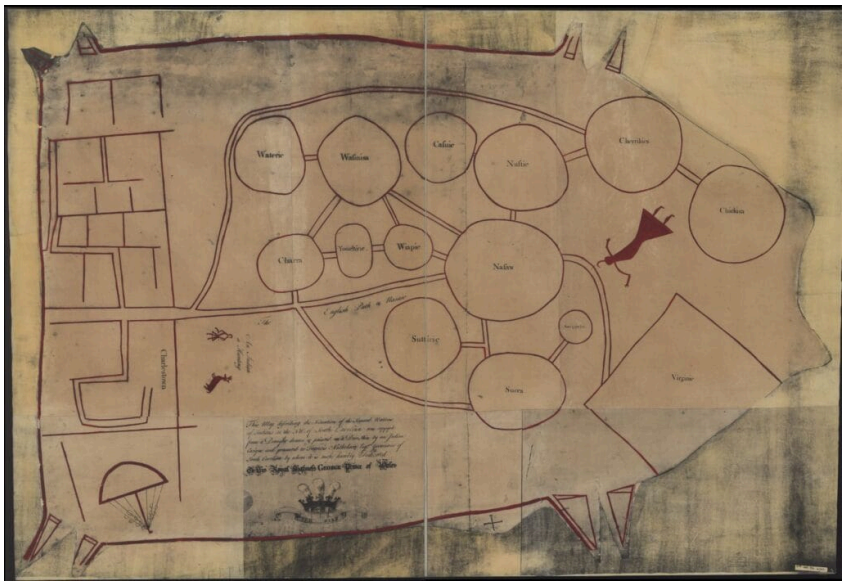


Figure 5.11. This 1764 English copy of the deerskin Catawba map depicted the Indigenous people between Charleston, listed on the left, and Virginia, listed on the right, following the Yamasee War. The majority of the territory in 18th-century North America remained in the hands of Indigenous people. Wikipedia.

In the Great Lakes region, French traders established trade routes among the Anishinaabe and Illinois before traveling south on the Mississippi River. They continued creating strong military relations with other Native nations and established New Orleans in 1718 using purchased enslaved laborers.[46] However, the French plantation colony in Louisiana was outnumbered by the Natchez. Livestock trade disputes, the exploitation of Indigenous forced labor, and diplomatic disagreements between other small nations led the Natchez to expel the French in 1729. This conflict, called the Natchez War, ended when the French and their Choctaw allies finally defeated the Natchez. Despite the victory, the French scaled back their colonial plans after decades of the plantation's unprofitability, and the continued costly warfare with the Chickasaws and other small nations that continued after the Natchez War.[47]

To the south and west of Haudenosaunee territory, smaller groups of multiethnic Indigenous people established networks and alliances that protected their people and helped them survive. These groups often settled on the fringe of multinational Anglo towns to take advantage of economic opportunities.[48]

On the West Coast and in Alaska, Russian traders established contact with Aleut and Tlingit communities while establishing global trade routes. Their interest along the West Coast, coupled with French expansion in the South, sparked Spanish reinvigoration in their northern settlements.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, the Spanish had settlements in St. Augustine, San Antonio, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe. They used a combination of coercion, gifts, and trade to establish and strengthen relationships with Indigenous tribes, solidifying their hold over their northern claims, despite a small settler population. Outside these enclaves, however, control was in the hands of Indigenous people. Friar Juan Agustín Morfi noted in 1778, "Though we still call ourselves [Texas's] masters, we do not exercise dominion over a foot of land beyond San Antonio."[49] This was true of the Southwest generally where a diversity of groups, including the Apache, Kiowa, Caddo, Karankawa, and Comanche, imposed their own rules on negotiations, gift giving, and trade.[50] As early as the 1720s, the Comanche regularly raided settlements and ranches, limiting Spanish expansion.[51]

VI. Seven Years' War

Of the eighty-seven years between the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the American War for Independence (1775), Britain was at war with France and French-allied Indigenous American nations for thirty-seven of them in what is sometimes referred to as the first world or global war. These were not encounters in which European soldiers exclusively fought other European soldiers. Anglo-American militiamen fought for the British against the French and their Indigenous allies in all these engagements. Warfare took a physical and spiritual toll on British colonists. Anglo-American towns located on the border between New England and New France experienced intermittent raiding by French-allied Native Americans. Raiding parties destroyed houses and burned crops, but they also took captives. They brought these captives to French Quebec, where some were ransomed back to their families in

New England while others converted to Catholicism and remained in New France. In this sense, Catholicism threatened to capture Protestant lands and souls.

France and Britain feuded over the boundaries of their respective North American empires. The conflict turned bloody in 1754 when a force of British colonists and Native American allies, led by young George Washington, killed a French diplomat in what was called the Jumonville Affair. This incident led to a war, which would become known as the Seven Years' War or, for the portion fought in North America, the French and Indian War.[52] In North America, France and their allies achieved victory in the early portion of this war. They attacked and burned multiple British outposts, such as Fort William Henry in 1757. In addition, the French seemed to easily defeat British attacks, such as General Braddock's attack on Fort Duquesne, and General Abercrombie's attack on Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) in 1758. These victories were often the result of alliances with Indigenous Americans.

In Europe, the war did not fully begin until 1756, when British-allied Frederick II of Prussia invaded the neutral state of Saxony. As a result of this invasion, a massive coalition of France, Austria, Russia, and Sweden attacked Prussia and the few German states allied with Prussia. In the European or continental war, the British monetarily supported the Prussians. However, as in North America, the early part of the land war went against the British, whose German allies suffered defeat to the French at the Battle of Hastenbeck in July 1757. Later, in December 1757, Frederick's army defeated the Austrians at the Battle of Leuthen. Meanwhile, in India and throughout the world's oceans, the British and their fleet consistently defeated the French. For instance, in June 1757, Robert Clive and his Indian allies defeated the French at the Battle of Plassey. With the sea firmly in their control, the British could deploy additional troops to North America.



Figure 5.12. The Seven Years' War may have begun in North America, but it quickly became a true world war. This 1760 painting depicts Lord Robert Clive and Mir Jafar, who ruled on behalf of the British East India Company in India. Wikimedia.

These newly arrived soldiers allowed the British to launch new offensives. The large French port and fortress of Louisbourg, in present-day Nova Scotia, fell to the British in 1758. In 1759, British general James Wolfe defeated French general Louis-Joseph de Montcalm in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, outside Quebec City. In Europe, 1759 saw the British defeat the French at the Battle of Minden and destroy large portions of the French fleet. The British referred to 1759 as the annus mirabilis or the year of miracles. These victories brought about the fall of French Canada, and war in North America ended in 1760 with the British capture of Montreal. The British continued to fight against the Spanish, who entered the war in 1762. In this war, the Spanish successfully defended Nicaragua against British attacks but were unable to prevent the conquest of Cuba and the Philippines.

The Seven Years' War ended with the peace treaties of Paris and Hubertusburg in 1763. The British received much of Canada and North America from the French, while the Prussians retained the important province of Silesia. This gave the British a larger empire than they could easily control and contributed to tensions that would lead to calls for independence. In particular, it exposed divisions within the newly expanded empire, including language, national affiliation, and religious views. When the British captured Quebec in 1760, a newspaper distributed in the colonies to celebrate the event boasted: "The time will come, when Pope and Friar/Shall both be roasted in the fire/When the proud Antichristian whore/will sink, and never rise more."[53]

Anglo-American colonists rejoiced over the defeat of Catholic France and felt secure that the Catholics in Quebec could no longer

threaten them. Of course, some Anglo-American colonies had been a haven for religious minorities since the seventeenth century. Catholic Maryland, for example, evidenced early religious pluralism. But practical toleration of Catholics existed alongside virulent anti-Catholicism or antipopery in public and political arenas. It was a powerful and enduring rhetorical tool borne out of warfare and competition between Britain and France.

In part because of constant conflict with Catholic France, Britons on either side of the Atlantic rallied around Protestantism. British ministers in England called for a coalition to fight the French and Catholic empires. Missionary organizations such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel were founded at the turn of the eighteenth century to evangelize Indigenous Americans and limit Jesuit conversions. The Protestant revivals of the Great Awakening crisscrossed the Atlantic and founded a participatory religious movement during the 1730s and 1740s that united British Protestant churches. Preachers and merchants alike urged greater Atlantic trade to bind the Anglophone Protestant Atlantic through commerce and religion.

VII. Pontiac's War

Relationships between colonists and Indigenous Americans were complex and, in the face of Anglo-American encroachment, often violent. In 1761, Neolin, a prophet, received a vision from his religion's main deity, known as the Master of Life. The Master of Life told Neolin that the only way to enter heaven would be to cast off the corrupting influence of Europeans by expelling the British: "This land where ye dwell I have made for you and not for others. Whence comes it that ye permit the Whites upon your lands. . . . Drive them out, make war upon them."[54] Neolin preached the avoidance of alcohol, a return to traditional rituals, and unity among Indigenous people to his disciples, including Pontiac, an Ottawa leader.

Pontiac took Neolin's words to heart and sparked the beginning of what would become known as Pontiac's War. At its height, the uprising included Indigenous peoples from the territory between the Great Lakes, the Appalachians, and the Mississippi River. Though Pontiac did not command all of those participating in the war, his actions were influential in its development. Pontiac and three hundred warriors sought to take the British Fort Detroit by surprise in May 1763, but the plan was foiled, resulting in a six-month siege. News of the siege quickly spread and inspired more attacks on British forts and settlers. In May, Pontiac and his allies captured Forts Sandusky, St. Joseph, and Miami. In June, a coalition of Ottawas and Ojibwes captured Fort Michilimackinac by staging a game of stickball (lacrosse) outside the fort. They chased the ball into the fort, gathered arms that had been smuggled in by a group of Indigenous American women, and killed almost half of the fort's British soldiers.

Though Indigenous Americans were indeed responding to Neolin's religious message, there were many other practical reasons for waging war on the British. After the Seven Years' War, Britain gained control of formerly French territory because of the Treaty of Paris. Whereas the French had maintained a relatively stable relationship with their Indigenous allies through trade, the British hoped to profit from and impose "order." For example, while the French empire engaged in many of the same extractive practices as the British, French diplomats more often engaged in the Indigenous practice of diplomatic gift giving. However, British general Jeffrey Amherst discouraged this practice and regulated the trade or sale of firearms and ammunition to Indigenous people. Most Indigenous Americans, including Pontiac, saw this not as frugal imperial policy but preparation for war.

Pontiac's War lasted until 1766. Indigenous American warriors attacked British forts and frontier settlements, killing as many as four hundred soldiers and two thousand settlers.[55] Disease and a shortage of supplies ultimately undermined the war effort, and in July 1766, Pontiac met with British official and diplomat William Johnson at Fort Ontario and settled for peace. Though they did not win Pontiac's War, Indigenous Americans succeeded in fundamentally altering the British government's policy. The war made British officials recognize that peace in the West would require royal recognition of Indigenous lands and heavy-handed regulation of Anglo-American trade activity in territory controlled by Indigenous Americans. As a result, the British Crown issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which created the Proclamation Line marking the Appalachian Mountains as the boundary between the British colonies and land held controlled by Indigenous Americans.

The effects of Pontiac's War were substantial and widespread. The war proved that coercion was not an effective strategy for imperial control, though the British government would continue to employ this strategy to consolidate their power in North America, most notably through the various acts imposed on their colonies. Additionally, the prohibition of Anglo-American settlement in Indigenous American territory, especially the Ohio River Valley, sparked discontent. The French immigrant Michel-Guillaume St. Jean de Crèvecoeur articulated this discontent most clearly in his 1782 Letters from an American Farmer when he asked, "What then is the American, this new man?" In other words, why did colonists start thinking of themselves as Americans, not Britons? Crèvecoeur suggested that America was a melting pot of self-reliant individual landholders, fiercely independent in pursuit of their own interests, and free from the burdens of European class systems. It was an answer many wanted to hear and fit with self-conceptions of the new nation, albeit one that imagined itself as white, male, and generally Protestant.[56]

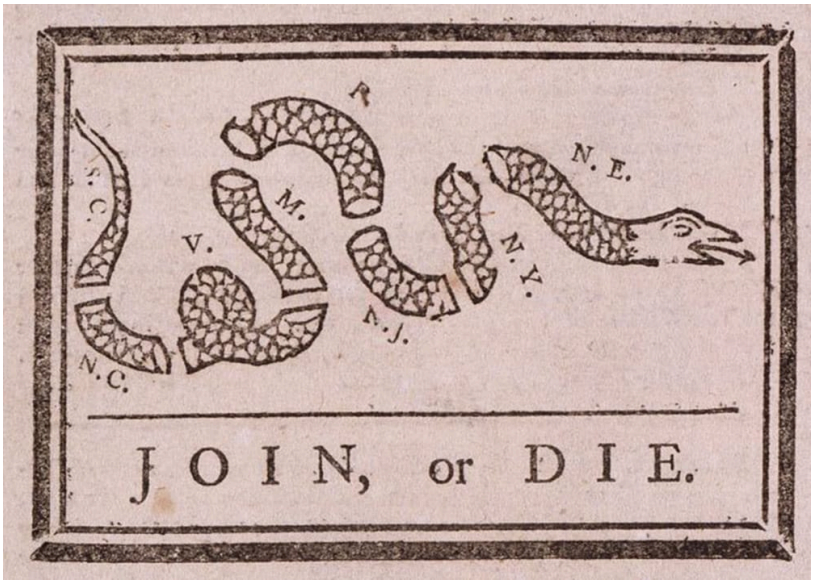


Figure 5.13. Benjamin Franklin, Join or Die, May 9, 1754. Library of Congress.

The Seven Years' War pushed the thirteen American colonies closer together politically and culturally than ever before. In 1754, at the Albany Congress, Benjamin Franklin suggested a plan of union to coordinate defenses across the continent. Tens of thousands of colonial soldiers fought during the war. At the French surrender in 1760, 11,000 British soldiers joined 6,500 militia members drawn from every colony north of Pennsylvania.[57] At home, many heard or read sermons that portrayed the war as a struggle between civilizations with liberty-loving Britons arrayed against tyrannical Frenchmen and "savage" Indigenous people. American colonists rejoiced in their collective victory as a moment of newfound peace and prosperity. After nearly seven years of warfare, colonists looked to the newly acquired lands west of the Appalachian Mountains as their reward, despite the fact that it belonged to Indigenous Americans.

The Seven Years' War was tremendously expensive and precipitated imperial reforms on taxation, commerce, and politics that also impacted intercolonial alliances. Britain spent over £140 million, an astronomical figure for the day, and the expenses kept coming as new territory required new security obligations. Britain wanted to recoup some of its expenses and looked to the colonies to share the costs of their own security. To do this, Parliament started legislating over all the colonies in a way rarely done before. As a result, the thirteen Anglo-American colonies began seeing themselves as a collective group in addition to distinct entities. Different taxation schemes implemented across the colonies between 1763 and 1774 placed duties on items like tea, paper, molasses, and stamps for almost every kind of document. Consumption and trade, important bonds between Britain and the colonies, were being threatened. To enforce these unpopular measures, Britain implemented increasingly restrictive policies that eroded civil liberties like protection from unlawful searches and jury trials. Many colonists worried that imperial policy on slavery would soon be changed to limit or outright end its legality with the rise of an antislavery movement. The moratorium on new settlements west of the Proclamation Line after Pontiac's War was yet another disappointment for colonists who believed they were entitled to Indigenous land. This led to resentment among colonists and a shift in power dynamics for Indigenous Americans who were accustomed to negotiating trade agreements from a position of strength, playing the English and French against one another. With the removal of the French from North America, balance was lost, and the British government began asserting more authority over Native people. The British no longer offered gifts but instead lowered the trade price for furs and claimed land previously outside their control. This shift in policy left little room for diplomacy rooted in trade between the British and Indian nations. General Amherst even suggested genocide by sending smallpox-infested blankets to the Delaware people.[58]

VIII. Conclusion

By 1763, Americans were increasingly united. In the wake of the Seven Years' War, they fought and they celebrated together. But as imperial policy changed in the aftermath, Anglo-Americans slowly began to recognize that they were not considered full British subjects; instead, they were of a different commercial, political, and cultural status. Anglo-Americans across the colonies viewed imperial reforms as threats to the British liberties they saw as their birthright. The Stamp Act Congress of 1765 brought colonial leaders together in an unprecedented show of cooperation against taxes imposed by Parliament, and popular boycotts of British goods created a common narrative of sacrifice, resistance, and shared political identity. These different ingredients created a mixture that was ripe for dissent and even rebellion.

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This chapter was edited by Nora Slonimsky, with content contributions by Emily Arendt, Ethan R. Bennett, John Blanton, Alexander Burns, Mary Draper, Jamie Goodall, Jane Fiegen Green, Hendrick Isom, Brenda Lakhani, Kathryn Lasdow, Allison Madar, Brooke Palmieri, Nora Slonimsky, Katherine Smoak, Christopher Sparshott, Ben Wright, Caroline Wright, and Garrett Wright.

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6: The American Revolution



Paul Revere, “Landing of the Troops,” ca. 1770, via The American Antiquarian Society.

I. Introduction

In the 1760s, Benjamin Rush, a native of Philadelphia, recounted a visit to Parliament. Upon seeing the king’s throne in the House of Lords, Rush said he “felt as if he walked on sacred ground” with “emotions that I cannot describe.”[1] Throughout the eighteenth century, colonists had developed significant emotional ties with both the British monarchy and the British constitution. The British North American colonists had just helped to win a world war and most, like Rush, had never been more proud to be British. And yet, in a little over a decade, those same colonists would declare their independence and break away from the British Empire. Seen from 1763, nothing would have seemed as improbable as the American Revolution.

The Revolution built institutions and codified the language and ideas that still define Americans’ image of themselves to this day. Moreover, revolutionaries justified their new nation with radical new ideals that changed the course of history and sparked a global “age of revolution.” But the Revolution was as paradoxical as it was unpredictable. A revolution fought in the name of liberty allowed slavery to persist. Resistance to centralized authority tied disparate colonies ever closer together under new governments. The revolution created politicians eager to foster republican selflessness and protect the public good but also encouraged individual self-interest and personal gain. The “founding fathers” instigated and fought a revolution to secure independence from Britain, but they did not fight that revolution to create a “democracy.” To successfully rebel against Britain, however, required more than a few dozen “founding fathers.” Common colonists joined the fight, unleashing popular forces that shaped the Revolution itself, often in ways not welcomed by elite leaders. But once unleashed, these popular forces continued to shape the new nation and indeed the rest of American history.

II. The Origins of the American Revolution

The American Revolution had both long-term origins and short-term causes. The long-term origins included political, intellectual, cultural, and economic developments in the eighteenth century that set the context for the crisis of the 1760s and 1770s. Between the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the middle of the eighteenth century, Britain had largely failed to define the colonies’ relationship to the empire and institute a coherent program of imperial reform. Two factors contributed to these failures. First, Britain was at war from the War of the Spanish Succession at the start of the century through the Seven Years’ War in 1763. Constant war was politically consuming and economically expensive. Second, competing visions of empire divided British officials. “Establishment” Whigs and their Tory supporters envisioned an authoritarian empire, based on conquering territory and extracting resources. They wanted to eliminate Britain’s growing national debt by raising taxes and cutting spending on the

colonies. The “radical” (or “patriot”) Whigs based their imperial vision on trade and manufacturing instead of land and resources. They argued that economic growth, not raising taxes, would solve the national debt. Instead of an authoritarian empire, patriot Whigs supported a laissez-faire (hands-off) approach to empire that would prioritize fostering trade between the colonies and the mother country. There were occasional attempts to reform the administration of the colonies, but debate between the two sides prevented coherent reform.[2]



Figure 6.2. This 1763 map shows the territorial divides of the North American continent among colonizing European nations following the Seven Years War. A New Map of North America, 1763. Wikimedia.

Colonists, however, developed their own understanding of how they fit into the empire. They saw themselves as British subjects “entitled to all the natural, essential, inherent, and inseparable rights of our fellow subjects in Great-Britain.” The eighteenth century brought significant economic and demographic growth to the colonies. This success, they believed, resulted partly from Britain’s hands-off approach to the colonies. With their growing economic importance, colonists believed that they held a special place in the empire. In 1764, James Otis Jr. wrote, “The colonists are entitled to as ample rights, liberties, and privileges as the subjects of the mother country are, and in some respects to more.”[3]

In this same period, the colonies developed their own local political institutions. Samuel Adams, in the Boston Gazette, described the colonies as each being a “separate body politic” from Britain. Almost immediately upon each colony’s settlement, they created a colonial assembly. These assemblies assumed many of the same duties as the Commons exercised in Britain, including taxing residents, managing the spending of the colonial government’s revenue, and granting salaries to royal officials. In the early 1700s, colonial leaders lobbied the British government to define their assemblies’ legal prerogatives, but Britain was too occupied with European wars. Royal governors tasked by the Board of Trade attempted to limit the power of the assemblies, but the assemblies’ power only grew throughout the eighteenth century. Many colonists came to see their assemblies as having the same jurisdiction over them that Parliament exercised over those in England. They interpreted British inaction as justifying their tradition of local governance. The Crown and Parliament, however, disagreed.[4]

Political culture in the colonies also developed differently than that of the mother country. In both Britain and the colonies, land ownership was the key to political participation, but because land was more easily obtained in the colonies, a higher proportion of male colonists participated in politics. Colonial political culture drew inspiration from the “country” party in Britain. These ideas—generally referred to as the ideology of republicanism—stressed the corrupting nature of power and the importance of “virtue” (i.e., putting the “public good” over their own self-interest). Patriots would need to be ever vigilant against the rise of conspiracies, centralized control, and tyranny. Though only a small fringe in Britain held these ideas, in the colonies, they were widely accepted.[5]

In the 1740s, two seemingly conflicting bodies of thought—the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening—began to combine in the colonies. Both of these movements would challenge older ideas about authority in ways that would help shape the Revolution. Perhaps no single philosopher had a greater impact on colonial thinking than John Locke. In his Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke argued that the mind was originally a tabula rasa (blank slate) and that individuals were formed primarily by their environment. The aristocracy, then, were wealthy or successful because they had greater access to wealth, education, and

patronage and not because they were innately superior. Locke followed this essay with Some Thoughts Concerning Education, which introduced radical new ideas about the importance of education. Education would produce rational human beings capable of thinking for themselves and questioning authority rather than tacitly accepting tradition. These ideas slowly came to have far-reaching effects in the colonies and, later, the new nation.

While Locke's ideas spread in North America, the colonies also experienced an unprecedented wave of evangelical Protestant revivalism. Between 1739 and 1740, the Rev. George Whitefield, an enigmatic, itinerant preacher, traveled the colonies preaching Calvinist sermons to huge crowds. Unlike the rationalism of Locke, his sermons were designed to appeal to his listeners' emotions. Whitefield told his listeners that salvation could only be found by taking personal responsibility for one's own unmediated relationship with God, a process that came to be known as a "conversion" experience. He also argued that the current church hierarchies populated by "unconverted" ministers only stood as a barrier between the individual and God. In his wake, new traveling preachers picked up his message, and many congregations split as the Great Awakening caused an unprecedented challenge to church authorities. Both Locke and Whitefield had empowered individuals to question authority and to take their lives into their own hands.

In other ways, eighteenth-century colonists were becoming more culturally similar to Britons, a process often referred to as Anglicization. As colonial economies grew, they quickly became an important market for British manufacturing exports. Colonists with disposable income and access to British markets attempted to mimic British culture. By the middle of the eighteenth century, middling-class colonists could also afford items previously thought of as luxuries, like British fashions, dining wares, and more. The desire to purchase British goods meshed with the desire to enjoy British liberties.[6] These political, intellectual, cultural, and economic developments built tensions that rose to the surface when, after the Seven Years' War, Britain finally began to implement a program of imperial reform that conflicted with colonists' understanding of the empire and their place in it.

III. The Causes of the American Revolution

Most immediately, the American Revolution resulted directly from attempts to reform the British Empire after the Seven Years' War. The Seven Years' War was the culmination of nearly a half century of war between Europe's imperial powers. It was truly a world war, fought between multiple empires on multiple continents. At its conclusion, the victorious British Empire had never been larger. Britain now controlled the North American continent east of the Mississippi River, including French Canada. It had also consolidated its control over India. But the realities and responsibilities of the postwar empire were daunting. War (let alone victory) on such a scale was costly. Britain doubled the national debt to 13.5 times its annual revenue. It also faced significant new costs required to secure and defend its far-flung empire, especially the western frontiers of the North American colonies. These factors led Britain to attempt to consolidate control over its North American colonies, which, in turn, led to resistance.

King George III took the crown in 1760 and brought Tories into his government after three decades of Whig rule. His new ministers represented the authoritarian vision of empire in which colonies would be subordinate. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was Britain's first major postwar imperial action targeting North America. The king forbade settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains in an attempt to limit costly wars with Native Americans. Colonists, however, protested and demanded access to the territory for which they had fought alongside the British.

In 1764, Parliament passed two more reforms. The Sugar Act sought to combat widespread smuggling of molasses in New England by cutting the duty in half but increasing enforcement. In addition, smugglers would be tried by vice-admiralty courts and not juries. Parliament also passed the Currency Act, which restricted colonies from producing paper money. Hard money, such as gold and silver coins, was scarce in the colonies. The lack of currency impeded the colonies' increasingly sophisticated transatlantic economies, but it was especially damaging in 1764 because a postwar recession had already begun. Between the restrictions of the Proclamation of 1763, the Currency Act, and the Sugar Act's canceling of trials by jury for smugglers, some colonists began to fear a pattern of increased taxation and restricted liberties.

In March 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act. The act required that many documents be printed on paper that had been stamped to show the duty had been paid, including newspapers, pamphlets, diplomas, legal documents, and even playing cards. The Sugar Act of 1764 was an attempt to get merchants to pay an already-existing duty, but the Stamp Act created a new, direct (or "internal") tax. Parliament had never before directly taxed the colonists. Instead, colonies contributed to the empire through the payment of indirect, "external" taxes, such as customs duties. In 1765, Daniel Dulany of Maryland wrote, "A right to impose an internal tax on the colonies, without their consent for the single purpose of revenue, is denied, a right to regulate their trade without their consent is, admitted."[7] Also, unlike the Sugar Act, which primarily affected merchants, the Stamp Act directly affected numerous groups throughout colonial society, including printers, lawyers, college graduates, and even sailors who played cards. This led, in part, to broader, more popular resistance.



Figure 6.3 Men and women politicized the domestic sphere by buying and displaying items that conspicuously revealed their position for or against Parliamentary actions. This witty teapot, which celebrates the end of taxation on goods like tea itself, makes clear the owner's perspective on the egregious taxation. "Teapot, Stamp Act Repeal'd," 1786, in Peabody Essex Museum. Salem State University, http://teh.salemstate.edu/USandWorld...Teapot_jpg.htm.

Resistance to the Stamp Act took three forms, distinguished largely by class: legislative resistance by elites, economic resistance by merchants, and popular protest by common colonists. Colonial elites responded by passing resolutions in their assemblies. The most famous of the anti-Stamp Act resolutions were the Virginia Resolves, passed by the House of Burgesses on May 30, 1765, which declared that the colonists were entitled to "all the liberties, privileges, franchises, and immunities . . . possessed by the people of Great Britain." When the Virginia Resolves were printed throughout the colonies, however, they often included a few extra, far more radical resolutions not passed by the Virginia House of Burgesses, the last of which asserted that only "the general assembly of this colony have any right or power to impose or lay any taxation" and that anyone who argued differently "shall be deemed an enemy to this His Majesty's colony."[8] These additional resolves spread throughout the colonies and helped radicalize subsequent responses in other colonial assemblies. These responses led to the calling of the Stamp Act Congress in New York City in October 1765. Nine colonies sent delegates, who included Benjamin Franklin, John Dickinson, Thomas Hutchinson, Philip Livingston, and James Otis.[9]

The Stamp Act Congress issued a "Declaration of Rights and Grievances," which, like the Virginia Resolves, declared allegiance to the king and "all due subordination" to Parliament but also reasserted the idea that colonists were entitled to the same rights as Britons. Those rights included trial by jury, which had been abridged by the Sugar Act, and the right to be taxed only by their own elected representatives. As Daniel Dulany wrote in 1765, "It is an essential principle of the English constitution, that the subject shall not be taxed without his consent."[10] Benjamin Franklin called it the "prime Maxim of all free Government."[11] Because the colonies did not elect members to Parliament, they believed that they were not represented and could not be taxed by that body. In response, Parliament and the Crown argued that the colonists were "virtually represented," just like the residents of those boroughs or counties in England that did not elect members to Parliament. However, the colonists rejected the notion of virtual representation, with one pamphleteer calling it a "monstrous idea."[12]

The second type of resistance to the Stamp Act was economic. While the Stamp Act Congress deliberated, merchants in major port cities were preparing nonimportation agreements, hoping that their refusal to import British goods would lead British merchants to lobby for the repeal of the Stamp Act. In New York City, "upwards of two hundred principal merchants" agreed not to import, sell, or buy "any goods, wares, or merchandises" from Great Britain.[13] In Philadelphia, merchants gathered at "a general meeting" to agree that "they would not Import any Goods from Great-Britain until the Stamp-Act was Repealed."[14] The plan worked. By January 1766, London merchants sent a letter to Parliament arguing that they had been "reduced to the necessity of pending ruin" by the Stamp Act and the subsequent boycotts.[15]

The third, and perhaps, most crucial type of resistance was popular protest. In August 1765, riots broke out in Boston. Crowds burned the appointed stamp distributor for Massachusetts, Andrew Oliver, in effigy and pulled a building he owned "down to the Ground in five minutes."[16] Oliver resigned the position the next day. The following week, a crowd also set upon the home of his

brother-in-law, Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, who had publicly argued for submission to the stamp tax. Before the evening was over, much of Hutchinson's home and belongings had been destroyed.[17]

Popular violence and intimidation spread quickly throughout the colonies. In New York City, posted notices read:

PRO PATRIA,

The first Man that either

distributes or makes use of Stampt

Paper, let him take care of

his House, Person, & Effects.

Vox Populi;

We dare.[18]

By November 16, all of the original twelve stamp distributors had resigned, and by early 1766, groups calling themselves the Sons of Liberty were formed in most colonies to direct and organize further resistance. These tactics had the dual effect of sending a message to Parliament and discouraging colonists from accepting appointments as stamp distributors. With no one willing to distribute the stamps, the act became unenforceable.

Pressure on Parliament grew until, in February 1766, it repealed the Stamp Act. But to save face and to try to avoid this kind of problem in the future, Parliament also passed the Declaratory Act, asserting that Parliament had the "full power and authority to make laws . . . to bind the colonies and people of America . . . in all cases whatsoever."[19] However, colonists were too busy celebrating the repeal of the Stamp Act to take much notice of the Declaratory Act. In New York City, the inhabitants raised a huge lead statue of King George III in honor of the Stamp Act's repeal. It could be argued that there was no moment at which colonists felt more proud to be members of the free British Empire than 1766. But Britain still needed revenue from the colonies.

The colonies had resisted the implementation of direct taxes, but the Declaratory Act reserved Parliament's right to impose them. And, in the colonists' dispatches to Parliament and in numerous pamphlets, they had explicitly acknowledged the right of Parliament to regulate colonial trade. So, Britain's next attempt to draw revenues from the colonies was aimed at taxing trade. Passed in June 1767, the Townshend Acts created new customs duties on common items, like lead, glass, paint, and tea, instead of direct taxes. They also created and strengthened formal mechanisms to enforce compliance, including a new American Board of Customs Commissioners and more vice-admiralty courts to try smugglers. Revenues from seizures would be used to pay customs officers and other royal officials, including the governors, thereby incentivizing them to convict offenders. These acts increased the presence of the British government in the colonies and circumscribed the authority of the colonial assemblies, since paying the governor's salary had long given the assemblies significant power over them. Unsurprisingly, colonists, once again, resisted.



Figure 6.4. Violent protest by groups like the Sons of Liberty created quite a stir both in the colonies and in England itself. While extreme acts like the tarring and feathering of Boston's Commissioner of Customs in 1774 propagated more protest against symbols of Parliament's tyranny throughout the colonies, violent demonstrations were regarded as acts of terrorism by British officials. This print of the 1774 event was from the British perspective, picturing the Sons as brutal instigators with almost demonic smiles on their faces as they enacted this excruciating punishment on the Custom Commissioner. Philip Dawe (attributed), "The Bostonians Paying the Excise-man, or Tarring and Feathering," Wikimedia.

Even though these were duties, many colonial resistance authors still referred to them as "taxes," because they were designed primarily to extract revenues from the colonies, not to regulate trade. John Dickinson, in his "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania," wrote, "That we may legally be bound to pay any general duties on these commodities, relative to the regulation of trade, is granted; but we being obliged by her laws to take them from Great Britain, any special duties imposed on their exportation to us only, with intention to raise a revenue from us only, are as much taxes upon us, as those imposed by the Stamp Act."[20] Hence, many authors asked: once the colonists assented to a new tax in any form, what would stop the British from imposing ever more and greater taxes on the colonists?

New forms of resistance emerged in which elite, middling, and working-class colonists participated together. Merchants reinstituted nonimportation agreements, and common colonists agreed not to consume these same products. Lists were circulated with signatories promising not to buy any British goods. These lists were often published in newspapers, bestowing recognition on those who had signed and leading to pressure on those who had not.

Women, too, became involved to an unprecedented degree in resistance to the Townshend Acts. They circulated subscription lists and gathered signatures. The first political commentaries in newspapers written by women appeared.[21] Also, without new imports of British clothes, colonists took to wearing simple, homespun clothing. Spinning clubs were formed, in which local women would gather at one of their homes and spin cloth for homespun clothing for their families and even for the community.[22]



Figure 6.5. Mercy Otis Warren was a poet, playwright, and pamphleteer whose writings attacked royal authority in Massachusetts and encouraged colonialists to resist British infringements on colonial rights and liberties. “Mrs. James Warren (Mercy Otis),” oil painting by John Singleton Copley, circa 1763. Wikimedia.

Homespun clothing quickly became a marker of one’s virtue and patriotism, and women were an important part of this cultural shift. At the same time, British goods and luxuries previously desired now became symbols of tyranny. Nonimportation and, especially, nonconsumption agreements changed colonists’ cultural relationship with the mother country. Committees of Inspection monitored merchants and residents to make sure that no one broke the agreements. Offenders could expect to be shamed by having their names and offenses published in the newspaper and in broadsides.

Nonimportation and nonconsumption helped forge colonial unity. Colonies formed Committees of Correspondence to keep each other informed of the resistance efforts throughout the colonies. Newspapers reprinted exploits of resistance, giving colonists a sense that they were part of a broader political community. The best example of this new “continental conversation” came in the wake of the Boston Massacre. Britain sent regiments to Boston in 1768 to help enforce the new acts and quell the resistance. On the evening of March 5, 1770, a crowd gathered outside the Custom House and began hurling insults, snowballs, and perhaps more at the young sentry. When a small number of soldiers came to the sentry’s aid, the crowd grew increasingly hostile until the soldiers fired their muskets. After the smoke cleared, five Bostonians were dead, including one of the ringleaders, Crispus Attucks, a formerly enslaved mixed-race man turned free dockworker. The soldiers were tried in Boston and won acquittal, thanks, in part, to their defense attorney, John Adams. News of the Boston Massacre spread quickly through the new resistance communication networks, aided by a famous engraving initially circulated by Paul Revere, which depicted bloodthirsty British soldiers with grins on their faces firing into a peaceful crowd. The engraving was quickly circulated and reprinted throughout the colonies, generating sympathy for Boston and anger with Britain.[23]



Figure 6.6. This iconic image of the Boston Massacre by Paul Revere sparked fury in both Americans and the British by portraying the redcoats as brutal slaughterers and the onlookers as helpless victims. The events of March 5, 1770 did not actually play out as Revere pictured them, yet his intention was not simply to recount the affair. Revere created an effective propaganda piece that lent credence to those demanding that the British authoritarian rule be stopped. Paul Revere (engraver), "The bloody massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt.," 1770. Library of Congress.

Resistance again led to repeal. In March 1770, Parliament repealed all of the new duties except the one on tea, which, like the Declaratory Act, was left, in part, to save face and assert that Parliament still retained the right to tax the colonies. The character of colonial resistance had changed between 1765 and 1770. During the Stamp Act resistance, elites wrote resolves and held congresses while violent, popular mobs burned effigies and tore down houses, with minimal coordination between colonies. But methods of resistance against the Townshend Acts became more inclusive and more coordinated. Colonists previously excluded from meaningful political participation now gathered signatures, and colonists of all ranks participated in the resistance by not buying British goods and monitoring and enforcing the boycotts.

Britain's failed attempts at imperial reform in the 1760s created an increasingly vigilant and resistant colonial population and, most importantly, an enlarged political sphere—both on the colonial and continental levels—far beyond anything anyone could have imagined a few years earlier. A new sense of shared grievances began to join the colonists in a shared American political identity.

IV. Independence

Tensions between the colonies and England eased for a time after the Boston Massacre. The colonial economy improved as the postwar recession receded. The Sons of Liberty in some colonies sought to continue nonimportation even after the repeal of the Townshend Acts. But in New York, a door-to-door poll of the population revealed that the majority wanted to end nonimportation.[24] Yet Britain's desire and need to reform imperial administration remained.

In April 1773, Parliament passed two acts to aid the failing East India Company, which had fallen behind in the annual payments it owed Britain. But the company was not only drowning in debt; it was also drowning in tea, with almost fifteen million pounds of it stored in warehouses from India to England. In 1773, Parliament passed the Regulating Act, which effectively put the troubled company under government control. It then passed the Tea Act, which would allow the company to sell its tea in the colonies directly and without the company having to pay the usual export tax in London. Even though this would greatly lower the cost of tea for colonists, they resisted.

Merchants resisted the Tea Act because they resented the East India Company's monopoly. But like the Sugar Act, the Tea Act affected only a small, specific group of people. The widespread support for resisting the Tea Act had more to do with principles. By buying tea, even though it was cheaper, colonists would be paying the duty and thereby implicitly acknowledging Parliament's right to tax them. According to the Pennsylvania Chronicle, Prime Minister Lord North was a "great schemer" who sought "to out wit us, and to effectually establish that Act, which will forever after be pleaded as a precedent for every imposition the Parliament of Great-Britain shall think proper to saddle us with."[25]

The Tea Act stipulated that the duty had to be paid when the ship unloaded. Newspaper essays and letters throughout the summer of 1773 in the major port cities debated what to do upon the ships' arrival. In November, the Boston Sons of Liberty, led by Samuel Adams and John Hancock, resolved to "prevent the landing and sale of the [tea], and the payment of any duty thereon" and to do so "at the risk of their lives and property."[26] The meeting appointed men to guard the wharfs and make sure the tea remained on the ships until they returned to London. This worked and the tea did not reach the shore, but by December 16, the ships were still there. Hence, another town meeting was held at the Old South Meeting House, at the end of which dozens of men disguised as Mohawks made their way to the wharf. The Boston Gazette reported what happened next:

But, behold what followed! A number of brave & resolute men, determined to do all in their power to save their country from the ruin which their enemies had plotted, in less than four hours, emptied every chest of tea on board the three ships . . . amounting to 342 chests, into the sea ! ! without the least damage done to the ships or any other property.[27]



Figure 6.7. Following a public reading of the Declaration of Independence, a mob pulls down a gilded lead equestrian statue of George III at Bowling Green, New York City, 9 July 1776. "Pulling Down the Statue of George III", oil painting by William Walcutt, circa 1854. Wikimedia.

As word spread throughout the colonies, patriots were emboldened to do the same to the tea sitting in their harbors. Tea was either dumped or seized in Charleston, Philadelphia, and New York, with numerous other smaller "tea parties" taking place throughout 1774.

Popular protest spread across the continent and down through all levels of colonial society. Fifty-one women in Edenton, North Carolina, for example, signed an agreement—published in numerous newspapers—in which they promised "to do every Thing as far as lies in our Power" to support the boycotts.[28] The ladies of Edenton were not alone in their desire to support the war effort by what means they could. Women across the thirteen colonies could most readily express their political sentiments as consumers and producers. Because women often made decisions regarding household purchases, their participation in consumer boycotts held particular weight.[29] Some women also took to the streets as part of more unruly mob actions, participating in grain riots, raids on the offices of royal officials, and demonstrations against the impressment of men into naval service. The agitation of so many helped elicit responses from both Britain and the colonial elites.

Britain's response was swift. The following spring, Parliament passed four acts known collectively, by the British, as the Coercive Acts. Colonists, however, referred to them as the Intolerable Acts. First, the Boston Port Act shut down the harbor and cut off all trade to and from the city. The Massachusetts Government Act put the colonial government entirely under British control, dissolving the assembly and restricting town meetings. The Administration of Justice Act allowed any royal official accused of a crime to be tried in Britain rather than by Massachusetts courts and juries. Finally, the Quartering Act, passed for all colonies, allowed the British army to quarter newly arrived soldiers in colonists' homes. Boston had been deemed in open rebellion, and the king, his advisors, and Parliament acted decisively to end the rebellion.

The Crown, however, did not anticipate the other colonies coming to the aid of Massachusetts. Colonists collected food to send to Boston. Virginia's House of Burgesses called for a day of prayer and fasting to show their support. Rather than isolating Massachusetts, the Coercive Acts fostered the sense of shared identity created over the previous decade. After all, if the Crown

and Parliament could dissolve Massachusetts's government, nothing could stop them from doing the same to any of her sister colonies. In Massachusetts, patriots created the Provincial Congress, and, throughout 1774, they seized control of local and county governments and courts.[30] In New York, citizens elected committees to direct the colonies' response to the Coercive Acts, including a Mechanics' Committee of middling colonists. By early 1774, Committees of Correspondence and/or extralegal assemblies were established in all of the colonies except Georgia. And throughout the year, they followed Massachusetts's example by seizing the powers of the royal governments.

Committees of Correspondence agreed to send delegates to a Continental Congress to coordinate an intercolonial response. The First Continental Congress convened on September 5, 1774. Over the next six weeks, elite delegates from every colony but Georgia issued a number of documents, including a "Declaration of Rights and Grievances." This document repeated the arguments that colonists had been making since 1765: colonists retained all the rights of native Britons, including the right to be taxed only by their own elected representatives as well as the right to a trial by jury.



Figure 6.8. This 1819 painting by John Trumbull depicts the drafters of the Declaration of Independence presenting the document to the Continental Congress. John Trumbull, Declaration of Independence, 1818. Yale University Art Gallery.

Most importantly, the Congress issued a document known as the "Continental Association." The Association declared that "the present unhappy situation of our affairs is occasioned by a ruinous system of colony administration adopted by the British Ministry about the year 1763, evidently calculated for enslaving these Colonies, and, with them, the British Empire." The Association recommended "that a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town . . . whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching this association." These Committees of Inspection would consist largely of common colonists. They were effectively deputized to police their communities and instructed to publish the names of anyone who opposed the Association so they "may be publicly known, and universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty." The delegates also agreed to a continental nonimportation, nonconsumption, and nonexportation agreement and to "wholly discontinue the slave trade." In all, the Continental Association was perhaps the most radical document of the period. It sought to unite and direct twelve revolutionary governments, establish economic and moral policies, and empower common colonists by giving them an important and unprecedented degree of on-the-ground political power.[31]

But not all colonists were patriots. Indeed, many remained faithful to the king and Parliament, while a good number took a neutral stance. As the situation intensified throughout 1774 and early 1775, factions emerged within the resistance movements in many colonies. Elite merchants who traded primarily with Britain, Anglican clergy, and colonists holding royal offices depended on and received privileges directly from their relationship with Britain. Initially, they sought to exert a moderating influence on the resistance committees, but, following the Association, a number of these colonists began to worry that the resistance was too radical and aimed at independence. They, like most colonists in this period, still expected a peaceful conciliation with Britain and grew increasingly suspicious of the resistance movement.

However, by the time the Continental Congress met again in May 1775, war had already broken out in Massachusetts. On April 19, 1775, British regiments set out to seize local militias' arms and gunpowder stores in Lexington and Concord. The town militia met them at the Lexington Green. The British ordered the militia to disperse when someone fired, setting off a volley

from the British. The battle continued all the way to the next town, Concord. News of the events at Lexington spread rapidly throughout the countryside. Militia members, known as minutemen, responded quickly and inflicted significant casualties on the British regiments as they chased them back to Boston. Approximately twenty thousand colonial militiamen laid siege to Boston, effectively trapping the British. In June, the militia set up fortifications on Breed's Hill overlooking the city. In the misnamed "Battle of Bunker Hill," the British attempted to dislodge them from the position with a frontal assault, and, despite eventually taking the hill, they suffered severe casualties at the hands of the colonists.



"The Battle of Lexington," Published by John H. Daniels & Son, c1903. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-pga-00995.

While men in Boston fought and died, the Continental Congress struggled to organize a response. The radical Massachusetts delegates—including John Adams, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock—implored the Congress to support the Massachusetts militia, who were laying siege to Boston without supplies. Meanwhile, many delegates from the Middle Colonies—including New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia—took a more moderate position, calling for renewed attempts at reconciliation. In the South, the Virginia delegation contained radicals such as Richard Henry Lee and Thomas Jefferson, while South Carolina's delegation included moderates like John and Edward Rutledge. The moderates worried that supporting the Massachusetts militia would be akin to declaring war.

The Congress struck a compromise, agreeing to adopt the Massachusetts militia and form a Continental Army, naming Virginia delegate George Washington commander in chief. They also issued a "Declaration of the Causes of Necessity of Taking Up Arms" to justify the decision. At the same time, the moderates drafted an "Olive Branch Petition," which assured the king that the colonists "most ardently desire[d] the former Harmony between [the mother country] and these Colonies." Many understood that the opportunities for reconciliation were running out. After Congress had approved the document, Benjamin Franklin wrote to a friend saying, "The Congress will send one more Petition to the King which I suppose will be treated as the former was, and therefore will probably be the last."[32] Congress was in the strange position of attempting reconciliation while publicly raising an army.

The petition arrived in England on August 13, 1775, but before it was delivered, the king issued his own "Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition." He believed his subjects in North America were being "misled by dangerous and ill-designing men," who were "traitorously preparing, ordering, and levying war against us." In an October speech to Parliament, he dismissed the colonists' petition. The king had no doubt that the resistance was "manifestly carried on for the purpose of establishing an independent empire."[33] By the start of 1776, talk of independence was growing while the prospect of reconciliation dimmed.

In the opening months of 1776, independence, for the first time, became part of the popular debate. Town meetings approved resolutions in support of independence. Yet, with moderates still hanging on, it would take another seven months before the Continental Congress officially passed the independence resolution. A small forty-six-page pamphlet published in Philadelphia and written by a recent immigrant from England captured the American conversation. Thomas Paine's Common Sense argued for independence by denouncing monarchy and challenging the logic behind the British Empire, saying, "There is something absurd, in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island."[34] His combination of easy language, biblical references, and

fiery rhetoric proved potent, and the pamphlet was quickly published and dispersed. Arguments over political philosophy and rumors of battlefield developments filled taverns throughout the colonies.

George Washington had taken control of the army and, after laying siege to Boston, forced the British to retreat to Halifax, Nova Scotia. In Virginia, the royal governor, Lord Dunmore, issued a proclamation declaring martial law and offering freedom to "all indentured servants, Negros, and others" if they would leave their enslavers and join the British. Though only about five hundred to a thousand enslaved people joined Lord Dunmore's "Ethiopian regiment," thousands more flocked to the British later in the war, risking capture and punishment for a chance at freedom. Formerly enslaved people occasionally fought, but primarily served in companies called Black Pioneers as laborers, skilled workers, and spies. British motives for offering freedom were practical rather than humanitarian, but the proclamation was the first mass emancipation of enslaved people in American history. Enslaved people could now choose to run and risk their lives for possible freedom with the British Army or hope that the United States would live up to its ideals of liberty.[35]

Dunmore's proclamation unnerved white southerners already suspicious of rising antislavery sentiments in the mother country. Four years earlier, English courts dealt a serious blow to slavery in the empire. In Somerset v Stewart, James Somerset sued for his freedom, and the court not only granted it but also undercut the very legality of slavery on the British mainland. Somerset and now Dunmore began to convince some enslavers that a new independent nation might offer a surer protection for slavery. Indeed, the proclamation laid the groundwork for the very unrest that loyal Southerners had hoped to avoid. Consequently, enslavers often used violence to prevent their enslaved laborers from joining the British or rising against them. Virginia enacted regulations to prevent freedom-seeking, threatening to ship rebellious enslaved people to the West Indies or execute them. Many enslavers transported their enslaved people inland, away from the coastal temptation to join the British armies, sometimes separating families in the process.

On May 10, 1776, nearly two months before the Declaration of Independence, the Congress voted on a resolution calling on all colonies that had not already established revolutionary governments to do so and to wrest control from royal officials.[36] The Congress also recommended that the colonies should begin preparing new written constitutions. In many ways, this was the Congress's first declaration of independence. A few weeks later, on June 7, Richard Henry Lee offered the following resolution:

Resolved, 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 connexion between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.[37]

Delegates went scurrying back to their assemblies for new instructions and nearly a month later, on July 2, the resolution finally came to a vote. It passed 12–0, with New York, under imminent threat of British invasion, abstaining.

The passage of Lee's resolution was the official legal declaration of independence, but, between the proposal and vote, a committee had been named to draft a public declaration in case the resolution passed. Virginian Thomas Jefferson drafted the document, with edits being made by his fellow committee members John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, and then again by the Congress as a whole. The famous preamble went beyond the arguments about the rights of British subjects under the British Constitution, instead referring to "natural law":

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.[38]

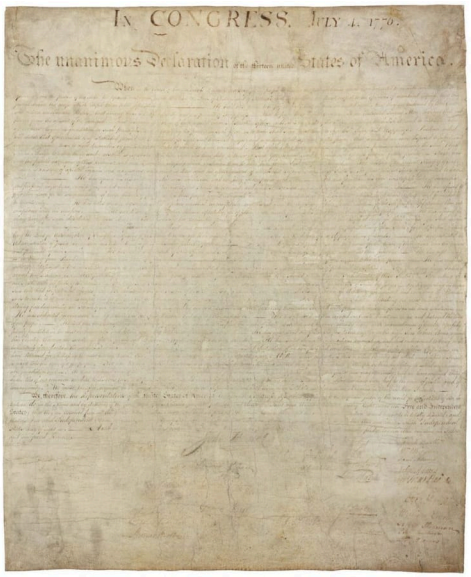


Figure 6.10. The Declaration of Independence. National Archives and Records Administration.

The majority of the document outlined a list of specific grievances that the colonists had with British attempts to reform imperial administration during the 1760s and 1770s. An early draft blamed the British for the transatlantic slave trade and even for discouraging attempts by the colonists to promote abolition. Delegates from South Carolina and Georgia as well as those from Northern states who profited from the trade all opposed this language, and it was removed.[39]

Neither the grievances nor the rhetoric of the preamble were new. Instead, they were the culmination of both a decade of popular resistance to imperial reform and decades more of long-term developments that saw both sides develop incompatible understandings of the British Empire and the colonies' place within it. The Congress approved the document on July 4, 1776. However, it was one thing to declare independence; it was quite another to win it on the battlefield.

V. The War for Independence

The war began at Lexington and Concord, more than a year before Congress declared independence. In 1775, the British believed that the mere threat of war and a few minor incursions to seize supplies would be enough to cow the colonial rebellion. Those minor incursions, however, turned into a full-out military conflict. Despite an early American victory at Boston, the new states faced the daunting task of taking on the world's largest military.

In the summer of 1776, the British forces that had abandoned Boston arrived at New York. The largest expeditionary force in British history, including tens of thousands of German mercenaries known as Hessians, followed soon after. New York was the perfect location to launch expeditions aimed at seizing control of the Hudson River and isolating New England from the rest of the continent. Also, New York contained many loyalists, particularly among its merchant and Anglican communities. In October, the British finally launched an attack on Brooklyn and Manhattan. The Continental Army took severe losses before retreating through New Jersey.[40] With the onset of winter, Washington needed something to lift morale and encourage reenlistment. Therefore, he launched a successful surprise attack on the Hessian camp at Trenton on Christmas Day by ferrying the few thousand men he had left across the Delaware River under the cover of night. The victory won the Continental Army much-needed supplies and a morale boost following the disaster at New York.[41]



Figure 6.11. This 1775 etching depicts George Washington taking command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts. Washington Taking Command of the American Army – At Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 3rd, 1775. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

An even greater success followed in upstate New York. In 1777, British General John Burgoyne led an army from Canada to secure the Hudson River. In upstate New York, he was to meet up with a detachment of General William Howe's forces marching north from Manhattan. However, Howe abandoned the plan without telling Burgoyne and instead sailed to Philadelphia to capture the new nation's capital. The Continental Army defeated Burgoyne's men at Saratoga, New York.[42] This victory proved a major turning point in the war. Benjamin Franklin had been in Paris trying to secure a treaty of alliance with the French. However, the French were reluctant to back what seemed like an unlikely cause. News of the victory at Saratoga convinced the French that the cause might not have been as unlikely as they had thought. A Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed on February 6, 1778. The treaty effectively turned a colonial rebellion into a global war as fighting between the British and French soon broke out in Europe and India.[43]

Howe had taken Philadelphia in 1777 but returned to New York once winter ended. He slowly realized that European military tactics would not work in North America. In Europe, armies fought head-on battles in attempts to seize major cities. However, in 1777, the British had held Philadelphia and New York and yet still weakened their position. Meanwhile, Washington realized after New York that the largely untrained Continental Army could not win head-on battles with the professional British Army. So, he developed his own logic of warfare that involved smaller, more frequent skirmishes and avoided major engagements that would risk his entire army. As long as he kept the army intact, the war would continue, no matter how many cities the British captured.

In 1778, the British shifted their attentions to the South, where they believed they enjoyed more popular support. Campaigns from Virginia to South Carolina and Georgia captured major cities, but the British simply did not have the manpower to retain military control. And upon their departures, severe fighting ensued between local patriots and loyalists, often pitting family members against one another. The war in the South was truly a civil war.[44]



Figure 6.12. In this 1782 cartoon, the British lion faces a spaniel (Spain), a rooster (France), a rattlesnake (America), and a pug dog (Netherlands). Though the caption predicts Britain's success, it illustrates that Britain faced challenges—and therefore drains on their military and treasury—from more than just the American rebels. J. Barrow, The British Lion Engaging Four Powers, 1782. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

By 1781, the British were also fighting France, Spain, and Holland. The British public's support for the costly war in North America was quickly waning. The Americans took advantage of the British southern strategy with significant aid from the French Army and Navy. In October, Washington marched his troops from New York to Virginia in an effort to trap the British southern army under the command of General Charles Cornwallis. Cornwallis had dug his men in at Yorktown awaiting supplies and reinforcements from New York. However, the Continental and French armies arrived first, quickly followed by a French Navy contingent, encircling Cornwallis's forces and, after laying siege to the city, forcing his surrender. The capture of another army left the British without a new strategy and without public support to continue the war. Peace negotiations took place in France, and the war came to an official end on September 3, 1783.[45]



Figure 6.13. Lord Cornwallis's surrender signaled the victory of the American revolutionaries over what they considered to be the despotic rule of Britain. This moment would live on in American memory as a pivotal one in the nation's origin story, prompting the United States government to commission artist John Trumbull to create this painting of the event in 1817. John Trumbull, Surrender of Lord Cornwallis, 1820. Wikimedia.

Americans celebrated their victory, but it came at great cost. Soldiers suffered through brutal winters with inadequate resources. During the single winter at Valley Forge in 1777–1778, over 2,500 Americans died from disease and exposure. Life was not easy on the home front either. Women on both sides of the conflict were frequently left alone to care for their households. In addition to

their existing duties, women took on roles usually assigned to men on farms and in shops and taverns. Abigail Adams addressed the difficulties she encountered while “minding family affairs” on their farm in Braintree, Massachusetts. Abigail managed the planting and harvesting of crops, in the midst of severe labor shortages and inflation, while dealing with several tenants on the Adams property, raising her children, and making clothing and other household goods. In order to support the family economically during John’s frequent absences and the uncertainties of war, Abigail also invested in several speculative schemes and sold imported goods.[46]

While Abigail remained safely out of the fray, other women were not so fortunate. The Revolution was not only fought on distant battlefields but also on women’s very doorsteps, in the fields next to their homes. There was no way for women to avoid the conflict or the disruptions and devastations it caused. As the leader of the state militia during the Revolution, Mary Silliman’s husband, Gold, was absent from their home for much of the conflict. On the morning of July 7, 1779, when a British fleet attacked nearby Fairfield, Connecticut, it was Mary who calmly evacuated her household, including her children and servants, to North Stratford. When Gold was captured by loyalists and held prisoner, Mary, six months’ pregnant with their second child, wrote letters to try to secure his release. When such appeals were ineffectual, Mary spearheaded an effort, along with Connecticut Governor John Trumbull, to capture a prominent Tory leader to exchange for her husband’s freedom.[47]

Black Americans, enslaved and free, also impacted (and were impacted by) the Revolution. The British were the first to recruit Black (or “Ethiopian”) regiments, as early as Dunmore’s Proclamation of 1775 in Virginia, which promised freedom to any enslaved person who would escape their enslavers and join the British cause. At first, Washington, an enslaver himself, resisted allowing Black men to join the Continental Army, but he eventually relented. In 1775, Peter Salem’s enslaver freed him to fight with the militia. Salem faced British Regulars in the battles at Lexington and Bunker Hill, where he fought valiantly with around three dozen other Black Americans. Salem not only contributed to the cause; he also earned the ability to determine his own life after his enlistment ended. Salem was not alone, but many more enslaved people seized on the tumult of war to run away and secure their own freedom directly. Historians estimate that between thirty thousand and one hundred thousand formerly enslaved people deserted their enslavers during the war.[48]



Figure 6.14. American soldiers came from a variety of backgrounds and had numerous reasons for fighting with the American army. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger, a French sublieutenant at the Battle of Yorktown, painted this watercolor soon after that battle and chose to depict four men in men military dress: an African American soldier from the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, a man in the homespun of the militia, another wearing the common “hunting shirt” of the frontier, and the French soldier on the end. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger, “American soldiers at the siege of Yorktown,” 1781. Wikimedia.

Men and women together struggled through years of war and hardship. For patriots (and those who remained neutral), victory brought new political, social, and economic opportunities, but it also brought new uncertainties. The war decimated entire communities, particularly in the South. Thousands of women throughout the nation had been widowed. The American economy, weighed down by war debt and depreciated currencies, would have to be rebuilt following the war. State constitutions had created governments, but now men would have to figure out how to govern. The opportunities created by the Revolution had come at great cost, in both lives and fortune, and it was left to the survivors to seize those opportunities and help forge and define the new nation-state.

VI. The Consequences of the American Revolution

Like the earlier distinction between “origins” and “causes,” the Revolution also had short- and long-term consequences. Perhaps the most important immediate consequence of declaring independence was the creation of state constitutions in 1776 and 1777. The Revolution also unleashed powerful political, social, and economic forces that would transform the new nation’s politics and society, including increased participation in politics and governance, the legal institutionalization of religious toleration, and the growth and diffusion of the population, particularly westward. The Revolution affected Native Americans by opening up western settlement and creating governments hostile to their territorial claims. Even more broadly, the Revolution ended the mercantilist economy, opening new opportunities in trade and manufacturing.

The new states drafted written constitutions, which, at the time, was an important innovation from the traditionally unwritten British Constitution. These new state constitutions were based on the idea of “popular sovereignty,” that is, that the power and authority of the government derived from the people.[49] Most created weak governors and strong legislatures with more regular elections and moderately increased the size of the electorate. A number of states followed the example of Virginia and included a declaration or “bill” of rights in their constitution designed to protect the rights of individuals and circumscribe the prerogative of the government. Pennsylvania’s first state constitution was the most radical and democratic. They created a unicameral legislature and an executive council, but no genuine executive. All free men could vote, including those who did not own property. Massachusetts’s constitution, passed in 1780, was less democratic in structure but underwent a more popular process of ratification. In the fall of 1779, each town sent delegates—312 in all—to a constitutional convention in Cambridge. Town meetings debated the constitution draft and offered suggestions. Anticipating the later federal constitution, Massachusetts established a three-branch government based on checks and balances between the branches. Independence came in 1776, and so did an unprecedented period of constitution making and state building.

The Continental Congress ratified the Articles of Confederation in 1781. The articles allowed each state one vote in the Continental Congress. But the articles are perhaps most notable for what they did not allow. Congress was given no power to levy or collect taxes, regulate foreign or interstate commerce, or establish a federal judiciary. These shortcomings rendered the postwar Congress weak and largely ineffectual.



Figure 6.15. Another John Trumbull piece commissioned for the Capitol in 1817, this painting depicts what would be remembered as the moment the new United States became a republic. On December 23, 1783, George Washington, widely considered the hero of the Revolution, resigned his position as the most powerful man in the former thirteen colonies. Giving up his role as Commander-in-Chief of the Army ensured that civilian rule would define the new nation and that a republic would be set in place rather than a dictatorship. John Trumbull, General George Washington Resigning His Commission, c. 1817-1824. From the Architect of the Capitol.

Political and social life changed drastically after independence. Political participation grew as more people gained the right to vote, leading to greater importance being placed on representation within government.[50] In addition, more common citizens (or “new men”) played increasingly important roles in local and state governance. Hierarchy within the states underwent significant changes. Society became less deferential and more egalitarian, less aristocratic and more meritocratic.

The Revolution's most important long-term economic consequence was the end of mercantilism. The British Empire had imposed various restrictions on the colonial economies including limiting trade, settlement, and manufacturing. The Revolution opened new markets and new trade relationships. The Americans' victory also opened the western territories for invasion and settlement, which created new domestic markets. Americans began to create their own manufactures, no longer content to rely on those in Britain.

Despite these important changes, the American Revolution had its limits. Following their unprecedented expansion into political affairs during the imperial resistance, women also served the patriot cause during the war. However, the Revolution did not result in civic equality for women. Instead, during the immediate postwar period, women became incorporated into the polity to some degree as "republican mothers." Republican societies required virtuous citizens, and it became mothers' responsibility to raise and educate future citizens. This opened opportunities for women regarding education, but they still remained largely on the peripheries of the new American polity.[51]

Approximately sixty thousand loyalists ended up leaving America because of the Revolution. Loyalists came from all ranks of American society, and many lived the rest of their lives in exile from their homeland. A clause in the Treaty of Paris was supposed to protect their property and require the Americans to compensate Loyalists who had lost property during the war because of their allegiance. The Americans, however, reneged on this promise and, throughout the 1780s, states continued seizing property held by Loyalists. Some colonists went to England, where they were strangers and outsiders in what they had thought of as their mother country. Many more, however, settled on the peripheries of the British Empire throughout the world, especially Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec. The Loyalists had come out on the losing side of a Revolution, and many lost everything they had and were forced to create new lives far from the land of their birth.[52]



Figure 6.16. In the thirteen colonies, boycotting women were seen as patriots. In British prints such as this, they were mocked as immoral harlots sticking their noses in the business of men. Philip Dawe, A Society of Patriotic Ladies at Edenton in North Carolina, March 1775. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In 1783, thousands of formerly enslaved Loyalists fled with the British Army. They hoped that the British government would uphold the promise of freedom and help them establish new homes elsewhere in the empire. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, demanded that British troops leave formerly enslaved people behind, but the British military commanders upheld earlier promises and evacuated thousands of freedpeople, transporting them to Canada, the Caribbean, or Great Britain. They would eventually play a role in settling Nova Scotia, and through the subsequent efforts of David George, a Black Loyalist and Baptist preacher, some settled in Sierra Leone in Africa. Black Loyalists, however, continued to face social and economic marginalization, including restrictions on land ownership within the British Empire.[53]

The fight for liberty led some Americans to manumit their enslaved laborers, and most of the new Northern states soon passed gradual emancipation laws. Some manumissions also occurred in the Upper South, but in the Lower South, some enslavers revoked their offers of freedom for service, and other freedpeople were forced back into bondage. The Revolution's rhetoric of equality created a "revolutionary generation" of enslaved people and free Black Americans that would eventually encourage the antislavery movement. Slave revolts began to incorporate claims for freedom based on revolutionary ideals. In the long term, the

Revolution failed to reconcile slavery with these new egalitarian republican societies, a tension that eventually boiled over in the 1830s and 1840s and effectively tore the nation in two in the 1850s and 1860s.[54]

Native Americans, too, participated in and were affected by the Revolution. Many Native American groups, such as the Shawnee, Creek, Cherokee, and Iroquois, had sided with the British. They had hoped for a British victory that would continue to restrain the land-hungry colonial settlers from moving west beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Unfortunately, the Americans' victory and Native Americans' support for the British created a pretense for justifying rapid and often brutal expansion into the western territories. Native American peoples would continue to be displaced and pushed farther west throughout the nineteenth century. Ultimately, American independence marked the beginning of the end of what had remained of Native American independence.[55]



Figure 6.17. Joseph Brandt as painted by George Romney. Brandt was a Mohawk leader who led Mohawk and British forces in western New York. Wikimedia.

VII. Conclusion

The American Revolution freed colonists from British rule and offered the first blow in what historians have called "the age of democratic revolutions." The American Revolution was a global event.[56] Revolutions followed in France, then Haiti, and then South America. The American Revolution meanwhile wrought significant changes to the British Empire. Many British historians even use the Revolution as a dividing point between a "first British Empire" and a "second British Empire." At home, however, the Revolution created a new nation-state, the United States of America. By September 1783, independence had been won. What the new nation would look like, however, was still very much up for grabs. In the 1780s, Americans would shape and then reshape that nation-state, first with the Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781, and then with the Constitution in 1787 and 1788.

Historians have long argued over the causes and character of the American Revolution. Was the Revolution caused by British imperial policy or by internal tensions within the colonies? Were colonists primarily motivated by constitutional principles, ideals of equality, or economic self-interest? Was the Revolution radical or conservative? But such questions are hardly limited to historians. From Abraham Lincoln's use of the Declaration of Independence in the Gettysburg Address to twenty-first-century Tea Party members wearing knee breeches, the Revolution has remained at the center of American political culture. Indeed, how one understands the Revolution often dictates how one defines what it means to be American.[57]

The Revolution was not won by a few founding fathers. Men and women of all ranks contributed to the colonies' most improbable victory, from the commoners who protested the Stamp Act to the women who helped organize boycotts against the Townshend duties; from the men, Black and white, who fought in the army to the women who contributed to its support. The Revolution, however, did not aim to end all social and civic inequalities in the new nation, and, in the case of Native Americans, it created new inequalities. But over time, the Revolution's rhetoric of equality, as encapsulated in the Declaration of Independence, helped highlight some of those inequalities and became a shared aspiration for future social and political movements, including, among others, the abolitionist and women's rights movements of the nineteenth century, the suffragist and civil rights movements of the twentieth century, and the gay rights movement of the twenty-first century.

VIII. Primary Sources

1. George R. T. Hewes, A retrospect of the Boston Tea-party, 1834

George R.T. Hewes wrote the following reminiscence of the Boston Tea Party almost 61 years after it occurred. It is likely that his memories included more than a few stories he picked up well after 1773. Nonetheless Hews provides a highly detailed account of this important event.

2. Thomas Paine calls for American independence, 1776

Britons had long understood themselves as the freest people on earth, blessed with a limited monarchy and an enlightened parliament. Paine's pamphlet offered a very different portrayal of the British government. His criticisms swept across the North American continent and generated widespread support for American independence.

3. Declaration of Independence, 1776

It is hard to overstate the significance of the Declaration of Independence. Designed as a measured justification for the severing of ties with Britain, the document has also functioned as a transformative piece of political philosophy. Most of the conflicts of American history from this point forward emerged from attempts to understand and implement what it means to believe "all men are created equal."

4. Women in South Carolina experience occupation, 1780

The British faced the difficult task of fighting a war without pushing more colonists into the hands of the revolutionaries. As a result, the Revolutionary War included little direct attacks on civilians, but that does not mean that civilians did not suffer. The following account from Eliza Wilkinson describes the stress faced by non-combatants who had to face the British army.

5. Oneida declaration of neutrality, 1775

The Oneida nation, one of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), issued a formal declaration of neutrality on June 19, 1775 to the governor of Connecticut after the imperial crisis between Great Britain and their North American colonies erupted into violence. This declaration hints at the Oneida conceptions of their own sovereignty among the Six Nations confederacy, the independence of other Native American nations, and how the Oneida understand the conflict as a war "between two brothers." Samuel Kirkland, a missionary living in Iroquois country, interpreted and transcribed the Oneida's words and sent them to Governor Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut.

6. Boston King recalls fighting for the British and securing his freedom, 1798

Boston King was born into slavery in South Carolina in 1760. He escaped to the British Army during their invasion of South Carolina in 1780. He served as a Loyalist in the British Army, and participated in several important battles. Although captured, and once again enslaved by the Americans, King was able to escape to the British again, who secured his freedom by sending him and other Black Loyalists to Canada. Many Black colonists sought freedom by joining with the British, with estimates as high as 5,000. King later became a missionary and one of the first Black Canadian settlers of Sierra Leone in West Africa.

7. Abigail and John Adams converse on women's rights, 1776

The American Revolution invited a reconsideration of all social inequalities. Abigail Adams, in this letter to her husband John Adams, asked her husband to "remember the ladies" in any new laws he may create. In his reply, John Adams treated this sentiment as a joke, demonstrating the limits of revolutionary liberty.

8. American Revolution cartoon, 1782

Political cartoons provide insight into public opinion and the decisions made by politicians. These cartoons became an important medium for voicing criticism and dissent during the American Revolution. In this 1782 cartoon, the British lion faces a spaniel (Spain), a rooster (France), a rattlesnake (America), and a pug dog (Netherlands). Though the caption predicts Britain's success, it illustrates that Britain faced challenges –and therefore drains on their military and treasury—from more than just the American rebels.

9. Drawings of the uniforms of the American Revolution, 1781

American soldiers came from a variety of backgrounds and had numerous reasons for fighting with the American army. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger, a French sublieutenant at the Battle of Yorktown, painted this watercolor soon after that battle and chose to depict four men in men military dress: an African American soldier from the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, a man in the homespun of the militia, another wearing the common "hunting shirt" of the frontier, and the French soldier on the end.

IX. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Michael Hattem, with content contributions by James Ambuske, Alexander Burns, Joshua Beatty, Christina Carrick, Christopher Consolino, Michael Hattem, Timothy C. Hemmis, Brenda Lakhani, Joseph Moore, Emily Romeo, John Saillant, Christopher Sparshott, Ben Wright, and Caroline Wright.

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7: A New Nation

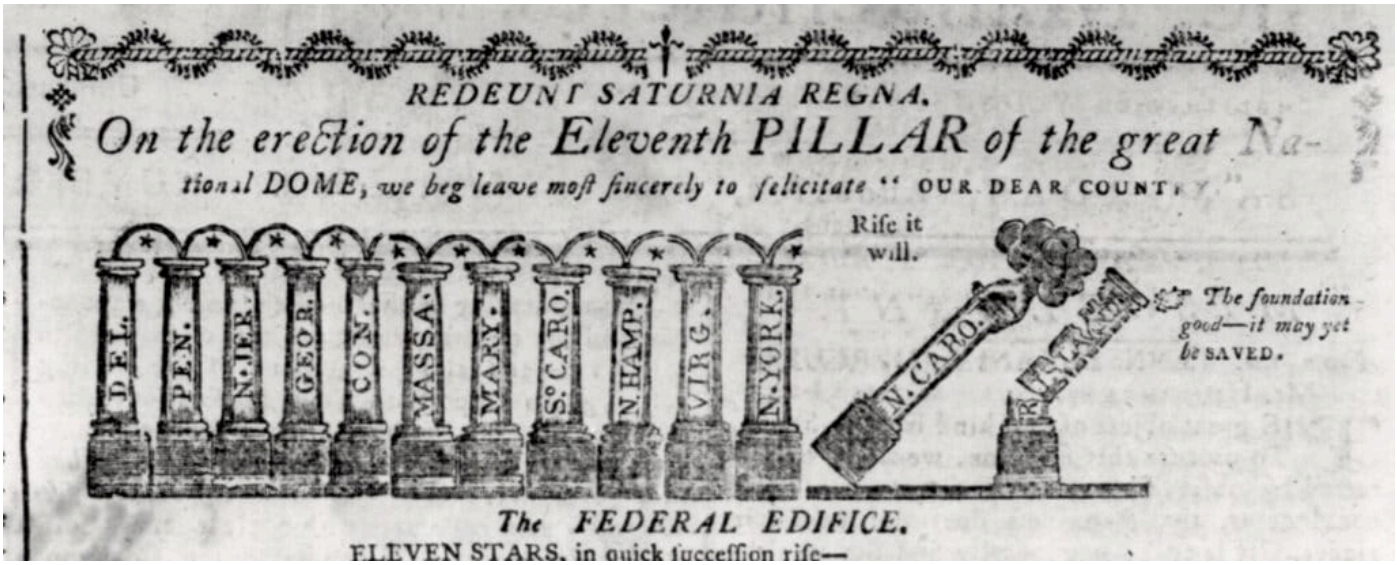


Figure 7.1. "The Federal Pillars," from The Massachusetts Centinel, August 2, 1789. Library of Congress.

I. Introduction

On July 4, 1788, Philadelphians turned out for a "grand federal procession" in honor of the new national constitution. Workers in various trades and professions demonstrated their crafts. Blacksmiths carted around a working forge, on which they symbolically beat swords into farm tools. Potters proudly carried a sign paraphrasing from the Bible, "The potter hath power over his clay," linking God's power with an artisan's work and a citizen's control over the country. Christian clergymen meanwhile marched arm-in-arm with Jewish leaders. The grand procession represented what many Americans hoped the United States would become: a diverse but cohesive, prosperous nation.[1]

Over the next few years, Americans would celebrate more of these patriotic holidays. In April 1789, for example, thousands gathered in New York to see George Washington take the presidential oath of office. That November, Washington called his fellow citizens to celebrate with a day of thanksgiving, particularly for "the peaceable and rational manner" in which the government had been established.[2]

But the new nation was never as cohesive as its champions had hoped. Although the officials of the new federal government—and the people who supported it—placed great emphasis on unity and cooperation, the country was often anything but unified. The Constitution itself had been a controversial document adopted to strengthen the government so that it could withstand internal conflicts. Whatever the later celebrations, the new nation had looked to the future with uncertainty. Less than two years before the national celebrations of 1788 and 1789, the United States had faced the threat of collapse.

II. Shays's Rebellion

In 1786 and 1787, a few years after the Revolution ended, thousands of farmers in western Massachusetts were struggling under a heavy burden of debt. Weak local and national economies made their problems worse. Many political leaders saw both the debt and the struggling economy as a consequence of the Articles of Confederation, which provided the federal government with no way to raise revenue and did little to create a cohesive nation out of the various states. The farmers wanted the Massachusetts government to protect them from their creditors, but the state supported the lenders instead. As creditors threatened to foreclose on their property, many of these farmers, including Revolutionary War veterans, took up arms.

Led by a fellow veteran named Daniel Shays, these armed men, the "Shaysites," resorted to tactics like the patriots had used

before the Revolution, forming blockades around courthouses to keep judges from issuing foreclosure orders. These protesters saw their cause and their methods as an extension of the "Spirit of 1776"; they were protecting their rights and demanding redress for the people's grievances.



Figure 7.2. Daniel Shays became a divisive figure, to some a violent rebel seeking to upend the new American government, to others an upholder of the true revolutionary virtues Shays and others fought for. This contemporary depiction of Shays and his accomplice Job Shattuck portrays them in the latter light as rising "illustrious from the Jail." Unidentified artist, Daniel Shays and Job Shattuck, 1787. Wikimedia.

Governor James Bowdoin, however, saw the Shaysites as rebels who wanted to rule the government through mob violence. He called up thousands of militiamen to disperse them. A former Revolutionary general, Benjamin Lincoln, led the state force, insisting that Massachusetts must prevent "a state of anarchy, confusion and slavery."[3] In January 1787, Lincoln's militia arrested more than one thousand Shaysites and reopened the courts.

Daniel Shays and other leaders were indicted for treason, and several were sentenced to death, but eventually Shays and most of his followers received pardons. Their protest, which became known as Shays's Rebellion, generated intense national debate. While some Americans, like Thomas Jefferson, thought "a little rebellion now and then" helped keep the country free, others feared the nation was sliding toward anarchy and complained that the states could not maintain control. For nationalists like James Madison of Virginia, Shays's Rebellion was a prime example of why the country needed a strong central government. "Liberty," Madison warned, "may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as the abuses of power."[4]

III. The Constitutional Convention

The uprising in Massachusetts convinced leaders around the country to act. After years of goading by James Madison and other nationalists, delegates from twelve of the thirteen states met at the Pennsylvania state house in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. Only Rhode Island declined to send a representative. The delegates arrived at the convention with instructions to revise the Articles of Confederation.

The biggest problem the convention needed to solve was the federal government's inability to levy taxes. That weakness meant that the burden of paying back debt from the Revolutionary War fell on the states. The states, in turn, found themselves beholden to the lenders who had bought up their war bonds. That was part of why Massachusetts had chosen to side with its wealthy bondholders over poor western farmers.[5]

James Madison, however, had no intention of simply revising the Articles of Confederation. He intended to produce a completely new national constitution. In the preceding year, he had completed two extensive research projects—one on the history of government in the United States, the other on the history of republics around the world. He used this research as the basis for a proposal he brought with him to Philadelphia. It came to be called the Virginia Plan, named after Madison's home state.[6]

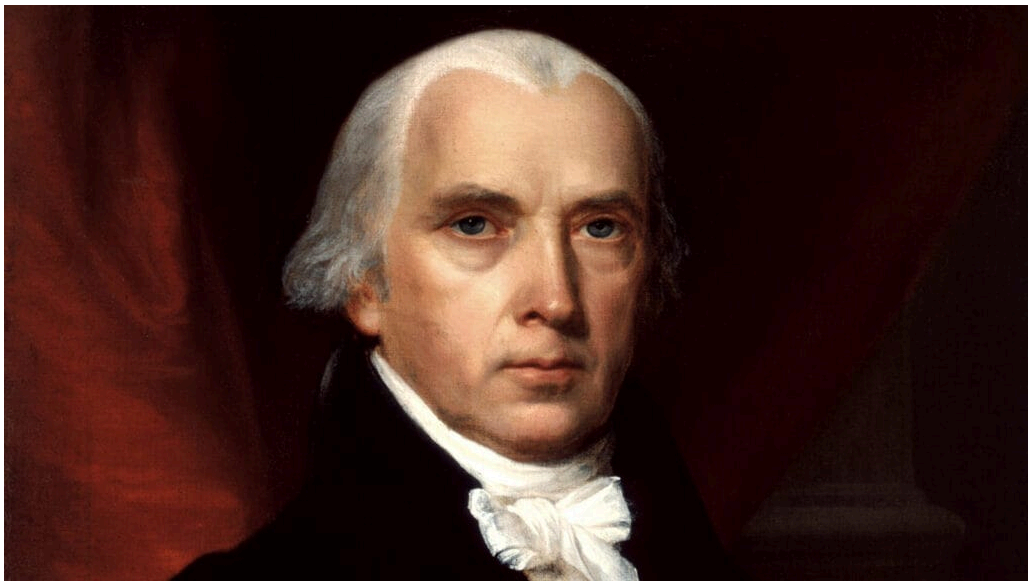


Figure 7.3. James Madison was a central figure in the reconfiguration of the national government. Madison's Virginia Plan was a guiding document in the formation of a new government under the Constitution. John Vanderlyn, Portrait of James Madison, 1816. Wikimedia

The Virginia Plan was daring. Classical learning said that a republican form of government required a small and homogenous state: the Roman republic, or a small country like Denmark, for example. Citizens who were too far apart geographically or too different could not govern themselves successfully. Conventional wisdom said the United States needed to have a very weak central government, which should simply represent the states on certain matters they had in common. Otherwise, power should stay at the state or local level. But Madison's research had led him in a different direction. He believed it was possible to create "an extended republic" encompassing a diversity of people, climates, and customs.

The Virginia Plan, therefore, proposed that the United States should have a strong federal government. It was to have three branches—legislative, executive, and judicial—with the power to act on any issues of national concern. The legislature, or Congress, would have two houses, in which every state would be represented according to its population size or tax base. The national legislature would have veto power over state laws.[7]

Other delegates to the convention generally agreed with Madison that the Articles of Confederation had failed. But they did not agree on what kind of government should replace them. In particular, they disagreed about the best method of representation in the new Congress. Representation was an important issue that influenced a host of other decisions, including deciding how the national executive branch should work, what specific powers the federal government should have, and even what to do about the divisive issue of slavery.

For more than a decade, each state had enjoyed a single vote in the Continental Congress. William Patterson's New Jersey Plan proposed to keep things that way. The Connecticut delegate Roger Sherman, furthermore, argued that members of Congress should be appointed by the state legislatures. Ordinary voters, Sherman said, lacked information, were "constantly liable to be misled" and "should have as little to do as may be" about most national decisions.[8] Large states, however, preferred the Virginia Plan, which would give their citizens far more power over the legislative branch. James Wilson of Pennsylvania argued that since the Virginia Plan would vastly increase the powers of the national government, representation should be drawn as directly as possible from the public. No government, he warned, "could long subsist without the confidence of the people."[9]

Ultimately, Roger Sherman suggested a compromise. Congress would have a lower house, the House of Representatives, in which state population determined the number of representative members, and an upper house, which became the Senate, in which each state would have one vote. This proposal, after months of debate, was adopted in a slightly altered form as the Great Compromise: each state would have two senators, who could vote independently. In addition to establishing both types of representation, this compromise also counted three-fifths of a state's enslaved population for representation and tax purposes.



Figure 7.4. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention assembled, argued, and finally agreed in this room, styled in the same manner as during the Convention. Photograph of the Assembly Room, Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Wikimedia.

The delegates took even longer to decide on the form of the national executive branch. Should executive power be in the hands of a committee or a single person? How should its officeholders be chosen? On June 1, James Wilson moved that the national executive power reside in a single person. Coming only four years after the American Revolution, that proposal was extremely contentious; it conjured up images of an elected monarchy.[10] The delegates also worried about how to protect the executive branch from corruption or undue control. They endlessly debated these questions, and not until early September did they decide the president would be elected by a special electoral college.

In the end, the Constitutional Convention proposed a government unlike any other, combining elements copied from ancient republics and English political tradition but making some limited democratic innovations—all while trying to maintain a delicate balance between national and state sovereignty. It was a complicated and highly controversial scheme.

IV. Ratifying the Constitution

On September 17, 1787, the Constitutional Convention voted on and signed this new document. The plan for adopting the new Constitution, however, required approval from special state ratification conventions, not just Congress. During the ratification process, critics of the Constitution organized to persuade voters in the different states to oppose it.

Importantly, the Constitutional Convention had voted down a proposal from Virginia's George Mason, the author of Virginia's state Declaration of Rights, for a national bill of rights. This omission became a rallying point for opponents of the document. Many of these Anti-Federalists argued that without such a guarantee of specific rights, American citizens risked losing their personal liberty to the powerful federal government. The proratification Federalists, on the other hand, argued that including a bill of rights was not only redundant but dangerous; it could limit future citizens from adding new rights.[11]

Citizens debated the merits of the Constitution in newspaper articles, letters, sermons, and coffeehouse quarrels across America. Some of the most famous, and most important, arguments came from Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison in the Federalist Papers, which were published in various New York newspapers in 1787 and 1788.[12] Massachusetts's ratification convention was contentious, and other Americans watched to see what that state would do. At first, the Anti-Federalists at the Massachusetts ratifying convention probably had the upper hand, but after weeks of debate, enough delegates changed their votes to narrowly approve the Constitution. But they also approved a number of proposed amendments, which were to be submitted to the first Congress. This pattern—ratifying the Constitution but attaching proposed amendments—was followed by other state conventions.

The most high-profile convention was held in Richmond, Virginia, in June 1788, when Federalists like James Madison, Edmund Randolph, and John Marshall squared off against equally influential Anti-Federalists like Patrick Henry and George Mason. Virginia was America's most populous state, it had produced some of the country's highest-profile leaders, and the success of the new

government rested upon its cooperation. After nearly a month of debate, Virginia voted 89 to 79 in favor of ratification.[13]

On July 2, 1788, Congress announced that a majority of states had ratified the Constitution and that the document was now in effect. Yet this did not mean the debates were over. North Carolina, New York, and Rhode Island had not completed their ratification conventions, and Anti-Federalists still argued that the Constitution would lead to tyranny. The New York convention would ratify the Constitution by just three votes, and finally Rhode Island would ratify it by two votes—a full year after George Washington was inaugurated as president.

V. Rights and Compromises

Although debates continued, Washington's election as president cemented the Constitution's authority. By 1793, the term Anti-Federalist would be essentially meaningless. Yet the debates produced a piece of the Constitution that seems irreplaceable today. Ten amendments were added in 1791. Together, they constitute the Bill of Rights. James Madison, against his original wishes, supported these amendments as an act of political compromise and necessity. He had won election to the House of Representatives only by promising his Virginia constituents such a list of rights.

There was much the Bill of Rights did not cover. Women found no special protections or guarantee of a voice in government. Many states continued to restrict voting only to men who owned significant amounts of property. And slavery not only continued to exist; it was condoned and protected by the Constitution.

Of all the compromises that formed the Constitution, perhaps none would be more important than the compromise over the slave trade. Americans generally perceived the transatlantic slave trade as more violent and immoral than slavery itself. Many Northerners opposed it on moral grounds. They also understood that letting Southern states import more Africans would increase Southerners' political power. The Constitution counted each Black individual as three-fifths of a person for purposes of representation, so in districts with many enslaved people, white voters had extra influence. On the other hand, the states of the Upper South also welcomed a ban on the Atlantic slave trade because they already had a surplus of enslaved laborers. Banning importation meant enslavers in Virginia and Maryland could get higher prices when they sold their enslaved laborers to states like South Carolina and Georgia that were dependent on a continued slave trade.

New England and the Deep South agreed to what was called a "dirty compromise" at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. New Englanders agreed to include a constitutional provision that protected the foreign slave trade for twenty years; in exchange, South Carolina and Georgia delegates had agreed to support a constitutional clause that made it easier for Congress to pass commercial legislation. As a result, the Atlantic slave trade resumed until 1808 when it was outlawed for three reasons. First, Britain was also in the process of prohibiting the slave trade in 1807, and the United States did not want to concede any moral high ground to its rival. Second, the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), a successful slave revolt against French colonial rule in the West Indies, had changed the stakes in the debate. The image of thousands of armed Black revolutionaries terrified white Americans. Third, the Haitian Revolution had ended France's plans to expand its presence in the Americas, so in 1803, the United States had purchased the Louisiana Territory from the French at a fire-sale price. This massive new territory, which had doubled the size of the United States, had put the question of slavery's expansion at the top of the national agenda. Many white Americans, including President Thomas Jefferson, thought that ending the external slave trade and dispersing the domestic slave population would keep the United States a white man's republic and perhaps even lead to the disappearance of slavery.

The ban on the slave trade, however, lacked effective enforcement measures and funding. Moreover, instead of freeing illegally imported Africans, the act left their fate to the individual states, and many of those states simply sold intercepted enslaved people at auction. Thus, the ban preserved the logic of property ownership in human beings. The new federal government protected slavery as much as it expanded democratic rights and privileges for white men.[14]

VI. Hamilton's Financial System

President George Washington's cabinet choices reflected continuing political tensions over the size and power of the federal government. The vice president was John Adams, and Washington chose Alexander Hamilton to be his secretary of the treasury. Both men wanted an active government that would promote prosperity by supporting American industry. However, Washington chose Thomas Jefferson to be his secretary of state, and Jefferson was committed to restricting federal power and preserving an economy based on agriculture. Almost from the beginning, Washington struggled to reconcile the Federalist and Republican (or Democratic-Republican) factions within his own administration.[15]

Alexander Hamilton believed that self-interest was the "most powerful incentive of human actions." Self-interest drove humans to accumulate property, and that effort created commerce and industry. According to Hamilton, the government had an important role to play in this process. First, the state should protect private property from theft. Second, the state should use human "passions" and "make them subservient to the public good."[16] In other words, a wise government would harness its citizens' desire for property so that both private individuals and the state would benefit.



Figure 7.5. Alexander Hamilton saw America's future as a metropolitan, commercial, industrial society, in contrast to Thomas Jefferson's nation of small farmers. While both men had the ear of President Washington, Hamilton's vision proved most appealing and enduring. John Trumbull, Portrait of Alexander Hamilton, 1806. Wikimedia.

Hamilton, like many of his contemporary statesmen, did not believe the state should ensure an equal distribution of property. Inequality was understood as "the great & fundamental distinction in Society," and Hamilton saw no reason why this should change. Instead, Hamilton wanted to tie the economic interests of wealthy Americans, or "monied men," to the federal government's financial health. If the rich needed the government, then they would direct their energies to making sure it remained solvent.[17]

Hamilton, therefore, believed that the federal government must be "a Repository of the Rights of the wealthy."[18] As the nation's first secretary of the treasury, he proposed an ambitious financial plan to achieve just that.

The first part of Hamilton's plan involved federal "assumption" of state debts, which were mostly left over from the Revolutionary War. The federal government would assume responsibility for the states' unpaid debts, which totaled about $25 million. Second, Hamilton wanted Congress to create a bank—a Bank of the United States.

The goal of these proposals was to link federal power and the country's economic vitality. Under the assumption proposal, the states' creditors (people who owned state bonds or promissory notes) would turn their old notes in to the treasury and receive new federal notes of the same face value. Hamilton foresaw that these bonds would circulate like money, acting as "an engine of business, and instrument of industry and commerce."[19] This part of his plan, however, was controversial for two reasons.

First, many taxpayers objected to paying the full face value on old notes, which had fallen in market value. Often the current holders had purchased them from the original creditors for pennies on the dollar. To pay them at full face value, therefore, would mean rewarding speculators at taxpayer expense. Hamilton countered that government debts must be honored in full, or else citizens would lose all trust in the government. Second, many Southerners objected that they had already paid their outstanding state debts, so federal assumption would mean forcing them to pay again for the debts of New Englanders. Nevertheless, President Washington and Congress both accepted Hamilton's argument. By the end of 1794, 98 percent of the country's domestic debt had been converted into new federal bonds.[20]

Hamilton's plan for a Bank of the United States, similarly, won congressional approval despite strong opposition. Thomas Jefferson and other Republicans argued that the plan was unconstitutional; the Constitution did not authorize Congress to create a bank. Hamilton, however, argued that the bank was not only constitutional but also important for the country's prosperity.

The Bank of the United States would fulfill several needs. It would act as a convenient depository for federal funds. It would print paper banknotes backed by specie (gold or silver). Its agents would also help control inflation by periodically taking state bank notes to their banks of origin and demanding specie in exchange, limiting the amount of notes the state banks printed. Furthermore, it would give wealthy people a vested interest in the federal government's finances. The government would control just 20 percent of the bank's stock; the other 80 percent would be owned by private investors. Thus, an "intimate connexion" between the government and wealthy men would benefit both, and this connection would promote American commerce.

In 1791, therefore, Congress approved a twenty-year charter for the Bank of the United States. The bank's stocks, together with federal bonds, created over $70 million in new financial instruments. These spurred the formation of securities markets, which allowed the federal government to borrow more money and underwrote the rapid spread of state-charted banks and other private business corporations in the 1790s. For Federalists, this was one of the major purposes of the federal government. For opponents who wanted a more limited role for industry, however, or who lived on the frontier and lacked access to capital, Hamilton's system seemed to reinforce class boundaries and give the rich inordinate power over the federal government.

Hamilton's plan, furthermore, had another highly controversial element. In order to pay what it owed on the new bonds, the federal government needed reliable sources of tax revenue. In 1791, Hamilton proposed a federal excise tax on the production, sale, and consumption of a number of goods, including whiskey.

VII. The Whiskey Rebellion and Jay's Treaty

Grain was the most valuable cash crop for many American farmers. In the West, selling grain to a local distillery for alcohol production was typically more profitable than shipping it over the Appalachians to Eastern markets. Hamilton's whiskey tax thus placed a special burden on Western farmers. It seemed to divide the young republic in half—geographically between the East and West, economically between merchants and farmers, and culturally between cities and the countryside.

In the fall of 1791, sixteen men in western Pennsylvania, disguised in women's clothes, assaulted a tax collector named Robert Johnson. They tarred and feathered him, and the local deputy marshals seeking justice met similar fates. They were robbed and beaten, whipped and flogged, tarred and feathered, tied up and left for dead. The rebel farmers also adopted other protest methods from the Revolution and Shays's Rebellion, writing local petitions and erecting liberty poles. For the next two years, tax collections in the region dwindled.

Then, in July 1794, groups of armed farmers attacked federal marshals and tax collectors, burning down at least two tax collectors' homes. At the end of the month, an armed force of about seven thousand, led by the radical attorney David Bradford, robbed the US mail and gathered about eight miles east of Pittsburgh. President Washington responded quickly.

First, Washington dispatched a committee of three distinguished Pennsylvanians to meet with the rebels and try to bring about a peaceful resolution. Meanwhile, he gathered an army of thirteen thousand militiamen in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. On September 19, Washington became the only sitting president to lead troops in the field, though he quickly turned over the army to the command of Henry Lee, a Revolutionary hero and the current governor of Virginia.



Figure 7.6. This painting depicts George Washington leading troops to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion. “The Whiskey Rebellion,” attributed to Frederick Kemmelmeyer, c. 1795. Wikimedia.

As the federal army moved westward, the farmers scattered. Hoping to make a dramatic display of federal authority, Alexander Hamilton oversaw the arrest and trial of a number of rebels. Many were released because of a lack of evidence, and most of those who remained, including two men sentenced to death for treason, were soon pardoned by the president. The Whiskey Rebellion had shown that the federal government was capable of quelling internal unrest. But it also demonstrated that some citizens, especially poor Westerners, viewed it as their enemy.[21]

Around the same time, another national issue also aroused fierce protest. Along with his vision of a strong financial system, Hamilton also had a vision of a nation busily engaged in foreign trade. In his mind, that meant pursuing a friendly relationship with one nation in particular: Great Britain.

America’s relationship with Britain since the end of the Revolution had been tense, partly because of warfare between the British and French. Their naval war threatened American shipping which was already risky and expensive while the impressment of men into Britain’s navy terrorized American sailors. Nevertheless, President Washington was conscious of American weakness and was determined not to take sides. In April 1793, he officially declared that the United States would remain neutral.[22] With his blessing, Hamilton’s political ally John Jay, who was currently serving as chief justice of the Supreme Court, sailed to London to negotiate a treaty that would satisfy both Britain and the United States.

Jefferson and Madison strongly opposed these negotiations. They mistrusted Britain and saw the treaty as the American government favoring Britain over France. The French had recently overthrown their own monarchy, and Republicans thought the United States should be glad to have the friendship of a new revolutionary state. They also suspected that a treaty with Britain would favor Northern merchants and manufacturers over the agricultural South.

In November 1794, despite their misgivings, John Jay signed a “treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation” with the British. Jay’s Treaty, as it was commonly called, required Britain to abandon its military positions in the Northwest Territory (especially Fort Detroit, Fort Mackinac, and Fort Niagara) by 1796. Britain also agreed to compensate American merchants for their losses. The United States, in return, agreed to treat Britain as its most prized trade partner, which meant tacitly supporting Britain in its current conflict with France. Unfortunately, Jay had failed to secure an end to impressment.[23]

For Federalists, this treaty was a significant accomplishment. Jay’s Treaty gave the United States, a relatively weak power, the ability to stay officially neutral in European wars, and it preserved American prosperity by protecting trade. For Jefferson’s Republicans, however, the treaty was proof of Federalist treachery. The Federalists had sided with a monarchy against a republic, and they had submitted to British influence in American affairs without even ending impressment. In Congress, debate over the treaty transformed the Federalists and Republicans from temporary factions into two distinct (though still loosely organized) political parties.

VIII. The French Revolution and the Limits of Liberty

In part, the Federalists were turning toward Britain because they feared the most radical forms of democratic thought. In the wake of Shays's Rebellion, the Whiskey Rebellion, and other internal protests, Federalists sought to preserve social stability. The course of the French Revolution seemed to justify their concerns.

In 1789, news had arrived in America that the French had revolted against their king. Most Americans imagined that liberty was spreading from America to Europe, carried there by the returning French heroes who had taken part in the American Revolution.

Initially, nearly all Americans had praised the French Revolution. Towns all over the country hosted speeches and parades on July 14 to commemorate the day it began. Women had worn neoclassical dress to honor republican principles, and men had pinned revolutionary cockades to their hats. John Randolph, a Virginia planter, named two of his favorite horses Jacobin and Sans-Culotte after French revolutionary factions.[24]

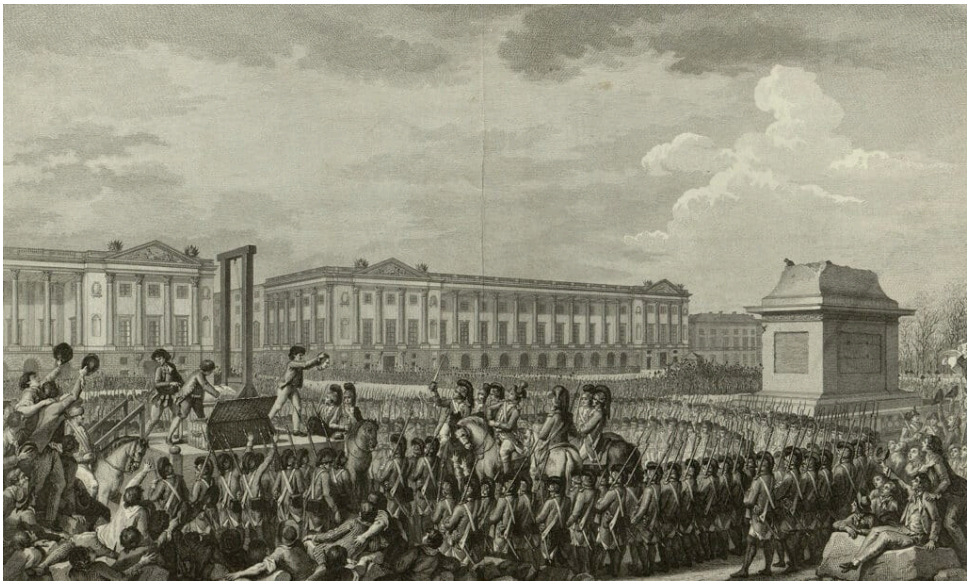


Figure 7.7. The mounting body count of the French Revolution included that of the queen and king, who were beheaded in a public ceremony in early 1793, as depicted in the engraving. While Americans disdained the concept of monarchy, the execution of King Louis XVI was regarded by many Americans as an abomination, an indication of the chaos and savagery reigning in France at the time. Charles Monnet (artist), Antoine-Jean Duclos and Isidore-Stanislas Helman (engravers), Day of 21 January 1793 the death of Louis Capet on the Place de la Révolution, 1794. Wikimedia.

In April 1793, a new French ambassador, "Citizen" Edmond-Charles Genêt, arrived in the United States. During his tour of several cities, Americans greeted him with wild enthusiasm. Citizen Genêt encouraged Americans to act against Spain, a British ally, by attacking its colonies of Florida and Louisiana. When President Washington refused, Genêt threatened to appeal to the American people directly. In response, Washington demanded that France recall its diplomat. In the meantime, however, Genêt's faction had fallen from power in France. Knowing that a return home might cost him his head, he decided to remain in America.

Genêt's intuition was correct. A radical coalition of revolutionaries had seized power in France. They initiated a bloody purge of their enemies, the Reign of Terror. As Americans learned about Genêt's impropriety and the mounting body count in France, many began to have second thoughts about the French Revolution.

Americans who feared that the French Revolution was spiraling out of control tended to become Federalists. Those who remained hopeful about the revolution tended to become Republicans. Not deterred by the violence, Thomas Jefferson declared that he would rather see "half the earth desolated" than see the French Revolution fail. "Were there but an Adam and an Eve left in every country, and left free," he wrote, "it would be better than as it now is."[25] Meanwhile, the Federalists sought closer ties with Britain.

Despite the political rancor, in late 1796 there came one sign of hope: the United States peacefully elected a new president. For now, as Washington stepped down and executive power changed hands, the country did not descend into the anarchy that many leaders feared.

The new president was John Adams, Washington's vice president. Adams was less beloved than the old general, and he governed a deeply divided nation. The foreign crisis also presented him with a major test.

In response to Jay's Treaty, the French government authorized its vessels to attack American shipping. To resolve this, President Adams sent envoys to France in 1797. The French insulted these diplomats. Some officials, whom the Americans code-named X, Y, and Z in their correspondence, hinted that negotiations could begin only after the Americans offered a bribe. When the story became public, this XYZ Affair infuriated American citizens. Dozens of towns wrote addresses to President Adams, pledging their support against France. Many people seemed eager for war. "Millions for defense," toasted South Carolina representative Robert Goodloe Harper, "but not one cent for tribute."[26]

By 1798, the people of Charleston watched the ocean's horizon apprehensively because they feared the arrival of the French navy at any moment. Many people now worried that the same ships that had aided Americans during the Revolutionary War might discharge an invasion force on their shores. Some Southerners were sure that this force would consist of Black troops from France's Caribbean colonies, who would attack the Southern states and cause their enslaved laborers to revolt. Many Americans also worried that France had covert agents in the country. In the streets of Charleston, armed bands of young men searched for French disorganizers. Even the little children prepared for the looming conflict by fighting with sticks.[27]

Meanwhile, during the crisis, New Englanders were some of the most outspoken opponents of France. In 1798, they found a new reason for Francophobia. An influential Massachusetts minister, Jedidiah Morse, announced to his congregation that the French Revolution had been hatched in a conspiracy led by a mysterious anti-Christian organization called the Illuminati. The story was a hoax, but rumors of Illuminati infiltration spread throughout New England like wildfire, adding a new dimension to the foreign threat.[28]



Figure 7.8. This 1798 political cartoon depicts the XYZ Affair. The United States is represented by Columbia, who is being plundered by five Frenchmen, three of whom are wearing French cockades, one wearing the Phrygian cap– symbols of revolutionary, republican France. The figures grouped off to the right are other European countries; John Bull, representing Great Britain, sits laughing atop the white cliffs of Dover. "Property protected–à la Françoise," S.W. Fores, 1798. Library of Congress.

Against this backdrop of fear, the French Quasi-War, as it would come to be known, was fought on the Atlantic, mostly between French naval vessels and American merchant ships. During this crisis, however, anxiety about foreign agents ran high, and members of Congress took action to prevent internal subversion. The most controversial of these steps were the Alien and Sedition Acts. These two laws, passed in 1798, were intended to prevent French agents and sympathizers from compromising America's resistance, but they also attacked Americans who criticized the president and the Federalist Party.

The Alien Act allowed the federal government to deport foreign nationals, or "aliens," who seemed to pose a national security threat. Even more dramatically, the Sedition Act allowed the government to prosecute anyone found to be speaking or publishing "false, scandalous, and malicious writing" against the government.[29]

These laws were not simply brought on by war hysteria. They reflected common assumptions about the nature of the American

Revolution and the limits of liberty. In fact, most of the advocates for the Constitution and the First Amendment accepted that free speech simply meant a lack of prior censorship or restraint, not a guarantee against punishment. According to this logic, "licentious" or unruly speech made society less free, not more. James Wilson, one of the principal architects of the Constitution, argued that "every author is responsible when he attacks the security or welfare of the government."[30]

In 1798, most Federalists were inclined to agree. Under the terms of the Sedition Act, they indicted and prosecuted several Republican printers—and even a Republican congressman who had criticized President Adams. Meanwhile, although the Adams administration never enforced the Alien Act, its passage was enough to convince some foreign nationals to leave the country. For the president and most other Federalists, the Alien and Sedition Acts represented a continuation of a conservative rather than radical American Revolution.

However, the Alien and Sedition Acts caused a backlash in two ways. First, shocked opponents articulated a new and expansive vision for liberty. The New York lawyer Tunis Wortman, for example, demanded an "absolute independence" of the press.[31] Likewise, the Virginia judge George Hay called for "any publication whatever criminal" to be exempt from legal punishment.[32] Many Americans began to argue that free speech meant the ability to say virtually anything without fear of prosecution.

Second, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson helped organize opposition from state governments. Ironically, both of them had expressed support for the principle behind the Sedition Act in previous years. Jefferson, for example, had written to Madison in 1789 that the nation should punish citizens for speaking "false facts" that injured the country.[33] Nevertheless, both men now opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts on constitutional grounds. In 1798, Jefferson made this point in a resolution adopted by the Kentucky state legislature. A short time later, the Virginia legislature adopted a similar document written by Madison.

The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions argued that the national government's authority was limited to the powers expressly granted by the US Constitution. More importantly, they asserted that the states could declare federal laws unconstitutional. For the time being, these resolutions were simply gestures of defiance. Their bold claim, however, would have important effects in later decades.

In just a few years, many Americans' feelings toward France had changed dramatically. Far from rejoicing in the "light of freedom," many Americans now feared the "contagion" of French-style liberty. Debates over the French Revolution in the 1790s gave Americans some of their earliest opportunities to articulate what it meant to be American. Did American national character rest on a radical and universal vision of human liberty? Or was America supposed to be essentially pious and traditional, an outgrowth of Great Britain? They couldn't agree. It was on this cracked foundation that many conflicts of the nineteenth century would rest.

IX. Slavery, Regionalism, and Westward Expansion

The American Revolution pushed some Northern states toward abolishing slavery although every state recognized the system in 1776. The Constitution did little to sort out how slavery would function in a democratic nation. Article VI of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance banned slavery north and west of the Ohio River.[34] Many Americans took that clause to mean that the founders intended for slavery to die out, yet when Congress authorized the admission of Vermont (1791) and Kentucky (1792), with Vermont coming into the Union as a free state and Kentucky coming in as a slave state, a new path forward developed with the federal government prioritizing a "balance of power" between North and South.

In 1790, 654,121 enslaved people lived in the South—then just Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and the Southwest Territory (now Tennessee). By 1810, that number had increased to more than 1.1 million individuals in bondage.[35] This drastic population increase happened in large part due to the rise of cotton. In the colonial period, tobacco had been the leading cash crop for America's plantation economy. But tobacco was a rough crop. It treated the land poorly, draining the soil of nutrients, and fields rarely survived more than four or five cycles of growth before they were incapable of growing much more than patches of grass.

Cotton was different. While long-staple, or sea island cotton, could only be grown along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, short-staple cotton could be grown throughout the South if it wasn't so hard to harvest. With the invention of the cotton gin in 1794, and the emergence of steam power three decades later, cotton became the product with which the South could expand westward. Within a decade Southern cotton production had increased to sixty million pounds a year, and white Southerners began to race westward, building a cotton-growing slave society as they went.



Figure 7.9. Though taken after the end of slavery, these stereographs show various stages of cotton production. The fluffy white staple fiber is first extracted from the boll (a prickly, sharp protective capsule), after which the seed is separated in the ginning and taken to a storehouse. Unknown, Picking cotton in a great plantation in North Carolina, U.S.A., c. 1865-1903. Wikimedia.

As Southerners built a region of cotton plantations and small rural communities, Northern states became more urban or at least more developed. And one of the growing populations in the North was free people of color; there were over 100,000 such people living in Northern states by 1810. This number grew in part as states ended the system of slavery. While some states ended slavery with immediate abolition, most enacted gradual emancipation laws that freed enslaved children after long periods of indentured servitude; for example, Pennsylvania's emancipation act of 1780 stipulated that freed children must serve an indenture term of twenty-eight years to compensate the enslaver's loss. James Mars, a young man indentured under this system in Connecticut, risked being thrown in jail when he protested the arrangement that kept him bound to his mother's enslaver until age twenty-five.[36]



Figure 7.10. A portrait of James Mars at 80 years of age. By Thomas M.V. Doughty, 1870. Wikimedia.

As Northern states ended the system of slavery, they also uncovered challenges to American democracy. Congress, for instance, made harboring a freedom-seeking enslaved person a federal crime with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, supporting Southern claims that their property rights must be protected. Yet, free Black people who found themselves kidnapped and sold into Southern slavery often lacked any political avenue to protest their loss of freedom. While propertied Black men in the North might be considered citizens of their states, the Naturalization Act of 1790 limited federal citizenship to "free, white people." And even states that had moved toward ending slavery moved toward defining citizenship as a privilege for white men. The

revolutionary Constitution of New Jersey had guaranteed the right to vote to all propertied men, but the state legislature changed the qualifications in 1807 to allow all white men to vote.

As America's regional and racial categories began to shift, American abolitionists built transatlantic networks to argue that freedom was the natural condition of humankind.[37] They worked particularly with English political theorists who had begun to rethink natural-law justifications for slavery. They rejected the long-standing idea that slavery was a condition that naturally suited some people and embraced the ideals of the American Revolution that all men were created equal. Even as many Americans saw slavery as a sin and worked to expand suffrage to more groups, America was effectively a "white-man's republic."

X. Religious Freedom

One reason the debates over the French Revolution became so heated was that Americans were unsure about their own religious future. The Illuminati scare of 1798 was just one manifestation of this fear. Across the United States, a slow but profound shift in attitudes toward religion and government began.

In 1776, none of the American state governments observed the separation of church and state. On the contrary, all thirteen states either had established, official, and tax-supported state churches, or at least required their officeholders to profess a certain faith. Most officials believed this was necessary to protect morality and social order. Over the next six decades, however, that changed. In 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, stopped supporting an official religious denomination. Historians call that gradual process disestablishment.

In many states, the process of disestablishment had started before the creation of the Constitution. South Carolina, for example, had been nominally Anglican before the Revolution, but it had dropped denominational restrictions in its 1778 constitution. Instead, it now allowed any church consisting of at least fifteen adult males to become "incorporated," or recognized for tax purposes as a state-supported church. Churches needed only to agree to a set of basic Christian theological tenets, which were vague enough that most denominations could support them.[38]

South Carolina tried to balance religious freedom with the religious practice that was supposed to be necessary for social order. Officeholders were still expected to be Christians; their oaths were witnessed by God, they were compelled by their religious beliefs to tell the truth, and they were called to live according to the Bible. This list of minimal requirements came to define acceptable Christianity in many states. As new Christian denominations proliferated between 1780 and 1840, however, more and more Christians fell outside this definition.

South Carolina continued its general establishment law until 1790, when a constitutional revision removed the establishment clause and religious restrictions on officeholders. Many other states, though, continued to support an established church well into the nineteenth century. The federal Constitution did not prevent this. The religious freedom clause in the Bill of Rights, during these decades, limited the federal government but not state governments. It was not until 1833 that a state supreme court decision ended Massachusetts's support for the Congregational Church.

Many political leaders, including Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, favored disestablishment because they saw the relationship between church and state as a tool of oppression. Jefferson proposed a Statute for Religious Freedom in the Virginia state assembly in 1779, but his bill failed in the overwhelmingly Anglican legislature. Madison proposed it again in 1785, and it defeated a rival bill that would have given equal revenue to all Protestant churches. Instead Virginia would not use public money to support religion. "The Religion then of every man," Jefferson wrote, "must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate."[39]

Removing the government support of churches created what historians call the American spiritual marketplace. Methodism achieved the most remarkable success, enjoying the most significant denominational increase in American history. The Methodist denomination grew from fewer than one thousand members at the end of the eighteenth century to constitute 34 percent of all American church membership by the mid-nineteenth century.[40] After its leaders broke with the Church of England to form a new American denomination in 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church achieved its growth through innovation. Methodists used itinerant preachers, known as circuit riders. These men (and the occasional woman) won converts by pushing west with the expanding United States over the Alleghenies and into the Ohio River Valley, bringing religion to new settlers hungry to have their spiritual needs addressed.

At the federal level, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 easily agreed that the national government should not have an official religion. This principle was upheld in 1791 when the First Amendment was ratified, with its guarantee of religious

liberty. The limits of federal disestablishment, however, required discussion. The federal government, for example, supported Native American missionaries and congressional chaplains. Well into the nineteenth century, debate raged over whether the postal service should operate on Sundays, and whether non-Christians could act as witnesses in federal courts. Americans continued to struggle to understand what it meant for Congress not to "establish" a religion.

XI. The Election of 1800

Meanwhile, the Alien and Sedition Acts expired in 1800 and 1801. They had been relatively ineffective at suppressing dissent. On the contrary, they were much more important for the loud reactions they had inspired. They had helped many Americans decide what they didn't want from their national government.

By 1800, therefore, President Adams had lost the confidence of many Americans. They had let him know it. In 1798, for instance, he had issued a national thanksgiving proclamation. Instead of enjoying a day of celebration and thankfulness, fear of rioters forced Adams and his family to flee the capital city of Philadelphia. The president's prickly independence had also put him at odds with Alexander Hamilton, the leader of his own party, who offered him little support. After four years in office, Adams found himself widely reviled.



Figure 7.11. The year 1800 brought about a host of changes in government, in particular, the first successful and peaceful transfer of power from one political party to another. But the year was important for another reason: the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. (pictured here in 1800) was finally opened to be occupied by Congress, the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, and the courts of the District of Columbia. William Russell Birch, A view of the Capitol of Washington before it was burnt down by the British, c. 1800. Wikimedia.

In the election of 1800, therefore, the Republicans defeated Adams in a bitter and complicated presidential race. During the election, one Federalist newspaper article predicted that a Republican victory would fill America with "murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest."[41] A Republican newspaper, on the other hand, flung sexual slurs against President Adams, saying he had "neither the force and firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman." Both sides predicted disaster and possibly war if the other should win.[42]

In the end, the contest came down to a tie between two Republicans, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia and Aaron Burr of New York, who each had seventy-three electoral votes. (Adams had sixty-five.) Burr was supposed to be a candidate for vice president, not president, but under the Constitution's original rules, a tie-breaking vote had to take place in the House of Representatives. It was controlled by Federalists bitter at Jefferson. House members voted dozens of times without breaking the tie. On the thirty-sixth ballot, Thomas Jefferson emerged victorious.

Republicans believed they had saved the United States from grave danger. An assembly of Republicans in New York City called the election a "bloodless revolution." They thought of their victory as a revolution in part because the Constitution (and eighteenth-century political theory) made no provision for political parties. The Republicans thought they were fighting to rescue the country from an aristocratic takeover, not just taking part in a normal constitutional process.

In his first inaugural address, however, Thomas Jefferson offered an olive branch to the Federalists. He pledged to follow the will of the American majority, whom he believed were Republicans, but to respect the rights of the Federalist minority. His election set an important precedent. Adams accepted his electoral defeat and left the White House peacefully. "The revolution of 1800," Jefferson wrote years later, did for American principles what the Revolution of 1776 had done for its structure. But this time, the revolution was accomplished not "by the sword" but "by the rational and peaceable instrument of reform, the suffrage of the people."[43] Four years later, when the Twelfth Amendment changed the rules for presidential elections to prevent future deadlocks, it was designed to accommodate the way political parties worked.

Despite Adams's and Jefferson's attempts to tame party politics, though, the tension between federal power and the liberties of states and individuals would exist long into the nineteenth century. And while Jefferson's administration attempted to decrease federal influence, Chief Justice John Marshall, an Adams appointee, worked to increase the authority of the Supreme Court. These competing agendas clashed most famously in the 1803 case of Marbury v. Madison, which Marshall used to establish a major precedent.



Figure 7.12. This image attacks Jefferson's support of the French Revolution and religious freedom. The letter, "To Mazzei," refers to a 1796 correspondence that criticized the Federalists and, by association, President Washington. Providential Detection, 1797. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

The Marbury case seemed insignificant at first. The night before leaving office in early 1801, Adams had appointed several men to serve as justices of the peace in Washington, DC. By making these "midnight appointments," Adams had sought to put Federalists into vacant positions at the last minute. On taking office, however, Jefferson and his secretary of state, James Madison, had refused to deliver the federal commissions to the men Adams had appointed. Several of the appointees, including William Marbury, sued the government, and the case was argued before the Supreme Court.

Marshall used Marbury's case to make a clever ruling. On the issue of the commissions, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Jefferson administration. But Chief Justice Marshall went further in his decision, ruling that the Supreme Court reserved the right to decide whether an act of Congress violated the Constitution. In other words, the court assumed the power of judicial review. This was a major (and lasting) blow to the Republican agenda, especially after 1810, when the Supreme Court extended judicial review to state laws. Jefferson was particularly frustrated by the decision, arguing that the power of judicial review "would make the Judiciary a despotic branch."[44]

XII. Conclusion

A grand debate over political power engulfed the young United States. The Constitution ensured that there would be a strong federal government capable of taxing, waging war, and making law, but it could never resolve the young nation's many conflicting constituencies. The Whiskey Rebellion proved that the nation could stifle internal dissent but exposed a new threat to liberty. Hamilton's banking system provided the nation with credit but also constrained frontier farmers. The Constitution's guarantee of religious liberty conflicted with many popular prerogatives. Dissension only deepened, and as the 1790s progressed, Americans became bitterly divided over political parties and foreign war.

During the ratification debates, Alexander Hamilton had written of the wonders of the Constitution. “A nation, without a national government,” he wrote, would be “an awful spectacle.” But, he added, “the establishment of a Constitution, in time of profound peace, by the voluntary consent of a whole people, is a prodigy,” a miracle that should be witnessed “with trembling anxiety.”[45] Anti-Federalists had grave concerns about the Constitution, but even they could celebrate the idea of national unity. By 1795, even the staunchest critics would have grudgingly agreed with Hamilton’s convictions about the Constitution. Yet these same individuals could also take the cautions in Washington’s 1796 farewell address to heart. “There is an opinion,” Washington wrote, “that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty.” This, he conceded, was probably true, but in a republic, he said, the danger was not too little partisanship, but too much. “A fire not to be quenched,” Washington warned, “it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.”[46]

For every parade, thanksgiving proclamation, or grand procession honoring the unity of the nation, there was also some political controversy reminding American citizens of how fragile their union was. And as party differences and regional quarrels tested the federal government, the new nation increasingly explored the limits of its democracy.

XIII. Primary Sources

1. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecœur describes the American people, 1782

Hector St. John de Crèvecœur was born in France, but relocated to the colony of New York and married a local woman named Mehitable Tippet. For a period of several years, de Crèvecœur wrote about the people he encountered in North America. The resulting work was widely successful in Europe. In this passage, Crèvecœur attempts to reflect on the difference between life in Europe and life in North America.

2. A Confederation of Native peoples seek peace with the United States, 1786

In 1786, half a year before the Constitutional Convention, a collection of Native American leaders gathered on the banks of the Detroit River to offer a unified message to the Congress of the United States. Despite this proposal, American surveyors, settlers, and others continued to cross the Ohio River.

3. Mary Smith Cranch comments on politics, 1786-87

In the aftermath of the Revolution, politics became a sport consumed by both men and women. In a series of letters sent to her sister, Mary Smith Cranch comments on a series of political events, including the lack of support for diplomats, the circulation of paper or hard currency, legal reform, tariffs against imported tea tables, Shays’s rebellion, and the role of women in supporting the nation’s interests.

4. James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, 1785

Before the American Revolution, Virginia supported local Anglican churches through taxes. After the American Revolution, Virginia had to decide what to do with this policy. Some founding fathers, including Patrick Henry, wanted to equally distribute tax dollars to all churches. In this document, James Madison explains why he did not want any government money to support religious causes in Virginia.

5. George Washington, “Farewell Address,” 1796

George Washington used his final public address as president to warn against what he understood as the two greatest dangers to American prosperity: political parties and foreign wars. Washington urged the American people to avoid political partisanship and entanglements with European wars.

6. Venture Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture Smith*, 1798

Venture Smith’s autobiography is one of the earliest slave narratives to circulate in the Atlantic World. Slave narratives grew into the most important genre of antislavery literature and bore testimony to the injustices of the slave system. Smith was unusually lucky in that he was able to purchase his freedom, but his story nonetheless reveals the hardships faced by even the most fortunate enslaved men and women.

7. Susannah Rowson, *Charlotte Temple,* 1794

In Charlotte Temple*, the first novel written in America, Susannah Rowson offered a cautionary tale of a woman deceived and then abandoned by a roguish man. Americans throughout the new nation read the book with rapt attention and many even traveled to New York City to visit the supposed grave of this fictional character.*

8. Constitutional ratification cartoon, 1789

The Massachusetts Centinel *ran a series of cartoons depicting the ratification of the Constitution. Each vertical pillar represents a state that has ratified the new government. In this cartoon, North Carolina's pillar is being guided into place (it would vote for ratification in November 1789). Rhode Island's pillar, however, is crumbling and shows the uncertainty of the vote there.*

9. Anti-Thomas Jefferson Cartoon, 1797

This image attacks Jefferson's support of the French Revolution and religious freedom. The Altar to "Gallic Despotism" mocks Jefferson's allegiance to the French. The letter, "To Mazzei," refers to a 1796 correspondence that criticized the Federalists and, by association, President Washington.

XIV. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Tara Strauch, with content contributions by Marco Basile, Nathaniel C. Green, Brenden Kennedy, Spencer McBride, Andrea Nero, Cara Rogers, John Saillant, Tara Strauch, Michael Harrison Taylor, Jordan Taylor, Kevin Wisniewski, Ben Wright, and Caroline Wright.

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8: The Early Republic



Figure 8.1. “America guided by wisdom an allegorical representation of the United States depicting their independence and prosperity,” 1815. Library of Congress.

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- III. Jeffersonian Republicanism
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I. Introduction

Thomas Jefferson’s electoral victory over John Adams—and the larger victory of the Democratic-Republicans over the Federalists—was but one of many changes in the early republic. Some, like Jefferson’s victory, were accomplished peacefully, and others violently. The wealthy and the powerful, middling and poor whites, Native Americans, free and enslaved African Americans, influential and poor women: all demanded a voice in the new nation that Thomas Paine called an “asylum” for liberty.[1] All would, in their own way, lay claim to the freedom and equality promised, if not fully realized, by the Revolution.

II. Free and Enslaved Black Americans and the Challenge to Slavery

Led by the enslaved man Gabriel, close to one thousand enslaved men planned to end slavery in Virginia by attacking Richmond in late August 1800. Some of the conspirators would set diversionary fires in the city’s warehouse district. Others would attack Richmond’s white residents, seize weapons, and capture Virginia Governor James Monroe. On August 30, two enslaved men revealed the plot to their enslaver, who notified authorities. Faced with bad weather, Gabriel and other leaders postponed the attack until the next night, giving Governor Monroe and the militia time to capture the conspirators. After briefly escaping, Gabriel was seized, tried, and hanged along with twenty-five others. Their executions sent the message that others would be punished if they challenged slavery. Subsequently, the Virginia government increased restrictions on free people of color.

Gabriel’s Rebellion, as the plot came to be known, taught Virginia’s white residents several lessons. First, it suggested that

enslaved Black Virginians were capable of preparing and carrying out a sophisticated and violent revolution—undermining white supremacist assumptions about the inherent intellectual inferiority of Black people. Furthermore, it demonstrated that white efforts to suppress news of other slave revolts—especially the 1791 slave rebellion in Haiti—had failed. Not only did some literate enslaved people read accounts of the successful attack in Virginia's newspapers, but others also heard about the rebellion firsthand when slaveholding refugees from Haiti arrived in Virginia with their enslaved laborers after July 1793.

The Haitian Revolution (1791–1804) inspired free and enslaved Black Americans, and terrified white Americans. Port cities in the United States were flooded with news and refugees. Free people of color embraced the revolution, understanding it as a call for full abolition and the rights of citizenship denied in the United States. Over the next several decades, Black Americans continually looked to Haiti as an inspiration in their struggle for freedom. For example, in 1829 David Walker, a Black abolitionist in Boston, wrote an Appeal that called for resistance to slavery and racism. Walker called Haiti the "glory of the blacks and terror of the tyrants" and said that Haitians, "according to their word, are bound to protect and comfort us." Haiti also proved that, given equal opportunities, people of color could achieve as much as white people.[2] In 1826 the third college graduate of color in the United States, John Russwurm, gave a commencement address at Bowdoin College, noting that, "Haytiens have adopted the republican form of government . . . [and] in no country are the rights and privileges of citizens and foreigners more respected, and crimes less frequent."[3] In 1838 the Colored American, an early Black newspaper, professed that "no one who reads, with an unprejudiced mind, the history of Hayti . . . can doubt the capacity of colored men, nor the propriety of removing all their disabilities."[4] Haiti, and the activism it inspired, sent the message that enslaved and free Black people could not be omitted from conversations about the meaning of liberty and equality. Their words and actions—on plantations, streets, and the printed page—left an indelible mark on early national political culture.



Figure 8.2. The idea and image of Black Haitian revolutionaries sent shock waves throughout white America. That Black people, enslaved and free, might turn violent against white people, so obvious in this image where a Black soldier holds up the head of a white soldier, remained a serious fear in the hearts and minds of white Southerners throughout the antebellum period. January Suchodolski, Battle at San Domingo, 1845. Wikimedia.

The Black activism inspired by Haiti's revolution was so powerful that anxious white leaders scrambled to use the violence of the Haitian revolt to reinforce white supremacy and proslavery views by limiting the social and political lives of people of color. White publications mocked Black Americans as buffoons, ridiculing calls for abolition and equal rights. The most (in)famous of these, the "Bobalition" broadsides, published in Boston in the 1810s, crudely caricatured African Americans. Widely distributed materials like these became the basis for racist ideas that thrived in the nineteenth century. But such ridicule also implied that Black Americans' presence in the political conversation was significant enough to require it. The need to reinforce such an obvious difference between whiteness and Blackness implied that those differences might not be so obvious after all.

Henry Moss, an enslaved man in Virginia, became arguably the most famous Black man of the day when white spots appeared on his body in 1792, turning him visibly white within three years. As his skin changed, Moss marketed himself as "a great curiosity" in Philadelphia and soon earned enough money to buy his freedom. He met the great scientists of the era—including Samuel Stanhope Smith and Dr. Benjamin Rush—who joyously deemed Moss to be living proof of their theory that "the Black Color (as it is called) of the Negroes is derived from the leprosy."[5] Something, somehow, was "curing" Moss of his Blackness. In the whitening

body of slave-turned-patriot-turned-curiosity, many Americans fostered ideas of race that would cause major problems in the years ahead.

The first decades of the new American republic coincided with a radical shift in understandings of race. Politically and culturally, Enlightenment thinking fostered beliefs in common humanity, the possibility of societal progress, the remaking of oneself, and the importance of one's social and ecological environment—a four-pronged revolt against the hierarchies of the Old World. Yet a tension arose due to Enlightenment thinkers' desire to classify and order the natural world. Carolus Linnaeus, Comte de Buffon, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, and others created connections between race and place as they divided the racial "types" of the world according to skin color, cranial measurements, and hair. They claimed that years under the hot sun and tropical climate of Africa darkened the skin and reconfigured the skulls of the African race, whereas the cold northern latitudes of Europe molded and sustained the "Caucasian" race. The environments endowed both races with respective characteristics, which accounted for differences in humankind tracing back to a common ancestry. A universal human nature, therefore, housed not fundamental differences but rather the "civilized" and the "primitive"—two poles on a scale of social progress.

Informed by European anthropology and republican optimism, Americans confronted their own uniquely problematic racial landscape. In 1787, Samuel Stanhope Smith published his treatise Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species, which further articulated the theory of racial change and suggested that improving the social environment would tap into the innate equality of humankind and dramatically uplift nonwhite races. The proper society, he and others believed, could gradually "whiten" men the way nature spontaneously chose to whiten Henry Moss. Thomas Jefferson disagreed. While Jefferson thought Native Americans could improve and become "civilized," he declared in his Notes on the State of Virginia (1784) that Black people were incapable of mental improvement and that they might even have a separate ancestry—a theory known as polygenesis, or multiple creations. His belief in polygenesis was less to justify slavery—enslavers universally rejected the theory as antibiblical and thus a threat to their primary instrument of justification, the Bible—and more to justify schemes for a white America, such as the plan to gradually send freed Black people to Africa. Many Americans believed nature had made the white and Black races too different to peacefully coexist, and they viewed African colonization as the solution to America's racial problem.

Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia sparked considerable backlash from antislavery and Black communities. The celebrated Black surveyor Benjamin Banneker, for example, immediately wrote to Jefferson and demanded he "eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas" and instead embrace the belief that we are "all of one flesh" and with "all the same sensations and endowed . . . with the same faculties."[6] Many years later, in his *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829), David Walker channeled decades of Black protest, simultaneously denouncing the moral rot of slavery and racism while praising the inner strength of the race.

Jefferson had his defenders. White men such as Charles Caldwell and Samuel George Morton hardened Jefferson's skepticism, offering a "biological" case for Black and white people not only having separate creations but actually being different species, a position increasingly articulated throughout the antebellum period. Few Americans subscribed wholesale to such theories, but many shared beliefs in white supremacy. As the decades passed, white Americans were forced to acknowledge that if the Black population was indeed whitening, it resulted from sexual violence and not the environment. The sense of inspiration and wonder that followed Henry Moss in the 1790s would have been impossible just a generation later.

III. Jeffersonian Republicanism

Free and enslaved Black Americans were not alone in pushing against political hierarchies. Jefferson's election to the presidency in 1800 represented a victory for nonelite white Americans in their bid to assume more direct control over the government. Elites had made no secret of their hostility toward the direct control of government by the people. In both private correspondence and published works, many of the nation's founders argued that pure democracy would lead to anarchy. Massachusetts Federalist Fisher Ames spoke for many of his colleagues when he lamented the dangers that democracy posed because it depended on public opinion, which "shifts with every current of caprice." Jefferson's election, for Federalists like Ames, heralded a slide "down into the mire of a democracy."[7]

The election of 1800 initially resulted in a tie vote in the Electoral College between two Republicans: Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. Each candidate had secured 73 Electoral College votes, meaning that the House of Representatives would have to choose the winner, with each state getting 1 vote. It took 36 separate ballots for Jefferson to eventually emerge victorious, and even then, that victory only occurred when a Federalist from Delaware, James Ashton Bayard, eventually decided to avert further Constitutional calamity and put Jefferson over the top. Bayard himself justified his decision to finally vote for Jefferson as a "sacred duty," a decision "not to hazard the constitution upon which the political existence of the State depends."[8] John Adams,

meanwhile, had claimed only 65 Electoral College votes. For many Northern Federalists, the real Constitutional crisis was not the deadlocked vote between Jefferson and Burr in the House, but Adams's loss. The Republican Party, strongest in the South, had gained additional votes in the Electoral College due to the three-fifths clause. It was those additional "slave" votes, Federalists charged, that had given the Republican candidates an unfair advantage over Adams. The election, Federalists charged, had been stolen.

In their fury and frustration at Adams's loss, Federalists took direct aim at the Constitution's three-fifths clause. But their claim did not primarily attack the injustice of denying liberty or rights to human beings deserving of both. Instead, Federalists claimed the Constitution's fundamental "injustice" lay in the fact that it included any fraction of enslaved people in the apportionment tally. The Constitution "represented" slaves, who were not "freemen," and thus were "no better entitled to representation than cattle and horses," as one newspaper piece put it.[9] Federalists would continue to attack Jefferson's presidency for years following his initial victory, and their assaults on the three-fifths clause would continue this basic line of argument. The Constitution, they chorused, was fundamentally tainted by the three-fifths clause. But the corruption, they claimed, lay chiefly in the fact that it counted enslaved people as "persons" at all.

In taking this argument, Federalists were attempting to attack the claim that Jefferson's election amounted to a mandate from "the people" to act on their behalf. Indeed, many political leaders and nonelite citizens believed Jefferson embraced the politics of the masses. "In a government like ours it is the duty of the Chief-magistrate . . . to unite in himself the confidence of the whole people," Jefferson wrote in 1810.[10] Nine years later, looking back on his monumental election, Jefferson again linked his triumph to the political engagement of ordinary citizens: "The revolution of 1800 . . . was as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of 76 was in its form," he wrote, "not effected indeed by the sword . . . but by the rational and peaceable instrument of reform, the suffrage [voting] of the people."[11] Jefferson desired to convince Americans, and the world, that a government that answered directly to the people would lead to lasting national union, not anarchic division. He wanted to prove that free people could govern themselves democratically.



Figure 8.3. This 1798 political cartoon satirizes the factionalism of Congress during the presidency of John Adams. It shows a fight that broke out on the congressional floor between Roger Griswold, a Federalist, and Matthew Lyon, a Jeffersonian. "Congressional Pugilists," Anonymous, 1798. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Jefferson set out to differentiate his administration from the Federalists. He defined American union by the voluntary bonds of fellow citizens toward one another and toward the government. In contrast, the Federalists supposedly imagined a union defined by expansive state power and public submission to the rule of aristocratic elites. For Jefferson, the American nation drew its "energy" and its strength from the "confidence" of a "reasonable" and "rational" people.

Democratic-Republican celebrations often credited Jefferson with saving the nation's republican principles. In a move that enraged Federalists, they used the image of George Washington, who had passed away in 1799, linking the republican virtue that Washington epitomized to the democratic liberty that Jefferson championed. Leaving behind the military pomp of power-obsessed Federalists, Democratic-Republicans had peacefully elected the scribe of national independence, the philosopher-patriot who had battled tyranny with his pen, not with a sword or a gun.

The celebrations of Jefferson's presidency and the defeat of the Federalists expressed many citizens' willingness to assert greater direct control over the government as citizens. The definition of citizenship was changing. Early American national identity was coded masculine, just as it was coded white and wealthy; yet, since the Revolution, women had repeatedly called for a place in the conversation. Mercy Otis Warren was one of the most noteworthy female contributors to the public ratification debate over the Constitution of 1787 and 1788, but women all over the country were urged to participate in the discussion over the Constitution. "It is the duty of the American ladies, in a particular manner, to interest themselves in the success of the measures that are now pursuing by the Federal Convention for the happiness of America," a Philadelphia essayist announced. "They can retain their rank as rational beings only in a free government. In a monarchy . . . they will be considered as valuable members of a society, only in proportion as they are capable of being mothers for soldiers, who are the pillars of crowned heads."[12] American women were more than mothers to soldiers; they were mothers to liberty.



Figure 8.4. The artist James Peale painted this portrait of his wife Mary and five of their eventual six children. Peale and others represented women as responsible for the health of the republic through their roles as wives as mothers. Historians call this view of women Republican Motherhood. Wikimedia.

Historians have used the term Republican Motherhood to describe the early American belief that women were essential in nurturing the principles of liberty in the citizenry. Women would pass along important values of independence and virtue to their children, ensuring that each generation cherished the same values of the American Revolution. Because of these ideas, women's actions became politicized. Some even described women's choice of sexual partner as crucial to the health and well-being of both the party and the nation. "The fair Daughters of America" should "never disgrace themselves by giving their hands in marriage to any but real republicans," a group of New Jersey Democratic-Republicans asserted. A Philadelphia paper toasted "The fair Daughters of Columbia. May their smiles be the reward of Republicans only."[13] Though unmistakably steeped in the gendered assumptions about female sexuality and domesticity that denied women an equal share of the political rights men enjoyed, these statements also conceded the pivotal role women played as active participants in partisan politics.[14]

IV. Jefferson as President

Buttressed by robust public support, Jefferson sought to implement policies that reflected his own political ideology. He worked to reduce taxes and cut the government's budget, believing that this would expand the economic opportunities of free Americans. His cuts included national defense, and Jefferson restricted the regular army to three thousand men. England may have needed taxes and debt to support its military empire, but Jefferson was determined to live in peace—and that belief led him to reduce America's national debt while getting rid of all internal taxes during his first term. In a move that became the crowning achievement of his presidency, Jefferson authorized the acquisition of Louisiana from France in 1803 in what is considered the largest real estate deal in American history. France had ceded Louisiana to Spain in exchange for West Florida after the Seven Years' War decades earlier. Jefferson was concerned about American access to New Orleans, which served as an important port for Western farmers. His worries multiplied when the French secretly reacquired Louisiana in 1800. Spain remained in Louisiana for two more years while the US minister to France, Robert R. Livingston, tried to strike a compromise. Fortunately for the United States, the pressures of war in Europe and the slave insurrection in Haiti forced Napoleon to rethink his vast North American

holdings. Rebellious enslaved people coupled with a yellow fever outbreak in Haiti defeated French forces, stripping Napoleon of his ability to control Haiti (the home of profitable sugar plantations). Deciding to cut his losses, Napoleon offered to sell the entire Louisiana Territory for $15 million—roughly equivalent to $250 million today. Negotiations between Livingston and Napoleon's foreign minister, Talleyrand, succeeded more spectacularly than either Jefferson or Livingston could have imagined.



Figure 8.5. Thomas Jefferson's victory over John Adams in the election of 1800 was celebrated through everyday Americans' material culture, including this victory banner. Smithsonian Institute, National Museum of American History.

Jefferson made an inquiry to his cabinet regarding the constitutionality of the Louisiana Purchase, but he believed he was obliged to operate outside the strict limitations of the Constitution if the good of the nation was at stake, as his ultimate responsibility was to the American people. Jefferson felt he should be able to "throw himself on the justice of his country" when he facilitated the interests of the very people he served.[15]

The Louisiana Purchase was the greatest foreign policy success of Jefferson's presidency.[16] But it also renewed Federalist fears that some sizable portion of the approximately 828,000 square miles acquired from France could eventually become more slave states, resulting in more "slave representation," thus ensuring the domination of the slave South, and the Republican Party, in perpetuity. In June 1804, a Federalist in the Massachusetts House of Representatives named William Ely proposed an amendment to the Constitution to get rid of the three-fifths clause. The amendment, if adopted, would base representation on the number of each state's "Free Inhabitants" only.[17] The terms for including enslaved people in the apportionment of House seats and Electoral College votes "were so manifestly unequal at the time the Constitution was formed," Ely's motion went on, "that they could have resulted only from the spirit of conciliation and compromise which influenced the Eastern States." But Jefferson's actions as president, including the Louisiana Purchase, had made an "unjust" situation worse. Louisiana was "an extensive country, which will require a great number of slaves for its cultivation, and when admitted into the Union, agreeably to the cession, will contribute, by the number of its slaves, to destroy the real influence of the Eastern States in the National Government; and also in the alteration of the original mode of electing the President of the United States, whereby, in the appointment of that important Magistrate, the weight of the small States (among which are most of the Eastern States, where there are few or no slaves[)] is greatly diminished."[18]

Ely's amendment contained none of the bombast of Federalist attacks on Republicans or the personhood of the enslaved. But it reflected the same basic logic: The essential problem with the Constitution was that it treated enslaved people, for the purpose of political representation, as "persons" at all. To correct the injustice, the Constitution had to be amended to treat enslaved people no differently than any other type of property. While some attacks on "slave representation" did foreground that slavery was evil and the "sale of man" was "criminal,"[19] Federalist defenders of Ely's amendment more often doubled down on their denial of enslaved humanity. "Now the slaves of the southern states were no more civil beings, had no more political capacities, were no more persons, than our oxen or horses," one ally of Ely's amendment declared in September 1804. "All their earnings belonged to their masters, they passed by bills of sale like our cattle, and certainly were, in the estimation of their masters, as little entitled to representation, as our beasts of burden."[20] Another piece agreed. "The slave, like the ox, is so much property—a mere marketable article—He gives his owner a certain influence in Elections," declared this piece, published in a New Hampshire newspaper. The

piece continued, “Append this influence to all property, and we are content. We ask nothing but that the New England cattle should be represented as well as those of Virginia.”[21] The argument that enslaved people should not be represented because they were not “persons” was as absurd by early nineteenth-century standards as it is today, and Ely’s amendment failed to gain much real traction. Jefferson won reelection in a landslide that fall, and Ely’s amendment eventually died on the Senate floor in December.

Jefferson’s foreign policy, particularly the Embargo Act of 1807, would prove more politically damaging. As Napoleon Bonaparte’s armies moved across Europe, Jefferson wrote to a European friend that he was glad that God had “divided the dry lands of your hemisphere from the dry lands of ours, and said ‘here, at least, be there peace.’”[22] Unfortunately, the Atlantic Ocean soon became the site of Jefferson’s greatest foreign policy test, as England, France, and Spain refused to respect American ships’ neutrality. The greatest offenses came from the British, who resumed the policy of impressment, seizing thousands of American sailors and forcing them to fight for the British Navy.



Figure 8.6. This 1807 political cartoon criticizes the Embargo Act of 1807. In the cartoon a snapping turtle holding a shipping license bites a man attempting to smuggle a barrel of sugar to a British ship. The caught smuggler exclaims, “Oh! this cursed Ograbme!” 1807. Wikimedia.

Many Americans called for war when the British attacked the USS Chesapeake in 1807. The president, however, decided on a policy of “peaceable coercion” and Congress agreed. Under the Embargo Act of 1807, American ports were closed to all foreign trade, in hopes of avoiding war. Jefferson hoped that an embargo would force European nations to respect American neutrality. Historians disagree over the wisdom of peaceable coercion. At first, withholding commerce rather than declaring war appeared to be the ultimate means of nonviolent conflict resolution. In practice, the embargo hurt the US economy. Even Jefferson’s personal finances suffered. When Americans resorted to smuggling their goods out of the country, Jefferson expanded governmental powers to try to enforce their compliance, leading some to label him a “tyrant.”

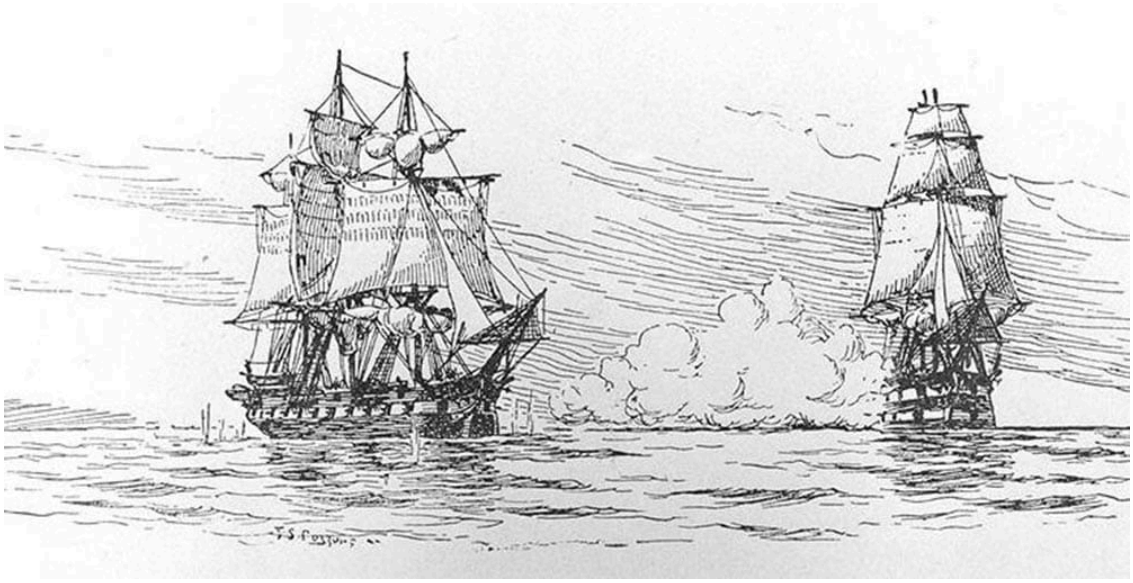


Figure 8.7. The attack of the Chesapeake caused such furor in the hearts of Americans that even eighty years after the incident, an artist sketched this drawing of the event. Fred S. Cozzens, The incident between HMS "Leopard" and USS "Chesapeake" that sparked the Chesapeake-Leopard Affair, 1897. Wikimedia.

Criticism of Jefferson's policies reflected the same rhetoric his supporters had used earlier against Adams and the Federalists. Federalists attacked the American Philosophical Society and the study of natural history, believing both to be too saturated with Democratic-Republicans. Some Federalists lamented the alleged decline of educational standards for children. Moreover, James Callender published accusations (that were later proven credible by DNA evidence) that Jefferson was involved in a sexual relationship with Sally Hemings, one of his enslaved laborers.[23] Callender referred to a hypothetical son of Jefferson's as "our little mulatto president,"[24] joining previous Federalist attacks on Jefferson's racial politics, including a scathing pamphlet written by South Carolinian William Loughton Smith in 1796 that described the principles of Jeffersonian democracy as the beginning of a slippery slope to dangerous racial equality.[25]

Arguments lamenting the democratization of America were far less effective than those that borrowed from democratic language and alleged that Jefferson's actions undermined the sovereignty of the people. When Federalists attacked Jefferson, they often accused him of acting against the interests of the very public he claimed to serve. This tactic represented a pivotal development. As the Federalists scrambled to stay politically relevant, it became apparent that their ideology—rooted in eighteenth-century notions of virtue, paternalistic rule by wealthy elite, and the deference of ordinary citizens to an aristocracy of merit—was no longer tenable. The Federalists' adoption of republican political rhetoric signaled a new political landscape in which both parties embraced the direct involvement of the citizenry. The Democratic-Republican Party rose to power on the promise to expand voting and promote a more direct link between political leaders and the electorate. The American populace continued to demand more direct access to political power. Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe sought to expand voting through policies that made it easier for Americans to purchase land. Under their leadership, seven new states entered the Union. By 1824, only three states still had rules about how much property someone had to own before he could vote. Never again would the Federalists regain dominance over either Congress or the presidency; the last Federalist to run for president, Rufus King, lost to Monroe in 1816.

V. Native American Power and the United States

The Jeffersonian rhetoric of equality contrasted harshly with the reality of a nation stratified along the lines of gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Diplomatic relations between Native Americans and local, state, and national governments offer a dramatic example of the dangers of those inequalities. Prior to the Revolution, many Native American nations had balanced a delicate diplomacy between European empires, which scholars have called the play-off system.[26] Moreover, in many parts of North America, Indigenous peoples dominated social relations.

Americans pushed for more land in all their interactions with Native diplomats and leaders. But boundaries were only one source of tension. Trade, criminal jurisdiction, roads, the sale of liquor, and alliances were also key negotiating points. Despite their role in fighting on both sides, Native American negotiators were not included in the diplomatic negotiations that ended the

Revolutionary War. Unsurprisingly, the final document omitted concessions for Native allies. Even as Native peoples proved vital trading partners, scouts, and allies against hostile nations, they were often condemned by white settlers and government officials as "savages." White ridicule of Indigenous practices and disregard for Indigenous nations' property rights and sovereignty prompted some Indigenous peoples to turn away from white practices.

In the wake of the American Revolution, Native American diplomats developed relationships with the United States, maintained or ceased relations with the British Empire (or with Spain in the South), and negotiated their relationship with other Native nations. Formal diplomatic negotiations included Native rituals to reestablish relationships and open communication. Treaty conferences took place in Native towns, at neutral sites in borderlands, and in state and federal capitals. While chiefs were politically important, skilled orators, such as Red Jacket, as well as intermediaries and interpreters, also played key roles in negotiations. Native American orators were known for metaphorical language, command of an audience, and compelling voice and gestures.



Figure 8.8. Shown in this portrait as a refined gentleman, Red Jacket proved to be one of the most effective middlemen between Native Americans and U.S. officials. The medal worn around his neck, apparently given to him by George Washington, reflects his position as an intermediary. Campbell & Burns, Red Jacket. Seneca war chief, Philadelphia: C. Hullmandel, 1838. Library of Congress.

Throughout the early republic, diplomacy was preferred to war. Violence and warfare carried enormous costs for all parties—in lives, money, trade disruptions, and reputation. Diplomacy allowed parties to air their grievances, negotiate their relationships, and minimize violence. Violent conflicts arose when diplomacy failed.

Native diplomacy testified to the complexity of Indigenous cultures and their role in shaping the politics and policy of American communities, states, and the federal government. Yet white attitudes, words, and policies frequently relegated Native peoples to the literal and figurative margins as "ignorant savages." Poor treatment like this inspired hostility and calls for alliances from leaders of distinct Native nations, including the Shawnee leader Tecumseh.

Tecumseh and his brother, Tenskwatawa, the Prophet, helped envision an alliance of North America's Indigenous populations to halt the encroachments of the United States. They created towns in present-day Indiana, first at Greenville, then at Prophetstown, in defiance of the Treaty of Greenville (1795). Tecumseh traveled to many diverse Native nations from Canada to Georgia, calling for unification, resistance, and the restoration of sacred power.

Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa's confederacy was the culmination of many movements that swept through Indigenous North America during the eighteenth century. An earlier coalition fought in Pontiac's War. Neolin, the Delaware prophet, influenced Pontiac, an Ottawa (Odawa) war chief, with his vision of Native independence, cultural renewal, and religious revitalization. Through Neolin, the Master of Life—the Great Spirit—urged Native peoples to shrug off their dependency on European goods and technologies, reassert their faith in Native spirituality and rituals, and cooperate with one another against the "White people's ways and nature."[27] Additionally, Neolin advocated violence against British encroachments on Native American lands, which escalated after the Seven Years' War. His message was particularly effective in the Ohio and Upper Susquehanna Valleys, where polyglot communities of Indigenous refugees and migrants from across eastern North America lived together. When combined with the militant leadership of Pontiac, who took up Neolin's message, the many Native peoples of the region united in attacks against British forts and people. From 1763 until 1765, the Great Lakes, Ohio Valley, and Upper Susquehanna Valley areas were

embroiled in a war between Pontiac's confederacy and the British Empire, a war that ultimately forced the English to restructure how they managed Native-British relations and trade.



Figure 8.9. Tenskwatawa as painted by George Catlin, in 1831. Caitlin acknowledged the prophet's spiritual power and painted him with a medicine stick. Wikimedia.

In the interim between 1765 and 1811, other Native prophets kept Neolin's message alive while encouraging Indigenous peoples to resist Euro-American encroachments. These individuals included the Ottawa leader "the Trout," also called Maya-Ga-Wy; Joseph Brant of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee); the Creek headman Mad Dog; Painted Pole of the Shawnee; a Mohawk woman named Coocoochee; Main Poc of the Potawatomi; and the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake. Once again, the epicenter of this resistance and revitalization originated in the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes regions, where from 1791 to 1795 a joint force of Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Iroquois, Ojibwe, Ottawa, Huron, Potawatomi, Mingo, Chickamauga, and other Indigenous peoples waged war against the American republic. Although this "Western Confederacy" ultimately suffered defeat at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, this Native coalition achieved a number of military victories against the republic, including the destruction of two American armies, forcing President Washington to reformulate federal policy. Tecumseh's experiences as a warrior against the American military in this conflict probably influenced his later efforts to generate solidarity among North American Indigenous communities.

Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa articulated ideas and beliefs similar to their eighteenth-century predecessors. In particular, Tenskwatawa pronounced that the Master of Life entrusted him and Tecumseh with the responsibility for returning Native peoples to the one true path and to rid Native communities of the dangerous and corrupting influences of Euro-American trade and culture. Tenskwatawa stressed the need for cultural and religious renewal, which coincided with his blending of the tenets, traditions, and rituals of Indigenous religions and Christianity. In particular, Tenskwatawa emphasized apocalyptic visions that he and his followers would usher in a new world and restore Native power to the continent. For Native peoples who gravitated to the Shawnee brothers, this emphasis on cultural and religious revitalization was empowering and spiritually liberating, especially given the continuous American assaults on Native land and power in the early nineteenth century.

Tecumseh's confederacy drew heavily from Indigenous communities in the Old Northwest and the festering hatred for land-hungry Americans. Tecumseh attracted a wealth of allies in his adamant refusal to concede any more land. Tecumseh proclaimed that the Master of Life tasked him with the responsibility of returning Native lands to their rightful owners. In his efforts to promote unity among Native peoples, Tecumseh also offered these communities a distinctly Native American identity that brought disparate Native peoples together under the banner of a common spirituality, together resisting an oppressive force. In short, spirituality tied together the resistance movement. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa were not above using this unifying rhetoric to legitimate their own authority within Indigenous communities at the expense of other Native leaders. This manifested most visibly during Tenskwatawa's witch hunts of the 1800s. Those who opposed Tenskwatawa or sought to accommodate Americans were labeled witches.

While Tecumseh attracted Native peoples from around the Northwest, the Red Stick Creeks brought these ideas to the Southeast. Led by the Creek prophet Hillis Hadjo, who accompanied Tecumseh when he toured throughout the Southeast in 1811, the Red Sticks integrated certain religious tenets from the north and invented new religious practices specific to the Creeks, all

the while communicating and coordinating with Tecumseh after he left Creek Country. In doing so, the Red Sticks joined Tecumseh in his resistance movement while seeking to purge Creek society of its Euro-American dependencies. Creek leaders who maintained relationships with the United States, in contrast, believed that accommodation and diplomacy might stave off American encroachments better than violence.

Additionally, the Red Sticks discovered that most Southeastern Indigenous leaders cared little for Tecumseh's confederacy. This lack of allies hindered the spread of a movement in the Southeast, and the Red Sticks soon found themselves in a civil war against other Creeks. Tecumseh thus found little support in the Southeast beyond the Red Sticks, who by 1813 were cut off from the north by Andrew Jackson. Shortly thereafter, Jackson's forces were joined by Lower Creek and Cherokee forces that helped defeat the Red Sticks, culminating in Jackson's victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Following their defeat, the Red Sticks were forced to cede an unprecedented fourteen million acres of land in the Treaty of Fort Jackson. As historian Adam Rothman argues, the defeat of the Red Sticks allowed the United States to expand west of the Mississippi, guaranteeing the continued existence and profitability of slavery.[28]

Many Native leaders refused to join Tecumseh and instead maintained their loyalties to the American republic. After the failures of Native American unity and loss at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, Tecumseh's confederation floundered. The War of 1812 between the United States and Britain offered new opportunities for Tecumseh and his followers.[29] With the United States distracted, Tecumseh and his confederated army seized several American forts on their own initiative. Eventually Tecumseh solicited British aid after sustaining heavy losses from American fighters at Fort Wayne and Fort Harrison. Even then, the confederacy faced an uphill battle, particularly after American naval forces secured control of the Great Lakes in September 1813, forcing British ships and reinforcements to retreat. Yet Tecumseh and his Native allies fought on despite being surrounded by American forces. Tecumseh told the British commander Henry Proctor, "Our lives are in the hands of the Great Spirit. We are determined to defend our lands, and if it is his will, we wish to leave our bones upon them."[30] Soon thereafter, Tecumseh fell on the battlefields of Moraviantown, Ontario, in October 1813. His death dealt a severe blow to Native American resistance against the United States. Men like Tecumseh and Pontiac, however, left behind a legacy of Native American unity that was not soon forgotten.

VI. The War of 1812

Soon after Jefferson retired from the presidency in 1808, Congress ended the embargo and the British relaxed their policies toward American ships. Despite the embargo's unpopularity, Jefferson still believed that more time would have proven that peaceable coercion worked. Yet war with Britain loomed—a war that would galvanize the young American nation.

The War of 1812 stemmed from American entanglement in two distinct sets of international issues. The first had to do with the nation's desire to maintain its position as a neutral trading nation during the series of Anglo-French wars, which began in the aftermath of the French Revolution in 1793. The second had older roots in the colonial and Revolutionary era. In both cases, American interests conflicted with those of the British Empire. British leaders showed little interest in accommodating the Americans.

Impressments, the practice of forcing American sailors to join the British Navy, was among the most important sources of conflict between the two nations. Driven in part by trade with Europe, the American economy grew quickly during the first decade of the nineteenth century, creating a labor shortage in the American shipping industry. In response, pay rates for sailors increased and American captains recruited heavily from the ranks of British sailors. As a result, around 30 percent of sailors employed on American merchant ships were British. As a republic, the Americans advanced the notion that people could become citizens by renouncing their allegiance to their home nation. To the British, a person born in the British Empire was a subject of that empire for life, a status they could not change. The British Navy was embroiled in a difficult war and was unwilling to lose any of its labor force. In order to regain lost crewmen, the British often boarded American ships to reclaim their sailors. Of course, many American sailors found themselves caught up in these sweeps and "impressed" into the service of the British Navy. Between 1803 and 1812, some six thousand Americans suffered this fate. The British would release Americans who could prove their identity, but this process could take years while the sailor endured harsh conditions and the dangers of the Royal Navy.



Figure 8.10. As pictured in this 1812 political cartoon published in Philadelphia, Americans lambasted the British and their native allies for what they considered "savage" offenses during war, though Americans too were engaging in similar acts. William Charles, A scene on the frontiers as practiced by the "humane" British and their "worthy" allies, Philadelphia, 1812. Library of Congress.

In 1806, responding to a French declaration of a complete naval blockade of Great Britain, the British demanded that neutral ships first carry their goods to Britain to pay a transit duty before they could proceed to France. Despite loopholes in these policies between 1807 and 1812, Britain, France, and their allies seized about nine hundred American ships, prompting a swift and angry American response. Jefferson's embargo sent the nation into a deep depression and drove exports down from $108 million in 1807 to $22 million in 1808, all while having little effect on Europeans.[31] Within fifteen months Congress repealed the Embargo Act, replacing it with smaller restrictions on trade with Britain and France. Although efforts to stand against Great Britain had failed, resentment of British trade policy remained widespread.

Far from the Atlantic Ocean on the American frontier, Americans were also at odds with the British Empire. From their position in Canada, the British maintained relations with Native Americans in the Old Northwest, supplying them with goods and weapons in attempts to maintain ties in case of another war with the United States. The threat of a Native uprising increased after 1805 when Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh built their alliance. The territorial governor of Indiana, William Henry Harrison, eventually convinced the Madison administration to allow for military action against the Native Americans in the Ohio Valley. The resulting Battle of Tippecanoe drove the followers of the Prophet from their gathering place but did little to change the dynamics of the region. British efforts to arm and supply Native Americans, however, angered Americans and strengthened anti-British sentiments.

Republicans began to talk of war as a solution to these problems, arguing that it was necessary to complete the War for Independence by preventing British efforts to keep America subjugated at sea and on land. The war would also represent another battle against the Loyalists, some thirty-eight thousand of whom had populated Upper Canada after the Revolution and sought to establish a counter to the radical experiment of the United States.[32]

In 1812, the Democratic-Republicans held 75 percent of the seats in the House and 82 percent of the Senate, giving them a free hand to set national policy. Among them were the "War Hawks," whom one historian describes as "too young to remember the horrors of the American Revolution" and thus "willing to risk another British war to vindicate the nation's rights and independence."[33] This group included men who would remain influential long after the War of 1812, such as Henry Clay of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina.

Convinced by the War Hawks in his party, Madison drafted a statement of the nation's disputes with the British and asked Congress for a war declaration on June 1, 1812. The Democratic-Republicans hoped that an invasion of Canada might remove the British from their backyard and force the empire to change their naval policies. After much negotiation in Congress over the details of the bill, Madison signed a declaration of war on June 18, 1812. For the second time, the United States was at war with Great Britain.

While the War of 1812 contained two key players—the United States and Great Britain—it also drew in other groups, such as Tecumseh and his Confederacy. The war can be organized into three stages or theaters. The first, the Atlantic Theater, lasted until

the spring of 1813. During this time, Great Britain was chiefly occupied in Europe against Napoleon, and the United States invaded Canada and sent their fledgling navy against British ships. During the second stage, from early 1813 to 1814, the United States launched their second offensive against Canada and the Great Lakes. In this period, the Americans won their first successes. The third stage, the Southern Theater, concluded with Andrew Jackson's January 1815 victory outside New Orleans, Louisiana.

During the war, the Americans were greatly interested in Canada and the Great Lakes borderlands. In July 1812, the United States launched their first offensive against Canada. By August, however, the British and their allies rebuffed the Americans, costing the United States control over Detroit and parts of the Michigan Territory. By the close of 1813, the Americans recaptured Detroit, shattered the Confederacy, killed Tecumseh, and eliminated the British threat in that theater. Despite these accomplishments, the American land forces proved outmatched by their adversaries.

After the land campaign of 1812 failed to secure America's war aims, Americans turned to the infant navy in 1813. Privateers and the US Navy rallied behind the slogan "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights!" Although the British possessed the most powerful navy in the world, surprisingly the young American navy extracted early victories with larger, more heavily armed ships. By 1814, however, the major naval battles had been fought with little effect on the war's outcome.

With Britain's main naval fleet fighting in the Napoleonic Wars, smaller ships and armaments stationed in North America were generally no match for their American counterparts. Early on, Americans humiliated the British in single ship battles. In retaliation, Captain Philip Broke of the HMS Shannon attacked the USS Chesapeake, captained by James Lawrence, on June 1, 1813. Within six minutes, the Chesapeake was destroyed and Lawrence mortally wounded. Yet the Americans did not give up. Lawrence commanded them, "Tell the men to fire faster! Don't give up the ship!"[34] Lawrence died of his wounds three days later, and although the Shannon defeated the Chesapeake, Lawrence's words became a rallying cry for the Americans.

Two and a half months later the USS Constitution squared off with the HMS Guerriere. As the Guerriere tried to outmaneuver the Americans, the Constitution pulled along broadside and began hammering the British frigate. The Guerriere returned fire, but as one sailor observed, the cannonballs simply bounced off the Constitution's thick hull. "Huzzah! Her sides are made of iron!" shouted the sailor, and henceforth, the Constitution became known as "Old Ironsides." In less than thirty-five minutes, the Guerriere was so badly damaged that it was set aflame rather than taken as a prize.

In 1814, Americans gained naval victories on Lake Champlain near Plattsburgh, preventing a British land invasion of the United States and on the Chesapeake Bay at Fort McHenry in Baltimore. Fort McHenry repelled the nineteen-ship British fleet, enduring twenty-seven hours of bombardment virtually unscathed. Watching from aboard a British ship, American poet Francis Scott Key penned the stanzas of the poem that would later become the national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner."



Figure 8.11. The artist shows Washington D.C. engulfed in flames as the British troops set fire to the city in 1813. "Capture of the City of Washington," August 1814. Wikimedia.

Impressive though these accomplishments were, they belied what was actually a poorly executed military campaign against the British. The US Navy won their most significant victories in the Atlantic Ocean in 1813. Napoleon's defeat in early 1814, however, allowed the British to focus on North America and blockade American ports. Thanks to the blockade, the British were able to

burn Washington, DC, on August 24, 1814, and open a new theater of operations in the South. The British sailed for New Orleans, where they achieved a naval victory at Lake Borgne before losing the land invasion to Major General Andrew Jackson's troops in January 1815. This American victory actually came after the United States and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814, but the Battle of New Orleans proved to be a psychological victory that boosted American morale and affected how the war has been remembered.

But not all Americans supported the war. In 1814, New England Federalists met in Hartford, Connecticut, to try to end the war and curb the power of the Democratic-Republican Party. They produced a document that proposed abolishing the three-fifths rule that afforded Southern enslavers disproportionate representation in Congress, limiting the president to a single term in office, and most importantly, demanding a two-thirds congressional majority, rather than a simple majority, for legislation that declared war, admitted new states into the Union, or regulated commerce. With the two-thirds majority, New England's Federalist politicians believed they could limit the power of their political foes.

These proposals were sent to Washington, but unfortunately for the Federalists, the victory at New Orleans buoyed popular support for the Madison administration. With little evidence, newspapers accused the Hartford Convention's delegates of plotting secession. In fact, the Hartford Convention had gone out of its way to claim the patriotic high ground. Unlike William Ely's doomed amendment to abolish the three-fifths clause in 1804, the Hartford Convention did not attribute the nation's political woes to a "spirit of conciliation and compromise" that had poisoned the Constitution from the outset. Instead, the Hartford Convention laid the blame squarely at the feet of the Republican Party. "The Constitution of the United States, under the auspices of a wise and virtuous Administration, proved itself competent to all the objects of national prosperity, comprehended in the views of its framers."[35] The problem was not the Constitution; the problem was how the Republicans had governed. The Hartford Convention insisted its goal was not to foment disunion or to destroy the Constitution; the goal, in fact, was to preserve the former by amending the latter.



Figure 8.12. Contemplating the possibility of secession over the War of 1812 (fueled in large part by the economic interests of New England merchants), the Hartford Convention posed the possibility of disaster for the still-young United States. England, represented by the figure John Bull on the right side, is shown in this political cartoon with arms open to accept New England back into its empire. William Charles Jr., The Hartford Convention or Leap No Leap. Wikimedia.

In important respects, however, the Hartford Convention's Report reflected a broad, longstanding belief among white Americans that neither Black people nor Native Americans should be included among the sovereign "people" of the United States. This sense of national identity dated back to the American Revolution. It was clearly evident in Federalist backlash against Jefferson's 1800 election. Political propaganda during the War of 1812 reinforced it. The Treaty of Ghent essentially returned relations between the United States and Britain to their prewar status—what is known as status quo antebellum. But during the war, Americans read patriotic newspaper stories, sang patriotic songs, and bought consumer goods decorated with national emblems. They also heard stories about how the British, their Native allies, and enslaved Black people threatened to bring violence into American homes. For examples, rumors spread that British officers promised rewards of "beauty and booty" for their soldiers when they attacked New Orleans.[36] In the Great Lakes borderlands, wartime propaganda fueled Americans' fear of Britain's Native American allies, whom they believed would slaughter men, women, and children indiscriminately. Terror and love worked together to make American

citizens feel a stronger bond with their country, defined along racial lines.[37])

Northern Federalists' political agenda reflected this racialized nationalism, even as they persisted in their criticism of Republicans and the "slave representation" that they claimed lay at the root of the South's political power. Hence, the Hartford Convention's first proposed amendment sought to limit apportionment of a state's House seats and Electoral College votes to the number of "free persons" only. Like Ely's doomed proposed amendment a decade earlier, it posed no threat to slavery nor provided freedom or rights to the enslaved. Instead, it would have altered the Constitution to treat enslaved people, for the purpose of political representation, no differently than any other type of property. These amendments, too, failed to gain enough broad support to be politically viable. For the Pennsylvania Senate, in fact, the amendment to abolish the three-fifths clause did not go far enough. "If any change in the fundamental principle of representation be desirable, it should be a complete one," the Senate committee report on the Hartford Convention concluded, "such a one as would place the real power of the government on the basis of its white population, and render the number not merely of representatives, but of senators proportioned to the free white inhabitants of the union."[38]

In short, New England Federalists recognized that the three-fifths clause fundamentally poisoned the Constitution, yet their arguments against it were fundamentally weakened—one might say, compromised—by the fact that most white Northerners, including those critical of the three-fifths clause, embraced the same white supremacy that lay at the root of the very slave system they detested. Yet the Federalists could not shake their reputation as monarchists who sought to control the American people rather than serve them. The next New England politician to assume the presidency, John Quincy Adams, would, in 1824, emerge not from within the Federalist fold but having served as secretary of state under President James Monroe, the leader of the Virginia Democratic-Republicans.

Former Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin claimed that the War of 1812 revived "national feelings" that had dwindled after the Revolution. "The people," he wrote, were now "more American; they feel and act more like a nation."[39] Politicians proposed measures to reinforce the fragile Union through capitalism and built on these sentiments of nationalism. The United States continued to expand into Native American territories with westward settlement in far-flung new states like Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi, and Illinois. Between 1810 and 1830, the country added more than six thousand new post offices.

In 1817, South Carolina congressman John C. Calhoun called for building projects to "bind the republic together with a perfect system of roads and canals."[40] He joined with other politicians, such as Kentucky's powerful Henry Clay, to promote what came to be called an American System. They aimed to make America economically independent and encouraged commerce between the states over trade with Europe and the West Indies. The American System would include a new Bank of the United States to provide capital; a high protective tariff, which would raise the prices of imported goods and help American-made products compete; and a network of "internal improvements," roads and canals, to let people take American goods to market.

These projects were controversial. Many people believed that they were unconstitutional or would increase the federal government's power at the expense of the states. Even Calhoun later changed his mind and joined the opposition. The War of 1812, however, had reinforced Americans' sense of the nation's importance in their political and economic life. Even when the federal government did not act, states created banks, roads, and canals of their own.

What may have been the boldest declaration of America's postwar pride came in 1823. President James Monroe issued an ultimatum to the empires of Europe in order to support several wars of independence in Latin America. The Monroe Doctrine declared that the United States considered its entire hemisphere, both North and South America, off-limits to new European colonization. Although Monroe was a Jeffersonian, some of his principles echoed Federalist policies. Whereas Jefferson cut the size of the military and ended all internal taxes in his first term, Monroe advocated the need for a strong military and an aggressive foreign policy. Since Americans were spreading out over the continent, Monroe authorized the federal government to invest in canals and roads, which he said would "shorten distances and, by making each part more accessible to and dependent on the other . . . shall bind the Union more closely together."[41] As Federalists had attempted two decades earlier, Democratic-Republican leaders after the War of 1812 advocated strengthening the government to strengthen the nation.

VII. Conclusion

Monroe's election after the conclusion of the War of 1812 signaled the death knell of the Federalists. Some predicted an "era of good feelings" and an end to party divisions. The war had cultivated a profound sense of union among a diverse and divided people. Yet that "era of good feelings" would never really come. Political division continued. Though the dying Federalists would fade from political relevance, a schism within the Democratic-Republican Party would give rise to Jacksonian Democrats. Political limits continued along class, gender, and racial and ethnic lines. At the same time, industrialization and the development

of American capitalism required new justifications of inequality. Social change and increased immigration prompted nativist reactions that would divide “true” Americans from dangerous or undeserving “others.” Still, a cacophony of voices clamored to be heard and struggled to realize a social order compatible with the ideals of equality and individual liberty. As always, the meaning of democracy was in flux.

XIII. Primary Sources

1. Letter of Cato and petition by “the negroes who obtained freedom by the late act,” in *Postscript to the Freeman’s Journal*, September 21, 1781

The elimination of slavery in northern states like Pennsylvania was slow and hard-fought. A bill passed in 1780 began the slow process of eroding slavery in the state, but a proposal just one year later would have erased that bill and furthered the distance between slavery and freedom. The action of Black Philadelphians and others succeeded in defeating this measure. In this letter to the Black newspaper, Philadelphia Freedom’s Journal*, a formerly enslaved man uses the rhetoric of the American Revolution to attack American slavery.*

2. Thomas Jefferson’s racism, 1788

American racism spread during the first decades after the American Revolution. Racial prejudice existed for centuries, but the belief that African-descended peoples were inherently and permanently inferior to Anglo-descended peoples developed sometime around the late eighteenth century. Writings such as this piece from Thomas Jefferson fostered faulty scientific reasoning to justify laws that protected slavery and white supremacy.

3. Black scientist Benjamin Banneker demonstrates Black intelligence to Thomas Jefferson, 1791

Benjamin Banneker, a free Black American and largely self-taught astronomer and mathematician, wrote Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State, on August 19, 1791. Banneker included this letter, as well as Jefferson’s short reply, in several of the first editions of his almanacs in part because he hoped it would dispel the widespread assumption that Jefferson perpetuated in his Notes on the State of Virginia that Black people were incapable of intellectual achievement.

4. Creek headman Alexander McGillivray (Hoboi-Hili-Miko) seeks to build an alliance with Spain, 1785

Native peoples had long employed strategies of playing Europeans off against each other to maintain their independence and neutrality. As early as 1785, the Creek headman Alexander McGillivray (Hoboi-Hili-Miko) saw the threat the expansionist Americans placed on Native peoples and the inability of a weak United States government to restrain their citizens from encroaching on Native lands. McGillivray sought the aid and protection of the Spanish in order to maintain the supply of trade goods into Creek country and counter the Americans.

5. Tecumseh Calls for Native American resistance, 1810

Like Pontiac before him, Tecumseh articulated a spiritual message of Native American unity and resistance. In this document, he acknowledges his Shawnee heritage, but appeals to a larger community of “red men,” who he describes as “once a happy race, since made miserable by the white people.” This document reveals not only Tecumseh’s message of resistance, but it also shows that Anglo-American understandings of race had spread to Native Americans as well.

6. Congress debates going to war, 1811

Americans were not united in their support for the War of 1812. In these two documents we hear from members of congress as they debate whether or not America should go to war against Great Britain.

7. Abigail Bailey escapes an abusive relationship, 1815

Women in early America suffered from a lack of rights or means of defending themselves against domestic abuse. The case of Abigail Bailey is remarkable because she was able to successfully free herself and her children from an abusive husband and father.

8. Genius of the Ladies magazine illustration, 1792

Despite the restrictions imposed on their American citizenship, white women worked to expand their rights to education in the

new nation using literature and the arts. The first journal for women in the United States, The Lady's Magazine, and repository of entertaining knowledge*, introduced their initial volume with an engraving celebrating the transatlantic exchange between women's rights advocates. In the engraving, English writer Mary Wollstonecraft presents her work, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," to Liberty who has the tools of the arts at her feet.*

9. America *Guided by Wisdom* engraving, 1815

This engraving reflects the sense of triumph many white Americans felt following the War of 1812. Drawing from the visual language of Jeffersonian Republicans, we see America—represented as a woman in classical dress—surrounded by gods of wisdom, commerce, and agriculture on one side and a statue of George Washington emblazoned with the recent war's victories on the other. The romantic sense of the United States as the heir to the ancient Roman republic, pride in military victory, and the glorification of domestic production contributed to the idea the young nation was about to enter an "era of good feelings."

XIV. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Nathaniel C. Green, with content contributions by Justin Clark, Adam Costanzo, Stephanie Gamble, Dale Kretz, Julie Richter, Bryan Rindfleisch, Angela Riotto, James Risk, Cara Rogers, Marie Stango, Jonathan Wilfred Wilson, Ben Wright, Caroline Wright, and Charlton Yingling, and Ashley Young.

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9: Getting Forward



Figure 9.1. William James Bennett, View of South Street, from Maiden Lane, New York City, c. 1827, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I. Introduction

If the War of 1812 was a military rematch with Great Britain, it was also an opportunity to imagine a fresh start for the American nation. Indeed, by the end of the next decade, some aspects of life in the United States would seem unrecognizable to the members of the old revolutionary generation. That included the ways many people made a living, took part in politics, and conceptualized what it meant to be an American woman, man, or child.

During these years, the country continued to seize Indigenous lands in the West and South. Between 1816 and 1821, the United States grew by a state per year, adding Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, Alabama, Maine, and Missouri. Twenty-four states graced the union in the 1820s, and the United States had thousands of miles of waterfront along the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast—not to mention half a billion acres of Native American territory that already had been claimed in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. For some younger white Americans, it was easy to imagine that national progress was inevitable. Some optimistically—and prematurely—proclaimed the decade after the war to be an "era of good feelings" in political life.

Other Americans were not so confident. "A free government," John Adams wrote anxiously to Thomas Jefferson in 1821, "is necessarily a complicated piece of machinery"—one that is not well understood by politicians, "and still less by the people."[1] Current events both at home and abroad gave these aging founders cause to worry about the future.

The postwar years were also a time of American economic expansion. The Second National Bank of the United States, chartered in 1816, helped stabilize the American economy by regulating state banks, issuing a uniform national currency, and facilitating trade and economic growth. But the expansion of the national economy, and the westward spread of statehood, also meant the entrenchment—contrary to many people's earlier expectations—of the brutality of plantation slavery. By the late 1820s, it became much harder to imagine the end of racialized human bondage in the United States.

National growth, both geographic and economic, brought major changes to the ways that Americans lived their lives and imagined their futures.

II. The Market Revolution

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Americans' economic drive—what one Baltimore newspaper in 1815 called an "almost

universal ambition to get forward"—remade the nation.[2] Water and steam power changed the way Americans could manufacture and move their products. Americans experienced what one influential historian dubbed a "Market Revolution."[3]

Americans had previously led a mostly local existence, but the technologies of the international Industrial Revolution created a new national commercial economy. Americans increasingly produced goods for sale across long distances, and more aspects of daily life involved the exchange of cash.

After 1815, more and more farmers grew crops for profit, rather than local consumption. Vast factories and cities arose in the North. Enormous fortunes materialized. The American middle class ballooned. And as more men and women worked in the cash economy, some found freedom from servitude.

Thanks to the busy pace of Northern textile factories, however, the demand for cotton fiber grew, so plantation slavery spread westward across new cotton-growing regions in the South. Meanwhile, some free Northern farmers became wage laborers bound to the whims of markets and employers. A series of devastating economic depressions called "panics" devastated many. And all of this contributed to sweeping changes in the way Americans experienced their political life.

The Transportation Revolution

Between the American Revolution and the War of 1812, American trade had grown haltingly. American farmers had been exporting food to Europe at a low cost. This translated into high profit margins. But exorbitant internal transportation costs, kept high by bad (or nonexistent) roads, hindered substantial economic development inside the United States.

In 1816, a merchant could move a ton of goods across the Atlantic Ocean for $9, but the same fee would move the same ton of goods only thirty miles over land. That year, a Senate committee report concluded that "the price of land carriage is too great" to allow profitable American manufacturing. In the wake of the War of 1812, therefore, Americans rushed to build a new national infrastructure of "internal improvements": new networks of roads, canals, and, eventually, railroads.

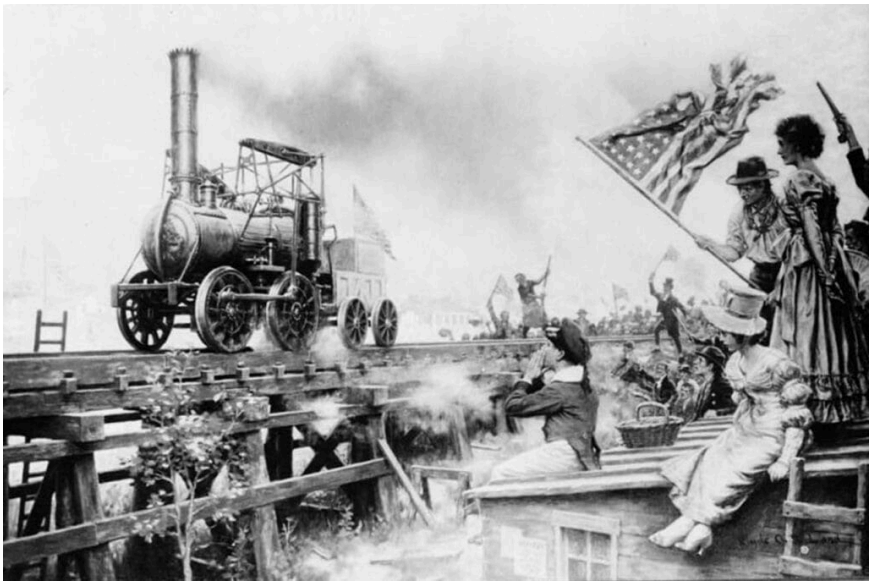


Figure 9.2. Clyde Osmer DeLand, "The First Locomotive. Aug. 8th, 1829. Trial Trip of the "Stourbridge Lion," 1916. Library of Congress.

In his 1815 annual message to Congress, President James Madison stressed "the great importance of establishing throughout our country the roads and canals which can best be executed under national authority."[4] Although state governments continued to sponsor more of this kind of building project, the federal government's annual expenditures on internal improvements would climb to a yearly average of $1,323,000 during Andrew Jackson's presidency, which would end in 1837.[5]

Much of this so-called Transportation Revolution took place on the water. Robert Fulton had laid the groundwork even before the war by establishing the first commercial steamboat service on the Hudson River in New York in 1807. Soon, steamboats filled the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers as well. By 1830, more than two hundred steamboats moved up and down Western waterways.

And some of the Transportation Revolution's waterways were human-made. The most important moment in the revolution came

when New York State completed the Erie Canal in 1825. This grand 363-mile-long “artificial river” linked the Great Lakes with the Hudson River, the New York City harbor, and the Atlantic Ocean. Now, crops grown in the Great Lakes region could be transported to eastern cities, and goods from eastern ports and factories could make the reverse journey to Midwestern farmers. The success of New York’s infrastructure project launched a canal-building boom in other regions. By 1840, Ohio would create two navigable, all-water links from Lake Erie to the Ohio River, extending the Erie traffic deep into the continent.



Figure 9.3. Engraving based on W.H. Bartlett, “Lockport, Erie Canal,” 1839. Wikimedia.

With the development of canals, improved roads, and later railroads, the Transportation Revolution brought new settlers into the Native lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. The journeys taken by two women less than two decades apart show how rapidly this Western landscape changed.

In 1810, Margaret Dwight left Connecticut in a wagon headed for Ohio Territory. Her trip was less than five hundred miles, but it took six weeks to complete. She found the journey a terrible ordeal. The roads were “so rocky & so gullied,” she complained, that they were “almost impassable.” Ten days into the journey, at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, it appeared to Margaret that she and her caravan “had come to the end of the habitable part of the globe.” She concluded that “the reason so few are willing to return [to the East] from the Western country, is not that the country is so good, but because the journey is so bad.”[6]

Less than twenty years later, the English traveler Frances Trollope made a similar journey in reverse, crossing the Allegheny Mountains from Cincinnati to the East Coast. At Wheeling, Virginia, her coach rolled onto the National Road, the first federally funded interstate infrastructure project. This road was smooth, and Trollope’s journey across the Alleghenies in 1829 was a scenic delight. “I really can hardly conceive a higher enjoyment than a botanical tour among the Alleghany Mountains,” she declared. The ninety miles of the National Road were to her “a garden.”[7]

In the years after Frances Trollope’s journey, the pace of change only accelerated. If the Transportation Revolution began with road networks and waterways, it soon involved even greater changes in the ways people earned their living. It would be felt in family relationships, in the social status of different kinds of people, and in politics, as well.

Manufacturing

The changes that took place during the Market Revolution were directly related to a shift that was taking place in how workers made things for sale. This change started even before the Transportation Revolution began, but the increased flow of trade on roads and canals made it more significant.

As early as the 1790s, merchants in New England began experimenting with powered machines, by borrowing—or stealing—a new model of factory work from Great Britain. In 1789, a textile mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, contracted a twenty-one-year-old British immigrant, Samuel Slater, to build machines to clean, combine, and spin yarn. Slater had apprenticed in an English mill, and he succeeded in mimicking the design of English machinery, thwarting the British government’s attempts to prevent the export of this valuable technology.

American industrial espionage was even more successful decades later when, in 1813, Francis Cabot Lowell and Paul Moody recreated the powered loom used in the mills of Manchester, England. Lowell had spent two years in Britain observing and touring mills. He had committed the design of the powered loom to memory, so no matter how many times British customs officials searched his luggage, they could not prevent him from smuggling England's industrial know-how into New England.

Francis Cabot Lowell's contribution to American industrialism was organizational as well as technological. Lowell helped reorganize and centralize the American manufacturing process. A new approach, the Waltham-Lowell System, created the textile mill that defined New England and American industrialism before the Civil War. In 1821, four years after Lowell himself died, the modern American textile mill was fully realized in a planned factory town named in his honor. Powered by the Merrimack River and operated by local farm girls, the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, centralized the process of textile manufacturing under one roof. The modern American factory was born.

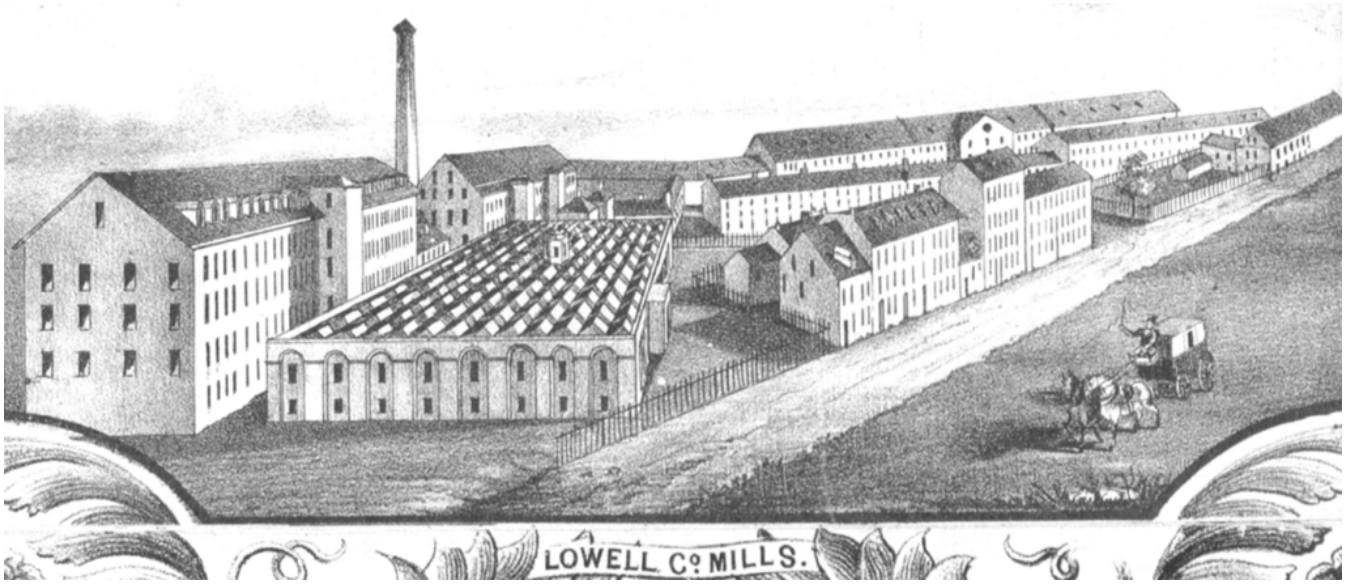


Figure 9.4. Sidney & Neff, Detail from Plan of the City of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1850. Wikimedia.

Before long, ten thousand workers labored in Lowell alone. Sarah Rice, who worked at the nearby Millbury factory, found it "a noisy place" that was "more confined than I like to be."[8] Working conditions were harsh for the many desperate "mill girls," who operated the factories relentlessly from sunup to sundown. One worker complained that "a large class of females are, and have been, destined to a state of servitude."[9]

In one famous incident at Lowell, workers went on strike, lobbying for better working hours. But the lure of steady wages—and freedom from parental oversight—was too much to keep new applicants away. As another worker wrote, "Very many Ladies . . . have given up millinery, dressmaking & school keeping for work in the mill."[10] With a large supply of eager workers, Lowell's vision brought a rush of capital and entrepreneurs into New England. The first American manufacturing boom was under way.

The Market Revolution shook other industries as well, with similar effects on workers. Some shoemakers, for instance, abandoned the traditional method of producing custom-built shoes at their home workshops and instead began producing larger quantities in an assortment of ready-made sizes to be shipped to urban centers. To increase production, they abandoned the old personal approach of relying on live-in apprentices for labor. Instead, they hired unskilled wage laborers. Factories slowly replaced shops.

Middle-Class Ideals

During the first half of the nineteenth century, whole families in the northern United States increasingly participated in the cash economy created by the Market Revolution, even as industrial work shifted away from the home. Together, these realities transformed Americans' definitions of work itself—and what they thought it should mean to be a woman, man, or child.

In colonial America, nearly all children had worked within their parent's profession. During the Market Revolution, however, more children were able to postpone employment. Middle-class Americans aspired to provide a "romantic childhood"—a period when boys and girls were sheltered in the home and nurtured through primary schooling.[11] Of course, this ideal was available only to families that could survive without their children's wages.

In such families, just as children were expected to be shielded from the adult world of work, an ideology of “separate spheres” set apart a masculine public realm—the outside world of men’s economic production and political life—from the world of women, who were supposed to spend their time in consumption and domesticity . Granted, the women of the middle class were working. They kept busy producing food and clothing, cleaning, teaching children, and purchasing goods for the household, among many other activities. But such tasks did not bring money into the household, even though they, too, were essential to the home’s economic viability.

Though the Market Revolution remade many women’s economic roles, laws maintained their inferior status. Upon marriage, women were rendered legally dead under the doctrine of “coverture,” the legal fiction that counted married couples as a single unit represented by the husband. In most cases, this meant married women’s money and property belonged by law to their husbands. Women shopped on their husbands’ credit, and, at any time, husbands could terminate their wives’ access to the market. Although a handful of states made divorce available, it remained expensive, difficult, and rare. Marriage was typically a permanently binding contract—but men had greater power to break their part of the deal without consequences.

Meanwhile, even as the middle and upper classes tried to keep their women from the harsh realities of wage labor, lower-class women had to make money. In poorer households, women earned wages as factory workers, keepers of taverns and inns, and domestic servants. Many of their tasks were the same as the household tasks of richer women. The key difference was whether they performed these jobs for cash in the market economy.

Working-class children, too, worked to supplement the low wages of their adult family members. Around age eleven or twelve, for example, boys could take jobs as office runners or waiters, earning perhaps a dollar a week. The ideal of an innocent and protected childhood was a privilege for middle- and upper-class families, who might look down upon these young earners.

Joseph Tuckerman, a Unitarian minister who served poor Bostonians, sounded a typical note when he lamented the lack of discipline and regularity that supposedly characterized poor children: “At one hour they are kept at work to procure fuel, or perform some other service; in the next are allowed to go where they will, and to do what they will.”[12] Prevented from attending school, poor children served as economic assets for their families and as a source of anxiety for the rich.



Figure 9.5. Winslow Homer, “Bell-Time,” Harper’s Weekly vol. 12 (July 1868): 472. Wikimedia.

Meanwhile, the education received by middle-class children provided a foundation for future economic privilege. Formal schooling beyond basic literacy was especially important for young men who desired apprenticeships in retail or commercial work. Enterprising teachers established schools to assist “young gentlemen preparing for mercantile and other pursuits, who may wish for an education superior to that usually obtained in the common schools,” such as the one organized in 1820 by Warren Colburn of Boston.[13] In response to the same need, the Boston School Committee created their city’s English High School, which could “give a child an education that shall fit him for active life, and shall serve as a foundation for eminence in his profession, whether Mercantile or Mechanical” beyond that “which our public schools can now furnish.”[14]

Education could equip young women, as well, with the tools to live sophisticated, genteel lives. After sixteen-year-old Elizabeth

Davis left home in 1816 to attend school, her father explained that the experience would "lay a foundation for your future character & respectability."[15] After touring the United States in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville praised the independence granted to the young American woman, who had "the great scene of the world . . . open to her" and whose education prepared her to exercise both reason and moral sense.[16]

Middling young women also used their education to take positions as schoolteachers in the expanding common school system. For instance, Bristol Academy in Taunton, Massachusetts, advertised "instruction . . . in the art of teaching" for female pupils.[17] In 1825, Nancy Denison left Concord Academy with references indicating that she was "qualified to teach with success and profit" and "very cheerfully recommend[ed]" for "that very responsible employment."[18]

Yet while middle-class youths found opportunities for respectable careers through formal education, the young poor remained in marginalized positions, stigmatized by their manual labor. Poor children sometimes received an education through institutions like the House of Refuge in New York City. They were often then indentured to affluent families to serve as field hands or domestic laborers. The Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents in New York City sent the children under its care to places like Sylvester Lusk's farm in Enfield, Connecticut. There, boys were supposed to learn "the trade and mystery of farming," and girls were expected to learn "the trade and mystery of housewifery." These children were forced to offer obedience in exchange for room and board and a rudimentary education.[19] Poor children also found work in factories such as Samuel Slater's textile mills in southern New England, where Slater published a newspaper advertisement for "four or five active Lads, about 15 Years of Age to serve as Apprentices in the Cotton Factory."[20]

Unsurprisingly, as the Market Revolution worked changes in what it meant to be an American woman, child, or man, social tensions grew over the meanings of wealth and the sources of prosperity. In politics, these tensions help explain the career of a man from the Western backcountry who attained lasting national fame after the War of 1812.

III. The Politics of Jacksonian America

On May 30, 1806, Andrew Jackson, a thirty-nine-year-old Tennessee lawyer, came within inches of death. A duelist's bullet struck him in the chest, just shy of his heart—the man who fired the gun was purportedly the best shot in Tennessee. But the wounded Jackson remained standing. Bleeding, he slowly steadied his aim and returned fire. The other man dropped to the ground, mortally wounded. Jackson—still carrying the bullet in his chest—later boasted, "I should have hit him, if he had shot me through the brain."[21]

This duel in Logan County, Kentucky, was one of many that Jackson fought during his long and highly controversial career. The tenacity, toughness, and vengefulness that kept Jackson alive in that duel, and the mythology and symbolism that would be attached to it, would also characterize many of his later dealings on the battlefield and in politics.

By the time of his death almost forty years later, Andrew Jackson became an enduring and controversial symbol of the ways that various Americans thought about their changing country. For better and worse, he would embody the meanings of American-style democracy.

Democratic Ideals

Today, despite some wavering in recent years, most Americans think democracy is a good thing. They tend to assume the nation's early political leaders believed the same. Wasn't the American Revolution a victory for democratic principles? For many of the founders, however, the clear answer had been no.

To be sure, a wide variety of people had participated in early US politics, especially at the local level. But ordinary citizens' growing direct influence on government after the Revolution had frightened the founding elites. At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Alexander Hamilton had warned about the "vices of democracy" and admitted that he considered the British government—with its powerful king and parliament—"the best in the world."[22] Another convention delegate, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, who eventually refused to sign the finished Constitution, had agreed. "The evils we experience," he proclaimed, "flow from an excess of democracy."[23]

Too much participation by the multitudes, these founding elite had believed, would undermine good order. It would prevent the creation of a secure and united republican society. Such warnings, though, had done nothing to quell Americans' democratic impulses in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

During these decades, Americans who were allowed to vote—and sometimes those who weren't—went to the polls in impressive numbers. They also made public demonstrations. They delivered partisan speeches on patriotic holidays. They petitioned Congress, openly criticized the president, and insisted that free people should not defer even to elected leaders. In many people's eyes, the American republic was a democratic republic: the people were sovereign all the time, not only on election day.

For all their misgivings, elite leaders of political parties could not afford to overlook "the cultivation of popular favour," as Alexander Hamilton put it.[24] Between the 1790s and 1830s, the elite of every state and party learned to listen—or pretend to listen—to the voices of the multitude. And an American president, holding the federal office that most resembles a king's, would come to symbolize the democratizing spirit of American politics.

The career of Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), the survivor of that backcountry Kentucky duel in 1806, exemplified both the opportunities and the dangers of political life in the early republic. A lawyer, enslaver, and military commander—and eventually the seventh president of the United States—he rose from humble frontier beginnings to become one of the most powerful Americans of the nineteenth century.

Old Hickory

Andrew Jackson was born in 1767, on the border between North and South Carolina, to two immigrants from northern Ireland. He grew up during a dangerous time. At age thirteen, he joined an American militia unit in the Revolutionary War. He was soon captured, and a British officer slashed at his head with a sword when he refused to shine the officer's shoes. Wartime disease claimed the lives of Jackson's two brothers and his mother, leaving him an orphan. Their deaths and his wounds left Jackson with a deep and abiding hatred of Great Britain.

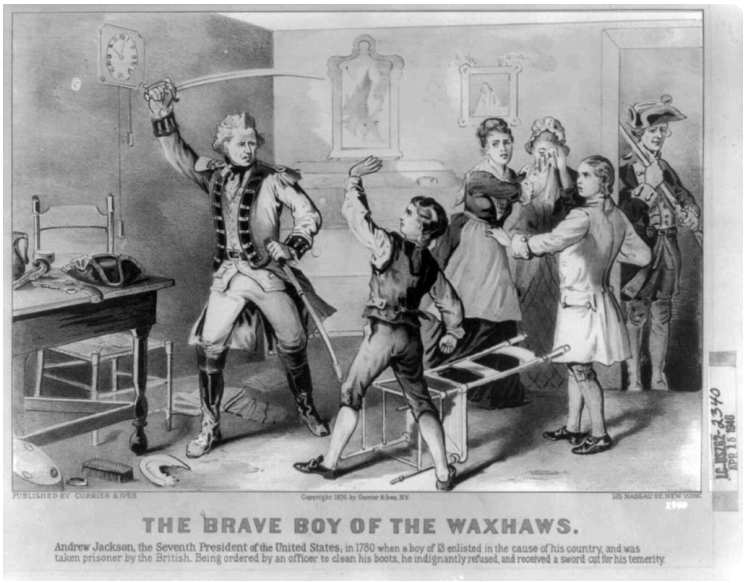


Figure 9.6. Images like this—showing a young Jackson defending his family from a British officer—established Jackson's legend. Currier & Ives, The Brave Boy of the Waxhaws, 1876. Wikimedia.

After the war, Jackson moved west to frontier Tennessee, where, despite his poor education, he prospered and made himself into a Southern gentleman, working as a lawyer and acquiring land and enslaved laborers—he would eventually come to keep 150 people enslaved at the Hermitage, his plantation near Nashville. In 1796, Jackson was elected as a US representative, and a year later he won a seat in the Senate, although he resigned within a year, citing financial difficulties.

Jackson's significance in American history might have ended there, but, thanks to his political connections, he obtained a general's commission at the outbreak of the War of 1812. Despite having no combat experience, General Jackson quickly impressed his troops, who nicknamed him "Old Hickory" after a particularly tough kind of tree.

Jackson led his militiamen into battle in the Southeast, first during the Creek War, a side conflict that started between different factions of Muskogee (Creek) fighters in present-day Alabama. In that war, he won a decisive victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814. A year later, he also defeated a large British invasion force at the Battle of New Orleans. There, Jackson's motley crew of fighters—including backwoods militiamen, free African Americans, Native Americans, and a company of slave-trading pirates—successfully defended the city and inflicted more than two thousand casualties against the British, sustaining barely

three hundred casualties of their own.[25] Despite the fact that the battle occurred after a peace treaty had been signed, Jackson gained wide acclaim throughout the United States.

The end of the War of 1812 did not finish Jackson's military career, however. In 1818, as commander of the US southern military district, the "Hero of New Orleans" also launched an invasion of Spanish-owned Florida. He was acting on vague orders from the War Department to break the resistance of the region's Seminole people, who sheltered Black refugees from slavery and attacked American settlers from across the border. Jackson oversaw several atrocities during this conflict. On his orders in 1816, US soldiers and their Creek allies had already destroyed the "Negro Fort," a British-built stronghold on Spanish soil, killing 270 formerly enslaved people and executing some survivors.[26] Now, in 1818, Jackson's troops crossed the border again. They occupied Pensacola, the main Spanish town in the region, and arrested two British subjects, whom Jackson promptly executed for helping the Seminoles.

The execution of these two Britons, combined with the dubious legality of invading Spanish territory in the first place, created a diplomatic crisis. Most officials in President James Monroe's administration called for Jackson's censure. But the secretary of state, John Quincy Adams, the son of former president John Adams, found Jackson's behavior useful. He defended the impulsive general, arguing that he had been forced to act. Adams used Jackson's military successes in this First Seminole War to pressure Spain to accept the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, which gave Florida to the United States.

Any friendliness between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, however, did not last long.

The Elections of 1824 and 1828

In 1824, four nominees competed for the presidency in one of the closest elections in American history. Conspicuously, the leading candidates represented different major sections of the country. The Northerner John Quincy Adams came from Massachusetts; the Southerner William H. Crawford came from Georgia; and two Westerners, Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay, hailed from Tennessee and Kentucky. All but Crawford were "favorite sons" nominated by their state legislatures rather than by a national party caucus.

Jackson had by far the least experience in Washington; but despite that, or perhaps because of it, he won the most popular votes. Still there was no majority winner in the Electoral College, so the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. There, John Quincy Adams used his political clout to claim the presidency, persuading Henry Clay to support him. After his election, Adams named Clay to serve as secretary of state, a powerful role that had often served as a step to the presidency. Jackson would never forgive Adams, whom his supporters accused of engineering a "corrupt bargain" with Clay to circumvent the people's will.

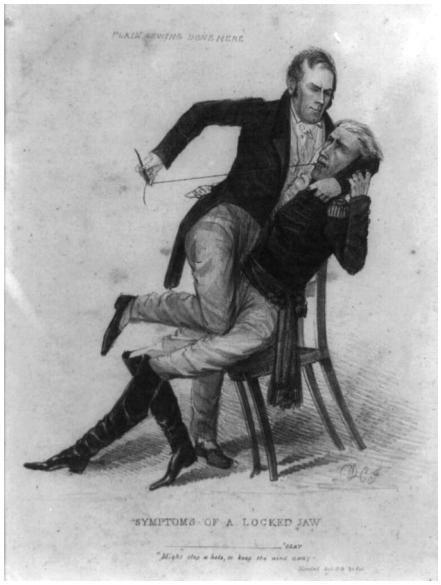


Figure 9.8. This political cartoon shows the antagonism between Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson, where Clay is sewing Jackson's mouth shut. David Claypoole Johnston, Symptoms of a Locked Jaw, 1834. Library of Congress.

Four years later, in 1828, Adams and Jackson squared off in one of the dirtiest presidential elections to date.[27] Pro-Jackson partisans accused the Harvard-educated Adams of elitism, and they claimed that while serving in Russia as a diplomat, he

had offered the Russian emperor the services of an American sex worker. Adams's supporters, on the other hand, accused Jackson of murder and attacked the morality of his marriage, pointing out that Jackson had married his wife Rachel under murky circumstances before her divorce from a prior husband was complete.

Despite the bitter attacks, Andrew Jackson won the election easily. But Rachel Jackson, with her reputation in tatters, died suddenly before his inauguration. Jackson would never forgive the people who attacked his wife's character during the campaign.

For both supporters and opponents, Jackson was a potent symbol of the changes that were happening in America. To supporters, he was "Old Hickory," the "Hero of New Orleans," a leader of plain frontier folk. His wartime accomplishments appealed to their pride. Over the next eight years, he would claim to represent the interests of ordinary white Americans, especially from the South and West, against the country's wealthy and powerful Northeastern elite. This attitude would lead him and his allies into a series of bitter political struggles.

In the process, Jacksonian politics would erode freedom for African Americans and Native Americans even as it expanded some freedoms for poor white people.

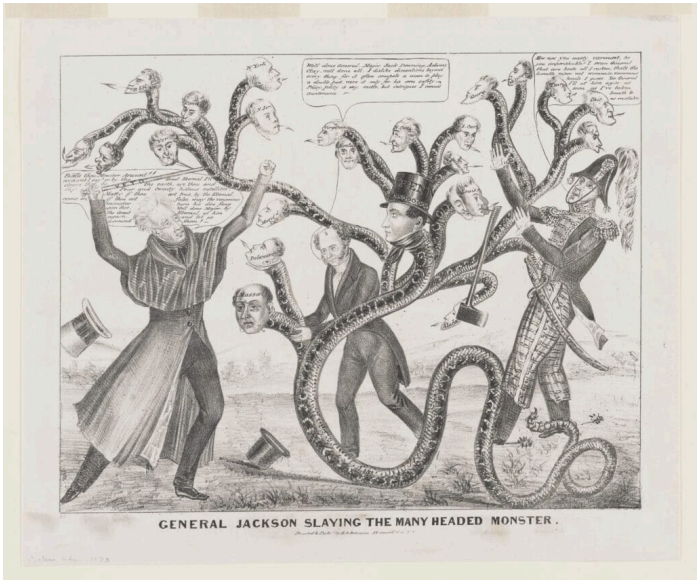


Figure 9.8. This political cartoon shows the antagonism between Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson, where Clay is sewing Jackson's mouth shut. David Claypoole Johnston, Symptoms of a Locked Jaw, 1834. Library of Congress.

Worker Protests

During the early nineteenth century, many Americans grew uneasy with the stark gap between wage laborers and wealthy businessmen. Elite men like Daniel Webster might defend their wealth and privilege by insisting that all workers could achieve "a career of usefulness and enterprise" if they were merely "industrious and sober." But labor activists like Seth Luther countered that capitalism created "a cruel system of extraction on the bodies and minds of the producing classes . . . for no other object than to enable the 'rich' to 'take care of themselves' while the poor must work or starve."[28]

Wage work had traditionally been distained as a state of "dependence." It was considered suitable only as a temporary waypoint for young men on their path toward the economic success necessary to support a wife and children. But now it was often a permanent condition. Hierarchy was always evident. Employers had both financial security and political power, while employees faced uncertainty and powerlessness in the workplace.

In this environment, even people who had already "gotten forward" could not feel secure. Depressions and downturns, such as the stunning Panic of 1819, might destroy businesses and throw their owners into wage work. Even in times of prosperity, male workers might lack good wages or economic security and therefore might need to depend on supplemental income from their wives and young children.

Dependent on the whims of their employers, some workers, like the Lowell mill girls, turned to unions to pool their resources, threatening to strike for better wages and working conditions. In 1825, a group of journeymen in Boston formed a Carpenters' Union to protest their inability "to maintain a family at the present time, with the wages which are now usually given."[29] Working

men organized unions to assert themselves and win both the respect and the resources due to a breadwinner and a citizen.



Figure 9.9. A Carpenter points to the clock informing his colleagues that it is time for them to quit work for the day. Journeyman House Carpenters' Association of Philadelphia banner promoting the ten-hour day, 1835. Wikimedia.

Managers, owners, and civic leaders thought these unions inflamed a dangerous and unnecessary antagonism between capital and labor. They responded by promoting an ideal of social mobility, justifying their own economic privilege as the natural product of superior character traits and hard work.

One group of master carpenters, for example, denounced their striking journeymen in 1825 with the claim that workers of "industrious and temperate habits, have, in their turn, become thriving and respectable Masters, and the great body of our Mechanics have been enabled to acquire property and respectability, with a just weight and influence in society."[30] In other words, they claimed, you could always get ahead if you worked hard. This claim did not always match the experience of wage earners.

Indeed, beyond the whims of employers, some workers believed they knew another specific culprit for the economic turmoil in their lives: the banks.

Banking

During the Transportation Revolution, state legislatures pumped capital into infrastructure projects by issuing corporate charters to banks. A corporate charter allowed investors and directors to avoid personal liability for a company's debts, and legislatures often granted this privilege, along with certain monopoly rights, to promote investment in expensive and risky projects. The number of state-chartered banks in America skyrocketed from just one in 1783, to 266 in 1820, to 702 in 1840, to 1,371 in 1860.[31] European finance also contributed to American infrastructure. By 1844, one British traveler declared that "the prosperity of America, her railroads, canals, steam navigation, and banks, are the fruit of English capital."[32]

The business corporation was still unfamiliar in the daily lives of most people, and many Americans distrusted these strange, impersonal, and potentially foreign business organizations. Corporate officers, they feared, lacked personal responsibility for their actions, and worse, had been given authority that should belong only to representatives of the people. Many Americans sensed a potential conspiracy to consolidate power outside the elected government.

In 1816, Thomas Jefferson himself wrote that Americans should "crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country."[33] A group of journeymen cordwainers (shoemakers) in New Jersey publicly declared in 1835 that they "entirely disapprov[ed] of the incorporation of Companies, for carrying on manual mechanical business, inasmuch as we believe their tendency is to eventuate and produce monopolies, thereby crippling the energies of individual enterprise."[34] But in *Dartmouth v. Woodward* (1819), the Supreme Court upheld the rights of private corporations, blocking an attempt by the government of New Hampshire to reorganize Dartmouth College.

Andrew Jackson's political supporters included many Americans who blamed the special privileges of these "monied corporations," especially state-chartered banks, for the unevenness of economic prosperity. Above all, they blamed the banks for promoting dangerous speculation. Major depressions struck the economy in 1819, 1837, and 1857. Each followed rampant speculation in various commodities: land in 1819, land and enslaved laborers in 1837, and railroad bonds in 1857.

The banks were suspect for another reason, as well. The bank notes they issued seemed inherently fraudulent to many Americans. These paper certificates were not technically money, but which circulated as if they were, passed around from buyer to seller to employee before eventually being presented to the bank for payment in coins. Printed in vast quantities by private firms, bank notes untethered the economy from tangible forms of wealth that seemed more reliable. Paper was no substitute for "cold, hard" metal—gold, silver, or copper. If a bank failed, its bills became worthless. Many bills weren't even issued by the banks that had their names on them; counterfeits were everywhere.

With so many fake bills circulating, Americans were constantly on the lookout for the "confidence man," or "con man" for short, and other deceptive characters. Just as false bank notes could pass as real in the national market, con men and women could circulate through communities, winning the trust of regular honest Americans. Middle-class culture, always uneasy about the morality of the commercial economy, reacted with horror. Advice literature offered young people strategies for avoiding hypocrisy. Intimacy in the domestic sphere became more important as duplicity proliferated in the public sphere. And even as Americans kept pushing "to get forward," many looked for spiritual renewal.

IV. The Second Great Awakening

In the early nineteenth century, a succession of Protestant Christian religious movements collectively known as the Second Great Awakening remade the nation's religious landscape. Preachers traveled on horseback and spoke to crowds outdoors, sharing a message of spiritual and moral "revival." Residents of towns, rural farmlands, and frontier territories alike flocked to huge religious revival meetings, where intense physical and emotional enthusiasm accompanied evangelical conversion experiences.

These revivals contributed to movements for social change, which sometimes endured long after the revival meetings were over. Under the leadership of preachers and ministers, reform societies attacked many social problems. Believers concerned about the harms of alcohol could join temperance societies. Other groups focused on eradicating dueling and gambling. Evangelical reformers might have supported home or foreign missionary work, or Bible and tract societies that distributed Christian literature. Sabbatarians fought tirelessly to end nonreligious activity on Sunday, the Christian sabbath. Moral reform societies sought to end prostitution and redeem its "fallen women."

Across the early nineteenth century, voluntary associations and benevolent activists also worked to reform bankruptcy laws, prison systems, mental hospitals, labor laws, and education. They built orphanages and free medical dispensaries and developed programs to provide social work, job placement, and day camps for children in city slums.

The Second Great Awakening was an expression of powerful intellectual and social currents in American life. Outdoor camp meetings, attended by people from all classes, captured the democratizing spirit of the American Revolution, but at the same time, they provided a unifying moral order and new sense of spiritual community for Americans uneasy with the great changes of the day. The camp meeting—held in close contact with nature, where believers meeting under a forest canopy might seal their conversions with full-immersion river baptisms—reflected the anxiety many felt about urban industrial society.[35]



Figure 9.10. “Camp Meeting of the Methodists in N. America,” 1819. Library of Congress.

As the Market Revolution, western expansion, and European immigration, especially the arrival of large numbers of Catholic Christians, all challenged traditional bonds of authority, Protestant Christian evangelicalism promised equal measures of excitement and order. By the 1820s, religious revivals were spreading across the United States, swelling church membership, spawning new Protestant denominations, and inspiring social reform.

Unlike most long-established churches, which required ministers to have some formal theological training, growing alternatives like the Methodists, who had organized their American denomination the year after the Revolution ended, required only a conversion experience and a supernatural “call to preach.” This meant that a twenty-year-old man could practically overnight go from working in a mill to being a full-time circuit-riding preacher for the Methodists. Thus, the evangelical denominations attracted more new preachers to send into the field—and the lack of formal education meant their preachers could be paid significantly less than a pastor with a divinity degree might expect. It also sometimes meant these movements had a place—albeit a separate place—for enslaved and free Black preachers, and evangelical religious life became increasingly important to African American communities during these decades.

Because of the economic forces of the Market Revolution, middle-class evangelicals caught up in the revival movements also had the time and resources to devote to reform campaigns. Often, their reforms focused on creating and maintaining respectable middle-class culture throughout the United States. Evangelical women, who were active in the revivals, also played a leading role in reform activity. They became increasingly responsible for the moral maintenance of their homes and communities, and their leadership signaled a dramatic departure from previous generations, when such prominent public roles for ordinary women would have been unthinkable.[36]

Though deep ideological and theological disagreements divided Protestant Christians into many different sects, church leaders often worked on an interdenominational basis to establish benevolent societies and draw their followers into the work of social reform. These nondenominational Christian societies became a powerful cultural force sometimes known as the “benevolent empire.”

Temperance

Among all the social reform movements associated with the benevolent empire, the temperance crusade was perhaps the most successful. Championed by prominent preachers like Lyman Beecher, the movement’s effort to curb the consumption of alcohol galvanized widespread support among the middle class.

Alcohol consumption had become a significant social issue after the American Revolution. Commercial distilleries produced whiskey that was frequently more affordable than milk or beer and safer than water, and hard liquor became a staple beverage in many households. Consumption among adults skyrocketed in the early nineteenth century, and alcoholism became an endemic problem across the United States by the 1820s.

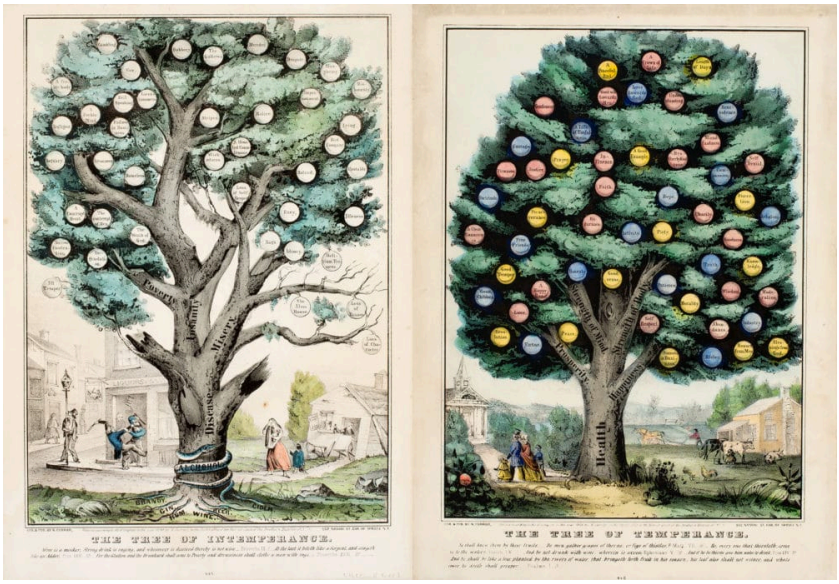


Figure 9.11. N. Currier, "Tree of Temperance" and "Tree of Intemperance," 1849. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

As alcoholism became more visible, most reformers escalated their efforts, switching from advocating moderation in liquor consumption to demanding full abstinence from all alcohol. They saw a direct correlation between alcohol and other forms of vice. Most importantly, they felt that it endangered family life.

In 1826, evangelical ministers organized the American Temperance Society to lead the national crusade. The ATS supported lecture campaigns, produced temperance literature, and organized Christian revivals specifically aimed at encouraging worshippers to give up the drink. The ATS was so successful that within a decade, it established five thousand branches and grew to over a million members.[37] Temperance reformers pledged not to touch the bottle and canvassed their neighborhoods and towns to encourage other people to join their "Cold Water Army." They also influenced lawmakers in several states to prohibit the sale of liquor.



Figure 9.12. Nathaniel Currier, "The Drunkard's Progress." 1846. Wikimedia.

Associating heavy drinking with men who abused, abandoned, or neglected their families, middle-class women formed a significant presence in the temperance societies. But their movement threatened to intrude on the private lives of lower-class workers, many of whom were Irish Catholics in families of recent immigrants. These moral attacks by the Protestant middle class thus exacerbated class, ethnic, and religious tensions. Still, the movement was a great success for reformers. In the 1840s, Americans drank half of what they had in the 1820s, and per capita consumption continued to decline over the next two

decades.[38]

The benevolent empire's potent combination of social reform and evangelical piety produced agendas and institutional changes that have reverberated through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By devoting their time to the moral uplift of their communities and the world in general, middle-class reformers in the nineteenth century created many of the largest and most influential organizations in the nation's history. For the optimistic, religiously motivated American, no problem seemed too great to solve. No problem, that is, except one.

V. The South, the West, and the Limits of Democracy

Revivals and reform extended well beyond American cities. Stirred by nationalism and moral purpose, evangelicals also labored to make sure the word of God reached far-flung settlers on the western American frontier. The American Bible Society distributed thousands of Bibles to areas where churches and clergy were scarce, while the American Home Missionary Society provided substantial financial assistance to frontier congregations struggling to achieve self-sufficiency. Missionaries also worked to translate the Bible into Native American languages in order to evangelize Indigenous populations.

Meanwhile, however, a troubling pattern emerged in national politics and culture. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, American politics shifted toward "sectional" conflict among the states of the North, South, and West. Many Northerners feared that the Southern states' common interest in protecting slavery was creating a congressional voting bloc that would be difficult for "free states" to counter. The North and South began to clash over federal policy as Northern states gradually ended slavery but Southern states came to depend even more on enslaved labor.

In this way, even as industrialization and the cash economy tied diverse regions together in trade, ideology drove the same regions apart. And amid all the social reform movements of the age, the brutal system of forced labor that enriched the few in the South seemed only to be growing more secure.

The Cotton Revolution

As late as the 1820s, Southern life was predicated on a rural lifestyle—farming, laboring, acquiring land and enslaved laborers, and producing whatever that land and those enslaved laborers could produce. The market, often located in the nearest town or city, rarely stretched beyond state lines. But cotton and steam power changed much of this.

Before cotton became central to its economy, the South had few major seaports. Even on the nation's great western waterway, the Mississippi River, which emptied into the Gulf of Mexico at New Orleans, shipping was almost entirely one-way—flowing with the current, not against it. But in January 1812, a 371-ton ship called the New Orleans arrived at its namesake city from the distant Ohio River port of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was the first steamboat to navigate the internal waterways of the North American continent from one end to the other and remain capable, thanks to coal and steam, of returning home. The technology was far from perfect—the New Orleans sank two years later after hitting a sandbar—but its successful trial promised a bright new future for river travel.



Figure 9.13. Hippolyte Sebron, “Bateaux à Vapeur Géant, la Nouvelle-Orléans 1853,” 1853. Wikimedia.

And that future was, indeed, bright. Just five years after the New Orleans arrived in the Crescent City, seventeen steamboats ran regular upriver lines. By the mid-1840s, more than 700 steamboats would do the same. And during 1860, the port of New Orleans would receive and unload 3,500 steamboats, all focused entirely on internal trade. These boats carried around 160,000 tons of raw product that merchants, traders, and agents converted into nearly $220 million in trade in a single year.[39] More than 80 percent of the yield was from cotton alone.

Thus, the Market Revolution’s explosion of steam changed the South along with the rest of the country. Everything that could be steam-powered was steam-powered. Cotton gins, wagons, grinders, looms, and baths were all adapted to this technology. Most importantly, the South’s rivers, lakes, and bays were no longer barriers and hindrances to trade. They had become the way commerce flowed, the “roads” of a modernizing society and region.

In this way, while most Northern US cities developed as centers of manufacturing, creating public spaces to boost the morale of wage laborers, America’s Southern cities adapted the Industrial Revolution to cotton and slavery. In fact, the South experienced a greater rate of urbanization between 1820 and 1860 than the more industrial North. The growth of Southern cities, far from promoting free wage labor, allowed slavery to flourish.

Life in Slavery

The global and economic functions of the South were wholly dependent on enslaved labor. The South was home to nearly four million enslaved people by 1860, amounting to more than 45 percent of the entire Southern population.[40]

Enslaved Southerners, though unfree, developed a culture all their own. They created kinship and family networks, systems of trade, linguistic codes, religious congregations, and even benevolent and social aid organizations. They formed all these within the grip of slavery, a system dedicated to extraction and exploitation.

More than anything else, the concept of family organized the daily lives of enslaved people. Through family units and kinship networks, enslaved people could piece together a sense of community, feeling, and dedication separate from the system of forced production that defined their work lives. Ideas that were passed between relatives on different plantations, names that were given to children in honor of the deceased, and other basic forms of love and devotion created a sense of individuality, an identity that assuaged the loneliness and desperation of enslaved life. Family defined how each community functioned, grew, and labored.



Figure 9.14. Eyre Crowe, Slaves Waiting for Sale, Richmond, Virginia, 1861. University of Virginia, The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas.

As American-born enslaved laborers overtook earlier African-born generations, the practice of marriage, especially among members of the same ethnic group or even residents of the same plantation, became vital to the continuation of traditions. Marriage served as the most important institution of cultural and identity formation, as it connected enslaved people to their own pasts and gave some sense of protection for the future.[41] But marriages and other family bonds were never safe from the violence of slavery.

By the start of the Civil War, approximately two-thirds of enslaved people were members of nuclear households, each averaging six people. Such a family might have a mother, a father, children, and often a grandparent, an elderly aunt or uncle, and even "in-laws." Enslaved Southerners who did not have a marriage bond still maintained family ties, often living with a single parent, brother, sister, or grandparent.[42]

Thus, culture thrived among the enslaved in ways that are difficult for us to see now through the bales of cotton sitting on the docks and the stacks of money filling the counting houses of the South's urban centers. But religion, honor, and pride transcended material goods. Defying the cruel domination of slavery, enslaved people maintained traditions and crafted new culture. They fell in love, had children, and protected one another. They were resourceful, brilliant, and vibrant, and they created freedom where freedom seemingly could not exist. And within their communities, resilience and dedication often led to cultural sustenance.

Yet the threat of disruption, especially through sale, always loomed. As the internal slave trade increased after the constitutional ban on transatlantic slave importation in 1808 and the rise of cotton in the 1830s and 1840s, enslaved families, especially those established prior to arriving in the United States, came under increased threat. Hundreds of thousands of marriages, many with children, fell victim to sale "downriver"—a euphemism for the near constant flow of enslaved laborers down the Mississippi River to the developing cotton belt in the Southwest.[43]

In fact, during the Cotton Revolution alone, between one-fifth and one-third of all marriages between enslaved people were broken up through sale or forced migration. And the lure of a profitable sale was not the only threat. Enslavers recognized that marriage was, in the most basic and tragic sense, a privilege they granted and defined. Many enslavers used marriages, or threats against marriages, to wield power over the people they held in bondage.

Expansion and Conflict

The Southern economy's appetite for cotton—and for land where enslaved workers could grow it—contributed to the nation's westward sprawl during the early nineteenth century. Other forces also played a role in national expansion across North America. Economic busts like the Panic of 1819 constantly threatened Western farmers and communities. The dream of subsistence and stability abruptly ended as many migrants lost their land and felt the hand of the distant market economy forcing them even farther west to escape debt. As a result, the federal government consistently sought to increase access to Western land, including efforts to lower the amount of land required for purchase. Smaller lots made it easier for more farmers to clear land and begin

farming faster.[44] This contributed to frequent conflict between white settlers and Native American communities.

The expansion of American influence and territory off the continent, meanwhile, became an important corollary to westward expansion. The US government sought to keep European countries out of the Western Hemisphere even as it laid claim to more and more western territory. Thus, in 1821, while still serving as secretary of state for President James Monroe, John Quincy Adams helped formulate the "Monroe Doctrine," declaring US hostility to British and Russian involvement in the Americas. Adams's great fear was not territorial loss. Rather, the Monroe administration was worried mainly about the ability of the United States to compete commercially with the British in Latin America and the Caribbean. Expansion of economic opportunity and protection from foreign pressures became the overriding goals of US foreign policy in the age of the Market Revolution.[45]

The greatest test of the US government between 1815 and 1828, however, related to political conflict over the expansion of slavery in the West.

The Missouri Crisis

When white settlers in Missouri, a new territory carved out of the Louisiana Purchase, applied for statehood in 1819, the balance of political power between Northern and Southern states became the focus of public debate. Missouri already had more than ten thousand enslaved labors and was poised to join the Southern slave states in Congress. [46]

Accordingly, Congressman James Tallmadge of New York proposed an amendment to Missouri's application for statehood. Tallmadge claimed that the institution of slavery mocked the Declaration of Independence and the liberty it promised to "all men." He proposed that Congress should admit Missouri as a state only if bringing more enslaved people to Missouri were prohibited and children born to those enslaved there were freed at age twenty-five.

Congressmen like Tallmadge opposed slavery for moral reasons, but they also wanted to maintain a sectional balance of power. Unsurprisingly, the Tallmadge Amendment met with firm resistance from Southern politicians. It passed in the House of Representatives with the support of nearly all the Northern congressmen, who had a majority there, but it was quickly defeated in the Senate.

When Congress reconvened in 1820, a senator from Illinois, another new Western state, proposed a compromise. Jesse Thomas hoped his offer would not only end the Missouri Crisis but also prevent any future sectional disputes over slavery and statehood. Another Westerner, Henry Clay of Kentucky, joined in promoting the deal, earning himself the nickname "the Great Compromiser."

Their bargain, the Missouri Compromise of 1820, contained three parts.[47] First, Congress would admit Missouri as a slave state. Second, Congress would admit Maine—which until now had been a territory of Massachusetts—as a free state, maintaining the balance between the number of free and slave states. Third, the rest of the Louisiana Purchase territory would be divided along the 36°30′ line of latitude—or in other words, along the southern border of Missouri. Slavery would be prohibited in other new states north of this line, but it would be permitted in new states to the south. The compromise passed both houses of Congress, and the Missouri Crisis ended peacefully.

Not everyone, however, felt relieved. The Missouri Crisis had made the sectional nature of American politics impossible to ignore. It had exposed just how divisive the slavery issue had grown. The debate had filled newspapers, speeches, and congressional records. Antislavery and proslavery positions from that point forward would repeatedly return to points made during the Missouri debates.

In these debates, white Southerners had not yet begun arguing that slavery was a "positive good" in the world. That claim would come later. But they had been insisting that the framers of the US Constitution had supported slavery and wanted to see it expand.

Likewise, the debates over Missouri's admission to the Union in 1820 had offered the first sustained debate on the question of Black citizenship. A proposed clause in Missouri's state constitution would have imposed a hard ban on any future Black migration into the state. Legislators ultimately had agreed that this ban violated the US Constitution, but they had reaffirmed Missouri's right to deny citizenship to African Americans.

While the crisis lasted, many Americans, including seventy-seven-year-old Thomas Jefferson, were alarmed at how readily some Americans spoke of disunion and even civil war over the issue. "This momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror," Jefferson wrote. "I considered it at once as the [death] knell of the Union."[48]

For now, the Missouri Crisis did not result in disunion and civil war, as Jefferson and others feared. But it did fail to settle the

issue of slavery's expansion into new Western territories.

VI. Primary Sources

1. James Madison Asks Congress to Support Internal Improvements, 1815

After the War of 1812, Americans looked to strengthen their nation through government spending on infrastructure, or what were then called internal improvements. In his seventh annual address to congress, Madison called for public investment to create national roads, canals, and even a national seminary. He also called for a tariff, or tax on certain imports, designed to make foreign goods more expensive, giving American producers an advantage in domestic markets.

2. A Traveler Describes Life Along the Erie Canal, 1829

Basil Hall, a British visitor traveled along the Erie Canal and took careful notes on what he found. In this excerpt, he described life in Rochester, New York. Rochester, and other small towns in upstate New York, grew rapidly as a result of the Erie Canal.

3. Harriet H. Robinson Remembers a Mill Workers' Strike, 1836

The social upheavals of the Market Revolution created new tensions between rich and poor, particularly between the new class of workers and the new class of managers. Lowell, Massachusetts was the location of the first American factory. In this document, a woman reminisces about a strike that she participated in at a Lowell textile mill.

4. Missouri Controversy Documents, 1819-1820

Southerners dominated the highest federal offices in the early United States, as Virginians held the Presidency thirty-two of the first thirty-six years of the nation's history. Northerners resented this dominance and sectional tensions simmered until they threatened to boil over in 1820 when James Tallmadge included the below amendment to Missouri's application for statehood. Included below is Tallmadge's amendment; the final act which settled the crisis, at least temporarily; and a private letter from Thomas Jefferson illustrating his reaction to the crisis.

5. President Monroe Outlines the Monroe Doctrine, 1823

The spirit of Manifest Destiny had its corollary in an earlier piece of American foreign policy. Americans sought to remove colonizing Europeans from the western hemisphere. As Secretary of State for President James Monroe, John Quincy Adams crafted what came to be called the Monroe Doctrine. President Monroe outlined the principles of this policy in his seventh annual message to Congress, excerpted here.

6. Letters from Venezuelan General Francisco de Miranda regarding Latin American Revolution, 1805-1806

During a trip to the United States Venezuelan General Francisco de Miranda worked to launch a revolution in Venezuela that he expected would spread throughout South America. He made a series of high-level contacts, as indicated in the letters below. The American public saw South American revolutionaries as "fellow republicans." At least three American ships, numerous American guns, and about 200 recruits participated in Miranda's failed attempt at Revolution.

7. Rebecca Burlend recalls her emigration from England to Illinois, 1848

Rebecca Burlend, her husband, and children emigrated to Illinois from England in 1831. These reflections describe her reaction to landing in New Orleans, sailing up the Mississippi to St. Louis, and finally arriving at her new home in Illinois. This was her first experience encountering American slavery, the American landscape, and the rugged living conditions of her new home.

8. County Election Painting, 1854

Beginning in the late 1840s, George Caleb Bingham created a series of paintings illustrating American democracy. He was drawn to the energy and near-chaos of speeches, rallies, election days, public announcements of voting results and more. Prior to painting this work, Bingham himself ran for state office in Missouri as a Whig. Here he shows the tumult of a county election day. Children play games, drunkards raise their glass (while political operatives drag inebriated men to the poll), citizens carefully debate the issues, while others study the newspaper. Art historians argue whether Bingham is celebrating or mocking American democracy.

9. The Fruit of Alcohol and Temperance Lithographs, 1849

This pair of lithographs, created by Nathaniel Currier (later of Currier & Ives fame), contrasts the "fruits" of abstaining from alcohol to those of indulging in strong drink. It leaves little to the imagination. Intemperance is symbolized by a diseased tree, surrounded by drunks outside of a pawn shop and a woman and her children being thrown out of their home. The lush foliage of temperance, on the other hand, is surrounded by prosperous church-going farm families.

VII. Conclusion

Instead of marking the end of human bondage in the United States, the 1810s and 1820s ended the first great age of emancipation. In hindsight, it can be said that the movement to end slavery that began with the Revolution came to an end in 1817, when the state of New York adopted the North's last gradual manumission law. For decades after this, despite the rise of wage labor, American "progress" would be impossible for many Americans to imagine apart from slavery.

The Market Revolution thus left open the question of what kind of labor would triumph in the United States. For all it did to spread hourly factory work, inspire social reform movements, and provoke the democratization of party politics, the national cash market only deepened the white South's dependence on enslaved workers. America's celebration of white, middle-class domestic life—with its commitment to temperance and piety, the sacredness of women and children, and belief in uplift through education—could hardly disguise what was happening. Indeed, the 1830s would usher in a new era of religiously inspired antislavery radicalism, responding to the contradictions of this moment.

Meanwhile, in electoral politics, both the hopes and the fears of many Americans were fastening on one man and the ideas about American identity that he seemed to embody. The presidential victory of Andrew Jackson in 1828 would inaugurate a new system of political partisanship—one that in some respects still exists today.

VII. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Jonathan Wilfred Wilson, with content contributions by Kelly Arehart, Ian Beamish, Myles Beaurpre, Marjorie Brown, Steffi Cerato, Kristin Condotta, Emily Conroy-Krutz, Mari Crabtree, Jane Fiegen Green, Robert Gudmestad, Nathan Jeremie-Brink, Lindsay Keiter, Brenden Kennedy, William Kerrigan, Brenda Lakhani, Maria Montalvo, Katherine Rohrer, Christopher Sawula, David Schley, Evgenia Shayder Shoop, Marie Stango, Kevin Waite, James Wellborn, Jonathan Wilfred Wilson, Caroline Wright, Ben Wright, and Ashley Young.

Recommended Reading

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10: American Democracy



Figure 10.1. George Caleb Bingham, The County Election, 1852. Reynolda House Museum of American Art.

I. Introduction

On January 20, 1835, an unemployed English immigrant name Richard Lawrence aimed two pistols at President Andrew Jackson. From a mere eight feet away, he pulled both triggers in the first ever assassination attempt on an American president. Remarkably, both weapons misfired, and Jackson took off after the would-be killer with his cane upraised. Although the assailant was motivated by a misguided belief that Jackson had killed his father, Jackson insisted the incident must have been politically motivated. Jackson interpreted the assassination attempt within the political climate of the time, one in which violence was a regular occurrence, immigrants drew increased scrutiny, conspiracy theories ran rife, and partisan strains threatened the sinews of American life.

Few political figures in American history have been mired in as much controversy as Andrew Jackson, so it is perhaps unsurprising that he was the first to face an attempt on his life. To some, Jackson represented the nation's first and greatest champion of democracy for "the common man." To others, Jackson was a tyrannical and aggressive threat to American republicanism. Undoubtedly, Jackson was a pivotal figure in a transitional moment in the nineteenth century. During the 1830s, the United States grappled with foundational questions relating to the nature of the nation's government, economy, political life, demographic composition, and moral character. In some way, each of these issues became a flashpoint for debate during Jackson's administration.

II: Jackson's Chaotic Cabinet

As Jackson entered the White House, his desire to institute reform would be hampered by a series of political crises engulfing his cabinet. These controversies would test not only the bounds of Jackson's political power but the configuration of American constitutional democracy itself. His supporters—a loose coalition of small farmers and "mechanics" (skilled urban laborers) in the North and West along with Southern planters—lacked a clear vision of what that reform might look like, a problem that would plague his administration in coming years. He assembled a geographically and ideologically diverse cabinet to advise him on national affairs and balance the tensions brewing between Vice President John C. Calhoun and Jackson's close advisor, Martin Van Buren. Yet even within the ranks of his allies, issues ranging from tax policy to the politics of high society would threaten Jackson's ability to govern effectively.

Jackson promptly instructed his cabinet to begin instituting the first of his major reforms in 1829: removing "corrupt" officials

from federal positions and instituting a policy of “rotation in office.” Breaking with the precedent of former presidents who rarely dismissed people from appointments unless they were visibly unscrupulous or incompetent, his administration removed nine hundred federal officials from positions on the basis that long-term office holding represented a kind of undemocratic privilege. While many of his supporters lauded this move as egalitarian, others could not make sense of the decision to remove qualified public servants and replace them with those they saw as inexperienced lackeys. These critics followed New York Senator William L. Macy in derisively describing this as the “spoils system.” Jackson set a new precedent: presidents for the next fifty years would distribute patronage posts as a reward to their political supporters, regardless of their level of qualification.

While Jackson’s cabinet began the work of rooting out corruption (for indeed they did uncover evidence of officials having embezzled $457,000 from the government), a more personal crisis would begin to drive a wedge between Jackson, his vice president, and the entire cabinet.[1] The Eaton Affair, sometimes insultingly called the “Petticoat Affair,” began as a disagreement among elite women in Washington, DC, that would eventually lead to the disbanding of Jackson’s cabinet.

Jackson preferred Washington outsiders. One such man was his friend John Henry Eaton, a senator from Tennessee, whom Jackson nominated to serve as secretary of war. Only a few months earlier, Eaton had married Margaret O’Neale Timberlake, the recent widow of a navy officer. She was the daughter of Washington boardinghouse proprietors, and her humble origins and her combination of beauty, outspokenness, and familiarity with so many men in the boardinghouse led to gossip. When her first husband died, rumors swirled that she and Eaton had been having an affair. Their quick marriage a mere nine months following her first husband’s death scandalized the women of high Washington society. One wrote that Margaret Eaton’s reputation had been “totally destroyed.”[2] The wives of cabinet members, led by the vice president’s wife Floride Calhoun, refused to have anything to do with her.

This social snubbing had great political importance. Although women could not vote or hold office, they played an important role in politics.[3] They held considerable influence and, as one local society woman noted, had “as much rivalship and party spirit” as their male counterparts.[4] Their presence in DC blurred the lines between the social and political realms, with purportedly social events becoming the sites of ongoing political dealmaking. The social exclusion of Margaret Eaton snowballed into a major political crisis when the president, already sensitive to these types of dynamics due to a similar scandal involving his recently deceased wife Rachel, took her under his wing. When Jackson realized the gossip originated from the wives of his own cabinet members, it opened a deep rift between himself and especially his vice president that would eventually lead to the dissolution of his cabinet.



Figure 10.2. This photograph shows Eaton at a much older age. “Eaton, Mrs. Margaret (Peggy O’Neill), old lady,” c. 1870-1880. Library of Congress.

The hostility among Jackson’s cabinet would only deepen amid a sectional dispute over national tax policy. When Jackson was inaugurated, most Southerners—Calhoun included—expected him to do away with the so-called Tariff of Abominations. The Tariff of 1828, an import tax providing protection for Northern manufacturing interests from European competitors, drove up costs for Southerners who were forced to purchase more expensive Northern goods and hit with retaliation from countries like Great Britain who purchased less Southern cotton in response. South Carolina, Calhoun’s home state, led the charge against the tariff,

which they also saw as an entering wedge for federal legislation limiting slavery. The real fear was that the federal government might attack "the peculiar domestick institution of the Southern States"—meaning slavery.[5] When Jackson failed to act against the tariff, Vice President Calhoun was caught in a tight position.

In 1828, Calhoun secretly drafted the "South Carolina Exposition and Protest," an essay and set of resolutions that laid out the doctrine of nullification or declaring a law null and void.[6] Drawing from the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798 and 1799, he argued that the states retained sovereignty within the national compact and could thus nullify unconstitutional federal statutes (or, if necessary, leave the Union). When Calhoun's authorship became public, Jackson interpreted it as a personal betrayal as well as a challenge to his authority and increasingly began to rely more heavily on the more informal group of advisors dubbed his "kitchen cabinet."

Regardless of the distractions caused by the Eaton Affair and Calhoun's disloyalty, Jackson worked to promote his agenda and use his authority as executive to dismantle federal overreach. That he could do so while also launching political assaults on his enemies (Henry Clay and now John C. Calhoun) was an added bonus. Under the justification that it was a local rather than national matter, Jackson vetoed an 1830 bill championed by Clay and Calhoun that would have funded internal improvements in Kentucky. The Maysville Road veto would not be the only time he mobilized this distinct presidential power. During his two terms, he would invoke the veto power more than any of his predecessors.

The ongoing tensions in his cabinet would continue to vex Jackson until March 1831, when Van Buren offered his resignation, opening the door for Jackson to reorganize his entire cabinet. By mid-April, Jackson called for and received the resignations of the anti-Eaton cabinet members. In the end, only a single member of his original cabinet remained, the rest replaced with new appointees whose primary loyalty was to the president himself.

III. Nullification and the Bank War

Another long-simmering issue central to Jackson's platform and popularity was his distrust of the Bank of the United States. First established under Alexander Hamilton's financial plan and then rechartered by Congress in 1816, the bank was designed to stabilize the growing American economy by establishing a national currency and regulating state banks and public credit. A private corporation, the Second Bank of the United States was tasked with federal responsibilities, including holding and disbursing federal funds. Though many Democratic-Republicans had supported the bank, some remained suspicious about the dependability and constitutionality of the institution and grew distrustful of paper currency. The bank came under additional scrutiny after the Panic of 1819 as Jackson and others blamed the bank for the economic downturn. And, as federal land sales brought in enormous amounts of money by the early 1830s, critics worried that the bank and its representatives were restricting state banks and businesses for their own profit.

Early in his first term, Jackson set his sights on the bank and its director, Nicholas Biddle, who represented the elite monied interests he hoped to dislodge. An early effort to recharter the "Monster Bank" fell in the midst of an election year and its passage through both houses of Congress left Jackson in a difficult position. As Biddle clearly knew, if Jackson failed to sign the rechartering bill into law, it could impact his reelection. For Jackson, Biddle's tactics smacked of blackmail. Unswayed, he told Van Buren, "The Bank is trying to kill me, but I will kill it!"[7] He vetoed the bill to recharter the bank.

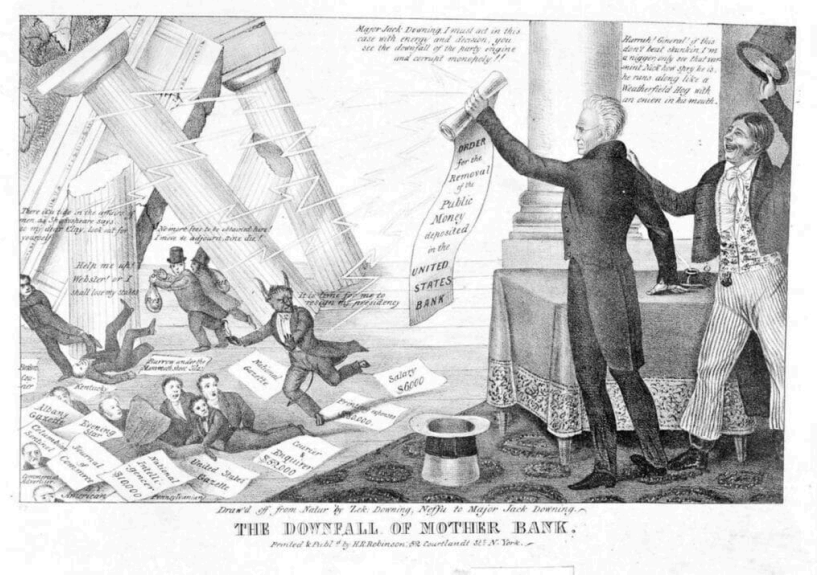


Figure 10.3. "The bank," Andrew Jackson told Martin Van Buren, "is trying to kill me, but I will kill it!" That is just the unwavering force that Edward Clay depicted in this lithograph, which praised Jackson for terminating the Second Bank of the United States. Clay shows Nicholas Biddle as the Devil running away from Jackson as the bank collapses around him, his hirelings, and speculators. Edward W. Clay, c. 1832. Wikimedia.

In his veto message, Jackson articulated the values that defined his presidency. He called the bank unconstitutional and "dangerous to the liberties of the people." The bank was virtually a federal agency, but it had powers that were not granted anywhere in the Constitution. Worst of all, the bank was a way for well-connected people to get richer at everyone else's expense.[8] Only a strictly limited government, Jackson believed, would treat people equally. Although its charter would not be renewed, the Bank of the United States could still operate for several more years. So, in 1833, to diminish its power, Jackson also directed his cabinet to stop depositing federal funds in it. From now on, the government would do business with selected state banks instead. Critics called them Jackson's "pet banks," and although the bank veto set off fierce controversy, the Bank War gave his supporters a specific "democratic" idea to rally around. More than any other issue, opposition to the national bank came to define their beliefs.

Meanwhile, Jackson continued to try to calm the situation that had emerged with his Southern supporters over tariff disputes. Congress had acceded to Jackson's calls for reductions in tariffs in 1832, lowering rates on some products but keeping them high on others—but this was not enough to diffuse the tensions. Jackson had replaced Calhoun as his running mate, and Calhoun returned to South Carolina where a special state convention nullified the federal tariffs of 1828 and 1832. It declared them unconstitutional and therefore "null, void, and no law" within South Carolina.[9] The convention ordered South Carolina customs officers not to collect tariff revenue and declared that any federal attempt to enforce the tariffs would lead to secession.

President Jackson responded dramatically. He denounced the ordinance of nullification and declared that "disunion, by armed force, is TREASON."[10] Vowing to hang Calhoun and any other nullifier who defied federal power, he persuaded Congress to pass a Force Bill that authorized him to send the military to enforce the tariffs. Faced with such threats, other Southern states declined to join South Carolina. Privately, however, Jackson supported the idea of compromise and allowed his political enemy Henry Clay to broker a solution with Calhoun. Congress passed a compromise bill that slowly lowered federal tariff rates. South Carolina rescinded nullification for the tariffs but also nullified the Force Bill.

Jackson's decisive action seemingly forced South Carolina to back down. But the crisis also united the ideas of secession and states' rights, two concepts that had not necessarily been linked before. Perhaps most clearly, nullification showed the immense political power of enslavers. During later debates in the 1840s and 1850s, they would raise the idea of nullification again.

IV: The Second Party System

Increasingly, supporters of Andrew Jackson referred to themselves as Democrats. Under the strategic leadership of Martin Van Buren, they built a highly organized national political party, the first modern party in the United States. Much more than earlier iterations, this Democratic Party had a centralized leadership structure and a consistent ideological program for all levels of

government: they denounced federal overreach, promoted laissez-faire economic approaches, supported geographic expansion, and put a premium on personal and political loyalty. Meanwhile, Jackson's enemies, mocking him as "King Andrew the First," named themselves after the patriots of the American Revolution, the Whigs.



Figure 10.5. Andrew Jackson portrayed himself as the defender of the common man, and in many ways he democratized American politics. His opponents, however, zeroed in on Jackson's willingness to utilize the powers of the executive office. Unwilling to defer to Congress and absolutely willing to use his veto power, Jackson came to be regarded by his adversaries as a tyrant (or, in this case, "King Andrew I".) Anonymous, c. 1832. Wikimedia.

Growing out of the National Republican's loose political coalition, the Whigs operated as an anti-Jackson opposition party. But Jackson's enemies were a varied and sometimes entirely contradictory group. For example, Whigs included proslavery Southerners angry about Jackson's behavior during the Nullification Crisis as well as antislavery Yankees. Because of this motley coalition, the party struggled to bring a cohesive message to voters in the 1830s. Anti-Jackson leaders stressed Protestant culture and federally sponsored internal improvements and courted the support of a variety of reform movements, including temperance, nativism, and even antislavery. Even before the party formally coalesced, these positions attracted a wide range of figures, including Henry Clay of Kentucky who served as the anti-Jackson nominee in 1832. Ridiculed by Democrats as an elitist champion of the Bank, Clay was roundly defeated by Jackson.

A number of voters in 1832, equally dissatisfied with Clay and Jackson, cast their ballots for the Anti-Masonic Party, a short-lived party formed in opposition to the secular fraternal order known as the Freemasons. While Freemasonry had been an important part of the social life of wealthy men in the early republic, the brotherhood's secrecy, elitism, and rituals generated deep suspicion among many Americans. Following the strange disappearance and probable murder of William Morgan, who had planned to publish an exposé of the order's secret rites, anti-Masonic sentiment rose to new levels and coalesced into a political movement that, though small, had significant power in New York and parts of New England. The Anti-Masons would be the first political party to hold a national nominating convention, a political move subsequently adopted by other parties. After their dismal showing in the 1832 election, the Anti-Masonic Party folded into the nascent Whig movement.

While some blamed Freemasons for the problems they saw in American society, others, called nativists, turned against immigrants, particularly those who practiced Catholicism. Nativists watched with horror as more and more Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany arrived in American cities. These immigrants professed different beliefs, often spoke unfamiliar languages, and participated in alien cultural traditions. They feared that Catholics would bring religious violence with them to the United States and worried about their influence on political life.

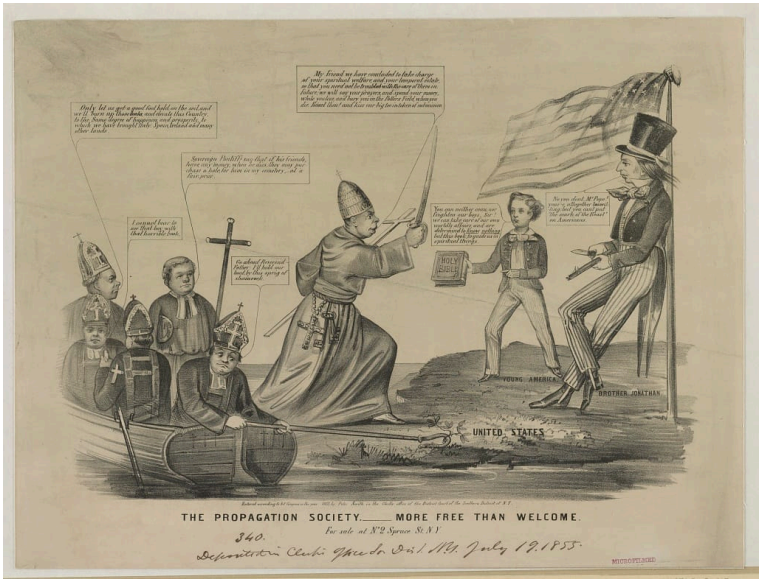


Figure 10.4. This anti-Catholic print depicts Catholic priests arriving by boat and then threatening Uncle Sam and a young Protestant boy who holds out a Bible in resistance. An anti-Catholic cartoon, reflecting the nativist perception of the threat posed by the Roman Church's influence in the United States through Irish immigration and Catholic education. N. Currier, "The Propagation Society, More Free than Welcome," 1855. Library of Congress.

In industrial Northern cities, Irish immigrants swelled the ranks of the working class and quickly encountered the politics of industrial labor. Trade unions such as Philadelphia's Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers or the Carpenters' Union of Boston operated within specific industries in major American cities. These unions protected the economic power of their members by creating closed shops—workplaces wherein employers could only hire union members—and striking to improve working conditions. By the 1840s, labor organizers demanded better pay, protections for children in factories, and limits on working hours. Activists established the Ten-Hour Movement, arguing that a ten-hour day would improve the immediate conditions of laborers by allowing "time and opportunities for intellectual and moral improvement."[11]

Although Democrats tended to support the interests of the working class and garnered the votes of urban workers in 1832, many politicians denounced these organizations as unlawful combinations to promote the narrow self-interest of workers above the rights of property holders and the interests of the common good. In response, some skilled workers formed political organizations like the Workingmen's Party established in Philadelphia in 1828. Unions did not become legally acceptable until 1842 when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in favor of a union organized among Boston bootmakers, arguing that the workers were capable of acting "in such a manner as best to subserve their own interests."[12] Even after the case, unions remained in a precarious legal position and were often ineffectual in achieving their objectives. Amid this kind of organizing, immigrants remained particularly vulnerable to assault by nativists who feared their religious proclivities as much as their politics.

In the summer of 1834, a mob of Protestants attacked a Catholic convent near Boston after hearing rumors that the nuns were holding a woman against her will. Angry men broke into the convent and burned it to the ground. Later, a young woman named Rebecca Reed, who had spent time in the convent, published a memoir describing abuses she claimed the nuns had directed toward novices and students.[13] The convent attack was among many eruptions of nativism in the Northeast during the early nineteenth century. Growing numbers of Protestants accused Catholic priests of not only preying sexually on young women but also of politically controlling their parishioners, whom they presumed to be enslaved to the will of the pope in Rome. Protestant minister Lyman Beecher lectured in various cities, delivering a stark warning. "If the potentates of Europe have no design upon our liberties," Beecher demanded, then why were they sending over "such floods of pauper emigrants—the contents of the poorhouse and the sweepings of the streets—multiplying tumults and violence, filling our prisons, and crowding our poorhouses, and quadrupling our taxation"—not to mention voting in American elections?[14] As they struggled to make sense of their rapidly changing world, nativists turned against the Democratic Party, which increasingly courted the vote of urban immigrants.

After failing to prevent Andrew Jackson's reelection, this fragile coalition of old National Republicans, Anti-Masons, and Nativists formally organized as a new party in 1834 "to rescue the Government and public liberty."[15] Henry Clay, serving again as a senator from Kentucky after losing his bid for the presidency, held private meetings to persuade anti-Jackson leaders from different backgrounds to unite. He also gave the new Whig Party its antimonarchical name. The emergence of two cohesive, modern political parties gave rise to what historians term the Second Party System: the two-party political system pitting Whigs against

Democrats that would last until 1854.

At first, the Whigs focused mainly on winning seats in Congress, opposing “King Andrew” from outside the presidency. They remained divided by regional and ideological differences. In 1836, the Democratic presidential candidate, Vice President Martin Van Buren, easily won election as Jackson’s successor. But the Whigs gained significant public support after the Panic of 1837, and they became increasingly well organized.

V. The Panic of 1837

Although Jackson and the Democratic Party had anticipated that their victory over the Bank of the United States would solve the country’s economic problems, this optimism proved unfounded. The demise of the Second Bank not only helped usher in an era of economic instability but also gave disgruntled partisans a motive to throw their support behind the fledgling Whig Party.

The economic outlook of the nation looked good throughout much of Jackson’s two terms, even initially after his veto of the Bank’s reauthorization. Between 1834 and 1836, a combination of high cotton prices, freely available foreign and domestic credit, and an infusion of specie (“hard” currency in the form of gold and silver) from Europe spurred a sustained boom in the American economy. At the same time, sales of western land by the federal government promoted speculation and poorly regulated lending practices, creating a vast real estate bubble.

Meanwhile, state-charted banks rapidly proliferated and paper banknotes circulated at higher rates than ever. Jackson’s Treasury Department, concerned that paper money was increasing inflation, issued the Specie Circular in 1836, requiring payment in hard currency for federal land purchases. The resulting contraction of credit, foreign lenders calling in their American loans, and limited availability of specie led to the Panic of 1837.

Runs on banks began in New York on May 4, 1837, as panicked customers scrambled to exchange their banknotes for hard currency. By May 10, New York banks, running out of gold and silver, stopped redeeming their notes. As news spread, banks around the nation did the same. By May 15, the largest crowd in Pennsylvania history had amassed outside Independence Hall in Philadelphia, denouncing banking as a “system of fraud and oppression.”[16]

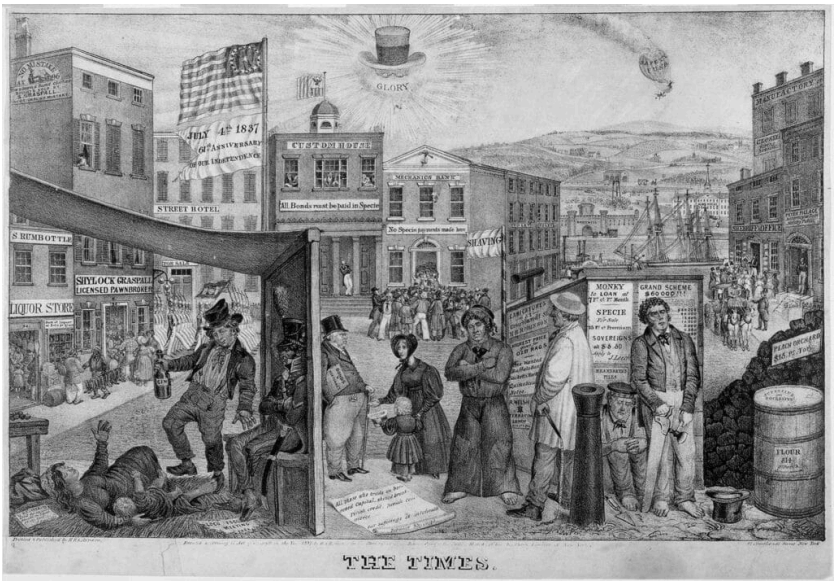


Figure 10.6. Many blamed the Panic of 1837 on the economic policies of Jackson, who is sarcastically represented in the lithograph as the sun with top hat, spectacle, and a banner of “Glory” around him. The destitute people in the foreground (representing the common man) are suffering while a prosperous attorney rides in an elegant carriage in the background (right side of frame). Edward W. Clay, “The Times,” 1837. Wikimedia.

The Panic of 1837 led to a general economic depression. Between 1839 and 1843, the total capital held by American banks dropped by 40 percent as prices fell and economic activity around the nation slowed to a crawl. The price of cotton in New Orleans, for instance, dropped 50 percent.[17] Two hundred banks closed, cash and credit became scarce, prices declined, and trade slowed. Eight states and a territorial government defaulted on loans made by British banks to finance internal improvements.[18] Martin Van Buren, dubbed “Van Ruin” by his opponents, would spend his presidency mired in the economic

fallout of the Panic, creating a rich political opportunity for the newly formed Whigs.

VI: Indigenous Dispossession

American politicians in the 1830s were mostly preoccupied with debates over tariff policy and banking, but meanwhile, the federal government increasingly threatened the power of tribal nations. Presidents since at least Thomas Jefferson had discussed removal, but Jackson took the most dramatic action, believing that "it [speedy removal] will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters."[19] Jackson's famed reputation as an "Indian fighter" generated much of his support, particularly from Americans eager to seize more and more Indigenous land. State and federal governments began to cease trying to assimilate Native Americans and instead planned for forced removal. Indeed, Jackson in part won the Southern vote because his supporters understood that he would expel Native peoples from desirable lands east of the Mississippi.

Beginning in 1826, Georgia officials asked the federal government to negotiate with the Cherokee to secure lucrative lands. The Adams administration resisted the state's request, but harassment from local settlers against the Cherokee forced the Adams and Jackson administrations to begin negotiations. Georgia grew impatient and abolished existing state agreements with the Cherokee that had guaranteed rights of movement and jurisdiction of tribal law. Jackson penned a letter soon after taking office that encouraged the Cherokee, among others, to voluntarily relocate to the West. The discovery of gold in Georgia in the fall of 1829 further exacerbated the situation.

The Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw began to collaborate with missionaries in part to protect themselves from these encroachments. Many tribal members adopted some Euro-American ways, including intensified agriculture, slaving, and Christianity. Missionary groups celebrated when their efforts seemed to be met with success. Evangelicals proclaimed that the Cherokee were becoming "civilized," which could be seen in their adoption of a written language, the Cherokee syllabary, and of a constitution modeled on that of the US government.

The Cherokee syllabary was later named after its creator Sequoyah in 1821. While settlers hailed the Sequoyah as progress, for the Cherokee it was a way "to unify the tribe, codify their laws and government, and form a national and distinctive cultural identity as a people."[20] It was also a message to Americans that their culture was as sophisticated and equal to theirs. Elias Boudinot, Cherokee writer and editor of the first Native American newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, wrote about tribal affairs, especially Indian Removal, from 1828 to 1834. The Phoenix unified the tribe, and it also provided evidence of the tribe's sovereignty and civilization.[21]

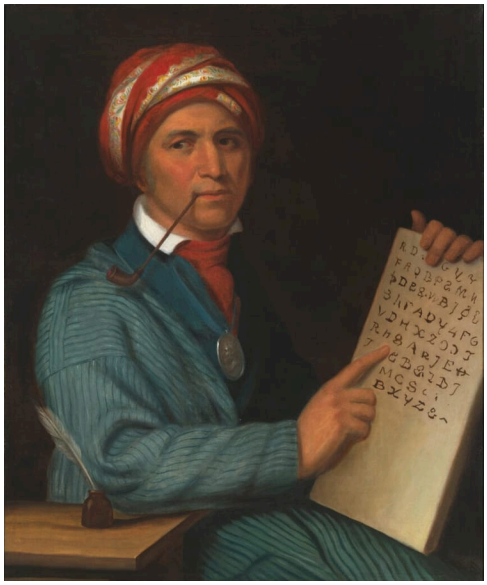


Figure 10.7. Sequoyah, the Cherokee scholar who produced the Cherokee syllabary. Henry Inman, "Sequoyah," c. 1830. Wikimedia.

In 1827, the Cherokee Nation used Sequoyah to write their constitution modeled after that of the United States. This new constitution demonstrated sovereignty and equality in a way that many Americans understood.[22] Still, the state and federal governments pressured the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Cherokee Nations to sign treaties and surrender land. Mission supporters were shocked and appalled at these efforts for removal. Meanwhile tribal nations used the law in hopes of protecting

their lands. Most notable among these efforts was the Cherokee Nation's attempt to sue the state of Georgia.

The Cherokee defended themselves against Georgia's laws by citing treaties signed with the United States that guaranteed the Cherokee Nation both their land and independence. They had allies in many missionaries, including Reverend Jeremiah Evarts of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, and Americans who supported the missions' movement.[23]

Other allies could be found in religious periodicals. Over two hundred thousand people opposed removal on legal grounds, including Arthur Tappan's New York Journal of Commerce, the Methodist Christian Advocate and Journal, and the Presbyterian New York Observer. Angelina Grimké and Harriet Beecher both wrote letters protesting removal.[24] In 1829, Catharine Beecher, in Circular Addressed to Benevolent Ladies of the United States, 1829, beseeched women of the nation to petition Congress to stop Jackson's removal policy from going forward: "Will those who boast of liberty, and feel their breasts throb at the name of freedom and their country, will they permit the free and noble Indian to be driven from his native land?"[25]

Cherokee women also joined the resistance. Peggy Scott Vann Crutchfield coauthored a petition to be sent to the president. She wrote, "The land was given to us by the Great Spirit above as our common right, to raise our children upon. . . . As the Cherokee nation have been the first settlers of this land; we therefore claim the right of the soil." She continued, "Our Father the President advised us to become farmers, to manufacture our own clothes, & to have our children instructed. To this advice we have attended in every thing as far as we were able."[26] Many understood the implied promise of civilization in earlier governmental action to mean peaceful coexistence.

In 1831 Cherokee appealed to the Supreme Court against Georgia to prevent dispossession. The Court, while sympathizing with the Cherokee's plight, ruled that it lacked jurisdiction to hear the case (Cherokee Nation v. Georgia). In an associated case, Worcester v. Georgia (1832), the Supreme Court ruled that Georgia laws did not apply within Cherokee territory.[27] The court's decision declared that "Indian nations had always been considered as distinct, independent political communities."[28] Regardless of these rulings, the state government ignored the Supreme Court and did little to prevent conflict between settlers and the Cherokee.

Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, granting the president authority to begin treaty negotiations that would give Native Americans land in the West in exchange for their lands east of the Mississippi. Many advocates of removal, including Jackson, paternalistically claimed that it would protect Native American communities from outside influences that jeopardized their chances of becoming "civilized" farmers. Jackson emphasized this paternalism—the belief that the government was acting in the best interest of Native peoples—in his 1830 State of the Union Address, where he argued that removal might cause Indians "gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community."[29]

In Jackson's message to Congress, he laid out the reasons he believed Native Americans would be better served by a move westward. While this message was addressed to Congress, his real audience was the Native American people. Jackson suggested that the government had always wanted to introduce "the arts of civilization" to Indigenous Americans. He went on to argue that if the tribes moved west of the Mississippi River, they would be given land there and would be free to set up their own governments largely free from US interference in the future.[30] This land would come to be known as the "Big Reservation."

In response to Jackson, Muskogee chief Speckled Snake, with feigned thankfulness and a great deal of sarcasm, tells his people "Brothers! We have heard the talk of our great father [Jackson]; it is very kind. He says he loves his red children."[31] Snake then explained how the Muscogee helped the settlers who first came to the shores but that this was not enough. The white settlers continued to take advantage of the Native Americans. "But when the white man had warmed himself before the Indian's fire, and filled himself with the Indian's hominy, he became very large; he stopped not for the mountain tops and his feet covered the plains and the valley."[32]

Jackson sent Secretary of War Lewis Cass to offer title to Western lands and the promise of tribal governance in exchange for relinquishing the Cherokee's Eastern lands. These negotiations exploited rifts within the Cherokee Nation. Cherokee leader John Ridge believed removal was inevitable and pushed for a treaty that would give the best terms. Others, called nationalists and led by John Ross, refused to consider removal. The Jackson administration rejected any deal that fell short of large-scale removal, thereby fueling a devastating and violent intratribal battle between the two factions. Tensions grew to the point that several treaty advocates were assassinated by members of the national faction.[33]



Figure 10.8. John Ridge, the Cherokee signer of the Treaty of New Ochoa which contributed to the dispossession and forced removal of the Cherokee. J. T. Bowen, lithographer after Henry Inman, John Ridge, 1842. Wikimedia.

A portion of the Cherokee Nation led by Ridge, hoping to prevent further tribal bloodshed, signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835. This treaty ceded lands in Georgia for $5 million and, the signatories hoped, would limit future conflicts between the Cherokee and white settlers. However, most of the tribal members refused to adhere to the terms, viewing the treaty as illegitimately negotiated. John Ross pointed out the US government's hypocrisy. "You asked us to throw off the hunter and warrior state: We did so—you asked us to form a republican government: We did so. . . . You asked us to cast away our idols and worship your god. We did so. Now you demand we cede to you our lands. That we will not do."[34]

In 1838, President Martin Van Buren used the New Echota Treaty provisions to order the army to forcibly remove Cherokee not obeying the treaty's cession of territory. Harsh weather, poor planning, and difficult travel compounded the tragedy of what became known as the Trail of Tears. Sixteen thousand Cherokee embarked on the journey; only ten thousand completed it.[35] Not every instance of removal was as treacherous or demographically disastrous as the Cherokee example. Furthermore, tribes responded in a variety of ways. Some tribes violently resisted removal. The influx of settlers into the Florida territory, for instance, was temporarily halted in the mid-1830s by the outbreak of the Second Seminole War (1835–1842), although this conflict was fueled as much by fears of the territory serving as a haven for escaped enslaved laborers. In the Old Northwest, Odawa and Ojibwe communities resisted removal, with some purchasing land independently. They formed successful alliances with missionaries and merchants who depended on trade with Native peoples. Yet Indian Removal occurred in the North as well—the Black Hawk War in 1832, for instance, led to the removal of many Sauk to Kansas.[36] Ultimately, over sixty thousand Native Americans were forced west prior to the Civil War.[37]

Despite the disaster of removal, tribal nations slowly rebuilt their cultures and, in some cases, even achieved prosperity in new territories. Leaders hoped education would help ensuing generations to protect political sovereignty. In 1841, the Cherokee Nation opened a public school system that within two years included eighteen schools. By 1852, the system expanded to twenty-one schools with a national enrollment of 1,100 pupils.[38] Many of the students educated in these tribally controlled schools later served their nations as teachers, lawyers, physicians, bureaucrats, and politicians. Tribal nations blended traditional cultural practices, including common land systems, with Western practices including constitutional governments, common school systems, and creating an elite enslaving class.

VII. The Cotton Belt

The hunger for land caused Indian Removal, and that hunger grew even greater after Rush Nutt developed the Petit Gulf hybrid strain of cotton in 1833.[39] Petit Gulf slid through the cotton gin—a machine developed by Eli Whitney in 1794 for deseeding cotton—more easily than other strains. It also grew tightly, producing more usable cotton than other types. Together, these developments ushered in the Cotton Revolution that would drastically reshape the American South.

Between the 1830s and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, the South expanded its wealth and population and became an integral part of an increasingly global economy. It did not, as previous generations of histories have told, sit back on its cultural and social traditions and insulate itself from an expanding system of communication, trade, and production that connected Europe and Asia to the Americas. Quite the opposite; the South actively engaged new technologies and trade routes while also seeking to assimilate and upgrade its most "traditional" and culturally ingrained practices—such as slavery and agricultural production—within a modernizing world.



Figure 10.10. A 19th-century cotton gin on display at the Eli Whitney Museum. Wikimedia.

Thousands rushed into the Cotton Belt. William Henry Sparks, a lawyer living in Natchez, Mississippi, remembered it as "a new El Dorado" in which "fortunes were made in a day, without enterprise or work."[40] Money flowed from newly formed banks in New York City, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and London on promises of "other-worldly" profits and overnight returns. Some even sent their own agents to purchase cheap land at auction for the express purpose of selling it, sometimes the very next day, at double and triple the original value, a process known as speculation.

The numbers were staggering. In 1793, just a few years after the first shipment of American cotton to Europe, the South produced around 5 million pounds of cotton.[41] By 1835, it would export more than 500 million pounds of Petit Gulf for a global market. The 2 billion pounds of cotton produced in 1860 amounted to more than 60 percent of the United States' total exports that year.[42] With greater availability of land through Indian Removal, federal auctions, readily available credit, and the seemingly universal dream of cotton's immediate profit, slavery became increasingly normalized and engrained. The heyday of American slavery had arrived.

This so-called Cotton Revolution wed the South to slavery. Without slavery there could be no Cotton Kingdom, no massive production of raw materials stretching across thousands of acres worth millions of dollars. Although slavery arrived in the Americas long before cotton became a profitable commodity, the use and purchase of enslaved laborers, the moralistic and economic justifications for the continuation of slavery, and even the urgency to protect the practice from extinction before the Civil War all received new life from the rise of cotton.

As cotton became the foundation of the Southern economy, Southern planters, politicians, merchants, and traders became more dedicated to the means of its production: slavery. In 1834, Joseph Ingraham wrote that "to sell cotton in order to buy negroes—to make more cotton to buy more negroes, 'ad infinitum,' is the aim and direct tendency of all the operations of the thorough going cotton planter; his whole soul is wrapped up in the pursuit."[43] Alongside the geographic expansion of slavery as the Cotton Kingdom moved westward, the numerical expansion of slavery tells the story of the antebellum South. From fewer than a million enslaved people in the United States in 1800, that number would quadruple to nearly four million held in bondage by the eve of the Civil War.

Enslaved people, the literal and figurative backbone of the Southern economy, served as the highest and most important expense for any successful cotton grower. Prices for enslaved laborers varied drastically, depending on skin color, sex, age, and location. In Virginia in the 1820s, for example, a single enslaved woman of childbearing age sold for an average of $300; an unskilled

man above age eighteen sold for around $450; and boys and girls below age thirteen sold for between $100 and $150.[44] By the 1840s, prices had nearly doubled—a result of both standard inflation and the increasing importance of enslaved laborers in the cotton market. “Prime field hands,” as they were called by merchants and traders, averaged $1,600 at market by 1850, a figure that fell in line with the rising prices of the cotton they picked.[45]

But enslaved people were not merely abstract prices. They were human beings. Among the many evils of slavery included the way that the system required men, women, and children to act like property. When an enslaved person experienced the terrifying, invasive process of a sale, whether in the marketplace or in the place they may have called home, sellers expected them to stand, walk, dance, dress, act, look, and respond like sound slaves— more specifically, like an enslaved person who was healthy, subservient, and could be exploited for their labor. Solomon Northup, a free man of color who was kidnapped and sold as an enslaved person, likened the process of a sale to “precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase.”[46] Still, in circumstances defined by violent separations and unknowable possibilities, enslaved people worked to navigate the process of a sale as best they could. Indeed, because buyers’ expectations and ambitions were wrapped up in an enslaved person’s performance, behavior, and disclosures, there was space for an enslaved person, albeit at great risk to themselves, to shape their own sale.[47]



Figure 10.11. The slave markets of the South varied in size and style, but the St. Louis Exchange in New Orleans was so frequently described it became a kind of representation for all southern slave markets. Indeed, the St. Louis Hotel rotunda was cemented in the literary imagination of nineteenth-century Americans after Harriet Beecher Stowe chose it as the site for the sale of Uncle Tom in her 1852 novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin. After the ruin of the St. Clare plantation, Tom and his fellow enslaved people were suddenly property that had to be liquidated. Brought to New Orleans to be sold to the highest bidder, Tom found himself “[b]eneath a splendid dome” where “men of all nations” scurried about. J. M. Starling (engraver), Sale of estates, pictures and slaves in the rotunda, New Orleans, 1842. Wikimedia.

And even after sale, enslaved people continued to insist on their humanity and worked to build lives of meaning despite ongoing brutality. Some resisted with violence, but many others worked to carve out their own spaces of freedom and to pursue their own interests as best as they could. Enslaved people built relationships, pursued personal passions, and even fought to make the sites of their enslavement feel like their home.[48]

The Cotton Revolution was a time of capitalism, panic, stress, and competition. Although the cotton market was large and profitable, it was also fickle, risky, and cost intensive. The more wealth one gained, the more land one needed to procure, which led to more enslaved laborers, more credit, and more mouths to feed. The decades before the Civil War in the South, then, were not times of slow, simple tradition. They were times of high competition, high risk, and high reward.

Of course, enslaved women were even more vulnerable in this slave society. Sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies, and constant childrearing while continuing to work the fields all made life as an enslaved woman more prone to disruption and uncertainty. Harriet Jacobs, an enslaved woman from North Carolina, chronicled her enslaver’s attempts to sexually abuse her in her narrative, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Jacobs suggested that her successful attempts to resist sexual assault and her determination to love whom she pleased was “something akin to freedom.”[49] But this “freedom,” however empowering and contextual, did not cast a wide net. Many enslaved women had no choice concerning love, sex, and motherhood. On plantations, small farms, and even

in cities, rape was ever present. Enslavers used sexual violence as a form of terrorism, a way to promote increased production, obedience, and power relations. In numerous accounts, violent enslavers forced men to witness the rape of their wives, daughters, and relatives, often as punishment, but occasionally as a sadistic expression of power and dominance.[50]

The paternalism that subordinated both white and Black women to white men further reinforced the racial hierarchy that had emerged centuries prior, bolstered by new religious arguments defending the Southern social order. By the outbreak of the Civil War, the vast majority of Southerners who affiliated with a religious denomination belonged to either the Baptist or Methodist faith.[51] Both of these churches in the South briefly attacked slavery before transforming into some of the most vocal proponents of slavery. Whether on the plantation or in newly booming urban centers, Southern society centered on the production of cotton and the defense of the institution of slavery that made rich profits possible.

VIII: An Urbanizing South

Despite an emphasis on plantation agriculture in depictions of the Old South, the economic significance of cotton resulted in rapid urban growth between 1820 and 1860. New Orleans, Richmond, Charleston, and St. Louis all saw massive explosions in their populations as the Cotton Revolution hit full stride. As Southern cities grew, they became more cosmopolitan, attracting types of people either unsuited for or uninterested in rural life. These people—merchants, skilled laborers, traders, sellers of all kinds and colors—brought rural goods to a market desperate for raw materials. Everyone, it seemed, had a place in the cotton trade.

Among the more important aspects of Southern urbanization was the development of a middle class in urban centers, something that never fully developed in rural areas. In a very general sense, the rural South fell under a two-class system in which a landowning elite controlled the politics and most of the capital, and a working poor survived on subsistence farming or basic, unskilled labor. The development of large urban centers founded on trade gave rise to a large middle class in the South. Predicated on the idea of separation from those above and below them, middle-class men and women in the South thrived in the active, feverish rush of port city life.

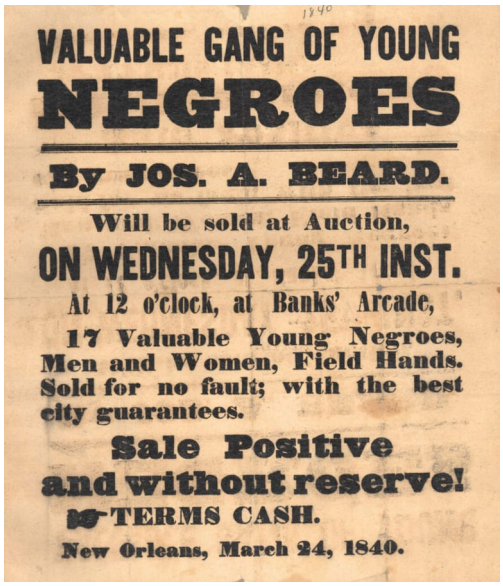


Figure 10.12. Slave trade sold bondspeople — men, women, and children — like mere pieces of property, as seen in the advertisements produced during the era. 1840 poster advertising enslaved laborers for sale in New Orleans. Wikimedia.

Skilled craftsmen, merchants, traders, speculators, and store owners made up the Southern middle class. Neighbors, friends, and business partners formed and joined benevolent societies to aid orphans and the destitute. But in many cases these benevolent societies simply served as a way to keep other people out of middle-class circles, sustaining both wealth and social prestige within an insular, well-regulated community. Members and partners married each other's sisters, stood as godparents for each others' children, and served as executors of fellow members' wills.

Rural and urban Southern society deferred to white men, under whom laws, social norms, and cultural practices were written, dictated, and maintained. White and free women of color lived in a society dominated by men. Denied voting rights, women of all statuses and colors had no direct representation in the creation and discussion of law. In many cases, too, the law did not protect white women the same way it protected men. In most states, marriage effectively transferred all a woman's property to her

husband. Divorce existed, but it hardly worked in a woman's favor, and often, if successful, ruined the wife's standing in society, even leading to well-known cases of suicide.[52]

IX. Texas, Mexico, and the United States

The debate over slavery became one of the prime forces behind the Texas Revolution and the resulting republic's annexation by the United States. After gaining its independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico hoped to attract new settlers to its northern areas to create a buffer between it and the powerful Comanche. New immigrants, mostly from the southern United States, poured into Mexican Texas. Over the next twenty-five years, concerns over growing Anglo influence and possible American designs on the area produced great friction between Mexicans and the former Americans in the area. In 1829, Mexico, hoping to quell both anger and immigration, outlawed slavery and required all new immigrants to convert to Catholicism. American immigrants, eager to expand their agricultural fortunes, largely ignored these requirements. In response, Mexican authorities closed their territory to any new immigration in 1830—a prohibition ignored by Americans who often squatted on public lands.[53]

In 1834, an internal conflict between federalists and centralists in the Mexican government led to the political ascendency of General Antonio López de Santa Anna. Santa Anna, governing as a dictator, repudiated the federalist Constitution of 1824, pursued a policy of authoritarian central control, and crushed several revolts throughout Mexico. Anglo settlers in Mexican Texas, or Texians as they called themselves, opposed Santa Anna's centralizing policies and met in November. They issued a statement of purpose that emphasized their commitment to the Constitution of 1824 and declared Texas to be a separate state within Mexico. After the Mexican government angrily rejected the offer, Texian leaders abandoned their fight for the Constitution of 1824 and declared independence on March 2, 1836.[54] The Texas Revolution of 1835–1836 was a successful secessionist movement in the northern district of the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas that resulted in an independent Republic of Texas.

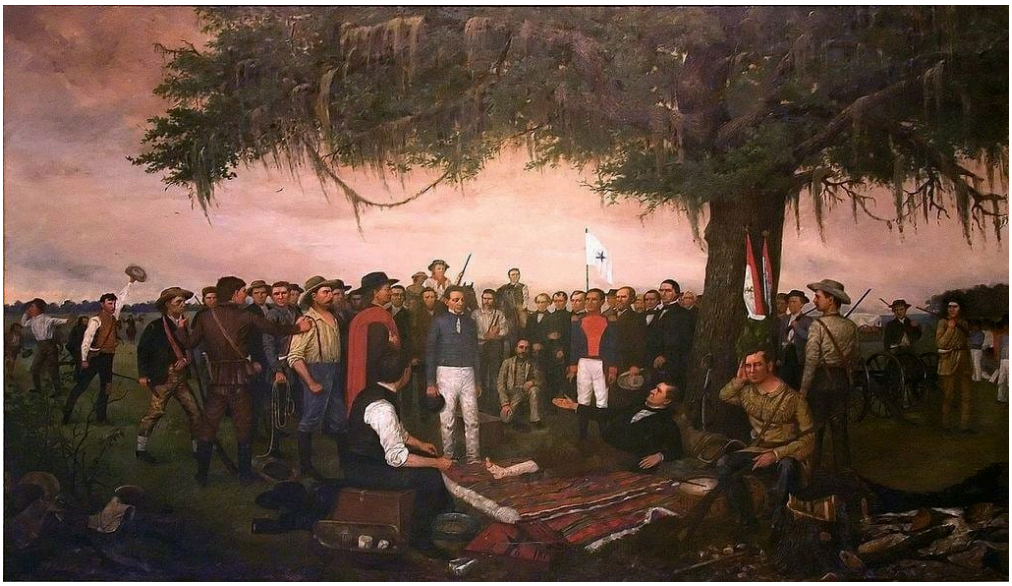


Figure 10.13. This 1886 painting depicts the 1836 surrender of Mexican General Santa Anna to a wounded Sam Houston after the Battle of San Jacinto. William Henry Huddle, "Surrender of Santa Anna," 1886. Wikimedia.

At the Alamo and Goliad, Santa Anna crushed smaller rebel forces and massacred hundreds of Texian prisoners. The Mexican army pursued the retreating Texian army deep into East Texas, spurring a mass panic and evacuation by American civilians known as the Runaway Scrape. The confident Santa Anna consistently failed to make adequate defensive preparations, an oversight that eventually led to a surprise attack from the outnumbered Texian army led by Sam Houston on April 21, 1836. The battle of San Jacinto lasted only eighteen minutes and resulted in a decisive victory for the Texians, who retaliated for previous Mexican atrocities by killing fleeing and surrendering Mexican soldiers. Santa Anna was captured in the aftermath and compelled to sign the Treaty of Velasco on May 14, 1836, by which he agreed to withdraw his army from Texas and acknowledge its independence. Although a new Mexican government never recognized the Republic of Texas, the United States and several other nations gave the new country diplomatic recognition.[55]

X: An Age of Reform

The upheavals of the 1830s were also reflected and shaped by religious developments. Both enthusiasm and anxiety around spiritual egalitarianism spawned the Second Great Awakening and the many reform movements that made up the benevolent empire. The ranks of Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians swelled precipitously alongside new denominations such as the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The evangelical fire reached such heights, in fact, that one swath of western and central New York state came to be known as the Burned-Over District. Charles Grandison Finney, the influential revivalist preacher who first coined the term, explained that the residents of this area had experienced so many revivals by different religious groups that there were no more souls to awaken to the fire of spiritual conversion.[56]

The democratic fervor of the era also informed a substantial theological critique of orthodox Calvinism with far-reaching consequences for religious individuals and for society as a whole. Calvinists believed that all of humankind was marred by sin, and God predestined only some for salvation. Worshippers, seeing this perspective as too pessimistic, increasingly took responsibility for their own spiritual role in effecting salvation. Revivalist preachers such as Finney were quick to recognize these cultural shifts and evangelize by appealing to worshippers' hearts and emotions. Even more conservative spiritual leaders like Lyman Beecher adopted a less orthodox approach to Calvinist doctrine.[57] Though these men did not see eye to eye, they both contributed to the emerging consensus that all souls are equal in salvation and that all people can be saved by surrendering to God. The ideas of perfectionism and spiritual equality were among the most important transformations to emerge out of the Second Great Awakening.

Difficulties arose, however, when the benevolent empire attempted to take up more explicitly political issues. The failed movement against Indian Removal was the first major example of this. Antiremoval activism was also notable for the entry of ordinary American women into political discourse. The first major petition campaign by American women focused on opposition to removal and was led (anonymously) by Catharine Beecher. Beecher was already a leader in the movement to reform women's education and came to her role in removal through her connections to the mission movement. She used religious and moral arguments to justify women's entry into political discussion when it concerned an obviously moral cause. This petitioning effort was unsuccessful but paved the way for women's political activism.

The divisions that the antiremoval campaign revealed became more dramatic with the next political cause of nineteenth-century reformers: abolition.

XI. Antislavery and Abolition

The revivalist doctrines of salvation, perfectionism, and disinterested benevolence led some evangelical reformers to believe that slavery was the most God-defying of all sins and the most terrible blight on the moral virtue of the United States. While interest in abolition had existed for several decades, organized advocacy had been largely restricted to gradual emancipation (seen in several Northern states following the American Revolution) and colonization efforts to remove Black Americans to Africa.

By the 1830s, however, a rising tide of anticolonization sentiment among Northern free Black Americans and middle-class white evangelicals' flourishing commitment to social reform radicalized the movement and pushed the idea of immediate emancipation (immediatism) onto center stage. Inspired by a strategy known as "moral suasion," young abolitionists believed they could convince enslavers to voluntarily release their enslaved laborers by appealing to their sense of Christian conscience. The result would be national redemption and moral harmony. They rested their mission for immediate emancipation "upon the Declaration of our Independence, and upon the truths of Divine Revelation," binding their cause to both national and Christian redemption.[58] Abolitionists fought to save the enslaved and thereby save the nation.

Figures like William Lloyd Garrison, the white abolitionist who established an antislavery newspaper called *The Liberator* in 1831 and the American Anti-slavery Society in 1833, have most famously illustrated this transition toward immediatism and moral suasion. Yet, it was an approach born out of the financial support of Northern freemen like James Forten (who financed *The Liberator*) and the intellectual work of Black activists, like the three thousand freemen who assembled in Philadelphia in 1817 to issue resolutions proclaiming their American identity and declaring themselves entitled to the same rights of white citizens.

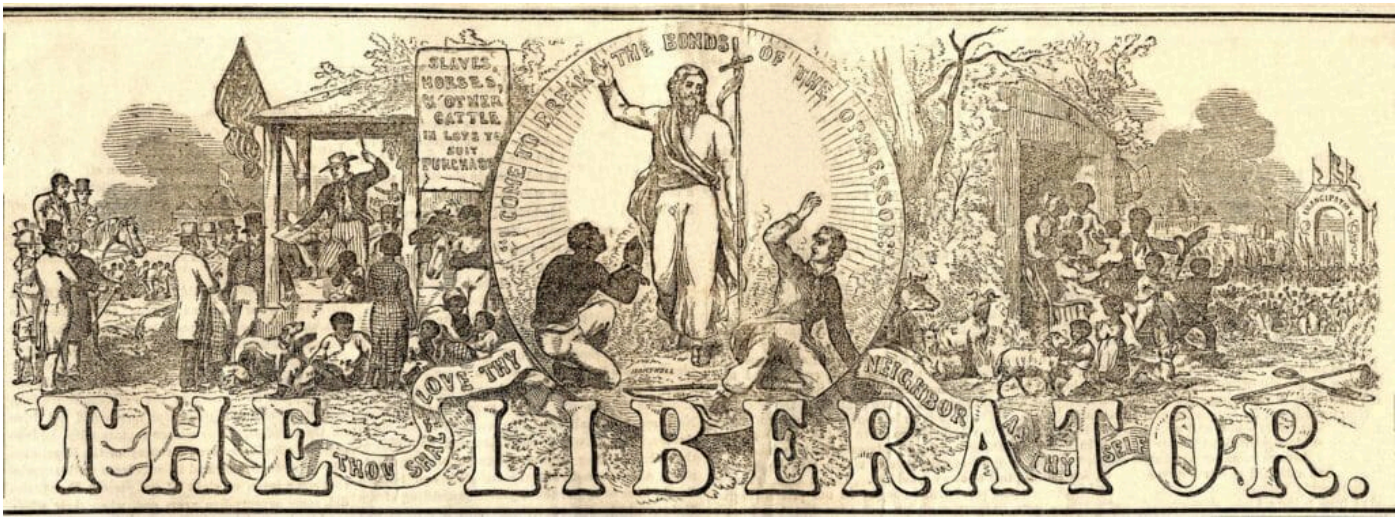


Figure 10.14. The Liberator, April 17, 1857. Masthead designed by Hammatt Billings in 1850. Metropolitan State University.

The racially integrated abolition movement was rife with racism and overwhelmingly relegated Black activists to a backseat role. Despite the popularity of moral suasion among white abolitionists, an alternative approach was steeped in calls for resistance and, if necessary, violence. David Walker, born free in North Carolina before moving north to Boston, published his famous Appeal in IV Articles in 1829. In this widely circulated pamphlet, Walker defended slave rebellions and believed that violent resistance might be necessary to end slavery and racial inequity. Henry Highland Garnet, who had escaped from bondage as a child, would make similar claims in a speech in 1843. Drawing on the legacy of the American and Haitian Revolutions, in which the promise of liberty justified violent rebellion, he spoke to his enslaved brethren: "Strike for your lives and liberties. . . . Rather die freemen than live to be slaves."[59]

Abolitionists collectively employed every method of outreach and agitation, establishing hundreds of antislavery societies. Harnessing the potential of steam-powered printing and mass communication, abolitionists blanketed the free states with pamphlets and antislavery newspapers. They blared their arguments from lyceum podiums and broadsides. Prominent individuals such as Wendell Phillips and Angelina Grimké saturated Northern media with shame-inducing exposés of Northern complicity in fugitive rendition, and white reformers sentimentalized slave narratives to tug at middle-class heartstrings. Women launched antislavery fairs to raise funds for the cause. Abolitionists used the US Postal Service in 1835 to inundate Southern enslavers with calls to save their souls by emancipating their enslaved laborers. Turning to more explicitly political methods in 1836, they prepared thousands of petitions for Congress as part of the Great Petition Campaign. In the six years from 1831 to 1837, abolitionist activities reached dizzying heights.[60]

Such efforts encountered fierce opposition. Abolitionists remained a small, marginalized group detested by most white Americans in both the North and the South. Immediatists were attacked as the harbingers of disunion, rabble-rousers who would stir up sectional tensions and thereby imperil the American experiment of self-government. Particularly troubling to some observers was the public engagement of women as abolitionist speakers and activists. Fearful of disunion and outraged by the interracial nature of abolitionism, Northern mobs smashed abolitionist printing presses and even killed a prominent antislavery newspaper editor named Elijah Lovejoy in 1837.

For enslaved people themselves, resistance existed in a multitude of forms. Simple acts of resistance, such as breaking a hoe, running a wagon off the road, causing a delay in production due to injury, running away, or even pregnancy provided a language shared by nearly all enslaved laborers, a sense of unity that remained unsaid but was acted out daily. A small number turned to armed rebellion.

Nat Turner, leader of the deadliest slave rebellion in the antebellum South, found inspiration from religion early in life. Adopting an austere Christian lifestyle during his adolescence, Turner claimed to have been visited by "spirits" and considered himself a singular prophet whose visions encouraged him to do the work of God. As scholars have recently shown, however, his broader community—including women—formed an important backdrop for the work of resistance and rebellion.[61] On the morning of August 22, 1831, in Southampton County, Virginia, Turner and six collaborators attempted to free the region's enslaved population. Turner initiated the violence by killing his enslaver with an ax blow to the head. By the end of the day, Turner and his band, which had grown to over fifty men, killed fifty-seven white men, women, and children on eleven farms. By the next day, the local militia and white residents had captured or killed all the participants except Turner, who hid for weeks in nearby woods before being

captured and executed. The white terror following the Southampton Rebellion transformed Southern religion, as antiliteracy laws increased and Black-led churches were broken up and placed under the supervision of white ministers.

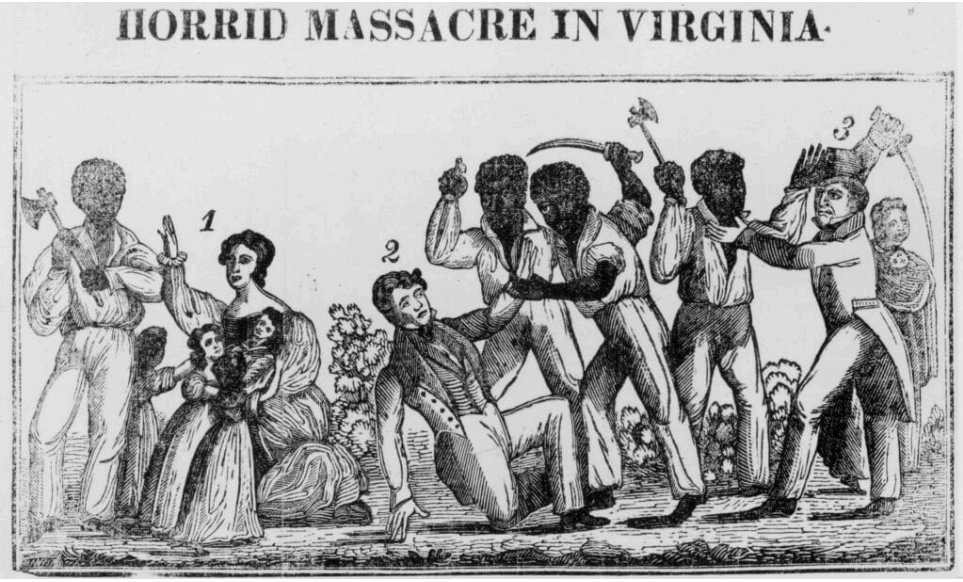


Figure 10.15. This woodcut captured the terror felt by white southerners in the aftermath of the Southampton Rebellion. After the rebellion, fearful white reactionaries killed hundreds of enslaved people—most unconnected to the rebellion— and the state created stricter, more limiting laws concerning slavery. African American Intellectual History Society.

The hysteria prompted by the Southampton Rebellion created additional challenges for the abolition movement. White Southerners, believing that abolitionists had incited the rebellion, aggressively purged antislavery dissent from the region. Violent harassment threatened abolitionists' personal safety. In Congress, Whigs and Democrats joined forces in 1836 to pass an unprecedented restriction on freedom of political expression known as the gag rule, prohibiting all discussion of abolitionist petitions in the House of Representatives. Two years later, mobs attacked the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, throwing rocks through the windows and burning the newly constructed Pennsylvania Hall to the ground.[62] While many white abolitionists would continue to espouse moral suasion, Black activists would increasingly turn to a politics of force, recognizing that nonresistance failed to protect Black Americans or end chattel slavery.[63]

XII: Conclusion

The age of Jackson ushered in sweeping changes. From the chaos of Jackson's cabinet emerged a new vision of executive power, one that prioritized personal and party loyalty, entwined populist democratic rhetoric with authoritarianism, and legitimized violence. The Jacksonian values that infused the Democratic Party were far from universal, however, and controversies over patronage, banking, tariffs, Indian Removal, immigration, and the expansion of slavery in the new cotton economy ensured the emergence of an opposition party. In the wake of the Panic of 1837, the Whigs were poised to enter American politics as a force to be reckoned with moving into the 1840s.

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1. David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, 1829

David Walker was the son of an enslaved man and a free Black woman. He traveled widely before settling in Boston where he worked in and owned clothing stores and involved himself in various reform causes. In 1829, he wrote the remarkable Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World. In it, he exposed the hypocrisies of American claims of freedom and Christianity, attacked the plan to colonize Black Americans in Africa, and predicted that God's justice promised violence for the enslaving United States.

2. William Lloyd Garrison Introduces *The Liberator*, 1831

William Lloyd Garrison participated in reform causes in Massachusetts from a young age. In the 1820s he advocated Black colonization in Africa and the gradual abolition of slavery. Reading the work of Black northerners like David Walker changed his

mind. In 1831, he created a newspaper, called The Liberator. *The following is the opening essay that Garrison used to explain the purpose of his paper.*

3. Nat Turner explains the Southampton rebellion, 1831

In August, 1831, Nat Turner led a group of enslaved and free Black men in a rebellion that killed over fifty white men, women, and children. Nat Turner understood his rebellion as an act of God. While he awaited trial, Turner spoke with the white attorney, Thomas Ruffin Gray, who wrote their conversations into the following document.

4. Maria Stewart bemoans the consequences of racism, 1832

Maria Stewart electrified audiences in Boston with a number of powerful speeches. Her most common theme was the evil of slavery. However, here she attacks the soul-crushing consequences of racism in American capitalism, claiming that the lack of social and economic equality doomed Black Americans to a life of suffering and spiritual death.

5. Andrew Jackson's Veto Message Against Re-chartering the Bank of the United States, 1832

President Andrew Jackson, like Thomas Jefferson before him, was highly suspicious of the Bank of the United States. He blamed the bank for the Panic of 1819 and for corrupting politics with too much money. After congress renewed the bank charter, Jackson vetoed the bill. The following was the message he gave to congress after issuing his veto. Jackson's decision was controversial. Some Americans accused him of acting like a dictator to redistribute wealth. Others saw the act as an attack on a corrupt system that only favored the rich.

6. Harriet Jacobs on Rape and Slavery, 1860

Harriet Jacobs was born into slavery in North Carolina. After escaping to New York, Jacobs eventually wrote a narrative of her enslavement under the pseudonym of Linda Brent. In this excerpt Jacobs explains her experience struggling with sexual assault from her enslaver.

7. Cherokee Petition Protesting Removal, 1836

Native Americans responded differently to the constant encroachments and attacks of American settlers. Some resisted violently. Others worked to adapt to American culture and defend themselves using particularly American weapons like lawsuits and petitions. The Cherokee did more to adapt than perhaps any other Native American group, creating a written constitution modeled off the American constitution and adopting American culture in dress, speech, religion and economic activity. In this document, Cherokee leaders protested the loss of their territory using a very American tactic: petitioning.

8. Martin Van Buren Cartoon, 1837

This caricature of President Martin Van Buren cloaked in worthless bank notes was created during the Panic of 1837. The artist mocks Van Buren and the policies of his predecessor, Andrew Jackson. The cartoon includes mentions to Jackson's "Specie Circular," an order that government officials only accept gold or silver as payment for land and Van Buren's "Safety Fund," a program designed to offset the damage of bank failures. A document labeled "Indian claims" also refers to Jackson's policy of Indian Removal. These and other subtle details reveal the anxieties of economic collapse and the policy differences between Democrats and Whigs.

9. Anti-Catholic Cartoon, 1855

Irish immigration transformed American cities. Yet many Americans greeted the new arrivals with suspicion or hostility. Nathanial Currier's anti-Catholic cartoon reflected the popular American perception that Irish Catholic immigrants posed a threat to the United States.

XIV: Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Emily Arendt, with content contributions by Myles Beaupre, Marjorie Brown, Michelle Cassidy, Steffi Cerato, Christopher Childers, Kristin Condotta, Emily Conroy-Krutz, William Cossen, Adam Costanzo, Jeff Fortney, Jane Fiegen Green, Nathaniel C. Green, Robert Gudmestad, Nathan Jeremie-Brink, Christopher C. Jones, Lindsay Keiter, Brenda Lakhani, Spencer McBride, Maria Montalvo, James Anthony Owen, Katherine Rohrer, Marie Stango, Kevin Waite, Kelly Weber, Jonathan Wilfred Wilson, Caroline Wright, and Ben Wright.

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11: Growth and Conflict



Figure 11.1 This mural celebrates westward expansion. It depicts settlers traveling on horseback and in covered wagons. Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way, 1862. Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, Mural. United States Capitol.

I. Introduction

The final years of the 1830s and the coming decade of the 1840s were a time of drastic, sudden, and reality-bending change for most Americans. The emergence of a cash-based economy, the harnessing of steam power, and the growth and increasing connection of the nation's cities spawned cultural, social, and political transformations. Families changed, inspired in part by an age of moral reform. The new Democratic Party led the way into the West, emboldened by both political victories and a vision of the nation as a divinely ordained continental force. The opposition party of the Whigs largely shared this vision of the American empire, yet deep divisions loomed.

These changes in national politics, urban industry, and local domestic life combined to feed a bold new national imagination taking form across the nation, but especially in the West. Most white Americans believed that the United States had a divine obligation to expand its "empire of liberty" into the land beyond the Mississippi River. This belief proved disastrous for the Indigenous people who still controlled most of this land. In the end, this expansion and the reform, renewal, and renegotiation unknowingly led the country closer to war with itself, introducing, for the first time in clear and present terms, the problems of a national future split in two.

II. Connecting Cities and Goods in a Growing Nation

The transportation and communication revolutions reshaped the lives of Americans in both urban and rural places. Farmers who previously produced crops mostly for their own families now turned to the market. They now sold and earned cash for what they had previously consumed themselves, and they now purchased the goods they had once made, bartered for with neighbors, or simply gone without. Market-based farmers soon accessed credit through Eastern banks, which provided them with the opportunity to expand their enterprise but also left them exposed to new risks of catastrophic failure wrought by distant market forces. In the Northeast and Midwest, where farm labor was ever in short supply, ambitious farmers invested in new technologies that promised to increase the productivity of the limited workforce. The years between 1815 and 1850 witnessed an explosion of patents on agricultural technologies. The most famous of these, perhaps, was Cyrus McCormick's horse-drawn mechanical reaper, which partially mechanized wheat harvesting, and John Deere's steel-bladed plow, which more easily allowed for the conversion of unbroken ground into fertile farmland.

Most visibly, the market revolution encouraged the growth of cities and reshaped the lives of urban workers. In 1820, only New York had over 100,000 inhabitants. By 1850, six American cities met that threshold, including Chicago, which had been founded fewer than two decades earlier.[1]

New technology and infrastructure paved the way for such growth. The Erie Canal captured the bulk of the trade emerging from the Great Lakes region, securing New York City's position as the nation's largest and most economically important city. The steamboat turned St. Louis and Cincinnati into centers of trade, and Chicago rose as it became the railroad hub of the western Great Lakes and Great Plains regions. The geographic center of the nation shifted westward. The development of steam power and the exploitation of Pennsylvania coalfields shifted the locus of American manufacturing. By the 1830s, for instance, New England was slowly losing its competitive advantage to the West.



Figure 11.2 Birds-eye view of the city of St. Louis as it appeared from above the Mississippi River in 1859 includes steamboats in the harbor. "Our city," (St. Louis, Mo.)" Lithograph by A. Janicke & Co. St. Louis, Missouri. Library of Congress.

After several decades of the transportation revolution, by 1860, Americans had laid more than thirty thousand miles of railroad.[2] The ensuing web of rail, paved roads, and canals made it much easier for farmers in the Northeast or Midwest to get their goods to urban markets. Railroad development was slower in the South, dedicated almost solely to connecting fields to ports, but the combination of rail lines and navigable rivers meant that few cotton planters struggled to transport their products to textile mills in the Northeast and Europe.

Such internal improvements spread not only goods but also information and people. The transportation revolution was accompanied by a communications revolution. The growing rail networks in the Northeast and Midwest linked urban spaces together, reducing the perceived distance between them by cutting travel times from weeks to days and days to hours. The telegraph likewise redefined the limits of human communication. By 1843, Samuel Morse had persuaded Congress to fund a forty-mile telegraph line stretching from Washington, DC, to Baltimore. Within a few short years, telegraph lines would carry news of battles in the Mexican-American War to Eastern newspapers within just a few days.

Meanwhile, the cash economy eclipsed older, local, informal systems of barter and trade, first in urban centers and then increasingly in rural spaces. Income and its consistency became the measure of economic worth and social privileges. Young workers might earn and expect wages as employees, rather than room, board, and training as part of a system of apprenticeships meant to propel rather than enrich. Moreover, a new form of economic organization appeared: the business corporation. Rooted in the idea that labor and laborers were a single part of a larger system of production, corporations offered the nation's first top-down experiment in collective, profit-driven, integrated capitalism. Importantly, unlike the equally capitalistic and profit-driven system of racial slavery in the South, the developing corporate system in the urban North created a hierarchy of wage-earners, foremen, managers, and executives couched in the language of democracy and economic voluntarism.

The cotton boom fueled speculation in and dedication to slavery across the South. New technologies in tool manufacturing, such as steel plows, steam-powered cotton gins, and mechanical reapers, were nothing short of revolutionary and increased crop outputs over the 1830s and 1840s. Although more expensive to purchase, these products lasted longer and allowed for a massive

repurposing of both labor and land, especially on large Southern plantations. Tilling fields and planting crops became faster and easier, as did harvesting and deseeding, increasing profits and leading to reinvestment at nearly every level of the Southern agricultural system. Increased global demand for cotton likewise led many enslavers to leverage potential profits into loans used to purchase ever-increasing numbers of enslaved laborers. For example, one 1840 Louisiana Courier ad warned that "it is very difficult now to find persons willing to buy slaves from Mississippi or Alabama on account of the fears entertained that such property may be already mortgaged to the banks of the above-named states."[3]

This created a curious relationship between the Northern and Southern economies, as much of the money received from these loans flowed from Northern and Southern banks. While cities in the North and Border States became increasingly dedicated to the mass production, movement, and sale of finished goods, the financial sector it fueled was ever more tied to the Southern slave economy. Buttressed by investments in trade and budding industry, Northern banks and lenders saw the Southern slave market as a valuable way to invest in the production of raw materials—which in turn theoretically drove industrial production in the North—without the moral weight of direct investment in plantations and slavery itself. Instead of buying up land, slaves, and plantations of their own, Northern investors simply provided mortgages and loans with which Southern plantation owners and enslavers expanded their operations and increased their own investments in enslaved workers. By the beginning of the 1850s, and certainly by the end of that decade, cotton fueled much of the American economy, picked by the hands of enslaved Black workers in the Southern states and funded, finished, and shipped by investors, banks, factories, and corporations in cities across the North, South, and West. It was transported on rail lines, boxcars, paved roads, and steamships, through human-made canals and massive rivers, all of which made a vast, diverse, and once truly disconnected nation seem much smaller than it ever had before.

III. Industry and Society

The emerging industrial economy of the 1830s and 1840s gave rise to a number of as yet unimagined problems. Family life changed, defined by shifting meanings in individual value, collective labor, and the relationship between work, class, and politics. Men, women, and children took on new roles in the home as well as in the factory. In the public sphere, women increasingly challenged the moral direction of this new American society.

Femininity in the nation was intimately tied to the domestic sphere in what historians have described as the "cult of domesticity," or the "cult of true womanhood." These ideas developed in tandem with industrialization, the market revolution, and the Second Great Awakening. In reality, they applied primarily to upper-class and middle-upper-class women. Working-class women joined the public sphere through their labor, which was necessary for their families' survival.

In the era of revivalism and reform, Americans understood the family and home as the hearthstones of civic virtue and moral influence. Women, the dominant understanding of gender claimed, were expected to be the guardians of virtue and the spiritual heads of the home. They were to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic. Their responsibility was to pass these virtues on to their children. The Southern emphasis on honor affected women as well. While Southern men worked to maintain their sense of masculinity, so too Southern women cultivated a sense of femininity.[4]



Figure 11.3 This illustration depicts the traditional domestic role of women. She is shown here holding a baby in her lap while two other children read nearby. "The Sphere of Woman," Godey's Lady's Book vol. 40 (March 1850): 209. Translated from the German of Goethe. Clifton Waller Barrett Collection, University of Virginia.

Yet women took the very ideology that defined their place in the home and used it to fashion a public role for themselves. As a result, women became more visible and active in the public sphere than ever before. The influence of the Second Great Awakening, coupled with new educational opportunities available to girls and young women, enabled white middle-class women, especially in the North, to leave their homes en masse, joining and forming societies dedicated to everything from literary interests to the antislavery movement. Northern working-class women joined the public arena too, but in a different way. Young women workers organized strikes, including one at the Lowell Textile Mill in Massachusetts. Later, they created the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association, entering the political arena.[5]

While some Northern women began to organize reform societies, Southern women were more often instructed to offer a calming, moralizing influence on husbands and children and manage their households. Managing the household was not easy work, however. For Southern women on large plantations, managing the household would include subduing a population of humans who often fought against the oppressions of enslavement. For most women who did not live on plantations, managing the household included nearly constant work in keeping families clean, fed, and well behaved. On top of these duties, many women were required to help with agricultural tasks. Some women also sold eggs and butter or took in laundry to supplement the family's income.

Female virtue, particularly in the South, came to be understood largely as a euphemism for sexual purity. Culture, law, and violence largely centered on protecting the virtue of sexual purity from any possible imagined threat. In a world saturated with the sexual exploitation of Black women, men developed a paranoid obsession with protecting the sexual purity of white women. Black men were presented as an insatiable sexual threat.

While some sought to overturn social hierarchies, many Southerners sought to preserve them. Southern manhood was largely shaped by an obsession with masculine honor. Honor prioritized the public recognition of white masculine claims to reputation and authority. Southern men developed a code to ritualize their interactions with each other and to perform their expectations of honor. This code structured language and behavior and was designed to minimize conflict. But when conflict did arise, the code also provided rituals that would reduce the resulting violence. Racial systems of violence and domination were wielded with crushing intensity for generations, all in the name of keeping white womanhood as pure as the cotton that anchored Southern society.

The formal duel exemplified the code of honor in action. If two men could not settle a dispute through the arbitration of their friends, they would duel to prove their equal honor status. Duelists arranged a secluded meeting, chose from a set of deadly weapons, and risked their lives as they clashed with swords or fired pistols at one another. Some of the most illustrious men in American history participated in a duel at some point during their lives, including President Andrew Jackson, Vice President Aaron Burr, and US Senators Henry Clay and Thomas Hart Benton. In all but Burr's case, dueling helped elevate these men to prominence.

Violence among the lower classes, especially those in the backcountry, involved fistfights and shoot-outs. Tactics included the

sharpening of fingernails and filing of teeth into razor-sharp points, which would be used to gouge eyes and bite off ears and noses. In a duel, a gentleman achieved recognition by risking his life rather than killing his opponent, whereas those involved in rough-and-tumble fighting achieved victory through maiming their opponent.

The legal system was partially to blame for the prevalence of violence in the Old South. Although states and territories had laws against murder, rape, and various other forms of violence, including specific laws against dueling, upper-class Southerners were rarely prosecuted, and juries often acquitted the accused. Although hundreds of duelists fought and killed one another, there is little evidence that many duelists faced prosecution, and only one, Timothy Bennett (of Belleville, Illinois), was ever executed. By contrast, prosecutors routinely sought cases against lower-class Southerners, who were found guilty in greater numbers than their wealthier counterparts.

These economic, religious, and social transformations increasingly seemed to divide the world into the public space of work and politics and the domestic space of leisure and morality. Women's roles as guardians of moral virtue were used to address all forms of social issues that they felt contributed to the moral decline of society, including labor laws, prison reform, and antislavery. In spite of this apparent valuation of women's position in society, there were clear limitations. Under the terms of coverture, men gained legal control over their wives' property upon marriage, and women with children had no legal rights over their offspring. Additionally, women could not initiate divorce, make wills, sign contracts, or vote.

IV. New Faiths

By the 1830s, the Second Great Awakening had already brought about tectonic shifts in the landscape of American religion. A newfound evangelicalism had spread a more open, reactive, and malleable form of religious zeal into the West. As a result, reformers across the nation had begun to harness that passion by organizing movements and founding churches dedicated to perfecting the American character. The self-reliance, discipline, and moral righteousness that defined the new American middle-class's image of itself found fertile ground in the rural spaces and working-class towns that linked the older Northeastern cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia with cities like Charleston, New Orleans, St. Louis, and Chicago. This produced an attitude of conscious reform and moral renegotiation that at once sought to escape and recreate the industrial, urban, middle-class outlook of the Northeast.

Perhaps most notable of these new religious groups were the Mormons. In Nauvoo, a small city in eastern Illinois founded as a haven for members of the uniquely American church, Joseph Smith moved beyond the bounds of 1840s Christian orthodoxy by continuing to pronounce personal revelations and introducing sacred rites to be performed only in front of church members in Mormon temples. Entrusted by God to rebuild the kingdom of Christ in the United States, Smith claimed, he and his followers were unrestricted in their criticism of modern society and its need for reform. Most controversially, Smith and a select group of his most loyal followers started to challenge standard notions of domesticity and marriage and began taking additional wives, a practice known at the time as "plural marriage." Smith himself, for example, married at least thirty women over the course of just three or four years. Although Mormons did not publicly acknowledge or openly practice polygamy until 1852, when they moved to the shores of the Great Salt Lake, rumors of Smith's involvement circulated almost immediately and played a part in the motivations of the mob that eventually murdered the Mormon prophet in the summer of 1844. The Mormon church continued under the leadership of Brigham Young, who led the group's movement westward beginning in 1846.

Mormons were not the only religious community in antebellum America to challenge the domestic norms of the era through radical sexual experiments. Shakers strictly enforced celibacy in their communes scattered throughout New England and the upper Midwest, while John Humphrey Noyes introduced free love (or "complex marriage") to his Oneida community in upstate New York.

Others challenged existing cultural customs in less radical ways. For individual worshippers, spiritual egalitarianism in revivals and camp meetings could break down traditional social conventions. For example, revivals generally admitted both men and women. Some preachers provided women with new opportunities to openly express themselves and participate in spiritual communities. This was particularly true in the Methodist and Baptist traditions, though by the mid-nineteenth century, most of these opportunities would be curtailed as these denominations attempted to move away from radical revivalism and toward the status of respectable, organized denominations. Some preachers also promoted racial integration in religious gatherings, expressing equal concern for white and Black people's spiritual salvation and encouraging both enslavers and the enslaved to attend the same meetings. Historians have even suggested that the extreme physical and vocal manifestations of conversion seen at impassioned revivals and camp meetings like those seen in Pentecostal services offered the ranks of worshippers a way to enact a sort of social leveling by flouting the codes of self-restraint prescribed by upper-class elites. Although the revivals did not always live up to such progressive ideals in practice, particularly in the more conservative regions of the slaveholding South, the concept of spiritual egalitarianism nonetheless changed how Protestant Americans thought about themselves, their God, and

one another.

Not all American Christians, though, were taken with revivalism. The early nineteenth century also saw the rise of Unitarianism as a group of ministers and their followers came to reject key aspects of "orthodox" Protestant belief, including the divinity of Christ. Christians in New England were particularly involved in the debates surrounding Unitarianism, as Harvard University became a hotly contested center of cultural authority between Unitarians and Trinitarians. Unitarianism had important effects on the world of reform when a group of Unitarian ministers founded the Transcendental Club in 1836.[6] The club met for four years and included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Frederic Henry Hedge, George Ripley, Orestes Brownson, James Freeman Clarke, and Theodore Parker. While initially limited to ministers or former ministers—except for the eccentric Alcott—the club quickly expanded to include numerous literary intellectuals. Among these were the author Henry David Thoreau, the proto-feminist and literary critic Margaret Fuller, and the educational reformer Elizabeth Peabody.

Transcendentalism had no established creed, and this was intentional. What united the Transcendentalists was their belief in a higher spiritual principle within each person that could be trusted to discover truth, guide moral action, and inspire art. They often referred to this principle as Soul, Spirit, Mind, or Reason. Deeply influenced by British Romanticism and German idealism's celebration of individual artistic inspiration, personal spiritual experience, and aspects of human existence not easily explained by reason or logic, the Transcendentalists established an enduring legacy precisely because they developed distinctly American ideas that emphasized individualism, optimism, oneness with nature, and a modern orientation toward the future rather than the past. These themes resonated in an American nineteenth century where political democracy and readily available land distinguished the United States from Europe.



Figure 11.4 Many Transcendentalists drew spiritual insights from nature. This trend harmonized with American trends that praised rural, agricultural life. The Arcadian or Pastoral State, second painting in The Course of Empire, by Thomas Cole, 1836.

Ralph Waldo Emerson espoused a religious worldview wherein God, "the eternal ONE," manifested through the special harmony between the individual soul and nature. In "The American Scholar" (1837) and "Self-Reliance" (1841), Emerson emphasized the utter reliability and sufficiency of the individual soul and exhorted his audience to overcome "our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands."[7] Emerson believed that the time had come for Americans to declare their intellectual independence from Europe. Henry David Thoreau espoused a similar enthusiasm for simple living, communion with nature, and self-sufficiency. Thoreau's sense of rugged individualism, perhaps the strongest among even the Transcendentalists, also yielded "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849).[8] Several of the Transcendentalists also participated in communal living experiments. For example, in the mid-1840s, George Ripley and other members of the utopian Brook Farm community began to espouse Fourierism, a vision of society based on cooperative principles, as an alternative to capitalist conditions.[9]

Many of these different types of responses to the religious turmoil of the time had a similar endpoint in the embrace of voluntary associations and social reform work. During the antebellum period, many American Protestants responded to the moral anxiety of industrialization and urbanization by organizing to address specific social needs. Social problems such as intemperance, vice, and crime assumed a new and distressing scale that older solutions, such as almshouses, were not equipped to handle. These moralists grew concerned about the growing mass of urban residents who did not attend church, and who, thanks to

poverty or illiteracy, did not even have access to scripture. Voluntary benevolent societies exploded in number to tackle these issues. Led by ministers and dominated by middle-class women, voluntary societies printed and distributed Protestant tracts, taught Sunday school, distributed outdoor relief, and evangelized in both frontier towns and urban slums. These associations and their evangelical members also lent moral backing and workers to large-scale social reform projects, including the temperance movement designed to curb Americans' consumption of alcohol, the abolitionist campaign to eradicate slavery in the United States, and women's rights agitation to improve women's political and economic rights. As such wide-ranging reform projects combined with missionary zeal, evangelical Christians formed a "benevolent empire" that swiftly became a cornerstone of the antebellum period.

V. Fighting Sin

By the 1830s, the bounds of the domestic sphere, and by connection the role of women in American society more broadly, were expanding beyond the walls of the home. Importantly, one of the products of industrialization and urban development was a widespread belief in public outreach and social uplift. In some states, this took form in the creation of the nation's first state-sponsored public-school systems led by Horace Mann. If the factory worker, wholesaler, manager, and banker were the modern-day representations of the virtuous yeoman of the Revolutionary and Jeffersonian eras, the domestic sphere that raised them needed a reimagining of its own. In part because women would work for lower wages and in part because the perceptions of the time held that women had the right nature and disposition to work with children, these schools became functional extensions of the republican household. They were places in which women, whether mothers of their own children or not, could take on the virtuous burden of educating the American public as a whole while also finding a place for themselves in the ranks of salaried workers across the nation.

The role women took in helping society adjust to the demands of a new era did not stop with its domestic needs. An active labor source for factories since the early 1800s, women launched some of the earliest strikes demanding better conditions in textile mills and northern gin houses. By the 1840s, female operatives were central players in many organized labor reform movements. Indeed, in 1844, the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association organized under the leadership of Sarah Bagley, becoming the first union of working women in United States history. An auxiliary of the New England Workingmen's Association, the organization led political pressure campaigns and public petition drives for better working conditions and more humane hours that drew thousands of signatures from "mill girls" across the region. Like their fellow male activists, Bagley and her associates used the desire for mental improvement as a central argument for reform. In an 1847 editorial published in the organization's newspaper, *Voice of Industry*, Bagley pointedly asked, "Who, after thirteen hours of steady application to monotonous work, can sit down and apply her mind to deep and long continued thought?"[10] Despite the widespread support for a ten-hour day, the movement achieved only partial success. President Martin Van Buren established a ten-hour-day policy for laborers on federal public works projects. New Hampshire passed a statewide law in 1847, and Pennsylvania followed a year later. Both states, however, allowed workers to opt out of these restrictions.



Figure 11.5 The masthead for The Voice of Industry, a worker-run newspaper from 1845-1848, advocated for American workers, the New England Workingmen's Association, at the height of the industrial revolution. Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Wikipedia.

In 1842, child labor, long a common sight in every corner of the republic, became a dominant issue in the American labor movement. Because the landscape of American labor was changing, and factory work was in some places replacing less physically dangerous practices, the protection of child laborers gained a great deal of middle-class support. A petition from parents in Fall River, a southern Massachusetts mill town that employed a high portion of child workers, asked the state legislature for a child labor law.[11] Massachusetts quickly passed a law prohibiting children under the age twelve from working more than ten hours a day. By the mid-nineteenth century, every state in New England had followed Massachusetts. Between the 1840s and 1860s,

these statutes reinforced the increased value society had placed on education and the middle-class beliefs in the extension of the domestic sphere into the public realm. Throughout the region, public officials agreed that young children, between the ages of nine and twelve, should be prevented from working in dangerous occupations, and older children, between twelve and fifteen, should balance their labor with education and time for leisure.[12]

Male workers likewise sought to improve their income and working conditions. But labor gains were limited. Despite occasional calls for better working conditions within the emerging industrial system, Northern labor activists remained much more focused on placing the idea of free, wage labor in conflict with the system of enslaved labor in the South, claiming moral superiority to the Southern states' peculiar institution. Indeed, the labor movement in the North and Midwest played a central role in popularizing the free-soil movement, challenging the spread of slavery into the West in the 1840s and forcing the debate into national politics in the 1850s. As a result, Northern industry, with all its flaws and internal challenges, came to represent for many people a more moral, pragmatic, and sustainable system of commerce than the Southern institution of slavery.

The most highly contested wing of the benevolent empire was the movement against slavery. In the face of substantial external opposition, the abolitionist movement began to splinter. In 1839, an ideological schism shook the foundations of organized antislavery. Moral suasionists, led most prominently by William Lloyd Garrison, felt that the US Constitution was a fundamentally proslavery document and that the present political system was irredeemable. They dedicated their efforts exclusively toward persuading the public to redeem the nation by reestablishing it on antislavery grounds. However, many abolitionists, reeling from the level of entrenched opposition met in the 1830s, began to feel that moral suasion was no longer realistic. Instead, they believed abolition would have to be effected through existing political processes. So, in 1839, political abolitionists formed the Liberty Party under the leadership of James G. Birney. This new abolitionist society was predicated on the belief that the US Constitution was actually an antislavery document that could be used to abolish the stain of slavery through the national political system.[13]

Many abolitionists who believed full-heartedly in moral suasion nonetheless felt compelled to leave the American Anti-Slavery Society because, in part, it elevated women to leadership positions and endorsed women's suffrage. This question came to a head when, in 1840, Abby Kelly was elected to the business committee of the society. The elevation of women to full leadership roles was too much for some conservative members, who saw this as evidence that the society had lost sight of its most important goal. Under the leadership of Arthur Tappan, they left to form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. These disputes became so bitter and acrimonious that former friends cut social ties and traded public insults.

Another significant shift stemmed from the disappointments of the 1830s. Abolitionists in the 1840s increasingly moved from agendas based on reform to agendas based on resistance. Moral suasionists continued to appeal to hearts and minds, and political abolitionists launched sustained campaigns to bring abolitionist agendas to the ballot box. Meanwhile, the entrenched and violent opposition of both enslavers and the Northern public encouraged abolitionists to find other avenues of fighting slave power. Increasingly, for example, abolitionists aided runaway enslaved people and established international antislavery networks to pressure the United States to abolish slavery.



Figure 11.6 This enormous painting documents the 1840 convention of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, established by both American and English anti-slavery activists to promote worldwide abolition. Benjamin Haydon, The Anti-Slavery Society Convention, 1840. Wikimedia.

Frederick Douglass represented the intersection of these two trends. After escaping from slavery, Douglass came to the fore of the abolitionist movement as a naturally gifted orator and a powerful narrator of his experiences in slavery. His first autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, published in 1845, was so widely read that it was reprinted in nine editions and translated into several languages.[14] Douglass traveled to Great Britain in 1845 and harnessed moral and financial support from British and Irish antislavery societies. His great success abroad contributed significantly to raising morale among weary abolitionists at home. Douglass was also a fervent supporter of women's rights. In his abolitionist newspaper, the North Star, he wrote, "We hold women to be justly entitled to all we claim for man."[15]

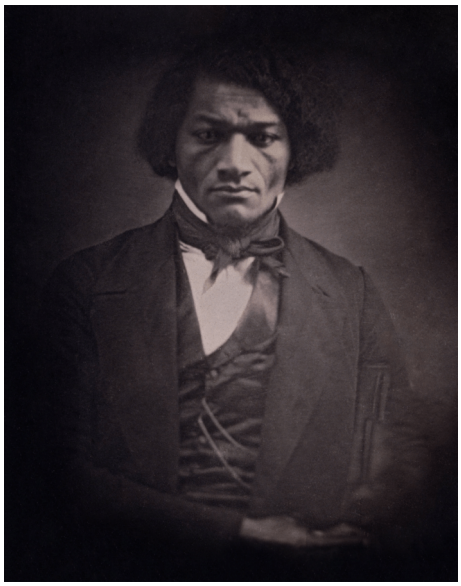


Figure 11.7 Frederick Douglass was perhaps the most famous African American abolitionist, fighting tirelessly not only for the end of slavery but for equal rights for all American citizens. This copy of a daguerreotype shows him as a young man, around the age of 29, and soon after his self-emancipation. Print, c. 1850 after c. 1847 daguerreotype. National Portrait Gallery, Wikimedia.

Women's rights, too, divided abolitionists. The abolitionist movement was another important school for women's public engagement. Many of the earliest women's rights advocates began their activism by fighting the injustices of slavery, including Angelina and Sarah Grimké, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. In the 1830s, women in cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia established female societies dedicated to the antislavery cause. Initially, these

societies were similar to the prayer and fundraising projects of other reform societies. As such societies proliferated, however, their strategies changed. Women could not vote, for example, but they increasingly used their right to petition to express their antislavery grievances to the government. Women like the Grimké sisters even began to travel on lecture circuits. This latter strategy, born of antislavery advocacy, tethered the cause of women's rights to abolitionism.

Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Emily Grimké were born to a wealthy family in Charleston, South Carolina, where they witnessed the horrors of slavery firsthand. Repulsed by the treatment of the enslaved laborers on the Grimké plantation, they decided to support the antislavery movement by sharing their experiences on Northern lecture tours. At first speaking to female audiences, they soon attracted "promiscuous" crowds of both men and women. They were among the earliest and most famous American women to take such a public role in the name of reform. When the Grimké sisters met substantial harassment and opposition to their public speaking on antislavery, they began to see that they would need to fight for women's rights in order to fight for the rights of enslaved people.[16] Other female abolitionists soon joined them in linking the issues of women's rights and abolitionism by drawing direct comparisons between the condition of free women in the United States and the condition of the slave.

As the antislavery movement gained momentum in Northern states in the 1830s and 1840s, so too did efforts for women's rights. These efforts came to a head at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. The convention's organizers refused to seat the female delegates or allow them to vote during the proceedings. Angered by such treatment, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whose husband was also a delegate, returned to the United States with a renewed interest in pursuing women's rights. In 1848, they organized the Seneca Falls Convention, a two-day summit in New York state in which women's rights advocates came together to discuss the problems facing women.



Figure 11.8. Lucretia Mott campaigned for women's rights, abolition, and equality in the United States, 1842. Joseph Kyle, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Wikimedia.

Stanton wrote the Declaration of Sentiments for the Seneca Falls Convention to capture the wide range of issues embraced by the early women's rights movement. She modeled the document on the Declaration of Independence to make explicit the connection between women's liberty and the rhetoric of America's founding. The Declaration of Sentiments outlined fifteen grievances and eleven resolutions. They championed property rights, access to the professions (such as medicine and the law), and, most controversially, the right to vote. Sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signed the Declaration of Sentiments.[17]

Antebellum women fought what they perceived as senseless gender discrimination, such as the barring of women from college and inferior pay for female teachers. They also argued that men and women should be held to the same moral standards. The Seneca Falls Convention was the first of many such gatherings promoting women's rights, held almost exclusively in the Northern states. Yet the women's rights movement grew slowly and experienced few victories. Few states reformed married women's property laws before the Civil War, and no state was prepared to offer women the right to vote during the antebellum period. At the onset of the Civil War, women's rights advocates temporarily threw the bulk of their support behind abolition, allowing the cause of racial equality to temporarily trump that of gender equality. But the words of the Seneca Falls convention continued to inspire generations of activists.

Female education provides an example of the great strides made by and for women during the early 1800s. As part of a larger education reform movement in the early republic, several female reformers worked tirelessly to increase women's access to education. They argued that if women were to take charge of the education of their children, they needed to be well educated themselves. While the women's education movement did not generally push for women's political or social equality, it did assert women's intellectual equality with men, an idea that would eventually have important effects. Educators such as Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, and Mary Lyon (founders of the Troy Female Seminary, Hartford Female Seminary, and Mount Holyoke Seminary, respectively) adopted the same rigorous curriculum that was used for boys. Many of these schools had the particular goal of training women to be teachers. Many graduates of these prominent seminaries would found their own schools, spreading women's education across the country, and with it, ideas about women's potential to take part in public life.

When the Civil War erupted in 1861, the revival and reform movements of the antebellum period had made an indelible mark on the American landscape. The Second Great Awakening ignited Protestant spirits by connecting evangelical Christians in national networks of faith. Social reform spurred members of the middle class to promote national morality and the public good. Not all reform projects were equally successful, however. While the temperance movement made substantial inroads against the excesses of alcohol consumption and reduced drinking by half, the abolitionist movement proved so divisive that it paved the way for a sectional crisis. Yet participation in reform movements, regardless of their ultimate success, encouraged many Americans to see themselves in new ways. Black activists became a powerful voice in antislavery societies, for example, developing domestic and transnational connections to pursue the cause of liberty. Middle-class women's dominant presence in the benevolent empire encouraged them to pursue a full-fledged women's movement. In their efforts to make the United States a more virtuous and moral nation, nineteenth-century reform activists developed cultural and institutional foundations for social change that have continued to reverberate through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

VI. Western Expansion

While women and men debated the bounds of politics, reform, and morality, Americans also pushed the physical limitations of their growing nation. Americans continued to push west. John Louis O'Sullivan, a popular newspaper editor and columnist, published the long-standing American belief that it was a God-given mission for the United States to lead the world in the peaceful transition to democracy. In a little-read essay printed in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, Jane McManus Storm outlined the importance of annexing Texas to the United States:

Why, were other reasoning wanting, in favor of now elevating this question of the reception of Texas into the Union, out of the lower region of our past party dissensions, up to its proper level of a high and broad nationality, it surely is to be found, found abundantly, in the manner in which other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves into it, between us and the proper parties to the case, in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.[1818]



Figure 11.9 John O'Sullivan, shown here in an 1874 Harper's Weekly sketch, printed the phrase "manifest destiny" in an 1845 newspaper article written by Jane McManus Storm. Wikimedia.

Storm, O'Sullivan, and many others viewed expansion as necessary to achieve America's destiny and to protect American interests. "Manifest destiny" was grounded in the belief that a democratic, agrarian republic would save the world by spreading its religion, culture, and institutions across America. White Americans across the political spectrum embraced some elements of this belief as the United States continued to expand across the continent.

Although named by Storm and O'Sullivan in 1845, manifest destiny was a widely held but vaguely defined belief dating back to the nation's founding. First, many Americans believed that the strength of American values and institutions justified moral claims to hemispheric leadership. Second, Americans viewed lands on the North American continent west of the Mississippi River (and later into the Caribbean) as destined for American-led political and agricultural improvement. Third, they believed that God and the Constitution ordained an irrepressible destiny to accomplish redemption and democratization throughout the world. These beliefs coupled with economic ambitions to create a tidal wave of western expansion. These beliefs and the resulting actions were often disastrous to anyone in the way of American expansion. The new religion of American democracy spread on the feet and in the wagons of those who moved west.

These impulses became articulated in a broad commitment to democratic expansion that grew into the Young America movement. Strongest among members of the Democratic Party but spanning the political spectrum, the Young America movement downplayed divisions over slavery and ethnicity by embracing a nationalist unity and emphasizing American exceptionalism, territorial expansion, democratic participation, and economic integration.[19] Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson captured the political outlook of this new generation in a speech he delivered in 1844 titled "The Young American":

In every age of the world, there has been a leading nation, one of a more generous sentiment, whose eminent citizens were willing to stand for the interests of general justice and humanity, at the risk of being called, by the men of the moment, chimerical and fantastic. Which should be that nation but these States? Which should lead that movement, if not New England? Who should lead the leaders, but the Young American?[20][20]

However, many Americans, including Emerson, disapproved of aggressive expansion. For opponents of manifest destiny, the lofty rhetoric of the Young Americans was nothing other than a kind of imperialism that the American Revolution was supposed to have repudiated.[21] Many members of the Whig Party (and later the Republican Party) argued that the United States' mission was to lead by example, not by conquest. Abraham Lincoln summed up this criticism with a fair amount of sarcasm during a speech in 1859: "He [the Young American] owns a large part of the world, by right of possessing it; and all the rest by right of wanting it, and intending to have it. . . . He knows all that can possibly be known; inclines to believe in spiritual trappings, and is the unquestioned inventor of 'Manifest Destiny.'"[22]

But Lincoln and other antiexpansionists struggled to win over popular opinion. The nation, fueled by the principles of manifest destiny, would continue westward. Along the way, Americans battled both Indigenous peoples and foreign nations, claiming territory to the very edges of the continent. "Do not lounge in the cities!" commanded publisher Horace Greeley in 1841. "There is room and health in the country, away from the crowds of idlers and imbeciles. Go west, before you are fitted for no life but that of the factory."[23] The New York Tribune often argued that American exceptionalism required the United States to benevolently conquer the continent as the prime means of spreading American capitalism and American democracy.

Settler-colonial dreams of creating a democratic utopia ultimately rested on those who picked up their possessions and their families and moved west. Western settlers usually migrated as families and settled along navigable and potable rivers. Settlements often coalesced around local traditions, especially religion, carried from Eastern settlements. These shared understandings encouraged a strong sense of cooperation among Western settlers that forged communities on the frontier.

Before the Mexican War, the West for most Americans still referred to the fertile area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River, with a slight amount of overspill beyond its banks. With soil exhaustion and land competition increasing in the East, most early migrants sought a greater measure of stability and self-sufficiency by engaging in small-scale farming. Boosters of these new agricultural areas, along with the US government, encouraged perceptions of the West as a land of hard-built opportunity that promised personal and national bounty.

Women migrants bore the unique double burden of travel while also being expected to conform to restrictive gender norms. The key virtues of femininity, according to the "cult of true womanhood," included piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness. The concept of "separate spheres" expected women to remain in the home. These values accompanied men and women as they traveled west to begin their new lives.

While many of these societal standards endured, there often existed an openness of frontier society that resulted in modestly more opportunities for women. Husbands needed partners in setting up a homestead and working in the field to provide food for

the family. Suitable wives were often in short supply, enabling some to informally negotiate more power in their households and along the Overland Trails.[24] Traditional gender lines broke down quickly on the trail. Women like Charlotte Pengra, for example, found themselves driving wagons and making bullets alongside the men who, at times, tended the children.[25] In the 1860s, women, such as Lucinda Walker and Margaret Brown, were empowered as livestock owners in Texas. Census records, although spotty, reveal these women as heads of household and owners of cattle.[26] Their relative freedom from traditional gender roles was possible because they lived in less populated areas on the frontier.

Americans debated the role of government in westward expansion. This debate centered on the proper role of the US government in paying for the internal improvements, or infrastructure projects, that soon became necessary to encourage and support economic development. Some saw frontier development as a self-driven undertaking that necessitated private risk and investment devoid of government interference. Others saw the federal government's role as providing the infrastructural development needed to give migrants the push toward engagement with the larger national economy. While comprehensive support for federally funded infrastructure never fully materialized, halting efforts by state, local, and federal governments enabled an expansion of transportation networks that undergirded economic growth and settler migrations westward through the 1840s and beyond. Economic chains of interdependence stretched over hundreds of miles of land and through thousands of contracts and remittances. America's manifest destiny became wedded not only to territorial expansion but also to economic development.[27]

In the end, federal aid proved essential for the conquest and settlement of the continent. Early railroads like the Baltimore and Ohio line hoped to link Mid-Atlantic cities with lucrative western trade routes. Railroad boosters encouraged the rapid growth of towns and cities along their routes. Not only did rail lines promise to move commerce faster, but the rails also encouraged the spreading of towns farther away from traditional waterway locations. Technological limitations, constant repairs, conflicts with Native Americans, and political disagreements all hampered railroading and kept canals and steamboats as integral parts of the transportation system. Nonetheless, this early establishment of railroads enabled a rapid expansion that would escalate during and after the Civil War, still furthering federal investment and involvement in the West.

VI. Indigenous People and Settler Pressures in the West

Yet the vast West was not empty. Until Indian Removal became national policy in the 1830s, Native Americans controlled much of the land east of the Mississippi River and almost all of the West. The political and legal processes of expansion always hinged on the belief that white Americans could best use new lands and opportunities. This belief rested on the idea that only Americans embodied the democratic ideals of yeoman agriculturalism extolled by Thomas Jefferson and expanded under Jacksonian democracy. Expansion hinged on the federal policy of Indian Removal that had begun in the East but would continue in the lands beyond the Mississippi River. American settlers came to covet the entire continent.



Figure 11.10. Artistic propaganda like this promoted the national project of manifest destiny. Columbia, the female figure of America, leads Americans into the West and into the future by carrying the values of republicanism (as seen through her Roman garb) and progress (shown through the inclusion of technological innovations like the telegraph) and clearing native peoples and animals, seen being pushed into the darkness. John Gast, American Progress, 1872. Wikimedia.

Still, some Native American groups remained too powerful to remove or subjugate. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the Comanche rose to power in the Southern Plains region of what is now the southwestern United States. By quickly adapting to the horse culture first introduced by the Spanish, the Comanche transitioned from a foraging economy into a mixed hunting and pastoral society. After 1821, Mexico claimed the region as part of its northern frontier, but they had little control. Instead, the Comanche remained in power and controlled the economy of the Southern Plains. A flexible political structure allowed the Comanche to ally with some Indigenous groups while dominating others, as well as Mexican and American settlers in this borderland of the Southern Plains.

In the 1830s, the Comanche launched raids into northern Mexico, ending what had been an unprofitable but peaceful diplomatic relationship with Mexico. At the same time, they forged new trading relationships with Anglo-American traders in Texas. Throughout this period, the Comanche and several other independent Native groups, particularly the Kiowa, Apache, and Diné (Navajo), engaged in thousands of violent encounters with northern Mexicans. Collectively, these encounters comprised an ongoing war during the 1830s and 1840s as tribal nations vied for power and wealth.

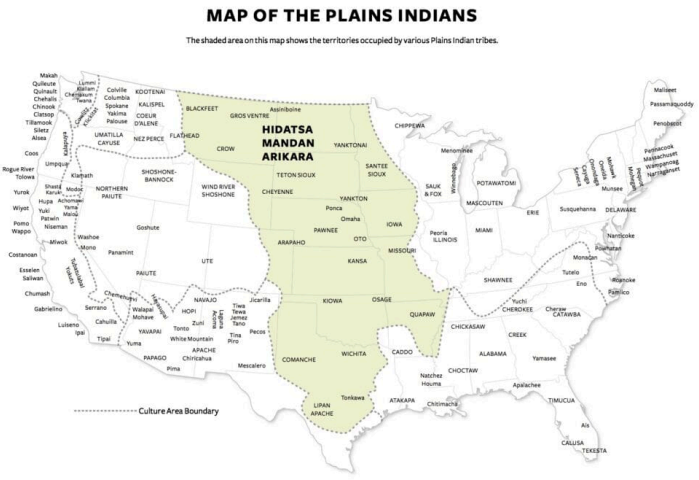


Figure 11.11. “Map of the Plains Indians,” undated. Smithsonian Institute.

By the 1840s, Comanche power peaked with an empire that controlled a vast territory in the trans-Mississippi West known as Comanchería. By trading in Texas and raiding in northern Mexico, the Comanche controlled the flow of commodities, including captives, livestock, and trade goods. They practiced a fluid system of captivity and captive trading, rather than a rigid chattel slavery system. The Comanche used captives for economic exploitation but also adopted captives into kinship networks. This allowed for the assimilation of diverse peoples in the region into the Comanche orbit. The ongoing conflict in the region had sweeping consequences on both Mexican and American politics. The US-Mexican War, beginning in 1846, can be seen as partly a consequence of this Indigenous-driven violence.[28]

In the Great Basin region, Mexican independence also escalated patterns of violence. This region, on the periphery of the Spanish Empire, was nonetheless integrated in the vast commercial trading network of the West.[29] Mexican officials and Anglo-American traders entered the region with their own imperial designs. New forms of violence spread into the homelands of the Paiute and Western Shoshone. Traders, settlers, and Mormon religious refugees, aided by US officials and soldiers, committed acts of violence and laid the groundwork for violent conquest. This expansion of the American state into the Great Basin meant groups such as the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe had to compete over land, resources, captives, and trade relations with Anglo-Americans. Eventually, white incursion and ongoing wars against Native Americans resulted in the traumatic dispossession of land and the struggle for subsistence.[30] Whether in the Great Basin, the Southern Plains, or the Pacific Northwest, as white settlers began to migrate west in larger numbers during the 1840s, their arrival signaled new pressures on Native lands and Indigenous ways of life.



Figure 11.12. American artist George Catlin traveled west to paint Native Americans. In 1832, he painted Eeh-nís-kim, Crystal Stone, wife of a Blackfoot leader. Smithsonian American Art Museum.

VIII. Westward Expansion and the Politics of Slavery

Questions over slavery's fate in the West endured in the United States. In late 1839, following the collective defeat of its four scattered candidates in the presidential election of 1836, the Whig Party held their first national convention in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, emboldened by President Martin Van Buren's failure to control the Panic of 1837 and seeking to take advantage of the growing call for reform. To party founder Henry Clay's disappointment, the convention voted to nominate not him but General William Henry Harrison of Ohio as the Whig candidate for president in 1840. Harrison was known primarily for defeating Shawnee warriors led by Tecumseh before and during the War of 1812, most famously at the Battle of Tippecanoe in present-day Indiana. Whig leaders viewed him as a candidate with broad patriotic appeal. They portrayed him as the "log cabin and hard cider" candidate, a plain man of the country, unlike the Easterner Martin Van Buren. To balance the ticket with a Southerner, the Whigs nominated a slave-owning Virginia senator, John Tyler, for vice president. A compromise candidate, Tyler was originally a Democrat and a Jackson supporter in the 1820s and 1830s. Although he had broken with Jackson over his stance on states' rights during the Nullification Crisis in 1832, Tyler never fully identified with the Whigs' platform of government-led reform so popular among moralists and middle-class reformers across the expanding and changing country.

Although "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" easily won the presidential election of 1840, this choice of ticket turned out to be disastrous

for the Whigs. Harrison became ill (for unclear reasons, though tradition claims he contracted pneumonia after delivering a nearly two-hour inaugural address without an overcoat or hat) and died after just thirty-one days in office. Harrison thus holds the ironic honor of having the longest inaugural address and the shortest term in office of any American president.[31] Vice President Tyler became president and soon adopted policies that looked far more like Andrew Jackson's than like a Whig's. After Tyler twice vetoed charters for another Bank of the United States, nearly his entire cabinet resigned, and the Whigs in Congress expelled "His Accidency" from the party.



Figure 11.13. The popular slogan "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" helped the Whigs and William Henry Harrison (with John Tyler) win the presidential election in 1840. Pictured here is a campaign banner with shortened "Tip and Ty," one of the many ways that Whigs waged the "log cabin campaign." Ross County Historical Society. Wikimedia.

The crisis of Tyler's administration was just one sign of the Whig Party's difficulty uniting around issues besides opposition to Democrats. The Whig Party succeeded in electing one more president but remained deeply divided. Its problems grew as the issue of slavery strained the Union in the 1850s.

Likewise, the push west only exacerbated the moral concerns of antislavery advocates in the North and Midwest and underlined the politically fraught prospects of slave-state representation in Congress and the national government more generally. Westward expansion seemed to also imply an expansion of the "slave interest" as Southern filibusters contemplated ways to graft new slave-holding territories onto the expanding nation. The 1840s opened with a number of disturbing developments for antislavery leaders. The 1842 Supreme Court case Prigg v. Pennsylvania ruled that the federal government's Fugitive Slave Act trumped Pennsylvania's personal liberty law.[32] Antislavery activists believed that the federal government only served Southern enslavers, who were trouncing the states' rights of the North. A number of Northern states reacted by passing new personal liberty laws in protest in 1843.

The rising controversy over the status of freedom-seeking people swelled partly through the influence of escaped formerly enslaved people, including Frederick Douglass. Other formerly enslaved people, including Sojourner Truth, joined Douglass in rousing support for antislavery, as did free Black Americans like Maria Stewart, James McCune Smith, Martin Delaney, and numerous others.[33] But Black activists did more than deliver speeches. They also attacked the fugitive slave laws by helping thousands to escape. The incredible career of Harriet Tubman is one of the more dramatic examples. But the forces of slavery had powerful allies at every level of government, and as the 1840s progressed, those committed to the cause of abolition and antislavery would look for new political options as they continued to challenge the institutions of slavery.

The Whig Party had initially formed in opposition to Andrew Jackson's presidency, and out of this opposition, it blamed Democrats for defending slavery at the expense of the American people. Yet antislavery was never a core component of the Whig platform. Several abolitionists grew so disgusted with the Whigs that they formed their own party, a true antislavery party. Activists in Warsaw, New York, organized the antislavery Liberty Party in 1839. Liberty leaders demanded the end of slavery in the District of Columbia, the end of the interstate slave trade, and the prohibition of slavery's expansion into the West. But the Liberty Party also shunned women's participation in the movement and distanced itself from visions of true racial egalitarianism. Few Americans voted for the party. The Democrats and Whigs continued to dominate American politics.

With this political status quo, Democrats and Whigs fostered a moment of relative calm on the slavery debate, partially aided by gag rules prohibiting discussion of antislavery petitions. Arkansas (1836) and Michigan (1837) became the newest states admitted to the Union, with Arkansas coming in as a slave state and Michigan coming in as a free state. Michigan gained admission through provisions established in the Northwest Ordinance, while Arkansas came in under the Missouri Compromise. Since its lands were below the line at 36°30′, the admission of Arkansas did not threaten the Missouri consensus. The balancing act between slavery and freedom continued.

Events in Texas would shatter the balance. In 1836, Anglo-Texans in the northern Mexican province of Tejas had successfully forced General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, then president of Mexico, to sign a treaty acknowledging Texas's independence as a separate republic. Independent Texas soon gained recognition from a supportive Andrew Jackson administration in 1837. But Jackson's successor, President Martin Van Buren, also a Democrat, had reasons to worry about the Republic of Texas. Texas struggled with ongoing conflicts with Mexico and raids from the powerful Comanche. The 1844 Democratic presidential candidate James K. Polk sought to bridge the sectional divide by promising new lands to whites in the North and South. Polk cited the annexation of Texas and the Oregon Territory as campaign cornerstones.[34] Yet as Polk championed the acquisition of these vast new lands, Northern Democrats grew annoyed by their Southern colleagues, especially when it came to Texas.

Texas annexation had remained a political landmine since the Republic declared independence from Mexico in 1836. American politicians feared that adding Texas to the Union would provoke a war with Mexico and reignite sectional tensions by throwing off the balance between free and slave states. However, after his expulsion from the Whig party, President John Tyler saw Texas statehood as the key to saving his political career. In 1842, he began work on opening annexation to national debate. Harnessing public outcry over the issue, Democrat James K. Polk rose from virtual obscurity to win the presidential election of 1844. Polk and his party campaigned on promises of westward expansion, with eyes toward Texas, Oregon, and California. In the final days of his presidency, Tyler at last extended an official offer to Texas on March 3, 1845. The Republic accepted on July 4, becoming the twenty-eighth state. Mexico denounced annexation as "an act of aggression, the most unjust which can be found recorded in the annals of modern history."[35] Beyond the anger produced by annexation, the two nations both laid claim over a narrow strip of land between two rivers. Mexico drew the southwestern border of Texas at the Nueces River, but Texans claimed that the border lay roughly 150 miles farther west at the Rio Grande. Neither claim was realistic since the sparsely populated area, known as the Nueces Strip, was in fact controlled by Native Americans.

For many observers, the debates over Texas statehood illustrated that the federal government had fallen into the hands of proslavery radicals. Texas president Sam Houston managed to secure a deal with Polk and gained admission to the Union for Texas in 1845. Antislavery Northerners also worried about the admission of Florida, which entered the Union as a slave state in 1845. The year 1845 became a pivotal year in the memory of antislavery leaders. As Americans embraced calls to pursue their manifest destiny, antislavery voices looked at developments in Florida and Texas as signs that the sectional crisis had taken an ominous and perhaps irredeemable turn.

VII. The US-Mexican War

The Polk presidency signaled new reversals to the antislavery cause and the beginnings of a dark new era in American politics. President Polk and his Democratic allies were eager to see Western lands brought into the Union and were especially anxious to see the borders of the nation extended to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Critics of the administration blasted these efforts as little more than land grabs on behalf of enslavers. In November 1845, President Polk secretly dispatched John Slidell to Mexico City to purchase the Nueces Strip along with large sections of New Mexico and California. The mission was an empty gesture, designed largely to pacify those in Washington who insisted on diplomacy before war. Predictably, officials in Mexico City refused to receive Slidell. In preparation for the assumed failure of the negotiations, Polk preemptively sent a four-thousand-man army under General Zachary Taylor to Corpus Christi, Texas, just northeast of the Nueces River. Upon word of Slidell's rebuff in January 1846, Polk ordered Taylor to cross into the disputed territory. The president hoped that this show of force would push the lands of California onto the bargaining table as well. Unfortunately, he badly misread the situation. After losing Texas, the Mexican public strongly opposed surrendering any more ground to the United States. Popular opinion left the shaky government in Mexico City without room to negotiate. On April 24, Mexican cavalrymen attacked a detachment of Taylor's troops in the disputed territory just north of the Rio Grande, killing eleven US soldiers.

The cagey Polk knew that since hostilities already existed, political dissent would be dangerous—a vote against war became a vote against supporting American soldiers under fire. Congress passed a declaration of war on May 13. Only a few members of both parties, notably John Quincy Adams and John C. Calhoun, opposed the measure. Upon declaring war in 1846, Congress issued a call for fifty thousand volunteer soldiers. Spurred by promises of adventure and conquest abroad, thousands of eager men flocked to assembly points across the country.[36] However, opposition to "Mr. Polk's War" soon grew. Polk's shady actions in

leading Congress to war in early 1846 seemed to justify antislavery complaints. Whigs, like Abraham Lincoln, found their initial protests to the war effort sidelined, but antislavery voices would become more vocal and more powerful as the Mexican War played out and new territories became annexed to the victorious United States.

In the early fall of 1846, the US Army invaded Mexico on multiple fronts, and within a year's time General Winfield Scott's men took control of Mexico City. However, the city's fall did not bring an end to the war. Scott's men occupied Mexico's capital for over four months while the two countries negotiated. In the United States, the war had been controversial from the beginning. Embedded journalists sent back detailed reports from the front lines, and a divided press viciously debated the news. Volunteers found that war was not as they expected. Disease killed seven times as many American soldiers as combat.[37] Harsh discipline, conflict within the ranks, and violent clashes with civilians led soldiers to desert in huge numbers. Peace finally came on February 2, 1848, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.



Figure 11.14. "General Scott's entrance into Mexico." Lithograph. 1851. Originally published in George Wilkins Kendall & Carl Nebel, The War between the United States and Mexico Illustrated, Embracing Pictorial Drawings of all the Principal Conflicts. New York: D. Appleton, 1851. Wikimedia.

Through the treaty, the United States gained lands that would become the future states of California, Utah, and Nevada; most of Arizona; and parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. Mexican officials also had to surrender their claims to Texas and recognize the Rio Grande as its southern boundary. The United States offered $15 million for all of it. With American soldiers occupying their capital, Mexican leaders had no choice but to sign.

With the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and a newly forged peace, Polk opened up American expansion to the Pacific. New outlets for American expansion going forward, not just in Oregon but also in the Great Basin, Southern Plains, and far Southwest, became viable. The newly won American West attracted a diverse group of entrepreneurs and settlers to the commercial towns of New Mexico, the fertile lands of eastern Texas, the famed gold deposits of California, and the Rocky Mountains. This postwar migration built on earlier paths of travel dating back to the 1820s, when the lucrative Santa Fe trade enticed merchants to New Mexico and generous land grants brought numerous settlers to Texas. The Gadsden Purchase of 1854 further added to American gains north of Mexico and solidified the southern border from the Rio Grande across to the Pacific Ocean.

While the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo secured vast tracts of land for American settlement, development, and overall expansion, the treaty infuriated antislavery leaders in the United States. The spoils of war were impressive, but it was clear they would help expand slavery. Antislavery activists, who already judged the Mexican War an enslavers' plot, vowed that none of the newly won territories should be opened to slavery. But knowing that the Liberty Party was also not likely to provide a home to many moderate voters, leaders fostered a new and more competitive party, which they called the Free Soil Party. Antislavery leaders had thought that their vision of a federal government divorced from slavery might be represented by the major parties in the presidential election of 1848, but both the Whigs and the Democrats nominated candidates hostile to the antislavery cause. Left unrepresented, antislavery Free Soil leaders swung into action.

Demanding an alternative to the proslavery status quo, Free Soil leaders assembled so-called Conscience Whigs, the remnants of the Liberty Party, and antislavery Democrats under a new political umbrella. The Free Soil coalition called for a national convention

in August 1848 at Buffalo, New York. A number of ex-Democrats committed to the party right away, including an important group of New Yorkers loyal to Martin Van Buren. The Free Soil Party's platform bridged the Eastern and Western leadership together and called for an end to slavery in Washington, DC, and a halt on slavery's expansion into the Western territories.[38]

The admission of Wisconsin as a free state in May 1848 helped cool tensions after the Texas and Florida admissions. Meanwhile, news from a number of failed European revolutions alarmed American reformers, but as exiled radicals filtered into the United States, a strengthening women's rights movement also flexed its muscle at Seneca Falls, New York.[39] Frederick Douglass also appeared at the convention and took part in the proceedings, where participants debated the Declaration of Sentiments, Grievances, and Resolutions.[40] By August 1848, it seemed plausible that the Free Soil Movement might tap into these reforms and build a broader coalition. In some ways, that is precisely what it did. But come November, the spirit of reform failed to yield much at the polls. Whig candidate Zachary Taylor bested Democrat Lewis Cass of Michigan. The Free Soil movement hardly made a dent in the 1848 presidential election, but it drew more than four times the popular vote won by the Liberty Party in earlier elections. It was a promising start. In 1848, Free Soil leaders claimed just 10 percent of the popular vote but won over a dozen House seats and even managed to win one Senate seat in Ohio, which went to Salmon P. Chase.[41] In Congress, Free Soil members had enough votes to swing power to either the Whigs or the Democrats, making them a sizable minority party that could no longer be ignored. In the years ahead, concerns about slavery's expansion west and the proslavery leanings of the national government would continue to fuel the Free Soil opposition movement.

X. Conclusion

Expansion—in both the reform efforts of society's morals and politics, and in the territorial sense as Americans pushed westward—shaped the era. In the aftermath of Jacksonian democracy's advent on the national stage, Americans wrestled with how to shape the continent and its people in its own image. Various interest groups also increasingly debated how that American future for the continent would take shape—what role religion would play, what voice women might have in it, and crucially, whether the institution of slavery would be permitted to spill westward despite the prior controversies and compromises of Missouri.

The US-Mexican War (1846–1848) had an enormous impact on these questions and shaped the future of both countries. The American victory helped set the United States on the path to becoming a world power. It elevated Zachary Taylor to the presidency and served as a training ground for many of the Civil War's future commanders. Most significantly, Mexico lost roughly half of its territory. Yet the US victory was not without danger. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an outspoken critic of the conflict, had predicted ominously at the beginning of the war, "We will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man who swallows the arsenic which will bring him down in turn. Mexico will poison us."[42] Indeed, the conflict over whether to extend slavery into the newly won territory pushed the nation ever closer to disunion and civil war. The chauvinism of policies like Native American removal, the Mexican War, and filibustering existed alongside growing anxiety over the morality of the nation's actions in the West and its continued reliance on slave labor in the South. Debates over reform, economics, diplomacy, and manifest destiny exposed some of the key weaknesses of the American system, begging the question of whether the nation could survive the growing pains of expansion in all of its capacities.

XI. Primary Sources

1. Sarah Grimké calls for women's rights, 1838

Antebellum Americans increasingly confined middle-class white women to the home, where they were responsible for educating children and maintaining household virtue. Yet women used these ideas to become more active in the public sphere than ever before, taking prominent roles in all the major reform causes of the era. Women's participation in the antislavery crusade most directly inspired specific women's rights campaigns. In this document, Sarah Moore Grimké calls for equality between men and women.

2. Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" 1852

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in Talbot County, Maryland in 1818. He was separated from his mother in infancy and lived with his grandmother until he was separated from her as well at age seven. After several attempts, he finally successfully escape slavery in 1838. He became one of the most influential abolitionist speakers and before a crowd of white abolitionists in 1852, he delivered this, one of the greatest abolitionist speeches.

3. George Fitzhugh argues that slavery is better than liberty and equality, 1854

As the nineteenth century progressed, some Americans shifted their understanding of slavery from a necessary evil to a positive good. George Fitzhugh offered one of the most consistent and sophisticated defenses of slavery. His study Sociology for the South attacked northern society as corrupt and slavery as a gentle system designed to "protect" the inferior Black race and promote social harmony.

4. Declaring America's manifest destiny, 1845

This newspaper editorial articulated the long-standing American belief in the God-given mission of the United States to lead the world in the transition to democracy. The piece calls this America's "manifest destiny." This idea motivated wars of American expansion. This essay advocates adding Texas to the United States.

5. Diary of a Woman Migrating to Oregon, 1853

The experience of migrating west into territory still controlled by Native Americans was difficult and dangerous. In these diary excerpts we find the experience of Amelia Stewart Knight who traveled with her husband and seven children from Iowa to Oregon. She was pregnant the entire trip and gave birth to her eighth child on the side of the road near the journey's end.

6. Chinese Merchant Complains of Racist Abuse, 1860

The California Gold Rush of 1849 brought a major influx of Asian immigrants to the new state. This number only grew after railroad companies turned to Chinese laborers to build western railroads. Life for these immigrants was particularly difficult, as even financially successful Chinese immigrants faced considerable discrimination. In 1860, the Chinese merchant Pun Chi drafted this petition to congress, calling on the legislature to do more to protect Chinese immigrants.

7. Wyandotte woman describes tensions over slavery, 1849

In 1843, the Wyandotte nation was forcefully removed from their homeland in Ohio and brought to the Kansas Territory. They found themselves on a borderland Missouri's slave society and land held by Native Americans. When the national Methodist church split, debates over slavery threatened the Christianity of the Wyandotte. This letter depicts the complex relationship between recently removed Native peoples, Christianity, and slavery.

8. Proslavery cartoon, 1850

European alliances helped the American antislavery movement. But proslavery supporters also drew transatlantic comparisons. This proslavery image ignorantly portrays enslaved people who, according to white observers, were cheerful and pleased with their bondage. Proslavery advocates attempted to claim that English factory workers suffered a worse "slavery" than enslaved Africans and African Americans in the American South.

9. Manifest destiny painting, 1872

Columbia, the female figure of America, leads Americans into the West and into the future by carrying the values of republicanism (as seen through her Roman garb) and progress (shown through the inclusion of technological innovations like the telegraph) and clearing native peoples and animals, seen being pushed into the darkness.

XII. Reference Material

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12: The National Crisis



Figure 12.1. This mural, created over eighty years after John Brown's death, captures the violence and religious fervor of the man and his era. John Steuart Curry, Tragic Prelude, 1938-1940, Kansas State Capitol. Wikimedia.

I. Introduction

Near the end of the nation's bloody Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln used his Second Inaugural Address to reflect on the war's causes. Slavery, he said, had long "constituted a peculiar and powerful interest." "All knew," he added, "that this interest was somehow the cause of the war."[1]

By the 1850s, it was widely understood that slavery's expansion into the Western territories had generated deep and persistent problems for the United States. Americans had fought over whether slavery should be allowed to expand westward and what role the government should play in protecting the interests of enslavers since at least the 1770s. Many believed that slavery suppressed wages and monopolized land that might otherwise support poorer Americans in their pursuit of economic independence. Others feared that if slavery could not expand, the antislavery movement would soon dominate national politics. Still others were apprehensive that a growing, concentrated population of enslaved people would spark insurrection and spur even more widespread violence. Meanwhile, Indigenous Americans continued to resist US expansion and defend their homelands and ways of life.

A central dilemma for the federal government was that enslaved people's persistent resistance demanded increasingly forceful proslavery policies to maintain order. As Northern and Northwestern states gradually abolished slavery, enslaved men and women fled, often seeking refuge in North America's expanding Black and interracial antislavery communities. This movement triggered growing debate over the federal government's responsibility to recapture freedom seekers. Some states invoked states' rights to resist participation in personal liberty laws, while others demanded a national commitment to enforcing slavery.

These conflicts grew harder to manage as the national economy diversified. In Lincoln's eyes, enslaved laborers formed a "powerful interest" not only because of their numbers but because their forced labor remained essential to the US economy. Slavery's products—especially cotton—fueled not only the plantation South but also the nation's industrializing sectors. At the same time, more and more Americans came to believe that wage labor represented a superior economic system. And then there were those who also resented what they saw as unfair labor competition from free Black people and formerly enslaved individuals.

After decades of conflict, American politics became sharply sectional in the 1850s. Many in both the North and South feared that the other region had seized permanent control of the federal government. In November 1860, Abraham Lincoln—an opponent of slavery's expansion—was elected president as the candidate of the recently formed Republican Party. In the secession crisis that

followed, tensions that had built over nearly a century erupted into Civil War.

II. Gold Rush

New Year's Day in 1849 passed quietly and uneventfully for the then lame-duck Illinois Congressman Abraham Lincoln. Just months earlier, he had suffered political defeat for his outspoken opposition to the Mexican War. With only a short time remaining in his term, Lincoln did not participate in the congressional debates that were once again poised to erupt over the issue of slavery's expansion.

By 1849, fierce disagreements over westward expansion and the future of slavery were nothing new. A decade earlier, advocates of US territorial growth had coined the phrase "manifest destiny."[2] By the mid-1840s, the idea had come to express the belief that it was America's divine mission "to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."[3] A term that once broadly evoked imperial ambition became increasingly tied to the interests of slaveholding expansion.

Lincoln's opposition to the spread of slavery had been a central theme of his first congressional campaign in 1846. The Mexican War, however, far from settling the issue, only intensified it. David Wilmot introduced a proviso before the House that would ban slavery in territory land to be seized from Mexico. Southerners revolted. By 1849, debates over slavery had grown even more urgent, especially as new developments—both abroad and in the recently acquired Western territories, including the discovery of gold in California—once again pushed the issue to the forefront of national politics.

The situation by 1850 seemed to embolden some of the nation's most ardent expansionists. Many Northern businessmen and Southern enslavers, for example, supported the idea of pushing US slavery into the Caribbean as a useful alternative to continental expansion, since slavery already existed in these areas. Some were critical of these attempts, seeing them as evidence of a growing slave-power conspiracy. Many others supported attempts at expansion, like those previously seen in eastern Florida, even if these attempts were not exactly legal. Filibustering, as it was called, involved privately financed schemes directed at capturing and occupying foreign territory without the approval of the US government.

Filibustering in the early 1850s took its greatest hold in the imaginations of Americans as they looked toward Cuba. Fears of racialized revolution in Cuba (as in Haiti and Florida before it), as well as the presence of an aggressive British abolitionist influence in the Caribbean, energized the movement to annex Cuba and encouraged filibustering as expedient alternatives to lethargic official negotiations. Despite filibustering's chaotic planning and destabilizing repercussions, those intellectually and economically guiding the effort imagined a willing and receptive Cuban population carefully guided and managed by an agreeable American business class. In Cuba, manifest destiny for the first time sought territory off the continent and hoped to put a unique spin on the story of success in Mexico. Yet the annexation of Cuba, despite great popularity and some military attempts led by Narciso López, a Cuban dissident, never succeeded.[4]

Other filibustering expeditions were launched elsewhere, including two by the Tennessean William Walker, a former American soldier. Walker seized portions of the Baja Peninsula in Mexico in 1853 and then later took power and established a slaving regime in Nicaragua. Eventually, Walker was executed in Honduras.[5] These missions violated the laws of the United States, but wealthy Americans regularly financed various filibusters, and less-wealthy adventurers were all too happy to sign up. Filibustering enjoyed its brief popularity into the late 1850s, at which point slavery and concerns over secession came to the fore. By the opening of the Civil War, most had changed their minds and now saw these attempts as simply territorial theft.

In the far western reaches of the lands seized from Mexico, meanwhile, the slavery issue also flared. California and Oregon in 1849 were at least three arduous months of overland travel from the nearest major American settlements in Missouri. Some Anglo-American settler communities dotted California's fertile Sacramento Valley, but the rich farmlands of Oregon's Willamette Valley at first attracted even more migrants. Since the 1840s opening of the Oregon Trail, dramatized stories of Indigenous attacks had filled these white settlers with a sense of foreboding. The region's constant Indigenous challenge and presence, combined with slow progress, disease, poor trails, a lack of guidebooks, and generalized confusion, all made overland passage to the West difficult. And yet, despite the harshness of the journey, by the late 1840s, approximately twenty thousand white Americans lived west of the Rocky Mountains, with about three-fourths of that number in Oregon. Not all had been brought to the territory willingly, of course. Enslaved African Americans added not only to the growing demographics of the territory but ensured that debates over slavery and Black rights would again exacerbate tensions as Oregon moved to draft its state constitution. There, as in so many other places in 1849, the question again became: Would these territories be slave or free?[6]



Figure 12.2. The great environmental and economic potential of the Oregon Territory led many to pack up their families and head west along the Oregon Trail. The Trail represented the hopes of many for a better life, represented and reinforced by images like Bierstadt's idealistic Oregon Trail. Albert Bierstadt, Oregon Trail (Campfire), 1863. Wikimedia.

The discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California had a similar effect to the slavery issue.[7] On January 24, 1848, James W. Marshall, a contractor hired by John Sutter, discovered gold on Sutter's sawmill land in the Sacramento Valley. When word of the discovery spread, an onrush of settlement from around the world began in 1849. The lure of getting rich quickly drew especially younger single men (with some women) to fast-rising gold towns spread throughout the region. These adventurers and fortune seekers in turn served as magnets for the arrival of others—from China, Mexico, Chile, Hawai'i, and elsewhere—who were often relegated to providing services associated with the Gold Rush. Towns and cities grew rapidly, especially San Francisco, whose population surged from about five hundred in 1848 to almost fifty thousand by 1853. And once more, enslaved African Americans again provided many essential laborers for life in the "diggings," as the mines were often referenced. Here again, the question of whether the territory and its incredibly diverse population would be admitted to the Union as "slave or free" loomed large.

The slavery question became an especially vexing one in California for several reasons. Obviously, with its long and expansive access to the Pacific Coast, California offered a tremendous economic opportunity to the expanding United States, with its potential for linking to lucrative Asian commercial markets. Yet California, as with the rest of the West, also had a robust Indigenous population that already laid claim to the lands. Making matters even more complicated, early white Californians were also lobbying hard to serve as the endpoint for a transcontinental railroad that could provide services for both passengers and goods from the East. The great influx of diverse peoples unleashed by the Gold Rush, in addition, raised additional questions about the boundaries and terms of American citizenship: Would these new residents be citizens, be voters? Linguistic, cultural, economic, and racial conflicts all roiled the state's fast-expanding urban and rural areas as its great diversity took shape. By the end of the 1850s, Chinese and Mexican immigrants made up one-fifth of the state's mining population. Many wondered if these populations, too, would become part of the fast-evolving nation.[8]

Observing these events, many Northern critics worried that without a strong antislavery presence, California would succumb to the wishes of the "Slave Power" (an idea that dated in many ways back to the nation's first Federalist Party, and had also been reenergized for a time by antislavery Democrats in the 1830s) If California fell under the sway of the slaving South, they warned, life there would be hardly any different than that of life in Louisiana, Alabama, or South Carolina. Already, critics warned, the promising multiethnic patchworks of California's frontier towns were threatened by migrating Southerners who insisted that whites resume their dominance in the territory as their major landowners and managers, while poorer whites and ethnic minorities were forced to work the mines and assorted jobs. The competition for land, resources, and riches furthered these individual and collective abuses, particularly against Native Americans and older Mexican communities. California's towns, as well as those dotting the landscape throughout the West, struggled to balance security with economic development and the protection of civil rights and liberties.

III. “Cotton Is King”

Proslavery voices also grew increasingly emboldened in the 1850s and added to expansionist appeals. James Henry Hammond, a South Carolina senator and plantation owner, famously celebrated slavery in a speech before the US Senate in 1858: “Would any sane nation make war on cotton?” he asked. “No power on earth dares to make war upon it. Cotton is king.”[9]

Such rhetoric was common among slavery’s staunchest defenders by the 1850s, who often used it to downplay or obscure the fundamental instabilities of the slave system—instabilities that had long made slavery a central “problem” in American life.[10] The problem of slavery in the cotton South at the time was twofold. First and most immediate for whites was the fear and risk of rebellion. With nearly four million enslaved people residing in the South in 1860, and nearly 2.5 million living in the Cotton Belt alone, the systems of communication, resistance, and potential violence among enslaved people did not escape the minds of enslavers across the region and the nation as a whole. Beginning in the 1780s, Thomas Jefferson wrote in his Notes on the State of Virginia that the enslaved should be freed, but then that they should be colonized to another country, where they could become an “independent people.” White people’s prejudices, and Black people’s “recollections . . . of the injuries they have sustained” under slavery, would keep the two races from successfully living together in America. If freedpeople were not colonized, eventually there would be “convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.”[11]

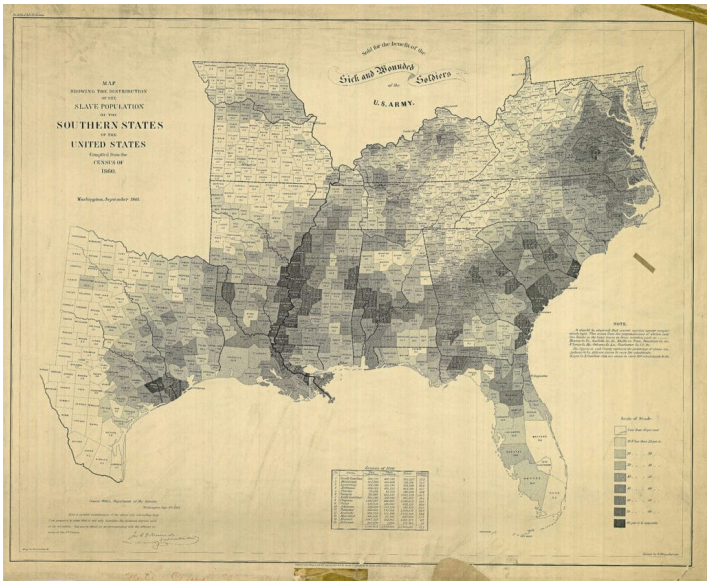


Figure 12.3. This map, published by the US Coast Guard, shows the percentage of enslaved people in the population in each county of the slave-holding states in 1860. The highest percentages lie along the Mississippi River, in the “Black Belt” of Alabama, and coastal South Carolina, all of which were centers of agricultural production (cotton and rice) in the United States. E. Hergesheimer (cartographer), Th. Leonhardt (engraver), Map Showing the Distribution of the Slave Population of the Southern States of the United States Compiled from the Census of 1860, c. 1861. Wikimedia.

Many writers, planters, farmers, merchants, and politicians continued to express an interest in the dilemma presented by Black colonization in the 1850s. “The South cannot recede,” declared an anonymous writer in an 1852 issue of the New Orleans–based *De Bow’s Review*. “She must fight for her slaves or against them. Even cowardice would not save her.”[12] To many enslavers in the South who turned against colonization as a reform, slavery was imagined as the saving grace of not only their own economic stability but also the maintenance of peace and security in everyday life. Much of the nation’s now fast-evolving proslavery ideology rested on the notion that slavery provided a sense of order, duty, and legitimacy to the lives of individual enslaved people, feelings that Africans and African Americans, it was said, could not otherwise experience. Without slavery, many thought, “the blacks” (the words most often used for “slaves” in regular conversation) would become violent, aimless, and uncontrollable. Colonization-minded reformers answered these challenges in turn by suggesting the best solution, perhaps, still rested with government-led mass deportations.

Complicating factors further in the 1850s was the endurance of the internal slave trade, the legal trade of enslaved laborers that had originated in the decades following the American Revolution between states, along rivers, and along the Atlantic coastline, but that in the decades since had expanded to include networks that now spanned the entire continent. This vast internal trade also gained speed in the decade before the Civil War as men and women with slaveholding interests spread into places like Arizona

and New Mexico.[13]

The productivity of enslaved laborers increased as the 1850s progressed. But this increased productivity also came on the backs of laborers who now faced heavier workloads, longer hours, and more intense punishments. “The great limitation to production is labor,” wrote one commentator in the American Cotton Planter in 1853. And many planters recognized this limitation and worked night and day, sometimes literally, to find the furthest extent of that limit.[14] By the mid-1850s, the expected production of an individual enslaved person in Mississippi’s Cotton Belt had increased from between four and five bales (weighing about 500 pounds each) per day to between eight and ten bales per day, on average.[15] Other, perhaps more reliable sources, such as the account book of Buena Vista Plantation in Tensas Parish, Louisiana, list average daily production at between 300 and 500 pounds “per hand,” with weekly averages ranging from 1,700 to 2,100 pounds. Cotton production “per hand” increased by 600 percent in Mississippi between 1820 and 1860.[16] Each enslaved person, then, was working longer, harder hours to keep up with his or her enslavers’ expected yield as the decade wore on.

Enslaved women endured some of the harshest realities of slavery, especially during the 1850s as Southern states aggressively embraced proslavery policies both domestically and internationally. Several factors exacerbated their suffering. A growing racial pseudoscience denied their fundamental humanity by claiming their essential biology made them inferior to whites, and this was a stance further reinforced by laws in multiple states that barred their testimony in court. Because slavery also incentivized natural reproduction, practices like sexual violence and rape were central to maintaining the system—an issue antislavery advocates had long highlighted. Yet enslaved women had few options for resistance; challenging or acting against their attackers was often criminalized. Enslavers, in turn, also produced few records detailing these abuses, but notable exceptions do exist. James Henry Hammond, for example, explicitly documented his rape of enslaved women in letters to his sons, writing that the offspring of these encounters had produced children “of my own blood.”[17]



Figure 12.4. The women in this photograph are Selina Gray and two of her daughters. Gray was the enslaved housekeeper to Robert E. Lee. National Park Service.

In extreme cases, enslaved women resisted violently, sometimes killing their attackers, and this too added to the fast-rising sense of crisis in the 1850s. One particularly infamous incident occurred in Missouri in 1855, involving a nineteen-year-old enslaved woman named Celia.

Between 1850 and 1855, Robert Newsom (Celia’s enslaver) raped her probably hundreds of times, producing two children and several miscarriages. In the summer of 1855, Newsom again tried to force himself upon Celia, but this time she took a club and struck him in the head two times, killing him. Instead of sympathy and aid, or even an honest attempt to understand and empathize with her plight, the community instead called for Celia’s execution. On November 16, 1855, after a trial of ten days, Celia was hanged for her “crimes.”[18]

By the mid-1850s, then, capitalism arose in its starkest colonial, violent, and exploitative forms. Humanity became a commodity used and worked to produce profit for a select group of investors, regardless of its shortfalls, dangers, and immoralities. But

slavery, profit, and cotton did not exist only in the rural South. The Cotton Revolution sparked the growth of an increasingly urbanized and industrial nation as well, with cities that served as hubs of global markets, and conduits through which the work of enslaved people and the profits of planters met and funded a wider world.

New national and international markets fueled the cotton boom, and by the mid-1850s, it seemed the United States was moving ever more closely toward a permanent proslavery future. American cotton exports rose from 150,000 bales in 1815 to 4,541,000 bales in 1859, making the United States a rising international economic power. The Census Bureau's 1860 Census of Manufactures stated that "the manufacture of cotton constitutes the most striking feature of the industrial history of the last fifty years."[19] Enslavers shipped their cotton to textile manufacturers and to financiers, many of them based in the Northern "free" states, for overseas shipments. Northern insurance brokers and exporters in the Northeast profited greatly as well. And yet, forces were fast assembling that would, and in the span of a mere decade, destroy "King Cotton."

IV. Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men

In March 1849, Abraham Lincoln returned home from Washington to Springfield, Illinois, presumably to resume a quiet life as a prairie lawyer. Having been defeated after just one term in Congress as a critic of the Mexican War, his political prospects appeared dim, and like many others, Lincoln may have expected never to return to the national stage. Yet events in the early 1850s prepared the groundwork for his dramatic political comeback.

The political realities unleashed by the Mexican War fast evolved during the early 1850s as Lincoln returned to Springfield. President Zachary Taylor remained in office only a brief time until his unexpected death from a stomach ailment in 1850. During Taylor's brief time in office, the seeming fruits of the Mexican War began to spoil. When Taylor was alive, his administration struggled to find a good remedy. Increased clamoring for the admission of California, New Mexico, and Utah pushed the country closer to the edge as the question of slavery's expansion again proved nearly irreconcilable.



Figure 12.5. Questions about the balance of free and slave states in the Union became even more fierce after the US acquired these territories from Mexico by 1848 in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Map of the Mexican Cession, 2008. Wikimedia.

As we have seen, gold had also been discovered by this time in California, and as thousands continued to pour into the West Coast and through the trans-Mississippi West, the admission of new states and territories loomed. In Utah, Mormons were making claims to an independent state they called Deseret. By 1850, California wanted admission as a free state. With so many competing dynamics underway, and with the president dead and replaced by Whig Millard Fillmore, the 1850s were off to a chaotic start.

Congressional leaders like Henry Clay and newer legislators like Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois were asked to broker a compromise, but this time it was clear no compromise could bridge all the diverging interests at play in the country. Clay eventually left Washington disheartened by the affairs. It fell to young Stephen Douglas, then, to shepherd the bills through Congress, which he in fact did. Legislators rallied behind the Compromise of 1850, an assemblage of bills passed late in 1850, which managed—briefly—to keep the promises of the Missouri Compromise alive.

The Compromise of 1850 tried to offer something to everyone, but in the end, it only worsened the sense of rising national crisis. For leaders in the slaveholding states, the package offered a tough new fugitive slave law that empowered the federal government to deputize regular citizens in arresting runaways. The New Mexico Territory and the Utah Territory would also be allowed to determine their own fates as slave or free states based on the concept of popular sovereignty. The compromise also allowed territories to submit suits directly to the Supreme Court over the status of freedom-seeking people within their bounds.



Figure 12.6. Henry Clay ("The Great Compromiser") addresses the U.S. Senate during the debates over the Compromise of 1850. The print shows a number of incendiary personalities, like John C. Calhoun, whose increasingly sectional beliefs were pacified for a time by the Compromise. P. F. Rothermel (artist), c. 1855. Wikimedia.

Those of an antislavery persuasion were less impressed with the terms of the deal. The proposed admission of California as a free state cheered many antislavery Northerners, but even the admission of a vast new state full of resources and rich agricultural lands seemed inadequate to the losses the "compromise" bill entailed. In addition to California, northerners also pressed for a ban on the slave trade in Washington, DC. As a further proposed consolation prize, Texas, which had already come into the Union as a slave state, was asked to give some of its land to New Mexico in return for the federal government absorbing some of the former republic's debt. But the compromise debates failed to really please anyone, and the situation soon grew desperate and grim. It appeared increasingly likely that the nation was headed toward a civil war.

The change in the nation's political rhetoric after 1850 was in many ways palpable. After the Compromise of 1850, antislavery critics, for example, became increasingly certain that enslavers had co-opted the federal government, and that a Southern "Slave Power" secretly controlled Washington, where it hoped to make slavery a national institution.[20] These complaints also pointed back to how the three-fifths compromise of the Constitution gave Southerners proportionally more representatives in Congress. Antislavery leaders increasingly argued, in short, that Washington worked on behalf of enslavers while ignoring the interests of white working men.

Of all the measures included in the Compromise of 1850, however, none proved more troubling to antislavery Americans than the Fugitive Slave Act. While a legal obligation to return escaped enslaved people had existed since the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the 1850 law significantly expanded the federal government's enforcement powers.

The Fugitive Slave Act was a direct attempt to extend slavery's reach across the entire country. It established a system of special federal commissioners who were authorized to determine the status of alleged fugitives without granting them a jury trial or allowing them to testify in their own defense. Local authorities were barred from interfering in the capture of freedom seekers under any circumstances. Even private citizens were required to assist in the arrest of so-called fugitive slaves when called upon by federal agents, regardless of their personal views on slavery. In this way, the law laid the foundation for a sweeping expansion of federal authority—especially its police powers—and it marked a serious disruption of American federalism. Many were especially alarmed by how the law directly undermined their local and state legal protections.

The response to the law was swift and intense. It inflamed antislavery sentiment and deepened public mistrust of the federal government, particularly due to the law's built-in incentives for corruption. Federal commissioners, for example, were paid $10 if they ruled that the accused was enslaved, but only $5 if they ruled in favor of the accused's freedom. The law also emboldened a

growing industry of kidnappers, who worked alongside local authorities to abduct and reenslave free Black Northerners.

Free Black communities responded with heightened militancy and resistance. Many individuals fled to Canada, while others organized to defend their communities, sometimes using force. Across the North, desperate but determined confrontations between residents and federal authorities became increasingly common, as resistance to the law took on both legal and physical forms.[21]

With widespread disaffection toward the government now spreading, the first major political victim came in the 1852 presidential election. The election dealt the Whig Party a stunning defeat and effectively ended their existence as a national political party. Whigs captured just 42 of the 254 electoral votes needed to win. A peaceful resolution to the Mexican War had seemed, however briefly, in reach. Now, the two-party system appeared to be in shambles.

Antislavery resentment at the terms of the compromise debates continued to run deep as the Whigs crumbled. One measure of the enduring popularity of antislavery ideas came during the election cycle in 1852, when Harriet Beecher Stowe published her best-selling antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Sales for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* made it one of the bestselling books in American history, eclipsed only by sales of the Bible.[22] The book became a sensation and helped move antislavery again into everyday conversation. Despite the powerful antislavery message, Stowe's book also reinforced many racist stereotypes, however.



Figure 12.7. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* intensified an already hot debate over slavery throughout the United States. The book revolves around Eliza (the woman holding the young boy) and Tom (standing with his wife Chloe), each of whom takes a very different path: Eliza escapes slavery using her own two feet, but Tom endures his chains only to die by the whip of a brutish enslaver. The horrific violence that both endured melted the hearts of many Northerners and pressed some to join in the fight against slavery. Full-page illustration by Hammatt Billings for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852. Wikimedia.

Democrats were themselves by 1853 also badly splintered along sectional lines over slavery. Yet the Democrats also had more reason to act with confidence than their rivals, the Whigs. Voters had, after all, returned the Democrats to majorities in 1852 following the bitter fights over the Compromise of 1850. Emboldened, Senator Douglas again introduced a set of additional amendments to a bill drafted in late 1853 to help organize the Nebraska Territory, the last of the still-unorganized portion of what had been the Louisiana Purchase lands. In 1853, that territory was huge: it extended from the northern end of Texas to the Canadian border, encompassing present-day Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Colorado, and Montana.

Douglas's efforts to amend and introduce the bill in 1854 opened dynamics that would break the Democratic Party in two and, in the process, rip the country apart.

Douglas's formidable Democratic Party coalition as it emerged in 1852 had traditionally served as the partisan home for the nation's swelling ranks of immigrants. More than five million immigrants, in fact, arrived in the United States between 1820 and 1860. Irish, German, and Jewish incomers sought new lives and economic opportunities. By the Civil War, nearly one out of every eight Americans had been born outside the United States. A series of push and pull factors drew these new arrivals to the United States.

In England, for example, an economic slump prompted Parliament to modernize British agriculture by revoking common land rights for Irish farmers. These policies generally targeted Catholics in the southern counties of Ireland and motivated many to seek greater opportunity elsewhere. The booming American economy pulled Irish immigrants toward ports along the eastern United States. Between 1820 and 1840, over 250,000 Irish immigrants arrived in the United States.[23]

Without the capital and skills required to purchase and operate farms, Irish immigrants settled primarily in Northeastern cities and towns and performed unskilled work. Irish men usually emigrated alone and, when possible, practiced what became known as chain migration. Chain migration allowed Irish men to send portions of their wages home, which would then be used either to support their families in Ireland or to purchase tickets for relatives to come to the United States. Irish immigration followed this pattern into the 1840s and 1850s, when the infamous Irish Famine sparked a massive exodus out of Ireland. Between 1840 and 1860, 1.7 million Irish fled starvation and the oppressive English policies that accompanied it.[24] As they entered manual, unskilled labor positions in urban America's dirtiest and most dangerous occupations, Irish workers in Northern cities were compared to African Americans, and anti-immigrant newspapers portrayed them with apelike features. Despite this hostility, Irish immigrants retained their social, cultural, and religious beliefs and left an indelible mark on American culture.

While the Irish settled mostly in coastal cities, most German immigrants used American ports and cities as temporary waypoints before settling in the rural countryside. Over 1.5 million immigrants from the various German states arrived in the United States during the antebellum era. Although some southern Germans fled declining agricultural conditions and repercussions of the liberal revolutions of 1848, many Germans simply sought steadier economic opportunity. German immigrants tended to travel as families and carried with them skills and capital that enabled them to enter middle-class trades. Germans migrated to the Old Northwest to farm in rural areas and practiced trades in growing communities such as St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee, three cities that formed what came to be called the "German Triangle."

These Catholic and Jewish Germans transformed many areas of the republic during the 1850s. New York's Jewish population, for example, rose from approximately five hundred in 1825 to forty thousand in 1860.[25] Similar gains were seen in other American cities. Jewish immigrants hailing from southwestern Germany and parts of occupied Poland moved to the United States through chain migration and as family units. Unlike other Germans, Jewish immigrants rarely settled in rural areas. Once established, Jewish immigrants found work in retail, commerce, and artisanal occupations such as tailoring. They quickly found their footing and established themselves as an important part of the American market economy. Just as Irish immigrants shaped the urban landscape through the construction of churches and Catholic schools, Jewish immigrants erected synagogues and made their mark on American culture as well.

The Democrats counted on the support of this broad-based and multifaceted immigrant constituency as it set out to consolidate its power and national grip in the mid-1850s. Douglas proposed a bold plan in 1854 to cut off a large southern chunk of Nebraska as the Kansas Territory, where popular sovereignty, he said, would flourish. Douglas had several goals in mind. The expansionist Democrat wanted to organize the territory to facilitate the completion of a national railroad that would flow through Chicago. It would bring a broadly consolidated national economy that would link all of the new states and territories, east and west.

But before he had even finished introducing the bill, an antislavery opposition that suspected that all of this would also come with slavery's expansion into these lands had already started to mobilize in response. Salmon P. Chase, one of the few resolutely antislavery leaders in the Senate at the time, drafted a response in Northern newspapers in January 1854 that framed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill as a measure to overturn the Missouri Compromise and open Western lands for slavery. Kansas-Nebraska protests emerged in response throughout the North that spring, with key meetings in places like Wisconsin, Michigan, and Maine. In the territories, meanwhile, legislators decided Kansas would become slave or free depending on the result of local elections. This in turn led to a dangerous situation wherein migrants flooding to the territory swelled the ranks of those who planned to vote for either expanding or constricting slavery. Making matters worse, many of these migrants traveled to Kansas with stockpiles of weapons and munitions suitable for war.

Ordinary Americans, meanwhile, increasingly resisted what they now believed to be a proslavery federal government. The rescues and arrests of enslaved men like Anthony Burns in Boston and Joshua Glover in Milwaukee in the spring and early summer of 1854 signaled the rising vehemence of resistance to the nation's 1850 Fugitive Slave Law.

The case of Anthony Burns, as an example, illustrates how the Fugitive Slave Law radicalized the slavery issue in the eyes of many voters. On May 24, 1854, twenty-year-old Burns, a preacher who worked in a Boston clothing shop, was clubbed and dragged to jail. One year earlier, Burns had escaped slavery in Virginia, and a group of slave catchers had since come north to return him to Richmond. Word of Burns's capture spread, and a mob gathered outside the courthouse demanding Burns's release. Two days after the arrest, the crowd stormed the courthouse and shot a deputy US marshal to death. News reached Washington, and the federal government sent soldiers. Boston was placed under martial law. Federal troops lined the streets of Boston as Burns was

marched onto a ship, where he was sent back to slavery in Virginia. After spending over $40,000, the US government successfully reenslaved Burns.[26] For many white Northerners after the summer of 1854, there was no going back to a moderate stance on the issue. In the words of Amos Adams Lawrence, "We went to bed one night old-fashioned, conservative, compromise Union Whigs & woke up stark mad Abolitionists."[27]

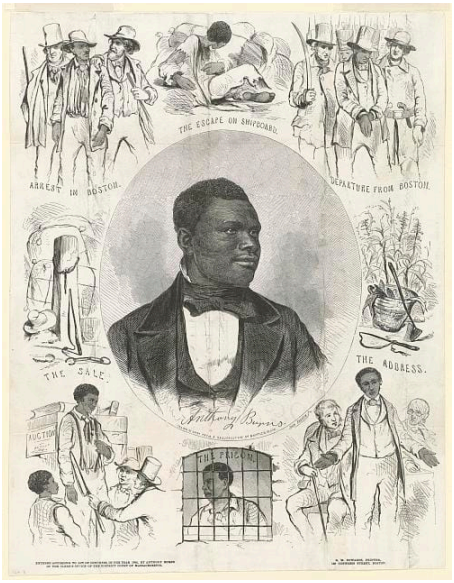


Figure 12.9. Anthony Burns, the fugitive slave, appears in a portrait at the center of this 1855 print. Burns' arrest and trial, possible because of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, became a rallying cry. As a symbol of the injustice of the slave system, Burns' treatment spurred riots and protests by abolitionists and citizens of Boston in the spring of 1854. John Andrews (engraver), "Anthony Burns," c. 1855. Library of Congress.

As Americans on all sides of the political spectrum radicalized, organizations like the New England Emigrant Aid Company provided still more guns and other goods for those willing to go to Kansas and establish the territory as antislavery through their votes.

The year 1855 then nearly fractured the Northern antislavery coalition, threatening to splinter it into disparate parts. The growing influx of immigrants—particularly Catholic Germans and Irish—triggered a backlash among many native-born Anglo-Protestant Americans. In response, a resurgent anti-immigrant movement briefly seized the momentum of the collapsing Whig Party and redirected political frustration away from the administration and toward the perceived threat posed by immigrant communities in American cities. This nativist movement gained popularity in places with large Catholic populations—such as Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia—and even launched its own political party. Known informally as the "Know-Nothings" (because members often claimed ignorance when questioned about their activities), the group's formal name was the American Party. They achieved notable electoral success in 1854 and 1855, especially in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. Yet despite these gains, the anti-immigrant movement failed to resonate in the increasingly immigrant-rich American West—where antislavery politics remained far more compelling.[28]



Figure 12.8. This cartoon depicts a highly racialized image of a Chinese immigrant and Irish immigrant "swallowing" the United States–in the form of Uncle Sam. Networks of railroads and the promise of American expansion can be seen in the background. "The great fear of the period that Uncle Sam may be swallowed by foreigners: The problem solved," 1860-1869. Library of Congress.

At the same time, the antislavery movements that started in the early part of 1854 coalesced with the formation of a new political party by the summer and fall of 1854. Harking back to the founding fathers, its organizers named it the Republican Party.

The Republicans had several advantages over the Know-Nothings in their attempts to become the nation's second-party alternative to the Democrats. For one, the slavery issue remained as volatile as ever, and unlike immigration, it led to some spectacularly violent and unsettling episodes in 1855.

Following an explosive speech before Congress on May 19–20 of that year, for example, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts was violently beaten with a cane by Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina on the floor of the Senate chamber. Among other accusations, Sumner had accused Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina, Brooks's cousin, of defending slavery so he could have sexual access to Black women.[29] Brooks felt that he had to defend his relative's honor and nearly killed Sumner in response.



Figure 12.10. The Caning of Charles Sumner, 1856. Wikimedia.

The violence in Washington was shocking enough, but it paled in comparison to what was soon underway in Kansas.[30] Proslavery

raiders attacked Lawrence, Kansas. Radical abolitionist John Brown retaliated, murdering several proslavery Kansans. As all of this played out, the House also failed to expel Brooks from his Congressional seat. Brooks resigned his position anyway, only to be reelected by his constituents later in the year. He received new canes emblazoned with the words "Hit him [Sumner] again!"[31] With sectional tensions at a breaking point, a fair case could be made that the country had already descended into Civil War.

In this climate, both parties readied for the coming presidential election in 1856. In June, the newly named Republican Party held its nominating convention at Philadelphia and selected Californian John Charles Frémont. Frémont's antislavery credentials may not have pleased many abolitionists, but his dynamic and talented wife, Jessie Benton Frémont, appealed to more radical members of the coalition, while John Frémont's former Democratic Party ties and role in the California campaign pleased the coalition's more conservative wings. As a self-professed moderate Whig, Abraham Lincoln was slow to abandon his old party for the Frémont-led ticket. But by the summer of 1856, Lincoln had also fully committed himself to the Frémont campaign and the Republican Party.

Frémont lost the election in 1856, much to the horror and disappointment of the antislavery movement. But Republicans celebrated that he won eleven of the sixteen free states. This showing, they urged, was truly impressive for any party making its first run at the presidency. Yet Northern Democrats unhappy with their party's proslavery turn in crucial swing states remained unmoved by the Republican Party's appeals. Ulysses S. Grant of Missouri, for example, a Mexican War veteran, worried that Frémont and the Republicans signaled trouble for the Union itself. Grant voted for the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, believing a Republican victory might bring about disunion. In abolitionist and especially Black American circles, Frémont's defeat was more than a disappointment. Believing their fate had been sealed as permanent noncitizens, some African Americans considered foreign emigration and colonization. Others began to explore the option of more radical and direct action against Slave Power.

V. From Sectional Crisis to National Crisis

The events in the middle 1850s motivated many Northerners to reengage with politics, and among the most prominent was Abraham Lincoln. In a speech delivered in Peoria, Illinois, in October 1854, Lincoln laid out his objections to slavery's expansion with such clarity, logic, and moral force that the address became a foundational statement of his antislavery position—one that drew in scores of similarly minded Northerners for years to come. The speech also played a crucial role in reviving his political career.[32]

Two years later, during an 1856 speech in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Abraham Lincoln continued to assure his audience that the country's commercial transformation had not reduced American laborers to slavery. Southerners, he said, "insist that their slaves are far better off than Northern freemen. What a mistaken view do these men have of Northern labourers! They think that men are always to remain labourers here—but there is no such class. The man who laboured for another last year, this year labours for himself. And next year he will hire others to labour for him."[33] This essential belief undergirded the Northern commitment to "free labor" and won the market revolution much widespread acceptance.

By late 1856 and early 1857, antislavery leaders had begun hailing Frémont's defeat as a "glorious" one and looked ahead to the party's future successes. For those still in slavery or hoping to see loved ones freed, the news of Frémont's defeat was of course much harder to take. The Republican Party had promised the rise of an antislavery coalition, but voters rebuked it. The lessons seemed clear enough.

The situation in "Bleeding Kansas" continued to loom large over national developments, darkening the national mood. Rumors and misinformation surrounding the early votes in the territory had long plagued the situation on the ground there. In 1856, these concerns became exacerbated as new stories emerged detailing the ways in which proslavery partisans from Missouri had again crossed the border to tamper with the Kansas elections. Back in 1854, critics attacked the Pierce administration for not living up to the ideals of popular sovereignty by ensuring fair elections. By 1856, few could look to the situation surrounding the ongoing votes in Kansas with any kind of confidence.

The sectional crisis had at last become a national crisis. "Bleeding Kansas" was the first place to demonstrate that the sectional crisis could easily be, and in fact already was, exploding into a full-blown national crisis. As the national mood grew increasingly grim, Kansas attracted hundreds of armed militants from around the country, and their swelling numbers brought together the extreme sides of the slavery debate.

In the days after the 1856 presidential election, meanwhile, newly elected President James Buchanan made his plans for his time in office clear. He talked with Chief Justice Roger Taney on inauguration day about a court decision he hoped to see handled

during his time in office. Indeed, not long after the inauguration, the Supreme Court handed down a decision that would come to define Buchanan's presidency. The Dred Scott decision, Scott v. Sandford, ruled that Black Americans could not be citizens of the United States and therefore could be transported as chattel from any state to another regardless of state law.[34] This gave the Buchanan administration and its Southern allies a direct repudiation of the Missouri Compromise. The court ruled that Scott, a Missouri slave, had no right to sue in US courts. The Dred Scott decision signaled that the federal government was now fully committed to extending slavery as far and as wide as it might want.

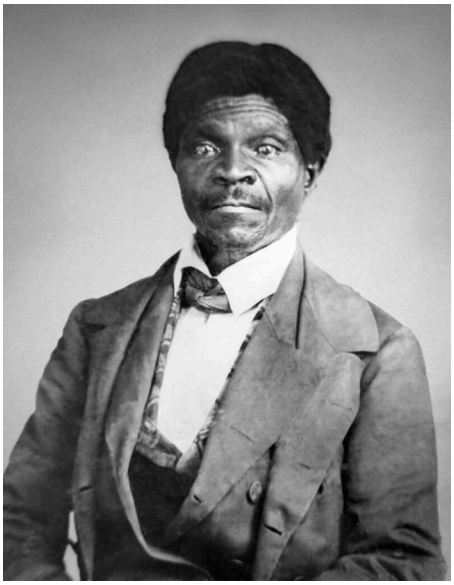


Figure 12.11. Dred Scott's Supreme Court case made clear that the federal government was no longer able or willing to ignore the issue of slavery. More than that, all Black Americans, Justice Taney declared, could never be citizens of the United States. Though seemingly a disastrous decision for abolitionists, this controversial ruling actually increased the ranks of the abolitionist movement. Photograph of Dred Scott, 1857. Wikimedia.

The Dred Scott decision seemed to settle the sectional crisis by making slavery fully national, but in reality, it just exacerbated sectional tensions further. In 1857, Buchanan sent US military forces to subdue Utah's Mormon communities (known as the Utah War). This action, however, led to renewed charges, many of them leveled from within his own party, that the administration was abusing its powers. Far more important than the Utah invasion, however, were the ongoing events in Kansas. It was Kansas that at last proved to many Northerners that the sectional crisis would not go away unless slavery also went away.

The Illinois Senate race in 1858 put the scope of the sectional crisis on full display. Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln challenged the greatly influential Democrat Stephen Douglas. Pandering to appeals to white supremacy, Douglas hammered the Republican opposition as a "Black Republican" party bent on racial equality.[35] The Republicans, including Lincoln, fired back with warnings of divisiveness and assertions that all Americans deserved equality of opportunity, even as they assured white audiences that they were no abolitionist party by yelling "white Republicans!" whenever Democrats offered their favorite attack line.

Democrats hung on as best they could, but the Republicans won the House of Representatives and picked up seats in the Senate. Lincoln, despite the good news for his party, lost his contest with Stephen Douglas that fall. But in the process, Lincoln firmly established himself as a leading national Republican. After the 1858 elections, all eyes turned to 1860. Given the Republican Party's successes since 1854, it was expected that the 1860 presidential election might just produce the nation's first antislavery president.

The year 1859 opened to a nation carefully navigating a crossroads moment in its history. In the troubled decades since the Missouri Compromise, the nation seemed to grow increasingly intent on tearing itself apart. As we have seen, congressmen clubbed each other nearly to death on the floor of Congress, and blood was now regularly being poured out in the war taking place on the Kansas and Missouri plains. Across the country, cities and towns were in various stages of revolt against federal authority. Fighting spread even farther against Native Americans in the Far West and against Mormons in Utah. The nation's militants anticipated a coming breakdown and worked to exploit it.

John Brown, a radical abolitionist who had been active in the movement for decades, moved east from Kansas with plans to escalate his assault on the slave system. Assembling a team from across the West, including Black radicals from Oberlin, Ohio, and throughout communities in western Canada, Brown hatched a plan to attack Harper's Ferry, a federal weapons arsenal in

Virginia (now West Virginia). Brown and his cohorts would then use the weapons to lead a revolt of enslaved people. Brown also approached and tried to recruit Frederick Douglass to the raid, though Douglass refused to join.

Brown's raid began on October 16. By October 18, a command under Robert E. Lee had crushed the revolt. Many of Brown's men, including his own sons, were killed, but Brown himself lived and was imprisoned. Brown prophesied while in prison that the nation's crimes would only be purged with blood. He went to the gallows in December 1859. Northerners made a stunning display of sympathy on the day of his execution. Southerners took their reactions to mean that the coming 1860 election would be, in many ways, a referendum on secession and disunion.



Figure 12.12. The execution of John Brown made him a martyr in abolitionist circles and a confirmed traitor in southern crowds. Both of these images continued to pervade public memory after the Civil War, but in the North, especially (where so many soldiers had died to help end slavery), his name was admired. Over two decades after Brown's death, Thomas Hovenden portrayed Brown as a saint. As he is led to his execution for attempting to destroy slavery, Brown poignantly leans over a rail to kiss a Black baby. Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown, c. 1882-1884. Wikimedia.

Republicans wanted little to do with Brown and instead tried to portray themselves as moderates opposed to both abolitionists and proslavery expansionists. In this climate, the parties opened their contest for the 1860 presidential election. The Democratic Party fared poorly as its Southern delegates revoted after its national convention at Charleston and ran their own candidate, Vice President John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky. Hoping to field a candidate who might nonetheless manage to bridge the broken party's factions, the Democrats decided to meet again at Baltimore and nominated Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.

The Republicans, meanwhile, held their boisterous convention in Chicago. The Republican platform made the party's antislavery commitments clear, also making wide promises to its white constituents, particularly Westerners, with the promise of new land, transcontinental railroads, and broad support of public schools.[36] Abraham Lincoln, a candidate few outside Illinois truly expected to win, nonetheless proved far less polarizing than the other names on the ballot. Lincoln won the nomination, and with the Democrats in disarray, Republicans knew their candidate, Lincoln, had a good chance of winning.

For all of the problems that abolitionists had faced since their resurgence in the 1820s and 1830s, the movement was far from a failure as conservative antislavery politicians seized the movement mantle in the late 1850s. The prominence of African Americans in abolitionist organizations offered a powerful, if imperfect, model of interracial coexistence. And while radical immediatists always remained a minority, their efforts had also paved the way for the moderately antislavery Republican Party to gain traction. It is hard to imagine that Abraham Lincoln could have become president in 1860 without the ground prepared by antislavery advocates and without the presence of radical abolitionists against whom he could be cast as a moderate alternative. Though it ultimately took a civil war to break the bonds of slavery in the United States, the evangelical moral compass of revivalist Protestantism provided motivation for these embattled abolitionists as well.



Figure 12.13. This political cartoon depicts the four candidates in the 1860 presidential election. Dividing the National Map. Available from the Library of Congress.

At the head of a badly disjointed coalition, nonetheless, Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 contest on November 6, gaining just 40 percent of the popular vote and not a single Southern vote in the Electoral College. Within days, Southern states were organizing secession conventions. John J. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed a series of compromises, but a clear pro-Southern bias meant they had little chance of gaining Republican acceptance. Crittenden's plan promised renewed enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law and offered a plan to keep slavery in the nation's capital.[37] Republicans by late 1860 knew that the voters who had just placed them in power did not want them to cave on these points, and Southern states proceeded with their plans to leave the Union. On December 20, South Carolina voted to secede and issued its "Declaration of the Immediate Causes."[38] The declaration highlighted the failure of the federal government to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act over competing personal liberty laws in Northern states. After the war, many Southerners claimed that secession was primarily motivated by a concern to preserve states' rights, but the primary complaint of the very first ordinance of secession listed the federal government's failure to exert its authority over the Northern states.

The year 1861, then, saw the culmination of the secession crisis. Before he left for Washington, Lincoln told those who had gathered in Springfield to wish him well and that he faced a "task greater than Washington's" in the years to come. Southerners were also learning the challenges of forming a new nation. The seceded states grappled with internal divisions right away, as states with enslavers sometimes did not support the newly seceded states. In January, for example, Delaware rejected secession. But states in the Lower South adopted a different course. The state of Mississippi seceded. Later in the month, the states of Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana also left the Union. By early February, Texas had also joined the newly seceded states. In February, Southerners drafted a constitution protecting slavery and named Jefferson Davis of Mississippi their president. Weeks after Abraham Lincoln's inauguration, rebels in the newly formed Confederate States of America opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Within days, Abraham Lincoln would demand seventy-five thousand volunteers from the North to crush the rebellion. The American Civil War had begun.

VI. Conclusion

Slavery had long divided the politics of the United States. In time, these divisions became both sectional and irreconcilable. The first and most ominous sign of a coming sectional storm occurred over the 1819 debates surrounding the admission of the state of Missouri. As westward expansion continued, these fault lines grew even more ominous, particularly as the United States managed to seize even more lands from its war with Mexico. The country seemed to teeter ever closer to a full-throated endorsement of slavery. But an antislavery coalition arose in the mid-1850s, calling itself the Republican Party. Eager to cordon off slavery and confine it to where it already existed, the Republicans won the presidential election of 1860 and threw the nation on the path to war.

Throughout this period, the mainstream of the antislavery movement remained committed to a peaceful resolution of the slavery issue through efforts understood to foster the "ultimate extinction" of slavery in due time. But as the secession crisis revealed,

the South could not tolerate a federal government working against the interests of slavery's expansion and decided to take a gamble on war with the United States. Secession, in the end, raised the possibility of emancipation through war, a possibility most Republicans knew, of course, had always been an option, but one they nonetheless hoped would never be necessary. By 1861, all bets were off, and the fate of slavery and of the nation depended on war.

VII. Primary Sources

1. Prigg v. Pennsylvania, 1842

Conflicts between the power of the federal government and states' rights strained American politics throughout the antebellum era. During the 1840s and 1850s, the most consistent source of tension on the issue stemmed from northerners refusing to comply with fugitive slave laws. As early as the 1780s, Pennsylvania passed laws that made it illegal to take a Black person from the state for the purpose of enslaving them. In the majority opinion, excerpted here, Supreme Court justice Joseph Story decided that the national fugitive slave act overruled Pennsylvania's law.

2. Stories from the Underground Railroad, 1855-56

William Still was an African-American abolitionist who frequently risked his life to help freedom-seekers escape slavery. In these excerpts, Still offers the readers some of the letters sent to him from abolitionists and formerly enslaved persons. The passages shed light on family separation, the financial costs of the journey to freedom, and the logistics of the Underground Railroad.

3. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852

In 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe published her bestselling antislavery novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin. *Sales for* Uncle Tom's Cabin *were astronomical, eclipsed only by sales of the Bible. The book became a sensation and helped move antislavery into everyday conversation for many northerners. In this passage, a senator and his wife debate the Fugitive Slave Law.*

4. Charlotte Forten complains of racism in the North, 1855

Writer, activist, and teacher Charlotte Forten was born in Philadelphia in 1837 to a well-to-do African American family. Forten's diary entries from 1854 illuminate sectional tensions, especially in her discussion of the trial of Anthony Burns, a fugitive from slavery. She also expressed frequent frustration over the racism she encountered in Boston.

5. Margaraetta Mason and Lydia Maria Child discuss John Brown, 1860

After John Brown was arrested for his raid on Harpers Ferry, Lydia Maria Child wrote to the governor of Virginia requesting to visit Brown. Margaretta Mason of Virginia wrote a searing letter to Child attacking her for supporting a murder. Child responded, and the exchange of letters was published by the American Antislavery Society.

6. 1860 Republican Party platform

The 1860 Republican Party convention in Chicago created a platform that clearly opposed the expansion of slavery in the West and the reopening of the slave trade. However, nothing in the document claimed that the government had the power to eliminate slavery where it already existed. Controversies over slavery suffuse the platform, but maybe even more noticeable is the importance of the West to the Republican Party.

7. South Carolina declaration of secession, 1860

Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 contest on November 6 with just 40% of the popular vote and not a single southern vote in the Electoral College. Within days, southern states were organizing secession conventions. On December 20, South Carolina voted to secede, and issued its "Declaration of the Immediate Causes."

8. Effects of the Fugitive Slave Law lithograph, 1850

This lithograph imagines the consequences of the Fugitive Slave Act, part of the Compromise of 1850. Four well-dressed Black men are being hunted by a party of white men, seen in the background. There are a number of ambiguities in the image – are the Black men enslaved or free? Are they trying to escape or not? Where exactly are they? These ambiguities speak to the concerns many abolitionists had about the law, which required free citizens to return freedom-seeking people to their enslavers.

9. Sectional crisis map, 1856

This piece of Republican propaganda from the 1856 election makes clear distinctions between free states, slave states, and territories. Featured at the top of the page are engravings of John C. Fremont and his running mate, William C. Dayton. A vibrant red sets off the free states. The chart, "Freedom vs. Slavery," demonstrates the North's economic and cultural superiority over slave states in terms of everything from population per square mile, capital in manufactures, miles of railroad, the number of newspapers and public libraries, and value of churches.

VIII. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Jesse Gant, with content contributions by Jeffrey Bain-Conkin, Joshua Beatty, Ethan Bennett, Matthew A. Byron, Michelle Cassidy, Christopher Childers, Jesse Gant, Jonathan Grandage, Brenda Lakhani, Gregg Lightfoot, Jose Juan Perez Melendez, Jessica Moore, Christopher Null, Ryan Poe, Michael Robinson, Nick Roland, Matthew K. Saionz, Rowan Steinecker, Patrick Troester, Nicholas Wood, Michael Woods, Ben Wright, and Caroline Wright.

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13: The Civil War



Figure 13.1. John Reekie, *Cold Harbor, VA. African Americans Collecting Bones of Soldiers Killed in the Battle.* April 1865. Library of Congress.

I. Introduction

The American Civil War, the bloodiest conflict in the nation's history, resulted in approximately 698,000 deaths.[1] The war touched the lives of nearly every American as military mobilization reached levels never seen before or since. The vast majority of Northern soldiers went to war to preserve the Union, but the war ultimately transformed into a struggle to eradicate slavery. African Americans, both enslaved and free, pressed the issue of emancipation and helped to catalyze this transformation. Simultaneously, women put themselves into critical wartime roles while navigating a world without many men of military age. The Civil War was a defining event in the history of the United States and, for the Americans thrust into it, a wrenching one.

II. The Election of 1860 and Secession

The 1860 presidential election was chaotic. In April, the Democratic Party convened in Charleston, South Carolina, the bastion of secessionist sentiment in the South. Democratic delegates sought to nominate a candidate for their party ticket, but the party was deeply divided. Northern Democrats supported Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois, a champion of popular sovereignty, while Southern Democrats were intent on endorsing someone other than Douglas. The party leaders' refusal to include a proslavery platform resulted in Southern delegates walking out of the convention, preventing Douglas from gaining the two-thirds majority required for a nomination. The Democrats ultimately ended up with two presidential nominees. Northern and Southern Democrats each held subsequent conventions in Baltimore, respectively nominating Douglas and the current vice president, John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, as their candidates. The nation's oldest party had split over the issue of slavery.[2]

Initially, the Republican Party was hardly unified around a single candidate itself. Several prominent Republicans vied for their party's nomination. A consensus emerged at the May 1860 convention that the party's nominee would need to carry all the free states—for only in that situation could a Republican nominee potentially win. Senator William Seward of New York, a leading contender, was passed over. Seward's pro-immigrant position posed a potential obstacle, particularly in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, as a relatively unknown but likable politician, rose from a pool of potential candidates and was selected by the delegates on the third ballot. The electoral landscape was further complicated through the emergence of a fourth candidate, Tennessee's John Bell, and his Constitutional Union Party. The Constitutional Unionists, composed of former Whigs and a few Southern Democrats, made it their mission to avoid the specter of disunion while doing little else to address the issues tearing the country apart.

Abraham Lincoln's nomination proved a great windfall for the Republican Party. Lincoln carried every free state except for New Jersey (which he split with Douglas). Of the voting electorate, 81.2 percent came out to vote, the highest ever for a presidential election to that point. Lincoln received less than 40 percent of the popular vote, but with the field split, that percentage yielded 180 electoral votes. Lincoln was trailed by Breckinridge with 72 electoral votes, carrying eleven of the fifteen slave states; Bell in third with 39 electoral votes; and Douglas in last place, with only 12 electoral votes despite carrying almost 30 percent of the popular vote. Since the Republican platform prohibited the expansion of slavery in future Western states, all future Confederate states, except for Virginia, excluded Lincoln's name from their ballots.[3]

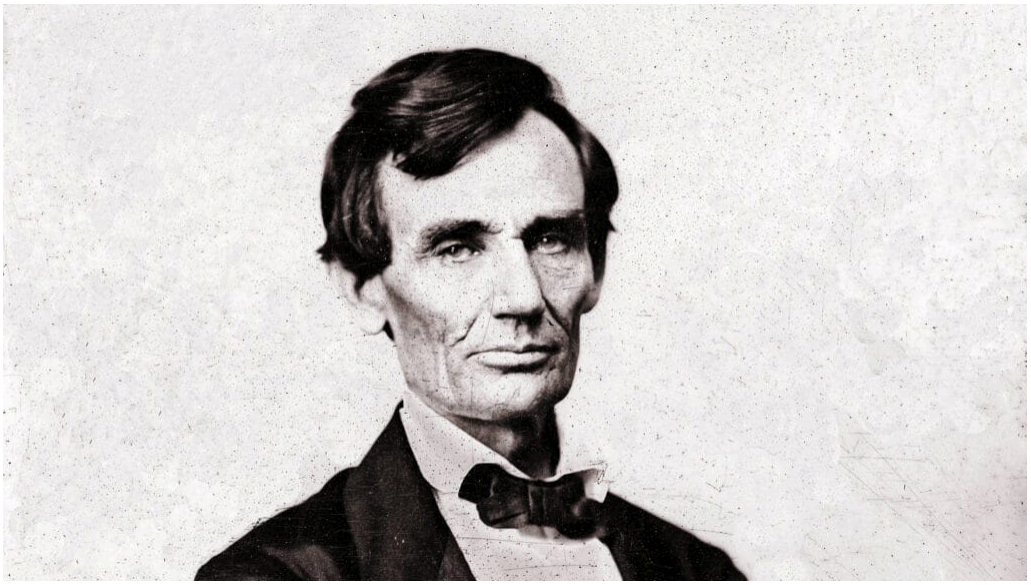


Figure 13.2. Abraham Lincoln, August 13, 1860. Library of Congress.

The election of Lincoln and the perceived threat to the institution of slavery proved too much for the deep Southern states. South Carolina acted almost immediately, calling a convention to declare secession. On December 20, 1860, the South Carolina convention voted unanimously, 169–0, to dissolve their union with the United States.[4] The other states across the Deep South quickly followed suit. Mississippi adopted its own resolution on January 9, 1861, Florida on January 10, Alabama on January 11, Georgia on January 19, Louisiana on January 26, and Texas on February 1. Texas was the only state to put the issue up for a popular vote, but secession was widely popular throughout the South.

Confederates quickly shed their American identity and adopted a new Confederate nationalism. Confederate nationalism was based on several ideals, foremost among these being slavery and white supremacy. As Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens stated, the Confederacy's "foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery . . . is his natural and normal condition."[5] The election of Lincoln in 1860 demonstrated that the South was politically overwhelmed. Slavery was omnipresent in the antebellum South, and it served as the most common frame of reference for unequal power. To a white Southern man, there was no fate more terrifying than the thought of being reduced to the level of a slave. Religion likewise shaped Confederate nationalism, as Southerners believed that the Confederacy was fulfilling God's will. The Confederacy even veered from the American Constitution by explicitly invoking Christianity in their founding document. Yet in every case, all rationale for secession could be thoroughly tied to slavery. "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world," proclaimed the Mississippi statement of secession.[6] For the original seven Confederate states (and the four that would subsequently join), slavery's existence was the essential core of the fledgling Confederacy.

The Confederacy did not intend to be fledgling for long. Its leaders aimed to construct a vast slaveholding empire, encompassing everything from the mines of the American Southwest to the island plantations of the Caribbean. Confederate nationalists aspired to dominate the global markets for cotton and other cash crops, establishing their primacy atop a new world order.[7]



Figure 13.3. The emblems of nationalism on this currency reveal much about the ideology underpinning the Confederacy: George Washington standing stately in a Roman toga indicates the belief in the South's honorable and aristocratic past; John C. Calhoun's portrait emphasizes the Confederate argument of the importance of states' rights; and, most importantly, the image of African Americans working in fields demonstrates slavery's position as foundational to the Confederacy. A five- and one-hundred-dollar Confederate States of America interest-bearing banknote, c. 1861 and 1862. Wikimedia.

Not all Southerners participated in Confederate nationalism. White Unionists, most common in the upcountry where slavery was weakest, retained their loyalty to the Union. These Southerners joined the Union army (the army of the United States of America) and worked to defeat the Confederacy.[8] Black southerners, most of whom were enslaved, overwhelmingly supported the Union, often running away from plantations and forcing the Union army to reckon with slavery.[9]

President James Buchanan would not directly address the issue of secession prior to his term's end in early March. Any effort to try to solve the issue therefore fell upon Congress, specifically a Committee of Thirteen including prominent men such as Stephen Douglas, William Seward, Robert Toombs, and John Crittenden. In what became known as the Crittenden Compromise, Senator Crittenden proposed a series of Constitutional amendments that guaranteed the permanent existence of slavery in the Southern states, reinstituted and expanded the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific, and offered to compensate enslavers whose enslaved people had escaped. The Committee of Thirteen ultimately voted down the measure, and it likewise failed in the full Senate vote (25–23). Reconciliation appeared impossible.[10]

The seven seceding states met in Montgomery, Alabama, on February 4 to organize a new nation. The delegates selected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as president and established a capital in Montgomery (which would move to Richmond in May). Whether other states of the Upper South would join the Confederacy remained uncertain. North Carolina and Tennessee opted against holding secession conventions, while conventions in Virginia, Missouri, and Arkansas initially voted down secession. Despite this temporary boost to the Union, it became abundantly clear that these acts of loyalty in the Upper South were highly conditional and contingent upon the federal government's noninterference in Southern affairs. Such was the precarious political situation facing Abraham Lincoln after his inauguration on March 4, 1861.

III. A War for Union, 1861–1863

In his inaugural address, Lincoln declared secession "legally void."[11] While he did not intend to invade the seceded states, he would use force to maintain possession of federal property within them. Attention quickly shifted to the federal installation of Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. The fort's garrison badly needed supplies, and Lincoln intended to resupply it. South Carolina demanded that the garrison evacuate the fort, but its commanding officer, Major Robert Anderson, refused. On April 12, 1861, Confederate Brigadier General P. G. T. Beauregard fired on Fort Sumter. Anderson surrendered on April 13, and the Union troops evacuated. In response to the attack, President Abraham Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand volunteers to serve for three months to suppress the rebellion. The American Civil War had begun.

The assault on Fort Sumter and subsequent call for troops provoked the Upper South states of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee,

and Arkansas to join the Confederacy. In total, eleven states renounced their allegiance to the United States. The new Confederate nation was predicated on the institution of slavery and the promotion of any and all interests that protected it. Some Southerners couched their defense of slavery as a preservation of states' rights. But to protect slavery, the Confederate Constitution left less power to the states compared to the US Constitution—an irony not lost on many.

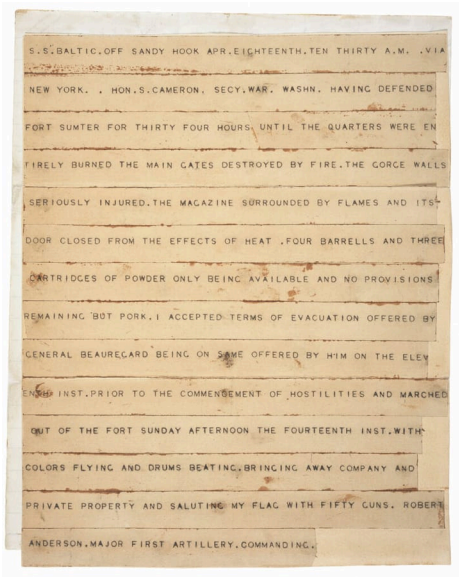

S.S.BALTIC.OFF SANDY HOOK APR.EIGHTEENTH.TEN THIRTY A.M. .VIA
NEW YORK. . HON.S.CAMERON, SECY.WAR. WASHN. HAVING DEFENDED
FORT SUMTER FOR THIRTY FOUR HOURS UNTIL THE QUARTERS WERE EN
TIRELY BURNED THE MAIN GATES DESTROYED BY FIRE.THE GORGE WALLS
SERIOUSLY INJURED.THE MAGAZINE SURROUNDED BY FLAMES AND ITS
DOOR CLOSED FROM THE EFFECTS OF HEAT .FOUR BARRELLS AND THREE
CARTRIDGES OF POWDER ONLY BEING AVAILABLE AND NO PROVISIONS
REMAINING BUT PORK.I ACCEPTED TERMS OF EVACUATION OFFERED BY
GENERAL BEAUREGARD BEING ON SAME OFFERED BY HIM ON THE ELEV
INST.PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES AND MARCHED
OUT OF THE FORT SUNDAY AFTERNOON THE FOURTEENTH INST.WITH
COLORS FLYING AND DRUMS BEATING,BRINGING AWAY COMPANY AND
PRIVATE PROPERTY AND SALUTING MY FLAG WITH FIFTY GUNS. ROBERT
ANDERSON.MAJOR FIRST ARTILLERY.COMMANDING.

Figure 13.4. Sent to then Secretary of War Simon Cameron on April 13, 1861, this telegraph announced that after "thirty hours of defending Fort Sumter, Major Robert Anderson had accepted the evacuation offered by Confederate General Beauregard. The Union had surrendered Fort Sumter, and the Civil War had officially begun. "Telegram from Maj. Robert Anderson to Hon. Simon Cameron, Secretary, announcing his withdrawal from Fort Sumter," April 18, 1861; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917; Record Group 94. National Archives.

Northerners, meanwhile, flocked into the Union army. Some of these men wished to deal a death blow to slavery, but most fought to preserve the Union. Northerners possessed a deeply held belief that the United States was the greatest experiment in self-government in human history. They were willing to put their lives on the line to ensure its survival—a goal on which everyone from Republicans to most Northern Democrats and former Whigs could agree.[12]

Shortly after Lincoln's call for troops, the Union adopted Commanding General Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan to suppress the rebellion. This strategy attempted to strangle the Confederacy by cutting off access to coastal ports and inland waterways via a naval blockade. Ground troops would enter the interior, and like an anaconda snake, they planned to surround and squeeze the Confederacy.



Figure 13.5. Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan meant to slowly squeeze the South dry of its resources, blocking all coastal ports and inland waterways to prevent the importation of goods or the export of cotton. This print, while poorly drawn, does a great job of making clear the Union's plan. J.B. Elliott, Scott's great snake. Entered according to the Act of Congress in the year 1861, 1861. Library of Congress.

The border states of Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky maintained geographic, social, political, and economic connections to both the North and the South. All four were immediately critical to the outcome of the conflict. Maryland was particularly important given its position relative to Washington. Abraham Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus and allowed military commanders to arrest secession-friendly activists without charging them with a crime. Other border states were also important: as Lincoln famously quipped, "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game."[13] Lincoln and his military advisors realized that the loss of the border states could mean a significant decrease in Union resources and threaten the capital in Washington. Lincoln consequently hoped to foster loyalty among their citizens, enabling Union forces to minimize their occupation. Despite terrible guerrilla warfare in Missouri and Kentucky, the four border states remained loyal to the Union throughout the war.

Foreign countries, primarily in Europe, closely watched the unfolding war. The United States represented the greatest example of democratic thought at the time, and individuals from Britain, France, Spain, Russia, and beyond closely followed events across the Atlantic Ocean. If American democracy failed, democratic activists in Europe wondered what hope might exist for such experiments elsewhere. Conversely, those with close ties to the cotton industry watched with other concerns. War meant the possibility of disrupting the cotton supply, which could have catastrophic ramifications in commercial and financial markets abroad. Aware of this fact, the Confederacy engaged in "cotton diplomacy," instituting a cotton embargo against Britain and France to coerce them into supporting its independence. But these nations instead turned to cultivating other markets. Though tensions flared between the United States and Britain on several occasions, no foreign power ultimately intervened in the Civil War.[14]

While Lincoln, his cabinet, and the War Department devised strategies to defeat the rebel insurrection, Black Americans quickly forced the issue of slavery as a primary issue in the debate. As early as 1861, Black Americans implored the Lincoln administration to serve in the army and navy.[15] Lincoln initially waged a conservative, limited war. He stressed that his goal was to preserve the Union rather than to end slavery, lest he alienate the loyal slaveholding border states. He likewise refused to allow Black volunteers to join the military. Yet army commanders could not ignore the growing populations of formerly enslaved people who took matters into their own hands by escaping to freedom behind Union army lines. As the number of refugees ballooned, Lincoln and Congress increasingly found it harder to ignore the slavery question.[16]

In May 1861, Union General Benjamin F. Butler went over his superiors' heads and began accepting freedom-seekers who escaped to Fort Monroe in Virginia. Butler labeled runaways "contraband of war." He reasoned that he had as much a right to confiscate this form of enemy property as he did to seize enemy horses or cannons.[17] Later that summer, Congress affirmed Butler's policy in the First Confiscation Act. The act left "contrabands," as these runaways were called, in a state of limbo. Once an enslaved person escaped to Union lines, their enslaver's claim was nullified. These persons were not, however, free citizens of the United States. Runaways lived in contraband camps, where disease and malnutrition were rampant. Women and men were required to perform the drudge work of war: raising fortifications, cooking meals, and laying railroad tracks. Still, thousands of enslaved people seized

the opportunity of this potential path to freedom. These refugees managed to foster new communities amid the difficulties of the contraband camps.[18]

Fugitives posed a dilemma for the Union military. Soldiers were forbidden to interfere with slavery or assist runaways, but many soldiers found such a policy unchristian. Even those indifferent to slavery were reluctant to turn away potential laborers or help the enemy by returning his property. Formerly enslaved people possessed useful information on the local terrain and rebel positions and often offered to serve as spies and guides for the Union military. Union officers became particularly reluctant to turn away freedom-seeking people when Confederate commanders began forcing enslaved laborers to work on fortifications. Every enslaved person who escaped to Union lines was considered a loss to the Confederate war effort.[19]



Figure 13.6. Enslaved African Americans who took freedom into their own hands and ran to Union lines congregated in what were called contraband camps, which existed alongside Union army camps. As is evident in the drawing, these were crude, disorganized, and dirty places. But they were still centers of freedom for those fleeing slavery. Contraband camp, Richmond, Va, 1865. The Camp of the Contrabands on the Banks of the Mississippi, Fort Pickering, Memphis, Tenn, 1862. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Any hopes for a brief conflict were eradicated when Union and Confederate forces met on July 21, 1861, at the First Battle of Bull Run, near Manassas, Virginia. While not particularly deadly, the Confederate victory proved that the Civil War would be long and costly. Furthermore, in response to the embarrassing Union rout, Lincoln removed Brigadier General Irvin McDowell and promoted Major General George B. McClellan to commander of the newly formed Army of the Potomac. For nearly a year after Bull Run, the Eastern Theater remained relatively silent. Smaller engagements only resulted in a bloody stalemate.

But while the military remained quiet, the same could not be said of Republicans in Washington. The absence of obstructionist Southerners in Congress allowed Republicans to finally pass the Whig economic package, including the Homestead Act, the Land-Grant College Act (aka the Morrill Act), and the Pacific Railroad Act.[20] The federal government also began moving toward a more nationally controlled currency (the greenback) and the creation of banks with national characteristics. New, centralized American financial systems vaulted onto the international stage, tying European nations more closely to the Union. These Republican acts proved instrumental in the expansion of the federal government and industry.[21]

The Democratic Party, absent its Southern leaders, divided into two camps. War Democrats largely stood behind President Lincoln in the fight to preserve the Union. Peace Democrats, also known as Copperheads, clashed frequently with both War Democrats and Republicans. Copperheads were sympathetic to the Confederacy; they exploited public antiwar sentiment (often the result of a lost battle or mounting Union casualties) and tried to pressure President Lincoln into negotiating an immediate peace. Had the Copperheads succeeded in their machinations, the Union would have been forced to recognize the Confederacy as a separate and legitimate government—and the institution of slavery would have remained intact.[22]



Figure 13.7. Photography captured the horrors of war as never before. Some Civil War photographers arranged the actors in their frames to capture the best picture, even repositioning bodies of dead soldiers for battlefield photos. Alexander Gardner, [Antietam, Md. Confederate dead by a fence on the Hagerstown road], September 1862. Library of Congress.

While Washington buzzed with political activity, military life consisted of relative monotony punctuated by brief periods of horror. Daily life for a Civil War soldier was one of routine. A typical day began around six in the morning and involved drill, marching, lunch break, and more drilling, followed by policing the camp. Weapon inspection and cleaning followed, perhaps one final drill, dinner, and taps around nine or nine thirty in the evening. Soldiers in both armies grew weary of the routine. Picketing or foraging afforded welcome distractions to the monotony.

Soldiers devised clever ways of dealing with the boredom of camp life. The most common was reading and writing. These were highly literate armies; nine out of every ten Federals and eight out of every ten Confederates could read and write.[23] Letters home served as a tether linking soldiers to their loved ones. Newspapers were often in high demand. News of battles, events in Europe, politics in Washington and Richmond, and local concerns were voraciously sought after and traded.

While there were nurses, camp followers, and some women who disguised themselves as men, camp life was overwhelmingly male. A sizable amount of these men—as much as 10 percent of Union soldiers—were underage boys who misrepresented their ages in enlisting. Soldiers drank liquor, smoked tobacco, gambled, and swore. Social commentators feared that when these men returned home with their hard-drinking and irreligious ways, all decency, faith, and temperance would depart. But not all methods of distraction were sinful. Soldiers also organized debate societies, composed music, sang songs, wrestled, raced horses, boxed, and played various sports.[24]



Figure 13.8. New and more destructive warfare technology emerged during this time that utilized discoveries and innovations in other areas of life, like transportation. This photograph shows Robert E. Lee's railroad gun and crew used in the main eastern theater of war at the siege of Petersburg, June 1864-April 1865. "Petersburg, Va. Railroad gun and crew," between 1864 and 1865. Library of Congress.

Neither side could consistently provide supplies for their soldiers, so it was not uncommon, though officially forbidden, for common soldiers to trade with the enemy. Confederate soldiers prized Northern newspapers and coffee. Northerners were glad to exchange these for Southern tobacco. Supply shortages and poor sanitation were synonymous with Civil War armies. The close proximity of thousands of men bred disease. Lice were soldiers' daily companions.[25]

Music was popular among the soldiers of both armies, creating a diversion from the boredom and horror of the war. As a result, soldiers often sang on fatigue duty and while in camp. Favorite songs often reminded the soldiers of home, including "Lorena," "Home, Sweet Home," and "Just Before the Battle, Mother." Dances held in camp offered another way to enjoy music. Since there were often few women nearby, soldiers would dance with one another.



Figure 13.9. Unidentified soldier of Co. H, 13th Virginia Infantry Regiment in uniform with over-the-shoulder saxhorn. Wikipedia.

When the Civil War broke out, one of the most popular songs among soldiers and civilians was "John Brown's Body," which began with the lyrics, "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave." It emerged as a Union anthem praising John Brown's actions at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, before being appropriated by the Confederates to vilify Brown. Each side's versions of the song stressed that theirs was the just cause. Eventually, the words to Julia Ward Howe's poem "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" were set to the melody, further implying Union success. The themes of popular songs changed over the course of the war, as feelings of inevitable

success alternated with feelings of terror and despair.[26]

After an extensive delay by Union commander George McClellan, his 120,000-man Army of the Potomac moved via ship to the peninsula between the York and James Rivers in Virginia in March 1862. Rather than crossing overland via the former battlefield at Manassas Junction, McClellan attempted to swing around the rebel forces and enter the capital of Richmond before they could react. McClellan, however, was an overly cautious man who consistently overestimated his adversaries' numbers. This circumspect approach played into the Confederates' favor on the outskirts of Richmond. Confederate General Robert E. Lee, who took over the Army of Northern Virginia after its previous commander was wounded, forced McClellan to retreat from Richmond, and the Peninsula Campaign ended in failure.[27]

While federal forces met with little success in the East, events in the Western Theater buoyed the Union cause. In February 1862, Union troops under General Ulysses S. Grant captured Forts Henry and Donelson along the Tennessee River. Fighting in the West greatly differed from that in the East. At the First Battle of Bull Run, two large armies fought for control of the nations' capital. But Union and Confederate forces in the West fought for control of the rivers, since the Mississippi River and its tributaries were key components of the Union's Anaconda Plan. One of the deadliest of these clashes occurred along the Tennessee River at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6–7, 1862. This battle, lasting only two days, was the costliest single battle in American history up to that time. The Union victory shocked both the Union and the Confederacy, with approximately 23,000 casualties, a number that exceeded casualties from all of the United States' previous wars combined.[28] The subsequent capture of New Orleans by Union forces in May 1862 proved a heavy blow to the Confederacy and capped a spring of success in the Western Theater.

War also came to the American Southwest. In response to secessionist sentiment in the southern portion of the New Mexico Territory (encompassing modern-day New Mexico, Arizona, and part of Nevada) the Confederates implemented their imperial ambitions. They invaded in 1861 and established the Arizona Territory, hoping to carve a path to California. The Union countered, driving the rebels out of the region in the Battle of Glorieta Pass in July 1862. Union forces then moved to carry out their own expansionist aims, waging a systematic and destructive campaign of total war against Apache and Navajo tribes in the territory. After eradicating the Navajos' crops and cattle, Union troops led by frontiersman Kit Carson began forcing them onto reservations. The Navajo suffered thousands of deaths from disease and starvation on the forced journeys to the reservation at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, between 1864 and 1866, collectively known today as the Long Walk.[29]

Native Americans were intertwined with the events of the Civil War beyond the Southwest as well. Native people strove to use their allegiances in the conflict as leverage to protect their own interests. Many tribes sided with the Union and sent warriors to fight in the military, hoping to ensure the Union would thereby honor its treaties with these tribes. However, other communities, specifically those found within "Indian Territory" in the south, allied with the Confederacy. The so-called Five Tribes of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek), Choctaw, and Seminole needed little persuasion to resist the government that forced their removal decades before. Therefore, they signed treaties with the Confederacy who created their own Bureau of Indian Affairs. These nations hoped to maintain control of their lands—and to preserve the institution of slavery, which they relied on alongside white Southerners. However, many tribal leaders appealed to unionists as they disapproved of secession. In January 1862, the Union saw victory as it invaded Indian Territory at Pea Ridge, where conflict between Indigenous unionists and secessionists was evolving into a civil war within a civil war.[30] Stand Watie, the chief of the Cherokee Nation, was commissioned as a general in the Confederate Army. He would become the last Confederate general to surrender to Union forces at the end of the Civil War.[31]

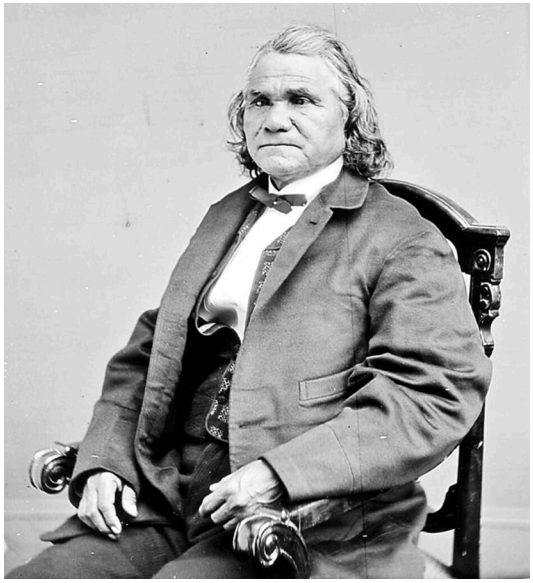


Figure 13.10. Isaac Stand Watie Degatag, Principal Cherokee Chief, was the last Confederate general to surrender in the Civil War. Wikipedia.

Far beyond the battlefields of the Civil War itself, conflicts arose between Northern settlers and Native peoples in the Union-controlled West, often ending in tragedy for the Native peoples. In 1862, violence erupted between the Dakota Nation and white settlers in Minnesota and the Dakota Territory. The US Census of 1850 recorded a white population of about 6,000 in Minnesota. By the time it became a state eight years later, its white population had exploded to over 150,000.[32] Additionally, the 1851 Treaty of Traverse had traded 1,665,000 acres of Dakota land in exchange for "money annuity, the sum of $40,000, among other stipends.[33] Unfortunately, the treaty was violated. The illegal influx of American farmers pushed the Dakota to the breaking point as hunting became unsustainable, and the Dakota who had taken up farming only found poverty, while annuity payments ceased altogether. When the federal Indian agent refused to disburse treaty-promised food, many starved. Andrew Myrick, a trader at the agency, refused to sell food on credit. "If they are hungry," he is alleged to have said, "let them eat grass or their own dung."[34] Tensions boiled over on August 17, 1862, when four young men of the Santee, a Dakota band, killed five white settlers near the Redwood Agency, a Union administrative office. In the face of an inevitable American retaliation, and over the protests of many members, the tribe chose war. On the following day, Dakota warriors attacked settlements near the Agency. They killed thirty-one men, women, and children (including Myrick, whose mouth was found filled with grass). They then ambushed a US military detachment at Redwood Ferry, killing twenty-three. The governor of Minnesota called up militia and several thousand Americans waged war against the Indigenous insurgents. Fighting broke out at New Ulm, Fort Ridgely, and Birch Coulee, but the United States broke Indigenous resistance at the Battle of Wood Lake on September 23, ending the Dakota War.[35]

More than two thousand Dakota had been taken prisoner during the fighting. Many were tried at federal forts for murder, rape, and other atrocities, in a kind of legalistic choreography that conveyed American ideas of Native guilt and white innocence. Military tribunals convicted 303 Dakota and sentenced them to hang. At the last minute, President Lincoln commuted all but thirty-eight of the sentences. Minnesota settlers and government officials insisted not only that the Dakota lose much of their reservation lands and be removed farther west, but that those who had fled be hunted down and placed on reservations as well. The American military gave chase. On September 3, 1863, after a year of attrition, American military units surrounded a large encampment of Dakota. American troops killed an estimated three hundred men, women, and children. Dozens more were taken prisoner. Troops spent the next two days burning winter food and supply stores to starve out the Dakota resistance, which continued to insist on Dakota sovereignty and treaty rights.[36]

Farther south, settlers inflamed tensions in Colorado. In 1851, the first Treaty of Fort Laramie secured right-of-way access for Americans passing through on their way to California and Oregon. But a gold rush in 1858 drew approximately 100,000 white gold seekers, and they demanded new treaties be made with local Indigenous groups to secure land rights in the newly created Colorado Territory. Cheyenne bands splintered over the possibility of signing a new treaty that would confine them to a reservation. Settlers, already wary of raids by powerful groups of Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Comanche, began reading sensationalist accounts of the uprising in Minnesota in their local newspapers. Militia leader John M. Chivington warned settlers in the summer of 1864 that the Cheyenne were dangerous. He fanned the flames of war and promised a swift military victory. The settlers soon sparked open conflict, and sporadic fighting broke out. The aged Cheyenne chief Black Kettle, believing that a peace treaty would be best for his people, traveled to Denver to arrange for peace talks. He and his followers traveled toward Fort Lyon in accordance with

government instructions. But on November 29, 1864, Chivington ordered his seven hundred militiamen to move to the Cheyenne camp near Fort Lyon at Sand Creek. Even though the Cheyenne attempted to declare their peaceful intentions, Chivington's militia mercilessly cut them down. Chivington's men killed two hundred men, women, and children in an unmitigated slaughter. The Sand Creek Massacre became a national scandal, alternately condemned and applauded across the land.[37]

The Civil War raged on, both on sea and land. Union and Confederate navies helped or hindered army movements around the many marine environments of the southern United States. Each navy employed the latest technology to outmatch the other. The Confederate Navy, led by Stephen Russell Mallory, had the unenviable task of constructing a fleet from scratch and trying to fend off a vastly better-equipped Union Navy. Led by Gideon Welles of Connecticut, the Union Navy successfully implemented Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan. The future of naval warfare also emerged in the spring of 1862 as two "ironclad" warships fought a duel at Hampton Roads, Virginia. The age of the wooden sail was gone, and naval warfare would be fundamentally altered.

On the ground, the actions of Black Americans were pushing the Union toward a war of emancipation by the summer of 1862.[38] So, too, were their allies in the biracial abolitionist movement. Antislavery activists developed an innovative strategy to convince white Northerners that emancipation was in their self-interest—that it was the only way to weaken the slavery-powered Confederacy and win the war. Their increasingly popular arguments eventually gained the support even of War Democrats and old Whigs like Daniel S. Dickinson and Edward Everett, who embraced the necessity of emancipation as a war measure.[39]

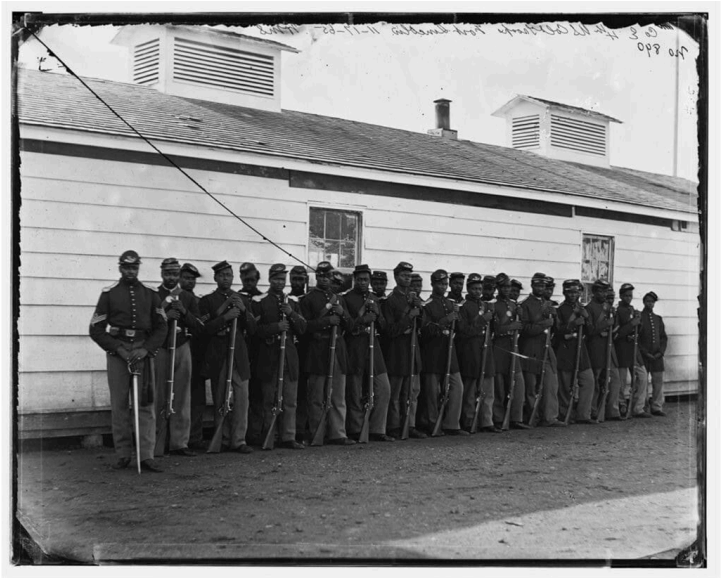


Figure 13.11. The creation of Black regiments was another kind of innovation during the Civil War. Northern free Black men and newly freed men joined together under the leadership of white officers to fight for the Union cause. This novelty was not only beneficial for the Union war effort; it also showed the Confederacy that the Union sought to destroy the foundational institution (slavery) upon which their nation was built. William Morris Smith, [District of Columbia. Company E, 4th U.S. Colored Infantry, at Fort Lincoln], between 1863 and 1866. Library of Congress.

Such sentiment soon translated into political action. In April 1862, Congress abolished the institution of slavery in the District of Columbia. That July, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, effectively emancipating enslaved people on land that came under Union control. Word traveled fast among enslaved people, and this legislation led to even more runaways making their way into Union lines. Abraham Lincoln's intentions on emancipation also evolved. Over the summer of 1862, Lincoln began floating the idea of an Emancipation Proclamation to members of his cabinet. By August, he proposed the first iteration of the Emancipation Proclamation. While his cabinet supported such an idea, Secretary of State William Seward insisted that Lincoln wait for a "decisive" Union victory so the proclamation would not appear to be the desperate measure of a faltering government.



Figure 13.12. This African American family dressed in their finest clothes (including a USCT uniform) for this photograph, projecting respectability and dignity that was at odds with the southern perception of Black Americans. [Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters], between 1863 and 1865. Library of Congress.

That decisive victory—or a reasonably clear-cut one, at least—occurred in the fall of 1862 along Antietam Creek in Maryland. Emboldened by their successes over the previous spring and summer, Lee and Confederate President Jefferson Davis planned to win a decisive victory in Union territory and end the war. On September 17, 1862, McClellan's and Lee's forces collided at the Battle of Antietam near the town of Sharpsburg. This was the first major battle of the Civil War to occur on Union soil. It remains the bloodiest single day in American history: over 20,000 soldiers were killed, wounded, or missing.

Despite the Confederate withdrawal and the high death toll, the Battle of Antietam was not a definitive Union triumph. Yet it provided enough of a victory for Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed enslaved people in areas under Confederate control. There were significant exemptions to the Emancipation Proclamation, including the loyal border states and Union-occupied areas of the Confederacy. But while it was a far cry from a universal end to slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation proved unquestionably vital by transforming a war for the Union into one for both the Union and emancipation. Lincoln framed his Proclamation as a war measure, hoping that stripping the Confederacy of its labor force would not only debilitate the Southern economy but also weaken Confederate morale. Furthermore, the Battle of Antietam and the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation all but ensured that the Confederacy would not be recognized by European powers. The Confederacy nonetheless fought on. Union and Confederate forces clashed again at Fredericksburg, Virginia, in December 1862, resulting in a Confederate victory—and staggering Union casualties.

IV. War for Emancipation, 1863–1865

As Union armies penetrated deeper into the Confederacy, politicians and generals came to understand the necessity and benefit of enlisting African American men in the army and navy. Although a few commanders began forming Black units in 1862, such as Massachusetts abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson's First South Carolina Volunteers (the first regiment of Black soldiers), widespread enlistment did not occur until the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863. "And I further declare and make known," Lincoln's proclamation read, "that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service."[40]

The language describing Black enlistment indicated Lincoln's implicit desire to segregate African American troops from the main campaigning armies of white soldiers. "I believe it is a resource which, if vigorously applied now, will soon close the contest. It works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us," Lincoln remarked in August 1863 about Black soldiering.[41] Although more than 180,000 Black men (10 percent of the Union army) served during the war, most United States Colored Troops (USCT) remained stationed behind the lines as garrison forces, often laboring and performing noncombat roles.

Black soldiers in the Union army endured rampant discrimination and earned less pay than white soldiers, while also facing the possibility of being murdered or sold into slavery if captured. James Henry Gooding, a Black corporal in the famed 54th

Massachusetts Volunteers, wrote to Abraham Lincoln in September 1863, questioning why he and his fellow volunteers were paid less than white men. Gooding argued that because he and his brethren were born in the United States and selflessly left their private lives to enter the army, they should be treated "as American SOLDIERS, not as menial hirelings."[42]



Figure 13.13. "Two Brothers in Arms." The Library of Congress.

African American soldiers defied the inequality of military service and used their positions in the army to reshape society in the North and South. The majority of the USCT had once been enslaved, and their presence as armed, blue-clad soldiers sent shock waves throughout the Confederacy. To their friends and families, African American soldiers symbolized the embodiment of liberation and the destruction of slavery. To white Southerners, they represented the utter disruption of the Old South's racial and social hierarchy. As members of the armies of occupation, Black soldiers wielded martial authority in towns and plantations. At the end of the war, as a Black soldier marched by a cluster of Confederate prisoners, he noticed his former enslaver among the group. "Hello, massa," the soldier exclaimed, "bottom rail on top dis time!"[43]

Leaders in the African American community recognized the greater importance of this military service. Through their martial valor on the battlefield, such leaders hoped, Black soldiers would convince white Northerners to grant their race full and equal rights. As Frederick Douglass argued, "Let the black man get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder," and none could refuse him the "right of citizenship." Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, and other Black leaders threw their all into recruiting for the new USCT regiments to make this dream a reality.[44]

The majority of the USCT occupied the South by performing garrison duty; other Black soldiers performed admirably on the battlefield, shattering white myths that docile, cowardly Black men would fold in the maelstrom of war. Black troops fought in more than four hundred battles and skirmishes, including Milliken's Bend and Port Hudson, Louisiana; Fort Wagner, South Carolina; Nashville; and the final campaigns to capture Richmond, Virginia. Fifteen Black soldiers received the Medal of Honor, the highest honor bestowed for military heroism. Through their voluntarism, service, battlefield contributions, and even deaths, Black soldiers successfully made their claims for citizenship.

Many enslaved laborers accompanied their enslavers in the Confederate army. They served their enslavers as "camp servants," cooking their meals, raising their tents, and carrying their supplies. The Confederacy also impressed enslaved laborers to perform manual labor. There are three key points to make about these enslaved "Confederates." First, their labor was almost always coerced. Second, people are complicated and have varying, often contradictory loyalties. An enslaved person could yearn for freedom and the Confederacy's collapse, but at the same time be concerned for the safety of his enslaver and the rebel soldiers he saw daily.

And finally, white Confederates did not see African Americans as their equals, much less as soldiers. There was never any doubt that Black laborers and camp servants were property. It is a stretch to claim that no enslaved person ever fired a gun for the Confederacy; a camp servant whose enslaver died in battle might well pick up his dead enslaver's rifle and continue firing, if for no other reason than to protect himself. But this would always have been on an informal basis. As a last act of desperation, the Confederate government did pass a law in March 1865 allowing for the enlistment of Black soldiers. Only a few dozen African

Americans (mostly Richmond hospital workers) signed up by the war's conclusion, however. African Americans never served on a battlefield as enlisted Confederate soldiers, despite modern-day claims to the contrary.[45]

As 1863 dawned, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia continued its offensive strategy in the East. One of the war's major battles occurred near the village of Chancellorsville, Virginia, from April 30 to May 6, 1863. While the Battle of Chancellorsville was a stunning Confederate victory, it also resulted in heavy casualties and the mortal wounding of an important Confederate commander, Major General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, who was killed by friendly fire.

Despite Jackson's death, Lee continued his offensive against federal forces and invaded Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863. During the three-day battle (July 1–3) at Gettysburg, heavy casualties crippled both sides. But after a failed—and devastating—infantry assault on July 3 against the Union center, known as Pickett's Charge, Lee retreated from Pennsylvania. The Gettysburg Campaign was Lee's final incursion into the North. The Battle of Gettysburg remains the bloodiest battle of the war, and in American history, with 51,000 casualties.

In the West, meanwhile, Union forces continued their movement along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Grant launched his campaign against Vicksburg, Mississippi, in the winter of 1862. Known as the "Gibraltar of the West," Vicksburg was the last Confederate strongpoint on the Mississippi River, and its seizure would enable uninhibited Union travel along the waterway. Grant's Vicksburg Campaign ended with the city's surrender on July 4, 1863. The fall of Vicksburg split the Confederacy in two.

Despite Union success in the summer of 1863, discontent over the war simmered across the North. This was particularly true in the wake of the Enrollment Act, which initiated a draft of military-age men in the North. Working-class Northerners were especially angry that the wealthy could pay $300 for substitutes, sparing themselves from the carnage of war. "A rich man's war, but a poor man's fight," went a popular refrain.[46] The Emancipation Proclamation convinced many immigrants in Northern cities that freed slaves would soon take their jobs. These racial and economic anxieties culminated in the New York City Draft Riots in July 1863. White rioters killed some 120 citizens over the span of four days, lynching at least eleven Black New Yorkers. Property damage was in the millions, including the destruction of more than fifty properties, most notably that of the Colored Orphan Asylum. It was the largest civil disturbance to date in the United States (aside from the war itself) and was only stopped by the deployment of Union soldiers, some of whom came directly from the battlefield at Gettysburg.[47]

The North was also capable of impressive acts of unity. Sanitary fairs originated in the Old Northwest and raised millions of dollars for supplies for Union soldiers. Indeed, many women rose to take pivotal leadership roles in the sanitary fairs, making strong contributions to the Union war effort. The fairs also encouraged national unity within the North, something that became more important as the war dragged on and casualties continued to mount. The Northern home front remained ever complicated: overt displays of loyalty contrasted with violent dissent.



Figure 13.14. Thomas Nast, "Our Heroines, United States Sanitary Commission," in Harper's Weekly, April 9, 1864. Cushing/Whitney Medical Library at Yale University.

A similar situation played out in the Confederacy. The Confederate Congress passed its first conscription act in the spring of

1862, a full year before its Northern counterpart. Military service was required from all able-bodied males between ages eighteen and thirty-five (eventually extended to forty-five). Notable class exemptions likewise existed in the Confederacy: those who owned twenty or more enslaved laborers could escape the draft. Popular discontent reached a boiling point in 1863. Throughout the spring of 1863, consistent food shortages led to "bread riots" in several Confederate cities, most notably Richmond and the Georgia cities of Augusta, Macon, and Columbus. Confederate women led these mobs to protest food shortages and rampant inflation within the Confederate South. Exerting their own political control, women dramatically impacted the war through violent actions in these cases, as well as constant petitions to governors for aid and the release of husbands from military service. One such woman wrote a letter to North Carolina Governor Zebulon Vance, pleading, "Especially for the sake of suffering women and children, do try and stop this cruel war."[48] Confederates waged a multifront struggle against Union incursion and internal dissent.

Some women supported their respective sides by spying on the enemy. When the war broke out, Rose O'Neal Greenhow was living in Washington. Utilizing her role as a well-regarded socialite in the capital, she began gathering information for her Confederate contact. Suspecting Greenhow of espionage, Allan Pinkerton of the Union Intelligence Service placed her under surveillance, instigated a raid on her house to gather evidence, and then put her under house arrest, after which she was incarcerated in Old Capitol Prison. Upon her release she was sent, under guard, to Baltimore, Maryland. From there, Greenhow went to Europe to attempt to bring support to the Confederacy. Having failed to curry favor, Greenhow decided to return to America aboard the blockade runner Condor. The ship ran aground off the North Carolina coast, however, and Greenhow ultimately drowned when her lifeboat capsized in a storm.

While Greenhow gave her life for the Confederate cause, Elizabeth "Crazy Bet" Van Lew sacrificed her social standing for the Union. A member of a prominent Richmond family who harbored antislavery sympathies, Van Lew organized a Union spy ring in the Confederate capital, leading to her being "held in contempt & scorn by the narrow-minded men and women of my city for my loyalty."[49] Indeed, when General Ulysses Grant took control of Richmond, he detailed a special guard to protect Van Lew. In addition to her espionage activities, Van Lew also acted as a nurse to Union prisoners in Libby Prison.[50]



Figure 13.15. Pauline Cushman was an American actress and a wartime spy. Using her guile to fraternize with Confederate officers, Cushman snuck military plans and drawings to Union officials in her shoes. She was caught, tried, and sentenced to death, but was apparently saved days before her execution by the occupation of her native New Orleans by Union forces. Whether as spies, nurses, or textile workers, women were essential to the Union war effort. "Pauline Cushman," between 1855 and 1865. Library of Congress.

Pro-Confederate Southern women, meanwhile, were eager to show their scorn for the enemy. Some women in New Orleans went so far as to dump their chamber pots onto the heads of unsuspecting federal soldiers standing underneath their balconies, leading to Benjamin Butler's infamous General Order Number 28, which arrested all rebellious women as prostitutes.

Military strategy shifted in 1864. The new tactics of "hard war" evolved slowly, as restraint toward Southern civilians and property gave way to a concerted effort to demoralize Southern civilians and destroy the Southern economy. Grant's successes at Vicksburg and Chattanooga, Tennessee (November 1863), as well as Meade's overly cautious pursuit of Lee after Gettysburg, prompted Lincoln to promote Grant to Commanding General of the United States Army in early 1864. This change in command brought some of the bloodiest battles of the Eastern Theater. Grant launched the Overland Campaign to take Richmond, demonstrating

his willingness to tirelessly grind down the ever-dwindling Army of Northern Virginia. The two armies clashed repeatedly in the horrific battles of The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor. By June 1864, Grant's army surrounded the Confederate depot of Petersburg, Virginia. Siege operations cut off Confederate forces and supplies from the capital of Richmond. Out west, meanwhile, Union armies under the command of William Tecumseh Sherman implemented hard-war strategies and made their way through central Tennessee and northern Georgia, capturing the vital rail hub of Atlanta in September 1864.

Deaths mounted in 1864 not only from the battles themselves, but also from disease. Sickness afflicted both armies and accounted for over half of all Civil War casualties. Sometimes as many as half of the men in a company could be ill. The overwhelming majority of Civil War soldiers came from rural areas, where less exposure to diseases meant soldiers lacked certain immunities. Vaccines for diseases such as smallpox were largely unavailable to those outside cities or towns. Despite the common nineteenth-century tendency to see city men as weak or soft, soldiers from urban environments tended to succumb to fewer diseases than their rural counterparts. Tuberculosis, measles, rheumatism, typhoid, malaria, and smallpox spread almost unchecked among the armies.



Figure 13.16. Pennsylvania Light Artillery, Battery B, Petersburg, Virginia. Photograph by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, 1864. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Civil War medicine focused almost exclusively on curing the patient rather than preventing disease. Many soldiers attempted to cure themselves by concocting elixirs and medicines themselves. These ineffective home remedies were often made from various plants the men found in woods or fields. There was no understanding of germ theory, and many soldiers did things that we would consider unsanitary today.[51] They ate food that was improperly cooked and handled, while practicing what we would consider poor personal hygiene. They did not take appropriate steps to ensure that drinking water was free from bacteria. Diarrhea and dysentery were common. These diseases proved especially dangerous, as Civil War soldiers did not understand the value of replacing fluids as they were lost. As such, men affected by these conditions would weaken and become unable to fight or march. As they became dehydrated, their immune system became less effective, inviting other infections to attack the body. Through trial and error, soldiers began to protect themselves from some of the more preventable sources of infection. Around 1862, both armies began to dig latrines rather than rely on the local waterways. Burying human and animal waste also cut down on exposure to diseases considerably.

Medical surgery was limited and brutal. If a soldier was wounded in the torso, throat, or head, little could be done by surgeons. Invasive procedures to repair damaged organs or stem blood loss invariably resulted in death. Luckily for soldiers, only approximately one in six combat wounds were to one of those areas. The remaining wounds were to limbs and were only treatable by amputation. Soldiers had the highest chance of survival if the limb was removed within forty-eight hours of injury. A skilled surgeon could amputate a limb in three to five minutes from start to finish. While the ignorance of germ theory again resulted in numerous unsafe practices, such as using the same tools on multiple patients, wiping hands on filthy gowns, and placing hands in communal buckets of water, there is evidence that amputation offered the strongest chance of survival.

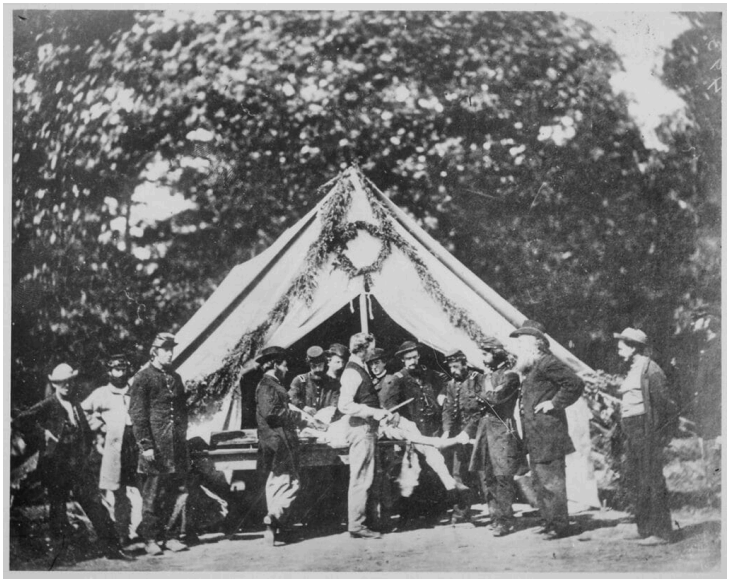


Figure 13.17. Amputations were a common form of treatment during the war. While it saved the lives of some soldiers, it was extremely painful and resulted in death in many cases. It also produced the first community of war veterans without limbs in American history. “Amputation being performed in a hospital tent, Gettysburg,” July 1863. National Archives and Records Administration.

It is a common misconception that amputation was done without anesthesia and against a patient’s wishes. Since the 1830s, Americans understood the benefits of nitrous oxide and ether in easing pain. Chloroform and opium were also used to either render patients unconscious or dull pain during the procedure. Moreover, surgeons would not amputate without the patient’s consent.

In the Union army alone, 2.8 million ounces of opium and over 5.2 million opium pills were administered. In 1862, William Alexander Hammon was appointed surgeon general of the United States Army. He sought to regulate dosages and manage supplies of available medicines, both to prevent overdosing and to ensure that an ample supply remained for the next engagement. However, his guidelines generally applied only to the regular federal army. Most Union soldiers were in volunteer units and organized at the state level. Their surgeons often ignored posted limits on medicines, or worse, experimented with their own concoctions made from local flora.

The conditions in Union hospitals were somewhat superior to those in the Confederacy. This was partly due to the organizational skills of women like Dorothea Dix, the Union’s superintendent for army nurses. Additionally, many women were members of the United States Sanitary Commission and helped to staff and supply hospitals in the North.

Women took on key roles within hospitals, both North and South. The publisher’s notice for Nurse and Spy in the Union Army stated, “In the opinion of many, it is the privilege of woman to minister to the sick and soothe the sorrowing—and in the present crisis of our country’s history, to aid our brothers to the extent of her capacity.”[52] Mary Chesnut wrote, “Every woman in the house is ready to rush into the Florence Nightingale business.”[53] After visiting a hospital, however, she declared that “I can never again shut out of view the sights that I saw there of human misery. I sit thinking, shut my eyes, and see it all.”[54] Hospital conditions were often so bad that many volunteer nurses quit soon after beginning. Kate Cumming volunteered as a nurse shortly after the war began. She and other volunteers traveled with the Army of Tennessee. All but one of the women who volunteered with Cumming quit within a week.

Death came in many forms; disease, prisons, bullets, even lightning and bee stings took men slowly or suddenly. Their deaths affected more than their regiments. Before the war, a wife expected to sit at her husband’s bed, holding his hand, and ministering to him after a long, fulfilling life. This noble type of death, the “Good Death,” disappeared during the Civil War as men died often far from home among strangers.[55] Casualty reporting was inconsistent, so a woman was often at the mercy of the men who fought alongside her husband to learn not only the details of his death, but even that the death had occurred.

“Now I’m a widow. Ah! That mournful word. Little the world think of the agony it contains!,” wrote Sally Randle Perry in her diary.[56] After her husband’s death at Antietam, Sally received the label she would share with over 200,000 other women. The death of a husband and loss of financial, physical, and emotional support could shatter lives. It also had the perverse power to free women from bad marriages and open doors to financial and psychological independence.

Widows had an important role to play in the conflict. The ideal widow wore black, mourned for a minimum of two and a half years, resigned herself to God's will, focused on her children, devoted herself to her husband's memory, and brought his body home for burial. Most tried, but not all widows were able to live up to this ideal. Many widows were unable to purchase proper mourning garb. Black silk dresses, heavy veils, and other features of antebellum mourning were expensive and in short supply. Because most of these women were in their childbearing years, the war created an unprecedented number of widows who were pregnant or still nursing infants. In a time when the average woman gave birth to eight to ten children in her lifetime, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Civil War created so many widows who were also young mothers with little free time for formal mourning. Widowhood permeated American society. But in the end, it was up to each widow to navigate her own mourning. She joined the ranks of sisters, mothers, cousins, girlfriends, and communities in mourning men.[57]

By the fall of 1864, affairs in the North played out against the backdrop of the upcoming presidential election. This contest featured a transformed electorate. Three new states (West Virginia, Nevada, and Kansas) had been added since 1860, while the eleven states of the Confederacy did not participate. Lincoln and his vice-presidential nominee, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, ran as the "National Union Party" to attract conservative Unionists into the Republican fold. The main competition came from his former commander, General George B. McClellan. Though McClellan himself was a War Democrat, the Copperhead-friendly official platform of the Democratic Party in 1864 revolved around negotiating an immediate end to the war. McClellan's vice-presidential nominee was George H. Pendleton of Ohio—a well-known Copperhead.[58]

Lincoln and McClellan each needed 117 electoral votes (out of a possible 233) to win the presidency on November 8. Lincoln doubted his chances of reelection throughout the campaign season, while McClellan assumed that large numbers of Union soldiers would grant him support. But thanks in great part to William Sherman's capture of Atlanta on September 2, 1864, as well as overwhelming support from Union troops, Lincoln easily won the election. He ultimately consolidated support from more radical Republican factions and members of the Radical Democracy Party, which demanded the end of slavery.

Lincoln defeated McClellan in the popular vote, 55.1 percent to 44.9 percent. In the Electoral College, Lincoln's victory was even more pronounced: 212 to 21. Lincoln won twenty-two states, while McClellan only carried three: New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky.[59]



Figure 13.18. With crowds of people filling every inch of ground around the U.S. Capitol, President Lincoln delivered his inaugural address on March 4, 1865. Alexander Gardner, "Lincoln's Second Inaugural," between 1910 and 1920, from a photograph taken in 1865. Wikimedia.

In the wake of his reelection, Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address on March 4, 1865, in which he concluded in soaring rhetoric:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.[6060]

Throughout late 1864 and 1865, the conflict ground on, proving incredibly deadly for both sides. Hard-war Union campaigns in

the West and the East destroyed Confederate infrastructure and demonstrated the efficacy of the Union's strategy. Following his successful capture of Atlanta, William Sherman initiated his March to the Sea in November 1864, arriving in Savannah in time to capture it and deliver it as a Christmas present for Abraham Lincoln. Sherman's path of destruction took on an even more destructive tone as he moved into the heart of the Confederacy in South Carolina in early 1865. The burning of Columbia, South Carolina, and subsequent capture of Charleston brought the hard hand of war to the birthplace of secession. In the East, Grant's ever-tightening siege of Petersburg finally forced Lee to abandon his lines and flee south, leaving Richmond to Union forces. After a dogged pursuit, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, ending major Confederate military operations. Peace came at last—at least in theory.[61]



Figure 13.19. Union soldiers pose in front of the Appomattox Court House after Lee's surrender in April 1865. Wikimedia.

To ensure the permanent destruction of slavery, Republicans drafted and passed the Thirteenth Amendment during the war. Yet the legal end of slavery did not mean the end of racial injustice. Disease-ridden contraband camps remained even after emancipation. After the war, the Republican Reconstruction program of guaranteeing the rights of Black Americans succumbed to persistent racism and white Southern violence. Long after 1865, most Black Southerners continued to labor on plantations, albeit as nominally free tenants or sharecroppers, while facing public segregation and disfranchisement. Slavery's effects endured long after abolition.

V. Conclusion

As the guns fell silent in 1865, the question of secession had been answered, slavery had been eradicated, and the Union was territorially restored. But in many ways, the conclusion of the Civil War created more questions than answers. How would the nation become one again? Who was responsible for rebuilding the South? What role would African Americans occupy in this society? Northern and Southern soldiers returned home with broken bodies, broken spirits, and broken minds. Plantation owners had land but not labor. Recently freed African Americans had their labor but no land. Formerly enslaved people encountered a world of possibilities—legal marriage, family reunions, employment, and fresh starts—but also one of prejudice, violence, and limited opportunity. The Civil War may have been over, but the struggle over the peace was just beginning.

VI. Primary Sources

1. Alexander Stephens on slavery and the Confederate constitution, 1861

Confederates had to quickly create not only a government but also a nation, including all of the cultural values required to foster patriotism. In this speech, Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, proclaims that slavery and white supremacy were not only the cause for secession but also the "cornerstone" of the Confederate nation.

2. General Benjamin F. Butler reacts to self-emancipation, 1861

Self-emancipating people posed a dilemma for the Union military. Soldiers were forbidden to interfere with slavery or assist runaways, but many soldiers disobeyed the policy. In May 1861, General Benjamin F. Butler went over his superiors' heads and began accepting freedom-seeking people who came to Fortress Monroe in Virginia. Butler reasoned that these people were "contraband of war," and he had as much a right to seize them as he did to seize enemy horses or cannons. Later that summer Congress affirmed Butler's policy in the First Confiscation Act.

3. William Henry Singleton, a formerly enslaved man, recalls fighting for the Union, 1922

William Henry Singleton was born to his enslaved mother, Lettice, and her enslaver's brother, William Singleton. At the age of four, he was sold away from his mother but ran back to her several times throughout his life. When the war broke out, he escaped to Union lines and volunteered for service. After being dismissed, he rallied one thousand Black soldiers and received a promotion as a sergeant.

4. Poem about Civil War nurses, 1866

The massive casualty rates of the Civil War meant that nurses were always needed. Women, North and South, left the comforts of home to care for the wounded. Hospital conditions were often so bad that many volunteer nurses quit soon after beginning. After the war, Kate Cumming, a nurse who traveled with the Army of Tennessee, published an account of her experience. She included a poem, written by an unknown author about nursing in the war.

5. Ambrose Bierce recalls his experience at the Battle of Shiloh, 1881

Civil War soldiers described the experience of combat as both terrifying and confusing. The American writer, Ambrose Bierce, captures both the confusion and terror of the Battle of Shiloh in the below excerpt of his 1881 recollections of the battle.

6. Civil War songs, 1862

Music played an important role in the Civil War. Songs celebrated the cause, mourned the loss of life, and bound sings together in shared commitments to mutual sacrifice. These two songs, both written by women, one in the North and the other in the South, show the flexibility of Civil War music. The first is an example of the somber, sacralizing function of music, while the latter is an example of a lighthearted attempt at humor.

7. Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address, 1865

Abraham Lincoln offered a first draft of history in his second inaugural address, casting the Civil War as a war for union that later became a spiritual process of national penance for two hundred and fifty years of slaveholding. Lincoln also looked to the future, envisioning a harmonious and speedy Reconstruction that would take place "with malice toward none" and "with charity for all."

8. Civil War nurses illustration, 1864

The Civil War ultimately opened a variety of arenas for Union and Confederate women's participation. In the North, the United States Sanitary Commission in particular centralized women's opportunities to volunteer as nurses, donate supplies, and to raise funds at Sanitary Fairs. This 1864 image from popular periodical Harper's Weekly celebrates women's contributions on the battlefield, in the hospital, in the parlor, and at the fair.

9. Burying the dead photograph, 1865

Death pervaded every aspect of life during the years of the Civil War. This gruesome photograph, taken after the battle of Cold Harbor, shows the hasty burial procedures used to reckon with unprecedented death. Dirty jobs like this were often left to Black soldiers or freedpeople in Contraband Camps.

VII. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Frank Cirillo, with content contributions by Thomas Balcerski, William Black, Lauren Brand, Frank Cirillo, Angela Esco Elder, Matthew C. Hulbert, Brenda Lakhani, Andrew F. Lang, Lindsay Stallones Marshall, John Patrick Riley, Angela Riotto, Gregory N. Stern, Emma Teitelman, David Thomson, Ann Tucker, Ben Wright, Caroline Wright, and Rebecca Zimmer.

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14: Reconstruction

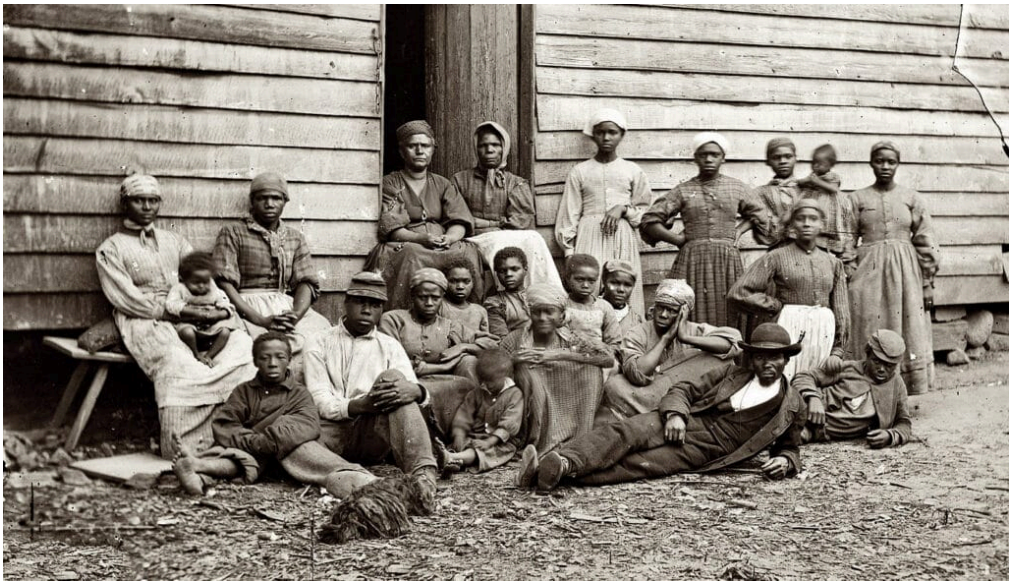


Figure 14.1. “Contrabands,” Cumberland Landing, Virginia, 1862. Library of Congress.

I. Introduction

After the Civil War, the future of the South was uncertain. 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 on formerly enslaved people? The answers to many of Reconstruction’s questions hinged on the concepts of citizenship, equality, and the practicalities of freedom. Americans who lived through the era engaged in the most open and widespread discussions of citizenship since the nation’s founding.

Reconstruction 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 are created equal” and have “certain unalienable rights.” 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, but white Americans lacked sufficient commitment to enforce the new laws. White supremacist terrorism and electioneering undermined and then overthrew Reconstruction. Limits on human freedom endured and would stand for nearly a century more.

II. Politics of Reconstruction

Reconstruction—the effort to restore Southern states to the Union and to redefine African Americans’ place in American society—began before the Civil War ended. President Abraham Lincoln began planning for the reunification of the United States in the fall of 1863.[1] With a sense that Union victory was imminent and that he could turn the tide of the war by stoking Unionist support in the Confederate states, Lincoln issued a proclamation allowing Southerners to take an oath of allegiance. When just 10 percent of a state’s voting population had taken such an oath, loyal Unionists could then establish governments.[2] These so-called Lincoln governments sprang up in pockets of Union-controlled territory in the South, including parts of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Unsurprisingly, these were also the places that were exempted from the liberating effects of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Initially proposed as a war aim, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation committed the United States to the abolition of slavery. However, the proclamation freed enslaved people only in areas of rebellion and left more than seven hundred thousand in bondage in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, as well as in Union-occupied areas of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia.

To cement the abolition of slavery, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment on January 31, 1865. The amendment legally abolished slavery "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." Section Two of the amendment granted Congress the "power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." State ratification followed, and by the end of the year, the requisite three-fourths of the states had approved the amendment, and four million people were forever free from the slavery that had existed in North America for 250 years.[3]



Figure 14.2. With the war coming to an end, the question of how to reunite the former Confederate states with the Union was a divisive one. Lincoln's Presidential Reconstruction plans were seen by many, including Radical Republicans in Congress, to be too tolerant towards what they considered to be traitors. This political cartoon reflects this viewpoint, showing Lincoln and Johnson happily stitching the Union back together with little anger towards the South. Joseph E. Baker, The 'Rail Splitter' at Work Repairing the Union, 1865. Library of Congress.

Lincoln's policy was lenient, conservative, and short-lived. The political winds changed when John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln on April 14, 1865, during a performance of Our American Cousin at Ford's Theater. Treated rapidly and with all possible care, Lincoln nevertheless succumbed to his wounds the following morning, leaving a somber pall over the North and especially among African Americans.

The assassination of Abraham Lincoln propelled Vice President Andrew Johnson into the executive office in April 1865. Johnson, a states'-rights, strict-constructionist, and unapologetic racist from Tennessee, offered former Confederates in Southern states a quick restoration into the Union. His Reconstruction plan required provisional Southern governments to void their ordinances of secession, repudiate their Confederate debts, and ratify the Thirteenth Amendment. On all other matters, the conventions could do what they wanted with no federal interference. He pardoned all Southerners engaged in the rebellion with the exception of wealthy planters who possessed more than $20,000 in property.[4] The Southern aristocracy would have to appeal to Johnson for individual pardons. In the meantime, Johnson hoped that a new class of Southerners would replace the extremely wealthy in leadership positions.

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. Other states soon followed. These laws granted some rights to African Americans, like the right to own property, marry, and make contracts. But they also denied fundamental rights. White lawmakers forbade Black men from serving on juries or in state militias, refused to recognize Black testimony against white people, apprenticed orphaned children to their former enslavers, and established severe vagrancy laws. Mississippi's vagrant law required all freedpeople to carry papers proving they had means of employment.[5] If they had no proof, they could be arrested and fined. If they could not pay the fine, the sheriff had the right to hire out his prisoner to anyone willing to pay the tax. Similar ambiguous vagrancy laws throughout the South reasserted control over Black labor in what one scholar has called "slavery by another name."[6] Black Codes effectively criminalized Black people's leisure, limited their mobility, and locked many into exploitative farming contracts. Attempts to restore the antebellum economic order largely succeeded.

These laws and outrageous mob violence against Black Southerners led Republicans to call for a more dramatic Reconstruction. So, when Johnson announced that the Southern states had been restored, congressional Republicans refused to seat delegates

from the newly reconstructed states.



Figure 14.3. While no one could agree on what the best plan for reconstructing the nation would be, Americans understood the moment as critical and perhaps revolutionary. In this magnificent visual metaphor for the reconciliation of the North and South, John Lawrence postulates what might result from reunion. Reconstruction, the print seems to argue, will form a more perfect Union that upholds the ideals of the American Revolution, most importantly (as seen on a streaming banner near the top) that "All men are born free and equal." John Giles Lawrence, *Reconstruction*, 1867. Library of Congress.

Republicans in Congress responded with a spate of legislation aimed at protecting freedpeople and restructuring political relations in the South. Many Republicans were keen to grant voting rights for freedmen in order to build a new, powerful voting bloc. Some Republicans, like US Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, believed in racial equality, but the majority were motivated primarily by the interests of their political party. The only way to protect Republican interests in the South was to give the vote to the hundreds of thousands of Black men. Republicans in Congress responded to the codes with the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the first federal attempt to constitutionally define all American-born residents (except Native peoples) as citizens. The law also prohibited any restriction of citizens' "fundamental rights."[7]

The Fourteenth Amendment developed concurrently with the Civil Rights Act to ensure its constitutionality. The House of Representatives approved the Fourteenth Amendment on June 13, 1866. Section One granted citizenship and repealed the Supreme Court's infamous Dred Scott (1857) decision. Moreover, it ensured that state laws could not deny due process or discriminate against particular groups of people. The Fourteenth Amendment signaled the federal government's willingness to enforce the Bill of Rights over the authority of the states.

Because he did not believe African Americans deserved equal rights, President Johnson opposed the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment and vetoed the Civil Rights Act. But after winning a two-thirds majority in the 1866 midterm elections, Republicans overrode the veto, and in 1867, they passed the first Reconstruction Act, dissolving state governments and dividing the South into five military districts. Under these new terms, states would have to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, write new constitutions enfranchising African Americans, and abolish repressive "Black Codes" before rejoining the Union. In the face of President Johnson's repeated obstructionism, the House of Representatives issued articles of impeachment against the president. Although Johnson narrowly escaped conviction in the Senate, Congress won the power to direct a new phase of Reconstruction. Six weeks later, on July 9, 1868, the states ratified the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing birthright citizenship and "equal protection of the laws."

In the 1868 presidential election, former Union General Ulysses S. Grant ran on a platform that proclaimed "Let Us Have Peace," in which he promised to protect the new status quo. On the other hand, the Democratic candidate, Horatio Seymour, promised to repeal Reconstruction. Black Southern voters helped Grant win most of the former Confederacy. Scalawags and Carpetbaggers also buttressed Republicans in the South. Scalawag was the derisive term used to describe white Republicans in the South, and carpetbaggers was the term for Northerners who traveled to the South during Reconstruction. But Black voters formed the backbone of the Republican coalition in the South.

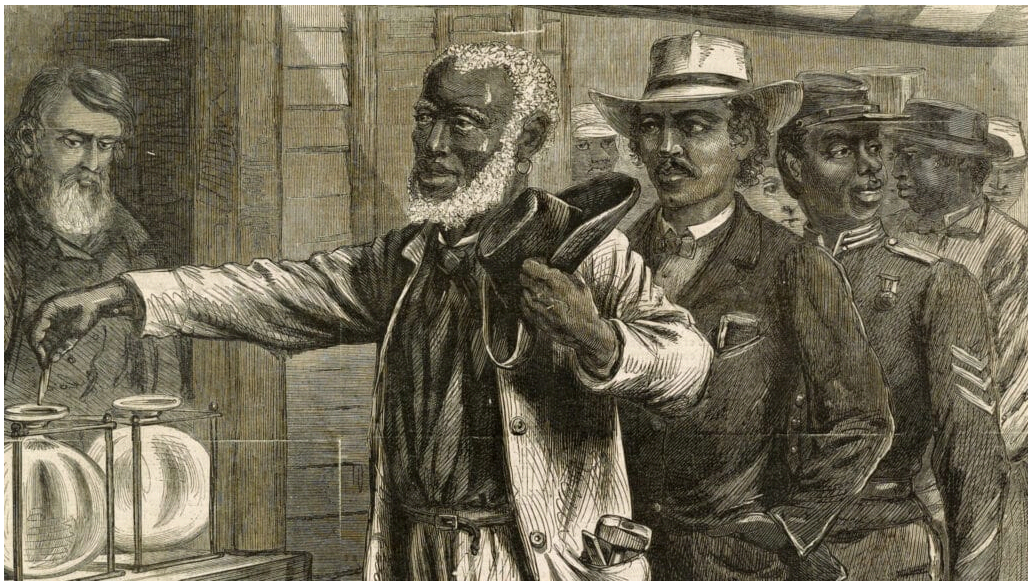


Figure 14.4. In this *Harper's Weekly* print, Black men of various occupations wait patiently for their turn as the first voter submits his ballot. Unlike other contemporary images that depicted African Americans as ignorant, unkempt, and lazy, this print shows these Black men as active citizens. Three years after the publication of this print, the Fifteenth Amendment protected the right of Black Americans to vote. Alfred R. Waud, *The First Vote*, November 1867. Library of Congress.

Reconstruction brought the first moment of mass democratic participation for African Americans. In 1860, only five states in the North allowed African Americans to vote on equal terms with whites. Yet after 1867, when Congress ordered Southern states to eliminate racial discrimination in voting, African Americans began to win elections across the South. In a short time, the South was transformed from an all-white, proslavery, Democratic stronghold to a collection of Republican-led states with African Americans in positions of power for the first time in American history.[8]

Through the provisions of the congressional Reconstruction Acts, Black men voted in large numbers and also served as delegates to the state constitutional conventions in 1868. Black Americans drew on the decades-long tradition of Colored Conventions to prepare for the moment, and Black delegates actively participated in revising state constitutions. One of the most significant accomplishments of these conventions was the establishment of a public school system. While public schools were virtually nonexistent in the antebellum period, by the end of Reconstruction, every Southern state had established a public school system.[9] Republican officials opened state institutions like mental asylums, hospitals, orphanages, and prisons to white and Black residents, though often on a segregated basis. They actively sought industrial development, Northern investment, and internal improvements.

African Americans served at every level of government during Reconstruction. At the federal level, Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce were chosen as US senators from Mississippi. Fourteen men served in the House of Representatives. At least 270 other African American men served in patronage positions as postmasters, customs officials, assessors, and ambassadors. At the state level, more than a thousand African American men held offices in the South. P. B. S. Pinchback served as Louisiana's governor for thirty-four days after the previous governor was suspended during impeachment proceedings and was the only African American state governor until Virginia elected L. Douglas Wilder in 1989. Almost eight hundred African American men served as state legislators around the South, with African Americans at one time making up a majority in the South Carolina House of Representatives.[10]

African American officeholders came from diverse backgrounds. Many had been born free or had gained their freedom before the Civil War. Many free African Americans, particularly those in South Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana, were wealthy and well educated, two facts that distinguished them from much of the white population both before and after the Civil War. Some, like Antoine Dubuclet of Louisiana and William Breedlove from Virginia, owned enslaved laborers before the Civil War. Others had helped enslaved people escape or taught them to read, like Georgia's James D. Porter.



Figure 14.5. The era of Reconstruction witnessed a few moments of true progress. One of those was the election of African Americans to local, state, and national offices, including both houses of Congress. Pictured here are Hiram Revels (the first African American Senator) alongside six Black representatives, all from the former Confederate states. Currier & Ives, *First Colored Senator and Representatives in the 41st and 42nd Congresses of the United States*, 1872. Library of Congress.

Most African American officeholders, however, gained their freedom during the war. Among them were skilled craftsmen like Emanuel Fortune, a shoemaker from Florida; ministers such as James D. Lynch from Mississippi; and teachers like William V. Turner from Alabama. Moving into political office was a natural continuation of the leadership roles they had held in their former communities.

By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, more than two thousand African American men had served in offices ranging from local levee commissioner to US senator.[11] When the end of Reconstruction returned white Democrats to power in the South, all but a few African American officeholders lost their positions. After Reconstruction, African Americans did not enter the political arena again in large numbers until well into the twentieth century.

III. The Meaning of Black Freedom

Land was one of the major desires of the freedpeople. Frustrated by responsibility for the growing numbers of freedpeople following his troops, General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15 in January 1865, in which land in Georgia and South Carolina was to be set aside as a homestead for them. Sherman lacked the authority to confiscate and distribute land, so this plan never fully took effect.[12] One of the main purposes of the federal government's Reconstruction-era Freedmen's Bureau, however, was to redistribute land to formerly enslaved people that had been abandoned and confiscated by the federal government. Even these land grants were short lived. In 1866, land that ex-Confederates had left behind was reinstated to them.

Freedpeople's hopes of land reform were unceremoniously dashed as Freedmen's Bureau agents held meetings with them throughout the South, telling them the promise of land was not going to be honored and that instead they should plan to go back to work for their former enslaver as wage laborers. The policy reversal came as quite a shock. In one instance, Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner General Oliver O. Howard went to Edisto Island to inform the Black population there of the policy change. The Black commission's response was that "we were promised Homesteads by the government. . . . You ask us to forgive the land owners of our island. . . . The man who tied me to a tree and gave me 39 lashes and who stripped and flogged my mother and my sister . . . that man I cannot well forgive. Does it look as if he has forgiven me, seeing how he tries to keep me in a condition of helplessness?"[13]

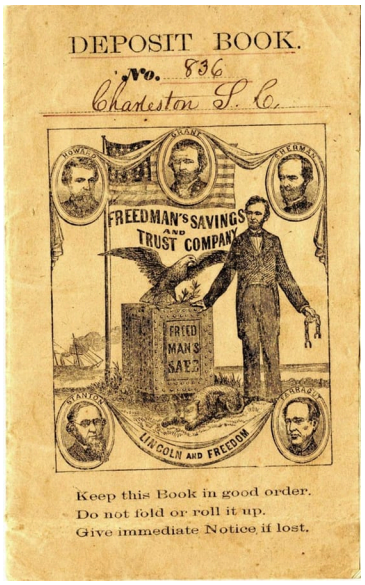


Figure 14.6. Freedman's Savings and Trust Company deposit book cover with image of President Abraham Lincoln. Courtesy of Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, College of Charleston Libraries. Smithsonian Museum of African American History.

In working to ensure that crops would be harvested, agents sometimes coerced formerly enslaved people into signing contracts with their former enslavers. However, the bureau also instituted courts where African Americans could seek redress if their employers were abusing them or not paying them. The last ember of hope for land redistribution was extinguished when Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner's proposed land reform bills were tabled in Congress. Radicalism had its limits, and the Republican Party's commitment to national economic stability eclipsed their interest in racial justice.

White Republicans' waning commitments to both racial and economic justice were reflected in the rise and collapse of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, also known as the Freedman's Bank. The Freedman's Bank was established on March 3, 1865, as a savings bank for "persons heretofore held in slavery, or their descendants."[14] Founded by white abolitionist and minister John Alvord, the Freedman's Bank represented Republicans' goals of helping formerly enslaved people develop habits of saving and "thrift," by encouraging them to open accounts, deposit their savings, and grow their wealth. At its height, the bank had over 70,000 depositors across 37 branches who had collectively deposited approximately $57 million in their bank accounts. The bank had a sprawling footprint, establishing branches in Northern cities such as New York and Philadelphia, and in the former Confederate South, in cities with large Black populations such as Jacksonville, New Orleans, and St. Louis. Despite the bank's benevolent foundations of serving the nation's freedpeople, the white trustees had different goals. The trustees and administrators, a veritable who's who of white Republicans, began the practice of making illegal loans to themselves and their business partners. Once Congress approved of amending the bank's charter in 1870, allowing the trustees to operate the bank not as a savings bank but as a commercial bank, the trustees began allowing borrowers to receive loans. By the summer of 1874, the bank had approximately $3.5 million in outstanding loans, the vast majority of which was borrowed by white people who lived in and around Washington, DC. Despite the bank's popularity both with Black depositors and white borrowers, by early 1874, the bank was on the verge of collapse. The trustees then asked Frederick Douglass to be the bank's president mere months before Congress mandated that the bank cease operations. Douglass accepted the position in March 1874. When the bank ceased operations in July 1874, the 61,144 depositors still had $2.9 million left in their accounts.[15] Though members of Congress held hearings and heard the testimonies of trustees and depositors, no one was held to account for the bank's failure. Freedpeople had no recourse and were left to pick up the pieces of their shattered trust.

Another aspect of the pursuit of freedom was the reconstitution of families. Many freedpeople immediately left plantations in search of family members who had been sold away. Newspaper ads sought information about long-lost relatives. People placed these ads until the turn of the twentieth century, demonstrating the enduring pursuit of family reunification. Freedpeople sought to gain control over their own children or other children who had been apprenticed to white masters either during the war or as a result of the Black Codes. Above all, freedpeople wanted freedom to control their families.[16]

Many freedpeople rushed to solemnize unions with formal wedding ceremonies. Black people's desires to marry fit the government's goal to make free Black men responsible for their own households and to prevent Black women and children from becoming dependent on the government.

Freedpeople placed a great emphasis on education for their children and themselves, and the Freedmen's Bureau helped establish schools across the South. For many, the ability to finally read the Bible for themselves induced work-weary men and women to spend all evening or Sunday attending night school or Sunday school classes. It was not uncommon to find a one-room school with more than fifty students ranging in age from three to eighty. As Booker T. Washington famously described the situation, "It was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn."[17]

Many churches served as schoolhouses and as a result became central to the freedom struggle. Free and freed Black Southerners carried well-formed political and organizational skills into freedom. They developed antiracist politics and organizational skills through antislavery organizations turned church associations. Liberated from white-controlled churches, Black Americans remade their religious worlds according to their own social and spiritual desires.[18]

One of the more marked transformations that took place after emancipation was the proliferation of independent Black churches and church associations. In the 1930s, nearly 40 percent of 663 Black churches surveyed had their organizational roots in the postemancipation era.[19] Many independent Black churches emerged in the rural areas, and most of them had never been affiliated with white churches.

Many of these independent churches were quickly organized into regional, state, and even national associations, often by brigades of free Black Northerners and Midwesterners who went to the South to help the freedpeople. Through associations like the Virginia Baptist State Convention and the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention, Baptists became the fastest growing postemancipation denomination, building on their antislavery associational roots and carrying on the struggle for Black political participation.[20]

Tensions between Northerners and Southerners over styles of worship and educational requirements strained these associations. Southern, rural Black churches preferred worship services with more emphasis on inspired preaching, while urban Black Northerners favored more orderly worship and an educated ministry.

Perhaps the most significant internal transformation in churches had to do with the role of women, a situation that eventually would lead to the development of independent women's conventions in Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. Women like Nannie Helen Burroughs and Virginia Broughton, leaders of the Baptist Woman's Convention, worked to protect Black women from sexual violence by white men. Black representatives repeatedly articulated this concern in state constitutional conventions early in the Reconstruction era. In churches, women continued to fight for equal treatment and access to the pulpit as preachers, even though they were already able to vote in church meetings.[21]

Black churches provided centralized leadership and organization in postemancipation communities. Many political leaders and officeholders were ministers. Churches were often the largest buildings in town and served as community centers. Access to pulpits and growing congregations provided a foundation for ministers' political leadership. Groups like the Union League, militias, and fraternal organizations all used the regalia, ritual, and even hymns of churches to inform and shape their practice.

Black churches provided space for conflict over gender roles, cultural values, practices, norms, and political engagement. With the rise of Jim Crow, Black churches would enter a new phase of negotiating relationships within the community and the wider world.

IV. Reconstruction and Women

Reconstruction involved more than the meaning of emancipation. Women also sought to redefine their roles within the nation and in their local communities. The abolitionist and women's rights movements simultaneously converged and began to clash. In the South, both Black and white women struggled to make sense of a world of death and change. In Reconstruction, leading women's rights advocate Elizabeth Cady Stanton saw an unprecedented opportunity for disenfranchised groups. Women, as well as Black Americans, North and South, could seize political rights. Stanton formed the Women's Loyal National League in 1863, which petitioned Congress for a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery.[22] The Thirteenth Amendment marked a victory not only for the antislavery cause but also for the Loyal League, proving women's political efficacy and the possibility for radical change. Now, as Congress debated the meanings of freedom, equality, and citizenship for formerly enslaved people, women's rights leaders saw an opening to advance transformations in women's status, too. On May 10, 1866, just one year after the war, the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention met in New York City to discuss what many agreed was an extraordinary moment, full of promise for fundamental social change. Elizabeth Cady Stanton presided over the meeting. Also in attendance were prominent abolitionists with whom Stanton and other women's rights leaders had joined forces in the years leading up to the war. Addressing this crowd of social reformers, Stanton captured the radical spirit of the hour: "Now in the reconstruction," she declared, "is the opportunity, perhaps for the century, to base our government on the broad principle of equal rights for

all."[23] Stanton chose her universal language—"equal rights for all"—with intention, setting an agenda of universal suffrage. Thus, in 1866, the National Women's Rights Convention officially merged with the American Anti-Slavery Society to form the American Equal Rights Association (AERA). This union marked the culmination of the long-standing partnership between abolitionists and women's rights advocates.

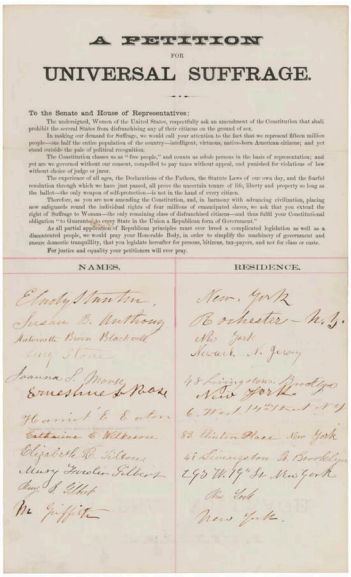


Figure 14.7. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton maintained a strong and productive relationship for nearly half a century as they sought to secure political rights for women. While the fight for women's rights stalled during the war, it sprung back to life as Anthony, Stanton, and others formed the American Equal Rights Association. [Elizabeth Cady Stanton, seated, and Susan B. Anthony, standing, three-quarter length portrait], between 1880 and 1902. Library of Congress.

The AERA was split over whether Black male suffrage should take precedence over universal suffrage, given the political climate of the South. Some worried that political support for freedmen would be undermined by the pursuit of women's suffrage. For example, AERA member Frederick Douglass insisted that the ballot was literally a "question of life and death" for Southern Black men, but not for women.[24] Some African American women challenged white suffragists in other ways. Frances Harper, for example, a freeborn Black woman living in Ohio, urged them to consider their own privilege as white and middle class. Universal suffrage, she argued, would not so clearly address the complex difficulties posed by racial, economic, and gender inequality.[25]

These divisions came to a head early in 1867, as the AERA organized a campaign in Kansas to determine the fate of Black and women's suffrage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her partner in the movement, Susan B. Anthony, made the journey to advocate for universal suffrage. Yet they soon realized that their allies were distancing themselves from women's suffrage in order to advance Black enfranchisement. Disheartened, Stanton and Anthony allied instead with white supremacists who supported women's equality. Many fellow activists were dismayed by Stanton's and Anthony's willingness to appeal to racism to advance their cause.[26]

These tensions finally erupted over conflicting views of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Women's rights leaders vigorously protested the Fourteenth Amendment. Although it established national citizenship for all persons born or naturalized in the United States, the amendment also introduced the word male into the Constitution for the first time. After the Fifteenth Amendment ignored sex as an unlawful barrier to suffrage, an omission that appalled Stanton, the AERA officially dissolved. Stanton and Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), while suffragists who supported the Fifteenth Amendment, regardless of its limitations, founded the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA).



A PETITION
FOR
UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

NAMES. RESIDENCE.

Figure 14.8. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the great women's rights and abolition activist, was one of the strongest forces in the universal suffrage movement. Her name can be seen at the top of this petition to extend suffrage to all regardless of sex, which was presented to Congress on January 29, 1866. It did not pass, and women would not gain the vote for more than half a century after Stanton and others signed this petition. Petition of E. Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, and Others Asking for an Amendment of the Constitution that Shall Prohibit the Several States from Disfranchising Any of Their Citizens on the Ground of Sex, 1865. National Archives and Records Administration.

The NWSA soon rallied around a new strategy: the New Departure. This new approach interpreted the Constitution as already guaranteeing women the right to vote. They argued that by nationalizing citizenship for all people and protecting all rights of citizens—including the right to vote—the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteed women's suffrage. Broadcasting the New Departure, the NWSA encouraged women to register to vote, which roughly seven hundred did between 1868 and 1872. Susan B. Anthony was one of them, and was arrested but then acquitted in trial. In 1875, the Supreme Court addressed this constitutional argument, acknowledging women's citizenship but arguing that suffrage was not a right guaranteed to all citizens. This ruling not only defeated the New Departure but also coincided with the Court's broader reactionary interpretation of the Reconstruction amendments that significantly limited freedpeople's rights. Following this defeat, many suffragists like Stanton increasingly replaced the ideal of universal suffrage with arguments about the virtue that white women would bring to the polls. These new arguments often hinged on racism and declared the necessity of white women voters to keep Black men in check.[27]

Advocates for women's suffrage were largely confined to the North, but Southern women were experiencing social transformations as well. Moreover, during the war, Southern white women had been called on to do traditional men's work, chopping wood and managing businesses. While white Southern women decided whether and how to return to their prior status, African American women embraced new freedoms and a redefinition of womanhood.

The Civil War showed white women, especially upper-class women, life without their husbands' protection. Many did not like what they saw, especially given the possibility of racial equality. Formerly wealthy women hoped to maintain their social status by rebuilding the prewar social hierarchy. Through Ladies' Memorial Associations (LMAs) and other civic groups, Southern women led the efforts to bury and memorialize the dead, praising and bolstering their men's masculinity through nationalist speeches and memorials. LMAs grew out of the Soldiers' Aid Society and became the precursor and custodian of the Lost Cause narrative. Proponents of the Lost Cause tried to rewrite the history of the antebellum South to deemphasize the brutality of slavery. They also created the myth that the Civil War was fought over states' rights instead of slavery, which was the actual cause. LMAs and their ceremonies created new holidays during which white Southerners could reaffirm their allegiance to the Confederacy and express their opposition to Black rights. For instance, some LMAs celebrated the anniversary of Stonewall Jackson's death on May 10.[28] Through these activities, Southern women took on political roles in the South.

Southern Black women also sought to redefine their public and private lives. Their efforts to control their labor met the immediate opposition of Southern white women. Gertrude Clanton, a plantation mistress before the war, disliked cooking and washing dishes, so she hired an African American woman to do the washing. A misunderstanding quickly developed. The laundress, nameless in Gertrude's records, performed her job and returned home. Gertrude believed that her money had purchased a day's labor, not just the load of washing, and she became quite frustrated. Meanwhile, this washerwoman and others like her set wages and hours for themselves, and in many cases began to take washing into their own homes in order to avoid the surveillance of white women

and the sexual threat posed by white men.[29]

Similar conflicts raged across the South. White Southerners demanded that African American women work in the plantation home and instituted apprenticeship systems to place African American children in unpaid labor positions. African American women combated these attempts by refusing to work at jobs without fair pay or fair conditions and by clinging tightly to their children.

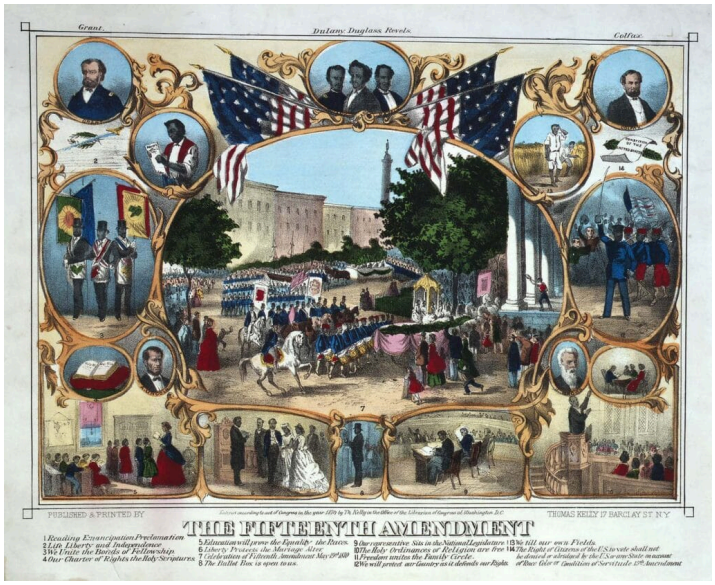


Figure 14.9. The Fifteenth Amendment prohibited discrimination in voting rights on the basis of race, color, or previous status (i.e. slavery). While the amendment was not all-encompassing in that women were not included, it was an extremely significant ruling in affirming the liberties of African American men. This print depicts a huge parade held in Baltimore, Maryland, on May 19, 1870, surrounded by portraits of abolitionists and scenes of African Americans exercising their rights. Thomas Kelly after James C. Beard, The 15th Amendment. Celebrated May 19th 1870, 1870. Library of Congress.

Like white LMA members, African American women formed clubs to bury their dead, celebrate African American masculinity, and provide aid to their communities. On May 1, 1865, African Americans in Charleston created the precursor to the modern Memorial Day holiday by mourning the Union dead buried hastily on a racetrack turned prison.[30] Like their white counterparts, the three hundred African American women who participated had been members of the local Patriotic Association, which aided freedpeople during the war. African American women continued participating in federal Decoration Day ceremonies and, later, formed their own club organizations. Racial violence, whether city riots or rural vigilantes, continued to threaten these vulnerable households. Nevertheless, the formation and preservation of African American households became a paramount goal for African American women.

White and Black Southern women faced parallel but distinct challenges during Reconstruction. Southern women, both white and Black, celebrated the return of their brothers, husbands, and sons, but couples separated for many years by war and enslavement struggled to adjust. To make matters worse, many men returned with physical or mental wounds for war and slavery. For white families, suicide and divorce became more acceptable, while the opposite occurred for Black families. Since the entire South suffered from economic devastation, many families were impoverished and sank into debt. All Southern women faced economic devastation, lasting wartime trauma, and enduring racial tensions.

V. Racial Violence in Reconstruction

Violence shattered the dream of biracial democracy. Still steeped in the violence of slavery, white Southerners could scarcely imagine Black free labor. Congressional investigator Carl Schurz reported that in the summer of 1865, Southerners shared a near unanimous sentiment: “You cannot make the negro work, without physical compulsion.”[31] Violence had been used in the antebellum period to enforce slave labor and to define racial difference. In the postemancipation period, it was used to stifle Black advancement and return to the old order.

Much of life in the antebellum South had been premised on slavery. The social order rested on a subjugated underclass, and the labor system required unfree laborers. A notion of white supremacy and Black inferiority undergirded it all. White people were understood as fit for freedom and citizenship, Black people for chattel slave labor. The Confederate surrender at Appomattox

Court House and the subsequent adoption by the US Congress of the Thirteenth Amendment destroyed the institution of American slavery and threw Southern society into disarray. The foundation of Southern society had been shaken, but Southern whites used Black Codes and racial terrorism to reassert control over formerly enslaved people.

Racial violence in the Reconstruction period took three major forms: riots against Black political authority, interpersonal fights, and organized vigilante groups. There were riots in Southern cities several times during Reconstruction. The most notable were the riots in Memphis and New Orleans in 1866, but other large-scale urban conflicts erupted in places including Laurens, South Carolina, in 1870; Colfax, Louisiana, in 1873; New Orleans in 1874; Yazoo City, Mississippi, in 1875; and Hamburg, South Carolina, in 1876. Southern cities grew rapidly after the war as migrants from the countryside—particularly freedpeople—flocked to urban centers. Cities became centers of Republican control. But white conservatives chafed at the influx of Black residents and the establishment of biracial politics. In nearly every conflict, white conservatives initiated violence in reaction to Republican rallies or conventions or elections in which Black men were to vote. The death tolls of these conflicts remain incalculable, and victims were overwhelmingly Black.



Figure 14.10. The Ku Klux Klan was just one of a number of vigilante groups that arose after the war to terrorize African Americans and Republicans throughout the South. The KKK brought violence into the voting polls, the workplace, and — as seen in this Harper's Weekly print — the homes of Black Americans. Frank Bellew, Visit of the Ku-Klux,"1872. Wikimedia.

Even everyday violence between individuals disproportionally targeted African Americans during Reconstruction. African Americans gained citizenship rights like the ability to serve on juries as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment. But Southern white men were almost never prosecuted for violence against Black victims. White men beat or shot Black men with relative impunity, and did so over minor squabbles, labor disputes, long-standing grudges, and crimes of passion. These incidents sometimes were reported to local federal authorities like the army or the Freedmen's Bureau, but more often than not such violence was unreported and unprosecuted.[32]

The violence committed by organized vigilante groups, sometimes called nightriders or bushwhackers, was more often premeditated. Groups of nightriders operated under cover of darkness and wore disguises to curtail Black political involvement. Nightriders harassed and killed Black candidates and officeholders and frightened voters away from the polls. They also aimed to limit Black economic mobility by terrorizing freedpeople who tried to purchase land or otherwise become too independent from the white enslavers they used to rely on. They were terrorists and vigilantes, determined to stop the erosion of the antebellum South, and they were widespread and numerous, operating throughout the South. The Ku Klux Klan emerged in the late 1860s as the most infamous of these groups.

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was organized in 1866 in Pulaski, Tennessee, and had spread to nearly every state of the former Confederacy by 1868. The KKK drew heavily from the antebellum Southern elite, but Klan groups sometimes overlapped with criminal gangs or former Confederate guerrilla groups. The Klan's reputation became so potent, and its violence so widespread, that many groups not formally associated with it were called Ku Kluxers, and to "Ku Klux" meant to commit vigilante violence. While it is difficult to differentiate KKK actions from those of similar groups, such as the White Line, the Knights of the White Camellia, and the White Brotherhood, the distinctions hardly matter. All such groups were part of a web of terror that spread throughout the South during Reconstruction. In Panola County, Mississippi, between August 1870 and December 1872, twenty-

four KKK-style murders occurred. And nearby, in Lafayette County, Klansmen drowned thirty Black Mississippians in a single mass murder. Sometimes the violence was aimed at Black men or women who had tried to buy land or dared to be insolent toward a white Southerner. Other times, as with the beating of Republican sheriff and tax collector Allen Huggins, the KKK targeted white politicians who supported freedpeople's civil rights. Numerous Republican politicians, perhaps dozens, were killed, either while in office or while campaigning. Thousands of individual citizens, men and women, white and Black, had their homes raided and were whipped, raped, or murdered.[33]

The federal government responded to Southern paramilitary tactics by passing the Enforcement Acts between 1870 and 1871. The acts made it criminal to deprive African Americans of their civil rights. The acts also deemed violent Klan behavior as acts of rebellion against the United States and allowed for the use of US troops to protect freedpeople. For a time, the federal government, its courts, and its troops, sought to put an end to the KKK and related groups. But the violence continued. By 1876, as Southern Democrats reestablished "home rule" and "redeemed" the South from Republicans, federal opposition to the KKK weakened. National attention shifted away from the South and the activities of the Klan, but African Americans remained trapped in a world of white supremacy that restricted their economic, social, and political rights.

White conservatives would assert that Republicans, in denouncing violence, were "waving a bloody shirt" for political opportunity. The violence, according to many white conservatives, was fabricated, or not as bad as it was claimed, or an unavoidable consequence of the enfranchisement of African Americans. On December 22, 1871, R. Latham of Yorkville, South Carolina, wrote to the New York Tribune, voicing the beliefs of many white Southerners as he declared that "the same principle that prompted the white men at Boston, disguised as Indians, to board, during the darkness of night, a vessel with tea, and throw her cargo into the Bay, clothed some of our people in Ku Klux gowns, and sent them out on missions technically illegal. Did the Ku Klux do wrong? You are ready to say they did and we will not argue the point with you. . . . Under the peculiar circumstances what could the people of South Carolina do but resort to Ku Kluxing?"[34]

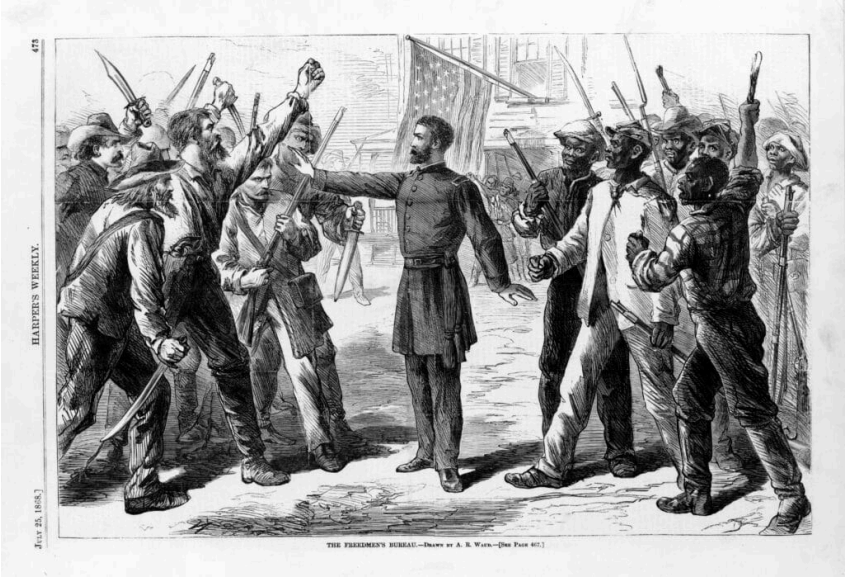


Figure 14.11. The federal government created the Freedmen's Bureau to assist freed people in securing their rights and their livelihoods. In this Harper's Weekly print, The Freedmen's Bureau official protecting the Black men and women from the angry and riotous mob of white Americans stood as a representation of the entire Bureau. Soon the Bureau and the federal government would recognize that they could not accomplish a fraction of what they set out to do, including keeping African Americans safe and free in the South. Alfred R. Waud, *The Freedmen's Bureau*, 1868. Library of Congress.

Victims and witnesses to the violence told a different story. Sallie Adkins of Warren County, Georgia, was traveling with her husband, Joseph, a Georgia state senator, when he was assassinated by Klansmen on May 10, 1869. She wrote President Ulysses S. Grant, asking for both physical protection and justice. "I am no Statesman," she disclaimed; "I am only a poor woman whose husband has been murdered for his devotion to his country. I may have very foolish ideas of Government, States & Constitutions. But I feel that I have claims upon my country. The Rebels imprisoned my Husband. Pardoned Rebels murdered him. There is no law for the punishment of them who do deeds of this sort. . . . I demand that you, President Grant, keep the pledge you made the nation—make it safe for any man to utter boldly and openly his devotion to the United States."[35]

The political and social consequences of the violence were as lasting as the physical and mental trauma suffered by victims and

witnesses. Terrorism worked to end federal involvement in Reconstruction and helped to usher in a new era of racial repression.

African Americans actively sought ways to shed the vestiges of slavery. Many discarded the names their former enslavers had chosen for them and adopted new names like “Freeman” and “Lincoln” that affirmed their new identities as free citizens. Others resettled far from their former plantations, hoping to eventually farm their own land or run their own businesses. By the end of Reconstruction, the desire for self-definition, economic independence, and racial pride coalesced in the founding of dozens of Black towns across the South. Perhaps the most well known of these towns was Mound Bayou, Mississippi, a Delta town established in 1887 by Isaiah Montgomery and Ben Green, formerly enslaved by Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his brother Joseph. Residents of the town took pride in the fact that African Americans owned all of the property in town, including banks, insurance companies, shops, and the surrounding farms. The town celebrated African American cultural and economic achievements during their annual festival, Mound Bayou Days. These tight-knit communities provided African Americans with spaces where they could live free from the indignities of segregation and the exploitation of sharecropping on white-owned plantations.[36]

VI. Economic Development During the Civil War and Reconstruction

The Civil War destroyed and then transformed the American economy. In 1859 and 1860, wealthy Southern planters were flush after producing record cotton crops. Southern prosperity relied on over four million enslaved African American to grow cotton, along with a number of other staple crops across the region. Cotton fed the textile mills of America and Europe and brought great wealth to the region. On the eve of war, the American South enjoyed more per capita wealth than any other slave economy in the New World. To their enslavers, these people constituted their most valuable assets, worth roughly $3 billion.[37] Yet this wealth obscured the gains in infrastructure, industrial production, and financial markets that occurred north of the Mason-Dixon Line, a fact that the war would unmask for all to see.

In contrast to the slave South, Northerners praised their region as a land of free labor, populated by farmers, merchants, and wage laborers. It was also home to a robust market economy. By 1860, Northerners could buy clothing made in a New England factory, or light their homes with kerosene oil from Pennsylvania. The Midwest produced seas of grain that fed the country, with enough left over for export to Europe. Farther west, mining and agriculture were the mainstays of life. Along with the textile mills, shoe factories, and iron foundries, the firms that produced McCormick’s wheat harvesters and Colt’s firearms displayed the technical advances of Northern manufacturers. Their goods crisscrossed the country on the North’s growing railroad network. An extensive network of banks and financial markets helped aggregate capital that could be reinvested into further growth.

The Civil War, like all wars, interrupted the rhythms of commercial life by destroying lives and property. This was especially true in the South. From 1861 onward, the Confederate government struggled to find the guns, food, and supplies needed to field an army. Southerners did make astonishing gains in industrial production during this time, but it was never enough. The Union’s blockade of the Atlantic prevented the Confederacy from financing the war with cotton sales to Europe. To pay their troops and keep the economy alive, the Confederate Congress turned to printing paper money that quickly sank in value and led to rapid inflation. In many cases, Confederate officials dispensed with taxes paid in cash and simply impressed the food and materials needed from their citizens. Perhaps most striking of all, in the vast agricultural wealth of the South, many Southerners struggled to find enough to eat.



Figure 14.12. George N. Barnard, City of Atlanta, Ga., no. 1, c. 1866. Library of Congress.

The war also pushed the US government to take unprecedented steps. In late 1861, Congress created the nation's first fiat currency, called greenbacks. Congress raised tariffs and passed the first national income tax in 1862, and in 1863, created the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency to regulate the national banking system. At first, the expansion of the currency and the rapid rise in government spending created an uptick in business in 1862–1863. As the war dragged on, inflation also hit the North. Workers demanded higher wages to pay rents and buy necessities, while the business community groaned under their growing tax burden. The United States, however, never embarked on a policy of impressment for food and supplies. The factories and farms of the North successfully supplied Union troops, while the federal government, with some adjustments, found the means to pay for the war.

None of this is to suggest that the North's superior ability to supply its war machine made the outcome of the war inevitable. Any account of the war must consider the tangled web of politics, battles, and economics that occurred between 1861 and 1865. But the aftermath of the war left portions of the Confederacy in ruins. State governments were mired in debt. White planters had most of their capital tied up in enslaved laborers and so lost most of their wealth. Cotton remained the most significant crop, but the war changed how it was grown and sold. Planters broke up large farms into smaller plots tended by single families in exchange for a portion of the crop, a system called sharecropping. Once cotton production resumed, Americans found that their cotton now competed with new cotton plantations around the world. For the South as a whole, the war and Reconstruction marked the start of a period of deep poverty that would last until at least the New Deal of the 1930s.



Figure 14.13. War brought destruction across the South. Governmental and private buildings, communication systems, the economy, and transportation infrastructure were all debilitated. [Richmond, Va. Crippled locomotive, Richmond & Petersburg Railroad depot], c. 1865. Library of Congress.

Emancipation was the single most important economic, social, and political outcome of the war. Freedom empowered African Americans in the South to rebuild families, make contracts, hold property, and move freely for the first time. Republicans in the South attempted to transform the region into a free-labor economy like the North. Yet the transition from slave labor to free labor was never so clear. Well into the twentieth century, white Southerners used a combination of legal coercion and extralegal violence to maintain systems of bound labor. Vagrancy laws enabled law enforcement to justify the arrest of innocent Black men and women, and the convict-lease system meant that arbitrary arrests often resulted in decades of forced, uncompensated labor. But this new form of servitude, which continued until World War II, was only the most extreme example of an array of economic injustices. In the later nineteenth century, poor whites would form mobs and go "white-capping" to scare away Black job seekers.[38] Lacking the means to buy their own farms, Black farmers often turned to sharecropping, which often led to cycles of debt that kept families bound to the land.[39]

Victory did not produce a sudden economic boom for the rest of the United States, either. The North would not regain its prewar pace of industrial and commodity output until the 1870s. But the war did prove beneficial to wealthy Northern farmers who could afford new technologies. Wartime labor shortages promoted the use of mechanical reapers, reducing demand for labor, boosting farm yields, and sowing the seeds of inequality.

Wartime laws also transformed the relationship between the federal government and the American economy. New tariff laws sheltered Northern industry from European competition. The Morrill Land Grant helped create colleges such as the University of California, the University of Illinois, and the University of Wisconsin. With the creation of the national banking system and greenbacks, Congress replaced hundreds of state bank notes with a system of federal currency that accelerated trade and exchange. This was not to say that Republican policy worked for everyone. The Homestead Act, meant to open the West to small farmers, was often frustrated by railroad corporations and speculators. The Transcontinental Railroad, launched during the war, failed to produce substantial economic gains for years.

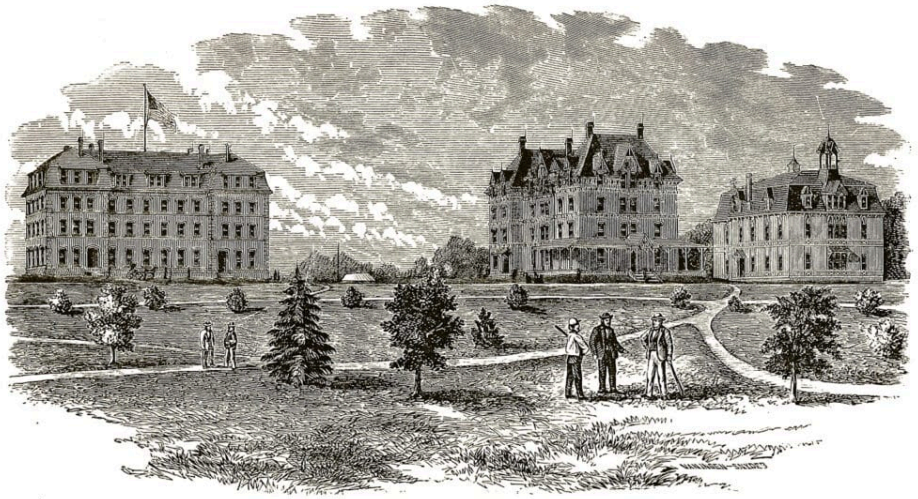


Figure 14.14. Massachusetts Agricultural College (now known as the University of Massachusetts Amherst) was one of many colleges founded through the Federal Morrill-Land Grant Colleges Act. Massachusetts Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass. 1879, 1880. Wikimedia.

The war years forged a close relationship between government and the business elite, a relationship that sometimes resulted in corruption and catastrophe, as it did when markets crashed on Black Friday, September 24, 1869. This new relationship created a political backlash, especially in the West and South, against Washington's perceived Eastern and industrial bias. Conflicts over emancipation and civil rights quickly gave way to long political conflict over the direction of American economic development.

VII. Reconstruction and the West

The end of the Civil War brought new violence to the West, as the United States devoted increased resources toward dispossessing Indigenous people. Groups like the Utes and Paiutes were pushed out of the Rocky Mountains by US expansion into Colorado and away from the northern Great Basin by the expanding Mormon population in Utah Territory in the 1850s and 1860s. Faced with a shrinking territorial base, members of these two groups often joined the US military in its campaigns in the southwest against other powerful Native groups like the Hopi, the Zuni, the Jicarilla Apache, and especially the Navajo, whose population of at least ten thousand engaged in both farming and sheep herding on some of the most valuable lands acquired by the United States after the Mexican War.

Conflicts between the US military, American settlers, and Native nations increased throughout the 1850s. By 1862, General James Carleton began searching for a reservation where he could remove the Navajo and end their threat to US expansion in the Southwest. Carleton selected a dry, almost treeless site in the Bosque Redondo Valley, three hundred miles from the Navajo homeland. In April 1863, Carleton gave orders to Colonel Kit Carson to round up the entire Navajo population and escort them to Bosque Redondo. Those who resisted would be shot. Thus began a period of Navajo history called the Long Walk, which remains deeply important to Navajo people today. The Long Walk was not a single event but a series of forced marches to the reservation at Bosque Redondo between August 1863 and December 1866. Conditions at Bosque Redondo were horrible. Provisions provided by the US Army were not only inadequate but often spoiled; disease was rampant, and thousands of Navajos died.

By 1868, it had become clear that life at the reservation was unsustainable. General William Tecumseh Sherman visited the reservation and wrote of the inhumane situation in which the Navajo were essentially kept as prisoners, but the lack of cost-effectiveness was the main reason Sherman recommended that the Navajo be returned to their homeland in the West. On June 1, 1868, the Navajo signed the Treaty of Bosque Redondo, an unprecedented treaty in the history of US-Native relations in which the Navajo were able to return from the reservation to their homeland.

The treaties that had been signed with numerous Native nations in California in the 1850s were never ratified by the Senate. Over one hundred distinct Native groups lived in California before the Spanish and American conquests, but by 1880, the Native population of California had collapsed from about 150,000 on the eve of the Gold Rush to a little less than 20,000. A few reservation areas were eventually set up by the US government to collect what remained of the Native population, but most were dispersed throughout California. This was partly the result of state laws from the 1850s that allowed white Californians to obtain both Native children and adults as "apprentice" laborers by merely bringing the desired laborer before a judge and promising to

feed, clothe, and eventually release them after a period of "service" that ranged from ten to twenty years. Thousands of California's Natives were thus pressed into a form of slave labor that supported the growing mining, agricultural, railroad, and cattle industries.

As settler incursions continued to provoke conflict, Americans pushed for a new "peace policy." Congress, confronted with these tragedies and further violence, authorized in 1868 the creation of an Indian Peace Commission. The commission's study of Native Americans decried prior American policy and galvanized support for reformers. After the inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant the following spring, Congress allied with prominent philanthropists to create the Board of Indian Commissioners, a permanent advisory body to oversee Indigenous affairs and prevent the further outbreak of violence. The board effectively Christianized American Indian policy. Much of the reservation system was handed over to Protestant churches, which were tasked with finding agents and missionaries to manage reservation life. Congress hoped that religiously minded men might fare better at creating just assimilation policies and persuading Native Americans to accept them. Historian Francis Paul Prucha believed that this attempt at a new "peace policy . . . might just have properly been labelled the 'religious policy.'"[40]

Many female Christian missionaries played a central role in cultural reeducation programs that attempted to not only instill Protestant religion but also impose traditional American gender roles and family structures. They endeavored to replace Indigenous peoples' tribal social units with small, patriarchal households. Women's labor became a contentious issue because few tribes divided labor according to the gender norms of middle- and upper-class Americans. Fieldwork, the traditional domain of white males, was primarily performed by Native women, who also usually controlled the products of their labor, if not the land that was worked, giving them status in society as laborers and food providers. For missionaries, the goal was to get Native women to leave the fields and engage in more proper "women's" work—housework. Christian missionaries performed much as secular federal agents had. Few American agents could meet Native Americans on their own terms. Most Americans viewed Indigenous peoples on reservations as lazy and thought of Indigenous cultures as inferior to their own. The views of J. L. Broaddus, appointed to oversee several small tribes on the Hoopa Valley reservation in California, are illustrative: in his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1875, he wrote, "The great majority of them are idle, listless, careless, and improvident. They seem to take no thought about provision for the future, and many of them would not work at all if they were not compelled to do so. They would rather live upon the roots and acorns gathered by their women than to work for flour and beef."[41]

VIII. The End of Reconstruction

Reconstruction ended when Northerners abandoned the cause of the formerly enslaved and Democrats recaptured Southern politics. Between 1868 and 1877, and especially after the Panic of 1873, economic issues supplanted Reconstruction as the foremost issue on the national agenda. The biggest threat to Republican power in the South had been the violence and intimidation of white Democrats. Only the presence of federal troops in key Southern cities prevented Reconstruction's overthrow. But the United States never committed the personnel required to restore order and guarantee Black Southerners the rights promised by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Republicans and Democrats responded to economic uncertainty by retreating from Reconstruction. War-weary from a decade of military and political strife, so-called Stalwart Republicans turned from the idealism of civil rights to the practicality of economics and party politics. They won particular influence during Ulysses S. Grant's first term as president (1868–1872). By the early 1870s, Stalwart Republicans assumed control of Republican Party politics.

Meanwhile, New Departure Democrats—who focused on business, economics, political corruption, and trade—gained strength by distancing themselves from proslavery Democrats and Copperheads. In the South, they were called Redeemers. White Southerners initially opposed the Redeemers and instead clung tightly to white supremacy and the Confederacy, but between 1869 and 1871, the Redeemers won support from white Southerners by promising local rule by white Democrats, rather than Black or white Republicans. By 1871, Redeemers won political control and overthrew Reconstruction in three important states: Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia.

In September 1873, Jay Cooke and Company declared bankruptcy, resulting in bank runs and closures that spiraled into a six-year depression. The Panic of 1873 crushed the nation's already suffering laboring class and destroyed whatever remaining idealism Northerners had about Reconstruction. In the South, where many farms were capitalized entirely through loans, sources of credit vanished, many landowners defaulted, and farmers entered an already oversaturated labor market. Wages plummeted and a growing system of debt peonage trapped workers in endless cycles of poverty. The economic turmoil enabled the Democrats to take control of the House of Representatives after the 1874 elections, blunting the legislature's capacity to any longer direct Reconstruction.

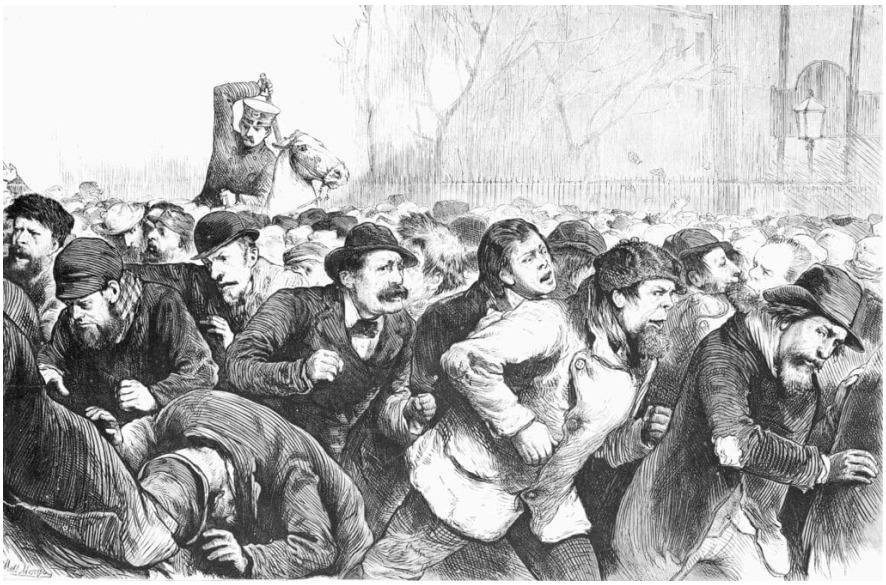


Figure 14.15. During the Panic of 1873, workers began demanding that the federal government help alleviate the strain on Americans. In January 1874, over 7,000 protesters congregated in New York City's Tompkins Square to insist the government make job creation a priority. They were met with brutality as police dispersed the crowd, and consequently the unemployment movement lost much of its steam. Matt Morgen, *The Red Flag in New York–Rioutous Communist Workmen Driven from the Tompkins Square by the Mounted Police, Tuesday, January 13th,* 1874. Library of Congress. Wikimedia.

On the eve of the 1876 presidential election, the nation still reeled from depression. Scandals sapped trust in the Grant Administration. By 1875, Democrats in Mississippi hatched the Mississippi Plan, a wave of violence designed to intimidate Black activists and suppress Black voters.[42] The state's Republican governor pleaded for federal intervention, but national Republicans ignored the plea. Meanwhile, Rutherford B. Hayes, a Republican, won a landslide victory in the Ohio gubernatorial election without mentioning Reconstruction, focusing instead on fighting corruption and alcohol abuse and promoting economic recovery. His success made him a potential presidential candidate. The stage was set for an election that would end Reconstruction as a national issue.

Republicans chose Rutherford B. Hayes as their nominee; Democrats chose Samuel J. Tilden, who ran on honest politics and home rule in the South. Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina would determine the president. Despite the enduring presence of Reconstruction in those states, white conservatives organized violence and fraud with impunity. With the election results contested, a federal special electoral commission voted along party lines—eight Republicans for, seven Democrats against—in favor of Hayes.

Democrats threatened to boycott Hayes's inauguration. Rival governments arose claiming to recognize Tilden as the rightfully elected president. Republicans, fearing another sectional crisis, reached out to Democrats. In what became known as the Compromise of 1877, Democrats conceded the presidency to Hayes on the condition that all remaining troops would be removed from the South, and the South would receive special economic favors. Hayes was inaugurated in March 1877. In April, the remaining troops were ordered out of the South. The compromise allowed Southern Democrats, no longer fearing reprisal from federal troops or Northern politicians for their flagrant violence and intimidation of Black voters, to return to power.

After 1877, Republicans no longer had the political capital—or political will—to intervene in the South in cases of violence and electoral fraud. In certain locations with large populations of African Americans, such as South Carolina, freedpeople continued to hold some local offices for several years. Yet, with its most revolutionary aims thwarted by 1868, and economic depression and political turmoil taking even its most modest promises off the table by the early 1870s, most of the promises of Reconstruction were unmet.

VIII. Conclusion

Reconstruction in the United States achieved Abraham Lincoln's paramount desire: the restoration of the Union. The war and its aftermath forever ended legal slavery in the United States, but African Americans remained second-class citizens, and women still struggled for full participation in the public life of the United States. The closing of Reconstruction saw North and South reunited behind the imperatives of economic growth and territorial expansion, rather than ensuring the full rights of its citizens.

From the ashes of civil war, a new nation faced fresh possibilities while enduring old problems.

Military District	State	Readmission	Conservative Takeover
District 1	Virginia	1870	1870
District 2	North Carolina	1868	1870
	South Carolina	1868	1877
District 3	Alabama	1868	1874
	Florida	1868	1877
	Georgia	1870	1871
District 4	Arkansas	1868	1874
	Mississippi	1870	1876
District 5	Texas	1870	1873
	Louisiana	1868	1877
None	Tennessee	1866	1869

Figure 14.16. Table. This table shows the military districts of the seceded states of the South, the date the state was readmitted into the Union, and the date when conservatives recaptured the state house.

IX. Primary Sources

1. Freedmen discuss post-emancipation life with General Sherman, 1865

Reconstruction began before the War ended. After his famous March to the Sea in January of 1865, General William T. Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton met with twenty of Savannah's African American religious leaders to discuss the future of the freedmen of the state of Georgia. In the excerpt below, Garrison Frazier, the chosen spokesman for the group, explains the importance of land for freedom. The result of this meeting was Sherman's famous Field Order 15, which set aside confiscated plantation lands along the coast from Charleston, S.C. to Jacksonville, FL. for Black land ownership. The policy would later be overruled and freedpeople would lose their right to the land.

2. Jourdon Anderson writes his former enslaver, 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 enslavers sought to maintain control over their formerly enslaved laborers through sharecropping contracts. P.H. Anderson of Tennessee was one such former enslaver. After the war, he contacted his formerly enslaved laborer Jourdon Anderson, offering him a job opportunity. The following is Jourdon Anderson's reply.

3. 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 formerly enslaved people. This excerpt from her diary explains her experiences during this time.

4. 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 enslaver.

5. 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.

6. A case of sexual violence during Reconstruction, 1866

These documents chronicle a case in the wider wave of violence that targeted people of color during Reconstruction. The first document includes Frances Thompson and Lucy Smith's testimony about their assault, rape, and robbery in 1866. The second document, demonstrates one way that white Southerners denied these claims. In 1876, Thompson was exposed for cross-dressing. For twenty years she successfully passed as a woman. Southerners trumpeted this case as evidence that widely documented cases of violence, sexual and otherwise, were fabricated.

7. 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.

8. Johnson and Reconstruction cartoon, 1866

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 Philips Sheridan bows to Louisiana Attorney General Andrew Herron in 1866, implying a defeat for Reconstruction. Click on the image for more information.

9. Fifteenth Amendment print, 1870

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.

X. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Justene Hill Edwards, with content contributions by Christopher Abernathy, Jeremiah Bauer, Lauren Brand, Michael T. Caires, Mari Crabtree, Chris Hayashida-Knight, Krista Kinslow, Brenda Lakhani, Lindsay Stallones Marshall, Ashley Mays, Keith McCall, Ryan Poe, Bradley Proctor, Emma Teitelman, Nicole Myers Turner, Caitlin Verboon, Caroline Wright, and Ben Wright.

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15: Capital and Labor



A Maryland National Guard unit fires upon strikers during the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Harper's Weekly, via Wikimedia

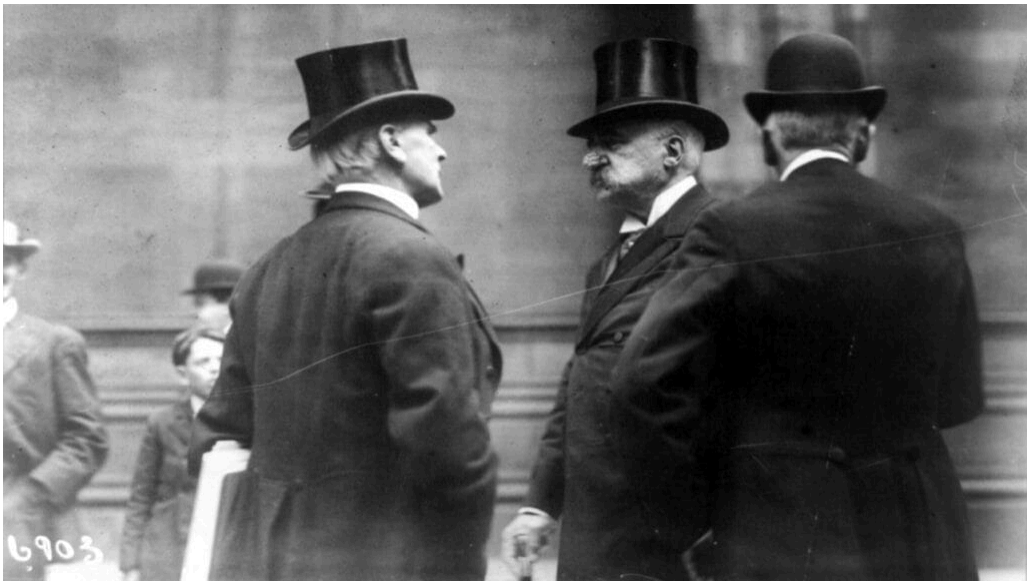
I. Introduction

The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 heralded a new era of labor conflict in the United States. That year, mired in the stagnant economy that followed the bursting of the railroads' financial bubble in 1873, rail lines slashed workers' wages (even, workers complained, as they reaped enormous government subsidies and paid shareholders lucrative stock dividends). Workers struck from Baltimore to St. Louis, shutting down railroad traffic—the nation's economic lifeblood—across the country.

Panicked business leaders and friendly political officials reacted quickly. When local police forces would not or could not suppress the strikes, governors called out state militias to break them and restore rail service. Many strikers destroyed rail property rather than allow militias to reopen the rails. The protests approached a class war. The governor of Maryland deployed the state's militia. In Baltimore, the militia fired into a crowd of striking workers, killing eleven and wounding many more. Strikes convulsed towns and cities across Pennsylvania. The head of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Thomas Andrew Scott, suggested that if workers were unhappy with their wages, they should be given "a rifle diet for a few days and see how they like that kind of bread."[1] Law enforcement in Pittsburgh refused to put down the protests, so the governor called out the state militia, which killed twenty strikers with bayonets and rifle fire. A month of chaos erupted. Strikers set fire to the city, destroying dozens of buildings, over a hundred engines, and over a thousand cars. In Reading, strikers destroyed rail property, and an angry crowd bombarded militiamen with rocks and bottles. The militia fired into the crowd, killing ten. A general strike erupted in St. Louis, and strikers seized rail depots and declared for the eight-hour day and the abolition of child labor. Federal troops and vigilantes fought their way into the depot, killing eighteen and breaking the strike. Rail lines were shut down all across neighboring Illinois, where coal miners struck in sympathy, tens of thousands gathered to protest under the aegis of the Workingmen's Party, and twenty protesters were killed in Chicago by special police and militiamen.

Courts, police, and state militias suppressed the strikes, but it was federal troops that finally defeated them. When Pennsylvania militiamen were unable to contain the strikes, federal troops stepped in. When militia in West Virginia refused to break the strike, federal troops broke it instead. On the orders of President Rutherford B. Hayes, American soldiers were deployed all across northern rail lines. Soldiers moved from town to town, suppressing protests and reopening the rail network. Six weeks after it had begun, the strike had been crushed. Nearly a hundred Americans died in "The Great Upheaval." Workers destroyed nearly $40 million worth of property. The strike galvanized the country. It convinced laborers of the need for institutionalized unions, persuaded businesses of the need for even greater political influence and government aid, and foretold a half century of labor conflict in the United States.[2]

II. The March of Capital



John Pierpont Morgan with two friends, ca.1907. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-92327

The greatest strikes first hit the railroads only because no other industry had so effectively marshaled together capital, government support, and bureaucratic management. National railroad mileage tripled in the twenty years after the outbreak of the Civil War, and tripled again over the four decades that followed. Railroads compelled the creation of uniform time zones across the country, gave industrialists access to remote markets, and opened the American West. Railroad companies were the nation's largest businesses. Their vast national operations demanded the creation of innovative new corporate organizational structures, advanced management techniques, and vast sums of capital. Their huge expenditures spurred countless industries and drew in droves of laborers. And as they crisscrossed the nation, they created a national market, a truly national economy, and, seemingly, a new national culture.[3]

The railroads were not natural creations. Their vast capital requirements required the use of incorporation, a legal innovation that protected shareholders from losses. Enormous amounts of government support followed. Federal, state, and local governments offered unrivaled handouts to create the national rail networks. Lincoln's Republican Party—which dominated government policy during the Civil War and Reconstruction—passed legislation granting vast subsidies. Hundreds of millions of acres of land and millions of dollars' worth of government bonds were freely given to build the great transcontinental railroads and the innumerable trunk lines that annihilated the vast geographic barriers that had so long sheltered American cities from one another.

Revolutions in American industry followed. Technological innovations and national investments slashed the costs of production and distribution. New administrative frameworks sustained the weight of vast firms. National credit agencies eased the uncertainties surrounding the rapid movement of capital among investors, manufacturers, and retailers. Plummeting transportation and communication costs opened new national media outlets, which advertising agencies used to nationalize various products.

Growing labor unrest accompanied the industrialization of the American economy. As railroad construction drove economic development, new means of production spawned new systems of labor. Many wage earners had traditionally seen factory work as a temporary stepping stone to attaining their own small businesses or farms. After the war, however, new technology and greater mechanization meant fewer and fewer American workers could legitimately aspire to economic independence. Many perceived their new powerlessness in the coming industrial order. Skills mattered less and less in an industrialized, mass-producing economy, and their strength as individuals seemed ever smaller and more insignificant as companies grew in size and power and managers grew flush with wealth and influence. Long hours, dangerous working conditions, and the difficulty of supporting a family on meager and unpredictable wages compelled armies of labor to organize and battle against the power of capital.

Stronger and more organized labor unions formed to fight on behalf of a growing, more permanent working class. At the same time, the growing scale of economic enterprises increasingly disconnected owners from their employees and day-to-day business operations. To handle their vast new operations, owners turned to managers. Educated bureaucrats swelled the ranks of an emerging middle class.

Industrialization, meanwhile, remade much of American life outside the workplace. Rapidly growing industrialized cities knit together urban consumers and rural producers into a single, integrated national market. Food production and consumption, for instance, were utterly nationalized. Chicago's stockyards seemingly tied it all together. Between 1866 and 1886, ranchers drove a million head of cattle annually overland from Texas ranches to railroad depots in Kansas for shipment by rail to Chicago. After traveling through modern "disassembly lines," the animals left the adjoining slaughterhouses as slabs of meat to be packed into refrigerated rail cars and sent to butcher shops across the continent. By 1885, a handful of large-scale industrial meatpackers in Chicago were producing nearly five hundred million pounds of "dressed" beef annually.[4] The new scale of industrialized meat production transformed the landscape. Buffalo herds, grasslands, and old-growth forests gave way to cattle, corn, and wheat. Chicago became the Gateway City, a crossroads connecting American agricultural goods, capital markets in New York and London, and consumers from all corners of the United States.

Technological innovation accompanied economic development. For April Fool's Day in 1878, the New York Daily Graphic published a fictitious interview with the celebrated inventor Thomas A. Edison. The piece described the "biggest invention of the age"—a new Edison machine that could create forty different kinds of food and drink out of only air, water, and dirt. "Meat will no longer be killed and vegetables no longer grown, except by savages," promised "Edison." The machine would end "famine and pauperism." And all for $5 or $6 per machine! The story was a joke, of course, but Edison nevertheless received inquiries from readers wondering when his food machine would be ready for the market. Americans had apparently witnessed such startling technological advances—advances that would have seemed far-fetched mere years earlier—that the Edison food machine seemed entirely plausible.[5]

In September 1878, Edison announced a new and ambitious line of research and development—electric power and lighting. The scientific principles behind dynamos and electric motors—the conversion of mechanical energy to electrical power, and vice versa—were long known, but Edison applied the age's bureaucratic and commercial ethos to the problem. Far from a lone inventor gripped by inspiration and toiling in isolation, Edison advanced the model of commercially minded management of research and development. Edison folded his two identities, business manager and inventor, together. He called his Menlo Park research laboratory an "invention factory" and promised to turn out "a minor invention every ten days and a big thing every six months or so." He brought Menlo Park, fully equipped, and his team of skilled machinists and scientists to bear on the problem of building an electric power system—and commercializing it.

By late fall 1879, Edison exhibited his system of power generation and electrical light for reporters and investors. Then he scaled up production. He sold generators to businesses. By the middle of 1883, Edison had overseen construction of 330 plants powering over sixty thousand lamps in factories, offices, printing houses, hotels, and theaters around the world. He convinced municipal officials to build central power stations and run power lines. New York's Pearl Street central station opened in September 1882 and powered a square mile of downtown Manhattan. Electricity revolutionized the world. It not only illuminated the night, it powered the Second Industrial Revolution. Factories could operate anywhere at any hour. Electric rail cars allowed for cities to build out, and electric elevators allowed for them to build up.



This print shows the four stages of pork packing in nineteenth-century Cincinnati. This centralization of production made meat-packing an innovative industry, one of great interest to industrialists of all ilks. In fact, this chromo-lithograph was exhibited by the Cincinnati Pork Packers' Association at the International Exposition in Vienna, Austria. "Pork Packing in Cincinnati," 1873. Wikimedia.

By the turn of the century, corporate leaders and wealthy industrialists embraced the new principles of scientific management, or Taylorism, after its noted proponent, Frederick Taylor. The precision of steel parts, the harnessing of electricity, the innovations of machine tools, and the mass markets wrought by the railroads offered new avenues for efficiency. To match the demands of the machine age, Taylor said, firms needed a scientific organization of production. He urged all manufacturers to increase efficiency by subdividing tasks. Rather than having thirty mechanics individually making thirty machines, for instance, a manufacturer could assign thirty laborers to perform thirty distinct tasks. Such a shift would not only make workers as interchangeable as the parts they were creating, it would also dramatically speed up the process of production. If managed by trained experts, specific tasks could be done quicker and more efficiently. Taylorism increased the scale and scope of manufacturing and allowed for the flowering of mass production. Building on the use of interchangeable parts in Civil War–era weapons manufacturing, American firms advanced mass production techniques and technologies. Singer sewing machines, Chicago packers' "disassembly" lines, McCormick grain reapers, Duke cigarette rollers: all realized unprecedented efficiencies and achieved unheard-of levels of production that propelled their companies into the forefront of American business. Henry Ford made the assembly line famous, allowing the production of automobiles to skyrocket as their cost plummeted, but various American firms had been paving the way for decades.[6] Cyrus McCormick had overseen the construction of mechanical reapers (used for harvesting wheat) for years. He had relied on skilled blacksmiths, skilled machinists, and skilled woodworkers to handcraft horse-drawn machines. But production was slow, and the machines were expensive. The reapers still enabled massive efficiency gains in grain farming, but their high cost and slow production times put them out of reach of most American wheat farmers. But then, in 1880, McCormick hired a production manager who had overseen the manufacturing of Colt firearms to transform his system of production. The Chicago plant introduced new jigs, steel gauges, and pattern machines that could make precise duplicates of new, interchangeable parts. The company had produced twenty-one thousand machines in 1880. It made twice as many in 1885; by 1889, less than a decade later, it was producing over one hundred thousand a year.[7]



Glazier Stove Company, moulding room, Chelsea, Michigan, ca1900-1910. Library of Congress, LC-D4-42785.

Industrialization and mass production pushed the United States into the forefront of the world. The American economy had lagged behind Britain, Germany, and France as recently as the 1860s, but by 1900 the United States was the world's leading manufacturing nation. Thirteen years later, by 1913, the United States produced one third of the world's industrial output—more than Britain, France, and Germany combined.[8] Firms such as McCormick's realized massive economies of scale: after accounting for their initial massive investments in machines and marketing, each additional product lost the company relatively little in production costs. The bigger the production, then, the bigger the profits. New industrial companies therefore hungered for markets to keep their high-volume production facilities operating. Retailers and advertisers sustained the massive markets needed for mass production, and corporate bureaucracies meanwhile allowed for the management of giant new firms. A new class of managers—comprising what one prominent economic historian called the "visible hand"—operated between the worlds of workers and owners and ensured the efficient operation and administration of mass production and mass distribution. Even more important to the growth and maintenance of these new companies, however, were the legal creations used to protect investors and sustain the power of massed capital.[9] The costs of mass production were prohibitive for all but the very wealthiest individuals, and, even then, the risks would be too great to bear individually. The corporation itself was ages old, but the actual right to incorporate had generally been reserved for public works projects or government-sponsored monopolies. After the Civil War, however, the corporation, using new state incorporation laws passed during the Market Revolution of the early nineteenth century, became a legal mechanism for nearly any enterprise to marshal vast amounts of capital while limiting the liability of shareholders. By washing their hands of legal and financial obligations while still retaining the right to profit massively, investors flooded corporations with the capital needed to industrialize.

But a competitive marketplace threatened the promise of investments. Once the efficiency gains of mass production were realized, profit margins could be undone by cutthroat competition, which kept costs low as price-cutting ate into profits. Companies rose and fell—and investors suffered losses—as manufacturing firms struggled to maintain supremacy over their particular industries. Economies of scale were a double-edged sword: while additional production provided immense profits, the high fixed costs of operating expensive factories dictated that even modest losses from selling underpriced goods were preferable to not selling profitably priced goods at all.

Desperate for any advantage, firms turned to advertising, propelling it into a multi-million-dollar industry. There were about 40 advertising firms in New York City in the 1860s; by 1890, there were 300. The industry professionalized. New business colleges taught courses on marketing, and trade groups published experts published a flurry of manuals and how-to guides. Advertisers worked as "copywriters," "commercial artists," and other newly specialized jobs.[10] Advertising itself changed. Ads became more colorful and distinct and entertaining. Congress created new national trademark protections in 1870, and companies responded by putting forward new trademarks and logos and corporate characters, such as the Quaker Oat Man (trademarked 1895). Ads, meanwhile, became ubiquitous, appearing in magazines, on billboards, in newspapers, on the sides of buildings, and even as free products on shop counters: printers created small, colorful, collectible cards ("chromolithographs") that blended entertainment and branding and became omnipresent in late nineteenth-century America.

Manufactured brand loyalty, however, could not triumph over economic law. As market share was won and lost, profits proved

unstable. American industrial firms tried everything to avoid competition: they formed informal pools and trusts, they entered price-fixing agreements, they divided markets, and, when blocked by antitrust laws and renegade price cutting, merged into consolidations. Rather than suffer from ruinous competition, firms combined and bypassed it altogether.

Between 1895 and 1904, and peaking between 1898 and 1902, a wave of mergers rocked the American economy. Competition melted away in what has been called "the great merger movement." In nine years, four thousand companies—nearly 20 percent of the American economy—were folded into rival firms. In nearly every major industry, newly consolidated firms such as General Electric and DuPont utterly dominated their market. Forty-one separate consolidations each controlled over 70 percent of the market in their respective industries. In 1901, financier J. P. Morgan oversaw the formation of United States Steel, built from eight leading steel companies. Industrialization was built on steel, and one firm—the world's first billion-dollar company—controlled the market. Monopoly had arrived.[11]

III. The Rise of Inequality



The Breakers, Vanderbilt residence, Newport, R.I., ca.1904. Library of Congress, LC-D4-16955.

Industrial capitalism realized the greatest advances in efficiency and productivity that the world had ever seen. Massive new companies marshaled capital on an unprecedented scale and provided enormous profits that created unheard-of fortunes. But it also created millions of low-paid, unskilled, unreliable jobs with long hours and dangerous working conditions. The notion of a glittering world of wealth and technological innovation masking massive social inequities and deep-seated corruption gave the era its most common label, the Gilded Age, which drew from the title of an 1873 satirical novel written by Mark Twain and Charles Warner. Industrial capitalism confronted Gilded Age Americans with unprecedented inequalities. The sudden appearance of the extreme wealth of industrial and financial leaders alongside the crippling squalor of the urban and rural poor shocked Americans. "This association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times," economist Henry George wrote in his 1879 bestseller *Progress and Poverty*.[12]

The great financial and industrial titans, the so-called robber barons, including railroad operators such as Cornelius Vanderbilt, oilmen such as John D. Rockefeller, steel magnates such as Andrew Carnegie, and bankers such as J. P. Morgan, won fortunes that, adjusted for inflation, are still among the largest the nation has ever seen. According to various measurements, in 1890 the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans owned one fourth of the nation's assets; the top 10 percent owned over 70 percent. And inequality only accelerated. By 1900, the richest 10 percent controlled perhaps 90 percent of the nation's wealth.[13]

As these vast and unprecedented new fortunes accumulated among a small number of wealthy Americans, new ideas arose to bestow moral legitimacy upon them. In 1859, British naturalist Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution through natural selection in his *On the Origin of Species*. It was not until the 1870s, however, that those theories gained widespread traction among biologists, naturalists, and other scientists in the United States and, in turn, challenged the social, political, and religious beliefs of many Americans. One of Darwin's greatest popularizers, the British sociologist and biologist Herbert Spencer, applied Darwin's theories to society and popularized the phrase survival of the fittest. The fittest, Spencer said, would demonstrate their superiority through economic success, while state welfare and private charity would lead to social degeneration—it would

encourage the survival of the weak.[14]



"Five Cents a Spot," unauthorized immigration lodgings in a Bayard Steet tenement, New York City, ca.1890. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-16348

"There must be complete surrender to the law of natural selection," the *Baltimore Sun* journalist H. L. Mencken wrote in 1907. "All growth must occur at the top. The strong must grow stronger, and that they may do so, they must waste no strength in the vain task of trying to uplift the weak."[15] By the time Mencken wrote those words, the ideas of social Darwinism had spread among wealthy Americans and their defenders. Social Darwinism identified a natural order that extended from the laws of the cosmos to the workings of industrial society. All species and all societies, including modern humans, the theory went, were governed by a relentless competitive struggle for survival. The inequality of outcomes was to be not merely tolerated but encouraged and celebrated. It signified the progress of species and societies. Spencer's major work, *Synthetic Philosophy*, sold nearly four hundred thousand copies in the United States by the time of his death in 1903. Gilded Age industrial elites such as Carnegie, Edison, and Rockefeller were among Spencer's prominent followers. Other American thinkers, such as Yale's William Graham Sumner, echoed his ideas. Sumner said, "Before the tribunal of nature a man has no more right to life than a rattlesnake; he has no more right to liberty than any wild beast; his right to pursuit of happiness is nothing but a license to maintain the struggle for existence."[16]

But not all so eagerly welcomed inequalities. The spectacular growth of the US economy and the ensuing inequalities in living conditions and incomes confounded many Americans. As industrial capitalism overtook the nation, it secured political protections. Although both major political parties facilitated the rise of big business and used state power to support the interests of capital against labor, big business looked primarily to the Republican Party.

The Republican Party had risen as an antislavery faction committed to "free labor," but it was also an ardent supporter of American business. Abraham Lincoln had been a corporate lawyer who defended railroads, and during the Civil War the Republican national government took advantage of the wartime absence of southern Democrats to push through a pro-business agenda. The Republican Congress gave millions of acres and dollars to railroad companies. Republicans became the party of business, and they dominated American politics throughout the Gilded Age and the first three decades of the twentieth century. Of the sixteen presidential elections between the Civil War and the Great Depression, Republican candidates won all but four. Republicans controlled the Senate in twenty-seven out of thirty-two sessions in the same period. Republican dominance maintained a high protective tariff, an import tax designed to shield American businesses from foreign competition. Southern planters had opposed this policy before the war but now could do nothing to stop it. It provided the protective foundation for a new American industrial order, while Spencer's social Darwinism provided moral justification for national policies that minimized government interference in the economy for anything other than the protection and support of business.

IV. The Labor Movement

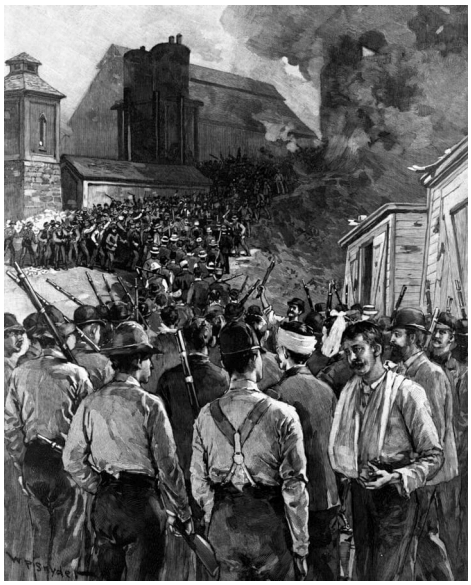


Lawrence Textile Strike, 1912. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-23725

The ideas of social Darwinism attracted little support among the mass of American industrial laborers. American workers toiled in difficult jobs for long hours and little pay. Mechanization and mass production threw skilled laborers into unskilled positions. Industrial work ebbed and flowed with the economy. The typical industrial laborer could expect to be unemployed one month out of the year. They labored sixty hours a week and could still expect their annual income to fall below the poverty line. Among the working poor, wives and children were forced into the labor market to compensate. Crowded cities, meanwhile, failed to accommodate growing urban populations, and skyrocketing rents trapped families in crowded slums.

Strikes ruptured American industry throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Workers seeking higher wages, shorter hours, and safer working conditions had struck throughout the antebellum era, but organized unions were fleeting and transitory. The Civil War and Reconstruction seemed to briefly distract the nation from the plight of labor, but the end of the sectional crisis and the explosive growth of big business, unprecedented fortunes, and a vast industrial workforce in the last quarter of the nineteenth century sparked the rise of a vast American labor movement.

The failure of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 convinced workers of the need to organize. Union memberships began to climb. The Knights of Labor enjoyed considerable success in the early 1880s, due in part to its efforts to unite skilled and unskilled workers. It welcomed all laborers, including women (the Knights barred only lawyers, bankers, and liquor dealers). By 1886, the Knights had over seven hundred thousand members. The Knights envisioned a cooperative producer-centered society that rewarded labor, not capital, but, despite their sweeping vision, the Knights focused on practical gains that could be won through the organization of workers into local unions.[17]



An 1892 cover of Harper's Weekly depicting the Homestead Riot, showed Pinkerton men who had surrendered to the steel mill workers navigating a gauntlet of violent strikers. W.P. Synder (artist) after a photograph by Dabbs, "The Homestead Riot," 1892. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-126046.

In Marshall, Texas, in the spring of 1886, one of Jay Gould's rail companies fired a Knights of Labor member for attending a union meeting. His local union walked off the job, and soon others joined. From Texas and Arkansas into Missouri, Kansas, and Illinois, nearly two hundred thousand workers struck against Gould's rail lines. Gould hired strikebreakers and the Pinkerton Detective Agency, a kind of private security contractor, to suppress the strikes and get the rails moving again. Political leaders helped him, and state militias were enlisted in support of Gould's companies. The Texas governor called in the Texas Rangers. Workers countered by destroying property, which had the effect of winning them negative headlines and, for many, justifying the use of strikebreakers and militiamen. The strike broke, briefly undermining the Knights of Labor, but the organization regrouped and set its eyes on a national campaign for the eight-hour day.[18]

The campaign for an eight-hour day, long a rallying cry that united American laborers, culminated in a national strike on May 1, 1886. Somewhere around four hundred thousand workers struck across the country.

In Chicago, police forces killed several workers while breaking up protesters at the McCormick reaper works. Labor leaders and radicals called for a protest at Haymarket Square the following day, which police also proceeded to break up. But as they did, a bomb exploded and killed seven policemen. Police fired into the crowd, killing four. The deaths of the Chicago policemen sparked outrage across the nation, and the sensationalization of the Haymarket Riot helped many Americans link unionism with radicalism. Eight Chicago anarchists were arrested and, despite a lack of direct evidence implicating them in the bombing, were charged and found guilty of conspiracy. Four were hanged (one died by suicide before he could be executed). Membership in the Knights had peaked earlier that year but fell rapidly after Haymarket; the group became associated with violence and radicalism. The national movement for an eight-hour day collapsed.[19]

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) emerged as a conservative alternative to the vision of the Knights of Labor. An alliance of craft unions (unions composed of skilled workers), the AFL rejected the Knights' expansive vision of a "producerist" economy and advocated "pure and simple trade unionism," a program that aimed for practical gains (higher wages, fewer hours, and safer conditions) through a conservative approach that tried to avoid strikes. But workers continued to strike.

In 1892, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers struck at one of Carnegie's steel mills in Homestead, Pennsylvania. After repeated wage cuts, workers shut the plant down and occupied the mill. The plant's operator, Henry Clay Frick, immediately called in hundreds of Pinkerton detectives, but the steel workers fought back. The heavily armed Pinkertons, attempting to approach the mill by river barges, were besieged by the striking steel workers. After several hours of pitched battle, the Pinkertons surrendered. Angry workers forced them to run through a bloody gauntlet of clubs and fists before they were expelled from the mill grounds. The Pennsylvania governor called the state militia, broke the strike, and reopened the mill. The union was essentially destroyed in the aftermath.[20]

Still, despite repeated failure, strikes continued to roll across the industrial landscape. In 1894, workers in George Pullman's

Pullman car factories struck when he cut wages by a quarter but kept rents and utilities in his company town constant. The American Railway Union (ARU), led by Eugene V. Debs, launched a sympathy strike: the ARU would refuse to handle any Pullman cars on any rail line anywhere in the country. Thousands of workers struck, and national railroad traffic ground to a halt. Unlike in nearly every other major strike, the governor of Illinois sympathized with workers and refused to dispatch the state militia. It didn't matter. In July, President Grover Cleveland dispatched thousands of American soldiers to break the strike, and a federal court issued a preemptive injunction against Debs and the union's leadership. The strike violated the injunction, and Debs was arrested and imprisoned. Without the union's leadership, the strike evaporated. Jail radicalized Debs, proving to him that political and judicial leaders were merely tools for capital in its struggle against labor.[21] But it wasn't just Debs. In 1905, the degrading conditions of industrial labor sparked strikes across the country. The final two decades of the nineteenth century saw over twenty thousand strikes and lockouts in the United States. Industrial laborers struggled to carve for themselves a piece of the prosperity lifting investors and a rapidly expanding middle class into unprecedented standards of living. But workers were not the only ones struggling to stay afloat in industrial America. American farmers also lashed out against the inequalities of the Gilded Age and denounced political corruption for enabling economic theft.



Two women strikers on picket line during the "Uprising of the 20,000", garment workers strike, New York City, 1910. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-49516 .

V. The Populist Movement

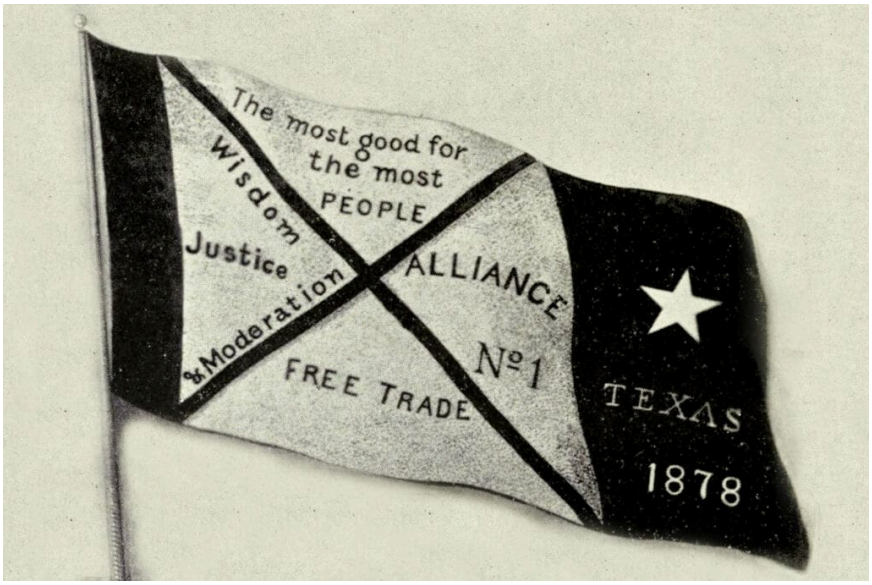
"Wall Street owns the country," the Populist leader Mary Elizabeth Lease told dispossessed farmers around 1890. "It is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street." Farmers, who remained a majority of the American population through the first decade of the twentieth century, were hit especially hard by industrialization. The expanding markets and technological improvements that increased efficiency also decreased commodity prices. Commercialization of agriculture put farmers in the hands of bankers, railroads, and various economic intermediaries. As the decades passed, more and more farmers fell ever further into debt, lost their land, and were forced to enter the industrial workforce or, especially in the South, became landless farmworkers.

The rise of industrial giants reshaped the American countryside and the Americans who called it home. Railroad spur lines and telegraph lines crept into farming communities and linked rural Americans, who also still made up a majority of the country's population, with towns, regional cities, American financial centers in Chicago and New York, and, eventually, London and the world's financial markets. Meanwhile, improved farm machinery, easy credit, and the latest consumer goods flooded the countryside. But the new connections and new conveniences came at a price.

Farmers had always been dependent on the whims of the weather and local markets. But now they staked their financial security on a national economic system subject to rapid price swings, rampant speculation, and limited regulation. Frustrated American farmers attempted to reshape the fundamental structures of the nation's political and economic systems, systems they believed enriched parasitic bankers and industrial monopolists at the expense of the many laboring farmers who fed the nation by producing its many crops and farm goods. Their dissatisfaction with an erratic and impersonal system put many of them at the forefront of what would become perhaps the most serious challenge to the established political economy of Gilded Age America.

Farmers organized and launched their challenge first through the cooperatives of the Farmers' Alliance and later through the politics of the People's (or Populist) Party.

Mass production and business consolidations spawned giant corporations that monopolized nearly every sector of the US economy in the decades after the Civil War. In contrast, the economic power of the individual farmer sank into oblivion. Threatened by ever-plummeting commodity prices and ever-rising indebtedness, Texas agrarians met in Lampasas, Texas, in 1877 and organized the first Farmers' Alliance to restore some economic power to farmers as they dealt with railroads, merchants, and bankers. If big business relied on its numerical strength to exert its economic will, why shouldn't farmers unite to counter that power? They could share machinery, bargain from wholesalers, and negotiate higher prices for their crops. Over the following years, organizers spread from town to town across the former Confederacy, the Midwest, and the Great Plains, holding evangelical-style camp meetings, distributing pamphlets, and establishing over a thousand alliance newspapers. As the alliance spread, so too did its near-religious vision of the nation's future as a "cooperative commonwealth" that would protect the interests of the many from the predatory greed of the few. At its peak, the Farmers' Alliance claimed a million and a half members meeting in forty thousand local sub-alliances.[22]



The banner of the first Texas Farmers' Alliance.

The alliance's most innovative programs were a series of farmers' cooperatives that enabled farmers to negotiate higher prices for their crops and lower prices for the goods they purchased. These cooperatives spread across the South between 1886 and 1892 and claimed more than a million members at their high point. While most failed financially, these "philanthropic monopolies," as one alliance speaker termed them, inspired farmers to look to large-scale organization to cope with their economic difficulties.[23] But cooperation was only part of the alliance message.

In the South, alliance-backed Democratic candidates won four governorships and forty-eight congressional seats in 1890.[24] But at a time when falling prices and rising debts were conspiring against the survival of family farmers, the two political parties seemed incapable of representing the needs of poor farmers. And so alliance members organized a political party—the People's Party, or the Populists, as they came to be known. The Populists attracted supporters across the nation by appealing to those convinced that there were deep flaws in the political economy of Gilded Age America, flaws that both political parties refused to address. Veterans of earlier fights for currency reform, disaffected industrial laborers, proponents of the benevolent socialism of Edward Bellamy's popular *Looking Backward*, and the champions of Henry George's farmer-friendly "single-tax" proposal joined alliance members in the new party. The Populists nominated former Civil War general James B. Weaver as their presidential candidate at the party's first national convention in Omaha, Nebraska, on July 4, 1892.[25]

At that meeting the party adopted a platform that crystallized the alliance's cooperate program into a coherent political vision. The platform's preamble, written by longtime political iconoclast and Minnesota populist Ignatius Donnelly, warned that "the fruits of the toil of millions [had been] boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few."[26] Taken as a whole, the Omaha Platform and the larger Populist movement sought to counter the scale and power of monopolistic capitalism with a strong, engaged, and modern federal government. The platform proposed an unprecedented expansion of federal power. It advocated nationalizing the

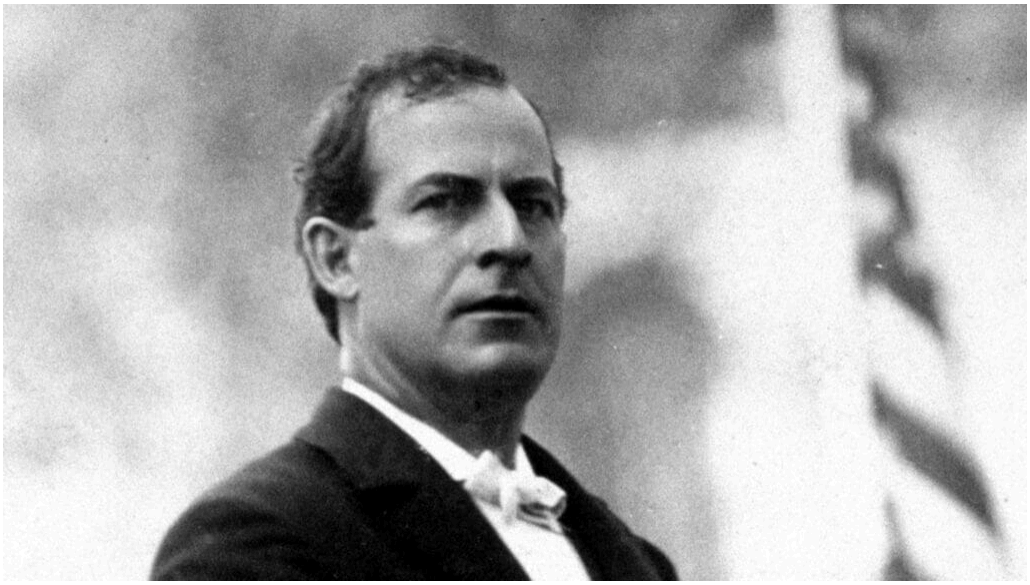
country's railroad and telegraph systems to ensure that essential services would be run in the best interests of the people. In an attempt to deal with the lack of currency available to farmers, it advocated postal savings banks to protect depositors and extend credit. It called for the establishment of a network of federally managed warehouses—called subtreasuries—which would extend government loans to farmers who stored crops in the warehouses as they awaited higher market prices. To save debtors it promoted an inflationary monetary policy by monetizing silver. Direct election of senators and the secret ballot would ensure that this federal government would serve the interest of the people rather than entrenched partisan interests, and a graduated income tax would protect Americans from the establishment of an American aristocracy. Combined, these efforts would, Populists believed, help shift economic and political power back toward the nation's producing classes.

In the Populists' first national election campaign in 1892, Weaver received over one million votes (and twenty-two electoral votes), a truly startling performance that signaled a bright future for the Populists. And when the Panic of 1893 sparked the worst economic depression the nation had ever yet seen, the Populist movement won further credibility and gained even more ground. One of the movement's most fervent speakers, Mary Lease, a Kansan, famously (and perhaps apocryphally) called on farmers to "raise less corn and more Hell." Populist stump speakers crossed the country, speaking with righteous indignation, blaming the greed of business elites and corrupt party politicians for causing the crisis fueling America's widening inequality. Southern orators like Texas's James "Cyclone" Davis and Georgian firebrand Tom Watson stumped across the South decrying the abuses of northern capitalists and the Democratic Party. Pamphlets such as W. H. Harvey's Coin's *Financial School* and Henry D. Lloyd's *Wealth Against Commonwealth* provided Populist answers to the age's many perceived problems. The faltering economy combined with the Populists' extensive organizing; in the 1894 elections, Populists elected six senators and seven representatives to Congress.[27]

The Populist movement, however, still faced substantial obstacles, especially in the South. The failure of alliance-backed Democrats to live up to their campaign promises drove some southerners to break with the party of their forefathers and join the Populists. Many, however, were unwilling to take what was, for southerners, such a radical step. Southern Democrats, for their part, responded to the Populist challenge with electoral fraud and racial demagoguery. Both severely limited Populist gains. Alliance organizers struggled to balance the pervasive white supremacy of the American South with their call for a grand union of the producing class. American racial attitudes—and their virulent southern strain—simply proved too formidable. Democrats race-baited Populists, and Populists capitulated. The Colored Farmers' Alliance, which had formed as a segregated sister organization to the southern alliance with as many as 250,000 members at its peak, fell prey to racial and class-based hostility. The group went into rapid decline in 1891 when faced with the violent white repression of a number of alliance-sponsored cotton picker strikes. Racial mistrust and division remained the rule, even among Populists, and even in North Carolina, where a political marriage of convenience, or "fusion," between Populists and Republicans resulted in the election of Populist Marion Butler to the Senate. Populists opposed Democratic corruption, but this did not necessarily make them champions of interracial democracy. As Butler explained to an audience in Edgecombe County, "We are in favor of white supremacy, but we are not in favor of cheating and fraud to get it."[28]

By the middle of the 1890s, Populism had exploded in popularity. The first major political force to tap into the vast discomfort of many Americans with the disruptions wrought by industrial capitalism, the Populist Party seemed poised to capture political victory. And yet, even as Populism gained national traction, the movement was stumbling. The party's often divided leadership found it difficult to shepherd what remained a diverse and loosely organized coalition of reformers toward unified political action. The Omaha Platform was a radical document, and some state party leaders selectively embraced its reforms. More important, the institutionalized parties were still too strong, and the Democrats loomed, ready to swallow Populist frustrations and inaugurate a new era of American politics.

VI. William Jennings Bryan and the Politics of Gold



William Jennings Bryan, 1896. Library of Congress, LC-USZC2-6259

William Jennings Bryan accomplished many different things in his life: he was a skilled orator, a Nebraska congressman, a three-time presidential candidate, US secretary of state under Woodrow Wilson, and a lawyer who supported prohibition and opposed Darwinism (most notably in the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial). In terms of his political career, he won national renown for his attack on the gold standard and his tireless promotion of free silver and policies for the benefit of the average American. Although Bryan was unsuccessful in winning the presidency, he forever altered the course of American political history.[29]

Bryan was born in Salem, Illinois, in 1860 to a devout family with a strong passion for law, politics, and public speaking. At twenty, he attended Union Law College in Chicago and passed the bar shortly thereafter. After his marriage to Mary Baird in Illinois, Bryan and his young family relocated to Nebraska, where he won a reputation among the state's Democratic Party leaders as an extraordinary orator. Bryan later won recognition as one of the greatest speakers in American history.

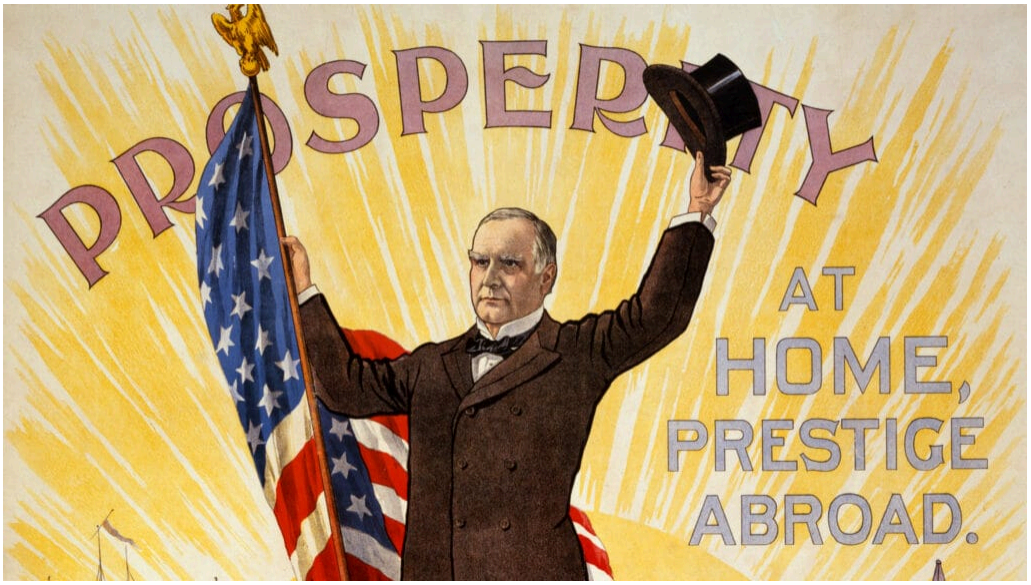
When economic depressions struck the Midwest in the late 1880s, despairing farmers confronted with low crop prices found few politicians on their side. While many rallied to the Populist cause, Bryan worked from within the Democratic Party, using the strength of his oratory. After delivering one speech, he told his wife, "Last night I found that I had a power over the audience. I could move them as I chose. I have more than usual power as a speaker. . . . God grant that I may use it wisely."[30] He soon won election to the House of Representatives, where he served for two terms. Although he lost a bid to join the Senate, Bryan turned his attention to a higher position: the presidency of the United States. There, he believed he could change the country by defending farmers and urban laborers against the corruptions of big business.

In 1895–1896, Bryan launched a national speaking tour in which he promoted the free coinage of silver. He believed that bimetallism, by inflating American currency, could alleviate farmers' debts. In contrast, Republicans championed the gold standard and a flat money supply. American monetary standards became a leading campaign issue. Then, in July 1896, the Democratic Party's national convention met to choose their presidential nominee in the upcoming election. The party platform asserted that the gold standard was "not only un-American but anti-American." Bryan spoke last at the convention. He astounded his listeners. At the conclusion of his stirring speech, he declared, "Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands 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."[31] After a few seconds of stunned silence, the convention went wild. Some wept, many shouted, and the band began to play "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Bryan received the 1896 Democratic presidential nomination.

The Republicans ran William McKinley, an economic conservative who championed business interests and the gold standard. Bryan crisscrossed the country spreading the silver gospel. The election drew enormous attention and much emotion. According to Bryan's wife, he received two thousand letters of support every day that year, an enormous amount for any politician, let alone one not currently in office. Yet Bryan could not defeat McKinley. The pro-business Republicans outspent Bryan's campaign fivefold. A notably high 79.3 percent of eligible American voters cast ballots, and turnout averaged 90 percent in areas supportive of

Bryan, but Republicans swayed the Northeast and Midwest and stymied the Democrats.[32]

In early 1900, Congress passed the Gold Standard Act, which put the country on the gold standard, effectively ending the debate over the nation's monetary policy. Bryan sought the presidency again in 1900 but was again defeated, as he would be yet again in 1908.



Conservative William McKinley promised prosperity to ordinary Americans through his "sound money" initiative, a policy he ran on during his election campaigns in 1896 and again in 1900. This election poster touts McKinley's gold standard policy as bringing "Prosperity at Home, Prestige Abroad." "Prosperity at home, prestige abroad," [between 1895 and 1900]. Library of Congress,.

Bryan was among the most influential losers in American political history. When the agrarian wing of the Democratic Party nominated the Nebraska congressman in 1896, Bryan's fiery condemnation of northeastern financial interests and his impassioned calls for "free and unlimited coinage of silver" co-opted popular Populist issues. The Democrats stood ready to siphon off a large proportion of the Populists' political support. When the People's Party held its own convention two weeks later, the party's moderate wing, in a fiercely contested move, overrode the objections of more ideologically pure Populists and nominated Bryan as the Populist candidate as well. This strategy of temporary "fusion" fatally fractured the movement and the party. Populist energy moved from the radical-yet-still-weak People's Party to the moderate-yet-powerful Democratic Party. And although at first glance the Populist movement appears to have been a failure—its minor electoral gains were short-lived, it did little to dislodge the entrenched two-party system, and the Populist dream of a cooperative commonwealth never took shape—in terms of lasting impact, the Populist Party proved the most significant third-party movement in American history. The agrarian revolt established the roots of later reform, and the majority of policies outlined within the Omaha Platform would eventually be signed into law over the following decades under the management of middle-class reformers. In large measure, the Populist vision laid the intellectual groundwork for the coming progressive movement.[33]



William Jennings Bryan espoused Populists politics while working within the two-party system as a Democrat. Republicans characterized this as a kind hijacking by Bryan, arguing that the Democratic Party was now a party of a radical faction of Populists. The pro-Republican magazine *Judge* rendered this perspective in a political cartoon showing Bryan (representing Populism writ large) as huge serpent swallowing a bucking mule (representing the Democratic party). Political Cartoon, Judge, 1896. Wikimedia.

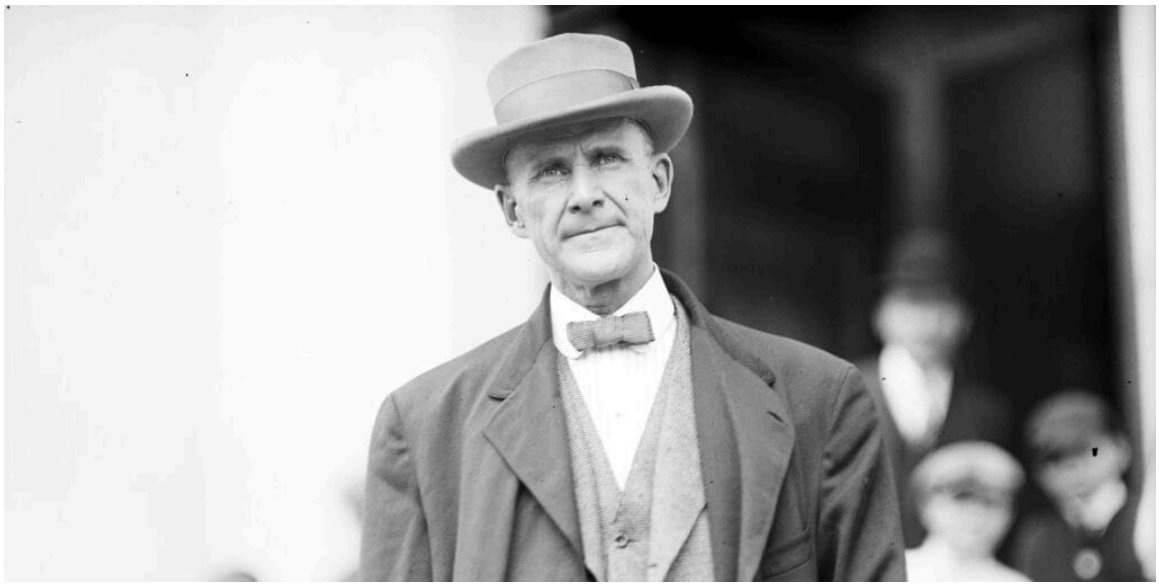
VII. American Radicalism

Many varieties of economic and political radicalism pushed back against industrial capitalism's newfound American supremacy. Thousands identified as anarchists, for instance. More a political attitude than a fixed platform, anti-government dissidents, generally associated with German and other European immigrants, didn't just reject political and economic authority, they wanted to dismantle it, sometimes violently. When, amid the national eight-hour-day May Day protests in 1886, an individual threw a pipe bomb into an advancing phalanx of policemen moving to break up a rally outside of a McCormick plant in Chicago, the police opened fire. The bomb had killed officer Mathias Degan, and when the shooting subsided, seven policemen and at least four protestors were dead. No one knew who threw the bomb, but police raided the offices of anarchist newspaper publisher August Spies, and charged eight, including the prominent anarchist Albert Parsons, with conspiracy. With no direct evidence tying them to the bombing, a jury found them guilty, and four were hanged (two asked for clemency and received life in prison; one committed suicide on the eve of the hanging). Haymarket galvanized Americans against radicalism—political traditions often associated with "hyphenated Americans" from Germany, Italy, Russia, and other hotbeds of European radicalism—and undermined support for the broader labor movement. "Shut the National door to such [anarchist] scum," the *Chicago Tribune* wrote.[34]

Anarchism wasn't merely a specter conjured up by the Haymarket bombing, and Parsons and Spies weren't the movement's only prominent American champions. Russian-born Emma Goldman migrated to the United States in 1885 and became known as the "high priestess of anarchy" for her opposition to government, war, capitalism, religion, and even marriage—any phenomenon, she wrote, that oppressed the individual.[35] Goldman and many other anarchists championed the concept of attentat, or "propaganda of the deed," a targeted act of violence that could spark revolution. Goldman, her lover Alexander Berkman, and a third conspirator, for instance, tried and failed to assassinate Henry Clay Frick, a staunchly anti-union officer of Carnegie Steel who had dramatically decimated unionization at the Homestead Steel Works in Pennsylvania (Berkman served fourteen years in prison). Others bombed the homes of prominent American capitalists and political leaders. And in 1901, anarchist Leon Czolgosz shot and killed President William McKinley.

American socialists, meanwhile, carried on the Populists' radical economic tradition by uniting farmers and workers in a sustained, decades-long political struggle to reorder American economic life. Socialists argued that wealth and power were consolidated in the hands of too few individuals, that monopolies and trusts controlled too much of the economy, and that owners and investors grew rich while the workers who produced their wealth, despite massive productivity gains and rising national wealth, still suffered from low pay, long hours, and unsafe working conditions. Karl Marx had described the new industrial economy as a worldwide class struggle between the wealthy bourgeoisie, who owned the means of production, such as factories and farms, and the proletariat, factory workers and tenant farmers who worked only for the wealth of others. According to Eugene Debs, socialists sought "the overthrow of the capitalist system and the emancipation of the working class from wage slavery."[36] Under an imagined socialist

cooperative commonwealth, the means of production would be owned collectively, ensuring that all men and women received a fair wage for their labor. According to socialist organizer and newspaper editor Oscar Ameringer, socialists wanted "ownership of the trust by the government, and the ownership of the government by the people."[37]



American socialist leader Eugene Victor Debs, 1912. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-hec-01584

The socialist movement drew from a diverse constituency. Party membership was open to all regardless of race, gender, class, ethnicity, or religion. Many prominent Americans, such as Helen Keller, Upton Sinclair, and Jack London, became socialists. They were joined by masses of American laborers from across the United States: factory workers, miners, railroad builders, tenant farmers, and small farmers all united under the red flag of socialism. Many united with labor leader William D. "Big Bill" Haywood and other radicals in 1905 to form the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the "Wobblies," a radical and confrontational union that welcomed all workers, regardless of race or gender.[38] Others turned to politics.

The Socialist Party of America (SPA), founded in 1901, carried on the American third-party political tradition. Socialist mayors were elected in thirty-three cities and towns, from Berkeley, California, to Schenectady, New York, and two socialists—Victor Berger from Wisconsin and Meyer London from New York—won congressional seats. All told, over one thousand socialist candidates won various American political offices. Julius A. Wayland, editor of the socialist newspaper Appeal to Reason, proclaimed that "socialism is coming. It's coming like a prairie fire and nothing can stop it . . . you can feel it in the air."[39] By 1913 there were 150,000 members of the Socialist Party and, in 1912, Eugene Debs, the Indiana-born Socialist Party candidate for president, received almost one million votes, or 6 percent of the total.[40]

Over the following years, however, the embrace of many socialist policies by progressive reformers, internal ideological and tactical disagreements, a failure to dissuade most Americans from the perceived incompatibility between socialism and American values, and, especially, government oppression and censorship, particularly during and after World War I, ultimately sank the party. Like the Populists, however, socialists had tapped into a deep well of discontent, and their energy and organizing filtered out into American culture and American politics.

VIII. Conclusion

The march of capital transformed American life. While some enjoyed unprecedented levels of wealth, and an ever-growing slice of middle-class workers won an ever more comfortable standard of living, vast numbers of farmers lost their land and a growing industrial working class struggled to earn wages sufficient to support themselves and their families. Industrial capitalism brought wealth and it brought poverty; it created owners and investors and it created employees. But whether winners or losers in the new economy, all Americans reckoned in some way with their new industrial world.

IX. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Joseph Locke, with content contributions by Andrew C. Baker, Jennifer M. Black, Nicholas Blood, Justin Clark, Dan Du, Kollin Fields, Caroline Bunnell Harris, David Hochfelder Scott Libson, Joseph Locke, Chad Pearson, Leah Richier, Matthew Simmons, Kate Sohasky, Joseph Super, and Kaylynn Washnock.

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16: Geographies of Empire



"School Begins," Puck, January 25, 1899.

I. Introduction

In the decades after the American Civil War, the United States, long busy fulfilling its "Manifest Destiny," roared across the continent and asserted itself overseas. Settlers poured into the US West, and, alongside the American military, destroyed Indigenous sovereignties. Investors and ranchers raced into the US-Mexico borderlands, overwhelming long-standing Mexican American communities with American economic and racial systems. And, increasingly, Americans looked overseas, flooding much of the world with missionaries, consumer goods, and territorial ambitions. By the end of the century, the United States, flexing its power and sovereignty more widely than ever before, had established itself as a global power.

II. Post-Civil War Westward Migration

Native Americans long dominated the vastness of the American West. Linked culturally and geographically by trade, travel, and warfare, various Indigenous groups controlled most of the continent west of the Mississippi River deep into the nineteenth century. Spanish, French, British, and later American traders had integrated themselves into many regional economies, and American emigrants pushed ever westward, but no imperial power had yet achieved anything approximating political or military control over the great bulk of the continent. But then the Civil War came and went and decoupled the West from the question of slavery just as the United States industrialized and laid down rails and pushed its ever-expanding population farther west.

Indigenous Americans have lived in North America for over ten millennia and, into the late nineteenth century, perhaps as many as 250,000 Native people still inhabited the American West.[1] But then unending waves of American settlers, the American military, and the unstoppable onrush of American capital conquered all. Often in violation of its own treaties, 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 vast bulk of land between the two oceans.

The history of the late nineteenth-century West is not a simple story. What some Americans touted as a triumph—the westward expansion of American authority—was for others a tragedy—the loss of Indigenous sovereignty outside of the reservation system. The West contained many peoples and many places, and their intertwined histories marked a pivotal transformation in the history of the United States.

In the decades after the Civil War, spurred by the 1862 Homestead Act and the vast system of speculative land sales that allowed

railroad companies to realize profits from massive government land grants, American settlers poured across the Mississippi River in record numbers. Rapidly expanding railroad mileage stitched far-flung communities into American commerce, facilitating widespread settlement. No longer simply crossing the continent for new imagined Edens in California or Oregon, Americans settled in the vast heart of the continent, where they grew crops, raised livestock, and mined precious minerals.

Settlement served American sovereignty. While often individually motivated by the economic incentives of cheap land peddled by land speculators, American settlers nevertheless participated in a kind of grassroots colonial system many historians have come to call "settler colonialism": rather than the state asserting power over sovereign peoples through direct military action and top-down colonial governance to extract wealth and resources, land-hungry settlers instead inundated Native lands, provoked conflict, and created the logic for persistent military intervention to secure new territory for the United States.[2]



While bison supplied leather for America's booming clothing industry, the skulls of the animals also provided a key ingredient in fertilizer. This 1870s photograph illustrates the massive number of bison killed for these and other reasons (including sport) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Photograph of a pile of American bison skulls waiting to be ground for fertilizer, 1870s. Wikimedia.

Others destroyed Indigenous ways of life more directly: many came to the Plains to extract the hides of the great bison herds. Millions of animals had roamed the Plains, but their tough leather supplied industrial belting in eastern factories and raw material for the booming clothing industry. Specialized teams took down and skinned the herds. The infamous American bison slaughter peaked in the early 1870s. The number of American bison plummeted from over ten million at midcentury to only a few hundred by the early 1880s. The expansion of the railroads allowed ranching to replace the bison with cattle on the American grasslands.[3]

III. The Indian Wars and Federal Peace Policies



Buffalo Soldiers, the nickname given to African-American cavalrymen by the native Americans they fought, were the first peacetime all-black regiments in the regular United States army. These soldiers regularly confronted racial prejudice from other Army members and civilians, but were an essential part of American victories during the Indian Wars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "[Buffalo soldiers of the 25th Infantry, some wearing buffalo robes, Ft. Keogh, Montana] / Chr. Barthelmess, photographer, Fort Keogh, Montana," 1890. Library of Congress.

The "Indian wars," so mythologized in western folklore, were a series of seemingly sporadic, localized, and often brief engagements between US military forces and various Native American groups. But these were not isolated military encounters. New patterns of American settlement, railroad construction, and material extraction provoked conflict. Settlers, for instance, clashed with the vast and cyclical movement across the Great Plains to hunt buffalo, raid enemies, and trade goods. Thomas Jefferson's old dream that Indigenous nations might live isolated in the West was, in the face of American expansion, no longer a viable reality. Imperialistic, economic, and even humanitarian concerns intensified American efforts to isolate Native Americans onto reservations. Although Indian removal had long been a part of federal Indian policy, after the Civil War the US government redoubled its efforts. If treaties and other forms of persistent coercion would not work, federal officials pushed for more drastic measures: after the Civil War, coordinated military action by celebrity Civil War generals such as William Sherman and Philip Sheridan exploited and exacerbated local conflicts sparked by illegal business ventures and settler incursions. Against the threat of confinement and the extinction of traditional ways of life, Native Americans battled the American army and the encroaching lines of American settlement.

Most Americans agreed that it was acceptable to use force to protect settlers, and the United States militarized the frontier with an extensive network of forts and army posts. Native groups resisted. In Texas and the southern Plains, the Comanche, the Kiowa, and their allies had wielded enormous influence. The Comanche in particular controlled huge swaths of territory and raided vast areas, inspiring terror from the Rocky Mountains to the interior of northern Mexico to the Texas Gulf Coast. But after the Civil War, the US military refocused its attention on the southern Plains.

The American military first sent messengers to the Plains to find the elusive Comanche and Kiowa bands and ask them to come to peace negotiations at Medicine Lodge Creek in the fall of 1867. But the terms were muddled: American officials believed that Comanche bands had accepted reservation life, while Comanche leaders believed they had been guaranteed vast lands for buffalo hunting. Comanche and Kiowa bands used designated reservation lands as a base from which to collect supplies and federal annuity goods while continuing to hunt, trade, and raid American settlements in Texas.

Confronted with renewed Comanche and Kiowa raiding, particularly by the famed Comanche war leader Quanah Parker, the US military finally proclaimed that all Indigenous peoples who were not settled on the reservation by the fall of 1874 would be considered "hostile." The Red River War began when many Comanche and Kiowa bands refused to resettle and the American military launched expeditions into the Plains to subdue them, culminating in the defeat of the remaining roaming bands in the canyonlands of the Texas Panhandle. It was total war: the American military targeted horses, homes, and food stores. Cold and hungry, their way of life already decimated by soldiers, settlers, cattlemen, and railroads, the last free Kiowa and Comanche bands were moved to the reservation at Fort Sill in what is now southwestern Oklahoma. Many who fought were incarcerated.[4]

On the northern Plains, the Lakota and Dakota peoples had yet to fully surrender. Following military defeats—and massacres and mass executions—during the Civil War, many bands had signed treaties with the United States and drifted into the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies to collect rations and annuities, but many continued to resist American encroachment, particularly during what the US called Red Cloud's War, a rare victory for Plains peoples that resulted in the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868) between the United States and Lakota, Dakota, and Arapaho bands, acknowledging Indigenous control over the Black Hills of South Dakota as part of the 32-million-acre "Great Sioux Reservation." But then, in 1874, an American expedition to the Black Hills discovered gold. American prospectors flooded the territory. Caring little about Indigenous treaty rights but very much about getting rich, they brought the Sioux situation again to its breaking point. Aware that US citizens were violating treaty provisions but unwilling to prevent them from searching for gold, federal officials pressured the Indigenous groups to sign a new treaty that would transfer control of the Black Hills to the United States while General Philip Sheridan quietly moved US troops into the region. Initial clashes between US troops and Indigenous warriors resulted in several Native victories that, combined with the visions of Sitting Bull, who had dreamed of an even more triumphant victory, attracted bands who had already signed treaties but now joined to fight.[5]

In late June 1876, a division of the 7th Cavalry Regiment led by Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer was sent up a trail into the Black Hills as an advance guard for a larger force. Custer's men approached a camp in modern-day Montana along a river known locally as Greasy Grass but marked on Custer's map as Little Bighorn and found an influx of defiant bands who had swelled the population of the village far beyond Custer's estimation. Custer's 7th Cavalry was vastly outnumbered, and he and 268 of his men were killed.[6]

Custer's fall shocked the nation. Cries for a swift American response filled the public sphere, and military expeditions were sent out to crush Native resistance. Resisting bands splintered off into the wilderness and began a campaign of intermittent resistance but, outnumbered and suffering after a long, hungry winter, the Lakota leader Crazy Horse led an Oglala band to surrender in May 1877. Other bands gradually followed until finally, in July 1881, Sitting Bull and his own Lakota followers at last laid down their weapons and came to the reservation. The Indigenous powers had been defeated. The Plains, it seemed, had been pacified. Today, over $1 billion sits unused in a Bureau of Indian Affairs account accruing interest following a judgment against the US government in *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians* (1980) for violating the terms of the Treaty of Fort Laramie. Indigenous leaders have thus far refused to accept the judgment—doing so would concede their sovereignty over the Black Hills.



Edward S. Curtis, *Navajo Riders in Canyon de Chelly*, c1904, via Library of Congress

American settlers and the American military pushed against Indigenous sovereignty across North America. Attacks on Native nations in California and the Pacific Northwest, for instance, received significantly less attention than the dramatic conquest of the Plains, but Native peoples in these regions also experienced violence, population decline, and territorial loss. For example, in 1872, the California/Oregon border erupted in violence when the Modoc people left the reservation of the Klamath Nation onto which they had been forced and returned to their homelands in an area known as Lost River. Americans had settled the region after Modoc removal several years before, and they complained bitterly of their return. The US military intervened after fifty-two remaining Modoc warriors, led by Kintpuash, known to settlers as Captain Jack, refused to return to the reservation and holed up in defensive positions along the state border. They fought a guerrilla war for eleven months in which at least two hundred US troops were killed before they were finally forced to surrender. Despite appeals from settlers acquainted with the Modoc, the

federal government hanged Kintpuash and three others leaders in a highly choreographed and publicized public execution.[7]

Four years later, in the Pacific Northwest, a branch of the Nez Perce (who, generations earlier, had aided Lewis and Clark in their famous journey to the Pacific Ocean) refused to be moved to a reservation and, under the leadership of Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, known to settlers and American readers as Chief Joseph, attempted to flee to Canada but were pursued by the US Cavalry. The outnumbered Nez Perce battled across a thousand miles and were attacked nearly two dozen times before they succumbed to hunger and exhaustion, surrendered, were imprisoned, and were removed to a reservation in Indian Territory. The flight of the Nez Perce captured the attention of the United States, and a transcript of Chief Joseph's surrender, as allegedly recorded by a US Army officer, became a landmark of American rhetoric. "Hear me, my chiefs," Joseph is supposed to have said, "I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever." Chief Joseph used his celebrity and, after several years, negotiated his people's relocation to a reservation nearer to their historic home.[8]

Meanwhile, in the American Southwest, American soldiers and Indigenous resistance perpetuated a simmering conflict between settlers, mining interests, and various Apache bands who had long traded violence back and forth.[9] Apache bands who once exercised enormous power in the Southwest suffered at the hands of Americans, Mexicans, and Indigenous rivals. They endured forced removals and brutal reservations and, when they fled, were pursued relentlessly by the US and Mexican armies on both sides of the US-Mexico border, and then entered into reciprocal military agreements.[10] In the mid-1880s, Geronimo, a Bedonkohe Apache leader who had become famous for continually escaping the US Army, consumed American attention. General George Crook led a headline-grabbing campaign but resigned after failing to subdue Geronimo. Finally, in 1886, Geronimo surrendered to the American army at Skeleton Canyon, Arizona. He and his warriors were taken as prisoners of war and later exiled from Arizona.[11] Although Geronimo became a national celebrity—he rode in Theodore Roosevelt's 1905 inauguration—he and his people never returned to their home. "I should have never surrendered," he is alleged to have said soon on his deathbed. "I should have fought until I was the last man alive."



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. Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center.

While incarcerated, many of their children were sent to boarding schools, such as the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, founded in 1879 as the first off-reservation boarding school for Indigenous children in the United States. Federal agencies had almost unlimited powers to remove children from Native families and place them in boarding schools such as Carlisle, where administrators sought to strip away the Indigenous identity of children and Americanize them: "Kill the Indian," Carlisle superintendent Richard H. Pratt said in 1892, "and save the man." Some assimilated; others resisted. At Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma, for instance, students resisted through "trixing," or the use of pranks, practical jokes, and sabotage. "We used to deliberately do things," Chilocco alum Curtis Carr (Muscogee/Creek Nation) recalled, "just . . . to let them know we could still outwit them."[12]

IV. Western Economic Expansion: Railroads and Cattle



Railroads made the settlement and growth of the West possible. By the late nineteenth century, maps of the mid-West like this one were filled with advertisements of how quickly a traveler could get nearly anywhere in the country. Map. The Environment and Society Portal.

Aside from agriculture and the extraction of natural resources—such as timber and precious metals—two major industries fueled the new western economy: ranching and railroads. Both developed in connection with each other, accelerated the inrush of settlers displacing Native peoples, and shaped the collective American memory of the post–Civil War "Wild West."

As one booster put it, "the West is purely a railroad enterprise." No economic enterprise rivaled the railroads in scale, scope, or sheer impact. No other businesses had ever attracted such enormous sums of capital, and no other ventures had ever received such lavish government subsidies (business historian Alfred Chandler called the railroads the "first modern business enterprise").[13] By "annihilating time and space"—by connecting the vastness of the continent—the railroads transformed the United States and made the American West.

No railroad enterprise so captured the American imagination—or federal support—as the transcontinental railroad. The transcontinental railroad crossed western plains and mountains and linked the West Coast with the rail networks of the eastern United States. Constructed from the west by the Central Pacific and from the east by the Union Pacific, the two roads were linked in Utah in 1869 to great national fanfare. But such a herculean task was not easy, and national legislators threw enormous subsidies at railroad companies, a part of the Republican Party platform since 1856. The 1862 Pacific Railroad Act gave bonds of between $16,000 and $48,000 for each mile of construction and provided vast land grants to railroad companies. Between 1850 and 1871 alone, railroad companies received more than 175 million acres of public land, an area larger than the state of Texas. Investors reaped enormous profits. As one congressional opponent put it in the 1870s, "If there be profit, the corporations may take it; if there be loss, the Government must bear it."[14]

If railroads attracted unparalleled subsidies and investments, they also created enormous labor demands. By 1880, approximately four hundred thousand men—or nearly 2.5 percent of the nation's entire workforce—labored in the railroad industry. Much of the work was dangerous and low-paying, and companies relied heavily on immigrant labor to build tracks. Companies employed Irish workers in the early nineteenth century and Chinese workers in the late nineteenth century. By 1880, over two hundred thousand Chinese migrants lived in the United States. Once the rails were laid, companies still needed a large workforce to keep the trains running. Much railroad work was dangerous, but perhaps the most hazardous work was done by brakemen. Before the advent of automatic braking, an engineer would blow the "down brake" whistle and brakemen would scramble to the top of the moving train, regardless of the weather conditions, and run from car to car manually turning brakes. Speed was necessary, and any slip could be fatal. Brakemen were also responsible for coupling the cars, attaching them together with a large pin. It was easy to lose a hand or finger, and even a slight mistake could cause cars to collide.[15]

The railroads boomed. In 1850, there were nine thousand miles of railroads in the United States. In 1900 there were 190,000, including several transcontinental lines.[16] To manage these vast networks of freight and passenger lines, companies converged rails at hub cities. Of all the Midwestern and western cities that blossomed from the bridging of western resources and eastern

capital in the late nineteenth century, Chicago was the most spectacular. It grew from two hundred inhabitants in 1833 to over a million by 1890. By 1893 it and the region from which it drew were completely transformed. The World's Columbian Exposition that year trumpeted the city's progress and broader technological progress with typical Gilded Age ostentation. A huge, gleaming (but temporary) "White City" was built in neoclassical style to house all the features of the fair and cater to the needs of the visitors who arrived from all over the world. Highlighted in the title of this world's fair were the changes that had overtaken North America since Columbus made landfall four centuries earlier. Chicago became the most important western hub and served as the gateway between the farm and ranch country of the Great Plains and eastern markets. Railroads brought cattle from Texas to Chicago for slaughter, where they were then processed into packaged meats and shipped by refrigerated rail to New York City and other eastern cities. Such hubs became the central nodes in a rapid-transit economy that increasingly spread across the entire continent linking goods and people together in a new national network.

This national network created the fabled cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s. The first cattle drives crossed the central plains soon after the Civil War. Railroads created the market for ranching, and for the few years after the war that railroads connected eastern markets with important market hubs such as Chicago but had yet to reach Texas ranchlands, ranchers began driving cattle north, out of the Lone Star State, to major railroad terminuses in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. Ranchers used well-worn trails, such as the Chisholm Trail, for drives, but conflicts arose with Native Americans in the Indian Territory and farmers in Kansas who disliked the intrusion of large and environmentally destructive herds onto their own hunting, ranching, and farming lands. Other trails, such as the Western Trail, the Goodnight-Loving Trail, and the Shawnee Trail, were therefore blazed.



This photochrom print (a new technology in the late nineteenth century that colorized images from a black-and-white negative) depicts a cattle round up in Cimarron, a crossroads of the late-nineteenth-century cattle drives. Detroit Photographic Co., "Colorado. 'Round up' on the Cimarron," c. 1898. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008678198/.

Cattle drives were difficult tasks for the crews of men who managed the herds. Historians estimate the number of men who worked as cowboys in the late nineteenth century to be between twelve thousand and forty thousand. Perhaps a fourth were African American, and more were likely Mexican or Mexican American. Much about the American cowboys evolved from Mexican vaqueros: cowboys adopted Mexican practices, gear, and terms such as rodeo, bronco, and lasso.

While most cattle drivers were men, there are at least sixteen verifiable accounts of women participating in the drives. Some, like Molly Dyer Goodnight, accompanied their husbands. Others, like Lizzie Johnson Williams, helped drive their own herds. Williams made at least three known trips with her herds up the Chisholm Trail.

Many cowboys hoped one day to become ranch owners themselves, but employment was insecure and wages were low. Beginners could expect to earn $20–$25 per month, and those with years of experience might earn $40–$45. Trail bosses could earn over $50 per month. And it was tough work. On a cattle drive, cowboys worked long hours and faced extremes of heat and cold and intense blowing dust. They subsisted on limited diets with irregular supplies.[17]



Cowboys like the one pictured here worked the drives that supplied Chicago and other mid-western cities with the necessary cattle to supply and help grow the meat-packing industry. Their work was obsolete by the turn of the century, yet their image lived on through vaudeville shows and films that romanticized life in the West. John C.H. Grabill, "The Cow Boy," c. 1888. Library of Congress.

But if workers of cattle earned low wages, owners and investors could receive riches. At the end of the Civil War, a steer worth $4 in Texas could fetch $40 in Kansas. Although profits slowly leveled off, large profits could still be made. And yet, by the 1880s, the great cattle drives were largely done. The railroads had created them, and the railroads ended them: railroad lines pushed into Texas and made the great drives obsolete. But ranching still brought profits and the Plains were better suited for grazing than for agriculture, so western ranchers continued supplying beef for national markets.

Ranching was just one of many western industries that depended on the railroads. By linking the Plains with national markets and rapidly moving people and goods, the railroads made the modern American West.

V. The Allotment Era and Resistance in the Native West

As the rails moved into the West and more and more Americans followed, the situation for Native groups deteriorated even further. Treaties negotiated between the United States and Native groups had typically promised that if tribes agreed to move to specific reservation lands, they would hold those lands collectively. But as American westward migration mounted and open lands closed, white settlers began to argue that Native people had more than their fair share of land, that the reservations were too big, that Native people were using the land "inefficiently," and that they still preferred nomadic hunting instead of intensive farming and ranching.

By the 1880s, Americans increasingly championed legislation to allow the transfer of Indigenous lands to farmers and ranchers, while many argued that allotting land to individual Native Americans, rather than to tribes, would encourage American-style agriculture and finally put the Indigenous peoples who had previously resisted the efforts of missionaries and federal officials on the path to "civilization."



Red Cloud and American Horse – two of the most renowned Ogala chiefs – are seen clasping hands in front of a tipi on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Both men served as delegates to Washington, D.C., after years of actively fighting the American government. John C. Grabill, "'Red Cloud and American Horse.' The two most noted chiefs now living," 1891. Library of Congress.

Passed by Congress on February 8, 1887, the Dawes General Allotment Act splintered Native American reservations into individual family homesteads. Each head of a Native family was to be allotted 160 acres, the typical size of a claim that any settler could establish on federal lands under the provisions of the Homestead Act. Single individuals over age eighteen would receive an eighty-acre allotment, and orphaned children received forty acres. A four-year timeline was established for Indigenous peoples to make their allotment selections. If at the end of that time no selection had been made, the act authorized the secretary of the interior to appoint an agent to make selections for the remaining tribal members. Allegedly to protect Native Americans from being swindled by unscrupulous land speculators, all allotments were to be held in trust—they could not be sold by allottees—for twenty-five years. Lands that remained unclaimed by tribal members after allotment would revert to federal control and be sold to American settlers.[18]

Americans publicly touted the Dawes Act as an uplifting humanitarian reform, but it upended Native lifestyles and left Native nations without sovereignty over their lands. The act claimed that to protect Native property rights, it was necessary to extend "the protection of the laws of the United States . . . over the Indians." Tribal governments and legal principles could be superseded, or dissolved and replaced, by US laws. Under the terms of the Dawes Act, Native nations struggled to hold on to some measure of tribal sovereignty. President Theodore Roosevelt later referred to Dawes as "a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass."[19]

The stresses of conquest unsettled generations of Native Americans. Many took comfort from the words of prophets and holy men. In Nevada, on January 1, 1889, Northern Paiute prophet Wovoka experienced a great revelation. He had traveled, he said, from his earthly home in western Nevada to heaven and returned during a solar eclipse to prophesy to his people. "You must not hurt anybody or do harm to anyone. You must not fight. Do right always," he allegedly exhorted. And they must, he said, participate in a religious ceremony that came to be known as the Ghost Dance. If the people lived justly and danced the Ghost Dance, Wovoka said, their ancestors would rise from the dead, the droughts would dissipate, the whites in the West would vanish, and the buffalo would once again roam the Plains.[20]

Native American prophets had often confronted American imperial power. Some prophets, including Wovoka, incorporated Christian elements like heaven and a messiah figure into Indigenous spiritual traditions. And so, though it was far from unique, Wovoka's prophecy nevertheless caught on quickly and spread beyond the Paiutes. From across the West, members of the Arapaho, Bannock, Cheyenne, and Shoshone nations, among others, adopted the Ghost Dance religion. Perhaps the most avid Ghost Dancers—and certainly the most famous—were the Lakota Sioux.

The Lakota were in dire straits. South Dakota, formed out of land that belonged by treaty to the Lakota, became a state in 1889. White homesteaders had poured in, reservations were carved up and diminished, starvation set in, corrupt federal agents cut food rations, and drought hit the Plains. Many Lakota feared a future as the landless subjects of a growing American empire when a delegation of eleven men, led by Kicking Bear, joined Ghost Dance pilgrims on the rails westward to Nevada and returned to

spread the revival in the Dakotas.

The energy and message of the revivals frightened settlers and Indian agents. Indian agent Daniel Royer, newly assigned to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, sent fearful dispatches to Washington and the press urging a military crackdown. Newspapers, meanwhile, sensationalized the Ghost Dance.[21] Agents began arresting Lakota leaders. Chief Sitting Bull and several others were killed in December 1890 during a botched arrest, convincing many bands to flee the reservations to join fugitive bands farther west, where Lakota adherents of the Ghost Dance preached that the Ghost Dancers would be immune to bullets.



Burial of the dead after the massacre of Wounded Knee. U.S. Soldiers putting Indians in common grave; some corpses are frozen in different positions. South Dakota. 1891. Library of Congress.

Two weeks later, an American cavalry unit intercepted a band of 350 Lakota, including over 100 women and children, under Chief Spotted Elk (later known as Bigfoot) seeking refuge at the Pine Ridge Agency. They were escorted to Wounded Knee Creek, where they camped for the night. The following morning, December 29, American cavalrymen entered the camp to disarm Spotted Elk's band. Tensions flared, a shot was fired, and a skirmish became a massacre. The Americans fired their heavy weaponry indiscriminately into the camp. Two dozen cavalrymen had been killed by the Lakotas' concealed weapons or by friendly fire, but when the guns went silent, between 150 and 300 Native men, women, and children were dead.[22]

Wounded Knee marked the end of sustained, armed Native American resistance on the Plains. Individuals continued to resist the pressures of assimilation and preserve traditional cultural practices, but sustained military defeats, the loss of sovereignty over land and resources, and the onset of crippling poverty on the reservations marked the final decades of the nineteenth century as a particularly dark era for America's western tribes. For Americans, however, it became mythical.

VI. Rodeos, Wild West Shows, and the Mythic American West



American frontierswoman and professional scout Martha Jane Canary was better known to America as Calamity Jane. A figure in western folklore during her life and after, Calamity Jane was a central character in many of the increasingly popular novels and films that romanticized western life in the twentieth century. "[Martha Canary, 1852-1903, ("Calamity Jane"), full-length portrait, seated with rifle as General Crook's scout]," c. 1895. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005689345/.

"The American West" conjures visions of tipis, cabins, cowboys, Native Americans, farm wives in sunbonnets, and outlaws with six-shooters. Such images pervade American culture, but they are as old as the West itself: novels, rodeos, and Wild West shows mythologized the American West throughout the post–Civil War era.

In the 1860s, Americans devoured dime novels that embellished the lives of real-life individuals such as Calamity Jane and Billy the Kid. Owen Wister's novels, especially The Virginian, established the character of the cowboy as a gritty stoic with a rough exterior but the courage and heroism needed to rescue people from train robbers, Native Americans, and cattle rustlers. Such images were later reinforced when the emergence of rodeo added to popular conceptions of the American West. Rodeos began as small roping and riding contests among cowboys in towns near ranches or at camps at the end of the cattle trails. In Pecos, Texas, on July 4, 1883, cowboys from two ranches, the Hash Knife and the W Ranch, competed in roping and riding contests as a way to settle an argument; this event is recognized by historians of the West as the first real rodeo. Casual contests evolved into planned celebrations. Many were scheduled around national holidays, such as Independence Day, or during traditional roundup times in the spring and fall. Early rodeos took place in open grassy areas—not arenas—and included calf and steer roping and roughstock events such as bronc riding. They gained popularity, and soon dedicated rodeo circuits developed. Although about 90 percent of rodeo contestants were men, women helped popularize the rodeo and several popular female bronc riders, such as Bertha Kaepernick, entered men's events, until around 1916 when women's competitive participation was curtailed. Americans also experienced the "Wild West"—the mythical West imagined in so many dime novels—by attending traveling Wild West shows, arguably the unofficial national entertainment of the United States from the 1880s to the 1910s. Wildly popular across the country, the shows traveled throughout the eastern United States and even across Europe and showcased what was already a mythic frontier life. William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody was the first to recognize the broad national appeal of the stock "characters" of the American West—cowboys, "Indians," sharpshooters, cavalrymen, and rangers—and put them all together into a single massive traveling extravaganza. Operating out of Omaha, Nebraska, Buffalo Bill launched his touring show in 1883. Cody himself shunned the word show, fearing that it implied an exaggeration or misrepresentation of the West. He instead called his production "Buffalo Bill's Wild West." He employed real cowboys and Native Americans in his productions. But it was still, of course, a show. It was entertainment, little different in its broad outlines from contemporary theater. Storylines depicted westward migration, life on the Plains, and Indigenous attacks, all punctuated by "cowboy fun": bucking broncos, roping cattle, and sharpshooting contests.[23]



William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody helped commercialize the cowboy lifestyle by building a profitable mythology around life in the Old West. ca1899. Library of Congress.

Buffalo Bill, joined by shrewd business partners skilled in marketing, turned his shows into a sensation. But he was not alone. Gordon William "Pawnee Bill" Lillie, another popular Wild West showman, got his start in 1886 when Cody employed him as an interpreter for Pawnee members of the show. Lillie went on to create his own production in 1888, "Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West." He was Cody's only real competitor in the business until 1908, when the two men combined their shows to create a new extravaganza, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Great Far East" (most people called it the "Two Bills Show"). It was an unparalleled spectacle. The cast included American cowboys, Mexican vaqueros, Native Americans, Russian Cossacks, Japanese acrobats, and an Australian aboriginal.

Cody and Lillie knew that Native Americans fascinated audiences in the United States and Europe, and both featured them prominently in their Wild West shows. Most Americans believed that Native cultures were disappearing—or had already disappeared—and felt a sense of urgency to see their dances, hear their song, and be captivated by their bareback riding skills and their elaborate buckskin and feather attire. The shows certainly veiled the true cultural and historic value of so many Native demonstrations and the Native performers were curiosities to white Americans, but the shows were one of the few ways for many Native Americans to make a living in the late nineteenth century.

In an attempt to appeal to women, Cody recruited Annie Oakley, a female sharpshooter who thrilled onlookers with her many stunts. Billed as "Little Sure Shot," she shot apples off her poodle's head and the ash from her husband's cigar, clenched trustingly between his teeth. Gordon Lillie's wife, May Manning Lillie, also became a skilled shot and performed as the "World's Greatest Lady Horseback Shot." Female sharpshooters were Wild West show staples. As many as eighty toured the country at the shows' peak. But if such acts challenged expected Victorian gender roles, female performers were typically careful to blunt criticism by maintaining their feminine identity—for example, by riding sidesaddle and wearing full skirts and corsets—during their acts.



Blackfoot chief Mountain Chief and American anthropologist and ethnographer Frances Densmore listen to a phonograph recording in 1916. Library of Congress.

The western "cowboys and Indians" mystique, perpetuated in novels, rodeos, and Wild West shows, was rooted in romantic nostalgia and, perhaps, in the anxieties that many felt in the late nineteenth century's new and seemingly "soft" industrial world of factory and office work. The mythical cowboy's "aggressive masculinity" was the seemingly perfect antidote for middle- and upper-class, city-dwelling Americans who feared they "had become over-civilized" and longed for what Theodore Roosevelt called the "strenuous life." Roosevelt himself, scion of a wealthy New York family and later a popular American president, turned a brief tenure as a failed Dakota ranch owner into a potent part of his political image. Americans looked longingly to the West, whose romance would continue to pull at generations of Americans.

In 1893, the American Historical Association met during that year's World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The young Wisconsin historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented his "frontier thesis," one of the most influential theories of American history, in his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."

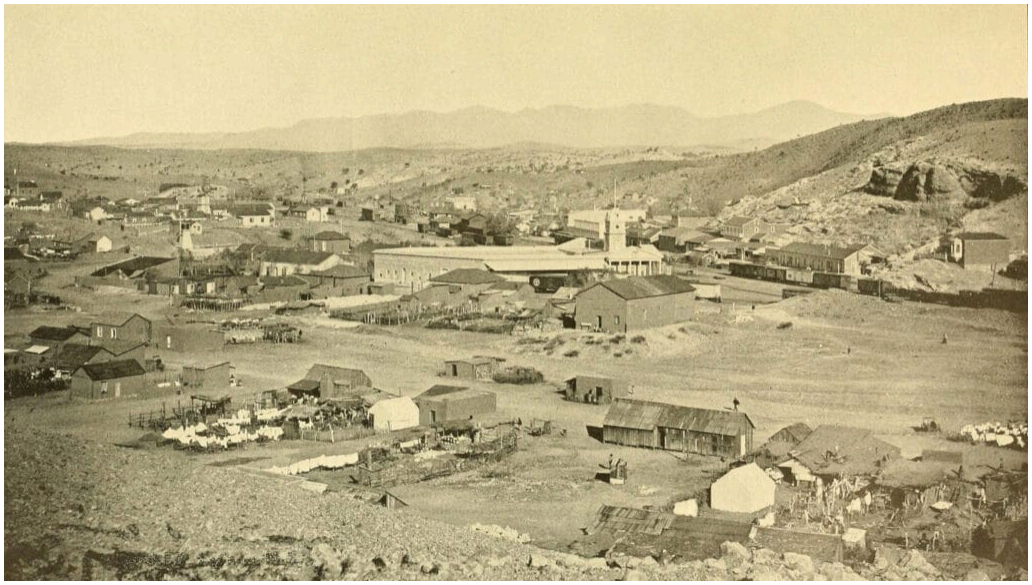
Turner looked back at the historical changes in the West and saw, instead of a tsunami of war and plunder and industry, waves of "civilization" that washed across the continent. A frontier line "between savagery and civilization" had moved west from the earliest English settlements in Massachusetts and Virginia across the Appalachians to the Mississippi and finally across the Plains to California and Oregon. Turner invited his audience to "stand at Cumberland Gap [the famous pass through the Appalachian Mountains], and watch the procession of civilization, marching single file—the buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Native American, the fur trader and hunter, the cattle-raiser, the pioneer farmer—and the frontier has passed by."[24]

Americans, Turner said, had been forced by necessity to build a rough-hewn civilization out of the frontier, giving the nation its exceptional hustle and its democratic spirit and distinguishing North America from the stale monarchies of Europe. Moreover, the style of history Turner called for was democratic as well, arguing that the work of ordinary people (in this case, pioneers) deserved the same study as that of great statesmen.

But Turner looked ominously to the future. The Census Bureau in 1890 had declared the frontier closed. There was no longer a discernible line running north to south that, Turner said, any longer divided civilization from savagery. Turner worried for the the country's future: what would become of the United States without the safety valve of the frontier? It was a common sentiment. Theodore Roosevelt wrote to Turner that his essay "put into
shape a good deal of thought that has been floating around rather loosely."[25]

The history of the West was made by many persons and peoples. Turner's thesis was rife with faults, not only in its bald Anglo-Saxon chauvinism—in which nonwhites fell before the march of "civilization" and Chinese and Mexican immigrants were invisible—but in its utter inability to appreciate the impact of technology and government subsidies and large-scale economic enterprises alongside the work of hardy pioneers. Still, Turner's thesis held an almost canonical position among historians for much of the twentieth century and, more importantly, captured Americans' enduring romanticization of the West and the simplification of a long and complicated story into a march of progress.

VII. The US-Mexico Borderlands



For many cross-border communities, such as Nogales, pictured here, the U.S-Mexico border was little more than an imaginary line. Library of Congress.

American settlers populated all corners of the country. The American side of the US-Mexico border, for instance, developed rapidly after the destruction of Indigenous sovereignties and the arrival of the railroads in the late 1870s and 1880s.

Tens of thousands of Mexican laborers came north to build the rail lines. But traqueros were only one part of a broad economic explosion in border cities that became way stations for the rising extractive American investments in Mexico and economic centers all their own. After the railroads arrived, the population of San Diego jumped from little more than 2,500 in 1880 to over 16,000 just ten years later; El Paso jumped from under 1,000 to over 10,000.

Anglos and Mexicans both poured into the American borderlands. Connected to rapidly expanding American urban markets by the new rail networks, Anglo ranchers gobbled up lands up and down the border. Some came by their land honestly; others wrenched control from Mexican American landholders through the inaccessibility of Spanish and Mexican land grants and the exploitation of Anglo-friendly courts. And where the courts failed to dislodge recalcitrant Mexican-descended ranchers, intimidation might do the job: in South Texas, for instance, Richard King built the iconic King Ranch through shrewd business dealings, legal maneuverings, intimidation, and the enlistment of state power against anyone who stood in his way.

US Customs officers increasingly manned ports of entry and patrolled for Chinese immigrants seeking to bypass the restrictions of the Chinese Exclusion Act after 1882, but, otherwise, the border was largely open. In Texas, ferries and bridges carried travelers freely across the Rio Grande between cities and surrounding towns and ranchos. In the western half of the border, the international boundary was little more than a fictive line. Cities such as Nogales sprawled across the borderline between Sonora and the Arizona Territory. The border was largely imaginary. Many didn't even know where it was, exactly—beginning in 1891, the International Boundary Commission resurveyed the US-Mexico border, reconstructing the few dozen crumbling boundary markers that marked the purported location of the US-Mexico land border.

Many Mexicans and Mexican Americans resisted Anglo encroachment. Catarino Garza in South Texas and the Herrera brothers in New Mexico Territory, for instance, led popular uprisings that targeted Anglo ranchers and championed the grievances of Mexican Americans. Cross-border cattle raids, meanwhile, poached herds in the United States. Ranchers, enlisting the aid of law enforcement, the military, and vigilantes, suppressed Mexicans and Mexican Americans across the region. Captain John Gregory Bourke led a brutal military counterinsurgency campaign in South Texas during the "Garza War," for instance.[26]

Borderland violence was hardly finished but, by the turn of the century, economic development had nevertheless stitched the US-Mexico borderlands into a binational flow of goods, dollars, and people. Mexican Americans already had a long history in the United States, and, as the border region boomed, they asserted themselves more forcefully into American life—the dislocations of the Mexican Revolution would soon push enormous numbers of Mexicans northward beginning in 1910, but already by 1900, over half a million Mexican Americans lived north of the border.

VIII. Patterns of Foreign Interventions

The American expansionary impulse spilled far beyond the continental borders of the United States. 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 on a long history of exploration, trade, and cultural exchange to practice something that looked remarkably like empire—a coercive, self-interested, and acquisitive approach to the world beyond US borders. Understanding the imperial impulse in US history seeks to understand not only direct American interventions in such places as Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii, Guam, and Puerto Rico but also the deeper history of American engagement with the wider world and the subsequent ways in which American economic, political, and cultural power has shaped the actions, choices, and possibilities of other groups and nations.

American interventions in Mexico, China, and the Middle East reflected the United States' new eagerness to intervene in foreign governments to protect American economic interests abroad. The United States had long been involved in Pacific commerce. American ships had been traveling to China, for instance, since 1784. As a percentage of total American foreign trade, Asian trade remained comparatively small, and yet the idea that Asian markets were vital to American commerce affected American policy and, when those markets were threatened, prompted interventions.[27] In 1899, Secretary of State John Hay articulated the Open Door Policy, which called for all Western powers to have equal access to Chinese markets. Hay feared that other imperial powers—Japan, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia—planned to carve China into spheres of influence. It was in the economic interest of American business to maintain China for free trade. The following year, in 1900, American troops joined a multinational force that intervened to prevent the closing of trade by putting down the Boxer Rebellion, a movement opposed to foreign businesses and missionaries operating in China. President McKinley sent the US. Army without consulting Congress, setting a precedent for US presidents to order American troops to action around the world under their executive powers.[28]

The United States was not only ready to intervene in foreign affairs to preserve foreign markets, it was willing to take territory. The United States acquired its first Pacific territories with the Guano Islands Act of 1856. Guano—collected bird excrement—was a popular fertilizer integral to industrial farming. The act authorized and encouraged Americans to venture into the seas and claim islands with guano deposits for the United States. These acquisitions were the first insular, unincorporated territories of the United States: they were neither part of a state nor a federal district, and they were not on the path to ever attain such a status. The act, though little known, offered a precedent for future American acquisitions.[29]

Merchants, of course, weren't the only American travelers in the Pacific. Christian missionaries soon followed explorers and traders. The first American missionaries arrived in Hawaii in 1820 and China in 1830, for example. Missionaries, though, often worked alongside business interests, and American missionaries in Hawaii, for instance, obtained large tracts of land and started lucrative sugar plantations. During the nineteenth century, Hawaii was ruled by an oligarchy based on the sugar companies, together known as the "Big Five." This white American (haole) elite was extremely powerful, but it still operated outside the formal expression of American state power.[30]

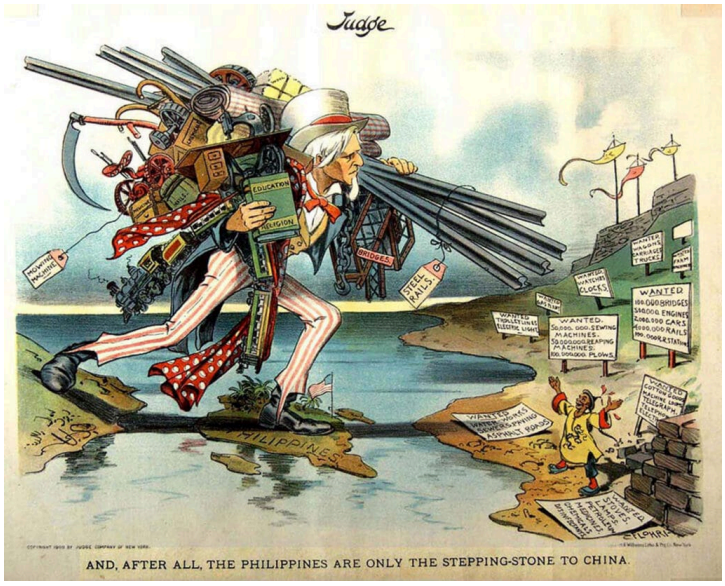
As many Americans looked for empire across the Pacific, others looked to Latin America. The United States, long a participant in an increasingly complex network of economic, social, and cultural interactions in Latin America, entered the late nineteenth century with a new aggressive and interventionist attitude toward its southern neighbors.

American capitalists invested enormous sums of money in Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during the long reign of the corrupt yet American-friendly regime of the modernization-hungry Mexican president Porfirio Díaz. American business interests controlled mines, smelters, plantations, railroads, and vast swaths of land. America's Gilded Age elite was deeply invested in Mexico, and, therefore, the United States was, too. In 1909, President Taft and Porfirio Díaz met along the El Paso–Juárez border, with diplomatic events on both sides of the Rio Grande, the first face-to-face meeting of the two nation's leaders and, aside from Theodore Roosevelt's 1906 trip to the Panama Canal Zone, the first time a sitting US president left American soil. Binational relations remained positive so long as Díaz's regime prostrated Mexico before American investors, but the scale of American investments in Mexico would propel American interventions after the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910.

American investments south of the Rio Grande—and their eventual sway over American foreign policy—typified a new, more globalized American presence. In 1867, Mark Twain traveled to the Middle East as part of a large tour group of Americans. In his satirical travelogue The Innocents Abroad, he wrote, "The people [of the Middle East] stared at us everywhere, and we [Americans] stared at them. We generally made them feel rather small, too, before we got done with them, because we bore down on them with America's greatness until we crushed them."[31] When Americans later intervened in the Middle East, they would do so convinced of their own superiority.

The US government had traditionally had little contact with the Middle East. Trade was limited, too limited for an economic relationship to be deemed vital to the national interest, but treaties were nevertheless signed between the US and powers in the Middle East. Still, the majority of American involvement in the Middle East prior to World War I came not in the form of trade but in education, science, and humanitarian aid. American missionaries led the way. The first Protestant missionaries had arrived in 1819. Soon the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the mission boards of the Reformed Church of America became dominant in missionary enterprises. Missions were established in almost every country of the Middle East, and even though their efforts resulted in relatively few converts, missionaries helped establish hospitals and schools, and their work laid the foundation for the establishment of Western-style universities, such as Robert College in Istanbul, Turkey (1863); the American University of Beirut (1866); and the American University of Cairo (1919).[32]

IX. 1898



Uncle Sam, loaded with implements of modern civilization, uses the Philippines as a stepping-stone to get across the Pacific to China (represented by a small man with open arms), who excitedly awaits Sam's arrival. With the expansionist policy gaining greater traction, the possibility for more imperialistic missions (including to conflict-ridden China) seemed strong. The cartoon might be arguing that such endeavors are worthwhile, bringing education, technological, and other civilizing tools to a desperate people. On the other hand, it could be read as sarcastically commenting on America's new propensity to "step" on others. "AND, AFTER ALL, THE PHILIPPINES ARE ONLY THE STEPPING-STONE TO CHINA," in Judge Magazine, 1900 or 1902. Wikimedia.

Although the United States had a long history of international economic, military, and cultural engagement that stretched back deep into the eighteenth century, the Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War (1898–1902) marked a crucial turning point in American interventions abroad. In pursuing war with Spain and then engaging in counterrevolutionary conflict in the Philippines, the United States expanded the scope and strength of its global reach. Over the next two decades, the United States would become increasingly involved in international politics, particularly in Latin America. These new conflicts and the ensuing territorial problems forced Americans to confront the ideological elements of imperialism. Should the United States act as an empire? Or were foreign interventions and the taking of territory antithetical to its founding democratic ideals? What exactly would be the relationship between the United States and its territories? And could colonial subjects be successfully and safely incorporated into the body politic as American citizens? The Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War brought these questions, which had always lurked behind discussions of American expansion, out into the open.

In 1898, Americans began in earnest to turn their attention southward to problems plaguing their neighbor Cuba. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Cubans had tried unsuccessfully to gain independence from Spain. The latest uprising, and the one that would prove fatal to Spain's colonial designs, began in 1895 and was still raging in the winter of 1898. By that time, in an attempt to crush the uprising, Spanish general Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau had been conducting a policy of -reconcentration—forcing Cubans living in certain cities to relocate en masse to military camps—for about two years. Prominent newspaper publishers sensationalized Spanish atrocities. Cubans in the United States and their allies raised cries of Cuba Libre! And while the US government proclaimed a wish to avoid armed conflict with Spain, President McKinley became increasingly concerned about the safety of American lives and property in Cuba. He ordered the battleship Maine to Havana Harbor in January 1898.

The Maine sat undisturbed in the harbor for about two weeks. Then, on the evening of February 15, a titanic explosion tore open the ship and sent it to the bottom of the ocean. Three-quarters of the ship's 354 occupants died. A naval board of inquiry immediately began an investigation to ascertain the cause of the explosion, but the loudest Americans had already decided that Spanish treachery was to blame. Capitalizing on the outrage, "yellow journals"—newspapers that promoted sensational stories, notoriously at the cost of accuracy—such as William Randolph Hearst's New York Journal called for war with Spain. When urgent negotiations failed to produce a mutually agreeable settlement, Congress officially declared war on April 25.

Although America's war effort began haphazardly, Spain's decaying military crumbled. Military victories for the United States came quickly. In the Pacific, on May 1, Commodore George Dewey engaged the Spanish fleet outside Manila, the capital of the Philippines (another Spanish colonial possession), destroyed it, and proceeded to blockade Manila Harbor. Two months later, American troops took Cuba's San Juan Heights in what would become the iconic battle of the war, winning fame not only for regular soldiers but also for the irregulars, especially Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders, the 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry. Roosevelt had been the assistant secretary of the navy but had resigned his position in order to see action in the war. His actions in Cuba made him a national celebrity. As disease began to eat away at American troops, the Spanish suffered the loss of Santiago de Cuba on July 17, effectively ending the war. The two nations agreed to a ceasefire on August 12 and formally signed the Treaty of Paris in December. The terms of the treaty stipulated, among other things, that the United States would acquire Spain's former holdings of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

Secretary of State John Hay memorably referred to the conflict as a "splendid little war," and at the time it certainly appeared that way. Fewer than four hundred Americans died in battle in a war that lasted about fifteen weeks. Contemporaries celebrated American victories as the providential act of God. The influential Brooklyn minister Lyman Abbott, for instance, declared that Americans were "an elect people of God" and saw divine providence in Dewey's victory at Manila.[33] Some, such as Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana, took matters one step further, seeing in American victory an opportunity for imperialism. In Beveridge's view, America had a "mission to perform" and a "duty to discharge" around the world.[34] What Beveridge envisioned was nothing less than an American empire.

But the question of whether the United States should become an empire was sharply debated across the nation in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and the acquisition of Hawaii in July 1898. At the behest of American businessmen who had overthrown the Hawaiian monarchy, the United States annexed the Hawaiian Islands and their rich plantations. Between Hawaii and a number of former Spanish possessions, many Americans coveted the economic and political advantages that increased territory would bring. Those opposed to expansion, however, worried that imperial ambitions did not accord with the nation's founding ideals. American actions in the Philippines brought all of these discussions to a head.

The Philippines were an afterthought of the Spanish-American War, but when the smoke cleared, the United States found itself in possession of a key foothold in the Pacific. After Dewey's victory over the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay, conversations about how to proceed occupied the attentions of President McKinley, political leaders from both parties, and the popular press. American and Philippine forces (under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo) were in communication: Would the Americans offer their support to the Filipinos and their ongoing efforts against the Spanish? Or would the Americans replace the Spanish as a colonial occupying force? American forces were instructed to secure Manila without allowing Philippine forces to enter the Walled City (the seat of the Spanish colonial government), hinting, perhaps, at things to come. Americans wondered what would happen next. Perhaps a good many ordinary Americans shared the bewildered sentiments of Mr. Dooley, the fictional Irish-American barkeeper whom humorist Finley Peter Dunne used to satirize American life: "I don't know what to do with th' Ph'lippeens anny more thin I did las' summer, befure I heerd tell iv thim. . . . We can't sell thim, we can't ate thim, an' we can't throw thim into the th' alley whin no wan is lookin'."[35]

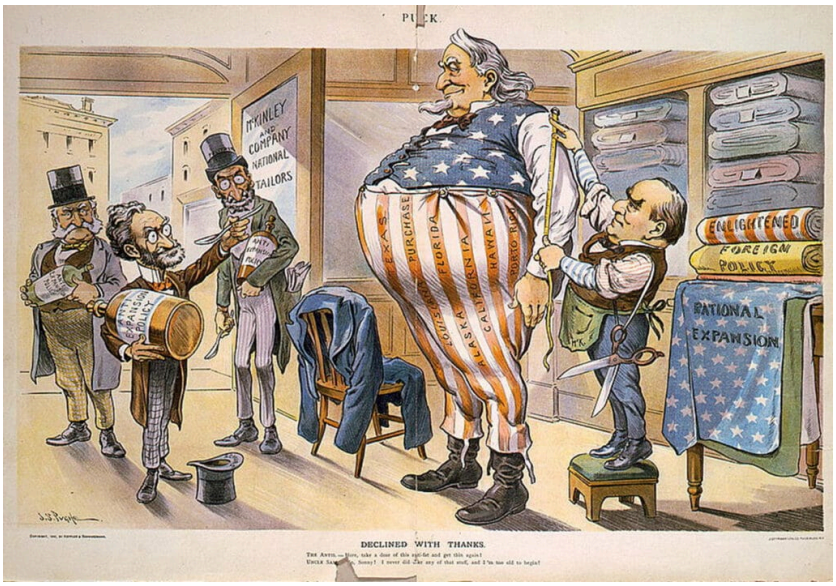
As debates about American imperialism continued against the backdrop of the upcoming presidential election, tensions in the Philippines escalated. Emilio Aguinaldo was inaugurated as president of the First Philippine Republic (sometimes called the Malolos Republic) in late January 1899; fighting between American and Philippine forces began in early February; and in April 1899, Congress ratified the 1898 Treaty of Paris, which concluded the Spanish-American War and gave Spain $20 million in exchange for the Philippine Islands.[36]

Like the Cubans, Filipinos had waged a long war against their Spanish colonizers. The United States could have given them the independence they had long fought for, but, instead, at the behest of President McKinley, the United States occupied the islands and from 1899 to 1902 waged a bloody series of conflicts against Filipino insurrectionists that cost far more lives than the war with Spain. Under the leadership of Aguinaldo, Filipinos who had fought for freedom against the Spanish now fought for freedom against the very nation that had claimed to have liberated them from Spanish tyranny.[37]

The Philippine Insurrection, or the Philippine-American War, was a brutal conflict of occupation and insurgency. Contemporaries

compared the guerrilla-style warfare in challenging and unfamiliar terrain to American experiences in the "Indian Wars" of the late nineteenth century. Many commented on its brutality and the uncertain mission of the American troops. An April 1899 dispatch from a Harper's Weekly correspondent began, "A week has passed—a week of fighting and marching, of jungles and rivers, of incident and adventure so varied and of so rapid transition that to sit down to write about it makes one feel as if he were trying to describe a dream where time, space, and all the logical sequences of ordinary life are upset in the unrelenting brutality of war."[38] John Bass described his experiences in detail, and his reportage, combined with accounts that came directly from soldiers, helped shape public knowledge about the war. Reports of cruelty on both sides and a few high-profile military investigations ensured continued public attention to events across the Pacific.

Amid fighting to secure the Philippine Islands, the federal government sent two Philippine Commissions to assess the situation in the islands and make recommendations for a civilian colonial government. A civilian administration, with William Howard Taft as the first governor-general (1901–1903), was established with military support. Although President Theodore Roosevelt declared the war to be over in 1902, resistance and occasional fighting continued into the second decade of the twentieth century.[37]



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. John S. Pughe, "Declined With Thanks," in Puck (September 5, 1900). Wikimedia.

Debates about American imperialism dominated headlines and tapped into core ideas about American identity and the proper role of the United States in the larger world. Should a former colony, established on the principles of freedom, liberty, and sovereignty, become itself a colonizer? What was imperialism, anyway? Many framed the Filipino conflict as a Protestant, civilizing mission. Others framed American imperialism in the Philippines as nothing new, as simply the extension of a never-ending westward American expansion. It was destiny, in short. Some saw imperialism as a way to reenergize the nation by asserting national authority and power around the globe. Others baldly recognized the opportunities the Philippine Islands presented for access to Asian markets. But critics grew loud. The American Anti-Imperialist League, founded in 1899 and populated by such prominent Americans as Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, and Jane Addams, protested American imperial actions and articulated a platform that decried foreign subjugation and upheld the rights of all to self-governance. Still others embraced anti-imperialist stances because of concerns about immigration and American racial identity, afraid that American purity stood imperiled by contact with strange and foreign peoples. For whatever reason, however, the onset or acceleration of imperialism was a controversial and landmark moment in American history. America had become a preeminent force in the world.

X. Theodore Roosevelt and American Imperialism



Teddy Roosevelt, a politician turned soldier, gained fame (and perhaps infamy) after he and his "Rough Riders" took San Juan Hill. Images like the poster praised Roosevelt and the battle as Americans celebrated this "splendid little war." "William H. West's Big Minstrel Jubilee," 1899. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...ugh_riders.jpg.

Under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt, the United States emerged from the nineteenth century with ambitious designs on global power through military might, territorial expansion, and economic influence. Though the Spanish-American War had begun under the administration of William McKinley, Roosevelt—the hero of San Juan Hill, assistant secretary of the navy, vice president, and now president—was arguably the most visible and influential proponent of American imperialism at the turn of the century. Roosevelt's emphasis on developing the American navy and on Latin America as a key strategic area of US foreign policy would have long-term consequences.

In return for Roosevelt's support of the Republican nominee, William McKinley, in the 1896 presidential election, McKinley appointed Roosevelt as assistant secretary of the navy. The head of the department, John Long, had a competent but lackadaisical managerial style that allowed Roosevelt a great deal of freedom, which he used to network with such luminaries as military theorists Alfred Thayer Mahan and naval officer George Dewey and politicians such as Henry Cabot Lodge and William Howard Taft. During his tenure he oversaw the construction of new battleships and the implementation of new technology and laid the groundwork for new shipyards, all with the goal of projecting America's power across the oceans. Roosevelt wanted to expand American influence. For instance, he advocated for the annexation of Hawaii for several reasons: it was within the American sphere of influence, it would deny Japanese expansion and limit potential threats to the West Coast, it had an excellent port for battleships at Pearl Harbor, and it would serve as a fueling station on the way to pivotal markets in Asia.[39]

Roosevelt, after winning headlines in the war, ran as vice president under McKinley and rose to the presidency after McKinley's assassination by the anarchist Leon Czolgosz in 1901. Among his many interventions in American life, Roosevelt acted with vigor to expand the military, bolstering naval power especially, to protect and promote American interests abroad. This included the construction of eleven battleships between 1904 and 1907. "Speak softly and carry a big stick," he said. Alfred Thayer Mahan's naval theories, described in his book The Influence of Sea Power upon History, influenced Roosevelt a great deal. In contrast to theories that advocated for commerce raiding, coastal defense, and small "brown water" ships, Mahan argued that the imperative to control the sea required battleships and a "blue water" navy that could engage and win decisive battles with rival fleets. As president, Roosevelt continued the policies he established as assistant secretary of the navy and expanded the US fleet. The mission of the Great White Fleet, sixteen all-white battleships that sailed around the world between 1907 and 1909, exemplified America's new power.[40]

Roosevelt insisted that the "big stick" and the persuasive power of the US military could ensure US hegemony over strategically important regions in the Western Hemisphere. The United States used military intervention in various circumstances to further its objectives, but it did not have the ability or the inclination to militarily impose its will on the entirety of South and Central America. As a result, the United States pivoted to informal methods of empire, often called "dollar diplomacy," to assert dominance over the hemisphere.

The United States actively intervened again and again in Latin America. Throughout his time in office, Roosevelt exerted US control over Cuba (even after it gained formal independence in 1902) and Puerto Rico, and he deployed naval forces to ensure Panama's independence from Colombia in 1903 in order to acquire the US Canal Zone. Furthermore, Roosevelt pronounced the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904, proclaiming US police power in the Caribbean. As articulated by President James Monroe in his annual address to Congress in 1823, the United States would treat any military intervention in Latin America by a European power as a threat to American security. Roosevelt reaffirmed the Monroe Doctrine and expanded it by declaring that the United States had the right to preemptive action through intervention in any Latin American nation in order to correct administrative and fiscal deficiencies.[41]

Roosevelt's policy justified numerous and repeated police actions in "dysfunctional" Caribbean and Latin American countries by US Marines and naval forces and enabled the founding of the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. This approach is sometimes referred to as "gunboat diplomacy," wherein naval forces and Marines land in a national capital to protect American and Western personnel, temporarily seize control of the government, and dictate policies friendly to American business, such as the repayment of foreign loans. For example, in 1905 Roosevelt sent the Marines to occupy the Dominican Republic and established financial supervision over the Dominican government. Imperialists often framed such actions as something close to humanitarian. They celebrated white Anglo-Saxon societies such as those found in the United States and the British Empire as advanced practitioners of nation-building and civilization, helping to uplift debtor nations in Latin America that lacked the manly qualities of discipline and self-control. Roosevelt, for instance, preached that it was the "manly duty" of the United States to exercise an international police power in the Caribbean and to spread the benefits of Anglo-Saxon civilization to inferior states populated by inferior peoples. The president's language, for instance, contrasted debtor nations' "impotence" with the United States' civilizing influence, articulating new ideas that associated self-restraint and social stability with Anglo-Saxon manliness.[42]

Dollar diplomacy offered a less costly method of empire and avoided the troubles of military occupation. Washington worked with bankers to provide loans to Latin American nations in exchange for some level of control over their national fiscal affairs. Roosevelt first implemented dollar diplomacy on a vast scale, while Presidents Taft and Wilson continued the practice in various forms during their administrations. All confronted instability in Latin America. Rising debts to European and American bankers allowed for the inroads of modern life but destabilized much of the region. Bankers, beginning with financial houses in London and New York, saw Latin America as an opportunity for investment. Lenders took advantage of the region's newly formed governments' need for cash and exacted punishing interest rates on massive loans, which were then sold off in pieces on the secondary bond market. American economic interests were now closely aligned with the region but also further undermined by the chronic instability of the region's newly formed governments, which were often plagued by mismanagement, civil wars, and military coups in the decades following their independence. Turnover in regimes interfered with the repayment of loans, as new governments often repudiated the national debt or forced a renegotiation with suddenly powerless lenders.[43]

Creditors could not force settlements of loans until they successfully lobbied their own governments to get involved and forcibly collect debts. The Roosevelt administration did not want to deny the Europeans' rightful demands of repayment of debt, but it also did not want to encourage European policies of conquest in the hemisphere as part of that debt collection. US policy makers and military strategists within the Roosevelt administration determined that this European practice of military intervention posed a serious threat to American interests in the region. Roosevelt reasoned that the United States must create and maintain fiscal and political stability within strategically important nations in Latin America, particularly those affecting routes to and from the proposed Panama Canal. As a result, US policy makers considered intervention in places like Cuba and the Dominican Republic a necessity to ensure security in the region.[44]

The Monroe Doctrine provided the Roosevelt administration with a diplomatic and international legal tradition through which it could assert a US right and obligation to intervene in the hemisphere. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine asserted that the United States wished to promote stable, prosperous states in Latin America that could live up to their political and financial obligations. Roosevelt declared that "wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may finally require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the United States cannot ignore this duty."[45] President Monroe declared what Europeans could not do in the Western Hemisphere; Roosevelt inverted his doctrine to legitimize direct US intervention in the region.[46]

Though aggressive and bellicose, Roosevelt did not necessarily advocate expansion by military force. In fact, the president insisted that in dealings with the Latin American nations, he did not seek national glory or expansion of territory and believed that war or intervention should be a last resort when resolving conflicts with problematic governments. According to Roosevelt, such actions were necessary to maintain "order and civilization."[47] Then again, Roosevelt certainly believed in using military power to protect national interests and spheres of influence when absolutely necessary. He also believed that the American sphere included not only Hawaii and the Caribbean but also much of the Pacific. When Japanese victories over Russia threatened the

regional balance of power, he sponsored peace talks between Russian and Japanese leaders, earning him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906.

XI. Women and American Imperialism



With great self-assurance of how she looks in her new hat, Columbia puts on her "Easter Bonnet" shaped as a warship labelled "World Power." By 1901, when this political cartoon was published, Americans were feeling rather confident in their position as a world leader. Ehrhart after sketch by Dalrymple, "Columbia's Easter bonnet", in Puck (April 6, 1901). Wikimedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Puck_cover2.jpg.

Debates over American imperialism revolved around more than just politics and economics and national self-interest. They also included notions of humanitarianism, morality, religion, and ideas of "civilization." And they included significant participation by American women.

In the fall of 1903, Margaret McLeod, age twenty-one, originally of Boston, found herself in Australia on family business and in need of income. Fortuitously, she made the acquaintance of Alexander MacWillie, the top salesman for the H. J. Heinz Company, who happened to be looking for a young lady to serve as a "demonstrator" of Heinz products to potential consumers. McLeod proved to be such an attractive purveyor of India relish and baked beans that she accompanied MacWillie on the rest of his tour of Australia and continued on to South Africa, India, and Japan. Wherever she went, this "dainty young girl with golden hair in white cap and tucker" drew attention to Heinz's products, but, in a much larger sense, she was also projecting an image of middle-class American domesticity, of pure womanhood. Heinz saw itself not only as purveying economical and healthful foodstuffs—it was bringing the blessings of civilization to the world.[48]

When commentators such as Theodore Roosevelt in his speech on "the strenuous life" spoke of America's overseas ventures, they generally gave the impression that this was strictly a masculine enterprise—the work of soldiers, sailors, government officials, explorers, businessmen, and scientists. But in fact, US imperialism, which focused as much on economic and cultural influence as on military or political power, offered a range of opportunities for white, middle-class, Christian women. In addition to working as representatives of American business, women could serve as missionaries, teachers, and medical professionals; as artists and writers they were also inspired by and helped transmit ideas about imperialism.

Moreover, the rhetoric of civilization that underlay imperialism was itself a highly gendered concept. According to the racial theory of the day, humans progressed through hierarchical stages of civilization in an orderly, linear fashion. Only Europeans and Americans had attained the highest level of civilization, which was superficially marked by whiteness but also included an industrial economy and a gender division in which men and women had diverging but complementary roles. Social and technological progress had freed women of the burdens of physical labor and elevated them to a position of moral and spiritual authority. White women thus potentially had important roles to play in US imperialism, both as symbols of the benefits of American civilization and as vehicles for the transmission of American values.[49]

Civilization, while often cloaked in the language of morality and Christianity, was very much an economic concept. The stages of civilization were primarily marked by their economic character (hunter-gatherer, agricultural, industrial), and the consumption of

industrially produced commodities was seen as a key moment in the progress of "savages" toward civilized life. Over the course of the nineteenth century, women in the West, for instance, had become closely associated with consumption, particularly of those commodities used in the domestic sphere. Thus it must have seemed natural for Alexander MacWillie to hire Margaret McLeod to "demonstrate" ketchup and chili sauce at the same time that she "demonstrated" white middle-class domesticity. By adopting the use of such progressive products in their homes, consumers could potentially absorb the very virtues of American civilization.[50]

In some ways, women's work in support of imperialism can be seen as an extension of the kind of activities many of them were already engaged in among working-class, immigrant, and Native American communities in the United States. Many white women felt that they had a duty to spread the benefits of Christian civilization to those less fortunate than themselves. American overseas ventures, then, merely expanded the scope of these activities—both literally, in that the geographical range of possibilities encompassed practically the entire globe, and figuratively, in that imperialism significantly raised the stakes of women's work. No longer only responsible for shaping the next generation of American citizens, white women now had a crucial role to play in the maintenance of civilization itself. They too would help determine whether civilization would continue to progress.

Of course, not all women were active supporters of US imperialism. Many actively opposed it. Although the most prominent public voices against imperialism were male, women made up a large proportion of the membership of organizations like the Anti-Imperialist League. For white women like Jane Addams and Josephine Shaw Lowell, anti-imperialist activism was an outgrowth of their work in opposition to violence and in support of democracy. Black female activists, meanwhile, generally viewed imperialism as a form of racial antagonism and drew parallels between the treatments of African Americans at home and, for example, Filipinos abroad. Indeed, Ida B. Wells viewed her anti-lynching campaign as a kind of anti-imperialist activism.

XII. Conclusion

While American imperialism abroad flared most brightly for a relatively brief time at the turn of the century, new imperial patterns perpetuated old practices and lived on into the twentieth century. The United States had concluded its long expansion of continental sovereignty, and the nation suddenly embraced its cultural, economic, and religious influence in the world, that, coupled with a newfound military power, exercised varying degrees of control over nations and peoples. Whether as formal subjects or unwilling partners on the receiving end of Roosevelt's "big stick," those who experienced US expansionist policies confronted new American ambitions. At home, debates over immigration and imperialism demonstrated how imperial actions, practices, and ideas were now intertwined in questions surrounding American culture and American politics. The geographies of empire were everywhere.

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This chapter was edited by Ellen Adams and Amy Kohout, with content contributions by Ellen Adams, Alvita Akiboh, Simon Balto, Jacob Betz, Lauren Brand, Carole Butcher, Tizoc Chavez, Morgan Deane, Dan Du, Josh Garrett-Davis, Pamela Gossin, Tracey Hanshew, Hidetaka Hirota, Amy Kohout, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Lindsay Stallones Marshall, Jose Juan Perez Melendez, Erik Moore, Gregory Moore, Nick Roland, David Schley, Emma Teitelman, and Alyce Webb.

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17: New Lives



"Mulberry Street, New York City," ca. 1900, Library of Congress

I. Introduction

The United States transformed itself in the decades after the Civil War. "My country in 1900 is something totally different from my own country of 1860. I am wholly a stranger in it," the patrician-historian Henry Adams wrote that year. "Neither I, nor anyone else, understands it."[1] The rise of cities, the acceleration of American immigration, the transformation of American labor, the 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 the 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: a new America plowed its way headlong into the twentieth century. But Americans struggled to navigate a world that, while rushing forward into "modernity," was nevertheless encumbered by the heavy baggage of its history. Immigrants struggled to fashion new lives in a new nation with increasingly nativistic attitudes, Black Americans pushed back against a country sliding into the "nadir" of its race relations, and women fought to carve out ever greater freedoms and opportunities. An increasingly popular national culture of play and amusement, meanwhile, threatened to smash Victorian Era norms.

II. A Nation of Immigrants



Immigrants on the deck of the steamer *Germanic*, 1887. Library of Congress.

To support fundraising efforts for the construction of the Statue of Liberty's pedestal in 1883, Emma Lazarus, a Jewish American poet from New York, wrote a sonnet, "The New Colossus," which described the statue, busy being constructed piece by piece in France, as the "Mother of Exiles" bearing "world-wide welcome." Lazarus finished the short poem with the lines:

> "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
>
> With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
>
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
>
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
>
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
>
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Between 1870 and 1920, over twenty-five million immigrants arrived in the United States. The earliest decades reflected demographic patterns established before the Civil War, but by the turn of the twentieth century, new immigrant groups such as Italians, Poles, and Eastern European Jews made up a larger percentage of arrivals than the Irish and Germans.

The specific reasons that immigrants left their particular countries and the reasons they came to the United States (what historians call push and pull factors) varied. For example, a young husband and wife living in Sweden in the 1880s and unable to purchase farmland might read an advertisement for inexpensive land in the American Midwest and immigrate to the United States to begin a new life. A young Italian man might simply hope to labor in a steel factory long enough to save up enough money to return home and purchase land for a family. A Russian Jewish family persecuted in European pogroms might look to the United States as a sanctuary. Small-scale Mexican farmers, pushed off communal lands by Porfirio Díaz's modernization laws, might travel to the American Southwest to labor in railroad construction or commercial farmwork. Or a Japanese migrant struggling to navigate his country's modernization might hear of fertile farming land on the West Coast and choose to sail for California. If many factors pushed people away from their home countries, by far the most important factor drawing immigrants was economics. Immigrants came to the United States looking for work.

Industrial capitalism was the most important factor that drew immigrants to the United States between 1880 and 1920. Immigrant workers labored in large industrial complexes producing goods such as steel, textiles, and food products, replacing smaller and more local workshops. The influx of immigrants, alongside a large movement of Americans from the countryside to the city, helped propel the rapid growth of cities like New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. By 1890, immigrants and their children accounted for roughly 60 percent of the population in most large northern cities (and sometimes as high as

80 or 90 percent). Many immigrants, especially from Italy and the Balkans, always intended to return home with enough money to purchase land. But what about those who stayed? Did the new arrivals assimilate together in the American melting pot—shedding their cultural heritage to mirror the lives of those already in the United States—or did they retain, and sometimes even strengthen, their traditional ethnic identities? The answer lies somewhere in between. Immigrants from specific countries—and often even specific communities—often clustered together in ethnic neighborhoods. They formed vibrant organizations and societies, such as Italian workmen's clubs, Eastern European Jewish mutual aid societies, and Polish Catholic churches, to ease the transition to their new American home. Immigrant communities published newspapers in dozens of languages and purchased spaces to keep their arts, languages, and traditions alive. And from these foundations they facilitated even more immigration: after staking out a claim to some corner of American life, they wrote home and encouraged others to follow them (historians call this chain migration).



Immigrants on an Atlantic liner, ca. 1906. Library of Congress.

As immigrants built urban enclaves that bridged their home countries and the United States, many struggled to find adequate housing amid low wages and severe housing shortages. In 1890, New York City journalist Jacob Riis published *How the Other Half Lives*, a scathing indictment of the living and working conditions in the city's slums. Riis not only vividly described the squalor he saw, he documented it with photography, giving readers an unflinching view of urban poverty. Riis's book led to housing reform in New York and other cities and helped instill the idea that society bore at least some responsibility for alleviating poverty.[2] Others, however, rejected the new Americans altogether.

Native-born Americans greeted the new arrivals with trepidation. Nativists opposed mass immigration for various reasons. Some felt that the new arrivals were unfit for American democracy and that Irish or Italian immigrants used violence or bribery to corrupt municipal governments. Others (often earlier immigrants themselves) worried that the arrival of even more immigrants would result in fewer jobs and lower wages. Such fears combined and resulted in anti-Chinese protests on the West Coast in the 1870s. Still others worried that immigrants brought with them radical ideas such as socialism, anarchism, and communism. These fears multiplied after the Chicago Haymarket affair in 1886, in which immigrants were accused of killing police officers in a bomb blast.[3]

In September 1876, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, a member of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities, gave an address in support of the introduction of regulatory federal immigration legislation at an interstate conference of charity officials in Saratoga, New York. Immigration might bring some benefits, but "it also introduces disease, ignorance, crime, pauperism and idleness." Sanborn thus advocated federal action to stop "indiscriminate and unregulated immigration."[4]

Sanborn's address was aimed at restricting only the immigration of paupers from Europe to the East Coast, but the idea of immigration restrictions was common across the United States in the late nineteenth century, when many variously feared that the influx of foreigners would undermine the racial, economic, and moral integrity of American society. From the 1870s to the 1920s, the federal government passed a series of laws limiting or discontinuing the immigration of particular groups, and the United States remained committed to regulating the kind of immigrants who would join American society. To critics, regulations legitimized racism, class bias, and ethnic prejudice as formal national policy.



Nativist sentiment intensified in the late nineteenth century as immigrants streamed into American cities to fuel the factory boom. "Uncle Sam's Lodging House" conveys this anti-immigrant attitude, with caricatured representations of Europeans, Asians, and African Americans creating a chaotic scene. Joseph Ferdinand Keppler, "Uncle Sam's lodging-house," in Puck (June 7, 1882). Wikimedia.

The first move for federal immigration control came from California, where racial hostility toward Chinese immigrants had mounted since the mid-nineteenth century. In addition to accusing Chinese immigrants of racial inferiority and unfitness for American citizenship, opponents claimed that they were also economically and morally corrupting American society with cheap labor and immoral practices, such as prostitution. Immigration restriction was necessary for the "Caucasian race of California," as one anti-Chinese politician declared, and for European Americans to "preserve and maintain their homes, their business, and their high social and moral position." In 1875, the anti-Chinese crusade in California moved Congress to pass the Page Act, which banned the entry of convicted criminals, Asian laborers brought against their will, and women imported "for the purposes of prostitution," a stricture designed chiefly to exclude Chinese women. Then, in May 1882, Congress suspended the immigration of all Chinese laborers with the Chinese Exclusion Act, making the Chinese the first immigrant group subject to admission restrictions on the basis of race. A year before Emma Lazarus penned her paean to America's "Mother of Exiles," US law created America's first illegal immigrants.[5]

On the other side of the country, Atlantic Seaboard states also facilitated the formation of federal immigration policy. Since the colonial period, East Coast states had regulated immigration through their own passenger laws, which prohibited the landing of destitute foreigners unless shipmasters prepaid certain amounts of money in support of those passengers. State-level control of pauper immigration developed into federal policy in the early 1880s. In August 1882, the same year it passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, Congress passed the Immigration Act, denying admission to people who were not able to support themselves and those, such as people with mental illnesses or convicted criminals, who might otherwise threaten the security of the nation.

The category of excludable people expanded continuously after 1882. In 1885, in response to American workers' complaints about cheap immigrant labor, Congress added foreign workers migrating under labor contracts with American employers to the list of excludable people. Six years later, the federal government included people who seemed likely to become wards of the state, people with contagious diseases, and polygamists, and made all groups of excludable people deportable. In 1903, those who would pose ideological threats to American republican democracy, such as anarchists and socialists, also became the subject of new immigration restrictions.

Many immigration critics were responding to the shifting demographics of American immigration. The center of immigrant-sending regions shifted from northern and western Europe to southern and eastern Europe and Asia. These "new immigrants" were poorer, were less likely to speak English, and were often Catholic or Jewish. White Protestant Americans typically regarded them as inferior, and American immigration policy began to reflect more explicit prejudice than ever before. One restrictionist declared that these immigrants were "races with which the English-speaking people have never hitherto assimilated, and who are most alien to the great body of the people of the United States." The increased immigration of people from southern and eastern Europe, such as Italians, Jews, Slavs, and Greeks, led directly to calls for tighter restrictive measures. In 1907, the immigration of Japanese laborers was practically suspended when the American and Japanese governments reached the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement, according to which Japan would stop issuing passports to working-class emigrants. In its forty-two-volume report of 1911, the US Immigration Commission highlighted the impossibility of incorporating these new immigrants into American society.

The report stressed their supposed innate inferiority, asserting that they were the causes of rising social problems in America, such as poverty, crime, prostitution, and political radicalism.[6]

The assault on many immigrants' Catholicism provides an excellent example of the challenges immigrant groups faced in the United States. By 1900, Catholicism in the United States had grown dramatically in size and diversity, from 1 percent of the population a century earlier to the largest religious denomination in America (though still outnumbered by Protestants as a whole). As a result, Catholics in America faced two intertwined challenges: one external, related to Protestant anti-Catholicism, and the other internal, having to do with the challenges of assimilation.

Externally, the Church and its members remained an "outsider" religion in a nation that continued to see itself as culturally and religiously Protestant. Torrents of anti-Catholic literature and scandalous rumors maligned Catholics. Many Protestants doubted whether Catholics could ever make loyal Americans because they supposedly owed primary allegiance to the pope.

Internally, Catholics in America faced the question every immigrant group has had to answer: to what extent should they become more like native-born Americans? This question was particularly acute, as Catholics encompassed a variety of languages and customs. Beginning in the 1830s, Catholic immigration to the United States had exploded with the increasing arrival of Irish and German immigrants. Subsequent Catholic arrivals from Italy, Poland, and other Eastern European countries chafed at Irish dominance over the Church hierarchy. Mexican and Mexican American Catholics, whether recent immigrants or incorporated into the nation after the Mexican-American War, expressed similar frustrations. Could all these different Catholics remain part of the same Church?

Catholic clergy approached this situation from a variety of perspectives. Some bishops advocated rapid assimilation into the English-speaking mainstream. These "Americanists" advocated an end to "ethnic parishes"—the unofficial practice of permitting separate congregations for Poles, Italians, Germans, and so on—in the belief that such isolation only delayed immigrants' entry into the American mainstream. They anticipated that the Catholic Church could thrive in a nation that espoused religious freedom—if only they assimilated. Meanwhile, however, more conservative clergy cautioned against assimilation. While they conceded that the United States had no official religion, they felt that Protestant notions of the separation of church and state and of licentious individual liberty posed a threat to the Catholic faith. They further saw ethnic parishes as an effective strategy protecting immigrant communities and worried that Protestants would use public schools to attack the Catholic faith. Eventually, the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Leo XIII, weighed in on the controversy. In 1899, he sent a special letter (an encyclical) to an archbishop in the United States. Leo reminded the Americanists that the Catholic Church was a unified global body and that American liberties did not give Catholics the freedom to alter church teachings. The Americanists denied any such intention, but the conservative clergy claimed that the pope had sided with them. The tension between Catholicism and American life, however, would continue well into the twentieth century.[7]

The American encounter with Catholicism—and Catholicism's encounter with America—testified to the tense relationship between native-born and foreign-born Americans and to the larger ideas Americans used to situate themselves in a larger world, a world of empire and immigrants.

In the US-Mexico borderlands, Mexicans and Mexican Americans navigated this new world. By 1900, roughly five hundred thousand individuals of Mexican descent lived in the United States, primarily in the border states of California and Texas and, prior to statehood in 1912, the Territories of New Mexico and Arizona. Many had arrived in recent decades, attracted by employment with the railroads or the new commercial farms and ranches rapidly sweeping through the borderlands (perhaps more than a million came during the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution that gripped the country beginning in 1910). But others had deep roots in the land stretching back to the Mexican Republic and the Spanish Empire. They had not crossed the border, the saying goes: the border had crossed them.

As more and more Anglos poured into the borderlands, Mexican Americans navigated a new racial regime that segregated ethnic Mexican communities, especially those who were poorer, those who had darker skin, and Spanish-speakers. In Texas, for instance, Jim Crow met the US-Mexico borderlands. Anti-Mexican segregation—referred to by some historians as "Juan Crow"—was not nearly as systematic and totalizing as anti-Black Jim Crow segregation, but it nevertheless hit communities up and down the Rio Grande and all along the broader US-Mexico border. Ethnic Mexicans resisted. Like immigrant communities in American cities, they formed mutual aid societies (mutualistas), such as the Alianza Hispano-Americana, across the American Southwest. They organized against acts of violence, fought in court, and otherwise maneuvered to assert their political and economic rights, rooting a twentieth-century civil rights struggle.

As the experience of native-born Mexican Americans showed, historical claims to the land were no guarantor of rights. In 1911, a group of highly educated Native Americans organized the Society of American Indians.[8] SAI's primary goal was US

citizenship—full, modern, and dynamic participation in American life alongside freedom from abusive federal and state powers.[9] SAI members included Zitkála-Šá, or Gertrude Bonnin (Yankton Dakota), Sherman Coolidge (Arapaho), Dr. Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai Apache), and others.[10] And yet, not all Native peoples sought inclusion through American citizenship: opponents included Clinton Rickard (Tuscarora) and Isleta Pueblo leader Pablo Abeita, who feared further erosion of Native sovereignty. Their battles would ultimately shape the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, granting birthright citizenship to Native American while protecting communal property holdings.

III: Urbanization



Wabash Avenue, Chicago, c1907. Library of Congress, LC-D4-70163.

British author Rudyard Kipling visited Chicago in 1889. He described a city captivated by technology and blinded by greed. It was a rushed and crowded city, a "huge wilderness" with "scores of miles of these terrible streets" and their "hundred thousand of these terrible people." "The show impressed me with a great horror," he wrote. "There was no color in the street and no beauty—only a maze of wire ropes overhead and dirty stone flagging under foot." He took a cab, and "the cabman said that these things were the proof of progress." Kipling visited a "gilded and mirrored" hotel "crammed with people talking about money, and spitting about everywhere." He went to extravagant churches and spoke with their congregants. "I listened to people who said that the mere fact of spiking down strips of iron to wood, and getting a steam and iron thing to run along them was progress, that the telephone was progress, and the network of wires overhead was progress. They repeated their statements again and again." Kipling said American newspapers report "that the snarling together of telegraph-wires, the heaving up of houses, and the making of money is progress."[11]



State Street, south from Lake Street, Chicago, 1900–1910. Library of Congress.

Chicago embodied the triumph of American industrialization. Its meatpacking industry typified the sweeping changes occurring in American life. The last decades of the nineteenth century, a new era for big business, saw the formation of large corporations, run by trained bureaucrats and salaried managers, doing national and international business. Chicago, for instance, became America's butcher. The Chicago meat processing industry, a cartel of five firms, produced four-fifths of the meat bought by American consumers. Kipling described in intimate detail the Union Stock Yards, the nation's largest meat processing zone, a square mile just southwest of the city whose pens and slaughterhouses linked the city's vast agricultural hinterland to the nation's dinner tables. "Once having seen them," he concluded, "you will never forget the sight." Like other notable Chicago industries, such as agricultural machinery and steel production, the meatpacking industry was closely tied to urbanization and immigration. In 1850, Chicago had a population of about thirty thousand. Twenty years later, it had three hundred thousand. Nothing could stop the city's growth. The Great Chicago Fire leveled 3.5 square miles and left a third of its residents homeless in 1871, but the city quickly recovered and resumed its spectacular growth. By the turn of the twentieth century, the city was home to 1.7 million people.



Clam seller, Mulberry Bend, New York City, ca. 1900. Library of Congress.

Chicago's explosive growth reflected national trends. In 1870, a quarter of the nation's population lived in towns or cities with populations greater than 2,500. By 1920, a majority did. But if many who flocked to Chicago and other American cities came from rural America, many others emigrated from overseas. Mirroring national immigration patterns, Chicago's newcomers had at first come mostly from Germany, the British Isles, and Scandinavia, but, by 1890, Poles, Italians, Czechs, Hungarians, Lithuanians, and

others from southern and eastern Europe made up a majority of new immigrants. Chicago, like many other American industrial cities, was also an immigrant city. In 1900, nearly 80 percent of Chicago's population was either foreign-born or the children of foreign-born immigrants.[12]

Kipling visited Chicago just as new industrial modes of production were revolutionizing the United States. Industry pulled ever more Americans into cities. Manufacturing needed the labor pool and the infrastructure, so cities exploded with growth. America's urban population increased sevenfold in the half century after the Civil War. Soon the United States had more large cities than any country in the world.

Many cities' politics adapted to their soaring immigrant populations. The infamous urban political machines often operated as a kind of mutual aid society. New York City's Democratic Party machine, popularly known as Tammany Hall, drew the greatest ire from critics and seemed to embody all of the worst of city machines, but it also responded to immigrant needs. In 1903, journalist William Riordon published a book, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall, which chronicled the activities of ward heeler George Washington Plunkitt. Plunkitt elaborately explained to Riordon the difference between "honest graft" and "dishonest graft": "I made my pile in politics, but, at the same time, I served the organization and got more big improvements for New York City than any other livin' man." While exposing corruption, Riordon also revealed the hard work Plunkitt undertook on behalf of his largely immigrant constituency. On a typical day, Riordon wrote, Plunkitt was awakened at 2 a.m. to bail out a saloonkeeper who stayed open too late, was awakened again at 6 a.m. because of a fire in the neighborhood and spent time finding lodgings for the families displaced by the fire, and, after spending the rest of the morning in court to secure the release of several of his constituents, found jobs for four unemployed men, attended an Italian funeral, visited a church social, and dropped in on a Jewish wedding. He returned home at midnight.[13]

Tammany Hall's corruption, especially under the reign of William "Boss" Tweed, was legendary, but the public works projects that funded Tammany Hall's graft also provided essential infrastructure and public services for the city's rapidly expanding population. Water, sewer, and gas lines; schools, hospitals, civic buildings, and museums; police and fire departments; roads, parks (notably Central Park), and bridges (notably the Brooklyn Bridge): all could, in whole or in part, be credited to Tammany's reign. Still, machine politics could never be enough. As the urban population exploded, many immigrants found themselves trapped in crowded, crime-ridden slums. Americans eventually took notice of this urban crisis and proposed municipal reforms but also grew concerned about the declining quality of life in rural areas.

While cities boomed, rural worlds languished. Some Americans scoffed at rural backwardness and reveled in the countryside's decay, but many romanticized the countryside, celebrated rural life, and wondered what had been lost in the cities. Sociologist Kenyon Butterfield, concerned by the sprawling nature of industrial cities and suburbs, regretted the eroding social position of rural citizens and farmers: "Agriculture does not hold the same relative rank among our industries that it did in former years." Butterfield saw "the farm problem" as part of "the whole question of democratic civilization."[14] He and many others thought the rise of the cities and the fall of the countryside threatened traditional American values. Many proposed conservation. Liberty Hyde Bailey, a botanist and rural scholar selected by Theodore Roosevelt to chair the federal Commission on Country Life in 1907, believed that rural places and industrial cities were linked: "Every agricultural question is a city question."[15]

Many longed for a middle path between the cities and the country. New suburban communities on the outskirts of American cities defined themselves in opposition to urban crowding. Americans contemplated the complicated relationships between rural places, suburban living, and urban spaces. Los Angeles became a model for the suburban development of rural places. Dana Barlett, a social reformer in Los Angeles, noted that the city, stretching across dozens of small towns, was "a better city" because of its residential identity as a "city of homes."[16] This language was seized upon by many suburbs that hoped to avoid both urban sprawl and rural decay. In Glendora, one of these small towns on the outskirts of Los Angeles, local leaders were "loath as anyone to see it become cosmopolitan." Instead, in order to have Glendora "grow along the lines necessary to have it remain an enjoyable city of homes," they needed to "bestir ourselves to direct its growth" by encouraging not industry or agriculture but residential development.[17]

IV. Black Life and "The New South"

At the turn of the twentieth century, roughly 90 percent of African Americans in the United States lived in the South. The Black community consisted of two groups in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era: a large working class and a smaller segment of middle-class professionals often referred to as "colored society." In the South the majority of African Americans worked in agriculture, although 85 percent did not own their own land. The options for farming included share tenantry, where an individual or family paid a portion of the crop as rent; sharecropping, where the farmer would labor for a share of profits minus cost-of-

living expenses; or as a basic wage laborer. Outside of agriculture, the options for Black working-class men were limited to jobs that white men refused to do. For example, they found jobs as street cleaners, porters on trains, barbers for a white clientele, and laborers in industries such as lumber, mining, iron, or steel.[18] It was not unusual for children or teenagers to supplement family income by doing odd jobs for white people. Author Richard Wright, who grew up in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas in the early twentieth century, recalled working as a small child to help pay his mother's rent and alleviate the gnawing hunger that plagued him throughout his childhood. He carted wood to feed hot stoves in restaurants, delivered pressed clothing to hotel guests, swept floors in retail stores, carried lunches to men who labored on the railroad, and performed a variety of chores for white women in their homes, among other things. The social rules of the Jim Crow South, or what is called "racial etiquette," required that African Americans always be deferential toward white people. This included never questioning whites' authority, claiming superior knowledge to a white person, laughing at whites' behavior, or suggesting that white people were lying. Wright remembered how mentally exhausting he found it to work in a white home, noting, "I was tense each moment, trying to anticipate their wishes and avoid a curse"; over time, "the nervous strain, the fear that my actions would call down upon my head a storm of curses was even more damaging."[19]

Employment opportunities for African American women were more limited. In Atlanta, Georgia, for example, 90 percent of Black women served as domestics in the early twentieth century. Working-class Black women toiled as cooks, housekeepers, and child nursemaids in white homes seven days a week, from sunup to sundown, for exceedingly low wages. Occasionally, they might find domestic employment in boarding houses, hotels, and other commercial settings. Inside the white home, southerners expected that Black women, like their male counterparts, would follow "racial etiquette." But unlike Black men, women had to contend with sexual harassment and assault by men in white households. Beginning in the 1870s and 1880s, a Black woman who desired to avoid the dangers and unpleasantness of white homes could work as a laundress. Before the age of industrial laundry, this job was incredibly grueling. It involved hauling water and firewood, making soap from lye, using batting sticks to move the laundry, scrubbing clothing on washboards, and collecting beeswax to use on heavy irons. Because laundresses did not live inside white homes, they retained freedom over their personhood. In 1881 three thousand laundresses in Atlanta formed the Washing Society and defiantly initiated a strike for higher wages and a uniform rate. Despite arrests and fines, they succeeded in their quest. The washerwoman strike inspired other working-class Black men and women to go on strike, including Black waiters at the National Hotel in Atlanta.[20]

Middle-class African Americans also encountered limitations. Because Black men had been excluded from politics by disfranchisement and both Black men and women faced social restrictions imposed by de jure (by law) and de facto (by custom or tradition) segregation, they retreated into their own world. Ironically, the Jim Crow era created new opportunities for middle-class African Americans to build their own companies and businesses designed to serve a segregated Black community. They established funeral homes, insurance companies, banks, and mercantile stores in cities across the South. Black men frequently served as educators, journalists, and clergymen. In 1887 Isaiah Montgomery and his cousins, who had been formerly enslaved, founded an all-Black town in Mississippi known as Mound Bayou. With a community of four thousand, it was a remarkable, if unusual, accomplishment. One resident of the town proudly noted, "Everything here was Negro from the symbols of law and authority and the man who ran the bank down to the fellow who drove the road scraper. That gave us kids a sense of security and power and pride that colored kids didn't get anywhere else."[21]

Many prominent white southerners, hungry for northern investments, pretended that the South's "racial problem" had been solved. "There was a South of slavery and secession," Atlanta Constitution editor Henry Grady proclaimed in an 1886 speech in New York. "That South is dead."[22] Grady captured the sentiment of many white southern business and political leaders who imagined a New South that could turn its back on the past by embracing industrialization and diversified agriculture. He promoted the region's economic possibilities and mutual future prosperity through an alliance of northern capital and southern labor. Grady and other New South boosters hoped to shape the region's economy in the North's image. They wanted industry and they wanted infrastructure. But the past could not be escaped. Economically and socially, the "New South" would still be much like the old.



The ambitions of Atlanta, seen in the construction of grand buildings like the Kimball House Hotel, reflect the larger regional aspirations to thrive in this so-called era of the "New South." Photograph of the second Kimball House scanned from an 1890 book. Wikimedia.

A "New South" seemed an obvious need. The Confederacy's failed insurrection wreaked havoc on the southern economy and crippled southern prestige. Property was destroyed. Lives were lost. Political power vanished. And four million enslaved Americans—representing the wealth and power of the antebellum white South—threw off their chains and walked proudly forward into freedom.

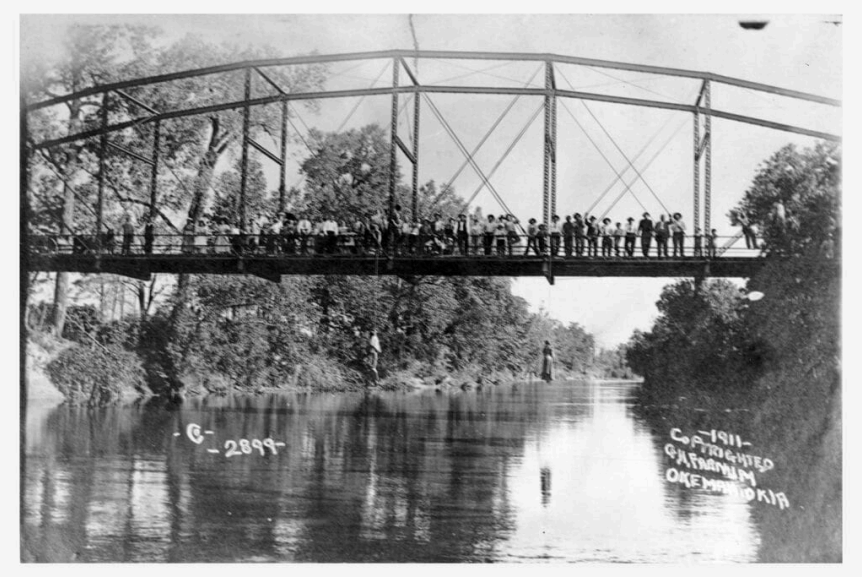
Emancipation unsettled the southern social order. When Reconstruction regimes attempted to grant freedpeople full citizenship rights, anxious whites struck back. From their fear, anger, and resentment they lashed out, not only in organized terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan but in political corruption, economic exploitation, and violent intimidation. White southerners took back control of state and local governments and used their reclaimed power to disenfranchise African Americans and pass Jim Crow laws segregating schools, transportation, employment, and various public and private facilities. The reestablishment of white supremacy after the "redemption" of the South from Reconstruction contradicted the proclamations of a "New" South. Perhaps nothing harked so forcefully back to the barbaric southern past than the wave of lynchings—the extralegal murder of individuals by vigilantes—that washed across the South after Reconstruction. Whether for actual crimes or fabricated crimes or for no crimes at all, white mobs murdered roughly five thousand African Americans between the 1880s and the 1950s.

Lynching was not just murder, it was a ritual rich with symbolism. Victims were not simply hanged, they were mutilated, burned alive, and shot. Lynchings could become carnivals, public spectacles attended by thousands of eager spectators. Rail lines ran special cars to accommodate the rush of participants. Vendors sold goods and keepsakes. Perpetrators posed for photos and collected mementos. And it was increasingly common. One notorious example occurred in Georgia in 1899. Accused of killing his white employer and raping the man's wife, Sam Hose was captured by a mob and taken to the town of Newnan. Word of the impending lynching quickly spread, and specially chartered passenger trains brought some four thousand visitors from Atlanta to witness the gruesome affair. Members of the mob tortured Hose for about an hour. They sliced off pieces of his body as he screamed in agony. Then they poured a can of kerosene over his body and burned him alive.[23]

At the barbaric height of southern lynching, in the last years of the nineteenth century, southerners lynched two to three African Americans every week. In general, lynchings were most frequent in the Cotton Belt of the Lower South, where southern Black people were most numerous and where the majority worked as tenant farmers and field hands on the cotton farms of white landowners. The states of Mississippi and Georgia had the greatest number of recorded lynchings: from 1880 to 1930, Mississippi lynch mobs killed over five hundred African Americans; Georgia mobs murdered more than four hundred.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of prominent southerners openly supported lynching, arguing that it was a necessary evil to punish Black rapists and deter others. In the late 1890s, Georgia newspaper columnist and noted women's rights activist Rebecca Latimer Felton—who would later become the first woman to serve in the US Senate—endorsed such extrajudicial killings. She said, "If it takes lynching to protect women's dearest possession from drunken, ravening beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week."[24] When opponents argued that lynching violated victims' constitutional rights, South Carolina governor Coleman Blease angrily responded, "Whenever the Constitution comes between me and the virtue

of the white women of South Carolina, I say to hell with the Constitution."[25]



This photograph shows the lynching of Laura and Lawrence Nelson on May 25, 1911 in Okemah, Oklahoma. One of thousands of lynchings throughout the South in the late nineteenth and century twentieth centuries, this particular case of the lynching of a mother and son garnered national attention. In response, the local white newspaper in Okemah simply wrote, "while the general sentiment is adverse to the method, it is generally thought that the negroes got what would have been due them under due process of law." (The Okemah Ledger, May 4, 1911) George H. Farnum (photographer), Photograph, May 25, 1911. Wikimedia.

Black activists and white allies worked to outlaw lynching. Ida B. Wells, an African American woman born in the last years of slavery and a pioneering anti-lynching advocate, lost three friends to a lynch mob in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1892. That year, Wells published Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases, a groundbreaking work that documented the South's lynching culture and exposed the myth of the Black rapist.[26] The Tuskegee Institute and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) both compiled and publicized lists of every reported lynching in the United States. In 1918, Representative Leonidas Dyer of Missouri introduced federal anti-lynching legislation that would have made the local counties where lynchings took place legally liable for such killings. Throughout the early 1920s, the Dyer Bill was the subject of heated political debate, but, fiercely opposed by southern congressmen and unable to win enough northern champions, the proposed bill was never enacted.

Lynching was not the only form of racial violence that survived Reconstruction. White political violence continued to follow African American political participation and labor organization, however severely circumscribed. When the Populist insurgency created new opportunities for Black political activism, white Democrats responded with terror. In North Carolina, Populists and Republicans "fused" together and won stunning electoral gains in 1896. Shocked White Democrats formed "Red Shirt" groups—paramilitary organizations dedicated to eradicating Black political participation and restoring Democratic rule through violence and intimidation. Launching a self-described "white supremacy campaign" of violence and intimidation against Black voters and officeholders during the 1898 state elections, the Red Shirts effectively took back state government. But municipal elections were not held that year in Wilmington, North Carolina, where Fusionists controlled the city government. After manning armed barricades blocking Black voters from entering the town to vote in the state elections, the Red Shirts drafted a "White Declaration of Independence" which declared "that that we will no longer be ruled and will never again be ruled, by men of African origin." Four hundred and fifty-seven white Democrats signed the document. They also issued a twelve-hour ultimatum that the editor of the city's Black daily paper flee the city. The editor left, but it wasn't enough. Twelve hours later, hundreds of Red Shirts raided the city's armory and ransacked the newspaper office anyway. The mob swelled and turned on the city's Black neighborhood, destroying homes and businesses and opening fire on any Black person they found. Dozens were killed and hundreds more fled the city. The mob then forced the mayor, the city's aldermen, and the police chief, at gunpoint, to immediately resign. To ensure their gains, the Democrats rounded up prominent fusionists, placed them on railroad cars, and, under armed guard, sent them out of the state. The mob installed and swore in their own replacements. It was a full-blown coup.

Lynching and organized terror campaigns were only the violent worst of the South's racial world. Discrimination in employment and housing and the legal segregation of public and private life also reflected the rise of the new segregationist South. Jim Crow laws legalized what custom had long dictated. Southern states and municipalities enforced racial segregation in public places and in private lives. Separate coach laws were some of the first such laws to appear, beginning in Tennessee in the 1880s. Soon schools, stores, theaters, restaurants, bathrooms, and nearly every other part of public life were segregated. So, too, were social

lives. The sin of racial mixing also had to be heavily guarded against. Marriage laws regulated against interracial couples, and white men, ever anxious of relationships between Black men and white women, passed miscegenation laws and justified lynching as an appropriate extralegal tool to police the racial divide.

In politics, de facto limitations of Black voting had suppressed Black voters since Reconstruction. Whites stuffed ballot boxes and intimidated Black voters with physical and economic threats. And then, from roughly 1890 to 1908, southern states put these new codes on the books, implementing de jure disfranchisement. They passed laws requiring voters to pass literacy tests (which could be judged arbitrarily) and pay poll taxes (which hit poor white and poor Black Americans alike), effectively denying Black men the franchise that was supposed to have been guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment. Those responsible for such laws posed as reformers and justified voting restrictions as for the public good, a way to clean up politics by purging purportedly corrupt African Americans from the voting rolls.

With white supremacy secured, prominent white southerners looked outward for support. New South boosters hoped to confront post-Reconstruction uncertainties by rebuilding the South's economy and convincing the nation that the South could be more than an economically backward, race-obsessed backwater. And as they did, they began to retell the history of the recent past. A kind of civic religion known as the "Lost Cause" glorified the Confederacy and romanticized the Old South. White southerners looked forward while simultaneously harking back to a mythic imagined past inhabited by contented and loyal slaves, benevolent and generous masters, chivalric and honorable men, and pure and faithful southern belles. Secession, they said, had little to do with the institution of slavery, and soldiers had fought only for home and honor, not the continued ownership of human beings. The New South, then, would be built physically with new technologies, new investments, and new industries, but undergirded by political and social custom.

Henry Grady might have declared the Confederate South dead, but its memory pervaded the thoughts and actions of white southerners. Lost Cause champions overtook the South. Women's groups, such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, joined with Confederate veterans to preserve a pro-Confederate past. They built Confederate monuments and celebrated Confederate veterans on Memorial Day. Across the South, towns erected statues of General Robert E. Lee and other Confederate figures. By the turn of the twentieth century, the idealized Lost Cause past was entrenched not only in the South but across the country. In 1905, for instance, North Carolinian Thomas F. Dixon published a novel, The Clansman, that depicted the Ku Klux Klan as heroic defenders of the South against the corruption of African American and northern "carpetbag" misrule during Reconstruction. In 1915, acclaimed film director D. W. Griffith adapted Dixon's novel into the groundbreaking blockbuster film *The Birth of a Nation*, which almost singlehandedly rejuvenated the Ku Klux Klan. The romanticized version of the antebellum South and the distorted version of Reconstruction dominated popular imagination.[27]

While Lost Cause defenders mythologized their past, New South boosters struggled to wrench the South into the modern world. The railroads became their focus. The region had lagged behind the North in the railroad building boom of the mid-nineteenth century, and postwar expansion facilitated connections between the most rural segments of the population and the region's rising urban areas. Boosters campaigned for the construction of new hard-surfaced roads as well, arguing that improved roads would further increase the flow of goods and people and entice northern businesses to relocate to the region. The rising popularity of the automobile after the turn of the century only increased pressure for the construction of reliable roads between cities, towns, county seats, and the vast farmlands of the South.

Along with new transportation networks, New South boosters continued to promote industrial growth. The region witnessed the rise of various manufacturing industries, predominantly textiles, tobacco, furniture, and steel. While agriculture—cotton in particular—remained the mainstay of the region's economy, these new industries provided new wealth for owners, new investments for the region, and new opportunities for the exploding number of landless farmers to finally flee the land. Industries offered low-paying jobs but also opportunities to the rural poor who could no longer sustain themselves through subsistence farming. Men, women, and children all moved into wage work. At the turn of the twentieth century, nearly one fourth of southern mill workers were children aged six to sixteen.

In most cases, as in most aspects of life in the New South, new factory jobs were racially segregated. Better-paying jobs were reserved for whites, while the most dangerous, labor-intensive, dirtiest, and lowest-paying positions were relegated to African Americans. African American women, shut out of most industries, found employment most often as domestic help for white families. As poor as white southern mill workers were, southern Black people were poorer. Some white mill workers could even afford to pay for domestic help in caring for young children, cleaning houses, doing laundry, and cooking meals. The mill villages that grew up alongside factories were whites-only, and African American families were pushed to the outer perimeter of the settlements.

That a "New South" emerged in the decades between Reconstruction and World War I is debatable. If measured by industrial output and railroad construction, the New South was a reality but if measured relative to the rest of the nation, the effect was

limited. If measured in terms of racial discrimination, however, the New South looked much like the Old one. Boosters such as Henry Grady said the South was done with racial questions, but lynching and segregation and the institutionalization of Jim Crow exposed the South's lingering racial obsessions. Meanwhile, most southerners still toiled in agriculture and still lived in poverty. Industrial development and expanding infrastructure, rather than re-creating the South, coexisted easily with white supremacy and an impoverished agricultural economy. The trains came, factories were built, and capital was invested, but the region remained mired in poverty and racial apartheid. Much of the "New South," then, was anything but new.

V. Gender, Religion, and Culture



Cab stand at Madison Square, New York City, ca. 1900. Library of Congress.

In 1905, Standard Oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller donated $100,000 (about $2.5 million today) to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Rockefeller was the richest man in America but also one of the most hated and mistrusted. Even his admirers conceded that he had achieved his wealth through often illegal and usually immoral business practices. Journalist Ida Tarbell had made waves describing Standard Oil's long-standing ruthlessness and predilections for political corruption. Clergymen, led by reformer Washington Gladden, fiercely protested the donation. A decade earlier, Gladden had asked of such donations, "Is this clean money? Can any man, can any institution, knowing its origin, touch it without being defiled?" Gladden said, "In the cool brutality with which properties are wrecked, securities destroyed, and people by the hundreds robbed of their little all to build up the fortunes of the multi-millionaires, we have an appalling revelation of the kind of monster that a human being may become."[28]

Despite widespread criticism, the board accepted Rockefeller's donation. Board president Samuel Capen did not defend Rockefeller, arguing that the gift was charitable and the board could not assess the origin of every donation, but the dispute shook Capen. Was a corporate background incompatible with a religious organization? The "tainted money" debate reflected questions about the proper relationship between religion and capitalism. With rising income inequality, would religious groups be forced to support either the elite or the disempowered? What was moral in the new industrial United States? And what obligations did wealth bring? Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie popularized the idea of a "gospel of wealth" in an 1889 article, claiming that "the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth" was the moral obligation of the rich to give to charity.[29] Farmers and labor organizers, meanwhile, argued that God had blessed the weak and that new Gilded Age fortunes and corporate management were inherently immoral. As time passed, American churches increasingly adapted themselves to the new industrial order. Even Gladden came to accept donations from the Gilded Age elite, such as the Baptist John D. Rockefeller, who increasingly touted the morality of business.

Secular knowledge-seeking and Gilded Age dollars increasingly muscled out the traditional role of religion in American higher education as well. The Gilded Age elite funneled their fortunes into new elite private institutions. The Morrill Land Grants of 1862 and 1890 subsidized new schools that emphasized practical knowledge in science, engineering, and agriculture. The 1890 version of the legislation also provided for Black colleges in states with segregated universities, nine years after Booker T. Washington founded the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, a model of Black vocational education that Washington championed across the South and much of the country. Daniel Coit Gilman, meanwhile, borrowed the models of research-based graduate education from

German universities—a popular destination for elite Americans who studied abroad—when he presided over the newly established Johns Hopkins University in 1876. At Harvard, educational reformer Charles William Elliot advocated for and modeled for the nation the replacement of a strictly guided classical curriculum with a more open-ended and practical-minded elective system. At the same time, women occupied a larger and larger percentage of American college students, either as students at separate women's colleges or, increasingly, at coeducational institutions. Such trends, in many ways, mirrored emerging social and cultural forces in America, and women's greater presence in American life—as typified by higher education—became sites for public discussion over the fate of traditional American masculinity.[30]

The economic and social changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—including increased urbanization, immigration, advancements in science and technology, patterns of consumption and the new availability of goods, and new awareness of economic, racial, and gender inequalities—challenged traditional gender norms. At the same time, urban spaces and shifting cultural and social values presented new opportunities to challenge traditional gender and sexual norms. Many women, carrying on a campaign that stretched long into the past, vied for equal rights. They became activists: they targeted municipal reforms, launched labor rights campaigns, and, above all, bolstered the suffrage movement.

Urbanization and immigration fueled anxieties that the old social mores were being subverted and that old forms of social and moral policing were becoming increasingly inadequate. The anonymity of urban spaces presented an opportunity in particular for female sexuality and for male and female sexual experimentation along a spectrum of orientations and gender identities. Anxiety over female sexuality reflected generational tensions and differences, as well as racial and class ones. As young women pushed back against social mores through premarital sexual exploration and expression, social welfare experts and moral reformers labeled such girls feeble-minded, believing even that such unfeminine behavior could be symptomatic of clinical insanity rather than free-willed expression. Generational differences exacerbated the social and familial tensions provoked by shifting gender norms. Youths challenged the norms of their parents' generations by donning new fashions and enjoying the delights of the city. Women's fashion loosed its physical constraints: corsets relaxed and hemlines rose. The newfound physical freedom enabled by looser dress was also mimicked in the pursuit of other freedoms.



Women on the beach at Coney Island, New York, 1899. Library of Congress.

Victoria Woodhull was perhaps the most famous advocate of women's rights in the years immediately following the war and emancipation. Woodhull, who made her name (and fortune) as the first woman to run a stock brokerage firm, became the first woman to address Congress in 1871. The previous year, women had been excluded from the Fifteenth Amendment (barring voter discrimination on the basis of race). In a speech before the House Judiciary Committee, she argued that, according to the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, women had a constitutional right to vote. After her electrifying talk, a delegation of women lobbied congressmen for suffrage "with a ferocity never known before."[31] One year later, Woodhull ran for president as the nominee of the Equal Rights Party, becoming the first woman to run for the office.

Woodhull also promoted "voluntary motherhood" for married women, who, she argued, had the right to plan and control their reproduction. But if wives could choose when to become pregnant, critics argued they had a right to refuse sex to their husbands. At a time when husbands were presumed to have unfettered access to their wives' bodies and the modern concept of "marital

rape" did not exist, this was a radical demand. "Perhaps it may be denied that women are slaves, sexually, sold and delivered to man. But I tell you, as a class, that they are," Woodhull wrote. "Refuse to yield to the sexual demands of your legal master, and ten to one he will turn you into the street, or in lieu of this, perhaps, give you personal violence, even compelling you to submit by force."[32] For many Gilded Age women, control over their sexual and reproductive lives constituted an important part of their push for social and political rights.

A moral panic surrounding birth control and pornography, exacerbated by women's push for greater political and sexual rights, sparked the passage of the Comstock Act in 1873, named after Anthony Comstock, a Christian moral reformer who won broad powers as a special agent of the US Postal Service to censor the mail for "obscene" material. The law punished the senders of any material with hard labor and heavy fines—Comstock specifically targeted Victoria Woodhull, for instance, who was arrested for disseminating information on birth control. Comstock, a zealous defender of his law, defined "obscene" broadly as anything from pornography to pamphlets for women with information on how to control their reproductive processes. The Comstock Law testified to dueling forces in American life: a push for greater women's political and reproductive rights and the newfound power of a repressive "moral politics."

While many women worked to liberate themselves, many, sometimes simultaneously, worked to uplift others. Women's work against alcohol propelled temperance into one of the foremost moral reforms of the period. Middle-class, typically Protestant women based their assault on alcohol on the basis of their feminine virtue, Christian sentiment, and their protective role in the family and home. Others, like Jane Addams and settlement house workers, sought to impart a middle-class education on immigrant and working-class women through the establishment of settlement homes. Other reformers touted "scientific motherhood": the new science of hygiene was deployed as a method of both social uplift and moralizing, particularly of working-class and immigrant women.



Taken a few years after the publication of "The Yellow Wallpaper," this portrait photograph shows activist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's feminine poise and respectability even as she sought massive change for women's place in society. An outspoken supporter of women's rights, Gilman's works challenged the supposedly "natural" inferiority of women. Her short stories, novels, and poetry have been an inspiration to feminists for over a century. Photograph, 1895. Wikimedia.

Women vocalized new discontents through literature. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" attacked the "naturalness" of feminine domesticity and critiqued Victorian psychological remedies administered to women, such as the "rest cure." Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, set in the American South, likewise criticized the domestic and familial role ascribed to women by society and gave expression to feelings of malaise, desperation, and desire. Such literature directly challenged the status quo of the Victorian era's constructions of femininity and feminine virtue, as well as established feminine roles.

While many men worried about female activism, they worried too about their own masculinity. To many anxious observers, industrial capitalism was withering American manhood. Rather than working on farms and in factories, where young men formed physical muscle and spiritual grit, new generations of workers labored behind desks, wore white collars, and, in the words of Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, appeared "black-coated, stiff-jointed, soft-muscled, [and] paste-complexioned."[33] Neurologist George Beard even coined a medical term, neurasthenia, for a new emasculated condition marked by depression, indigestion, hypochondria, and extreme nervousness. The philosopher William James called it simply "Americanitis." Academics

increasingly warned that America had become a nation of emasculated men.

Churches too worried about feminization. Women had always comprised a clear majority of church memberships in the United States, but now, Washington Gladden said, “A preponderance of female influence in the Church or anywhere else in society is unnatural and injurious.” Many feared that the feminized church had feminized Christ himself. Rather than a rough-hewn carpenter, Jesus had been made “mushy” and “sweetly effeminate,” in the words of Baptist minister Walter Rauschenbusch. Advocates of a so-called muscular Christianity sought to stiffen young men’s backbones by putting them back in touch with their primal manliness. Pulling from contemporary developmental theory, they believed that young men ought to evolve as civilization evolved, advancing from primitive nature-dwelling to modern industrial enlightenment. To facilitate “primitive” encounters with nature, muscular Christians founded summer camps and outdoor boys’ clubs like the Woodcraft Indians, the Sons of Daniel Boone, and the Boy Brigades—all precursors of the Boy Scouts. Other champions of muscular Christianity, such as the newly formed Young Men’s Christian Association, built gymnasiums, often attached to churches, where youths could strengthen their bodies as well as their spirits. It was a YMCA leader who coined the term bodybuilding; others invented the sports of basketball and volleyball.[34]

Muscular Christianity, though, was about even more than building strong bodies and minds. Many advocates also ardently championed Western imperialism, cheering on attempts to civilize non-Western peoples. Gilded Age men were encouraged to embrace a particular vision of masculinity connected intimately with the rising tides of nationalism, militarism, and imperialism. Contemporary ideals of American masculinity at the turn of the century developed in concert with the United States’ imperial and militaristic endeavors in the West and abroad. During the Spanish-American War in 1898, Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders embodied the idealized image of the tall, strong, virile, and fit American man that simultaneously epitomized the ideals of power that informed the United States’ imperial agenda. Roosevelt and others like him believed that a reinvigorated masculinity would preserve the American race’s superiority against foreign foes and the effeminizing effects of overcivilization.



Young men at the beach, ca. 1905. Library of Congress.

But while many fretted about traditional American life, others lost themselves in new forms of mass culture. Vaudeville heralded a new world of American popular culture. Comprising a variety of stage entertainments, these traveling circuit shows first appeared during the Civil War, peaking between 1880 and 1920. Vaudeville shows featured comedians, musicians, actors, jugglers, and other talents that could captivate an audience. Unlike earlier rowdy acts meant for a male audience that included alcohol, vaudeville was considered family-friendly, “polite” entertainment, though the acts involved offensive ethnic and racial caricatures of African Americans and recent immigrants. Vaudeville performances were often small and quirky, though venues such as the renowned Palace Theatre in New York City signaled true stardom for many performers. Popular entertainers such as silent film star Charlie Chaplin and magician Harry Houdini made names for themselves on the vaudeville circuit. But if live entertainment still captivated audiences, others looked to entirely new technologies.



Visitors enjoy Luna Park, one of the original amusement parks on Brooklyn's famous Coney Island, ca. 1915. At the turn of the twentieth century, amusement-hungry Americans flocked to new entertainments. Library of Congress (LC-B2- 2240-13).

By the turn of the century, two technologies pioneered by Edison—the phonograph and motion pictures—stood ready to revolutionize leisure and help create the mass entertainment culture of the twentieth century. The phonograph was the first reliable device capable of recording and reproducing sound. But it was more than that. The phonograph industry could create multiple copies of recordings, sparking a great expansion of the market for popular music. Although the phonograph was a technical success, Edison at first had trouble developing commercial applications for it. He thought it might be used for dictation: recording audio letters, preserving the speeches and dying words of great men, or teaching elocution. He did not anticipate that its greatest use would be in the field of mass entertainment, but Edison's sales agents soon reported that many phonographs were being used for just that, especially in so-called phonograph parlors, where customers could pay a nickel to hear a piece of music. By the turn of the century, Americans were purchasing phonographs for home use. Entertainment became the phonograph's major market.

Inspired by the success of the phonograph as an entertainment device, Edison decided in 1888 to develop "an instrument which does for the Eye what the phonograph does for the Ear." In 1888, he patented the concept of motion pictures. By 1891, he was exhibiting a motion-picture camera (a kinetograph) and a viewer (a kinetoscope). By 1894, the Edison Company had produced about seventy-five films suitable for sale and viewing. They could be viewed through a small eyepiece in an arcade or parlor. They were short, typically about three minutes long. Many of the early films depicted athletic feats and competitions. One 1894 film, for example, showed a six-round boxing match. The catalog description gave a sense of the appeal it had for male viewers: "Full of hard fighting, clever hits, punches, leads, dodges, body blows and some slugging." Other early kinetoscope subjects included Indian dances, nature and outdoor scenes, re-creations of historical events, and humorous skits. By 1896, the Edison Vitascope could project film, shifting audiences away from arcades and pulling them into theaters. Edison's film catalog meanwhile grew in sophistication. He sent filmmakers to distant and exotic locales like Japan and China. Long-form fictional films created a demand for "movie stars," such as the glamorous Mary Pickford, the swashbuckling Douglas Fairbanks, the acrobatic comedian Buster Keaton, who began to appear in the popular imagination beginning around 1910. Alongside professional boxing and baseball, the film industry was creating the modern culture of celebrity that would characterize twentieth-century mass entertainment.[35]

VI. Conclusion



Visitors to the Columbian Exposition of 1893 take in the Court of Honor from the roof of the Manufacturers Building. Art Institute of Chicago, via Wikimedia.

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago was a sensation. A grand concourse of more than a dozen stately Beaux Arts–style buildings showcasing American industrial, artistic, and scientific achievements lined the beautifully manicured fairgrounds alongside Lake Michigan. A midway, flush with amusements, featured the world's first Ferris Wheel.[36] Nearly two hundred other buildings brought the world to America's doorstep. Meanwhile, Buffalo Bill set up his popular Wild West show just outside the fairgrounds. The fair embodied dreams of American power and progress. The Auditorium Theatre's America pageant traced a heroic arc of American history: It recreated Columbus's voyage, the Plymouth Plantation, and the Revolutionary War before showing a "Grand Ballet of Arts and Sciences" and a "Grand Ballet of American Inventions." And it embodied its limits: the fair's exhibits trafficked in racial stereotypes, and Black Americans' poor representation at the fair infuriated Frederick Douglass and other Black leaders. And yet, the fair captured the imagination of millions: over twenty-million visitors came to Chicago for it. Its extravagance, its amusements, its social failings: the Exposition embodied the United States on the eve of the twentieth century.



Designers of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago used a Neoclassical architectural style to build what was known as The White City. The integrated design of buildings, walkways, and landscapes was extremely influential in the burgeoning City Beautiful movement. The Fair itself was a huge success, bringing more than 27 million people to Chicago and helping to establish the ideology of American exceptionalism. Photograph of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893. Wikimedia.

After enduring four bloody years of warfare and a strained, decade-long effort to reconstruct the defeated South, the United States abandoned itself to industrial development. Businesses expanded in scale and scope. The nature of labor shifted. A middle class rose. Wealth concentrated. Immigrants crowded into the cities, which grew upward and outward. The Jim Crow South stripped away the vestiges of Reconstruction, and New South boosters papered over the scars. Industrialists hunted profits. Evangelists appealed to people's morals. Consumers lost themselves in new goods and new technologies. Women emerging into new urban spaces embraced new social possibilities. By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States, in all of its many facets, had been radically transformed. And the transformations continued to ripple outward into the West and overseas, and inward into radical protest and progressive reforms. For Americans at the twilight of the nineteenth century and the dawn of the twentieth, a bold new world loomed.

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This chapter was edited by David Hochfelder, with content contributions by Jacob Betz, Anne Gray Fischer, David Hochfelder, Gerard Koeppel, Scott Libson, Kyle Livie, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Paul Matzko, Isabella Morales, Natalie J. Ring, Andrew Robichaud, Kate Sohasky, Joseph Super, Susan Thomas, Shawn Varghese, Kaylynn Washnock, and Kevin Young.

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18: The Progressive Era



From an undated William Jennings Bryan campaign print, “Shall the People Rule?” Library of Congress.

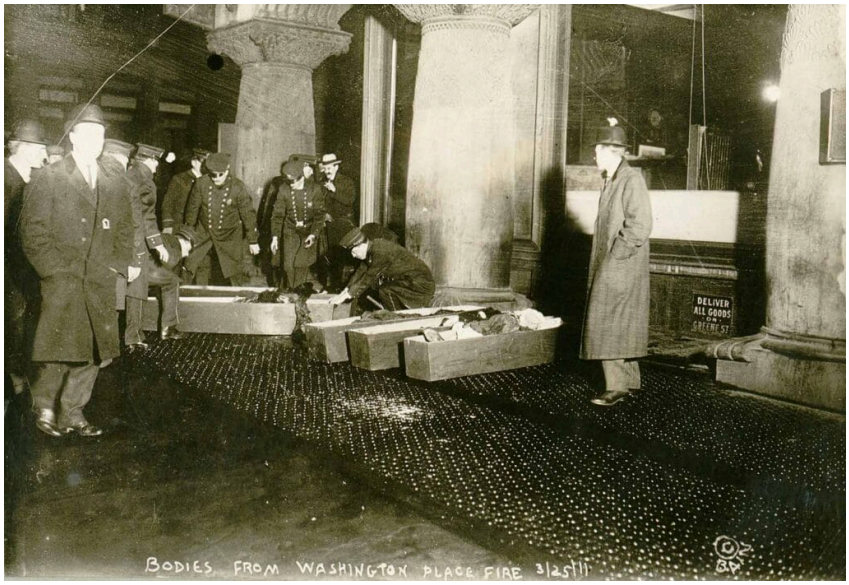
I. Introduction

“Never in the history of the world was society in so terrific flux as it is right now,” wrote Jack London in *The Iron Heel*, his 1908 dystopian novel in which a corporate oligarchy comes to rule the United States. He wrote, “The swift changes in our industrial system are causing equally swift changes in our religious, political, and social structures. An unseen and fearful revolution is taking place in the fiber and structure of society. One can only dimly feel these things, but they are in the air, now, today.”[1]

The many problems associated with the Gilded Age—the rise of unprecedented fortunes and unprecedented poverty, controversies over imperialism, urban squalor, all but open 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. 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. Americans had many different ideas about how the country’s development should be managed and whose interests required the greatest protection. Reformers sought to clean up politics; Black Americans continued their long struggle for civil rights; women demanded the vote with greater intensity while also demanding a more equal role in society at large; and workers demanded higher wages, safer workplaces, and the union recognition that would guarantee these rights. Whatever the goals, reform became the word of the age, and the sum of their efforts, whatever their ultimate impact or original intentions, gave the era its name.

II. Mobilizing for Reform



Photographs like this one made real the potential atrocities resulting from unsafe working conditions, as policemen place the bodies of workers burnt alive in the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire into coffins. "Bodies from Washington Place fire, Mar 1911," March 25, 1911. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98502780/.

In 1911 the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Manhattan caught fire. The doors of the factory had been chained shut to prevent employees from taking unauthorized breaks (the managers who held the keys saved themselves but left over two hundred women behind). A rickety fire ladder on the side of the building collapsed immediately. Women lined the rooftop and windows of the ten-story building and jumped, landing in a "mangled, bloody pulp." Life nets held by firemen tore at the impact of the falling bodies. Among the onlookers, "women were hysterical, scores fainted; men wept as, in paroxysms of frenzy, they hurled themselves against the police lines." By the time the fire burned itself out, 71 workers were injured and 146 had died.[2]

A year before, the Triangle workers had gone on strike demanding union recognition, higher wages, and better safety conditions. Remembering their workers' "chief value," the owners of the factory decided that a viable fire escape and unlocked doors were too expensive and called in the city police to break up the strike. After the 1911 fire, reporter Bill Shepherd reflected, "I looked upon the heap of dead bodies and I remembered these girls were shirtwaist makers. I remembered their great strike last year in which the same girls had demanded more sanitary conditions and more safety precautions in the shops. These dead bodies were the answer."[3] Former Triangle worker and labor organizer Rose Schneiderman said, "This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers . . . the life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred! There are so many of us for one job, it matters little if 140-odd are burned to death."[4] After the fire, Triangle owners Max Blanck and Isaac Harris were brought up on manslaughter charges. They were acquitted after less than two hours of deliberation. The outcome continued a trend in the industrializing economy that saw workers' deaths answered with little punishment of the business owners responsible for such dangerous conditions. But as tragedies mounted and working and living conditions worsened and inequality grew, it became increasingly difficult to develop justifications for this new modern order.

Events such as the Triangle Shirtwaist fire convinced many Americans of the need for reform, but the energies of activists were needed to spread a new commitment to political activism and government interference in the economy. Politicians, journalists, novelists, religious leaders, and activists all raised their voices to push Americans toward reform.

Reformers turned to books and mass-circulation magazines to publicize the plight of the nation's poor and the many corruptions endemic to the new industrial order. Journalists who exposed business practices, poverty, and corruption—labeled by Theodore Roosevelt as "muckrakers"—aroused public demands for reform. Magazines such as McClure's detailed political corruption and economic malfeasance. The muckrakers confirmed Americans' suspicions about runaway wealth and political corruption. Ray Stannard Baker, a journalist whose reports on US Steel exposed the underbelly of the new corporate capitalism, wrote, "I think I can understand now why these exposure articles took such a hold upon the American people. It was because the country, for years, had been swept by the agitation of soap-box orators, prophets crying in the wilderness, and political campaigns based upon charges of corruption and privilege which everyone believed or suspected had some basis of truth, but which were largely

unsubstantiated."[5]

Journalists and other writers shaped popular perceptions of Gilded Age injustice. In 1906, Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*, a novel dramatizing the experiences of a Lithuanian immigrant family who moved to Chicago to work in the stockyards. Although Sinclair intended the novel to reveal the brutal exploitation of labor in the meatpacking industry, and thus to build support for the socialist movement, its major impact was to lay bare the entire process of industrialized food production. The growing invisibility of slaughterhouses and livestock production for urban consumers had enabled unsanitary and unsafe conditions. "The slaughtering machine ran on, visitors or no visitors," wrote Sinclair, "like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory."[6] Sinclair's exposé led to the passage of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906.

Edward Bellamy's 1888 *Looking Backward*, one of the most popular novels of the nineteenth century, enthralled Gilded Age readers. In it, a man falls asleep in Boston in 1887 and awakens in 2000 to find society radically altered. Poverty and disease and competition give way as new industrial armies cooperate to build a utopia of social harmony and economic prosperity. Bellamy's vision of a reformed society enthralled readers, inspired hundreds of Bellamy clubs, and pushed many young readers onto the road to reform.[7] It led countless Americans to question the realities of American life in the nineteenth century. As Dr. Leete orates late in the book:

> "I am aware that you called yourselves free in the nineteenth century. The meaning of the word could not then, however, have been at all what it is at present, or you certainly would not have applied it to a society of which nearly every member was in a position of galling personal dependence upon others as to the very means of life, the poor upon the rich, or employed upon employer, women upon men, children upon parents."[8]



Jacob Riis, "Home of an Italian Ragpicker," 1896. Wikimedia.

But Americans were urged to action not only by books and magazines but by preachers and theologians, too. Confronted by both the benefits and the ravages of industrialization, many Americans asked themselves, "What Would Jesus Do?" In 1896, Charles Sheldon, a Congregational minister in Topeka, Kansas, published *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* The novel told the story of Henry Maxwell, a pastor in a small Midwestern town one day confronted by an unemployed migrant who criticizes his congregation's lack of concern for the poor and downtrodden. Moved by the man's plight, Maxwell preaches a series of sermons in which he asks his congregation: "Would it not be true, think you, that if every Christian in America did as Jesus would do, society itself, the business world, yes, the very political system under which our commercial and government activity is carried on, would be so changed that human suffering would be reduced to a minimum?"[9] Sheldon's novel became a bestseller, not only because of its story but because the book's plot connected with a new movement transforming American religion: the social gospel.

Emphasizing the need for Christians to be concerned for the salvation of society, and not simply individual souls, the social gospel emerged within Protestant Christianity at the end of the nineteenth century. Instead of just caring for family or fellow church members, social gospel advocates encouraged Christians to engage society; challenge social, political, and economic structures; and help those less fortunate than themselves. Responding to the developments of the industrial revolution in America and the

increasing concentration of people in urban spaces, with its attendant social and economic problems, some social gospelers went so far as to advocate a form of Christian socialism, but all urged Americans to confront the sins of their society.

One of the most notable advocates of the social gospel was Walter Rauschenbusch. After graduating from Rochester Theological Seminary in 1886, Rauschenbusch accepted the pastorate of a German Baptist church in the Hell's Kitchen section of New York City, where he confronted rampant crime and stark poverty, problems not adequately addressed by the political leaders of the city. Rauschenbusch joined with fellow reformers to elect a new mayoral candidate, but he also realized that a new theological framework was needed to reflect his interest in society and its problems. He revived Jesus's phrase, "the Kingdom of God," claiming that it encompassed every aspect of life and made every part of society the purview of the proper Christian. Like Charles Sheldon's fictional Rev. Maxwell, Rauschenbusch believed that every Christian, whether they were a businessperson, a politician, or a stay-at-home parent, should ask themselves what they could do to enact the kingdom of God on Earth:

The social gospel is the old message of salvation, but enlarged and intensified. The individualistic gospel has taught us to see the sinfulness of every human heart and has inspired us with faith in the willingness and power of God to save every soul that comes to him. But it has not given us an adequate understanding of the sinfulness of the social order and its share in the sins of all individuals within it. It has not evoked faith in the will and power of God to redeem the permanent institutions of human society from their inherited guilt of oppression and extortion. Both our sense of sin and our faith in salvation have fallen short of the realities under its teaching. The social gospel seeks to bring men under repentance for their collective sins and to create a more sensitive and more modern conscience. It calls on us for the faith of the old prophets who believed in the salvation of nations.[10]

Glaring blind spots persisted within the proposals of most social gospel advocates. As men, they often ignored the plight of women. Most refused to support women's suffrage. Many were also silent on the plight of African Americans, Native Americans, and other oppressed minority groups. However, the writings of Rauschenbusch and other social gospel proponents had a profound influence on twentieth-century American life. Most immediately, they fueled progressive reform. But they also inspired future activists, including Martin Luther King Jr., who envisioned a "beloved community" that resembled Rauschenbusch's "Kingdom of God."

III. Women's Movements



Suffragettes campaigned tirelessly for the vote in the first two decades of the twentieth century, taking to the streets in public displays like this 1915 pre-election parade in New York City. During this one event, 20,000 women defied the gender norms that tried to relegate them to the private sphere and deny them the vote. Photograph, 1915. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...parade_NYC.jpg.

Reform opened up new possibilities for women's activism in American public life and gave new impetus to the long campaign for women's suffrage. Much energy for women's work came from female "clubs," social organizations devoted to various purposes. Some focused on intellectual development; others emphasized philanthropic activities. Increasingly, these organizations looked outward, to their communities and to the place of women in the larger political sphere.

Women's clubs flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1890s, women formed national women's club

federations. Particularly significant in campaigns for suffrage and women's rights were the General Federation of Women's Clubs (formed in New York City in 1890) and the National Association of Colored Women (organized in Washington, D.C., in 1896), both of which were dominated by upper-middle-class, educated, northern women. Few such organizations were biracial, a legacy of the sometimes uneasy mid-nineteenth-century relationship between socially active African Americans and white women. Rising American prejudice led many white female activists to ban African American women from their organizations entirely.

Black women produced vibrant organizations that could promise racial uplift and civil rights for all Black Americans as well as equal rights for all women. Black abolitionist Mary Jane Richardson Jones organized Black women in Chicago around settlement work, moral uplift, and suffrage. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, who had also worked for abolition and suffrage, worked with club women in Boston and organized, in 1895, the First National Conference of the Colored Women of America. The following year, Mary Church Terrell and other Black activists formed the National Association of Colored Women, later known as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. These leagues of service-oriented women's organizations provided powerful networks to organize and amplify Black women's efforts not only to secure suffrage but to challenge discrimination and uplift Black communities across the United States.[11]

Other women worked through churches and moral reform organizations to clean up American life. And still others worked as moral vigilantes. The fearsome Carrie A. Nation, an imposing woman who believed she worked God's will, won headlines for destroying saloons. In Wichita, Kansas, on December 27, 1900, Nation took a hatchet and broke bottles and bars at the luxurious Carey Hotel. Arrested and charged with causing $3,000 in damages, Nation spent a month in jail before the county dismissed the charges on account of "a delusion to such an extent as to be practically irresponsible." But Nation's "hatchetation" drew national attention. Describing herself as "a bulldog running along at the feet of Jesus, barking at what He doesn't like," she continued her assaults, and days later she smashed two more Wichita bars.[12]

Few women followed in Nation's footsteps; many more worked within more reputable organizations. Nation, for instance, had founded a chapter of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, but the organization's leaders described her as "unwomanly and unchristian" after her "hatchetation." The WCTU was founded in 1874 as a modest temperance organization devoted to combating the evils of drunkenness. But then, from 1879 to 1898, Frances Willard invigorated the organization by transforming it into a national political organization, embracing a "do everything" policy that adopted any and all reasonable reforms that would improve social welfare and advance women's rights. WCTU women worked to alleviate urban poverty, pursued prison reform, championed the eight-hour workday, pushed for child labor laws, advocated "home protection," and fought for several other progressive causes. Temperance, and then the full prohibition of alcohol, however, always loomed large.

Many American reformers associated alcohol with nearly every social ill. Alcohol was blamed for domestic abuse, poverty, crime, and disease. In 1912, for instance, an Anti-Saloon League publication presented charts indicating comparable increases in alcohol consumption alongside rising divorce rates. The WCTU called alcohol a "home wrecker." More insidiously, perhaps, reformers also associated alcohol with cities and immigrants, necessarily maligning America's immigrants, Catholics, and working classes in their crusade against liquor. Still, reformers believed that the abolition of "strong drink" would bring about social progress, obviate the need for prisons and insane asylums, save women and children from domestic abuse, and usher in a more just and progressive society.

Powerful female activists emerged out of the club movement and temperance campaigns. Perhaps no American reformer matched Jane Addams in fame, energy, and innovation. Born in Cedarville, Illinois, in 1860, Addams lost her mother by age two and lived under the attentive care of her father. At seventeen she left home to attend Rockford Female Seminary. An idealist, Addams sought the means to make the world a better place. She believed that well-educated women of means, such as herself, lacked practical strategies for engaging everyday reform. After four years at Rockford, Addams embarked on a multiyear "grand tour" of Europe. She found herself drawn to English settlement houses, a kind of prototype for social work in which philanthropists embedded themselves among communities and offered services to disadvantaged populations. After visiting London's Toynbee Hall in 1887, Addams returned to the United States and in 1889 founded Hull House in Chicago with her longtime confidant and companion, Ellen Gates Starr.[13]

The Settlement . . . 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. It insists that these problems are not confined to any one portion of the city. It is an attempt to relieve, at the same time, the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other. . . . It must be grounded in a philosophy whose foundation is on the solidarity of the human race, a philosophy which will not waver when the race happens to be represented by a drunken woman or an idiot boy.[14]

Hull House workers provided for their neighbors by running a nursery and a kindergarten, administering classes for parents and clubs for children, and organizing social and cultural events for the community. Americans founded hundreds of such settlements

all across the country. Many targeted immigrant communities. San Francisco's "mission home," for instance, helped Chinese victims of human trafficking, an unintended result of the onerous restrictions on Chinese immigration. Women's clubs in Kentucky sponsored the Hindman Settlement School for Appalachian peoples. Ida B. Wells's Negro Fellowship League provided social services to southern Black migrants in Chicago.

Service in settlement homes encouraged greater social engagement. Reformer Florence Kelley, who stayed at Hull House from 1891 to 1899, convinced Addams, for instance, to move into the realm of social reform.[15] Hull House began exposing conditions in local sweatshops and advocated for the organization of workers. She called the conditions caused by urban poverty and industrialization a "social crime." Hull House workers surveyed their surrounding community and produced statistics on poverty, disease, and living conditions. Addams began pressuring politicians. Together Kelley and Addams petitioned legislators to pass anti-sweatshop legislation that limited the hours of work for women and children to eight per day. Like many reformers, Addams, an upper-class woman, refused to embrace more radical policies. While Addams called labor organizing a "social obligation," she also warned the labor movement against the "constant temptation towards class warfare." Addams, like many reformers, favored cooperation between rich and poor and bosses and workers—whether cooperation was a realistic possibility or not.[16]

Addams became a celebrity. In 1912, she became the first woman to give a nominating speech at a major party convention when she seconded the nomination of Theodore Roosevelt as the Progressive Party's candidate for president. Her campaigns for social reform and women's rights won her headlines, and her voice became ubiquitous in progressive politics.[17]

Addams's advocacy grew beyond domestic concerns. Beginning with her work in the Anti-Imperialist League during the Spanish-American War, Addams increasingly began to see militarism as a drain on resources better spent on social reform. In 1907 she wrote Newer Ideals of Peace, a book that would become for many a philosophical foundation of pacifism. Addams emerged as a prominent opponent of America's entry into World War I. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.[18]

It would be suffrage, however, that would mark the full emergence of women in American public life. Generations of women—and, occasionally, men—had pushed for women's suffrage. Suffragists' hard work resulted in slow but encouraging steps forward during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Notable victories were won in the West, where suffragists mobilized large numbers of women, and male politicians were open to experimental forms of governance.[19] By 1912, nine western states had passed suffrage amendments to their constitutions.



Women protested silently in front of the White House for over two years before passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Here, women represent their alma maters as they picket the White House in support of women's suffrage, 1917. Library of Congress.

Women's suffrage was typically entwined with a wide range of reform efforts. Many suffragists argued that women's votes were necessary to clean up politics and combat social evils. By the 1890s, for example, the WCTU, then the largest women's organization in America, had endorsed suffrage. An alliance of working-class and middle- and upper-class women organized the Women's Trade Union League in 1903 and campaigned for the vote alongside the National American Woman Suffrage Association, a leading suffrage organization composed largely of middle- and upper-class women. WTUL members viewed the

vote as a way to further their economic interests and to foster a new sense of respect for working-class women. “What the woman who labors wants is the right to live, not simply exist,” said Rose Schneiderman during a 1912 speech. “The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too.”[20]

Many suffragists adopted a crueler message. Some, and not just in the South, argued that white women’s votes were necessary to maintain white supremacy. Many white women argued that enfranchising white upper- and middle-class women would help counteract Black voters. Chinese American, Native American, Mexican American, and African American suffragists generally labored for suffrage outside the major white-dominated suffrage associations.[21] But whether conducted in the name of gender equality, class politics, or white supremacy, the suffrage campaign was winning.

In 1890, two suffrage organizations united to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and breathed new life into the national movement under the leadership of Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt. Meanwhile, tensions divided activists—would they embrace moderate means of persuasion under the guide of “respectability” or push for a national amendment through direct action?

On March 3, 1913, the day before President-elect Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns of NAWSA’s Congressional Committee organized an eight-thousand-person suffragist parade (the Woman Suffrage Procession) down the streets of Washington D.C. Paul, an advocate of direct action, had learned from the British suffrage movement that processions garnered publicity.[22] The suffragists marched in groups organized by their country, state, occupation, or organization while demanding a federal suffrage amendment. NAWSA leaders attempted to segregate Black suffragists, but Ida B. Wells refused and fell in with other suffragists from Illinois, joining approximately forty Black women who marched with their state delegations or professions. Mary Church Terrell marched with the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority from Howard University. Native American Bottineau Baldwin walked with her fellow Washington College of Law graduates.[23] Hecklers chanted, and when some in the crowd turned violent and police failed to contain them, the US Army was called in and the cavalry cleared the path for the suffragists.[24] Some suffragists, vowing never again to be so vulnerable, took self-defense classes afterwards.[25] Still, the parade was a success—Congress began consideration of a suffrage amendment.



Young women take a break from classes at Columbia Teacher’s College, 1912. Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The final push for women’s suffrage came on the eve of World War I. Determined to win the vote, NAWSA developed a dual strategy that focused on the passage of state voting rights laws and on the ratification of an amendment to the US Constitution. Meanwhile, a new, more militant suffrage organization emerged on the scene. Led by Alice Paul, the National Woman’s Party took to the streets to demand voting rights, organizing marches and protests that mobilized thousands of women. Beginning in January 1917, Paul and other National Woman’s Party members—the “Silent Sentinels,” as they were styled—began to picket the White House, an action that led to the arrest and imprisonment of over 150 women. Imprisoned suffragists went on hunger strikes; guards force-fed them. On November, 14, 1917—the Night of Terror—guards attacked and beat suffragists jailed at the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia. In March, the D.C. Court of Appeals declared the protests legal and ordered all jailed Sentinels to be released.[26]

Suffragists were winning at the state and local level and pressuring federal officials. In January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson finally declared his support for the women's suffrage amendment, Congress passed what would become the Nineteenth Amendment the next summer; when it was finally ratified in August of 1920, women's suffrage became a reality. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, women from all walks of life mobilized to vote. They were driven by the promise of change but also in some cases by their anxieties about the future. Much had changed since their campaign began; the United States was now more industrial than not, increasingly more urban than it had ever been. The activism and activities of these new city denizens also gave rise to a new American culture.

IV. Targeting the Trusts



An 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 statehouse, 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 trustbuster. Udo Keppler, "Next!" 1904. Library of Congress (LC-USZCN4-122).

In one of the defining books of the Progressive Era, *The Promise of American Life*, Herbert Croly argued that because "the corrupt politician has usurped too much of the power which should be exercised by the people," the "millionaire and the trust have appropriated too many of the economic opportunities formerly enjoyed by the people." Croly and other reformers believed that wealth inequality eroded democracy; reformers had to win back for the people the power usurped by the moneyed trusts. But what exactly were these "trusts," and why did it suddenly seem so important to reform them?[27]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a trust was a monopoly or cartel associated with the large corporations of the Gilded and Progressive Eras that entered into agreements—legal or otherwise—or consolidations to exercise exclusive control over a specific product or industry under the control of a single entity. Certain types of monopolies, specifically for intellectual property like copyrights, patents, trademarks, and trade secrets, are protected under the Constitution "to promote the progress of science and useful arts," but for powerful entities to control entire national markets was something wholly new and, for many Americans, wholly unsettling.

The rapid industrialization, technological advancement, and urban growth of the 1870s and 1880s triggered major changes in the way businesses structured themselves. The Second Industrial Revolution, made possible by available natural resources, growth in the labor supply through immigration, increasing capital, new legal economic entities, novel production strategies, and a growing national market, was commonly asserted to be the natural product of the federal government's laissez-faire, or "hands off," economic policy. An unregulated business climate, the argument went, allowed for the growth of major trusts, most notably Andrew Carnegie's Carnegie Steel (later consolidated with other producers as US Steel) and John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. Each displayed the vertical and horizontal integration strategies common to the new trusts: Carnegie first used vertical integration by controlling every phase of business (raw materials, transportation, manufacturing, distribution), and Rockefeller adhered to horizontal integration by buying out competing refineries. Once dominant in a market, critics alleged, the trusts could artificially inflate prices, bully rivals, and bribe politicians.

Between 1897 and 1904, over four thousand companies were consolidated down into 257 corporate firms. As one historian wrote,

"By 1904 a total of 318 trusts held 40% of US manufacturing assets and boasted a capitalization of $7 billion, seven times bigger than the US national debt."[28] With the twentieth century came the age of monopoly. Mergers and the aggressive business policies of wealthy men such as Carnegie and Rockefeller had earned them the epithet robber barons. Their cutthroat stifling of economic competition, mistreatment of workers, and corruption of politics sparked an opposition that pushed for regulations to rein in the power of monopolies. The great corporations had become a major target of reformers.

Big business, whether in meatpacking, railroads, telegraph lines, oil, or steel, posed new problems for the American legal system. Before the Civil War, most businesses operated in a single state. They might ship goods across state lines or to other countries, but they typically had offices and factories in just one state. Individual states naturally regulated industry and commerce. But extensive railroad routes crossed several state lines, and new mass-producing corporations operated across the nation, raising questions about where the authority to regulate such practices rested. During the 1870s, many states passed laws to check the growing power of the vast new corporations. In the Midwest, farmers formed a network of organizations that were part political pressure group, part social club, and part mutual aid society. Together they pushed for the so-called Granger Laws that regulated railroads and other new companies. Railroads and other concerns opposed these regulations because they restrained profits and because they made meeting the standards of each state's separate regulatory laws difficult. In 1877, the US Supreme Court upheld these laws in a series of rulings, finding in cases such as *Munn v. Illinois* and Stone v. Wisconsin that railroads and other companies of such size necessarily affected the public interest and could thus be regulated by individual states. In *Munn*, the court declared, "Property does become clothed with a public interest when used in a manner to make it of public consequence, and affect the community at large. When, therefore, one devoted his property to a use in which the public has an interest, he, in effect, grants to the public an interest in that use, and must submit to be controlled by the public for the common good, to the extent of the interest he has thus created."[29]

Later rulings, however, conceded that only the federal government could constitutionally regulate interstate commerce and the new national businesses operating it. And as more and more power and capital and market share flowed to the great corporations, the onus of regulation passed to the federal government. In 1887, Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act, which established the Interstate Commerce Commission to stop discriminatory and predatory pricing practices. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 aimed to limit anticompetitive practices, such as those institutionalized in cartels and monopolistic corporations. It stated that a "trust . . . or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce . . . is declared to be illegal" and that those who "monopolize . . . any part of the trade or commerce . . . shall be deemed guilty."[30] The Sherman Anti-Trust Act declared that not all monopolies were illegal, only those that "unreasonably" stifled free trade. The courts seized on the law's vague language, however, and the act was turned against itself, manipulated and used, for instance, to limit the growing power of labor unions. Only in 1914, with the Clayton Anti-Trust Act, did Congress attempt to close loopholes in previous legislation.

Aggression against the trusts—and the progressive vogue for "trust busting"—took on new meaning under the presidency of Teddy Roosevelt, a reform-minded Republican who ascended to the presidency after the death of William McKinley in 1901. Roosevelt's youthful energy and confrontational politics captivated the nation.[31] Roosevelt was by no means antibusiness. Instead, he envisioned his presidency as a mediator between opposing forces, such as between labor unions and corporate executives. Despite his own wealthy background, Roosevelt pushed for antitrust legislation and regulations, arguing that the courts could not be relied on to break up the trusts. Roosevelt also used his own moral judgment to determine which monopolies he would pursue. Roosevelt believed that there were good and bad trusts, necessary monopolies and corrupt ones. Although his reputation as a trustbuster was exaggerated, he was the first major national politician to go after the trusts. "The great corporations which we have grown to speak of rather loosely as trusts," he said, "are the creatures of the State, and the State not only has the right to control them, but it is in duty bound to control them wherever the need of such control is shown."[32]

His first target was the Northern Securities Company, a "holding" trust in which several wealthy bankers, including J. P. Morgan, held a controlling share in all the major railroad companies in the American Northwest. Holding trusts had emerged as a way to circumvent the Sherman Anti-Trust Act: by controlling the majority of shares, rather than the principal, Morgan and his collaborators tried to claim that it was not a monopoly. Roosevelt's administration sued and won in court, and in 1904 the Northern Securities Company was ordered to disband into separate, competitive companies. Two years later, in 1906, Roosevelt signed the Hepburn Act, allowing the Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate best practices and set reasonable rates for the railroads.

Roosevelt was more interested in regulating corporations than breaking them apart. Besides, the courts were slow and unpredictable. However, his successor after 1908, William Howard Taft, firmly believed in court-oriented trustbusting and during his four years in office more than doubled the number of monopoly breakups that occurred during Roosevelt's seven years in office. Taft notably went after US Steel, the world's first billion-dollar corporation, which had been formed via the consolidation of nearly every major American steel producer.

Trust-busting and the handling of monopolies dominated the election of 1912. When the Republican Party spurned Roosevelt's

return to politics and renominated the incumbent Taft, Roosevelt left and formed his own coalition, the Progressive or "Bull Moose" Party. Whereas Taft took an all-encompassing view on the illegality of monopolies, Roosevelt adopted a New Nationalism program, which once again emphasized the regulation of already existing corporations by expanding federal authority over the economy. In contrast, Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic Party nominee, emphasized in his New Freedom agenda neither trust-busting nor federal regulation but rather small-business incentives so that individual companies could increase their competitive chances. Yet once he won the election, Wilson edged nearer to Roosevelt's position, signing the Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914. The Clayton Anti-Trust Act substantially enhanced the Sherman Act, specifically regulating mergers and price discrimination and protecting labor's access to collective bargaining and related strategies of picketing, boycotting, and protesting. Congress further created the Federal Trade Commission to enforce the Clayton Act, ensuring at least some measure of implementation.[33]

While the three presidents—Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson—pushed the development and enforcement of antitrust law, their commitments were uneven, and trust-busting itself manifested the political pressure put on politicians by the workers, farmers, and progressive writers who so strongly drew attention to the ramifications of trusts and corporate capital on the lives of everyday Americans.

V. Progressive Environmentalism

The potential scope of environmental destruction wrought by industrial capitalism was unparalleled in human history. Professional bison-hunting expeditions nearly eradicated an entire species, industrialized logging companies denuded whole forests, and chemical plants polluted the water supply of many regions. As American development and industrialization marched westward, reformers embraced environmental protections.

Historians often cite preservation and conservation as two competing strategies that dueled for supremacy among environmental reformers during the Progressive Era. The tensions between these two approaches crystallized in the debate over a proposed dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley in California. The fight revolved around the provision of water for San Francisco. Engineers identified the location where the Tuolumne River ran through Hetch Hetchy as an ideal site for a reservoir. The project had been suggested in the 1880s but picked up momentum in the early twentieth century. But the valley was located inside Yosemite National Park. (Yosemite was designated a national park in 1890, though the land had been set aside earlier in a grant approved by President Lincoln in 1864.) The debate over Hetch Hetchy revealed two distinct positions on the value of the valley and on the purpose of public lands.



Photograph of the Hetch Hetchy Valley before damming, January 1908.



The image on the top shows the Hetch Hetchy Valley before it was dammed. The bottom photograph, taken almost a century later, shows the obvious difference after damming, with the submergence of the valley floor under the reservoir waters. Photograph of the Hetch Hetchy Valley before damming, from the Sierra Club Bulletin, January 1908. Wikimedia. Daniel Mayer (photographer), May 2002. Wikimedia.

John Muir, naturalist, writer, and founder of the Sierra Club, invoked the "God of the Mountains" in his defense of the valley in its supposedly pristine condition. Gifford Pinchot, arguably the father of American forestry and a key player in the federal management of national forests, meanwhile emphasized what he understood to be the purpose of conservation: "to take every part of the land and its resources and put it to that use in which it will serve the most people." Muir took a wider view of what the people needed, writing that "everybody needs beauty as well as bread."[34] These dueling arguments revealed the key differences in environmental thought: Muir, on the side of the preservationists, advocated setting aside pristine lands for their aesthetic and spiritual value, enabling Americans to "[get] in touch with the nerves of Mother Earth."[35] Pinchot, on the other hand, led the charge for conservation, a kind of environmental utilitarianism that emphasized the efficient use of available resources through planning and control and "the prevention of waste."[36] In Hetch Hetchy, conservation won out; Congress approved the project in 1913. The dam was built, and the valley was flooded for the benefit of San Francisco residents.

While preservation was often articulated as an escape from an increasingly urbanized and industrialized way of life and as a welcome respite from the challenges of modernity—at least for those who had the means to escape—the conservationists were more closely aligned with broader trends in American society. Although the "greatest good for the greatest number" was something like the catchphrase of conservation, conservationist policies most often benefited the nation's financial interests. For example, many states instituted game laws to regulate hunting and protect wildlife, but the laws were often unbalanced. In Pennsylvania, local game laws required firearm permits for noncitizens, barred hunting on Sundays, and banned the shooting of songbirds. These laws disproportionately affected Italian immigrants, critics said, as Italians often hunted songbirds for subsistence, worked in mines for low wages every day but Sunday, and were too poor to purchase permits or to pay the fines levied against them when game wardens caught them in the act. Other laws, for example, offered up resources to businesses at costs prohibitive to all but the wealthiest companies and individuals, or with regulatory requirements that could be met only by companies with extensive resources.

But Progressive Era environmentalism addressed more than the management of American public lands. After all, reformers addressing issues facing the urban poor were also doing environmental work. Settlement house workers like Jane Addams and Florence Kelley focused on questions of health and sanitation, while activists concerned with working conditions, most notably Dr. Alice Hamilton, investigated both worksite hazards and occupational and bodily harm. The progressives' commitment to the provision of public services at the municipal level meant more coordination and oversight in matters of public health, waste management, and even playgrounds and city parks. Their work focused on the intersection of communities and their material environments, highlighting the urgency of urban environmental concerns.

While reform movements focused their attention on the urban poor, other efforts targeted rural communities. The Country Life movement, spearheaded by Cornell University professor Liberty Hyde Bailey, sought to support agrarian families and encourage young people to stay in their communities and run family farms. The movement sought to modernize country schools and develop agricultural extension programs to share scientific advances with American farmers. At the same time, progressive educators such as Bailey and his Cornell colleague Anna Botsford Comstock advocated for "nature study"; in line with their desire that Americans "study nature, not books," they took students outside to experience natural processes and to help them develop observational skills and an appreciation for the natural world.[37]

Other examples highlight the interconnectedness of urban and rural communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. The extinction of the North American passenger pigeon reveals the complexity of Progressive Era relationships between people and nature. Passenger pigeons were actively hunted, prepared at New York's finest restaurants and in the humblest of farm kitchens. Some hunted them for pay; others shot them in competitions at sporting clubs. And then they were gone, their ubiquity giving way only to nostalgia. Many Americans took notice at the great extinction of a species that had perhaps numbered in the billions and then was eradicated. Women in Audubon Society chapters organized against the fashion of wearing feathers—even whole birds—on ladies' hats. Upper- and middle-class women made up the lion's share of the membership of these societies. They used their social standing to fight for birds. Pressure created national wildlife refuges and key laws and regulations that included the Lacey Act of 1900, banning the shipment of species killed illegally across state lines. Examining how women mobilized contemporary notions of womanhood in the service of protecting birds reveals a tangle of cultural and economic processes. Such examples also reveal the range of ideas, policies, and practices wrapped up in figuring out what—and who—American nature should be for.

VI. Jim Crow and African American Life

America's tragic racial history was not erased by the Progressive Era. In fact, in all too many ways, reform removed African Americans ever farther from American public life. In the South, electoral politics remained a parade of electoral fraud, voter intimidation, and race-baiting. Democratic Party candidates stirred southern whites into frenzies with warnings of "negro domination" and of Black men violating white women. The region's culture of racial violence and the rise of lynching as a mass public spectacle accelerated. And as the remaining African American voters threatened the dominance of Democratic leadership in the South, southern Democrats turned to what many white southerners understood as a series of progressive electoral and social reforms—disenfranchisement and segregation. Just as reformers would clean up politics by taming city political machines, white southerners would "purify" the ballot box by restricting Black voting, and they would prevent racial strife by legislating the social separation of the races. The strongest supporters of such measures in the South were progressive Democrats and former Populists, both of whom saw in these reforms a way to eliminate the racial demagoguery that conservative Democratic party leaders had so effectively wielded. Leaders in both the North and South embraced and proclaimed the reunion of the sections on the basis of white supremacy. As the nation took up the "white man's burden" to uplift the world's racially inferior peoples, the North looked to the South as an example of how to manage nonwhite populations. The South had become the nation's racial vanguard.[38]

The question was how to accomplish disfranchisement. The Fifteenth Amendment clearly prohibited states from denying any citizen the right to vote on the basis of race. In 1890, a Mississippi state newspaper called on politicians to devise "some legal defensible substitute for the abhorrent and evil methods on which white supremacy lies."[39] The state's Democratic Party responded with a new state constitution designed to purge corruption at the ballot box through disenfranchisement. African Americans hoping to vote in Mississippi would have to jump through a series of hurdles designed with the explicit purpose of excluding them from political power. The state first established a poll tax, which required voters to pay for the privilege of voting. Second, it stripped suffrage from those convicted of the petty crimes most common among the state's African Americans. Next, the state required voters to pass a literacy test. Local voting officials, who were themselves part of the local party machine, were responsible for judging whether voters were able to read and understand a section of the Constitution. In order to protect illiterate whites from exclusion, the so-called "understanding clause" allowed a voter to qualify if they could adequately explain the meaning of a section that was read to them. In practice these rules were systematically abused to the point where local election officials effectively wielded the power to permit and deny suffrage at will. The disenfranchisement laws effectively moved electoral conflict from the ballot box, where public attention was greatest, to the voting registrar, where supposedly colorblind laws allowed local party officials to deny the ballot without the appearance of fraud.[40]

Between 1895 and 1908, the rest of the states in the South approved new constitutions including these disenfranchisement tools. Six southern states also added a grandfather clause, which bestowed suffrage on anyone whose grandfather was eligible to vote in 1867. This ensured that whites who would have been otherwise excluded through mechanisms such as poll taxes or literacy tests would still be eligible, at least until grandfather clauses were struck down by the Supreme Court in 1915. Finally, each southern state adopted an all-white primary and excluded Black Americans from the Democratic primary, the only political contests that mattered across much of the South.[40]

For all the legal double-talk, the purpose of these laws was plain. James Kimble Vardaman, later governor of Mississippi, boasted that "there is no use to equivocate or lie about the matter. Mississippi's constitutional convention was held for no other purpose than to eliminate the nigger from politics; not the ignorant—but the nigger."[41] These technically colorblind tools did their work well. In 1900, Alabama had 121,159 literate Black men of voting age. Only 3,742 were registered to vote. Louisiana had 130,000 Black voters in the contentious election of 1896. Four years later, it had only 5,320. Black people were clearly the target of these

laws, but that did not prevent some whites from being disenfranchised as well. Louisiana dropped 80,000 white voters over the same period. Most politically engaged southern whites considered this a price worth paying to prevent the alleged fraud that plagued the region's elections.[42]

At the same time that the South's Democratic leaders were adopting the tools to disenfranchise the region's Black voters, these same legislatures were constructing a system of racial segregation even more pernicious. While it built on earlier practice, segregation was primarily a modern and urban system of enforcing racial subordination and deference. In rural areas, white and Black southerners negotiated the meaning of racial difference within the context of personal relationships of kinship and patronage. An African American who broke the local community's racial norms could expect swift personal sanction that often included violence. The crop lien and convict lease systems were the most important legal tools of racial control in the rural South. Maintaining white supremacy there did not require segregation. Maintaining white supremacy within the city, however, was a different matter altogether. As the region's railroad networks and cities expanded, so too did the anonymity and therefore freedom of southern Black people. Southern cities were becoming a center of Black middle-class life that was an implicit threat to racial hierarchies. White southerners created the system of segregation as a way to maintain white supremacy in restaurants, theaters, public restrooms, schools, water fountains, train cars, and hospitals. Segregation inscribed the superiority of whites and the deference of Black people into the very geography of public spaces.

Amid the onslaught of Jim Crow, middle-class Black men and women, through social clubs, benevolent societies, fraternal organizations, and religious groups, championed the philosophy of racial uplift as an objective and strategy for change. Racial uplift embodied the belief that African Americans would do well to focus on internal betterment and cultivate proper values such as good character, respectability, cleanliness, Victorian sexual morality, economic advancement, and educational achievement. The editor of the Richmond Planet, in Virginia, offered succinct advice to his readers: "Colored men, educate your children, buy property, be religious and all will be well. Cultivate tidiness. Show to the world what twenty-five years of freedom has done for you."[43] The purpose of racial uplift was not to agitate for specific political and economic rights but to demonstrate to white society that middle-class Black men and women had evolved since Emancipation and were worthy of respect. Between 1900 and 1920, women reformers in the Black Baptist Church believed that highlighting respectability offered the best way to combat racist images of African Americans circulating at the height of white supremacy. Baptist women organized "Negro Doll Clubs" and opened the National Negro Doll Company in 1908. They hoped to instill race pride in Black children while emphasizing middle-class markers of virtuousness. Black reformers could therefore advocate for their greater social integration while distancing themselves from the Black working class.[44]

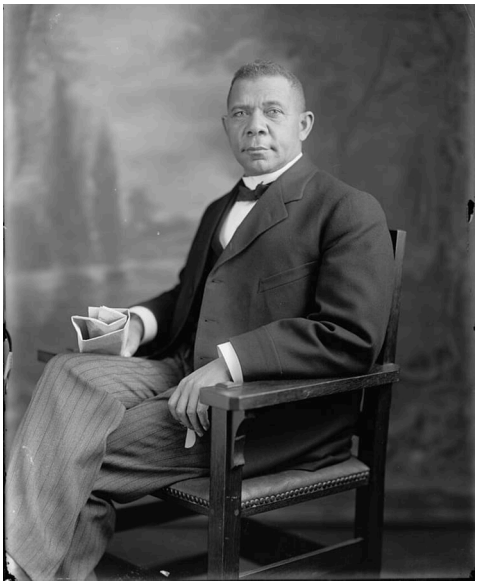
In addition, prominent writers and artists elevated the idea of racial uplift, undercutting white supremacist representations of African Americans mainstreaming in popular culture. Born in Illinois in 1884, Oscar Micheaux embodied the spirit of a new generation of African Americans not born into slavery. After working as a Pullman Car porter in Chicago and homesteading in South Dakota, he shifted gears and became a prolific fiction writer and filmmaker. He published seven novels and produced forty-five films during the silent film era. To a reporter at the New York Amsterdam News, Micheaux proclaimed, "I'm tired of reading about the Negro in an inferior position in society. I want to see them in dignified roles. . . . Also, I want to see the white man and the white woman as the villains."[45] Micheaux is best known for his film *Within Our Gates* (1920), which offered a stinging critique of the grotesquely racist film *The Birth of a Nation*, which had premiered five years earlier. Taking place in the urban North and rural South, *Within Our Gates* follows the life of Sylvia Landry, a reputable educated Black woman seeking support from northern philanthropists to fund a school for the children of Black sharecroppers. While in the North, she meets an honorable Black man named Mr. Vivian who discovers that Sylvia's hardworking, honest parents were lynched by local whites who mistakenly believed Mr. Landry murdered the white landowner he worked for. While the brutal lynching of her parents is taking place, Sylvia is assaulted by the white landowner's brother and barely escapes being raped. Not only did *Within Our Gates* portray most African Americans as upstanding, cultured men and women, but the film also condemned southern racial violence, the sexual assault of Black women, and the grinding poverty of sharecropping. Micheaux's films contested vicious stereotypes of African Americans and communicated a message of racial uplift designed to inspire price in one's race.

Racial uplift strategies failed to deter southern whites from erecting the apparatus of Jim Crow. Of course, as with disenfranchisement, segregation violated a plain reading of the Constitution—in this case the Fourteenth Amendment. Here the Supreme Court intervened, ruling in the *Civil Rights Cases* (1883) that the Fourteenth Amendment only prevented discrimination directly by states; it did not prevent discrimination by individuals, businesses, or other entities. Southern states exploited this interpretation with the first legal segregation of railroad cars in 1888. In a case that reached the Supreme Court in 1896, New Orleans resident Homer Plessy challenged the constitutionality of Louisiana's segregation of streetcars. The court ruled against Plessy and, in the process, established the legal principle of "separate but equal." Racially segregated facilities were legal provided they were equivalent. In practice this was almost never the case. The court's majority defended its position with logic that reflected the racial assumptions of the day. "If one race be inferior to the other socially," the court explained, "the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane." Justice John Harlan, the lone dissenter, countered, "Our

Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law." Harlan went on to warn that the court's decision would "permit the seeds of race hatred to be planted under the sanction of law."[46] In their rush to fulfill Harlan's prophecy, southern whites codified and enforced the segregation of public spaces.

Segregation was built on a fiction—that there could be a white South socially and culturally distinct from African Americans. Its legal basis rested on the constitutional fallacy of "separate but equal." Southern whites erected a bulwark of white supremacy that would last for nearly sixty years. Segregation and disenfranchisement in the South rejected Black citizenship and relegated Black social and cultural life to segregated spaces. African Americans lived divided lives, acting the part whites demanded of them in public, while maintaining their own world apart from whites. This segregated world provided a measure of independence for the region's growing Black middle class, yet at the cost of poisoning the relationship between Black and white. Segregation and disenfranchisement created entrenched structures of racism that completed the total rejection of the promises of Reconstruction.

And yet many Black Americans of the Progressive Era fought back. Just as activists such as Ida B. Wells worked against southern lynching, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois vied for leadership among African American activists, resulting in years of intense rivalry and debates over the strategies for the uplifting of Black Americans.



The strategies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois differed, but their desire was the same: better lives for African Americans. Photograph of Booker T. Washington taken between 1905 and 1915. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/hec2009002812/.

Born into the world of bondage in Virginia in 1856, Booker Taliaferro Washington was subjected to the degradation and exploitation of slavery early in life. But Washington also developed an insatiable thirst to learn. Working against tremendous odds, Washington matriculated into Hampton University in Virginia and thereafter established a southern institution that would educate many Black Americans, the Tuskegee Institute, located in Alabama. Washington envisioned that Tuskegee's contribution to Black life would come through industrial education and vocational training. He believed that such skills would help African Americans accomplish economic independence while developing a sense of self-worth and pride of accomplishment, even while living within the putrid confines of Jim Crow. Washington poured his life into Tuskegee and thereby connected with leading white philanthropic interests. Individuals such as Andrew Carnegie, for instance, financially assisted Washington and his educational ventures.

Washington became a leading spokesperson for Black Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly after Frederick Douglass's death in early 1895. Washington's famous "Atlanta Compromise" speech from that same year encouraged Black Americans to "cast your bucket down" to improve life's lot under segregation. In the same speech, delivered one year before the Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson decision that legalized segregation under the "separate but equal" doctrine, Washington said to white Americans, "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."[47] Washington was both praised as a race leader and pilloried as an accommodationist to America's unjust racial hierarchy; his public advocacy of a conciliatory posture toward white supremacy concealed the efforts to which he went to assist African Americans in the legal and economic quest for racial justice. In addition to founding Tuskegee, Washington also published a handful of influential books, including the autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901). Like Du Bois, Washington was also active in Black journalism, working to fund and support Black newspaper publications, most of which sought to counter Du

Bois's growing influence. Washington died in 1915, during World War I, of ill health in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Speaking decades later, Du Bois said that Washington had, in his 1895 "Compromise" speech, "implicitly abandoned all political and social rights. . . . I never thought Washington was a bad man. . . . I believed him to be sincere, though wrong." Du Bois would directly attack Washington in his classic 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, but at the turn of the century he could never escape the shadow of his longtime rival. "I admired much about him," Du Bois admitted. "Washington . . . died in 1915. A lot of people think I died at the same time."[48]



"W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois," 1919. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003681451/.

Du Bois's criticism reveals the politicized context of the Black freedom struggle and exposes the many positions available to Black activists. Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868, Du Bois entered the world as a free person of color three years after the Civil War ended. He was raised by a hardworking and independent mother; his New England childhood alerted him to the reality of race even as it invested the emerging thinker with an abiding faith in the power of education. Du Bois graduated at the top of his high school class and attended Fisk University. Du Bois's sojourn to the South in 1880s left a distinct impression that would guide his life's work to study what he called the "Negro problem," the systemic racial and economic discrimination that Du Bois prophetically pronounced would be the problem of the twentieth century. After Fisk, Du Bois's educational path trended back North. He attended Harvard, earned his second degree, crossed the Atlantic for graduate work in Germany, and circulated back to Harvard, and in 1895, he became the first Black American to receive a Ph.D. there.

Du Bois became one of America's foremost intellectual leaders on questions of social justice by producing scholarship that underscored the humanity of African Americans. Du Bois's work as an intellectual, scholar, and college professor began during the Progressive Era, a time in American history marked by rapid social and cultural change as well as complex global political conflicts and developments. Du Bois addressed these domestic and international concerns not only in his classrooms at Wilberforce University in Ohio and Atlanta University in Georgia but also in a number of his early publications on the history of the transatlantic slave trade and Black life in urban Philadelphia. The best-known of these early works included *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and *Darkwater* (1920). In these books, Du Bois combined incisive historical analysis with engaging literary drama to validate Black personhood and attack the inhumanity of white supremacy, particularly in the lead-up to and during World War I. In addition to publications and teaching, Du Bois set his sights on political organizing for civil rights, first with the Niagara Movement and later with its offspring, the NAACP. Du Bois's main work with the NAACP lasted from 1909 to 1934 as editor of The Crisis, one of America's leading Black publications. Du Bois attacked Washington and urged Black Americans to concede nothing, to make no compromises and advocate for equal rights under the law. Throughout his early career, he pushed for civil rights legislation, launched legal challenges against discrimination, organized protests against injustice, and applied his capacity for clear research and sharp prose to expose the racial sins of Progressive Era America.

We refuse to allow the impression to remain that the Negro-American assents to inferiority, is submissive under oppression and apologetic before insults. . . . Any discrimination based simply on race or color is barbarous, we care not how hallowed it be by custom, expediency or prejudice . . . discriminations based simply and solely on physical peculiarities, place of birth, color of skin, are relics of that unreasoning human savagery of which the world is and ought to be thoroughly ashamed. . . . Persistent manly

agitation is the way to liberty.[49]

W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington made a tremendous historical impact and left a notable historical legacy. They were reared under markedly different circumstances, and thus their early life experiences and even personal temperaments oriented the two leaders' lives and outlooks in decidedly different ways. Du Bois's confrontational voice boldly targeted white supremacy. He believed in the power of social science to arrest the reach of white supremacy. Washington advocated incremental change for longer-term gain. He contended that economic self-sufficiency would pay off at a future date. Four years after Du Bois directly spoke out against Washington in the chapter "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington" in *Souls of Black Folk*, the two men shared the same lectern at the Philadelphia Divinity School to address matters of race, history, and culture in the American South. Although their philosophies often differed, both men inspired others to demand that America live up to its democratic creed.

VII. Conclusion

Industrial capitalism unleashed powerful forces in American life. Along with wealth, technological innovation, and rising standards of living, a host of social problems unsettled many who turned to reform politics to set the world right again. The Progressive Era signaled that a turning point had been reached for many Americans, who were suddenly willing to confront the age's problems with national political solutions. Reformers sought to bring order to chaos, to bring efficiency to inefficiency, and to bring justice to injustice. Causes varied, constituencies shifted, and the tangible effects of so much energy was difficult to measure, but the Progressive Era signaled a bursting of long-simmering tensions and introduced new patterns in the relationship between American society, American culture, and American politics.

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This chapter was edited by Mary Anne Henderson, with content contributions by Andrew C. Baker, Peter Catapano, Blaine Hamilton, Mary Anne Henderson, Amanda Hughett, Amy Kohout, Maria Montalvo, Natalie J. Ring, Brent Ruswick, Philip Luke Sinitiere, Nora Slonimsky, Whitney Stewart, and Brandy Thomas Wells.

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19: World War I and Its Aftermath



The Boy Scouts of America charge up Fifth Avenue in New York City in a 1917 “Wake Up, America” parade to support recruitment efforts. Nearly 60,000 people attended the parade. Wikimedia.

I. Introduction

World War I (“The Great War”) toppled empires, created new nations, and sparked tensions that would explode across future years. On the battlefield, gruesome modern weaponry wrecked an entire generation of young men. The United States entered the conflict in 1917 and was never again 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.

II. Prelude to War

As the German empire rose in power and influence at the end of the nineteenth century, skilled diplomats maneuvered this disruption of traditional powers and influences into several decades of European peace. In Germany, however, an ambitious new monarch would overshadow the years of tactful diplomacy. Wilhelm II rose to the German throne in 1888. He admired the British Empire of his grandmother, Queen Victoria, and envied the Royal Navy of Great Britain so much that he attempted to build a rival German navy and plant German colonies around the globe. The British viewed the prospect of a German navy as a strategic threat, but, jealous of what he perceived as a lack of prestige in the world, Wilhelm II pressed Germany’s case for access to colonies and symbols of status suitable for a world power. Wilhelm’s maneuvers and Germany’s rise spawned a new system of alliances as rival nations warily watched Germany’s expansion.

In 1892, German posturing worried the leaders of Russia and France and prompted a defensive alliance to counter the existing triple threat between Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Italy. Britain under Queen Victoria remained unassociated with the alliances until a series of diplomatic crises and an emerging German naval threat led to British agreements with Tsar Nicholas II and French president Émile Loubet in the early twentieth century. (The alliance between Great Britain, France, and Russia became known as the Triple Entente.)

The other great threat to European peace was the Ottoman Empire, in Turkey. While the leaders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire showed little interest in colonies elsewhere, Turkish lands on its southern border appealed to their strategic goals. However,

Austro-Hungarian expansion in Europe worried Nicholas II, who saw Russia as both the historic guarantor of the Slavic nations in the Balkans and the competitor for territories governed by the Ottoman Empire.

By 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had control of Bosnia and Herzegovina and viewed Slavic Serbia, a nation protected by Russia, as its next challenge. Then, on June 28, 1914, Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austro-Hungarian heirs to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Grand Duchess Sophie. Austria-Hungary mobilized for war.[1]

On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States played an insignificant role in global diplomacy—it rarely forayed into internal European politics. The federal government did not participate in international diplomatic alliances but nevertheless championed the transatlantic economy and assisted in its expansion. American businesses and consumers benefited from the trade generated as the result of the extended period of European peace.

Stated American attitudes toward international affairs followed the advice given by President George Washington in his 1796 Farewell Address, 121 years before America's entry into World War I. He had recommended that his fellow countrymen avoid "foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues" and "those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty."[2]

A foreign policy of neutrality reflected America's inward-looking focus on the construction and management of its new powerful industrial economy (built in large part with foreign capital). The federal government possessed limited diplomatic tools with which to engage in international struggles for world power. America's small and increasingly antiquated military precluded forceful coercion and left American diplomats to persuade by reason, appeals to justice, or economic influence. But in the 1880s, as Americans embarked upon empire, Congress authorized the construction of a modern navy. The army nevertheless remained small and underfunded compared to the armies of many industrializing nations.

After the turn of the century, the army and navy faced a great deal of organizational uncertainty. New technologies—airplanes, motor vehicles, submarines, modern artillery—stressed the capability of army and navy personnel to effectively procure and use them. The nation's army could police Native Americans in the West and garrison recent overseas acquisitions, but it could not sustain a full-blown conflict of any size. The Davis Act of 1908 and the National Defense Act of 1916 inaugurated the rise of the modern versions of the National Guard and military reserves. A system of state-administered units available for local emergencies that received conditional federal funding for training could be activated for use in international wars. The National Guard program encompassed individual units separated by state borders. The program supplied summer training for college students as a reserve officer corps. Federal and state governments now had a long-term strategic reserve of trained soldiers and sailors.[3]

The American diplomatic tradition avoided formal alliances, and the Army seemed inadequate for sustained overseas fighting. However, the United States outdistanced the nations of Europe in one important measure of world power: by 1914, the nation held the top position in the global industrial economy. The United States was producing slightly more than a third of the world's manufactured goods, roughly equal to the outputs of France, Great Britain, and Germany combined. And it was beginning to flex its military muscle outside of its borders.

III: The US and Mexico

Instability along the US-Mexico border strained diplomatic relations, exacerbated anti-Mexican attitudes in the United States, and set the scene for American military intervention.



Mexican refugees on their way to Marfa, Texas, following the Battle of Ojinga in 1914. Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2014695398/.

Mexican reformer Francisco Madero challenged President Porfirio Díaz's corrupt and unpopular conservative regime in 1910. He was jailed, fled to San Antonio, and penned the Plan of San Luis Potosí, paving the way for the Mexican Revolution and the rise of armed revolutionaries across the country. Revolutionary tumult in Mexico worried American business interests after decades of indulgence during Díaz's decades-long rule (the "Porfiriato").[4] The chaos of the Revolution threatened American land ownership, railroad investments, mining companies, and oil extraction. Americans controlled over one hundred million acres in Mexico, more than a fifth of the entire country.[5] Mining companies operated across the nation, and American oilmen, with demand spiking after the onset of World War I in 1914—one British official later remarked that the Allies "floated to victory on a wave of oil"—greedily eyed Mexico's vast oil reserves.[6]

The Wilson administration had withdrawn its support of Díaz, but Madero struggled to win sustained support from American officials—US Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson began to actively undermine his rule. Victoriano Huerta's violent 1913 coup and its "ten bloody days," however, fully repelled the Wilson administration. Huerta refused to call elections, and in April 1914, following the arrest of several American sailors in Tampico as well as a further diplomatic slight, President Wilson ordered Marines to accompany a naval escort to Veracruz and occupy the port city. After a brief battle, the Marines supervised the city government and prevented shipments of German arms to Huerta until they departed in November 1914 following Huerta's capitulation that summer.[7]

The occupation of Veracruz demonstrated America's continued reliance on naval forces and the difficulty in modernizing the military during a period of European imperial influence in the Caribbean and elsewhere. The threat of war in Europe, however, enabled passage of the Naval Act of 1916. President Wilson declared that the national goal was to build the Navy as "incomparably, the greatest . . . in the world."

The Revolution, meanwhile, traumatized Mexico. More than a million Mexicans died, and as many as a million fled northward into the United States, bolstering the country's historical population of Mexican Americans and a newer number of immigrants who had arrived in the Southwest over the past several decades following the arrival of the railroads on the border and the incorporation of the broader US-Mexico borderlands into the national economy. Anglo farmers and ranchers, meanwhile, poured into the region, buying up vast sums of land and muscling out Mexican American landowners through legal and extralegal means. Racial tensions ran high in the borderlands.

Amid such strains, and along with rising binational anxiety owing to the Mexican Revolution, a Mexican huertista named Basilio Ramos was arrested in McAllen, Texas, in January 1915 with a document, "The Plan of San Diego" (named for the small South Texas town from which it ostensibly originated), that called for the instigation of a race war against Anglos in South Texas and the restoration of the Southwest to Mexico.[8] A series of Mexican raids later that summer, meanwhile, targeted American ranchers as followers of the anarchist Richard Flores Magón attacked infrastructure across South Texas. Throughout it all, the violent reprisals of Anglo ranchers and Texas Rangers inaugurated what one historian called "an orgy of bloodshed," claiming the lives of many hundreds of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in what generations remembered as "La Matanza," which translates to "the killing"

or “the slaughter.”[9] Americans, fretting over the security of the border, saw Wilson use the powers of the new National Defense Act to mobilize and station over one hundred thousand National Guardsmen along the US-Mexico border.[10]

Chaos continued to grip Mexico and the borderlands. American officials watched warily as the revolution devolved into coups, assassinations, and deceit. In October 1915, the United States gave de facto recognition to Venustiano Carranza’s Constitutionalist regime, enflaming his former ally and now rival, Francisco “Pancho” Villa, a popular revolutionary who operated in northern Mexico. In March 1916, Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico. His raiders killed seventeen Americans and burned the town center before American soldiers forced their retreat. In response, President Wilson commissioned Army general John “Black Jack” Pershing to capture Villa and disperse his rebels. The United States military gained invaluable training and experience in Mexico. Pershing’s “Punitive Expedition” employed motorized vehicles, reconnaissance aircraft, and the wireless telegraph in the pursuit of Villa. Motorized vehicles in particular allowed General Pershing to obtain supplies and rapidly deploy soldiers without relying on railroads controlled by the Mexican government. Cryptographers encrypted insurgent telegrams. And while the aircraft assigned to the campaign crashed or were grounded by mechanical malfunctions, the experience provided invaluable lessons for their future use in war.

The Punitive Expedition exacerbated tensions on both sides of the border, and the conflict between the United States and Mexico might have escalated into full-scale war if the crisis in Europe had not loomed over it all. By 1917, Wilson supported a binational commission that sought to provide security along the border, the Punitive Expedition was withdrawn, insurgent violence eased along the border, and the United States turned its eyes to Europe.

IV. War Spreads through Europe



French assault on German positions in Champagne, France, 1917. National Archives (NARA FILE #: 111-SC-97271)

After the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and Grand Duchess Sophie, Austria secured the promise of aid from its German ally and issued a list of ten ultimatums to Serbia. On July 28, 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia for failure to meet all of the demands. Russia, determined to protect Serbia, began to mobilize its armed forces. On August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia to protect Austria after warnings directed at Tsar Nicholas II failed to stop Russian preparations for war.

In spite of the central European focus of the initial crises, the first blow was struck against neutral Belgium, in northwestern Europe. Germany planned to take advantage of sluggish Russian mobilization by focusing the German army on France. German military leaders recycled tactics developed earlier and activated the Schlieffen Plan, which moved German armies rapidly by rail to march through Belgium and into France. However, this violation of Belgian neutrality also ensured that Great Britain would enter the war against Germany. On August 4, 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany for failing to respect Belgium as a neutral nation.



A staged scene of two British soldiers charging a bunker with a “dead” German soldier lying in front, ca. 1922. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/91783839/.

By 1915, the European war had developed into a series of bloody trench stalemates that continued through the following year. Offensives, largely carried out by British and French armies, achieved nothing but huge numbers of casualties. Peripheral campaigns against the Ottoman Empire in Turkey at Gallipoli, throughout the Middle East, and in various parts of Africa either were unsuccessful or had little bearing on the European contest for victory. The third year of the war, however, witnessed a coup for German military prospects when the regime of Tsar Nicholas II collapsed in Russia in March 1917. At about the same time, the Germans resumed unrestricted submarine warfare to deprive the Allies of replenishment supplies from the United States.[11]

The Germans, realizing that submarine warfare could spark an American intervention, hoped that the European war would be over before American soldiers could arrive in sufficient numbers to alter the balance of power. A German diplomat, Arthur Zimmermann, hatched a plan to complicate the potential American intervention. He offered support to the Mexican government via a desperate bid to regain Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Mexican national leaders declined the offer; the revelation of the Zimmermann Telegram helped usher the United States into the war.

V. America Enters the War

After the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, President Wilson declared American neutrality. He insisted from the start that the United States be neutral “in fact as well as in name,” a policy the majority of American people enthusiastically endorsed. It was unclear, however, what “neutrality” could mean in a world of close economic connections. Ties to the British and French proved strong, and those nations obtained far more loans and supplies than the Germans. In October 1914, President Wilson approved commercial credit loans to the combatants, which made it increasingly difficult for the nation to claim impartiality as war spread through Europe. Trade and financial relations with the Allied nations ultimately drew the United States further into the conflict. In spite of mutually declared blockades between Germany, Great Britain, and France, munitions and other war suppliers in the United States witnessed a brisk and booming increase in business. The British naval blockades that often stopped or seized ships proved annoying and costly, but the unrestricted and surprise torpedo attacks from German submarines were deadly. In May 1915, Germans sank the RMS Lusitania; over a hundred American lives were lost. The attack, coupled with other German attacks on American and British shipping, raised the ire of the public and stoked the desire for war.[12]

By the fall of 1916 and the spring of 1917, President Wilson believed that an imminent German victory would drastically and dangerously alter the balance of power in Europe. Bankers and manufacturers who had made loans and contracts were invested in an Entente victory and lobbied Congress for American intervention. As the Entente teetered, Wilson ordered the withdrawal of Pershing’s soldiers from Mexico in the first months of 1917 as submarine warfare and the Zimmermann Telegram further enflamed public opinion against Germany. Finally, at Wilson’s urging, Congress declared war on Germany on April 4, 1917. The nation entered a war three thousand miles away with a small, under-trained, and poorly equipped military. The United States was unprepared for nearly every aspect of modern war. Considerable time elapsed before an effective army and navy could be assembled, trained, equipped, and deployed to the Western Front in Europe. Building an army and navy sufficient for war was not

easy. Unlike the largest European military powers of Germany, France, and Austrio-Hungary, no tradition existed in the United States to maintain large standing armed forces or trained military reserves during peacetime. There was no American counterpart to the European practice of rapidly equipping, training, and mobilizing reservists and conscripts.

The US historically relied on volunteerism to fill the ranks of the armed forces. Notions of patriotic duty and adventure appealed to young men, who not only volunteered for wartime service but sought out and paid for their own training at army camps prior to American entry in the war. American labor organizations favored voluntary service over conscription. After the United States declared war, labor leader Samuel Gompers argued for volunteerism in letters to the congressional committees considering the question. “The organized labor movement,” he wrote, “has always been fundamentally opposed to compulsion.” Referring to American values as a role model for others, he continued, “It is the hope of organized labor to demonstrate that under voluntary conditions and institutions the Republic of the United States can mobilize its greatest strength, resources and efficiency.”[13]

Despite fears of popular resistance, Congress quickly instituted a reasonably equitable and locally administered system to draft men for the military. On May 18, 1917, Congress approved the Selective Service Act, and President Wilson signed it a week later. The new legislation avoided the unpopular system of bonuses and substitutes used during the Civil War and was received without major objection by the American people.[14]

The conscription act initially required men from ages twenty-one to thirty to register for compulsory military service. Basic physical fitness was the primary requirement for service. The resulting tests offered the emerging fields of social science a range of data collection tools and new screening methods. The Army Medical Department examined the general condition of young American men selected for service from the population. The Surgeon General compiled his findings from draft records in the 1919 report “Defects Found in Drafted Men,” a snapshot of the 2.5 million men examined for military service. Of that group, 1,533,937 physical defects were recorded (often more than one per individual). More than 34 percent of those examined were rejected for service or later discharged for neurological, psychiatric, or mental deficiencies.[15]

To provide a basis for the neurological, psychiatric, and mental evaluations, the army used cognitive skills tests to determine intelligence. About 1.9 million men were tested on intelligence. Soldiers who could read took the Army Alpha test. Illiterates and non-English-speaking immigrants took the nonverbal equivalent, the Army Beta test, which relied on visual testing procedures. Robert M. Yerkes, president of the American Psychological Association and chairman of the Committee on the Psychological Examination of Recruits, developed and analyzed the tests. His data argued that the actual mental age of recruits was only about thirteen years. Among recent immigrants, he said, it was even lower. As a eugenicist, he interpreted the results as roughly equivalent to a mild level of retardation and as an indication of racial deterioration. Years later, experts agreed that the results misrepresented the levels of education for the recruits and revealed defects in the design of the tests.

The experience of service in the army expanded many individual social horizons as native-born and foreign-born soldiers served together. Immigrants had been welcomed into Union ranks during the Civil War, including large numbers of Irish and Germans who had joined and fought alongside native-born men. Some Germans in the Civil War fought in units where German was the main language. Between 1917 and 1918, the army accepted immigrants with some hesitancy because of the widespread public agitation against “hyphenated Americans.” Others were segregated.

Prevailing racial attitudes among white Americans mandated the assignment of white and Black soldiers to different units. Despite racial discrimination, many Black American leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, supported the war effort and sought a place at the front for Black soldiers. Black leaders viewed military service as an opportunity to demonstrate to white society the willingness and ability of Black men to assume all duties and responsibilities of citizens, including wartime sacrifice. If Black soldiers were drafted and fought and died on equal footing with white soldiers, then white Americans would see that they deserved full citizenship. The War Department, however, barred Black troops from combat and relegated Black soldiers to segregated service units where they worked as general laborers. The army also often restricted the privileges of Black soldiers to ensure that the conditions they encountered in Europe did not lead them to question their place in American society. In France, however, the experiences of Black soldiers during training and periods of leave, coupled with their service, proved transformative.

The US government exercised significant social control over its overseas soldiers. To ensure that American “doughboys” did not succumb to European vices, several religious and progressive organizations created an extensive program designed to keep the men pure of heart, mind, and body. With assistance from the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and other temperance organizations, the War Department put together a program of schools, sightseeing tours, and recreational facilities to provide wholesome and educational outlets. The soldiers welcomed most of the activities from these groups, but many still managed to find and enjoy the traditional recreations of soldiers at war.[16]



American soldiers serving in Europe shown “at ease.” Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/20...5946/resource/.

Women reacted to the war preparations by joining several military and civilian organizations. Their enrollment and actions in these organizations proved to be a pioneering effort for American women in war. Military leaders authorized the permanent gender transition of several occupations that gave women opportunities to don uniforms where none had existed before in history. Civilian wartime organizations, although chaired by male members of the business elite, boasted all-female volunteer workforces. Women performed the bulk of volunteer work during the war.[17]



A nurse poses in her U.S. Army uniform. Library of Congress, http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2003663699/.

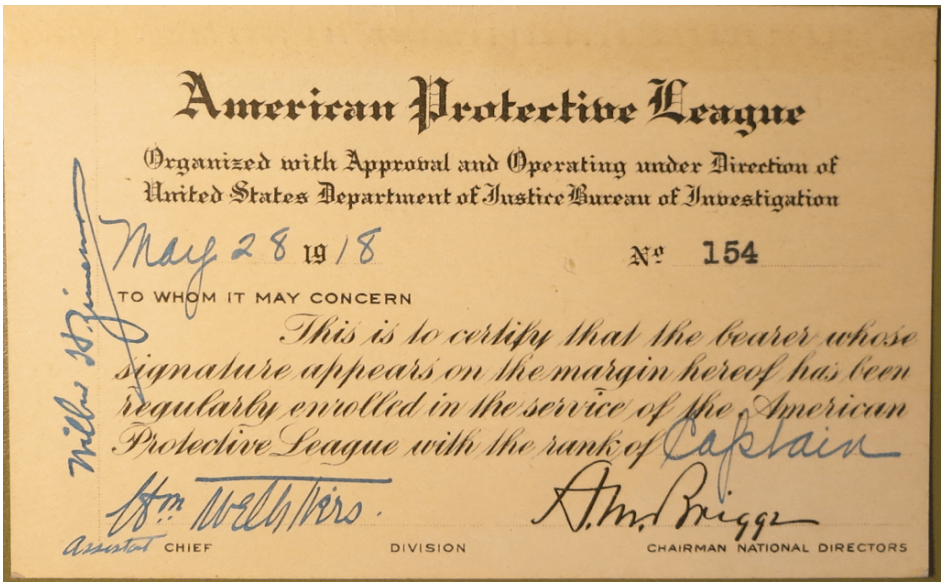
The admittance of women brought considerable upheaval. The War and Navy Departments authorized the enlistment of women to fill positions in several established administrative occupations. The gendered transition of these jobs freed more men to join combat units. Army women served as telephone operators (Hello Girls) for the Signal Corps, navy women enlisted as yeomen (clerical workers), and the first groups of women joined the Marine Corps in July 1918. Approximately twenty-five thousand nurses served in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps for duty stateside and overseas, and about a hundred female physicians were contracted by the army. Neither the female nurses nor the doctors served as commissioned officers in the military, leaving the status of professional medical women hovering somewhere between the enlisted and officer ranks. As a result, many female nurses and doctors suffered various physical and mental abuses at the hands of their male coworkers with no system of redress in place.[18]

Millions of women also volunteered in civilian organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Young Men’s and Women’s

Christian Associations (YMCA/YWCA), and the Salvation Army. Most women performed their volunteer duties in communal spaces owned by the leaders of the municipal chapters of these organizations. Women met at designated times to roll bandages, prepare and serve meals and snacks, package and ship supplies, and organize community fundraisers. The variety of volunteer opportunities gave women the ability to appear in public spaces and promote charitable activities for the war effort. Female volunteers encouraged entire communities, including children, to get involved in war work. While most of these efforts focused on support for the home front, a small percentage of female volunteers served with the American Expeditionary Force in France.[19]

Jim Crow segregation in both the military and civilian sectors stood as a barrier for Black women who wanted to give their time to the war effort. The military prohibited Black women from serving as enlisted or appointed medical personnel. The only avenue for Black women to wear a military uniform existed with the armies of the other Allied nations. A few Black female doctors and nurses joined the French Foreign Legion to escape the racism in the American army. Black female volunteers faced the same discrimination in civilian wartime organizations. White leaders of the American Red Cross, YMCA/YWCA, and Salvation Army municipal chapters refused to admit Black women as equal participants. Black women were forced to charter auxiliary units as subsidiary divisions and were given little guidance on organizing volunteers. They turned instead to the community for support and recruited millions of women for auxiliaries that supported the nearly two hundred thousand Black soldiers and sailors serving in the military. While most female volunteers labored to care for Black families on the home front, three YMCA secretaries worked with the Black troops in France.[20]

VI. On the Homefront


American Protective League

Organized with Approval and Operating under Direction of
United States Department of Justice Bureau of Investigation

May 28 1918 No 154

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that the bearer whose signature appears on the margin hereof has been regularly enrolled in the service of the American Protective League with the rank of Captain

Wm Wallers. A. M. Briggs

Assistant CHIEF DIVISION CHAIRMAN NATIONAL DIRECTORS

The large numbers of German immigrants living throughout the United States created suspicion within the federal government. The American Protective League, a group of private citizens, worked directly with the U.S. government during WWI to identify suspected German sympathizers. Additionally, they sought to eradicate all radical, anarchical, left-wing, and anti-war activities through surveillance and raids. Even Herbert Hoover, the infamous head of the FBI, used the APL to gather intelligence. A membership card in the American Protective League, issued 28 May 1918. Wikimedia.

In the early years of the war, Americans were generally detached from the events in Europe. Progressive Era reform politics dominated the political landscape, and Americans remained most concerned with the shifting role of government at home. However, the facts of the war could not be ignored. The destruction taking place on European battlefields and the ensuing casualty rates exposed the unprecedented brutality of modern warfare. Increasingly, a sense that the fate of the Western world lay in the victory or defeat of the Allies took hold in the United States.

President Wilson, a committed progressive, articulated a global vision of democracy even as he embraced neutrality. As war engulfed Europe, it seemed apparent that the United States' economic power would shape the outcome of the conflict regardless of any American military intervention. By 1916, American trade with the Allies had tripled, while trade with the Central Powers shrank to less than 1 percent of previous levels.

The progression of the war in Europe generated fierce national debates about military preparedness. The Allies and the Central Powers had quickly raised and mobilized vast armies and navies. The United States still had a small military. When America

entered the war, the mobilization of military resources and the cultivation of popular support consumed the country, generating enormous publicity and propaganda campaigns. President Wilson created the Committee on Public Information, known as the Creel Committee, headed by Progressive George Creel, to inspire patriotism and generate support for military adventures. Creel enlisted the help of Hollywood studios and other budding media outlets to cultivate a view of the war that pitted democracy against imperialism and framed America as a crusading nation rescuing Western civilization from medievalism and militarism.

As war passions flared, any challenge to the crushing patriotic sentiment that America was making the world "safe for democracy" was deemed disloyal. A repressive "one hundred percent Americanism" reigned in the United States. In the wake of the Russian Revolution, Wilson signed the Espionage Act in 1917 and the Sedition Act in 1918, stripping dissenters and protesters of their rights to publicly resist the war. Critics and protesters were imprisoned. Immigrants, labor unions, and political radicals became targets of government investigations and an ever more hostile public culture. Anything less than was absolute loyalty threatened to attract nationalistic mobs. Any appearance of German ethnic identity exposed German Americans to violence. Many towns and communities banned the very speaking of the German language in public, and mobs broke up German-language meetings and church services. Support for immigration restrictions, meanwhile, reached a fever pitch. Congress overrode a presidential veto to pass the Immigration Act of 1917, which barred illiterate migrants from entering the United States and shifted American immigration policy closer to comprehensive restrictions based on nationality and a perceived standard of "fitness" for citizenship.[21]

Meanwhile, the government called upon civilians to help pay for the war. Americans lent their financial support to the war effort by purchasing war bonds or supporting the Liberty Loan drives. Many Americans, however, sacrificed far more than money.[22]

VII. Before the Armistice



Burial of an American soldier in Europe. Library of Congress, https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.72750.

The European powers struggled to adapt to the brutality of modern war. Until the spring of 1917, the Allies possessed few effective defensive measures against submarine attacks. German submarines sank more than a thousand ships by the time the United States entered the war. The rapid addition of American naval escorts to the British surface fleet and the establishment of a convoy system countered much of the effect of German submarines. Shipping and military losses declined rapidly. The American army, meanwhile, arrived in Europe in large numbers. Although much of the army's equipment still needed to make the transatlantic passage, the physical presence of so many soldiers proved a fatal blow to German war plans.[23]

In July 1917, after one last disastrous offensive against the Germans, the Russian army disintegrated. The tsarist regime collapsed and in November 1917 Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik Party came to power. Russia soon surrendered to German demands and exited the war, freeing Germany to finally pursue the one-front war it had desired since 1914. The German military quickly shifted hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the eastern theater in preparation for a new series of offensives planned for the following year in France.[24]

In March 1918, Germany launched the Kaiserschlacht (Spring Offensive), a series of five major attacks. By the middle of July

1918, each and every one had failed to break through the Western Front. On August 8, 1918, two million men of the American Expeditionary Forces joined British and French armies in a series of successful counteroffensives that pushed the disintegrating German lines back across France. German general Erich Ludendorff referred to the launch of the counteroffensive as “the black day of the German army in the history of this war.” The German offensive gamble exhausted Germany’s faltering military effort. Defeat was inevitable. Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated at the request of the German military leaders, and the new democratic government agreed to an armistice (ceasefire) on November 11, 1918. German military forces withdrew from France and Belgium and returned to a Germany teetering on the brink of chaos.[24]

By the end of the war, more than 4.7 million American men had served in all branches of the military: four million in the army, six hundred thousand in the navy, and about eighty thousand in the Marine Corps. The United States lost over one hundred thousand men (fifty-three thousand died in battle and many more from disease). Their terrible sacrifice, however, paled before that of the Europeans. After four years of brutal stalemate, France had suffered almost a million and a half military dead and Germany even more. Both nations lost about 4 percent of their population to the war. And the death was not done.[24]

VIII. The War and the Influenza Pandemic

Even as war raged on the Western Front, a new deadly threat loomed: influenza. In the spring of 1918, a strain of the flu virus appeared in the farm country of Haskell County, Kansas, and hit nearby Camp Funston, one of the largest army training camps in the nation. The virus spread like wildfire. The camp had brought disparate populations together, shuffled them between bases, sent them back to their homes across the nation, and, in consecutive waves, deployed them around the world. Between March and May 1918, fourteen of the largest American military training camps reported outbreaks of influenza. Some of the infected soldiers carried the virus on troop transports to France. By September 1918, influenza had spread to all training camps in the United States. And then it mutated.[25]

The second wave of the virus, a mutated strain, was even deadlier than the first. It struck down those in the prime of their lives: a disproportionate amount of influenza victims were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. In Europe, influenza hit both sides of the Western Front. The “Spanish Influenza,” or the “Spanish Lady,” misnamed due to accounts of the disease that first appeared in the uncensored newspapers of neutral Spain, resulted in the deaths of an estimated fifty million people worldwide. Reports from the Surgeon General of the Army revealed that while 227,000 American soldiers were hospitalized from wounds received in battle, almost half a million suffered from influenza. The worst part of the epidemic struck during the height of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in the fall of 1918 and weakened the combat capabilities of the American and German armies. During the war, more soldiers died from influenza than combat. The pandemic continued to spread after the armistice before finally fading in the early 1920s. No cure was ever found.[26]

IX. The Fourteen Points and the League of Nations

As the flu virus wracked the world, Europe and America rejoiced at the end of hostilities. On December 4, 1918, President Wilson became the first American president to travel to Europe during his term. He intended to shape the peace. The war brought an abrupt end to four great European imperial powers. The German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires evaporated, and the map of Europe was redrawn to accommodate new independent nations. As part of the armistice, Allied forces followed the retreating Germans and occupied territories in the Rhineland to prevent Germany from reigniting war. As Germany disarmed, Wilson and the other Allied leaders gathered in France at Versailles for the Paris Peace Conference to dictate the terms of a settlement to the war. After months of deliberation, the Treaty of Versailles officially ended the war.

Earlier that year, on January 8, 1918, before a joint session of Congress, President Wilson offered an ambitious statement of war aims and peace terms known as the Fourteen Points. The plan not only dealt with territorial issues but offered principles on which a long-term peace could be built. But in January 1918, Germany still anticipated a favorable verdict on the battlefield and did not seriously consider accepting the terms of the Fourteen Points. The Allies were even more dismissive. French prime minister Georges Clemenceau remarked, “The good Lord only had ten!”[16]

President Wilson labored to realize his vision of the postwar world. The United States had entered the fray, Wilson proclaimed, “to make the world safe for democracy.” At the center of Wilson’s plan was a novel international organization—the League of Nations—charged with keeping a worldwide peace by preventing the kind of destruction that tore across Europe and “affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.” This promise of collective security, that an attack on one sovereign member would be viewed as an attack on all, was a key component of the Fourteen

Points.[27]

But the fight for peace was daunting. While President Wilson was celebrated in Europe and welcomed as the "God of Peace," his fellow statesmen were less enthusiastic about his plans for postwar Europe. America's closest allies had little interest in the League of Nations. Allied leaders sought to guarantee the future safety of their own nations. Unlike the United States, the Allies endured the horrors of the war firsthand. They refused to sacrifice further. The negotiations made clear that the British prime minister, David Lloyd George, was more interested in preserving Britain's imperial domain, while the French prime minister, Clemenceau, sought a peace that recognized the Allies' victory and the Central Powers' culpability: he wanted reparations—severe financial penalties—and limits on Germany's future ability to wage war. This placed the fight for the League of Nations largely on the shoulders of President Wilson. By June 1919, the final version of the treaty was signed, and President Wilson was able to return home. The treaty was a compromise that included demands for German reparations, provisions for the League of Nations, and the promise of collective security. For President Wilson, it was an imperfect peace, but an imperfect peace was better than none at all.

The real fight for the League of Nations was on the American home front. Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts stood as the most prominent opponent of the League of Nations. As chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and an influential Republican Party leader, he could block ratification of the treaty. Lodge attacked the treaty for potentially robbing the United States of its sovereignty. Never an isolationist, Lodge demanded instead that the country deal with its own problems in its own way, free from the collective security—and oversight—offered by the League of Nations. Unable to match Lodge's influence in the Senate, President Wilson took his case to the American people in the hopes that ordinary voters might be convinced that the only guarantee of future world peace was the League of Nations. During his grueling cross-country trip, however, President Wilson suffered an incapacitating stroke. His opponents had the upper hand.[28]

President Wilson's dream for the League of Nations died on the floor of the Senate. Lodge's opposition successfully blocked America's entry into the League of Nations, an organization conceived and championed by an American president. The League of Nations operated with fifty-eight sovereign members, but the United States refused to join, refused to lend it American power, and refused to provide it with the power needed to fulfill its purpose.[24]

X. Aftermath of World War I

The war transformed the world. The Middle East, for instance, was drastically changed. For centuries the Ottoman Empire had shaped life in the region. Before the war, the Middle East had three main centers of power: the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Iran. President Wilson's call for self-determination appealed to many under the Ottoman Empire's rule. In the aftermath of the war, Wilson sent a commission to investigate the region to determine the conditions and aspirations of the populace. The King-Crane Commission found that most of the inhabitants favored an independent state free of European control. However, these wishes were largely ignored, and the lands of the former Ottoman Empire were divided into mandates by the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated into what would become several new nations, many created by European powers with little regard for the incoherent populations they had suddenly cobbled together. These Arab provinces were ruled by Britain and France, and the new nation of Turkey emerged from the former heartland of Anatolia. According to the League of Nations, mandates "were inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world." Though allegedly for the benefit of the peoples of the Middle East, the mandate system was essentially a reimagined form of nineteenth-century imperialism. France received Syria; Britain took control of Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan (Jordan). The United States was asked to become a mandate power but declined. The geographical realignment of the Middle East also included the formation of two new nations: Yemen and Kingdom of Hejaz, the latter of which was ruled by Sharif Hussein and only lasted until the 1920s, when it became part of Saudi Arabia.[29]

The 1917 Russian Revolution, meanwhile, enflamed American fears of communism. Anxious Americans saw Bolsheviks everywhere. The fates of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian-born anarchists who were convicted of robbery and murder in 1920, epitomized the sudden arrival of the Red Scare. Their arrest, trial, and execution, meanwhile, inspired many leftists and dissenting artists to express their sympathy with the accused, such as in Maxwell Anderson's Gods of the Lightning or Upton Sinclair's Boston. The Sacco-Vanzetti case demonstrated an exacerbated nervousness about immigrants and the potential spread of radical ideas, especially those related to international communism.[30]

Mail bombs were sent to dozens of prominent Americans in April 1919. Most were intercepted—the bomb posted to the mayor of Seattle leaked acid, leading to the unraveling of the bombing plot—but in June simultaneous explosions rocked sites in eight cities, including the Washington, D.C., home of US Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, who survived the blast.

Congress demanded action. J. Edgar Hoover, who built up and then led the modern Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for nearly half a century, headed the new General Intelligence Division of the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation in August 1919. During what became known as the Palmer Raids, the government raided the headquarters of radical groups in dozens of cities in November and again in January 1920, netting over four thousand arrests. Hundreds of radicals and suspected radicals, meanwhile, were deported. The raids—together with the broader repressive American political climate—broke the back many radical organizations.[31] While the raids played to a pervasive Americanism, they also shocked many civil libertarians. Hearings revealed that many of the arrests lacked warrants, seizures of evidence had not followed legal procedures, and the raids failed to produce weapon stockpiles or violent plots. In the face of the raids and broader assaults on free speech, the American Civil Liberties Union formed in 1920, pushing the speech protections of the First Amendment to the forefront of many Americans' understandings of American freedom. [32]



While still fighting in WWI, President Wilson sent American troops to Siberia during the Russian Civil War for reasons both diplomatic and military. This photograph shows American soldiers in Vladivostok parading before the building occupied by the staff of the Czecho-Slovaks (those opposing the Bolsheviks). To the left, Japanese marines stand to attention as the American troops march. Photograph, August 1, 1918. Wikimedia.

Meanwhile, the United States had been actively fighting the Bolsheviks. After signing a separate peace treaty with Germany in March 1918, the Allies planned to send troops to northern Russia and Siberia to prevent German influence and fight the Bolshevik Revolution. Wilson agreed, and in a little-known foreign intervention, American troops remained in Russia as late as 1920. Although the Bolshevik rhetoric of self-determination followed many of the ideals of Wilson's Fourteen Points—Vladimir Lenin supported revolutions against imperial rule across the world—the American commitment to self-rule was hardly strong enough to overcome the powerful strains of anticommunism.

At home, the United States grappled with harsh postwar realities. Workers struggled to navigate the hastily demobilized economy. In early 1919, the grievances of shipbuilding workers in Seattle escalated briefly into a February general strike during which union workers administered the city. The strike was suppressed by troops and a sensationalist press whipped up the threat of urban soviets (local workers' councils that had been critical to the success of the Russian Revolution) supplanting regional governments.



Striking steel mill workers holding bulletins, Chicago, Illinois, September 22, 1919. ExplorePAhistory.com

The Seattle conflict sparked a record year of labor activism: four million Americans went on strike, representing almost a quarter of the manual workforce and more than three times the annual number during the war years of 1917–18. Strikers fought not just for practical gains but for a larger "industrial democracy" within which workers exercised more control, but such demands rang ominously in the wake of the Russian Revolution.[33]

Governor Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts broke a Boston police strike in September 1919. That same month, workers launched an epic national labor confrontation across the American steel industry. Workers targeted the coal industry in November—with winter approaching. Both industries were at the heart of the industrial economy, with coal in particular a matter of life and death in the country's coldest regions. Bowing to the demands of capital and appealing to the coming winter, the government suppressed the strike with an injunction, which the courts upheld and the savvy head of the United Mine Workers, John L. Lewis, declined to defy. Some miners tried to go it alone, but by mid-December it was over, and so was the epic strike year of 1919.[34]

The war exacerbated racial tensions as well, and violence exploded after the war. The "Red Summer" of 1919 saw racial violence break out in at least twenty-five cities, including Chicago and Washington, D.C. The riots originated from wartime racial tensions. Industrial war production and massive wartime service created vast labor shortages, and thousands of Black southerners traveled to the North and Midwest to escape the traps of southern poverty. But the so-called Great Migration sparked significant racial conflict as white northerners and returning veterans fought to reclaim their jobs and their neighborhoods from new Black migrants.[35]

Many Black Americans, who had fled the Jim Crow South and traveled halfway around the world to fight for the United States, would not so easily accept postwar racism. The overseas experience of Black Americans and their return triggered a dramatic change in Black communities. W.E.B. Du Bois wrote boldly of returning soldiers: "We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy!"[36] But white Americans desired a return to the status quo, a world that did not include social, political, or economic equality for Black people.

Black Americans suffered throughout the Red Summer. Riots erupted across the country from April until October. The massive bloodshed included thousands of injuries, hundreds of deaths, and vast destruction of private and public property across the nation. The Chicago Riot, from July 27 to August 3, 1919, considered the summer's worst, sparked a week of mob violence, murder, and arson. Race riots had rocked the nation before, but the Red Summer was something new. Recently empowered Black Americans actively defended their families and homes from hostile white rioters, often with militant force. This behavior galvanized many in Black communities, but it also shocked white Americans who alternatively interpreted Black resistance as a desire for total revolution or as a new positive step in the path toward Black civil rights. In the riots' aftermath, James Weldon Johnson wrote, "Can't they understand that the more Negroes they outrage, the more determined the whole race becomes to secure the full rights and privileges of freemen?" Those hot months in 1919 forever altered American society and roused and terrified those who experienced the sudden and devastating outbreaks of violence.[37]

XI. Conclusion

World War I decimated millions and profoundly altered the course of world history. Postwar instabilities led directly to a global depression and a second world war. The war sparked the Bolshevik Revolution, which led to the Soviet Union and later the Cold War. It created Middle Eastern nations and aggravated ethnic tensions that the United States could never overcome. And the United States had fought on the European mainland as a major power. America's place in the world was never the same. By whipping up nationalist passions, American attitudes toward radicalism, dissent, and immigration were poisoned. Postwar disillusionment shattered Americans' hopes for the progress of the modern world. The war came and went, leaving in its place the bloody wreckage of the old world through which the United States traveled to a new and uncertain future.

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This chapter was edited by Paula Fortier, with content contributions by Alex Beckstrand, Tizoc Chavez, Morgan Deane, Zachary W. Dresser, Blake Earle, Max Ehrenfreund, Paula Fortier, Larry A. Grant, Mariah Hepworth, Andrew Hernandez, Adam J. Hodges, Jun Suk Hyun, Benjamin C. Montoya, and Leah Richier.

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20: The New Era



"Women competing in low hurdle race, Washington, D.C.," ca. 1920s. Library of Congress (LC-USZ62-65429)

I. Introduction

On a sunny day in early March 1921, Warren G. Harding took the oath of office to become the twenty-ninth president of the United States. He had won a landslide election by promising a "return to normalcy." "Our supreme task is the resumption of our onward, normal way," he declared in his inaugural address. While campaigning, he said, "America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration." The nation still reeled from the shock of World War I, the explosion of racial violence and political repression in 1919, and, the lingering Red Scare sparked by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

More than 115,000 American soldiers had lost their lives in barely a year of fighting in Europe. Then, between 1918 and 1920, nearly seven hundred thousand Americans died in a flu epidemic that hit nearly 20 percent of the American population. Waves of labor strikes, meanwhile, hit soon after the war. Radicals bellowed. Anarchists and others sent more than thirty bombs through the mail on May 1, 1919. After wartime controls fell, the economy tanked and national unemployment hit 20 percent. Farmers' bankruptcy rates, already egregious, now skyrocketed. Harding could hardly deliver the peace that he promised, but his message nevertheless resonated among a populace wracked by instability.

The 1920s, of course, would be anything but "normal." The decade 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, most commonly, the Roaring Twenties. The mass production and consumption of automobiles, household appliances, and film and radio programs fueled a new economy and new standards of living. New mass entertainment introduced talking films and jazz music while sexual and social restraints loosened. As Americans fought harder than ever for equal rights, cultural observers noted the appearance of "the New Woman" and "the New Negro." At the same time, however, many Americans turned their back on political and economic reform, denounced America's shifting demographics, stifled immigration, retreated toward "old-time religion," and revived the Ku Klux Klan with millions of new members. Old immigrant communities that had predated new immigration quotas, meanwhile, clung to their cultures and their native faiths in the face of "Americanization." The 1920s were a decade of conflict and tension. But whatever it was, it was not "normalcy."

II. Republican White House, 1921–1933

To deliver on his promises of stability and prosperity, Harding signed legislation to restore a high protective tariff and dismantled

the last wartime controls over industry. Meanwhile, the vestiges of America's involvement in World War I and its propaganda and suspicions of anything less than "one hundred percent American" pushed Congress to address fears of immigration and foreign populations. The sour postwar economy led elites to raise the specter of the Russian Revolution and sideline not just the various American socialist and anarchist organizations but nearly all union activism. During the 1920s, the labor movement suffered sharp declines in membership. Workers lost not only bargaining power but also the support of courts, politicians, and, in large measure, the American public.[1]

Harding's presidency would go down in history as among the most corrupt. Many of Harding's cabinet appointees, however, were individuals of some stature who answered to various American constituencies. For instance, Henry C. Wallace, the vocal editor of Wallace's Farmer and a well-known proponent of scientific farming, was made secretary of agriculture. Herbert Hoover, the popular head and administrator of the wartime Food Administration and a self-made millionaire, was made secretary of commerce. To satisfy business interests, the conservative businessman Andrew Mellon became secretary of the treasury. Mostly, however, it was the appointing of friends and close supporters, dubbed "the Ohio gang," that led to trouble.[2]

Harding's administration suffered a tremendous setback when several officials conspired to lease government land in Wyoming to oil companies in exchange for cash. In what became known as the Teapot Dome scandal (named after a nearby rock formation that resembled a teapot), Interior Secretary Albert Fall and Navy Secretary Edwin Denby resigned and Fall was convicted and sent to jail. Harding took vacation in the summer of 1923 so that he could think deeply on how to deal "with my God-damned friends"—it was his friends, not his enemies, who kept him up walking the halls at nights. But then, in August 1923, Harding died suddenly of a heart attack, and Vice President Calvin Coolidge ascended to the highest office in the land.[3]

The son of a shopkeeper, Coolidge climbed the Republican ranks from city councilman to governor of Massachusetts. As president, Coolidge sought to remove the stain of scandal but otherwise continued Harding's economic approach, refusing to take actions in defense of workers or consumers against American business. "The chief business of the American people," the new president stated, "is business." One observer called Coolidge's policy "active inactivity," but Coolidge was not afraid of supporting business interests and wealthy Americans by lowering taxes or maintaining high tariff rates. Congress, for instance, had already begun to reduce taxes on the wealthy from wartime levels of 66 percent to 20 percent, which Coolidge championed.[4]

While Coolidge supported business, other Americans agitated for social causes. The 1920s, for instance, represented a time of great activism among American women, who had won the vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Female voters, like their male counterparts, pursued many interests. Concerned about squalor, poverty, and domestic violence, women had already lent their efforts to prohibition, which went into effect under the Eighteenth Amendment in January 1920. After that point, alcohol could no longer be manufactured or sold. Other reformers urged government action to ameliorate high mortality rates among infants and children, provide federal aid for education, and ensure peace and disarmament. Some activists advocated protective legislation for women and children, while Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party called for the elimination of all legal distinctions "on account of sex" through the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was introduced but defeated in Congress.[5]



During the 1920s, the National Women's Party fought for the rights of women beyond that of suffrage, which they had secured through the 19th Amendment in 1920. They organized private events, like the tea party pictured here, and public campaigning, such as the introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment to Congress, as they continued the struggle for equality. "Reception tea at the National Womens [i.e., Woman's] Party to Alice Brady, famous film star and one of the organizers of the party," April 5, 1923. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/91705244/.

National politics in the 1920s was dominated by the Republican Party, which held not only the presidency but both houses of Congress as well. Coolidge decided not to seek a second term in 1928. A man of few words, "Silent Cal" publicized his decision by handing a scrap of paper to a reporter that read simply: "I do not choose to run for president in 1928." That year's race became a contest between the Democratic governor of New York, Al Smith, whose Catholic faith and immigrant background aroused nativist suspicions and whose connections to Tammany Hall and anti-Prohibition politics offended reformers, and the Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover, whose all-American, Midwestern, Protestant background and managerial prowess during World War I endeared him to American voters.[6] Hoover focused on economic growth and prosperity. He had served as secretary of commerce under Harding and Coolidge and claimed credit for the sustained growth seen during the 1920s. "We in America to-day are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land," he said when he launched his 1928 presidential campaign. "Given a 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."[7] Despite Hoover's claims—which would come to seem farcical after the onset of the Great Depression—much of the election centered on Smith's religion and his opposition to Prohibition. Many Protestant ministers preached against Smith and warned that he would be enthralled to the pope. Hoover won in a landslide. While Smith won handily in the nation's largest cities, portending future political trends, he lost most of the rest of the country. Even several solidly Democratic southern states pulled the lever for a Republican for the first time since Reconstruction.[8]

III. Culture of Consumption



In the 1920s, Americans bought magazines like Photoplay to learn about the stars of their new favorite entertainment medium: the movies. Advertisers took advantage of this broad audience to promote a wide range of consumer goods and services to both men and women. Archive .org.

"Change is in the very air Americans breathe, and consumer changes are the very bricks out of which we are building our new kind of civilization," announced marketing expert and home economist Christine Frederick in her influential 1929 monograph Selling Mrs. Consumer. The book, which was based on one of the earliest surveys of American buying habits, advised manufacturers and advertisers how to capture the purchasing power of women, who, according to Frederick, accounted for 90 percent of household expenditures. Aside from granting advertisers insight into the psychology of the "average" consumer, Frederick's text captured the tremendous social and economic transformations that had been wrought over the course of her lifetime.[9]

Indeed, the America of Frederick's birth looked very different from the one she confronted in 1929. The consumer change she studied had resulted from the industrial expansion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the discovery of new energy sources and manufacturing technologies, industrial output flooded the market with a range of consumer products such as ready-to-wear clothing, convenience foods, and home appliances. By the end of the nineteenth century, output had risen so dramatically that many contemporaries feared supply had outpaced demand and that the nation would soon face the devastating financial consequences of overproduction. American businessmen attempted to avoid this catastrophe by developing new merchandising and marketing strategies that transformed distribution and stimulated a new culture of consumer desire.[10]

The department store stood at the center of this early consumer revolution. By the 1880s, several large dry-goods houses blossomed into modern retail department stores. These emporiums concentrated a broad array of goods under a single roof, allowing customers to purchase shirtwaists and gloves alongside toy trains and washbasins. To attract customers, department stores relied on more than variety. They also employed innovations in service (such as access to restaurants, writing rooms, and babysitting) and spectacle (such as elaborately decorated store windows, fashion shows, and interior merchandise displays). Marshall Field was among the most successful of these entrepreneurs. Located on State Street in Chicago, his store, Marshall Field & Co., pioneered many of these strategies, including establishing a tearoom that provided refreshment to the well-heeled female shoppers who composed the store's clientele. Reflecting on the success of Field's marketing techniques, Thomas W. Goodspeed, an early trustee of the University of Chicago, wrote, "Perhaps the most notable of Mr. Field's innovations was that he made a store in which it was a joy to buy."[11]

The joy of buying infected a growing number of Americans in the early twentieth century as the rise of mail-order catalogs, mass-circulation magazines, and national branding further stoked consumer desire. The automobile industry also fostered the new culture of consumption by promoting the use of credit. By 1927, more than 60 percent of American automobiles were sold on credit, and installment purchasing was made available for nearly every other large consumer purchase. Spurred by access to easy credit, consumer expenditures for household appliances, for example, grew by more than 120 percent between 1919 and 1929. Henry Ford's assembly line, which advanced production strategies taken up by countless industries, brought automobiles within the reach of middle-income Americans and further drove the spirit of consumerism. By 1925, Ford's factories were turning out a

Model T every ten seconds. The number of registered cars ballooned from just over nine million in 1920 to nearly twenty-seven million by the decade's end. Americans owned more cars than Great Britain, Germany, France, and Italy combined. In the late 1920s, 80 percent of the world's cars drove on American roads.

IV. Culture of Escape

As transformative as steam and iron had been in the previous century, gasoline and electricity—embodied most dramatically for many Americans in automobiles, movies, and radio programs—propelled not only consumption but also the famed popular culture of the 1920s. "We wish to escape," wrote Edgar Burroughs, author of the Tarzan series, ". . . the restrictions of manmade laws, and the inhibitions that society has placed upon us." Burroughs authored a new Tarzan story nearly every year from 1914 until 1939. "We would each like to be Tarzan," he said. "At least I would; I admit it." Like many Americans in the 1920s, Burroughs sought to challenge and escape the constraints of a society that seemed more industrialized with each passing day.[12]

Just like Burroughs, Americans escaped with great speed. Whether through the automobile, Hollywood's latest films, jazz records produced on Tin Pan Alley, or the hours spent listening to radio broadcasts of Jack Dempsey's prizefights, the public wrapped itself in popular culture. One observer estimated that Americans belted out the silly musical hit "Yes! We Have No Bananas" more than "The Star-Spangled Banner" and all the hymns in all the hymnals combined.[13]



Side view of a Ford sedan with four passengers and a woman getting in on the driver's side, ca.1923. Library of Congress.

As the automobile became more popular and more reliable, more people traveled more frequently and attempted greater distances. Women increasingly drove themselves to their own activities as well as those of their children. Vacationing Americans sped to Florida to escape northern winters. Young men and women fled the supervision of courtship, exchanging the staid parlor couch for sexual exploration in the back seat of a sedan. In order to serve and capture the growing number of drivers, Americans erected gas stations, diners, motels, and billboards along the roadside. Automobiles themselves became objects of entertainment: nearly one hundred thousand people gathered to watch drivers compete for the $50,000 prize of the Indianapolis 500.

Meanwhile, the United States dominated the global film industry. By 1930, as moviemaking became more expensive, a handful of film companies had seized control of the industry. It was left to immigrants, mostly of Jewish heritage from central and Eastern Europe, to "invent Hollywood" because most turn-of-the-century middle- and upper-class Americans disdained cinema as lower-class entertainment. After their parents emigrated from Poland in 1876, Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack Warner (who were, according to family lore, given the name when an Ellis Island official could not understand their surname) founded Warner Bros. In 1918, Universal, Paramount, Columbia, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) were all founded by or led by Jewish executives. Aware of their social status as outsiders, these immigrants (or sons of immigrants) purposefully produced films that portrayed American values of opportunity, democracy, and freedom.

Not content with distributing thirty-minute films accessible in small establishments known as nickelodeons, film moguls produced longer, higher-quality films and showed them in palatial theaters that attracted those who had previously shunned the film

industry. But as filmmakers captured the middle and upper classes, they held on to working-class moviegoers by blending traditional and modern values. Cecil B. DeMille's 1923 epic *The Ten Commandments* depicted orgiastic revelry, for instance, while still managing to celebrate a biblical story. But what good was a silver screen in a dingy theater? Moguls and entrepreneurs soon constructed picture palaces. Samuel Rothafel's Roxy Theater in New York held more than six thousand patrons, to be escorted by a uniformed usher past gardens and statues to their cushioned seat. In order to show *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the first movie with synchronized vocal track and pictures, the Warners spent half a million dollars to equip two theaters. "Sound is a passing fancy," one MGM producer told his wife, but Warner Bros.' assets, which increased from just $5 million in 1925 to $230 million in 1930, told a different story.[14]



Mary Pickford's film personas led the glamorous and lavish lifestyle that female movie-goers of the 1920s desired so much. Mary Pickford, 1920. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003666664.

Americans fell in love with the movies. Whether it was the surroundings, the sound, or the production budgets, weekly movie attendance skyrocketed from sixteen million in 1912 to forty million in the early 1920s. Hungarian immigrant William Fox, founder of Fox Film Corporation, declared that "the motion picture is a distinctly American institution" because "the rich rub elbows with the poor" in movie theaters. With no seating restriction, the one-price admission was accessible for nearly all Americans (African Americans, however, were either excluded or segregated). Women represented more than 60 percent of moviegoers, packing theaters to see Mary Pickford, nicknamed "America's Sweetheart," who was earning a million dollars a year by 1920 through a combination of film and endorsement contracts. Pickford and other female stars popularized the "flapper," a woman who favored short skirts, makeup, and cigarettes.

As Americans went to the movies more and more, at home they had the radio. Italian scientist Guglielmo Marconi transmitted the first transatlantic wireless (radio) message in 1901, but radios in the home did not become available until around 1920, when they boomed across the country. Around half of American homes contained a radio by 1930. Radio stations brought entertainment directly into the living room through the sale of advertisements and sponsorships, from The Maxwell House Hour to B. A. Rolfe and His Lucky Strike Orchestra. Soap companies sponsored daytime dramas so frequently that an entire genre—"soap operas"—was born, providing housewives with audio adventures that stood in stark contrast to common chores. Though radio stations were often under the control of corporations like the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) or the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), radio programs were less constrained by traditional boundaries in order to capture as wide an audience as possible, spreading popular culture on a national level.

Radio exposed Americans to a broad array of music. Jazz, a uniquely American musical style popularized by the African American community in New Orleans, spread primarily through radio stations and records. *The New York Times* had ridiculed jazz as "savage" because of its racial heritage, but the music represented cultural independence to others. As Harlem-based musician William Dixon put it, "It did seem, to a little boy, that . . . white people really owned everything. But that wasn't entirely true. They didn't own the music that I played." The fast-paced and spontaneity-laced tunes invited the listener to dance along. "When a good orchestra plays a 'rag,'" dance instructor Vernon Castle recalled, "one has simply got to move." Jazz became a national sensation, played and heard by both white and Black Americans. Jewish Lithuanian-born singer Al Jolson—whose biography inspired *The Jazz Singer* and who played the film's titular character—became the most popular singer in America.[15]

The 1920s also witnessed the maturation of professional sports. Play-by-play radio broadcasts of major collegiate and professional sporting events marked a new era for sports, despite the institutionalization of racial segregation in most. Suddenly, Jack Dempsey's left crosses and right uppercuts could almost be felt in homes across the United States. Dempsey, who held the heavyweight championship for most of the decade, drew million-dollar gates and inaugurated "Dempseymania" in newspapers across the country. Harold Edward "Red" Grange, who carried the football with a similar recklessness, helped popularize professional football, which was then in the shadow of the college game. Grange left the University of Illinois before graduating to join the Chicago Bears in 1925. "There had never been such evidence of public interest since our professional league began," recalled Bears owner George Halas of Grange's arrival.[16]



Babe Ruth's incredible talent attracted widespread attention to the sport of baseball, helping it become America's favorite pastime. Ruth's propensity to shatter records with the swing of his bat made him a national hero during a period when defying conventions was the popular thing to do. "[Babe Ruth, full-length portrait, standing, facing slightly left, in baseball uniform, holding baseball bat]," c. 1920. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/92507380/.

Perhaps no sports figure left a bigger mark than did Babe Ruth. Born George Herman Ruth, the "Sultan of Swat" grew up in an orphanage in Baltimore's slums. Ruth's emergence on the national scene was much needed, as the baseball world had been rocked by the so-called Black Sox Scandal in which eight Chicago White Sox players allegedly agreed to throw the 1919 World Series. Ruth hit fifty-four home runs in 1920, which was more than any other American League team. Baseball writers called Ruth a superman, and more Americans could recognize Ruth than they could then-president Warren G. Harding.

After an era of destruction and doubt brought about by World War I, Americans craved heroes who seemed to defy convention and break boundaries. Dempsey, Grange, and Ruth dominated their respective sports, but only Charles Lindbergh conquered the sky. On May 21, 1927, Lindbergh concluded the first ever nonstop solo flight from New York to Paris. Armed with only a few sandwiches, some bottles of water, paper maps, and a flashlight, Lindbergh successfully navigated over the Atlantic Ocean in thirty-three hours. Some historians have dubbed Lindbergh the "hero of the decade," not only for his transatlantic journey but because he helped to restore the faith of many Americans in individual effort and technological advancement. In a world so recently devastated by machine guns, submarines, and chemical weapons, Lindbergh's flight demonstrated that technology could inspire and accomplish great things. Outlook Magazine called Lindbergh "the heir of all that we like to think is best in America."[17]

The decade's popular culture seemed to revolve around escape. Coney Island in New York marked new amusements for young and old. Americans drove their sedans to massive theaters to enjoy major motion pictures. Radio towers broadcast the bold new sound of jazz, the adventures of soap operas, and the feats of amazing athletes. Dempsey and Grange seemed bigger, stronger, and faster than any who dared to challenge them. Babe Ruth smashed home runs out of ball parks. And Lindbergh escaped the earth's gravity and crossed an entire ocean. Neither Dempsey nor Ruth nor Lindbergh made Americans forget the horrors of World War I and the chaos that followed, but they made it seem as if the future might be brighter.

V. “The New Woman”



This “new breed” of women – known as the flapper – went against the gender proscriptions of the era, bobbing their hair, wearing short dresses, listening to jazz, and flouting social and sexual norms. While liberating in many ways, these behaviors also reinforced stereotypes of female carelessness and obsessive consumerism that would continue throughout the twentieth century. Bain News Service, “Louise Brooks,” undated. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ggb2006007866/.

The rising emphasis on spending and accumulation nurtured a national ethos of materialism and individual pleasure. These impulses were embodied in the figure of the flapper, whose bobbed hair, short skirts, makeup, cigarettes, and carefree spirit captured the attention of American novelists such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis. Rejecting the old Victorian values of desexualized modesty and self-restraint, young “flappers” seized opportunities for the public coed pleasures offered by new commercial leisure institutions, such as dance halls, cabarets, and nickelodeons, not to mention the illicit blind tigers and speakeasies (venues where alcohol could be consumed) spawned by Prohibition. In so doing, young American women had helped usher in a new morality that permitted women greater independence, freedom of movement, and access to the delights of urban living. In the words of psychologist G. Stanley Hall, “She was out to see the world and, incidentally, be seen of it.”

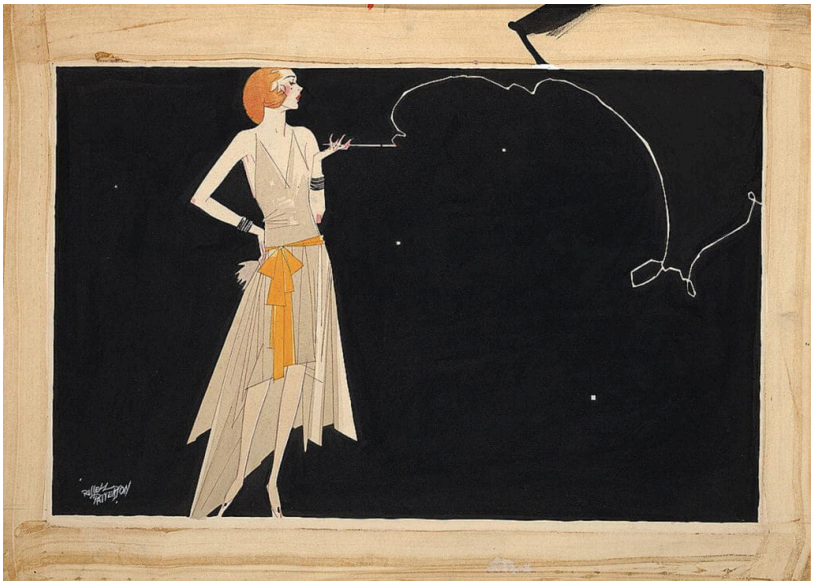
Such sentiments were repeated in an oft-cited advertisement in a 1930 edition of The *Chicago Daily Tribune*: “Today’s woman gets what she wants. The vote. Slim sheaths of silk to replace voluminous petticoats. Glassware in sapphire blue or glowing amber. The right to a career. Soap to match her bathroom’s color scheme.” As with so much else in the 1920s, however, sex and gender were in many ways a study in contradictions. It was the decade of the “New Woman,” and one in which only 10 percent of married women—although nearly half of unmarried women—worked outside the home.[18] It was a decade in which new technologies decreased time requirements for household chores, and one in which standards of cleanliness and order in the home rose to often impossible standards. It was a decade in which women finally could exercise their right to vote, and one in which the often thinly bound women’s coalitions that had secured that victory splintered into various causes. Finally, it was a decade in which images such as the flapper gave women new modes of representing femininity, and one in which such representations were often inaccessible to women of certain races, ages, and socioeconomic classes.

Women undoubtedly gained much in the 1920s. There was a profound and keenly felt cultural shift that, for many women, meant increased opportunity to work outside the home. The number of professional women, for example, significantly rose in the decade. But limits still existed, even for professional women. Occupations such as law and medicine remained overwhelmingly male: most female professionals were in feminized professions such as teaching and nursing. And even within these fields, it was difficult for women to rise to leadership positions.

Further, it is crucial not to overgeneralize the experience of all women based on the experiences of a much-commented-upon subset of the population. A woman’s race, class, ethnicity, and marital status all had an impact on both the likelihood that she worked outside the home and the types of opportunities that were available to her. While there were exceptions, for many minority women work outside the home was not a cultural statement but rather a financial necessity (or both), and physically demanding, low-paying domestic service work continued to be the most common job type. Young, working-class white women were joining the workforce more frequently, too, but often in order to help support their struggling mothers and fathers.

For young, middle-class, white women—those most likely to fit the image of the carefree flapper—the most common workplace was the office. These predominantly single women increasingly became clerks, jobs that had been primarily male in earlier years. But here, too, there was a clear ceiling. While entry-level clerk jobs became increasingly feminized, jobs at higher, more lucrative levels remained dominated by men. Further, rather than changing the culture of the workplace, the entrance of women into lower-level jobs primarily changed the coding of the jobs themselves. Such positions simply became "women's work."

Finally, as these same women grew older and married, the social changes became even subtler. Married women were, for the most part, expected to remain in the domestic sphere. And while new patterns of consumption gave them more power and, arguably, more autonomy, new household technologies and philosophies of marriage and child-rearing increased expectations, further tying these women to the home—a paradox that becomes clear in advertisements such as the one in *The Chicago Daily Tribune*. Of course, the number of women in the workplace cannot exclusively measure changes in sex and gender norms. Attitudes toward sex, for example, liberalized in the 1920s as well. Not all Americans embraced new ideas about sexuality during the 1920s, but for many women—particularly young, college-educated white women—an attempt to rebel against what they saw as a repressive Victorian notion of sexuality led to an increase in premarital sexual activity strong enough that it became, in the words of one historian, "almost a matter of conformity."[19]



The frivolity, decadence, and obliviousness of the 1920s was embodied in the image of the flapper, the stereotyped carefree and indulgent woman of the Roaring Twenties depicted by Russell Patterson's drawing. Russell Patterson, artist, "Where there's smoke there's fire," c. 1920s. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009616115/.

Meanwhile, especially in urban centers such as New York, the gay community flourished. While gay males had to contend with the increased policing of their daily lives, especially later in the decade, they generally lived more openly in such cities than they would be able to for many decades following World War II.[20] At the same time, for many lesbians in the decade, the increased sexualization of women brought new scrutiny to same-sex female relationships previously dismissed as harmless.[21]

Ultimately, the most enduring symbol of the changing notions of gender in the 1920s remains the flapper. And indeed, that image was a "new" available representation of womanhood in the 1920s. But it is just that: a representation of womanhood of the 1920s. There were many women in the decade of differing races, classes, ethnicities, and experiences, just as there were many men with different experiences. For some women, the 1920s were a time of reorganization, new representations, and new opportunities. For others, it was a decade of confusion, contradiction, new pressures, and struggles new and old.

VI. “The New Negro”



White mobs burned the Black community of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1921. National Museum of African American History and Culture Collection.

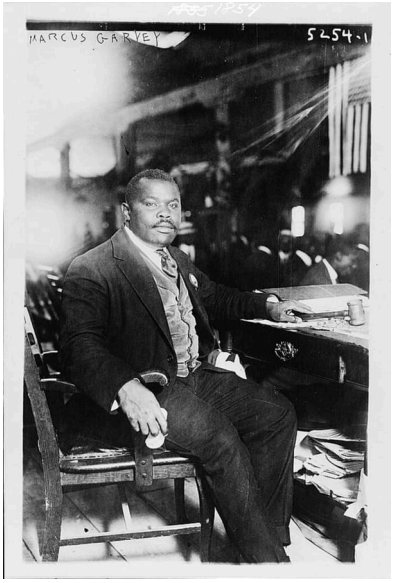
The iniquities of Jim Crow segregation, the barbarities of America’s lynching epidemic, and the depravities of 1919’s Red Summer weighed heavily upon Black Americans as they entered the 1920s. The injustices and the violence continued. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Black Americans had built up the Greenwood District with commerce and prosperity. Booker T. Washington called it the “Black Wall Street.” On the evening of May 31, 1921, spurred by a false claim of sexual assault levied against a young Black man—nineteen-year-old Dick Rowland had likely either tripped over a young white elevator operator’s foot or tripped and brushed the woman’s shoulder with his hand—a white mob mobilized, armed themselves, and destroyed the prosperous neighborhood. Over thirty square blocks were destroyed. Mobs burned over a thousand homes and killed as many as several hundred Black Tulsans. Survivors recalled the mob using heavy machine guns, and others reported planes circling overhead, firing rifles and dropping firebombs. When order was finally restored the next day, the bodies of the victims were buried in mass graves. Thousands of survivors were left homeless.

The relentlessness of racial violence awoke a generation of Black Americans to new alternatives. The Great Migration had pulled enormous numbers of Black southerners northward, and just as cultural limits loosened across the nation, the 1920s represented a period of self-reflection among African Americans, especially those in northern cities. New York City was a popular destination of Black Americans during the Great Migration. The city’s Black population grew 257 percent, from 91,709 in 1910 to 327,706 by 1930 (the white population grew only 20 percent).[22] Moreover, by 1930, some 98,620 foreign-born Black people had migrated to the United States. Nearly half made their home in Manhattan’s Harlem district.[23]

Harlem originally lay between Fifth Avenue and Eighth Avenue and 130th Street to 145th Street. By 1930, the district had expanded to 155th Street and was home to 164,000 people, mostly African Americans. Continuous relocation to “the greatest Negro City in the world” exacerbated problems with crime, health, housing, and unemployment.[24] Nevertheless, it brought together a mass of Black people energized by race pride, military service in World War I, the urban environment, and, for many, ideas of Pan-Africanism or Garveyism (discussed shortly). James Weldon Johnson called Harlem “the Culture Capital.”[25] The area’s cultural ferment produced the Harlem Renaissance and fostered what was then termed the New Negro Movement.

Alain Locke did not coin the term New Negro, but he did much to popularize it. In the 1925 book *The New Negro*, Locke proclaimed that the generation of subservience was no more—“we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation.” Bringing together writings by men and women, young and old, Black and white, Locke produced an anthology that was of African Americans, rather than only about them. The book joined many others. Popular Harlem Renaissance writers published some twenty-six novels, ten volumes of poetry, and countless short stories between 1922 and 1935.[26] Alongside the well-known Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, female writers like Jessie Redmon Fauset and Zora Neale Hurston published nearly one third of these novels. While the themes varied, the literature frequently explored and countered pervading stereotypes and forms of American racial prejudice.

The Harlem Renaissance was manifested in theater, art, and music. For the first time, Broadway presented Black actors in serious roles. The 1924 production Dixie to Broadway was the first all-Black show with mainstream showings.[27] In art, Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Aaron Douglas, and Palmer Hayden showcased Black cultural heritage and captured the population's current experience. In music, jazz rocketed in popularity. Eager to hear "real jazz," whites journeyed to Harlem's Cotton Club and Smalls Paradise. Next to Greenwich Village, Harlem's nightclubs and speakeasies presented a place where sexual freedom and gay life thrived. Unfortunately, while headliners like Duke Ellington were hired to entertain at Harlem's venues, the surrounding Black community was usually excluded. Furthermore, Black performers were often restricted from restroom use and relegated to service door entry. As the Harlem Renaissance faded to a close, several of its artists went on to produce important works indicating that this movement was but one component in African Americans' long history of cultural and intellectual achievements.[28]



Marcus Garvey inspired black American activists disappointed with the lack of progress since emancipation to create a world-wide community to fight injustice. One of the many forms of social activism in the 1920s, Garveyism was seen by some as too radical to engender any real change. Yet Garveyism formed a substantial following, and was a major stimulus for later black nationalistic movements like the Black Panthers. Photograph of Marcus Garvey, August 5, 1924. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003653533/.

The explosion of African American self-expression found multiple outlets in politics. In the 1910s and 1920s, perhaps no one so attracted disaffected Black activists as Marcus Garvey. Garvey was a Jamaican publisher and labor organizer who arrived in New York City in 1916. Within just a few years of his arrival, he had built the largest Black nationalist organization in the world, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).[29] Inspired by Pan-Africanism and Booker T. Washington's model of industrial education and critical of what he saw as Du Bois's elitist strategies in service of Black elites, Garvey sought to promote racial pride, encourage Black economic independence, and root out racial oppression in Africa and the Diaspora.[30]

Headquartered in Harlem, the UNIA published a newspaper, Negro World, and organized elaborate parades in which members, known as Garveyites, dressed in ornate, militaristic regalia and marched down city streets. The organization criticized the slow pace of the judicial focus of the NAACP as well as its acceptance of memberships and funds from whites. "For the Negro to depend on the ballot and his industrial progress alone," Garvey opined, "will be hopeless as it does not help him when he is lynched, burned, jim-crowed, and segregated." In 1919, the UNIA announced plans to develop a shipping company called the Black Star Line as part of a plan that pushed for Black Americans to reject the political system and to "return to Africa" instead. Most of the investments came in the form of shares purchased by UNIA members, many of whom heard Garvey give rousing speeches across the country about the importance of establishing commercial ventures between African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Africans.[31]

Garvey's detractors disparaged these public displays and poorly managed business ventures, and they criticized Garvey for peddling empty gestures in place of measures that addressed the material concerns of African Americans. NAACP leaders depicted Garvey's plan as one that simply said, "Give up! Surrender! The struggle is useless." Enflamed by his aggressive attacks on other Black activists and his radical ideas of racial independence, many African American and Afro-Caribbean leaders worked with government officials and launched the "Garvey Must Go" campaign, which culminated in his 1922 indictment and 1925 imprisonment and subsequent deportation for "using the mails for fraudulent purposes." The UNIA never recovered its popularity or financial support, but Garvey's movement made a lasting impact on Black consciousness in the United States and abroad.

He inspired the likes of Malcolm X, whose parents were Garveyites, and Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. Garvey's message, perhaps best captured by his rallying cry, "Up, you mighty race," resonated with African Americans who found in Garveyism a dignity not granted them in their everyday lives. In that sense, it was all too typical of the Harlem Renaissance.[31]

VII. Culture War

For all of its cultural ferment, however, the 1920s were also a difficult time for radicals and immigrants and anything "modern." Fear of foreign radicals led to the executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian anarchists, in 1927. In May 1920, the two had been arrested for robbery and murder connected with an incident at a Massachusetts factory. Their guilty verdicts were appealed for years as the evidence surrounding their convictions was slim. For instance, while one eyewitness claimed that Vanzetti drove the getaway car, accounts of others described a different person altogether. Nevertheless, despite worldwide lobbying by radicals and a respectable movement among middle-class Italian organizations in the United States, the two men were executed on August 23, 1927. Vanzetti conceivably provided the most succinct reason for his death, saying, "I am suffering because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical; I have suffered because I was an Italian, and indeed I am an Italian."[32]

The Sacco and Vanzetti trial exacerbated a rampant American nativism. Already flustered by a radically liberalizing culture, many native-born Americans made scapegoats out of Eastern European and Latin American immigrants (Asian immigration had already been almost completely prohibited) as well as those Black Americans now pushing harder for civil rights; this latter trend was magnified by the effects of the Great Migration, the mass exodus that carried nearly half a million Black Southerners out of the South and to northern cities after 1910. Protestants, meanwhile, continued to denounce the Roman Catholic Church and charged that American Catholics gave their allegiance to the pope and not to their country.

Nativist anxiety spurred the 1921 Emergency Immigration Act, the first American immigration law to apply numerical limits and blanket, broad-scale national-origin restrictions across much of the globe. An immigration regime predicated mostly on selective restrictions suddenly embraced large-scale, comprehensive restrictions. As one legal historian put it, the law shattered the basic, inclusive premise of US immigration policy: the presumption that most persons could immigrate to the United States gave way to the presumption that most persons could not.[33] Intended as a stopgap, its restrictive quota-based system was made permanent—with even more aggressive racial engineering of the quota system—by the Immigration Act of 1924 (also called the Johnson-Reed Act, after its congressional sponsors).

The Johnson-Reed Act capped overall immigration levels and fixed the number of immigrants annually admitted to the United States from each nation at 2 percent of the population from the respective country who had resided in the United States in 1890. By pushing back three decades, past the recent waves of "new" immigrants from southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, the law made it extremely difficult—almost impossible—for immigrants outside northern Europe to legally enter the United States. Later adjustments to the quota calculations preserved those geographic inequalities. The act also explicitly excluded all Asians, although, to satisfy southern and western growers, it omitted restrictions on Mexican immigrants, despite the efforts of nativist congressmen such as John Box, who fought to impose a quota on Mexican immigrants throughout the rest of the 1920s (increasing visa restrictions ultimately made citizenship increasingly difficult, regardless). The exclusions and harsh quotas (and, in the case of Mexico, the effort to impose harsh quotas) sparked diplomatic fury as affected nations protested such insults.

At home, the law remade American demographics. Second- and third-generation Americans increasingly overshadowed foreign-born immigrants in American immigrant communities. At the same time, the act functionally created, or breathed life into, the very concept of an "illegal alien"—aside most notably from the Chinese Exclusion Act, American immigration law had not targeted entire nationalities.[34] Policing followed legislation: three days after Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act, it appropriated a million dollars for the creation of the US Border Patrol, whose agents began policing the US-Mexico and US-Canada borders.[35] The United States, a "nation of immigrants," had shut its doors.

The same year, Congress mandated birthright citizenship for those with the longest historical claim to the land: the American Indian Citizenship Act proclaimed that all Native Americans "are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States, provided that the granting of such citizenship shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property."[36] Prior to the 1924 act, a haphazard naturalization process rendered some Native Americans citizens and others as "wards" of the federal government, dependent upon the whims of a legal federal guardianship system.[37] The Act did not immediately lead to total self-determination or curb abusive federal mismanagement, but it provided a foundation for individual legal protections and collective civil rights. For others, however, the Act was an imposition that "contradict[ed] the sovereign status of Native nationhood and membership within it."[38]

VIII. Fundamentalist Christianity

In addition to alarms over immigration and the growing presence of Catholicism and Judaism, a new core of Christian fundamentalists was very much concerned about relaxed sexual mores and increased social freedoms, especially as found in city centers. Although never a centralized group, most fundamentalists lashed out against what they saw as a sagging public morality, a world in which Protestantism seemed challenged by Catholicism, women exercised ever greater sexual freedoms, public amusements encouraged selfish and empty pleasures, and critics mocked Prohibition through bootlegging and speakeasies.

Christian fundamentalism arose most directly from a doctrinal dispute among Protestant leaders. Liberal theologians sought to intertwine religion with science and secular culture. These modernists, influenced by the biblical scholarship of nineteenth-century German academics, argued that Christian doctrines about the miraculous might be best understood metaphorically. The Church, they said, needed to adapt itself to the world. According to the Baptist pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick, the "coming of Christ" might occur "slowly . . . but surely, [as] His will and principles [are] worked out by God's grace in human life and institutions."[39] The social gospel, which encouraged Christians to build the Kingdom of God on earth by working against social and economic inequality, was very much tied to liberal theology.

During the 1910s, funding from oil barons Lyman and Milton Stewart enabled the evangelist A. C. Dixon to commission some ninety essays to combat religious liberalism. The collection, known as The Fundamentals, became the foundational documents of Christian fundamentalism, from which the movement's name is drawn. Contributors agreed that Christian faith rested on literal truths, that Jesus, for instance, would physically return to earth at the end of time to redeem the righteous and damn the wicked. Some of the essays put forth that human endeavor would not build the Kingdom of God, while others covered such subjects as the virgin birth and biblical inerrancy. American fundamentalists spanned Protestant denominations and borrowed from diverse philosophies and theologies, most notably the holiness movement, the larger revivalism of the nineteenth century, and new dispensationalist theology (in which history proceeded, and would end, through "dispensations" by God). They did, however, all agree that modernism was the enemy and the Bible was the inerrant word of God. It was a fluid movement often without clear boundaries, but it featured many prominent clergymen, including the well-established and extremely vocal John Roach Straton (New York), J. Frank Norris (Texas), and William Bell Riley (Minnesota).[40]



The Scopes trial signified a pivotal moment when science and religion became diametrically opposed. The Scopes defense team, three of whom are seen in this photograph, argued a literal interpretation of the Bible that is still popular in many fundamentalist Christian circles today. "Dudley Field Malone, Dr. John R. Neal, and Clarence Darrow in Chicago, Illinois." The Clarence Darrow Digital Collection, http://darrow.law.umn.edu/photo.php?pid=874.

On March 21, 1925, in a tiny courtroom in Dayton, Tennessee, fundamentalists gathered to tackle the issues of creation and evolution. A young biology teacher, John T. Scopes, was being tried for teaching his students evolutionary theory in violation of the Butler Act, a state law preventing evolutionary theory or any theory that denied "the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible" from being taught in publicly funded Tennessee classrooms. Seeing the act as a threat to personal liberty, the ACLU immediately sought a volunteer for a "test" case, hoping that the conviction and subsequent appeals would lead to a day in the Supreme Court, testing the constitutionality of the law. It was then that Scopes, a part-time teacher and coach, stepped up and

voluntarily admitted to teaching evolution (Scopes's violation of the law was never in question). Thus the stage was set for the pivotal courtroom showdown—"the trial of the century"—between the champions and opponents of evolution that marked a key moment in an enduring American "culture war."[41]

The case became a public spectacle. Clarence Darrow, an agnostic attorney and a keen liberal mind from Chicago, volunteered to aid the defense and came up against William Jennings Bryan. Bryan, the "Great Commoner," was the three-time presidential candidate who in his younger days had led the political crusade against corporate greed. He had done so with a firm belief in the righteousness of his cause, and now he defended biblical literalism in similar terms. The theory of evolution, Bryan said, with its emphasis on the survival of the fittest, "would eliminate love and carry man back to a struggle of tooth and claw."[42]

Newspapermen and spectators flooded the small town of Dayton. Across the nation, Americans tuned their radios to the national broadcasts of a trial that dealt with questions of religious liberty, academic freedom, parental rights, and the moral responsibility of education. For six days in July, the men and women of America were captivated as Bryan presented his argument on the morally corrupting influence of evolutionary theory (and pointed out that Darrow made a similar argument about the corruptive potential of education during his defense of the famed killers Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb a year before). Darrow eloquently fought for academic freedom.[43]

At the request of the defense, Bryan took the stand as an "expert witness" on the Bible. At his age, he was no match for Darrow's famous skills as a trial lawyer and his answers came across as blundering and incoherent, particularly as he was not in fact a literal believer in all of the Genesis account (believing—as many anti-evolutionists did—that the meaning of the word day in the book of Genesis could be taken as allegory) and only hesitantly admitted as much, not wishing to alienate his fundamentalist followers. Additionally, Darrow posed a series of unanswerable questions: Was the "great fish" that swallowed the prophet Jonah created for that specific purpose? What precisely happened astronomically when God made the sun stand still? Bryan, of course, could cite only his faith in miracles. Tied into logical contradictions, Bryan's testimony was a public relations disaster, although his statements were expunged from the record the next day and no further experts were allowed—Scopes's guilt being established, the jury delivered a guilty verdict in minutes. The case was later thrown out on a technicality. But few cared about the verdict. Darrow had, in many ways, at least to his defenders, already won: the fundamentalists seemed to have taken a beating in the national limelight. Journalist and satirist H. L. Mencken characterized the "circus in Tennessee" as an embarrassment for fundamentalism, and modernists remembered the "Monkey Trial" as a smashing victory. If fundamentalists retreated from the public sphere, they did not disappear entirely. Instead, they went local, built a vibrant subculture, and emerged many decades later, stronger than ever.[25]

IX. Rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan



This photo taken by popular news photographers Underwood and Underwood shows a gathering of a reported 300 Ku Klux Klansmen just outside Washington, D.C., 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 a conscious publicity effort by the Klan. Library of Congress.

Suspicions of immigrants, Catholics, and modernists contributed to a string of reactionary organizations. None so captured the

imaginations of the country as the reborn Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a white supremacist organization that expanded beyond its narrow Reconstruction-era anti-Black politics to target not just Black people but feminists, radicals, immigrants, Catholics, Jews, atheists, bootleggers, and a host of other imagined moral enemies.

Two events in 1915 are widely credited with inspiring the rebirth of the Klan: the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish factory worker in Georgia falsely convicted of murdering a teenage girl, and the release of The Birth of a Nation, a popular and groundbreaking film that valorized the Reconstruction-era Klan as a protector of feminine virtue and white racial purity. Taking advantage of this sudden surge of popularity, Colonel William Joseph Simmons organized what is often called the "second" Ku Klux Klan in Georgia in late 1915. This new Klan, modeled after other fraternal organizations with elaborate rituals and a hierarchy, remained largely confined to Georgia and Alabama until 1920, when Simmons began a professional recruiting effort that resulted in individual chapters being formed across the country and membership rising into the millions.[44]

Partly in response to the migration of Black southerners to northern cities during World War I, the KKK expanded above the Mason-Dixon Line. Membership soared in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, and Portland, while Klan-endorsed mayoral candidates won in Indianapolis, Denver, and Atlanta.[45] The Klan often recruited through fraternal organizations such as the Freemasons and through various Protestant churches. In many areas, local Klansmen visited churches of which they approved and bestowed a gift of money on the presiding minister, often during the services. The Klan also enticed people to join through large picnics, parades, rallies, and ceremonies. The Klan established a women's auxiliary in 1923 headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Women of the Ku Klux Klan mirrored the KKK in practice and ideology and soon had chapters in all forty-eight states, often attracting women who were already part of the Prohibition movement, the defense of which was a centerpiece of Klan activism.[46]

Contrary to its perception of as a primarily southern and lower-class phenomenon, the second Klan had a national reach composed largely of middle-class people. Many years later, sociologist Rory McVeigh surveyed The Imperial Night-Hawk, the main KKK newspaper, for the years 1923 and 1924, at the organization's peak, and found the largest number of Klan-related activities to have occurred in Texas, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and Georgia. The Klan was even present in Canada, where it was a powerful force within Saskatchewan's Conservative Party. In many states and localities, the Klan dominated politics to such a level that one could not be elected without the support of the KKK. For example, in 1924, the Klan supported William Lee Cazort for governor of Arkansas, leading his opponent in the Democratic Party primary, Thomas Terral, to seek honorary membership through a Louisiana klavern so as not to be tagged as the anti-Klan candidate. In 1922, Texans elected Earle B. Mayfield, an avowed Klansman who ran openly as that year's "klandidate," to the US Senate. At its peak the Klan claimed between four and five million members.[47]

Despite the breadth of its political activism, the Klan is today remembered largely as a violent vigilante group—and not without reason. Members of the Klan and affiliated organizations often carried out acts of lynching and "nightriding"—the physical harassment of bootleggers, union activists, civil rights workers, or any others deemed "immoral" (such as suspected adulterers) under the cover of darkness or while wearing their hoods and robes. In fact, Klan violence was extensive enough in Oklahoma that Governor John C. Walton placed the entire state under martial law in 1923. Witnesses testifying before the military court disclosed accounts of Klan violence ranging from the flogging of clandestine brewers to the disfiguring of a prominent Black Tulsan for registering African Americans to vote. In Houston, the Klan maintained an extensive system of surveillance that included tapping telephone lines and putting spies in the local post office in order to root out "undesirables." A mob organized and led by Klan members in Aiken, South Carolina, lynched Bertha Lowman and her two brothers in 1926, but no one was ever prosecuted: the sheriff, deputies, city attorney, and state representative all belonged to the Klan.[48]

The Klan dwindled in the face of scandal and diminished energy over the last years of the 1920s. By 1930, the Klan only had about thirty thousand members and was largely spent as a national force, only to appear again as a much-diminished force during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

X. Conclusion

In his inauguration speech in 1929, Herbert Hoover told Americans that the Republican Party had brought prosperity. Even ignoring the stubbornly large rates of poverty and unparalleled levels of inequality, he could not see the weaknesses behind the decade's economy. Even as the new culture of consumption promoted new freedoms, it also promoted new insecurities. An economy built on credit exposed the nation to tremendous risk. Flailing European economies, high tariffs, wealth inequality, a construction bubble, and an ever more flooded consumer market loomed dangerously until the Roaring Twenties ground to a halt. In a moment the nation's glitz and glamour seemed to give way to decay and despair. For farmers, racial minorities, unionized workers, and other populations that did not share in the 1920s prosperity, the veneer of a Jazz Age and the booming economy had always been a fiction. But for them, as for millions of Americans, the end of an era was close. The Great Depression loomed.

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This chapter was edited by Brandy Thomas Wells, with content contributions by Micah Childress, Mari Crabtree, Maggie Flamingo, Kerry Goldmann, Pamela Gossin, Guy Lancaster, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Benjamin C. Montoya, Emily Remus, Colin Reynolds, Kristopher Shields, and Brandy Thomas Wells.

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21: The Great Depression



In this iconic 1936 photograph, taken by Dorothea Lange, a destitute, thirty-two-year-old mother of seven captures the agonies of the Great Depression. Library of Congress.

I. Introduction

Hard times had hit the United States before, but never had an economic crisis lasted so long or inflicted as much harm as the slump that followed the 1929 crash. After nearly a decade of supposed prosperity, the economy crashed to a halt. People suddenly stopped borrowing and buying. Industries built on debt-fueled purchases sold fewer goods. Retailers lowered prices and, when that did not attract enough buyers to turn profits, they laid off workers to lower labor costs. With so many people out of work and without income, shops sold even less, dropped their prices lower still, and then shed still more workers, creating a vicious downward cycle.

Four years after the crash, the Great Depression reached its lowest point: nearly one in four Americans who wanted a job could not find one, and of those who could, more than half had to settle for part-time work. Farmers could not make enough money from their crops to make harvesting worthwhile. Food rotted in the fields of a starving nation.

The needy drew down whatever savings they had, turned to their families, and sought out charities for public assistance. Soon they all were depleted. Unemployed workers and cash-strapped farmers defaulted on their debts, including mortgages. Banks, already over-extended and deprived of income, took savings accounts down with them when they closed. Fear-stricken onlookers rushed to their own banks and demanded their deposits. Banks that otherwise might have endured the crisis fell prey to panic and shut down as well.

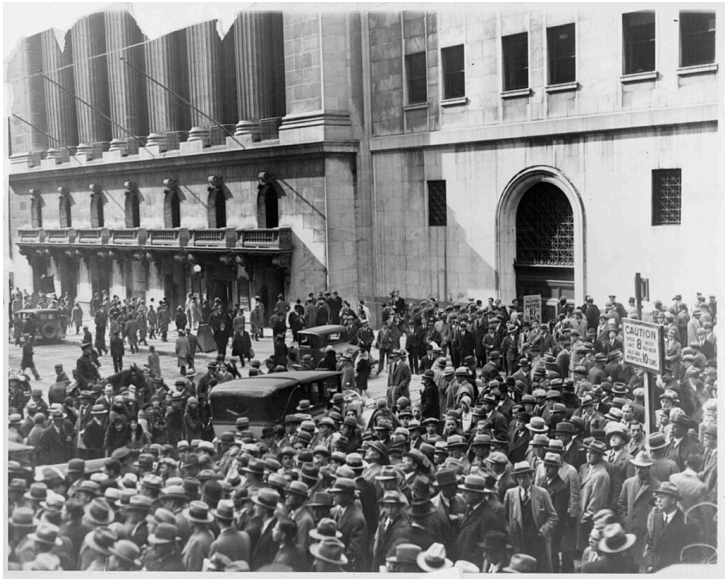
With so little being bought and sold and so little lent and spent, with even bankers unable to lay their hands on money, the nation's economy ground nearly to a halt. None of the remedies adopted by the president or the Congress succeeded—not higher tariffs, nor restriction of immigration, nor sticking to "sound money," nor expressions of confidence in the resilience of the American people. Whatever good these measures achieved, it was not enough.

In the 1932 presidential election, the incumbent president, Herbert Hoover, a Republican, promised that he would stand firm against those who, he said, would destroy the US Constitution to restore the economy. Chief among these supposedly dangerous experimenters was the Democratic presidential nominee, New York governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, who began his campaign by pledging a "New Deal" for the American people.

The voters chose Roosevelt in a landslide, inaugurating a rapid and enduring transformation in the US government. Even though

the New Deal never achieved as much as its proponents hoped or its opponents feared, it did more than any other peacetime program to change how Americans saw their country.

II. The Origins of the Great Depression

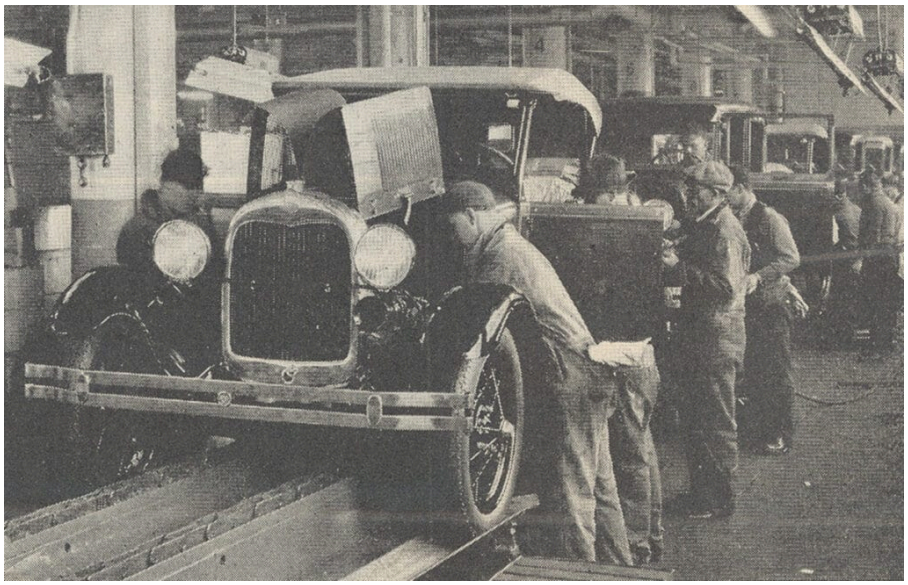


"Crowd of people gather outside the New York Stock Exchange following the Crash of 1929," 1929. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99471695/.

On Thursday, October 24, 1929, stock market prices suddenly plummeted. Ten billion dollars in investments (roughly equivalent to about $100 billion today) disappeared in a matter of hours. Panicked selling set in, stock values sank to sudden lows, and stunned investors crowded the New York Stock Exchange demanding answers. Leading bankers met privately at the offices of J. P. Morgan and raised millions in personal and institutional contributions to halt the slide. They marched across the street and ceremoniously bought stocks at inflated prices. The market temporarily stabilized, but fears spread over the weekend and the following week frightened investors dumped their portfolios to avoid further losses. On October 29, "Black Tuesday," the stock market began its long, precipitous fall. Stock values evaporated. Shares of US Steel dropped from $262 to $22. General Motors stock fell from $73 a share to $8. Four fifths of J. D. Rockefeller's fortune—the greatest in American history—vanished.

As the crash stunned the nation, it exposed the deeper, underlying problems with the American economy in the 1920s. The stock market's popularity grew throughout the decade, but only 2.5 percent of Americans had brokerage accounts; the overwhelming majority of Americans had no direct personal stake in Wall Street. The stock market's collapse, no matter how dramatic, did not by itself depress the American economy. Instead, the crash revealed a great number of factors that, when combined with the financial panic, sank the American economy into the greatest of all economic crises. Rising inequality, declining demand, rural collapse, overextended investors, and the bursting of speculative bubbles all conspired to plunge the nation into the Great Depression.

Despite resistance by Progressives, the vast gap between rich and poor accelerated throughout the early twentieth century. In the aggregate, Americans were better off in 1929 than in 1920. Per capita income had risen 10 percent for all Americans—but 75 percent for the nation's wealthiest citizens.[1] The return of conservative politics in the 1920s reinforced federal fiscal policies that exacerbated the divide: low corporate and personal taxes, easy credit, and depressed interest rates overwhelmingly favored wealthy investors who, flush with cash, spent their money on luxury goods and speculative investments in the rapidly rising stock market.



While a manufacturing innovation, Henry Ford's assembly line produced so many cars as to flood the automobile market in the 1920s. Interview with Henry Ford, Literary Digest, January 7, 1928. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...embly_line.jpg.

The pro-business policies of the 1920s were designed for an American economy built on the production and consumption of durable goods. Yet by the late 1920s, much of the market was saturated. The boom of automobile manufacturing, the great driver of the American economy in the 1920s, slowed as fewer and fewer Americans with the means to purchase a car had not already done so. More and more, the well-to-do had no need for the new automobiles, radios, and other consumer goods that fueled gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the 1920s. When products failed to sell, inventories piled up, manufacturers scaled back production, and companies fired workers, stripping potential consumers of cash, blunting demand for consumer goods and replicating the downward economic cycle. The situation was only compounded by increased automation and rising efficiency in American factories. Despite impressive overall growth throughout the 1920s, unemployment hovered around 7 percent throughout the decade, suppressing purchasing power for the great swath of potential consumers.[2]

For American farmers, meanwhile, hard times began long before the markets crashed. In 1920 and 1921, after several years of larger-than-average profits during the First World War, farm prices in the South and West continued their long decline, plummeting as production climbed and domestic and international demand for cotton, foodstuffs, and other agricultural products stalled. Widespread soil exhaustion on western farms only compounded the problem. Farmers found themselves unable to make payments on loans taken out during the good years, and banks in agricultural areas tightened credit in response. By 1929, farm families were overextended, in no shape to make up for declining consumption, and in a precarious economic position even before the Depression wrecked the global economy.[3]

Despite serious foundational problems in the industrial and agricultural economy, most Americans in 1929 and 1930 still believed the economy would bounce back. In 1930, amid one of the Depression's many false hopes, President Herbert Hoover reassured an audience that "the depression is over."[4] But the president was not simply guilty of false optimism. Hoover made many mistakes. During his 1928 election campaign, Hoover promoted higher tariffs as a means for encouraging domestic consumption and protecting American farmers from foreign competition. Spurred by the ongoing agricultural depression, Hoover signed into law the highest tariff in American history, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930, just as global markets began to crumble. Other countries responded in kind, tariff walls rose across the globe, and international trade ground to a halt. Between 1929 and 1932, international trade dropped from $36 billion to only $12 billion. American exports fell by 78 percent. Combined with overproduction and declining domestic consumption, the tariff exacerbated the world's economic collapse.[5]

But beyond structural flaws, speculative bubbles, and destructive protectionism, the final contributing element of the Great Depression was a quintessentially human one: panic. The frantic reaction to the market's fall aggravated the economy's other many failings. More economic policies backfired. The Federal Reserve overcorrected in its response to speculation by raising interest rates and tightening credit. Across the country, banks denied loans and called in debts. Their patrons, afraid that reactionary policies meant further financial trouble, rushed to withdraw money before institutions could close their doors, ensuring their fate. Such bank runs were not uncommon in the 1920s, but in 1930, with the economy worsening and panic from the crash accelerating, 1,352 banks failed. In 1932, nearly 2,300 banks collapsed, taking personal deposits, savings, and credit with them.[6]

The Great Depression was the confluence of many problems, most of which had begun during a time of unprecedented economic growth. Fiscal policies of the Republican "business presidents" undoubtedly widened the gap between rich and poor and fostered a standoff over international trade, but such policies were widely popular and, for much of the decade, widely seen as a source of the decade's explosive growth. With fortunes to be won and standards of living to maintain, few Americans had the foresight or wherewithal to repudiate an age of easy credit, rampant consumerism, and wild speculation. Instead, as the Depression worked its way across the United States, Americans hoped to weather the economic storm as best they could, hoping for some relief from the ever-mounting economic collapse that was strangling so many lives.

III. Herbert Hoover and the Politics of the Depression



"Unemployed men queued outside a depression soup kitchen opened in Chicago by Al Capone," February 1931. Wikimedia.

As the Depression spread, public blame settled on President Herbert Hoover and the conservative politics of the Republican Party. In 1928, having won the presidency in a landslide, Hoover had no reason to believe that his presidency would be any different than that of his predecessor, Calvin Coolidge, whose time in office was marked by relative government inaction, seemingly rampant prosperity, and high approval ratings.[7] Hoover entered office on a wave of popular support, but by October 1929 the economic collapse had overwhelmed his presidency. Like all too many Americans, Hoover and his advisors assumed—or perhaps simply hoped—that the sharp financial and economic decline was a temporary downturn, another "bust" of the inevitable boom-bust cycles that stretched back through America's commercial history. "Any lack of confidence in the economic future and the basic strength of business in the United States is simply foolish," he said in November.[8] And yet the crisis grew. Unemployment commenced a slow, sickening rise. Registrations of new cars dropped by almost a quarter within a few months.[9] Consumer spending on durable goods dropped by a fifth in 1930.[10]

When suffering Americans looked to Hoover for help, Hoover could only answer with volunteerism. He asked business leaders to promise to maintain investments and employment and encouraged state and local charities to assist those in need. Hoover established the President's Organization for Unemployment Relief, or POUR, to help organize the efforts of private agencies. While POUR urged charitable giving, charitable relief organizations were overwhelmed by the growing needs of the many multiplying unemployed, underfed, and unhoused Americans. By mid-1932, for instance, a quarter of all of New York's private charities closed: they had simply run out of money. In Atlanta, solvent relief charities could only provide $1.30 per week to needy families. The size and scope of the Depression overpowered the radically insufficient capacity of private volunteer organizations to mediate the crisis.[11]

Although Hoover is sometimes categorized as a "business president" in line with his Republican predecessors, he also embraced a kind of business progressivism, a system of voluntary action called associationalism that assumed Americans could maintain a web of voluntary cooperative organizations dedicated to providing economic assistance and services to those in need. Businesses, the thinking went, would willingly limit harmful practice for the greater economic good. To Hoover, direct government aid would discourage a healthy work ethic, while associationalism would encourage the self-control and self-initiative that fueled economic growth. But when the Depression exposed the incapacity of such strategies to produce an economic recovery, Hoover

proved insufficiently flexible to recognize the limits of his ideology.[12] "We cannot legislate ourselves out of a world economic depression," he told Congress in 1931.[13]

Hoover resisted direct action. As the crisis deepened, even bankers and businessmen and the president's own advisors and appointees all pleaded with him to use the government's power to fight the Depression. But his conservative ideology wouldn't allow him to. He believed in limited government as a matter of principle. Senator Robert Wagner of New York said in 1931 that the president's policy was "to do nothing and when the pressure becomes irresistible to do as little as possible."[14] By 1932, with the economy long since stagnant and a reelection campaign looming, Hoover, hoping to stimulate American industry, created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) to provide emergency loans to banks, building-and-loan societies, railroads, and other private industries. It was radical in its use of direct government aid and out of character for the normally laissez-faire Hoover, but it also bypassed needy Americans to bolster industrial and financial interests. New York congressman Fiorello La Guardia, who later served as mayor of New York City, captured public sentiment when he denounced the RFC as a "millionaire's dole."[15]

IV. The Lived Experience of the Great Depression



"Hooverville, Seattle." 1932-1937. Washington State Archives. http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Re...1081FDB3A72C1E

In 1934 a woman from Humboldt County, California, wrote to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt seeking a job for her husband, a surveyor, who had been out of work for nearly two years. The pair had survived on the meager income she received from working at the county courthouse. "My salary could keep us going," she explained, "but—I am to have a baby." The family needed temporary help, and, she explained, "after that I can go back to work and we can work out our own salvation. But to have this baby come to a home full of worry and despair, with no money for the things it needs, is not fair. It needs and deserves a happy start in life."[16]

As the United States slid ever deeper into the Great Depression, such tragic scenes played out time and time again. Individuals, families, and communities faced the painful, frightening, and often bewildering collapse of the economic institutions on which they depended. The more fortunate were spared the worst effects, and a few even profited from it, but by the end of 1932, the crisis had become so deep and so widespread that most Americans had suffered directly. Markets crashed through no fault of their own. Workers were plunged into poverty because of impersonal forces for which they shared no responsibility.

With rampant unemployment and declining wages, Americans slashed expenses. The fortunate could survive by simply deferring vacations and regular consumer purchases. Middle- and working-class Americans might rely on disappearing credit at neighborhood stores, default on utility bills, or skip meals. Those who could borrowed from relatives or took in boarders in homes or "doubled up" in tenements. But such resources couldn't withstand the unending relentlessness of the economic crisis. As one New York City official explained in 1932,

> When the breadwinner is out of a job he usually exhausts his savings if he has any. . . . He borrows from his friends and from his relatives until they can stand the burden no longer. He gets credit from the corner grocery store and the butcher shop, and the landlord forgoes collecting the rent until interest and taxes have to be paid and something

> has to be done. All of these resources are finally exhausted over a period of time, and it becomes necessary for these people, who have never before been in want, to go on assistance.[17]

But public assistance and private charities were quickly exhausted by the scope of the crisis. As one Detroit city official put it in 1932,

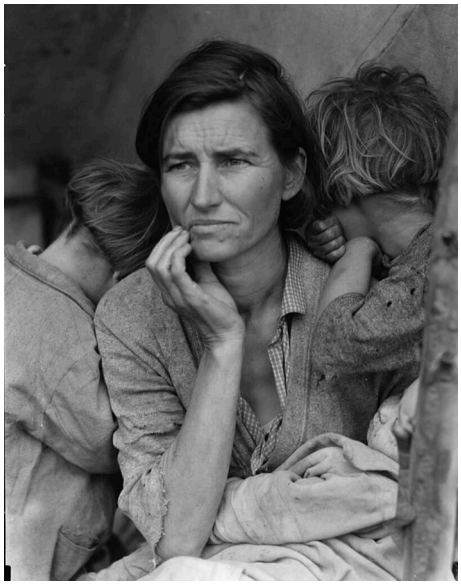
> Many essential public services have been reduced beyond the minimum point absolutely essential to the health and safety of the city. . . . The salaries of city employees have been twice reduced . . . and hundreds of faithful employees . . . have been furloughed. Thus has the city borrowed from its own future welfare to keep its unemployed on the barest subsistence levels. . . . A wage work plan which had supported 11,000 families collapsed last month because the city was unable to find funds to pay these unemployed—men who wished to earn their own support. For the coming year, Detroit can see no possibility of preventing wide-spread hunger and slow starvation through its own unaided resources.[18]

These most desperate Americans, the chronically unemployed, encamped on public or marginal lands in "Hoovervilles," spontaneous shantytowns that dotted America's cities, depending on bread lines and street-corner peddling. One doctor recalled that "every day . . . someone would faint on a streetcar. They'd bring him in, and they wouldn't ask any questions. . . . they knew what it was. Hunger."[19] "A man is not a man without work," one of the jobless told an interviewer.[20]

The ideal of the sole "male breadwinner" was a fiction for poor Americans, and during the crisis, women and young children entered the labor force, as they always had. Since the start of the twentieth century, single women had become an increasing share of the workforce, but married women, Americans were likely to believe, took a job because they wanted to and not because they needed it. American suppositions about family structure meant that, in many ways, women suffered disproportionately from the Depression. As one politician remarked at the time, the woman worker was "the first orphan in the storm."[21] Many employers, subscribing to traditional notions of male breadwinning, were less likely to hire married women and more likely to dismiss those they had already employed.[22] Women on their own and without regular work, meanwhile, suffered a greater threat of sexual violence than their male counterparts; accounts of such women suggest they depended on each other for protection.

The Great Depression was particularly tough for nonwhite Americans. "The Negro was born in depression," one Black pensioner told interviewer Studs Terkel. "It didn't mean too much to him. The Great American Depression . . . only became official when it hit the white man."[23] Black workers were generally the last hired when businesses expanded production and the first fired when businesses experienced downturns. As a National Urban League study found, "So general is this practice that one is warranted in suspecting that it has been adopted as a method of relieving unemployment of whites without regard to the consequences upon Negroes."[24] In 1932, with the national unemployment average hovering around 25 percent, Black unemployment reached as high as 50 percent, while even Black workers who kept their jobs saw their already low wages cut dramatically.[25]

V. Migration and the Great Depression



This iconic photograph made real the suffering of millions during the Great Depression. Dorothea Lange, “Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California” or “Migrant Mother,” February/March 1936. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998021539/PP/.

On the Great Plains, environmental catastrophe deepened America’s long-standing agricultural crisis and magnified the tragedy of the Depression. Beginning in 1932, severe droughts hit from Texas to the Dakotas and lasted until at least 1936. The droughts compounded years of agricultural mismanagement. To grow their crops, Plains farmers had plowed up natural ground cover that had taken ages to form over the surface of the dry Plains states. Relatively wet decades had protected them, but during the early 1930s, without rain, the exposed fertile topsoil turned to dust, and without sod or windbreaks such as trees, rolling winds churned the dust into massive storms that blotted out the sky, choked settlers and livestock, and rained dirt not only across the region but as far east as Washington, D.C., New England, and ships on the Atlantic Ocean. The Dust Bowl, as the region became known, exposed all-too-late the need for conservation. The region’s farmers, already hit by years of foreclosures and declining commodity prices, were decimated.[26] For many in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas who were “baked out, blown out, and broke,” their only hope was to travel west to California, whose rains still brought bountiful harvests and—potentially—jobs for farmworkers. It was an exodus. Oklahoma lost 440,000 people, or a full 18.4 percent of its 1930 population, to outmigration.[27]

Dorothea Lange’s Migrant Mother became one of the most enduring images of the Dust Bowl and the ensuing westward exodus. Lange, a photographer for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), captured the image at a migrant farmworker camp in Nipomo, California, in 1936. In the photograph a young mother stares out with a worried, weary expression. She was a migrant, having left her home in Oklahoma to follow the crops to the Golden State. She took part in what many in the mid-1930s were beginning to recognize as a vast migration of families out of the southwestern Plains states. In the image she cradles an infant and supports two older children, who cling to her. Lange’s photo encapsulated the nation’s struggle. The subject of the photograph seemed used to hard work but down on her luck, and uncertain about what the future might hold.

The Okies, as such westward migrants were disparagingly called by their new neighbors, were the most visible group on the move during the Depression, lured by news and rumors of jobs in far-flung regions of the country. Men from all over the country, some abandoning families, hitched rides, hopped freight cars, or otherwise made their way around the country. By 1932, sociologists were estimating that millions of men were on the roads and rails traveling the country.[28] Popular magazines and newspapers were filled with stories of homeless boys and the veterans-turned-migrants of the Bonus Army commandeering boxcars. Popular culture, such as William Wellman’s 1933 film Wild Boys of the Road and, most famously, John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath, published in 1939 and turned into a hit movie a year later, captured the Depression’s dislocated populations.

These years witnessed the first significant reversal in the flow of people between rural and urban areas. Thousands of city dwellers fled the jobless cities and moved to the country looking for work. As relief efforts floundered, many state and local officials threw up barriers to migration, making it difficult for newcomers to receive relief or find work. Some state legislatures made it a crime to bring poor migrants into the state and allowed local officials to deport migrants to neighboring states. In the winter of 1935–1936, California, Florida, and Colorado established “border blockades” to block poor migrants from their states and reduce

competition with local residents for jobs. A billboard outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, informed potential migrants that there were “NO JOBS in California” and warned them to “KEEP OUT.”[29]



During her assignment as a photographer for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), Dorothea Lange documented the movement of migrant families forced from their homes by drought and economic depression. This family, captured by Lange in 1938, was in the process of traveling 124 miles by foot, across Oklahoma, because the father was ill and therefore unable to receive relief or WPA work. Library of Congress.

Sympathy for migrants, however, accelerated late in the Depression with the publication of The Grapes of Wrath. The Joad family’s struggles drew attention to the plight of Depression-era migrants; just a month after the nationwide release of the film version, Congress created the Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens. Starting in 1940, the committee held widely publicized hearings. But it was too late. Within a year of its founding, defense industries were already gearing up in the wake of the outbreak of World War II, and the “problem” of migration suddenly became a lack of migrants needed to fill war industries. Such relief was nowhere to be found in the 1930s.

Americans meanwhile feared foreign workers willing to work for even lower wages. The Saturday Evening Post warned that foreign immigrants, who were “compelled to accept employment on any terms and conditions offered,” would exacerbate the economic crisis.[30] On September 8, 1930, the Hoover administration issued a press release on the administration of immigration laws “under existing conditions of unemployment.” Hoover instructed consular officers to scrutinize carefully the visa applications of those “likely to become public charges” and suggested that this might include denying visas to most, if not all, alien laborers and artisans. The crisis itself had stifled foreign immigration, but such restrictive and exclusionary actions in the first years of the Depression intensified its effects. The number of European visas issued fell roughly 60 percent while deportations dramatically increased. Between 1930 and 1932, fifty-four thousand people were deported. An additional forty-four thousand deportable aliens left “voluntarily.”[31]

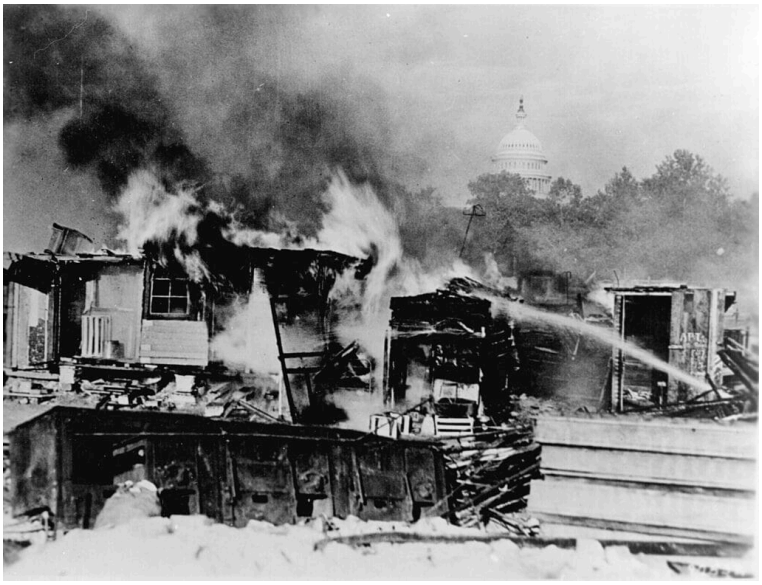
Exclusionary measures and popular nativist attitudes hit Mexican immigrants particularly hard. Mexican workers and their families, pulled northward by the dislocations of the Mexican Revolution during the 1910s and absorbed into the American labor force by the rapid expansion of agriculture and industry in the American Southwest over the first three decades of the twentieth century, suffered greatly under the Depression. The State Department made a concerted effort to reduce immigration from Mexico as early as 1929, and Hoover’s executive actions arrived the following year. Officials in the Southwest, where most Mexicans and Mexican Americans lived, led a coordinated effort to push out Mexican immigrants through targeted harassment, intimidation, and paramilitary “street sweeps” that, while directly deporting relatively few undocumented residents, nevertheless operated as a “psychological gesture” or “scareheading,” designed to compel repatriation.[32]

In Los Angeles, the Citizens Committee on Coordination of Unemployment Relief began working closely with federal officials in early 1931 to conduct deportation raids, while the Los Angeles County Department of Charities began a simultaneous drive to repatriate Mexicans and Mexican Americans on relief, negotiating a charity rate with the railroads—and with the Mexican government—to return Mexicans “voluntarily” to their mother country. Repatriation trains departed not only from Los Angeles and San Antonio but from Detroit and New York City, ferrying Mexican citizens—buffeted by a failing economy, popular hostility, and government pressure—out of the United States and into Mexico.

Franklin Roosevelt did not indulge anti-immigrant sentiment as willingly as Hoover had. Under the New Deal, the Immigration and Naturalization Service halted some of the Hoover administration's most divisive practices, but with jobs suddenly scarce, hostile attitudes intensified, and official policies less than welcoming, immigration plummeted and deportations rose. Over the course of the Depression, more people left the United States than entered it.[33]

According to the federal census, from 1930 (already after the onset of the Depression) to 1940 the Mexican-born population living in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas fell from 616,998 to 377,433. Scholars estimate, conservatively, that, including the full sweep of the Depression and looking beyond the narrow enumeration of census workers, one million Mexicans may have been pushed out of the United States. Many of those were individual migrant workers; others were families—with children who, born north of the Rio Grande, were American citizens—who had spent decades planting roots in the United States.

VI. The Bonus Army



"Shacks, put up by the Bonus Army on the Anacostia flats, Washington, D.C., burning after the battle with the military. The Capitol in the background. 1932." Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...tbonusarmy.jpg.

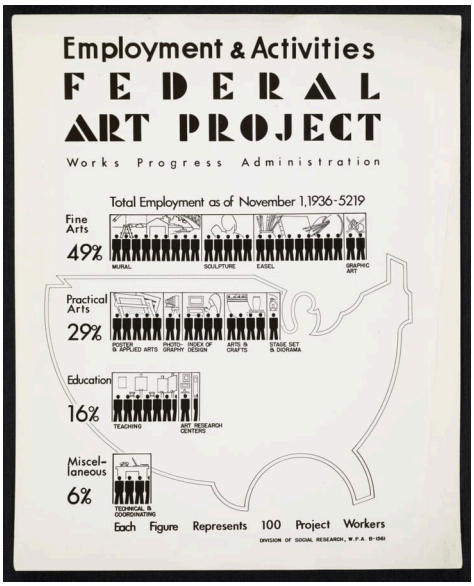
In the summer of 1932, more than fifteen thousand unemployed veterans and their families converged on Washington, D.C., to petition for a bill authorizing immediate payment of cash bonuses to veterans of World War I that were originally scheduled to be paid out in 1945. Given the economic hardships facing the country, the bonus came to symbolize government relief for the most deserving recipients. The veterans in D.C. erected a tent city across the Potomac River in Anacostia Flats, a "Hooverville" in the spirit of the camps of homeless and unemployed Americans then appearing in American cities. Calling themselves the Bonus Expeditionary Force, or the Bonus Army, they drilled and marched and demonstrated for their bonuses. "While there were billions for bankers, there was nothing for the poor," they complained.

Concerned with what immediate payment would do to the federal budget, Hoover opposed the bill, which was eventually voted down by the Senate. While most of the Bonus Army left Washington in defeat, many stayed to press their case. Hoover called the remaining veterans "insurrectionists" and ordered them to leave. When thousands failed to heed the vacation order, General Douglas MacArthur, accompanied by local police, infantry, cavalry, tanks, and a machine gun squadron, stormed the tent city and routed the Bonus Army. Troops chased down men and women, tear-gassed children, and torched the shantytown.[34] Two marchers were shot and killed, and a baby was killed by tear gas.

The national media reported on the raid, newsreels showed footage, and Americans recoiled at Hoover's insensitivity toward suffering Americans. His overall unwillingness to address widespread economic problems and his repeated platitudes about returning prosperity condemned his presidency. Hoover of course was not responsible for the Depression, not personally. But neither he nor his advisors conceived of the enormity of the crisis, a crisis his conservative ideology could neither accommodate nor address. Americans had so far found little relief from Washington. But they were still looking for it.

VII. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the “First” New Deal

The early years of the Depression were catastrophic. The crisis, far from relenting, deepened each year. Unemployment peaked at 25 percent in 1932. With no end in sight and with private firms crippled and charities overwhelmed by the crisis, Americans looked to their government as the last barrier against starvation, hopelessness, and perpetual poverty.



Posters like this 1936 production showing the extent of the Federal Art Project were used to prove the value of the WPA—and, by extension, the entire New Deal—to the American people. Wikimedia.

Few presidential elections in modern American history have been more consequential than that of 1932. The United States was struggling through the third year of the Depression, and exasperated voters overthrew Hoover in a landslide for the Democratic governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt came from a privileged background in New York’s Hudson River Valley (his distant cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, became president while Franklin was at Harvard) and embarked on a slow but steady ascent through state and national politics. In 1913, he was appointed assistant secretary of the navy, a position he held during the defense emergency of World War I. In the course of his rise, in the summer of 1921, Roosevelt suffered a sudden bout of lower-body pain and paralysis. He was diagnosed with polio. The disease left Roosevelt a paraplegic, but, encouraged and assisted by his wife, Eleanor, he sought therapeutic treatment and maintained sufficient political connections to reenter politics. In 1928, Roosevelt won election as governor of New York. He oversaw the rise of the Depression and drew from the tradition of American progressivism to address the economic crisis. As he explained to the state assembly in 1931, the crisis demanded a government response “not as a matter of charity, but as a matter of social duty.” As governor he established the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA), supplying public work jobs at the prevailing wage and in-kind aid—food, shelter, and clothes—to those unable to afford it. Soon the TERA was providing work and relief to 10 percent of the state’s families.[35] Roosevelt relied on many like-minded advisors. Frances Perkins, for example, the commissioner of the state’s labor department, successfully advocated pioneering legislation that enhanced workplace safety, reduced the use of child labor in factories, and offered economic relief for struggling families. Perkins later accompanied Roosevelt to Washington and served as the nation’s first female secretary of labor.[36]

On July 1, 1932, Roosevelt, the newly designated presidential nominee of the Democratic Party, delivered one of the most famous on-site acceptance speeches in American presidential history, of which it was also the first. In it, he said, “I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people.” Newspaper editors seized on the phrase “new deal,” and it entered the American political lexicon as shorthand for Roosevelt’s program to address the Great Depression.[37]

Roosevelt proposed jobs programs, public work projects, higher wages, a shorter work week, old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, farm subsidies, banking regulations, and lower tariffs. Hoover warned that such a program represented “the total abandonment of every principle upon which this government and the American system is founded.” It reeked of European communism, he said, adding that “the so called new deals would destroy the very foundations of the American system of life.”[38] Americans didn’t buy it. Roosevelt crushed Hoover in November. He won more counties than any previous candidate in American history. He spent the months between his election and inauguration—the twentieth amendment, ratified in 1933, would

subsequently move the inauguration from March 4 to January 20—traveling, planning, and assembling a team of advisors, the famous "Brain Trust" of academics and experts, to help him formulate a plan of attack. On March 4, 1933, in his first inaugural address, Roosevelt famously declared, "This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."[39]

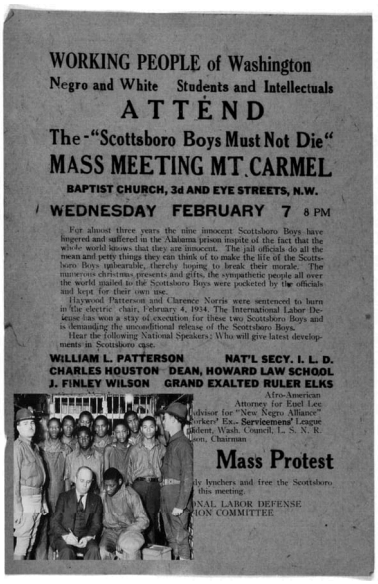
Roosevelt's reassuring words would have rung hollow if he had not taken swift action against the economic crisis. In his first days in office, Roosevelt and his advisors prepared, submitted, and secured congressional enactment of numerous laws designed to arrest the worst of the Great Depression. His administration threw the federal government headlong into the fight against the Depression. Roosevelt immediately looked to stabilize the collapsing banking system. Two out of every five banks open in 1929 had been shuttered, and some Federal Reserve banks were on the verge of insolvency.[40] Roosevelt declared a national "bank holiday" closing American banks and set to work pushing the Emergency Banking Act through Congress. On March 12, the night before select banks reopened under stricter federal guidelines, Roosevelt appeared on the radio in the first of his "Fireside Chats." The addresses, which the president continued delivering through four terms, were informal, even personal. Roosevelt used his airtime to explain New Deal legislation, to encourage confidence in government action, and to mobilize the American people's support. In the first chat, Roosevelt described the new banking safeguards and asked the public to place their trust and their savings in banks. Americans responded, and deposits outpaced withdrawals across the country. The act was a major success. In June, Congress passed the Glass-Steagall Banking Act, which instituted a federal deposit insurance system through the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and barred the mixing of commercial and investment banking.[41]

Stabilizing the banks was only a first step. In the remainder of his First Hundred Days, Roosevelt and his congressional allies focused especially on relief for suffering Americans.[42] Congress debated, amended, and passed what Roosevelt proposed. As one historian noted, the president "directed the entire operation like a seasoned field general."[43] And despite some questions over the constitutionality of many of his actions, Americans and their congressional representatives conceded that the crisis demanded swift and immediate action. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) employed young men on conservation and reforestation projects; the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) provided direct cash assistance to state relief agencies struggling to care for the unemployed;[44] the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) built a series of hydroelectric dams along the Tennessee River as part of a comprehensive program to economically develop a chronically depressed region;[45] and several agencies helped home and farm owners refinance their mortgages. And Roosevelt wasn't done.

The heart of Roosevelt's early recovery program consisted of two massive efforts to stabilize and coordinate the American economy: the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) and the National Recovery Administration (NRA). The AAA, created in May 1933, aimed to raise the prices of agricultural commodities (and hence farmers' income) by offering cash incentives to voluntarily limit farm production (decreasing supply, thereby raising prices).[46] The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which created the NRA in June 1933, suspended antitrust laws to allow businesses to establish "codes" that would coordinate prices, regulate production levels, and establish conditions of employment to curtail "cutthroat competition." In exchange for these exemptions, businesses agreed to provide reasonable wages and hours, end child labor, and allow workers the right to unionize. Participating businesses earned the right to display a placard with the NRA's Blue Eagle, showing their cooperation in the effort to combat the Great Depression.[47]

The programs of the First Hundred Days stabilized the American economy and ushered in a robust though imperfect recovery. GDP climbed once more, but even as output increased, unemployment remained stubbornly high. Though the unemployment rate dipped from its high in 1933, when Roosevelt was inaugurated, vast numbers remained out of work. If the economy could not put people back to work, the New Deal would try. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) and, later, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) put unemployed men and women to work on projects designed and proposed by local governments. The Public Works Administration (PWA) provided grants-in-aid to local governments for large infrastructure projects, such as bridges, tunnels, schoolhouses, libraries, and America's first federal public housing projects. Together, they provided not only tangible projects of immense public good but employment for millions. The New Deal was reshaping much of the nation.[48]

VIII. The New Deal in the South



The unjust and unreasonable accusation of rape brought against the so-called Scottsboro Boys, pictured with their attorney in 1932, generated serious controversy throughout the country.

"Working people of Washington negro and white. students and intellectuals attend The 'Scottsboro boys must not die' mass meeting Mt. Carmel Baptist church 3d and Eye Streets N. W. Wednesday February 7 8 PM ...." Washington, D. C., 1934. Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/...20805500%29%29.

"The Scottsboro Boys, with attorney Samuel Leibowitz, under guard by the state militia, 1932." Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottsb..._Boys_1932.jpg.

The impact of initial New Deal legislation was readily apparent in the South, a region of perpetual poverty especially plagued by the Depression. In 1929 the average per capita income in the American Southeast was $365, the lowest in the nation. Southern farmers averaged $183 per year at a time when farmers on the West Coast made more than four times that.[49] Moreover, they were trapped into the production of cotton and corn, crops that depleted the soil and returned ever-diminishing profits. Despite the ceaseless efforts of civic boosters, what little industry the South had remained low-wage, low-skilled, and primarily extractive. Southern workers made significantly less than their national counterparts: 75 percent of nonsouthern textile workers, 60 percent of iron and steel workers, and a paltry 45 percent of lumber workers. At the time of the crash, southerners were already underpaid, underfed, and undereducated.[50]

Major New Deal programs were designed with the South in mind. FDR hoped that by drastically decreasing the amount of land devoted to cotton, the AAA would arrest its long-plummeting price decline. Farmers plowed up existing crops and left fields fallow, and the market price did rise. But in an agricultural world of landowners and landless farmworkers (such as tenants and sharecroppers), the benefits of the AAA bypassed the southerners who needed them most. The government relied on landowners and local organizations to distribute money fairly to those most affected by production limits, but many owners simply kicked tenants and croppers off their land, kept the subsidy checks for keeping those acres fallow, and reinvested the profits in mechanical farming equipment that further suppressed the demand for labor. Instead of making farming profitable again, the AAA pushed landless southern farmworkers off the land.[51]

But Roosevelt's assault on southern poverty took many forms. Southern industrial practices attracted much attention. The NRA encouraged higher wages and better conditions. It began to suppress the rampant use of child labor in southern mills and, for the first time, provided federal protection for unionized workers all across the country. Those gains were eventually solidified in the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, which set a national minimum wage of $0.25/hour (eventually rising to $0.40/hour). The minimum wage disproportionately affected low-paid southern workers and brought southern wages within the reach of northern wages.[52]

The president's support for unionization further impacted the South. Southern industrialists had proven themselves ardent foes of unionization, particularly in the infamous southern textile mills. In 1934, when workers at textile mills across the southern Piedmont region of the American Southeast struck over low wages and long hours, owners turned to local and state authorities to quash workers' groups, even as they recruited thousands of strikebreakers from the many displaced farmers swelling industrial

centers looking for work. But starting in 1935 the National Labor Relations Act guaranteed the rights of most workers to unionize and bargain collectively. And so unionized workers, backed by the support of the federal government and determined to enforce the reforms of the New Deal, pushed for higher wages, shorter hours, and better conditions. With growing success, union members came to see Roosevelt as a protector of workers' rights. Or, as one union leader put it, he was an "agent of God."[53]

Perhaps the most successful New Deal program in the South was the TVA, an ambitious program to use hydroelectric power, agricultural and industrial reform, flood control, economic development, education, and healthcare to radically remake the impoverished watershed region of the Tennessee River. Though the area of focus was limited, Roosevelt's TVA sought to "make a different type of citizen" out of the area's penniless residents.[54] The TVA built a series of hydroelectric dams to control flooding and distribute electricity to the otherwise non-electrified areas at government-subsidized rates. Agents of the TVA met with residents and offered training and general education classes to improve agricultural practices and exploit new job opportunities. The TVA encapsulates Roosevelt's vision for uplifting the South and integrating it into the larger national economy.[55]

Roosevelt initially courted conservative southern Democrats to ensure the legislative success of the New Deal, all but guaranteeing that the racial and economic inequalities of the region remained intact, but by the end of his second term, he had won the support of enough non-southern voters that he felt confident confronting some of the region's most glaring inequalities. Nowhere was this more apparent than in his endorsement of a report, formulated by a group of progressive southern New Dealers, titled "A Report on Economic Conditions in the South." The pamphlet denounced the hardships wrought by the southern economy—in his introductory letter to the report, Roosevelt called the region "the Nation's No. 1 economic problem"—and blasted reactionary southern anti–New Dealers. He suggested that the New Deal could save the South and thereby spur a nationwide recovery. The report was among the first broadsides in Roosevelt's coming reelection campaign that addressed the inequalities that continued to mark southern and national life.[56]

IX. Voices of Protest



Huey Long was a dynamic, indomitable force (with a wild speech-giving style, seen in the photograph) who campaigned tirelessly for the common man, demanding that Americans "Share Our Wealth." Photograph of Huey P. Long, c. 1933-35. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...ongGesture.jpg. "Share Our Wealth" button, c. 1930s. Authentic History, http://www.authentichistory.com/1930...lth_Button.jpg.

Despite the unprecedented actions taken in his first year in office, Roosevelt's initial relief programs could often be quite conservative. He had usually been careful to work within the bounds of presidential authority and congressional cooperation. And, unlike Europe, where several nations had turned toward state-run economies, and even fascism and socialism, Roosevelt's New Deal demonstrated a clear reluctance to radically tinker with the nation's foundational economic and social structures. Many high-profile critics attacked Roosevelt for not going far enough, and, beginning in 1934, Roosevelt and his advisors were forced to respond.

Senator Huey Long, a flamboyant Democrat from Louisiana, was perhaps the most important "voice of protest." Long's populist rhetoric appealed to those who saw deeply rooted but easily addressed injustice in the nation's economic system. Long

proposed a Share Our Wealth program in which the federal government would confiscate the assets of the extremely wealthy and redistribute them to the less well-off through guaranteed minimum incomes. “How many men ever went to a barbecue and would let one man take off the table what’s intended for nine-tenths of the people to eat?” he asked. Over twenty-seven thousand Share the Wealth clubs sprang up across the nation as Long traveled the country explaining his program to crowds of impoverished and unemployed Americans. Long envisioned the movement as a stepping stone to the presidency, but his crusade ended in late 1935 when he was assassinated on the floor of the Louisiana State Capitol. Even in death, however, Long convinced Roosevelt to more stridently attack the Depression and American inequality.

But Huey Long was not alone in his critique of Roosevelt. Francis Townsend, a former doctor and public health official from California, promoted a plan for old-age pensions which, he argued, would provide economic security for the elderly (who disproportionately suffered poverty) and encourage recovery by allowing older workers to retire from the workforce. Reverend Charles Coughlin, meanwhile, a priest and radio personality from the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, gained a following by making vitriolic antisemitic attacks on Roosevelt for cooperating with banks and financiers and proposing a new system of “social justice” through a more state-driven economy instead. Like Long, both Townsend and Coughlin built up substantial public followings.

If many Americans urged Roosevelt to go further in addressing the economic crisis, the president faced even greater opposition from conservative politicians and business leaders. By late 1934, complaints increased from business-friendly Republicans about Roosevelt’s willingness to regulate industry and use federal spending for public works and employment programs. In the South, Democrats who had originally supported the president grew more hostile toward programs that challenged the region’s political, economic, and social status quo. Yet the greatest opposition came from the Supreme Court, filled with conservative appointments made during the previous three Republican presidential administrations, during which eight men were nominated.

By early 1935 the Court was reviewing the programs of the New Deal. On May 27, a day Roosevelt’s supporters called “Black Monday,” the justices struck down one of the president’s signature reforms: in a case revolving around poultry processing, the Court unanimously declared the NRA unconstitutional. In early 1936, the AAA fell as well.[57]

X. The “Second” New Deal (1935–1936)



Unionization met with fierce opposition from owners and managers, particularly in the “Manufacturing Belt” of the Mid-West. Sheldon Dick, photographer, “Strikers guarding window entrance to Fisher body plant number three. Flint, Michigan,” January/February 1937. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa2000021503/PP/.

The New Deal enjoyed broad popularity. Democrats gained seats in the 1934 midterm elections, securing massive majorities in both the House and Senate. Bolstered by these gains, facing reelection in 1936, and confronting rising opposition from both the left and the right, Roosevelt rededicated himself to bold programs and more aggressive approaches, a set of legislation often termed the Second New Deal. It included a nearly five-billion-dollar appropriation that in 1935 established the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a permanent version of the CWA, which would ultimately employ millions of Americans on public works projects. It would employ “the maximum number of persons in the shortest time possible,” Roosevelt said.[58] Americans employed by the WPA paved more than half a million miles of roads, constructed thousands of bridges, built schools and post offices, and

painted murals and recorded oral histories. Not only did the program build much of America's physical infrastructure, it came closer than any New Deal program to providing the federal jobs guarantee Roosevelt had promised in 1932.

Also in 1935, hoping to reconstitute some of the protections afforded workers in the now-defunct NRA, Roosevelt worked with Congress to pass the National Labor Relations Act (known as the Wagner Act for its chief sponsor, New York senator Robert Wagner), offering federal legal protection, for the first time, for workers to organize unions. The labor protections extended by Roosevelt's New Deal were revolutionary. In northern industrial cities, workers responded to worsening conditions by banding together and demanding support for workers' rights. In 1935, the head of the United Mine Workers, John L. Lewis, took the lead in forming a new national workers' organization, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), breaking with the more conservative, craft-oriented AFL. The CIO won a major victory in 1937 when affiliated members in the United Automobile Workers (UAW) struck for recognition and better pay and hours at a General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan. Launching a "sit-down" strike, the workers remained in the building until management agreed to negotiate. GM recognized the UAW and granted a pay increase. GM's recognition gave the UAW new legitimacy, and unionization spread rapidly across the auto industry. Across the country, unions and workers took advantage of the New Deal's protections to organize and win major concessions from employers. Three years after the NLRA, with the backing of Roosevelt and Secretary of Labor Perkins, Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, creating the modern minimum wage.

The Second New Deal also oversaw the restoration of a highly progressive federal income tax, mandated new reporting requirements for publicly traded companies, refinanced long-term home mortgages for struggling homeowners, and attempted rural reconstruction projects to bring farm incomes in line with urban ones.[59] Perhaps the signature piece of Roosevelt's Second New Deal, however, was the Social Security Act. Championed by Secretary of Labor Perkins, it provided for old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, and economic aid, based on means, to assist both the elderly and dependent children.[60] The president was careful to mitigate some of the criticism from what was, at the time, in the American context, a revolutionary concept. He specifically insisted that social security be financed from payroll, not the federal government. "No dole," Roosevelt emphasized to an advisor. "Mustn't have a dole."[61] He thereby helped separate social security from the stigma of being an undeserved "welfare" entitlement. While such a strategy saved the program from suspicions, social security became the centerpiece of the modern American social welfare state. It was the culmination of a long progressive push for government-sponsored social welfare, an answer to the calls of Roosevelt's opponents on the Left for reform, a response to the intractable poverty among America's neediest groups, and a recognition that the government would now assume some responsibility for the economic well-being of its citizens.[62] Nevertheless, the act excluded large swaths of the American population. Its pension program excluded domestic workers and farmworkers, for instance, a policy that disproportionately affected African Americans. Roosevelt recognized that social security's programs would need expansion and improvement. "This law," he said, "represents a cornerstone in a structure which is being built but is by no means complete."[63]

The Second New Deal reshaped much of American life. It also shaped its culture. The economic trials and tribulations of the 1930s sparked the imagination of the nation's people, and the federal government supported a new, democratically minded flowering of cultural production. The WPA created four major projects—music, theater, writing, and art—that were known collectively as "Federal One." The Federal Theater Project employed forty thousand people, including actors, scriptwriters, and set workers. They produced children's plays and puppet and marionette shows that performed at orphanages, schools, and reformatories. The Federal Music Project funded everything from orchestras to songwriters to jubilee bands. They performed in public parks and outdoor concerts and provided free radio concerts bringing music to the people. Some programs taught children and adults about music. Etta Rich, a housewife, had wanted to play the piano but could never afford lessons. Upon hearing about the free music project, "I immediately joined," she wrote President Roosevelt. "It has given me hope. Art helps one live."[11] At the same time, the Federal Writers Project employed newsmen, poets, and writers. The extensive interviews with the then-elderly survivors of American slavery undertaken by writers and journalists in the project, for instance, continue to offer some of the most detailed insights into the experience of American slavery. The Federal Art Project, meanwhile, produced over two hundred thousand works of public art ranging from murals and sculptures to paintings and photography. "How many of us might have been discouraged or derailed in their creative calling if the Project did not exist?" painter Joseph Soman asked.[64]

XI. Equal Rights and the New Deal

Black Americans faced discrimination everywhere but suffered especially severe legal inequality in the Jim Crow South. In 1931, for instance, a group of nine young men riding the rails between Chattanooga and Memphis, Tennessee, were pulled from the train near Scottsboro, Alabama, and charged with assaulting two white women. Despite clear evidence that the assault had not occurred and despite one of the women later recanting, the young men endured a series of sham trials in which all but one were sentenced to death. Only the communist-oriented International Labor Defense (ILD) came to the aid of the "Scottsboro

Boys," who soon became a national symbol of continuing racial prejudice in America and a rallying point for civil rights–minded Americans. In appeals, the ILD successfully challenged the boys' sentencing, and the death sentences were either commuted or reversed, although the last of the accused did not receive parole until 1946.[65]

Despite a concerted effort to appoint Black advisors to some New Deal programs, Franklin Roosevelt did little to specifically address the particular difficulties Black communities faced. To do so openly would provoke southern Democrats and put his New Deal coalition—–the uneasy alliance of national liberals, urban laborers, farm workers, and southern whites—at risk. Roosevelt not only rejected such proposals as abolishing the poll tax and declaring lynching a federal crime, he refused to specifically target African American needs in any of his larger relief and reform packages. As he explained to the national secretary of the NAACP, "I just can't take that risk."[66]

In fact, many of the programs of the New Deal had made hard times more difficult. When the codes of the NRA set new pay scales, they usually took into account regional differentiation and historical data. In the South, where African Americans had long suffered unequal pay, the new codes simply perpetuated that inequality. The codes also exempted those involved in farm work and domestic labor, the occupations of a majority of southern Black men and women. The AAA was equally problematic as owners displaced Black tenants and sharecroppers, many of whom were forced to return to their farms as low-paid day labor or to migrate to cities looking for wage work.[67]

Perhaps the most notorious failure of the New Deal to aid African Americans came with the passage of the Social Security Act. Southern politicians chafed at the prospect of African Americans benefiting from federally sponsored social welfare, afraid that economic security would allow Black southerners to escape the cycle of poverty that kept them tied to the land as cheap, exploitable farm laborers. In Mississippi, the Jackson Daily News callously warned that "the average Mississippian can't imagine himself chipping in to pay pensions for able-bodied Negroes to sit around in idleness . . . while cotton and corn crops are crying for workers." Roosevelt agreed to remove domestic workers and farm laborers from the provisions of the bill, excluding many African Americans, already laboring under the strictures of legal racial discrimination, from the benefits of an expanding economic safety net.[68]

Women, too, failed to receive the full benefits of New Deal programs. On one hand, Roosevelt included women in key positions within his administration, including the first female cabinet secretary, Frances Perkins, and a prominently placed African American advisor in the National Youth Administration, Mary McLeod Bethune. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a key advisor to the president and became a major voice for economic and racial justice. But many New Deal programs were built on the assumption that men would serve as breadwinners and women as mothers, homemakers, and consumers. New Deal programs aimed to help both but usually by forcing such gendered assumptions, making it difficult for women to attain economic autonomy. New Deal social welfare programs tended to funnel women into means-tested, state-administered relief programs while reserving entitlement benefits for male workers, creating a kind of two-tiered social welfare state. And so, despite its great advances, the New Deal failed to challenge core inequalities that continued to mark life in the United States.[69]

XII. The End of the New Deal (1937–1939)

By 1936, Roosevelt and his New Deal won record popularity. In November, Roosevelt annihilated his Republican challenger, Governor Alf Landon of Kansas, who lost in every state save Maine and Vermont. The Great Depression had certainly not ended, but it appeared to be retreating, and Roosevelt, now safely reelected, appeared ready to take advantage of both his popularity and the improving economic climate to press for even more dramatic changes. But conservative barriers continued to limit the power of his popular support. The Supreme Court, for instance, continued to gut many of his programs.

In 1937, concerned that the Court might overthrow social security in an upcoming case, Roosevelt called for legislation allowing him to expand the Court by appointing a new, younger justice for every sitting member over age seventy. Roosevelt argued that the measure would speed up the Court's ability to handle the growing backlog of cases; however, his "court-packing scheme," as opponents termed it, was clearly designed to allow the president to appoint up to six friendly, pro–New Deal justices to drown the influence of old-time conservatives on the Court. Roosevelt's "scheme" riled opposition and did not become law, but the chastened Court thereafter upheld social security and other pieces of New Deal legislation. Moreover, Roosevelt was slowly able to appoint more amenable justices as conservatives died or retired. Still, the court-packing scheme damaged the Roosevelt administration and emboldened New Deal opponents.[70]

Compounding his problems, Roosevelt and his advisors made a costly economic misstep. Believing the United States had turned a corner, Roosevelt cut spending in 1937. The American economy plunged nearly to the depths of 1932–1933. Roosevelt reversed

course and, adopting the approach popularized by the English economist John Maynard Keynes, hoped that countercyclical, compensatory spending would pull the country out of the recession, even at the expense of a growing budget deficit. It was perhaps too late. The Roosevelt Recession of 1937 became fodder for critics. Combined with the court-packing scheme, the recession allowed for significant gains by a conservative coalition of southern Democrats and Midwestern Republicans in the 1938 midterm elections. By 1939, Roosevelt was struggling to build congressional support for new reforms, let alone maintain existing agencies. Moreover, the growing threat of war in Europe stole the public's attention and increasingly dominated Roosevelt's interests. The New Deal slowly receded into the background, outshined by war.[71]

XIII. The Legacy of the New Deal

By the end of the 1930s, Roosevelt and his Democratic Congresses had presided over a transformation of the American government and a realignment in American party politics. Before World War I, the American national state, though powerful, had been a "government out of sight." After the New Deal, Americans came to see the federal government as a potential ally in their daily struggles, whether finding work, securing a decent wage, getting a fair price for agricultural products, or organizing a union. Voter turnout in presidential elections jumped in 1932 and again in 1936, with most of these newly mobilized voters forming a durable piece of the Democratic Party that would remain loyal well into the 1960s. Even as affluence returned with the American intervention in World War II, memories of the Depression continued to shape the outlook of two generations of Americans.[72] Survivors of the Great Depression, one man would recall in the late 1960s, "are still ridin' with the ghost—the ghost of those days when things came hard."[73]

Historians debate when the New Deal ended. Some identify the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 as the last major New Deal measure. Others see wartime measures such as price and rent control and the G.I. Bill (which afforded New Deal–style social benefits to veterans) as species of New Deal legislation. Still others conceive of a "New Deal order," a constellation of "ideas, public policies, and political alliances," which, though changing, guided American politics from Roosevelt's Hundred Days forward to Lyndon Johnson's Great Society—and perhaps even beyond. Indeed, the New Deal's legacy still remains, and its battle lines still shape American politics.

XIV. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Matthew Downs and Eric Rauchway, with content contributed by Dana Cochran, Matthew Downs, Rebecca Brenner Graham, Benjamin Helwege, Brenda L. Lakhani, Elisa Minoff, Eric Rauchway, Larisa L. Veloz, Caitlin Verboon, and Mason Williams.

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22: World War II

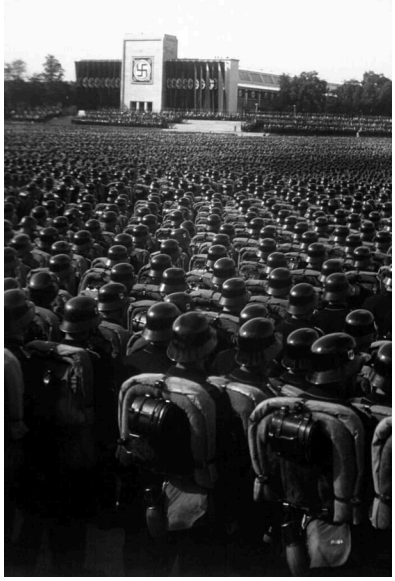


Walter Rosenblum, “D Day Rescue, Omaha Beach,” via Library of Congress.

I. Introduction

Mired in the depths of the Great Depression, the United States looked on warily as the world exploded into a paroxysm of war. The post–World War I order had fully collapsed, and a global economic crisis gave way to the deadliest and most destructive war in human history. Perhaps eighty million individuals lost their lives during World War II, which the United States joined after December 7, 1941. The war saw industrialized genocide and unleashed the most fearsome technology ever unleashed in war. And when it ended, the United States found itself standing more powerful than ever as the world’s greatest superpower. Armed with the world’s most vibrant economy, it looked forward to the fruits of a prosperous consumers’ economy. But the war, which raised as many questions as it settled, unleashed new social forces at home and abroad that would confront generations of Americans to come.

II. The Collapse of the Post–World War I Order



Huge rallies like this one in Nuremberg displayed the sheer number of armed and ready troop and instilled a fierce loyalty to (or fearful silence about) Hitler and the National Socialist Party in Germany. Photograph, November, 9. 1935. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...eitag_1935.jpg.

In his last radio address, delivered on the eve of Armistice Day in 1923, a dying Woodrow Wilson reflected on the First World War. "The stimulating memories of that happy time of triumph," he said, "are forever marred and embittered for us by the shameful fact that when the victory was won . . . we turned our backs upon our associates and refused to bear any responsible part in the administration of peace." The United States "withdrew into a sullen and selfish isolation," he said.[1]

The United States had joined Europe in war but abandoned it in peace—the United States never joined the League of Nations and never ratified the Treaty of Versailles. The "war to end all wars" stoked resentments and exacerbated international tensions, even among the victors: Italy resented its second-tier national status granted by the vittoria mutilita (mutilated victory), a grievance harnessed by Benito Mussolini's fascist movement in the 1920s, and Japan resented its denial of its own sphere of influence over the Pacific. In Germany, meanwhile, the resentments of the vanquished would prove fertile soil for the Nazi propaganda machine.

Still, the tenuous postwar order might have persevered if not for the global economic calamity of the 1930s. In Europe, the continent's major powers were still struggling with the aftereffects of World War I when the global economic crisis threw much of the continent into chaos. Germany's Weimar Republic followed the collapsing economy into obliteration, and out of the ashes emerged Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party (the Nazis). Championing German racial supremacy, fascist government, and military expansionism, Hitler rose to power and, after aborted attempts to take power in Germany, became chancellor in 1933. The Nazis smashed democratic traditions and swiftly conquered German institutions. Leftist groups were purged. Hitler repudiated the punitive damages and strict military limitations of the Treaty of Versailles. He rebuilt the German military and navy. German soldiers reoccupied the Rhineland, the demilitarized region along the border with France. Mussolini had already, in defiance of the League of Nations, ordered the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, and, when the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, he and Hitler intervened on behalf of the Spanish fascists, toppling the communist Spanish Republican Party. Britain and France stood warily by and began to rebuild their militaries, anxious in the face of a renewed Germany but still unwilling to draw Europe into another bloody war.[2]

On the other side of the globe, Japan marched to war. On September 18, 1931, a small explosion tore up railroad tracks controlled by the Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railway near the city of Shenyang (Mukden) in the Chinese province of Manchuria. Under the pretense of protecting Japanese citizens and investments, the Japanese Imperial Army ordered a full-scale invasion of Manchuria. The invasion was swift. Without having to face a united Chinese army, the Japanese quickly defeated isolated Chinese warlords; by the end of February 1932, all of Manchuria was firmly under Japanese control. Japan established the nation of Manchukuo out of the former province of Manchuria.[3]

This seemingly small skirmish—known by the Chinese as the September 18 Incident and the Japanese as the Manchurian Incident—sparked a war that would last thirteen years and claim the lives of over thirty-five million people. Comprehending

Japanese motivations for attacking China and the grueling stalemate of the ensuing war is crucial for understanding Japan's seemingly unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, and, therefore, for understanding the involvement of the United States in World War II as well.

Despite their rapid advance into Manchuria, the Japanese put off the full invasion of China for nearly three years. Japan occupied a precarious domestic and international position after the September 18 Incident. At home, Japan was riven by political factionalism due to its stagnating economy. Leaders were torn as to whether to address modernization and the lack of natural resources through unilateral expansion (which would require the conquest of resource-rich areas such as Manchuria to export raw materials to domestic Japanese industrial bases such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki) or international cooperation (they could have chosen a philosophy of pan-Asianism in an anti-Western coalition that would push the colonial powers out of Asia). Ultimately, after a series of political crises and assassinations inflamed tensions, prowar elements within the Japanese military triumphed over the more moderate civilian government. Japan committed itself to aggressive military expansion.

Chinese leaders Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang appealed to the League of Nations for assistance against Japan. The United States supported the Chinese protest, giving rise to the Stimson Doctrine in January 1932, a refusal to recognize any state established as the result of Japanese aggression. Meanwhile, the League of Nations sent Englishman Victor Bulwer-Lytton to investigate the September 18 Incident. After a six-month investigation, Bulwer-Lytton found the Japanese guilty of inciting the event and demanded the return of Manchuria to China. Japan opted to withdraw from international diplomacy and officially left the League of Nations in March 1933. Its diplomatic isolation empowered radical military leaders who could point to the Japanese military success in Manchuria against the domestic political failures of the civilian government. The military took over Japanese policy. And in the military's eyes, the conquest of China would not only provide for Japan's industrial needs, it would secure Japanese supremacy in East Asia.

As militarism loomed over Europe and Asia, America stood idly by. After the gut-wrenching carnage of World War I, many Americans retreated toward isolationism and opposed any involvement in the conflagrations burning across Europe and Asia. Significant numbers of Americans regretted the nation's entry into World War I, believing the country either had been actively manipulated into war—congressional investigations, for instance, probed whether American business interests had deliberately provoked American entry—or had simply blundered its way in. Congress worked to preempt all of the economic and political entanglements that had pushed the US down the path to war between 1914 and 1917. Consumed by the economic crisis of the Great Depression and anxious over the looming dangers posed by spiraling international conflicts, Congress passed the first of several neutrality acts in 1935 by banning American businesses from selling war materials to belligerent nations. The same year, the Senate rejected a treaty that would allow the United States to join the World Court. And yet, whatever distance the United States put between itself and the world, the shadow of war loomed over the American public. "The epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading," Roosevelt observed in 1937. The United States would attempt to insulate itself, but "war is a contagion," he warned, that "can engulf states and peoples remote from the original scene of hostilities."[4]

III. The World at War

That year, Japan launched its full-scale invasion of China. It assaulted the Marco Polo Bridge on July 7 and routed the forces of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army. The broken Chinese army gave up Beijing on August 8, Shanghai on November 26, and the capital, Nanjing (Nanking), on December 13. Between 250,000 and 300,000 people were killed, and tens of thousands of women were raped when the Japanese besieged and then sacked Nanjing. The Western press called it the Rape of Nanking (using the common spelling of the era). To halt the invading enemy, Chiang adopted a scorched-earth strategy of "trading space for time." His Nationalist government retreated inland, burning villages and destroying dams, and established a new capital at the Yangtze River port of Chongqing (Chungking). Although the Nationalists' radical policy hurt the Japanese military effort, it alienated scores of dislocated Chinese civilians and became a potent propaganda tool of the emerging Chinese Communist Party (CCP).[5]

Americans read about the brutal fighting in China, but the United States lacked both the will and the military power to oppose the Japanese invasion. The Japanese army was a technologically advanced force consisting of 4,100,000 men and 900,000 Chinese collaborators—and that was in China alone. The Japanese military was armed with modern rifles, artillery, armor, and aircraft. By 1940, the Japanese navy was the third-largest, and among the most technologically advanced, in the world.

Still, Chinese Nationalists lobbied Washington for aid. Chiang Kai-shek's wife, Soong May-ling—known to the American public as Madame Chiang—led the effort. Born into a wealthy Chinese merchant family in 1898, Madame Chiang spent much of her childhood in the United States and graduated from Wellesley College in 1917 with a major in English literature. In contrast to her gruff husband, Madame Chiang was charming and able to use her knowledge of American culture and values to garner support

for her husband and his government. The United States denounced Japanese aggression, but it took no action during the 1930s.

As Chinese Nationalists fought for survival, the Communist Party was busy collecting people and supplies in the northwestern Shaanxi Province. China had been at war with itself when the Japanese came. Nationalists battled a stubborn communist insurgency. In 1935 the Nationalists threw the communists out of the fertile Chinese coast, but an ambitious young commander named Mao Zedong recognized the power of the Chinese peasant population. In Shaanxi, Mao recruited from the local peasantry, building his force from a meager seven thousand survivors at the end of the Long March in 1935 to a robust 1.2 million members by the end of the war.

Although Japan had conquered much of the country, the Nationalists regrouped and the communists rearmed. An uneasy truce paused the country's civil war and refocused efforts on the invaders. The Chinese could not dislodge the Japanese, but they could stall their advance. The war was mired in stalemate.

Germany, too, moved toward war. In his autobiographical manifesto, Mein Kampf, Hitler advocated for the unification of Europe's German peoples under one nation and that nation's need for Lebensraum (living space), particularly in Eastern Europe, to supply Germans with the land and resources needed for future prosperity. The Untermenschen (lesser humans) would have to go. Once in power, Hitler worked toward the twin goals of unification and expansion.

In 1938, Germany annexed Austria and set its sights on the Sudetenland, a large and ethnically German area of Czechoslovakia. Britain and France, alarmed but still anxious to avoid war, agreed—without Czechoslovakia's input—that Germany could annex the region in return for a promise to stop all future German aggression. They thought that Hitler could be appeased, but it became clear that he would continue pushing German expansion. In March 1939, Hitler took the rest of Czechoslovakia and began to make demands on Poland. Britain and France promised war. And war came.

Hitler signed a secret agreement—the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact—with the Soviet Union that coordinated the splitting of Poland between the two powers and promised nonaggression thereafter. The European war began when the German army, called the Wehrmacht, invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Britain and France declared war two days later and mobilized their armies. Britain and France hoped that the Poles could hold out for three or four months, enough time for the Allies to intervene. In the event, Poland lasted three weeks. The German army, anxious to avoid the rigid, grinding war of attrition that took so many millions in the stalemate of World War I, built their new modern army for speed and maneuverability. German doctrine emphasized the use of tanks, planes, and motorized infantry (infantry that used trucks for transportation instead of marching) to concentrate forces, smash front lines, and wreak havoc behind the enemy's defenses. It was called Blitzkrieg—lightning war.

IV. The Loosening of American Neutrality

The moral horrors of the Nazi regime—the fascist overthrow of democratic norms and institutions, the persecution of Jews and other political and religious "undesirables," and its unchecked, often brutal militarism—alienated much of the American public, and Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 accelerated the nation's slow turn away from isolationism. After Germany's invasion of Poland sparked the Second World War in Europe, Roosevelt pushed to loosen America's neutrality and facilitate the sale of arms and provisions through a new "cash and carry" policy that required the Allies to pay cash and carry supplies on their own ships, avoiding the loss of American lives that enflamed passions in the lead-up to World War I. "I hope the United States will keep out of this war," Roosevelt told the nation. "I believe that it will."[6]

"This nation will remain a neutral nation," Roosevelt said, "but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral has a right to take account of facts. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or his conscience." And yet American conscience provoked minimal humanitarian effort. The State Department and most US embassies did relatively little to aid European Jews before American entry into the war. Roosevelt publicly spoke out against the persecution and even withdrew the US ambassador to Germany after Kristallnacht, in 1938. That year he pushed for the Evian Conference in France, in which international leaders discussed the Jewish refugee problem and worked to expand Jewish immigration quotas by tens of thousands of people per year. But the conference came to nothing, and the United States turned away countless Jewish refugees who requested asylum in the United States.

The 1924 Johnson-Reed Act shut down most European immigration to the United States, and the US barred its doors to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. In 1939, the German ocean liner St. Louis carried over nine hundred Jewish refugees. It could not find a country that would take them. The passengers could not receive visas under the US quota system. A State Department wire to one passenger read that all must "await their turns on the waiting list and qualify for and obtain immigration visas before they may be admissible into the United States." The ship cabled the president for special privilege, but the president did nothing. The ship was forced to return to Europe. Hundreds of the St. Louis's passengers would perish in the Holocaust.

Antisemitism still permeated the United States. In 1938 and 1939, the US Congress debated the Wagner-Rogers Bill, an act to exempt twenty thousand German-Jewish children from the quota system. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt endorsed the measure, but the president remained publicly silent. The bill, opposed by roughly two-thirds of the American public, never made it out of committee. Historians speculate that Roosevelt, anxious to protect the New Deal and his rearmament programs, was unwilling to expend political capital to protect foreign groups that the American public had little interest in protecting.[7]

Meanwhile, German military victories and the horrors of the Nazi regime increasingly provoked American outrage, and the United States took increasingly proactive steps not only to build up its own military capacity but also to support the Allies with arms and matériel and strangle the Axis powers economically. At the same time, the cruelties of the Japanese invasion of China enflamed American attitudes.

In 1939 the United States dissolved its trade treaties with Japan and the following year cut off supplies of war materials by embargoing oil, steel, rubber, and other vital goods. It was hoped that economic pressure would shut down the Japanese war machine. Instead, Japan's resource-starved military launched invasions across the Pacific to sustain its war effort. The Japanese called their new empire the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and, with the cry of "Asia for the Asians," made war against European powers and independent nations throughout the region. Diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States collapsed. The United States demanded that Japan withdraw from China; Japan considered the oil embargo a de facto declaration of war.[8]

Germany, meanwhile, pushed on. After the fall of Poland, France and its British allies braced for an inevitable German attack. Throughout the winter of 1939–1940, fighting was mostly confined to smaller fronts in Norway. Belligerents called it the Sitzkrieg (sitting war). But in May 1940, Hitler launched his attack into Western Europe. Mirroring the German's Schlieffen Plan of 1914 in the previous war, Germany attacked through the Netherlands and Belgium to avoid the prepared French defenses along the French-German border. Poland had fallen in three weeks; France lasted only a few weeks more. By June, Hitler was posing for photographs in front of the Eiffel Tower. Germany split France in half. Germany occupied and governed the north, and the south would be ruled under a puppet government in Vichy.

With France under heel, Hitler turned to Britain. Operation Sea Lion—the planned German invasion of the British Isles—required air superiority over the English Channel. From June until October the German Luftwaffe fought the Royal Air Force (RAF) for control of the skies. Despite having fewer planes, British pilots won the so-called Battle of Britain, saving the islands from immediate invasion and prompting the new prime minister, Winston Churchill, to declare, "Never before in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."



The German aerial bombing of London left thousands homeless, hurt, or dead. This child sits among the rubble with a rather quizzical look on his face, as adults ponder their fate in the background. Toni Frissell, "[Abandoned boy holding a stuffed toy animal amid ruins following German aerial bombing of London]," 1945. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008680191/.

If Britain was safe from invasion, it was not immune from additional air attacks. Stymied in the Battle of Britain, Hitler began the Blitz—a bombing campaign against cities and civilians. Hoping to crush the British will to fight, the Luftwaffe bombed the cities of London, Liverpool, and Manchester every night from September to the following May. Children were sent far into the countryside

to live with strangers in order to shield them from the bombings. Remaining residents took refuge in shelters and subway tunnels, emerging each morning to put out fires and bury the dead.

More and more Americans advocated for direct involvement in Europe as public opinion in the United States shifted from fierce isolationism to grudging acceptance of a perhaps inevitable war. In the fall of 1940, Roosevelt signed the Selective Training Service Act, the nation's first peacetime military draft. Meanwhile, convinced that only he could steer the nation through the global crisis, Roosevelt ran for and won an unprecedented third presidential term.

The United States readied itself for war. American journalist Dorothy Thompson called for "the full economic, financial, commercial and machine power of the United States" to be used against the Nazis for the establishment of "a world fit for human beings."[9] Roosevelt readied the American war machine. "I want to make it clear that it is the purpose of the nation to build now with all possible speed every machine, every arsenal, every factory that we need to manufacture our defense material," he told the nation in December 1940. "We have the men, the skill, the wealth, and above all, the will."[10]

In January 1941, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act, allowing the United States to support the Allied war effort through not only food and provisions but weapons and military equipment. The United States still claimed neutrality—American soldiers were not yet fighting—but the country was now providing direct material support for the Allies. "We must be the great arsenal of democracy," Roosevelt had said a few weeks earlier.

Turning tides provoked more pointed isolationist rhetoric. The America First Committee denounced foreign interventionism and championed a "Fortress America." While many non-interventionists simply sought to avoid entanglement in another devastating war, some within the movement—including its popular spokesman, the hero pilot Charles Lindbergh—promoted antisemitic conspiracy theories alleging Jews were purposely trying to steer the country into the conflict.

Then, in 1941, Hitler, having failed to win the Battle of Britain but confident it had knocked Britain temporarily out of the fight, launched Operation Barbarossa—the invasion of the Soviet Union. Hoping to capture agricultural lands, seize oil fields, and break the military threat of Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler broke the two powers' 1939 nonaggression pact and, on June 22, invaded the Soviet Union. It was the largest land invasion in history. France and Poland had fallen in weeks, and German officials hoped to break Russia before the winter. And initially, the Blitzkrieg worked. The German military quickly conquered enormous swaths of land and netted hundreds of thousands of prisoners. But Russia was too big, and the Soviets were willing to sacrifice millions to stop the fascist advance. After recovering from the initial shock of the German invasion, Stalin moved his factories east of the Urals, out of range of the Luftwaffe. He ordered his retreating army to adopt a scorched-earth policy, to move east and destroy food, the railway, and dwellings to stymie the advancing German army. The German army slogged forward. It split up into three pieces and stood at the gates of Moscow, Stalingrad, and Leningrad, but its supply lines now stretched thousands of miles, existing Soviet infrastructure had been destroyed, partisans harried German lines, and the brutal Russian winter arrived. Germany had won massive gains but the winter found Germany exhausted and overextended. In the north, the German army starved Leningrad during an interminable siege; in the south, at Stalingrad, the two armies bled themselves to death in the destroyed city; and in the center, on the outskirts of Moscow, in sight of the capital city, the German army faltered and fell back. It was the Soviet Union that broke Hitler's army. Twenty-five million Soviet soldiers and civilians died during the "Great Patriotic War," as the Russians called it; roughly 80 percent of all German casualties during the war came on the Eastern Front. The German army and its various conscripts suffered 850,000 casualties at the Battle of Stalingrad alone.[11]

In August 1941, as new American embargoes went into effect on Japan, Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill off the coast of Newfoundland on the USS Augusta to hammer out the Atlantic Charter, a statement of shared commitments—including "the final destruction of Nazi tyranny" and a disavowal of territorial seizures—that laid out a general vision for a cooperative, economically connected postwar world.

V. America at War



The U.S.S. West Virginia burns following the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 1941. Library of Congress.

Japanese military planners, convinced that American intervention in the Pacific was inevitable, planned a coordinated Pacific offensive to preemptively neutralize the United States and other European powers and provide time for Japan to complete its conquests and fortify its positions. On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Japanese military launched a surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Japanese military planners hoped to destroy enough battleships and aircraft carriers to cripple American naval power for years. Twenty-four hundred Americans were killed in the attack.

American isolationism fell at Pearl Harbor. Japan also assaulted Hong Kong, the Philippines, and American holdings throughout the Pacific, but it was the attack on Hawaii that threw the United States into a global conflict. Franklin Roosevelt called December 7 “a date which will live in infamy” and demanded a declaration of war, which Congress answered within hours. Within a week of Pearl Harbor the United States was at war with the Axis in Europe and Asia, uniting separate conflicts into a single world war.



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 professional advertisers to “sell” a romantic vision of war to Americans. 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?” Recruiting Publicity Bureau, US Women’s Army Corps Recruiting Poster (1943); Unknown, “Let’s Go Get ‘Em.” Beck Engraving Co. (1942). Library of Congress.

Americans poured into the armed forces. Almost eighteen million men served in World War II. Volunteers rushed to join the military after Pearl Harbor, but the majority—over ten million—were drafted into service. Volunteers could express their preference for assignment, and many preempted the draft by volunteering. Regardless, recruits judged I-A, "fit for service," were moved into basic training, where soldiers were developed physically and trained in the basic use of weapons and military equipment. Soldiers were indoctrinated into the chain of command and introduced to military life. After "basic," soldiers moved on to more specialized training. For example, combat infantrymen received additional weapons and tactical training, and radio operators learned transmission codes and the operation of field radios. Afterward, an individual's experience varied depending on what service he entered and to what theater he was assigned.[12]

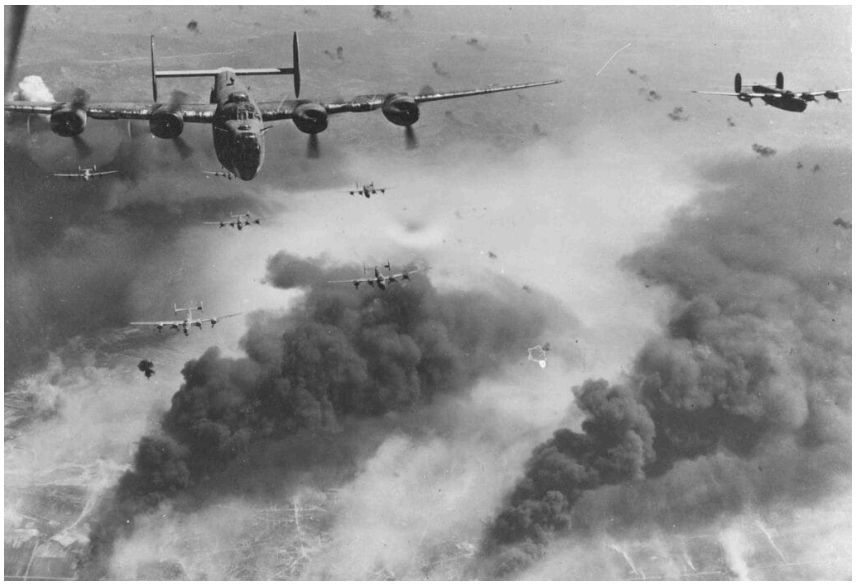
American service members ("G.I.s") came from all segments of the population—"old stock" Yankee Protestants served alongside Jewish immigrants and Italian Catholics, farmhands alongside factory workers and accountants. Half a million Latinos—the majority Mexican Americans—served, as did thousands of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino Americans. They were joined by over twenty thousand Native Americans. For many, the military was a kind of melting pot. More than a million Black service members, meanwhile, served in segregated units—the US military remained a Jim Crow institution.[13]

The American war began slowly. After Pearl Harbor, the American-controlled Philippine archipelago fell to Japan. After running out of ammunition and supplies, the garrison of American and Filipino soldiers surrendered. The prisoners were marched eighty miles to their prisoner-of-war camp without food, water, or rest. Ten thousand died on the Bataan Death March, as it became known.[14] But as Americans mobilized their armed forces, the tide turned. In the summer of 1942, American naval victories at the Battle of the Coral Sea and the aircraft carrier duel at the Battle of Midway crippled Japan's Pacific naval operations and paved the way for the United States's "island-hopping" campaign: to dislodge Japan's hold over the Pacific, the US military began attacking island after island, bypassing the strongest but seizing those capable of holding airfields to continue pushing Japan out of the region. Combat was vicious. At Guadalcanal, American soldiers saw Japanese soldiers launch suicidal charges rather than surrender. Many Japanese soldiers refused to be taken prisoner or to take prisoners themselves. Such tactics, coupled with American racial prejudice, turned the Pacific Theater into a more brutal and barbarous conflict than the European Theater.[15]

In November 1942, the first American combat troops entered the European war by landing in French Morocco and began pushing the Germans east as the British pushed west from Egypt. By 1943, the Allies had pushed Axis forces out of Africa. In January President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met at Casablanca to discuss the next step of the European war. Churchill convinced Roosevelt to chase the Axis up Italy, into the "soft underbelly" of Europe. Afterward, Roosevelt announced to the press that the Allies would accept nothing less than unconditional surrender.[16]

Soldiers and Marines bore the brunt of on-the-ground combat. After transportation to the front by trains, ships, and trucks, they could expect to march carrying packs weighing anywhere from twenty to fifty pounds containing rations, ammunition, bandages, tools, clothing, and miscellaneous personal items in addition to their weapons. Sailors, once deployed, spent months at sea operating their assigned vessels. Larger ships, particularly aircraft carriers, were veritable floating cities. In most, sailors lived and worked in cramped conditions, often sleeping in bunks stacked in rooms housing dozens of sailors. Senior officers received small rooms of their own. Sixty thousand American sailors lost their lives in the war.

Meanwhile, the Army Air Force (AAF) sent hundreds—eventually thousands—of bombers to England in preparation for a massive strategic bombing campaign against Germany. The plan was to bomb Germany around the clock. American bombers hit German ball-bearing factories, rail yards, oil fields, and manufacturing centers during the day, while the British RAF carpet-bombed German cities at night. Flying in formation, they initially flew unescorted, since many believed that bombers equipped with defensive firepower flew too high and too fast to be attacked. However, advanced German technology allowed fighters to easily shoot down the lumbering bombers. On some disastrous missions, the Germans shot down almost 50 percent of American aircraft. However, the advent and implementation of a long-range escort fighter let the bombers hit their targets more accurately while fighters confronted opposing German aircraft.



In 1944, Allied forces began a bombing campaign of railroad and oil targets in Bucharest, part of the wider policy of bombing expeditions meant to incapacitate German transportation. Bucharest was considered the number one oil target in Europe. Photograph, August 1, 1943. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...rld_War_II.jpg.

During World War II, the Air Force was still a branch of the US Army, and soldiers served in ground and air crews. World War II saw the institutionalization of massive bombing campaigns against cities and industrial production. Large bombers like the B-17 Flying Fortress required pilots, navigators, bombardiers, radio operators, and four dedicated machine gunners. Airmen on bombing raids left from bases in England or Italy or from Pacific islands and endured hours of flight before approaching enemy territory. At high altitude, and without pressurized cabins, crews used oxygen tanks to breathe, and on-board temperatures plummeted. Once in enemy airspace, crews confronted enemy fighters and anti-aircraft flak from the ground. While fighter pilots flew as escorts, the Air Corps suffered heavy casualties. Tens of thousands of airmen lost their lives.



Bombings throughout Europe caused complete devastation in some areas, leveling beautiful ancient cities like Cologne, Germany. Cologne experienced an astonishing 262 separate air raids by Allied forces, leaving the city in ruins as in these the photograph above. Amazingly, the Cologne Cathedral stands nearly undamaged even after being hit numerous times, while the area around it crumbles. Photograph, April 24, 1945. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Koeln_1945.jpg.

In the wake of the Soviets' victory at Stalingrad, the "Big Three" Allied leaders (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) met in Tehran in November 1943. Dismissing Africa and Italy as a sideshow, Stalin demanded that Britain and the United States invade France to relieve pressure on the Eastern Front. Churchill was hesitant, but Roosevelt was eager. The invasion was tentatively scheduled for 1944.

Back in Italy, the “soft underbelly” turned out to be much tougher than Churchill had imagined. Italy’s narrow, mountainous terrain gave the defending Axis the advantage. Movement up the peninsula was slow, and in some places conditions returned to the trenchlike warfare of World War I. Americans attempted to land troops behind them at Anzio on the western coast of Italy, but, surrounded, they suffered heavy casualties. Still, the Allies pushed up the peninsula, Mussolini’s government revolted, and the new Italian government quickly made peace.

On the day the American army entered Rome, American, British, and Canadian forces launched Operation Overlord, the long-awaited invasion of France. D-Day, as it became popularly known, was the largest amphibious assault in history. American general Dwight D. Eisenhower was uncertain enough of the attack’s chances that the night before the invasion he wrote two speeches: one for success and one for failure. The Allied landings at Normandy were successful, and although progress across France was much slower than had been hoped, Paris was liberated roughly two months later. Allied bombing expeditions meanwhile continued to level German cities and industrial capacity. Perhaps four hundred thousand German civilians were killed by Allied bombing.[17]

For American soldiers on the ground, conditions varied. GIs in Europe endured freezing winters, impenetrable French hedgerows, Italian mountain ranges, and dense forests. Germans fought with a Western way of war familiar to Americans. Soldiers in the Pacific endured heat and humidity, monsoons, jungles, and tropical diseases. And they confronted an unfamiliar foe. Americans, for instance, could understand surrender as prudent; many Japanese soldiers saw it as cowardice. What Americans saw as a fanatical waste of life, the Japanese saw as brave and honorable. Moreover, American soldiers and American military leadership brought their historical anti-Asian prejudices to bear against the Japanese. Atrocities flourished in the Pacific at a level unmatched in Western Europe.

Japanese defenders fought tenaciously. Japanese soldiers bled the Americans in their advance across the Pacific. At Iwo Jima, an eight-square-mile island of volcanic rock, seventeen thousand Japanese soldiers held the island against seventy thousand Marines for over a month in 1945. At the cost of nearly their entire force, they inflicted almost thirty thousand casualties before the island was lost.

The Nazis, meanwhile, were crumbling on both fronts. Hitler was unable to turn the war in his favor in the west. The Battle of the Bulge failed to drive the Allies back to the English Channel, but the delay cost the Allies the winter. The invasion of Germany would have to wait, while the Soviet Union continued its relentless push westward, ravaging German populations in retribution for German war crimes.[18]

German counterattacks in the east failed to dislodge the Soviet advance, destroying any last chance Germany might have had to regain the initiative. The year 1945 dawned with the end of European war in sight. The Big Three met again at Yalta in the Soviet Union, where they reaffirmed the demand for Hitler’s unconditional surrender and began to plan for postwar Europe.

The Axis was crumbling. In the Pacific, American bombers were in range of the mainland of Japan by February 1945. Bombers hit Japan’s industrial facilities but suffered high casualties. To spare bomber crews from dangerous daylight raids and to achieve maximum effect against Japan’s wooden cities, many American bombers dropped incendiary weapons that created massive firestorms and wreaked havoc on Japanese cities. Over sixty Japanese cities were firebombed. American firebombs killed one hundred thousand civilians in Tokyo alone
in March 1945.

The Soviet Union had already reached Germany in January, and the Americans finally crossed the Rhine in March. President Roosevelt died in April, mere weeks before American and Soviet troops met at the Elbe River. The Soviets, pushed relentlessly by Stalin to reach Berlin first, took the capital city in May, days after Hitler and his high command died by suicide in a city bunker. Germany was conquered. The European war was over. Allied leaders met again, this time at Potsdam, Germany, where it was decided that Germany would be divided into pieces according to current Allied occupation, with Berlin likewise divided, pending future elections. Stalin also agreed to join the fight against Japan three months later.[19]

After Americans celebrated V-E (Victory in Europe) Day, they redirected their full attention to the still-raging Pacific War. In June 1945, after eighty days of fighting and tens of thousands of casualties, the Americans captured the island of Okinawa. The mainland of Japan was open before them. It was a viable base from which to launch a full invasion of the Japanese homeland and end the war.

Estimates varied, but given the tenacity of Japanese soldiers fighting on islands far from their home, some officials estimated that an invasion of the Japanese mainland could cost half a million American casualties—and perhaps millions of Japanese civilians. Historians debate the many motivations that ultimately drove the Americans to use atomic weapons against Japan, and many American officials criticized the decision.[20]

Early in the war, fearing that the Germans might develop an atomic bomb, the US government launched the Manhattan Project, a hugely expensive and ambitious program to harness atomic energy and create a single weapon capable of leveling entire cities. The Americans successfully exploded the world's first nuclear device, Trinity, in New Mexico in July 1945. (Physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Los Alamos Laboratory, where the bomb was designed, later recalled that the event reminded him of Hindu scripture: "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.") Two more bombs—Fat Man and Little Boy—were built and detonated over two Japanese cities in August. Hiroshima was hit on August 6. Over one hundred thousand civilians were killed. Nagasaki followed on August 9. Perhaps eighty thousand civilians were killed.



The United States detonated an atomic bomb over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, killing over one-hundred-thousand civilians. Library of Congress.

Emperor Hirohito announced the surrender of Japan on August 15. On September 2, aboard the battleship USS Missouri, delegates from the Japanese government formally signed their surrender. World War II was finally over.

VI. The Wartime Economy

Economies win wars no less than militaries. The war converted American factories to wartime production, reawakened Americans' economic might, equipped Allied belligerents and the American armed forces, effectively pulled America out of the Great Depression, and ushered in an era of unparalleled economic prosperity.[21]



Scene from a factory producing B-24 bombers and C-87 transports in Fort Worth, Texas, 1942. Library of Congress.

Roosevelt's New Deal had ameliorated the worst of the Depression, but the economy still limped its way through the 1930s. But then Europe fell into war, and, despite its isolationism, America was glad to sell the Allies arms and supplies. And then Pearl Harbor changed everything. The United States drafted the economy into war service. The "sleeping giant" mobilized its unrivaled economic capacity to wage worldwide war. Governmental entities such as the War Production Board and the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion managed economic production for the war effort, and economic output exploded. An economy that was unable to provide work for a quarter of the workforce less than a decade earlier now struggled to fill vacant positions.



Workers at a Fort Worth, Texas, production plant, 1942. Library of Congress.

Government spending during the four years of war *doubled* all federal spending in all of American history up to that point. The budget deficit soared, but, just as Depression-era economists had counseled, the government's massive intervention annihilated unemployment and propelled growth. The economy that came out of the war looked nothing like the one that had begun it.

Military production came at the expense of the civilian consumer economy. Appliance and automobile manufacturers converted their plants to produce weapons and vehicles. Consumer choice was foreclosed. Every American received rationing cards and, legally, goods such as gasoline, coffee, meat, cheese, butter, processed food, firewood, and sugar could not be purchased without them. The housing industry was shut down, and the cities became overcrowded.

But the wartime economy boomed. The Roosevelt administration urged citizens to save their earnings or buy war bonds to prevent

inflation. Bond drives were held nationally and were headlined by Hollywood celebrities. Such drives were hugely successful. They not only funded much of the war effort, they helped tame inflation as well. So too did tax rates. The federal government raised income taxes and boosted the top marginal tax rate to 94 percent.



Much like during WWI, citizens during WWI were urged to buy war bonds to support the effort overseas. Rallies like this one appealed to Americans' sense of patriotism. Wikimedia, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...A_-_197250.jpg.

With the economy booming and twenty million American workers placed into military service, unemployment virtually disappeared. More and more African Americans continued to leave the agrarian South for the industrial North. Over sixty-five thousand Native Americans left reservations to work in wartime industries.[22] And as more and more men joined the military and more and more positions went unfilled, women joined the workforce en masse. Other American producers looked southward, to Mexico, to fill its labor force. Starting in 1942, the United States contracted thousands of Mexican nationals to work in American agriculture and railroads in the Bracero Program. Jointly administered by the State Department, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Justice, the binational agreement secured five million contracts across twenty-four states.[23]

With factory work proliferating across the country and agricultural labor experiencing severe labor shortages, the presidents of Mexico and the United States signed an agreement in July 1942 to bring the first group of legally contracted workers to California. Discriminatory policies toward people of Mexican descent prevented bracero contracts in Texas until 1947. The Bracero Program survived the war, enshrined in law until the 1960s, when the United States liberalized its immigration laws. Though braceros suffered exploitative labor conditions, for the men who participated, the program was a mixed blessing. Interviews with ex-braceros captured the complexity. "They would call us pigs . . . they didn't have to treat us that way," one said of his employers, while another said, "For me it was a blessing, the United States was a blessing. . . . it is a nation I fell in love with because of the excess work and good pay."[24] After the exodus of Mexican migrants during the Depression, the program helped reestablish Mexican migration, institutionalized migrant farm work across much of the country, and further planted a Mexican presence in the southern and western United States.

VII. Women and World War II



Women came into the workforces in greater numbers than ever before during WWII. With vacancies left by deployed men and new positions created by war production, posters like this iconic "We Can Do It!" urged women to support the war effort by going to work in America's factories. Poster for Westinghouse, 1942. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...Can_Do_It!.jpg.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration had encouraged all able-bodied American women to help the war effort. He considered the role of women in the war critical for American victory, and the public expected women to assume various functions to free men for active military service. While most women opted to remain at home or volunteer with charitable organizations, many went to work or donned a military uniform.

World War II brought unprecedented labor opportunities for American women. Industrial labor, an occupational sphere dominated by men, shifted in part to women for the duration of wartime mobilization. Women applied for jobs in converted munitions factories. The iconic illustrated image of Rosie the Riveter, a muscular woman dressed in coveralls with her hair in a kerchief and inscribed with the phrase We Can Do It!, came to stand for female factory labor during the war. But women also worked in various auxiliary positions for the government. Over a million administrative jobs at the local, state, and national levels were transferred from men to women for the duration of the war.[25]

For women who elected not to work, many volunteer opportunities presented themselves. The American Red Cross, the largest charitable organization in the nation, encouraged women to volunteer with local city chapters. Millions of women organized community social events for families, packed and shipped almost half a million tons of medical supplies overseas, and prepared twenty-seven million care packages of nonperishable items for American and other Allied prisoners of war. The American Red Cross further required all female volunteers to certify as nurse's aides, providing an extra benefit and work opportunity for hospital staffs that suffered severe personnel losses. Other charity organizations, such as church and synagogue affiliates, benevolent associations, and social club auxiliaries, gave women further outlets for volunteer work.

Military service was another option for women who wanted to join the war effort. Over 350,000 women served in several all-female units of the military branches. The Army and Navy Nurse Corps Reserves, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Navy's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, the Coast Guard's SPARs (named for the Coast Guard motto, Semper Paratus, "Always Ready"), and Marine Corps units gave women the opportunity to serve as either commissioned officers or enlisted members at military bases at home and abroad. The Nurse Corps Reserves alone commissioned 105,000 army and navy nurses recruited by the American Red Cross. Military nurses worked at base hospitals, mobile medical units, and onboard hospital "mercy" ships.[26]

Jim Crow segregation in both the civilian and military sectors remained a problem for Black women who wanted to join the war effort. Even after President Roosevelt barred racial discrimination in the defense industry, factory supervisors still often relegated Black women to the most menial tasks. Segregation was further upheld in factory lunchrooms, and many Black women were forced to work at night to keep them separate from whites. In the military, only the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and the Nurse Corps Reserves accepted Black women for active service, and the army set a limited quota of 10 percent of total end strength for Black female officers and enlisted women and segregated Black units on active duty. The American Red Cross, meanwhile, recruited only four hundred Black nurses for the Army and Navy Nurse Corps Reserves, and Black army and navy nurses worked in

segregated military hospitals on bases stateside and overseas.

And for all of the postwar celebration of Rosie the Riveter, after the war ended the men returned and most women voluntarily left the workforce or lost their jobs. Meanwhile, former military women faced a litany of obstacles in obtaining veteran's benefits during their transition to civilian life. The nation that beckoned the call for assistance to millions of women during the four-year crisis hardly stood ready to accommodate their postwar needs and demands.

VIII. Race and World War II



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 photographs 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. Photograph, 1941. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...egee_Class.jpg.

World War II affected nearly every aspect of life in the United States, and America's racial relationships were not immune. African Americans, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Jews, and Japanese Americans were profoundly impacted.

In early 1941, months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the largest Black trade union in the nation, made headlines by threatening President Roosevelt with a march on Washington, D.C. In this "crisis of democracy," Randolph said, many defense contractors still refused to hire Black workers, and the armed forces remained segregated. In exchange for Randolph calling off the march, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, the Fair Employment Practice in Defense Industries Act, banning racial and religious discrimination in defense industries and establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to monitor defense industry hiring practices. While the armed forces remained segregated throughout the war and the FEPC had limited influence, the order showed that the federal government could stand against discrimination. The Black workforce in defense industries rose from 3 percent in 1942 to 9 percent in 1945.[27]

More than one million African Americans fought in the war. Most Black servicemen served in segregated noncombat units led by white officers. Some gains were made, however. The number of Black officers increased from five in 1940 to over seven thousand in 1945. The all-Black pilot squadrons, known as the Tuskegee Airmen, completed more than 1,500 missions, escorted heavy bombers into Germany, and earned several hundred merits and medals. Many bomber crews specifically requested the Red Tail Angels as escorts. And near the end of the war, the army and navy began integrating some of their units and facilities, before the US government finally ordered the full integration of its armed forces in 1948.[28]

While Black Americans served in the armed forces, on the home front they became riveters and welders, rationed food and gasoline, and bought victory bonds. And many Black Americans saw the war as an opportunity not only to serve their country but to improve it. The Pittsburgh Courier, a leading Black newspaper, spearheaded the "Double V" campaign. It called on African Americans to fight two wars: the war against Nazism and fascism abroad and the war against racial inequality at home. To achieve victory, to achieve "real democracy," the Courier encouraged its readers to enlist in the armed forces, volunteer on the home front,

and fight against racial segregation and discrimination.[29]

During the war, membership in the NAACP jumped tenfold, from fifty thousand to five hundred thousand. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), formed in 1942, spearheaded the method of nonviolent direct action to achieve desegregation. Between 1940 and 1950, some 1.5 million Black southerners, the largest number of any decade since the beginning of the Great Migration, also indirectly demonstrated their opposition to racism and violence by migrating out of the Jim Crow South to the North. But transitions were not easy. Racial tensions erupted in 1943 in a series of riots in cities such as Mobile, Alabama; Beaumont, Texas; and Harlem. The bloodiest race riot occurred in Detroit and resulted in the death of twenty-five Black and nine white Americans. Still, the war ignited in African Americans an urgency for equality that they would carry with them into the subsequent years. And they were not alone.[30]

Americans of all backgrounds joined the fight. Over half a million American Latinos—including 350,000 Mexican Americans and 50,000 Puerto Ricans—served in World War II. They often existed in a tenuous racial world that did not usually consign them to formal segregation in the military but often denied them the full benefits of citizenship outside of it. Felix Longoria, for instance, was killed in the Philippines in 1945 but was denied a funeral and burial in his hometown of Three Rivers, Texas. Soldiers on leave might not be able to eat in certain restaurants or socialize in USO clubs. Wartime employment shortages, meanwhile, provided opportunities for Mexican American workers on the home front while, in 1942, the Bracero Program formalized the legal importation of Mexican migrant workers.[31] Racial tensions were palpable throughout the period, however. Anglo soldiers and sailors, for instance, attacked Mexican American youth in the 1943 Los Angeles "Zoot Suit Riots." After the war, veterans would leverage their service to claim full citizenship rights, powering the postwar Mexican American civil rights movement.[32]

Native Americans, meanwhile, registered for the Selective Service and served in integrated units in every branch of the military. Some famously parlayed their knowledge of indigenous languages—although generally associated with the Navajo, speakers from fourteen distinct tribes took part—into work as "code talkers." Hundreds of Native American women, meanwhile, volunteered in Women's Army Corps (WACs) and the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVEs) programs. At home, wartime spending saw funding fall for payments to tribes and for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Policy makers pursued policies of "Termination" and "Relocation," aiming to cut costs by moving Native Americans off of reservations and terminating the distinct political relationship between tribal nations and the federal government. Native Americans residing on tribal lands, for instance, would not be eligible for the GI Bill.[33])

Many Americans had to navigate American prejudice, and America's entry into the war left foreign nationals from the belligerent nations in a precarious position. The FBI targeted many on suspicions of disloyalty for detainment, hearings, and possible internment under the Alien Enemy Act. Those who received an order for internment were sent to government camps secured by barbed wire and armed guards. Such internments were supposed to be for cause. Then, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal of any persons from designated "exclusion zones"—which ultimately covered the entirety of the West Coast—at the discretion of military commanders. Thirty thousand Japanese Americans fought for the United States in World War II, but wartime anti-Japanese sentiment built on historical prejudices, and under the order, people of Japanese descent, both immigrants and American citizens, were detained and placed under the custody of the War Relocation Authority, the civil agency that supervised their relocation to internment camps. They lost their homes and their jobs. Over ten thousand German nationals and a smaller number of Italian nationals were interned at various times in the United States during World War II, but American policies disproportionately targeted Japanese-descended populations, and individuals did not receive personalized reviews prior to their internment. This policy of mass exclusion and detention affected over 110,000 Japanese and Japanese-descended individuals. Seventy thousand were American citizens.[34]



American children of Japanese descent in San Francisco recite the Pledge of Allegiance in 1942, shortly before their relocation to Japanese internment camps. Library of Congress.

In its 1982 report Personal Justice Denied, the congressionally appointed Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that "the broad historical causes" shaping the relocation program were "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."[35] Although the exclusion orders were found to have been constitutionally permissible under the vagaries of national security, they were later judged, even by many military and judicial leaders of the time, to have been a grave injustice against people of Japanese descent. In 1988, President Reagan signed a law that formally apologized for internment and provided reparations to surviving internees.

Meanwhile, as the Allies pushed into Germany and Poland, they uncovered the full extent of Hitler's genocidal atrocities. The Allies liberated massive camp systems set up for the imprisonment, forced labor, and extermination of all those deemed racially, ideologically, or biologically "unfit" by Nazi Germany. But the Holocaust—the systematic murder of eleven million civilians, including six million Jews—had been underway for years. How had the United States responded?

Knowledge of the full extent of the Holocaust had been slow in coming. Some American officials doubted the initial reports of industrial death camps, for instance. But as the war progressed and the horrors of the Holocaust were made clear, some Americans pushed against the currents of antisemitism, isolationism, and restrictionism to urge greater aid. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr., the son of a prosperous German American Jewish family, pushed through major changes in American policy. A passionate advocate for Jewish refugees, Morgenthau convinced Roosevelt to issue public statements condemning the Nazis' persecutions and in 1944 helped form the War Refugee Board (WRB), a US civilian agency that saved the lives of over a hundred thousand people in Europe.[36]

As the US military pushed into Germany in 1944, the WRB and the World Jewish Congress petitioned the American government to bomb either the death camps or the railroads leading to them. Arguing that it would do little to stop deportations, would distract from the war effort, and would result in casualties among concentration camp prisoners, military and civilian officials rejected the idea. Whether bombing would have saved lives remains a hotly debated question.[37] Regardless, as American officials argued, only Allied victory in Germany was able to bring about the true end of the Holocaust.

IX. Toward a Postwar World

Americans celebrated the end of the war. At home and abroad, the United States looked to create a postwar order that would guarantee global peace and domestic prosperity. Although the alliance of convenience with Stalin's Soviet Union would quickly collapse, Americans nevertheless looked for the means to ensure postwar stability and economic security for returning veterans.

The inability of the League of Nations to stop German, Italian, and Japanese aggressions caused many to question whether any global organization or agreements could ever ensure world peace. This included Franklin Roosevelt, who, as Woodrow Wilson's undersecretary of the navy, witnessed the rejection of this idea by both the American people and the Senate. In 1941, Roosevelt

believed that postwar security could be maintained by an informal agreement between what he termed the “Four Policemen”—the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China—instead of a rejuvenated League of Nations. But others, including Secretary of State Cordell Hull and British prime minister Winston Churchill, disagreed and convinced Roosevelt to push for a new global organization. As the war ran its course, Roosevelt came around to the idea. And so did the American public. Pollster George Gallup noted a “profound change” in American attitudes. The United States had rejected membership in the League of Nations after World War I, and in 1937 only a third of Americans polled supported such an idea. But as war broke out in Europe, half of Americans did. America’s entry into the war bolstered support, and by 1945, with the war closing, 81 percent of Americans favored the idea.[38]

Whatever his support, Roosevelt had long shown enthusiasm for the ideas later enshrined in the United Nations (UN) charter. In January 1941, he announced his Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, of worship, from want, and from fear—that all of the world’s citizens should enjoy. That same year he signed the Atlantic Charter with Churchill, reinforcing those ideas and also promising the right of self-determination and some sort of postwar economic and political cooperation. Roosevelt first used the term united nations to describe the Allied powers, not the subsequent postwar organization. But the name stuck. At Tehran in 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill convinced Stalin to send a Soviet delegation to a conference at Dumbarton Oaks in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C., where in August 1944 they agreed on the basic structure of the new organization. It would have a Security Council—the original Four Policemen plus France—which would consult on how best to keep the peace and when to deploy the military power of the assembled nations. According to one historian, the organization demonstrated an understanding that “only the Great Powers, working together, could provide real security.” But the plan was a kind of hybrid between Roosevelt’s policemen idea and a global organization of equal representation. There would also be a General Assembly, made up of all nations; an International Court of Justice; and a council for economic and social matters. Dumbarton Oaks was a mixed success—the Soviets especially expressed concern over how the Security Council would work—but the powers agreed to meet again in San Francisco between April and June 1945 for further negotiations. There, on June 26, 1945, fifty nations signed the UN charter.[39]

Anticipating victory in World War II, leaders looked not only to the postwar global order but to the fate of returning American servicemen. American politicians and interest groups sought to avoid another economic depression—the economy had tanked after World War I—by gradually easing returning veterans back into the civilian economy. The brainchild of Harry Colmery, the former head of the American Legion, the G.I. Bill won support from progressives and conservatives alike. Passed in 1944, the G.I. Bill was a multifaceted, multi-billion-dollar entitlement program that rewarded honorably discharged veterans with numerous benefits.[40]

Faced with the prospect of over fifteen million members of the armed services (including approximately 350,000 women) suddenly returning to civilian life, the G.I. Bill offered a bevy of inducements to slow their influx into the civilian workforce as well as reward their service with public benefits. The legislation offered a year’s worth of unemployment benefits for veterans unable to secure work. About half of American veterans (eight million) received $4 billion in unemployment benefits over the life of the bill. The G.I. Bill also made postsecondary education a reality for many. The Veterans Administration (VA) paid the lion’s share of educational expenses, including tuition, fees, supplies, and even stipends for living expenses. The G.I. Bill sparked a boom in higher education. Enrollments at accredited colleges, universities, and technical and professional schools spiked, rising from 1.5 million in 1940 to 3.6 million in 1960. The VA disbursed over $14 billon in educational aid in just over a decade. Furthermore, the bill encouraged homeownership. Roughly 40 percent of Americans owned homes in 1945, but that figure climbed to 60 percent a decade after the close of the war. Because the bill did away with down payment requirements, veterans could obtain home loans for as little as $1 down. Close to four million veterans purchased homes through the G.I. Bill, sparking a construction bonanza that fueled postwar growth. In addition, the VA also helped nearly two hundred thousand veterans secure farms and offered thousands more guaranteed financing for small businesses.[41]

Not all Americans, however, benefited equally from the G.I. Bill. Indirectly, since the military limited the number of female personnel, men qualified for the bill’s benefits in far higher numbers. Colleges also limited the number of female applicants to guarantee space for male veterans. African Americans, too, faced discrimination. Segregation forced Black veterans into overcrowded “historically Black colleges” that had to turn away close to twenty thousand applicants. Meanwhile, residential segregation limited Black homeownership in various neighborhoods, denying Black homeowners the equity and investment that would come with homeownership. There were other limits and other disadvantaged groups. Veterans accused of homosexuality, for instance, were similarly unable to claim GI benefits. For many workers, meanwhile, the G.I. Bill did relatively little to address more immediate material concerns over pay and working conditions. The federal government loosened price controls and wage supports, and over five million Americans went on strike in the twelve months after the end of the war, demanding increased wages and improved working conditions.[42]

Despite clear limits, the effects of the G.I. Bill were nevertheless significant and long-lasting. It helped sustain the great postwar

economic boom and, even if many could not attain it, it nevertheless established the hallmarks of American middle-class life.

At the same time, the United States anchored a new global economic system. Europe and Asia were devastated; the United States was an industrial superpower. In July 1944, at a conference held in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, hundreds of delegates from forty-four allied nations signed agreements that created the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, pegging the postwar global economy to the American dollar. Tariffs fell and trade increased as US banks funded much of the world's economic recovery. The United States would stand at the center of a "free world" of industrialized nations stitched together by trade and finance, the backbone of a new postwar order.

X. Conclusion

The United States entered the war in a crippling economic depression and exited it amid an unparalleled economic boom. It came at great cost. Over sixteen million Americans served in World War II, and over four hundred thousand were killed. But the war had been won, the United States was more powerful than ever, and Americans looked forward to a prosperous future. Sustained by new international institutions it had helped to create, the country looked to remake the world in its own image (or, at the very least, to align the world with its own interests). And yet the war unleashed powerful forces that would reshape the United States at home and abroad. Americans who had fought a war for global democracy would find that very democracy betrayed in reestablished colonial regimes and denied at home through segregation and racial injustice, sparking revolutions at home and abroad. Meanwhile, a global rivalry with Stalin's Soviet Union and the proliferation of nuclear weapons shattered postwar dreams of global harmony. The world had been forever changed, and the United States stepped forward into the new, unpreceded world it had helped to create.

XI. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Joseph Locke, with content contributions by Mary Beth Chopas, Andrew David, Ashton Ellett, Paula Fortier, Rebecca Brenner Graham, Dan Johnson, Joseph Locke, Jennifer Mandel, Valerie Martinez, James McKay, Ryan Menath, Laura L. Oviedo, John E. Schmitz, Chris Thomas.

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23: The Cold War



Test of the tactical nuclear weapon “Small Boy” at the Nevada Test Site, July 14, 1962. National Nuclear Security Administration.

I. Introduction

Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union—erstwhile allies—soured soon after World War II. On February 22, 1946, less than a year after the end of the war, the chargé d’affaires of the US embassy in Moscow, George Kennan, sent a famously lengthy telegram—referred to ever since as “the Long Telegram”—to the State Department denouncing the Soviet Union. “World communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue,” he wrote, and “the steady advance of uneasy Russian nationalism . . . in [the] new guise of international Marxism . . . is more dangerous and insidious than ever before.”[1] There could be no cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union, Kennan wrote. Instead, the Soviets had to be “contained.” Less than two weeks later, on March 5, former British prime minister Winston Churchill visited President Harry Truman in his home state of Missouri and declared that Europe had been cut in half, divided by an “iron curtain” that had “descended across the Continent.”[2] Aggressive anti-Soviet sentiment seized the American government and, soon, the American people.[3]

The Cold War was a global, political, and ideological struggle between capitalist and communist countries, particularly between 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. The Cold War reshaped the world and the generations of Americans that lived under its shadow.

II. Political, Economic, and Military Dimensions

The Cold War grew out of a failure to achieve a durable settlement among leaders from the Big Three Allies—the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union—as they met at Yalta in Russian Crimea and at Potsdam in occupied Germany to shape the postwar order. The Germans had pillaged their way across Eastern Europe, and the Soviets pillaged their way back. Millions of lives were lost. Stalin considered the newly conquered territory part of a Soviet sphere of influence. With Germany’s defeat imminent, the Allies set terms for unconditional surrender. At the same time, deliberation began over reparations, tribunals, and the nature of an occupation regime that would initially be divided into American, British, French, and Soviet zones. Suspicion and mistrust were

already mounting. The political landscape was altered drastically by Franklin Roosevelt's sudden death in April 1945, just days before the inaugural meeting of the UN. Although Roosevelt was skeptical of Stalin, he always held out hope that the Soviets could be brought into the "Free World." Truman, like Churchill, had no such illusions. He committed the United States to a hard-line, anti-Soviet approach.[4]

At the Potsdam Conference, held on the outskirts of Berlin from mid-July to early August, the Allies debated the fate of Soviet-occupied Poland. Toward the end of the meeting, the American delegation received word that Manhattan Project scientists had successfully tested an atomic bomb. On July 24, when Truman told Stalin about this "new weapon of unusual destructive force," the Soviet leader simply nodded his acknowledgment and said that he hoped the Americans would make "good use" of it.[5]

The Cold War had long roots. The World War II alliance of convenience was not enough to erase decades of mutual suspicions. The Bolshevik Revolution had overthrown the Russian tsarists during World War I. Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin urged an immediate worldwide peace that would pave the way for world socialism just as Woodrow Wilson brought the United States into the war with promises of global democracy and free trade. The United States had intervened militarily against the Red Army during the Russian Civil War, and when the Soviet Union was founded in 1922, the United States refused to recognize it. The two powers were brought together only by their common enemy, and without that common enemy, there was little hope for cooperation.[6]

On the eve of American involvement in World War II, on August 14, 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill had issued a joint declaration of goals for postwar peace, known as the Atlantic Charter. An adaptation of Wilson's Fourteen Points, the Atlantic Charter established the creation of the United Nations. The Soviet Union was among the fifty charter UN member states and was given one of five permanent seats—alongside the United States, Britain, France, and China—on the Security Council. The Atlantic Charter also set in motion the planning for a reorganized global economy. The Bretton Woods system created in the summer of 1944 was bolstered in 1947 with the addition of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), forerunner of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Soviets rejected it all.

Many officials on both sides knew that the Soviet-American relationship would dissolve into renewed hostility at the end of the war, and events proved them right. In 1946 alone, the Soviet Union refused to cede parts of occupied Iran, a Soviet defector betrayed a Soviet spy who had worked on the Manhattan Project, and the United States refused Soviet calls to dismantle its nuclear arsenal. In a 1947 article for Foreign Affairs—written under the pseudonym "Mr. X"—George Kennan warned that Americans should "continue to regard the Soviet Union as a rival, not a partner," since Stalin harbored "no real faith in the possibility of a permanent happy coexistence of the Socialist and capitalist worlds." He urged US leaders to pursue "a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the Russians."[7]

Truman, on March 12, 1947, announced $400 million in aid to Greece and Turkey, where "terrorist activities . . . led by Communists" jeopardized "democratic" governance. With Britain "reducing or liquidating its commitments in several parts of the world, including Greece," it fell on the United States, Truman said, "to support free peoples . . . resisting attempted subjugation by . . . outside pressures."[8] The so-called Truman Doctrine became a cornerstone of the American policy of containment designed to stop Soviet expansion anywhere in the world.[9]

In the harsh winter of 1946–1947, famine loomed in much of continental Europe. Blizzards and freezing cold halted coal production. Factories closed. Unemployment spiked. Amid these conditions, the communist parties of France and Italy gained nearly a third of the seats in their respective parliaments. American officials worried that Europe's impoverished masses were increasingly vulnerable to Soviet propaganda. The situation remained dire through the spring, when the secretary of state, General George Marshall, gave an address at Harvard University on June 5, 1947, suggesting that "the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health to the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace."[10] Although Marshall had stipulated to potential critics that his proposal was "not directed against any country, but against hunger, poverty . . . and chaos," Stalin clearly understood this as an assault against communism in Europe. He saw it as a "Trojan Horse" designed to lure Germany and other countries into the capitalist web.[11]

The European Recovery Program (ERP), popularly known as the Marshall Plan, pumped enormous sums of capital into Western Europe. From 1948 to 1952 the United States invested $13 billion toward reconstruction while simultaneously loosening trade barriers. To avoid the postwar chaos that had followed World War I, the Marshall Plan was designed to rebuild Western Europe, open markets, and win European support for capitalist democracies. The Soviets countered with their rival Molotov Plan, a symbolic pledge of aid to Eastern Europe. Polish leader Józef Cyrankiewicz was rewarded with a five-year, $450 million trade agreement from Russia for boycotting the Marshall Plan. Stalin was jealous of Eastern Europe. When Czechoslovakia received $200 million in American assistance, Stalin summoned Czech foreign minister Jan Masaryk to Moscow. Masaryk later recounted that he "went to Moscow as the foreign minister of an independent sovereign state" but "returned as a lackey of the Soviet

Government." Stalin exercised ever tighter control over Soviet "satellite" countries in central and Eastern Europe.[12]



The Berlin Blockade and resultant Allied airlift was one of the first major crises of the Cold War. Photograph, U.S. Navy Douglas R4D and U.S. Air Force C-47 aircraft unload at Tempelhof Airport during the Berlin Airlift, c. 1948-1949. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...erlin_1948.jpg.

The situation in Germany, meanwhile, deteriorated. Berlin had been divided into communist and capitalist zones. In June 1948, when US, British, and French officials introduced a new currency, the Soviet Union initiated a ground blockade, cutting off rail and road access to West Berlin (landlocked within the Soviet occupation zone) to gain control over the entire city. The United States organized and coordinated a massive airlift that flew essential supplies into the beleaguered city for eleven months, until the Soviets lifted the blockade on May 12, 1949. Germany was officially broken in half. On May 23, the western half of the country was formally renamed the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and the eastern, Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic (GDR) later that fall. Berlin, which lay squarely within the GDR, was divided into two sections (and, from August 1961 until November 1989, was famously separated by physical walls).[13]

In the summer of 1949, American officials launched the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a mutual defense pact in which the United States and Canada were joined by England, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. The Soviet Union would formalize its own collective defensive agreement in 1955, the Warsaw Pact, which included Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany.

Liberal journalist Walter Lippmann was largely responsible for popularizing the term Cold War in his book The Cold War: A Study in US Foreign Policy, published in 1947. Lippmann envisioned a prolonged stalemate between the United States and the USSR, a war of words and ideas in which direct shots would not necessarily be fired between the two. Lippmann agreed that the Soviet Union would only be "prevented from expanding" if it were "confronted with . . . American power," but he felt "that the strategical conception and plan" recommended by Mr. X (George Kennan) was "fundamentally unsound," as it would require having "the money and the military power always available in sufficient amounts to apply 'counter-force' at constantly shifting points all over the world." Lippmann cautioned against making far-flung, open-ended commitments, favoring instead a more limited engagement that focused on halting the influence of communism in the "heart" of Europe; he believed that if the Soviet system were successfully restrained on the continent, it could otherwise be left alone to collapse under the weight of its own imperfections.[14]



The communist world system rested, in part, on the relationship between the two largest communist nations — the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. This 1950 Chinese Stamp depicts Joseph Stalin shaking hands with Mao Zedong. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...mp_in_1950.jpg.

A new chapter in the Cold War began on October 1, 1949, when the CCP, led by Mao Zedong, declared victory against Kuomintang nationalists led by the Western-backed Chiang Kai-shek. The Kuomintang retreated to the island of Taiwan, and the CCP took over the mainland under the red flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Coming so soon after the Soviet Union's successful test of an atomic bomb, on August 29, the "loss of China," the world's most populous country, contributed to a sense of panic among American foreign policy makers, whose attention began to shift from Europe to Asia. After Dean Acheson became secretary of state in 1949, Kennan was replaced in the State Department by former investment banker Paul Nitze, whose first task was to help compose, as Acheson later described in his memoir, a document designed to "bludgeon the mass mind of 'top government'" into approving a "substantial increase" in military expenditures.[15]

"National Security Memorandum 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," a national defense memo known as NSC-68, achieved its goal. Issued in April 1950, the nearly sixty-page classified memo warned of "increasingly terrifying weapons of mass destruction," which served to remind "every individual" of "the ever-present possibility of annihilation." It said that leaders of the USSR and its "international communist movement" sought only "to retain and solidify their absolute power." As the central "bulwark of opposition to Soviet expansion," America had become "the principal enemy" that "must be subverted or destroyed by one means or another." NSC-68 urged a "rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength" in order to "roll back the Kremlin's drive for world domination." Such a massive commitment of resources, amounting to more than a threefold increase in the annual defense budget, was necessary because the USSR, "unlike previous aspirants to hegemony," was "animated by a new fanatic faith," seeking "to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world."[16] Both Kennan and Lippmann were among a minority in the foreign policy establishment who argued to no avail that such a "militarization of containment" was tragically wrongheaded.[17]

On June 25, 1950, as US officials were considering the merits of NSC-68's proposals, including "the intensification of . . . operations by covert means in the fields of economic . . . political and psychological warfare" designed to foment "unrest and revolt in . . . [Soviet] satellite countries," fighting erupted in Korea between communists in the north and American-backed anti-communists in the south.[18]

After Japan surrendered in September 1945, a US-Soviet joint occupation had paved the way for the division of Korea. In November 1947, the UN passed a resolution that a united government in Korea should be created, but the Soviet Union refused to cooperate. Only the south held elections. The Republic of Korea (ROK), South Korea, was created three months after the election. A month later, communists in the north established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Both claimed to stand for the unified Korean peninsula. The UN recognized the ROK, but incessant armed conflict broke out between North and South.[19]

In the spring of 1950, Stalin hesitantly endorsed North Korean leader Kim Il Sung's plan to liberate the South by force, a plan heavily influenced by Mao's recent victory in China. While he did not desire a military confrontation with the United States, Stalin thought correctly that he could encourage his Chinese comrades to support North Korea if the war turned against the DPRK.

The North Koreans launched a successful surprise attack, and Seoul, the capital of South Korea, fell to the communists on June 28. The UN passed resolutions demanding that North Korea cease hostilities and withdraw its armed forces to the thirty-eighth parallel and calling on member states to provide the ROK with military assistance to repulse the northern attack.

That July, UN forces mobilized under American general Douglas MacArthur. Troops landed at Inchon, a port city about thirty miles from Seoul, and took the city on September 28. They moved on North Korea. On October 1, ROK/UN forces crossed the thirty-eighth parallel, and on October 26 they reached the Yalu River, the traditional Korea-China border. They were met by three hundred thousand Chinese troops, who broke the advance and rolled up the offensive. On November 30, ROK/UN forces began a fevered retreat. They returned across the thirty-eighth parallel and abandoned Seoul on January 4, 1951. The United Nations forces regrouped, but the war entered into a stalemate. General MacArthur, growing impatient and wanting to eliminate the communist threats, requested authorization to use nuclear weapons against North Korea and China. Denied, MacArthur publicly denounced Truman. Truman, unwilling to threaten World War III and refusing to tolerate MacArthur's public insubordination, dismissed the general in April. On June 23, 1951, the Soviet ambassador to the UN suggested a ceasefire, which the US immediately accepted. Peace talks continued for two years.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower defeated Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson in the 1952 presidential election, and Stalin died in March 1953. The DPRK warmed to peace, and an armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953. More than thirty thousand Americans had died in the war. Millions of Korean soldiers and civilians lost their lives.[20]



With the policy of "containing" communism and at home and abroad, the U.S. pressured the United Nations to support the South Koreans, ultimately supplying American troops to fight in the civil war. Though rather forgotten in the annals of American history, the Korean War caused over 30,000 American deaths and 100,000 wounded, leaving an indelible mark on those who served. Wikimedia, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...enSoldier1.jpg.

Coming so soon after World War II and ending without clear victory, Korea became for many Americans a "forgotten war." Decades later, though, the nation's other major intervention in Asia would be anything but forgotten. The Vietnam War had deep roots in the Cold War world. Vietnam had been colonized by France and seized by Japan during World War II. The nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh had been backed by the United States during his anti-Japanese insurgency and, following Japan's surrender in 1945, Viet Minh nationalists, quoting the American Declaration of Independence, created the independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Yet France moved to reassert authority over its former colony in Indochina, and the United States sacrificed Vietnamese self-determination for France's colonial imperatives. Ho Chi Minh turned to the Soviet Union for assistance in waging war against the French colonizers in a protracted war.

After French troops were defeated at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, US officials helped broker a temporary settlement that partitioned Vietnam in two, with a Soviet/Chinese-backed state in the north and an American-backed state in the south. To stifle communist expansion southward, the United States would send arms, offer military advisors, prop up corrupt politicians, stop elections, and, eventually, send over five hundred thousand troops, of whom nearly sixty thousand would be lost before the communists finally reunified the country.

III. The Arms Buildup, the Space Race, and Technological Advancement



In response to the Soviet Union's test of a pseudo-hydrogen bomb in 1953, the United States began Castle Bravo — the first U.S. test of a dry fuel, hydrogen bomb. Detonated on March 1, 1954, it was the most powerful nuclear device ever tested by the U.S. But the effects were more gruesome than expected, causing nuclear fall-out and radiation poisoning in nearby Pacific islands. Photograph, March 1, 945. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...ravo_Blast.jpg.

The world was never the same after the United States leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 with atomic bombs. Not only had perhaps 180,000 civilians been killed, the nature of warfare was forever changed. The Soviets accelerated their nuclear research, expedited in no small part by "atom spies" such as Klaus Fuchs, who had stolen nuclear secrets from the Americans' secret Manhattan Project. Soviet scientists successfully tested an atomic bomb on August 29, 1949, years before American officials had estimated they would. This unexpectedly quick Russian success not only caught the United States off guard but alarmed the Western world and propelled a nuclear arms race between the United States and the USSR.

The United States detonated the first thermonuclear weapon, or hydrogen bomb (using fusion explosions of theoretically limitless power) on November 1, 1952. The blast measured over ten megatons and generated an inferno five miles wide with a mushroom cloud twenty-five miles high and a hundred miles across. The irradiated debris—fallout—from the blast circled the earth, occasioning international alarm about the effects of nuclear testing on human health and the environment. It only hastened the arms race, with each side developing increasingly advanced warheads and delivery systems. The USSR successfully tested a hydrogen bomb in 1953, and soon thereafter Eisenhower announced a policy of "massive retaliation." The United States would henceforth respond to threats or acts of aggression with perhaps its entire nuclear might. Both sides, then, would theoretically be deterred from starting a war, through the logic of mutually assured destruction (MAD). J. Robert Oppenheimer, director of Los Alamos nuclear laboratory that developed the first nuclear bomb, likened the state of "nuclear deterrence" between the United States and the USSR to "two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of killing the other," but only by risking their own lives.[21]

Fears of nuclear war produced a veritable atomic culture. Films such as *Godzilla*, *On the Beach*, *Fail-Safe*, and *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* plumbed the depths of American anxieties with plots featuring radioactive monsters, nuclear accidents, and doomsday scenarios. Antinuclear protests in the United States and abroad warned against the perils of nuclear testing and highlighted the likelihood that a thermonuclear war would unleash a global environmental catastrophe. Yet at the same time, peaceful nuclear technologies, such as fission- and fusion-based energy, seemed to herald a utopia of power that would be clean, safe, and "too cheap to meter." In 1953, Eisenhower proclaimed at the UN that the United States would share the knowledge and means for other countries to use atomic power. Henceforth, "the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life." The "Atoms for Peace" speech brought about the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), along with worldwide investment in this new economic sector.[22]

As Germany fell at the close of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union each sought to acquire elements of the Nazi's V-2 superweapon program. A devastating rocket that had terrorized England, the V-2 was capable of delivering its explosive payload up to a distance of nearly six hundred miles, and both nations sought to capture the scientists, designs, and manufacturing equipment to make it work. A former top German rocket scientist, Wernher von Braun, became the leader of the American space program; the Soviet Union's program was secretly managed by former prisoner Sergei Korolev. After the end of

the war, American and Soviet rocket engineering teams worked to adapt German technology in order to create an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). The Soviets achieved success first. They even used the same launch vehicle on October 4, 1957, to send Sputnik 1, the world's first human-made satellite, into orbit. It was a decisive Soviet propaganda victory.[23]

In response, the US government rushed to perfect its own ICBM technology and launch its own satellites and astronauts into space. In 1958, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was created as a successor to the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). Initial American attempts to launch a satellite into orbit using the Vanguard rocket suffered spectacular failures, heightening fears of Soviet domination in space. While the American space program floundered, on September 13, 1959, the Soviet Union's Luna 2 capsule became the first human-made object to touch the moon. The "race for survival," as it was called by The New York Times, reached a new level.[24] The Soviet Union successfully launched a pair of dogs (Belka and Strelka) into orbit and returned them to Earth while the American Mercury program languished behind schedule. Despite countless failures and one massive accident that killed nearly one hundred Soviet military and rocket engineers, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was launched into orbit on April 12, 1961. American astronaut Alan Shepard accomplished a suborbital flight in the Freedom 7 capsule on May 5. The United States had lagged behind, and President John F. Kennedy would use America's losses in the "space race" to bolster funding for a moon landing.

While outer space captivated the world's imagination, the Cold War still captured its anxieties. The ever-escalating arms race continued to foster panic. In the early 1950s, the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) began preparing citizens for the worst. Schoolchildren were instructed, via a film featuring Bert the Turtle, to "duck and cover" beneath their desks in the event of a thermonuclear war.[25]

Although it took a back seat to space travel and nuclear weapons, the advent of modern computing was yet another major Cold War scientific innovation, the effects of which were only just beginning to be understood. In 1958, following the humiliation of the Sputnik launches, Eisenhower authorized the creation of the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) housed within the Department of Defense (later changed to DARPA). As a secretive military research and development operation, ARPA was tasked with funding and otherwise overseeing the production of sensitive new technologies. Soon, in cooperation with university-based computer engineers, ARPA would develop the world's first system of "network packing switches," and computer networks would begin to be connected to one another.

IV. The Cold War Red Scare, McCarthyism, and Liberal Anti-Communism



Joseph McCarthy, Republican Senator from Wisconsin, fueled fears during the early 1950s that communism was rampant and growing. This intensified Cold War tensions felt by every segment of society, from government officials to ordinary American citizens. Photograph of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, March 14, 1950. National Archives and Records Administration, http://research.archives.gov/description/68002721.

Senator Joseph McCarthy burst onto the national scene during a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950. Waving a sheet of paper in the air, he proclaimed: "I have here in my hand a list of 205 . . . names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping [US] policy." Since the Wisconsin Republican had no actual list, when pressed, the number changed to fifty-seven, then, later, eighty-one. Finally, he

promised to disclose the name of just one communist, the nation's "top Soviet agent." The shifting numbers brought ridicule, but it didn't matter: McCarthy's claims won him fame and fueled the ongoing "red scare."[26]

McCarthyism was a symptom of a massive and widespread anticommunist hysteria that engulfed Cold War America. Popular fears, for instance, had long since shot through the federal government. Only two years after World War II, President Truman, facing growing anticommunist excitement and with a tough election on the horizon, gave in to pressure in March 1947 and issued his "loyalty order," Executive Order 9835, establishing loyalty reviews for federal employees. The FBI conducted closer examinations of all potential "security risks" among Foreign Service officers. In Congress, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (SPSI) held hearings on communist influence in American society. Between 1949 and 1954, congressional committees conducted over one hundred investigations into subversive activities. Antisubversion committees emerged in over a dozen state legislatures, and review procedures proliferated in public schools and universities across the country. At the University of California, for example, thirty-one professors were dismissed in 1950 for refusing to sign a loyalty oath. The Internal Security Act, or the McCarran Act, passed by Congress in September 1950, mandated all "communist organizations" to register with the government, gave the government greater powers to investigate sedition, and made it possible to prevent suspected individuals from gaining or keeping their citizenship.[27]

Anticommunist policies reflected national fears of a surging global communism. Within a ten-month span beginning in 1949, for instance, the USSR developed a nuclear bomb, China fell to communism, and over three hundred thousand American soldiers were deployed to fight a land war in Korea. Newspapers, meanwhile, were filled with headlines alleging Soviet espionage.



The environment of fear and panic instigated by McCarthyism led to the arrest of many innocent people. Still, some Americans accused of supplying top-secret information to the Soviets were in fact spies. The Rosenbergs were convicted of espionage and executed in 1953 for giving information about the atomic bomb to the Soviets. This was one case that has proven the test of time, for as recently as 2008 a co-conspirator of the Rosenbergs admitted to spying for the Soviet Union. Roger Higgins, "[Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, separated by heavy wire screen as they leave U.S. Court House after being found guilty by jury]," 1951. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97503499/.

During the war, Julius Rosenberg worked briefly at the US Army Signal Corps Laboratory in New Jersey, where he had access to classified information. He and his wife, Ethel, who had both been members of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA) in the 1930s, were accused of passing secret bomb-related documents to Soviet officials and were indicted in August 1950 on charges of giving nuclear secrets to the Russians. After being tried and found guilty in March 1951, they were executed on June 19, 1953.[28]

Alger Hiss, the highest-ranking government official linked to Soviet espionage, was another prize for conservatives. Hiss was a prominent official in the US State Department and served as secretary-general of the UN Charter Conference in San Francisco from April to June 1945 before leaving the State Department in 1946. A young congressman and member of HUAC, Richard Nixon, made waves by publicly accusing Hiss of espionage. On August 3, 1948, Whittaker Chambers testified before HUAC that he and Hiss had worked together as part of the secret "communist underground" in Washington, D.C., during the 1930s. Hiss, who always maintained his innocence, stood trial twice. After a hung jury in July 1949, he was convicted on two counts of perjury (the statute of limitations for espionage had expired). The evidence decisively establishing the guilt of Hiss and the Rosenbergs would emerge later, but their convictions nevertheless fueled an anticommunist frenzy. Some began seeing communists everywhere.[29]

Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs offered anticommunists such as Joseph McCarthy the evidence they needed to allege a vast Soviet conspiracy to infiltrate and subvert the US government and justify the smearing of all left-liberals, even those who were resolutely anticommunist. Not long after his February 1950 speech in Wheeling, McCarthy's sensational charges became a source of growing controversy. Forced to respond, President Truman arranged a partisan congressional investigation designed to discredit McCarthy. The Tydings Committee held hearings from early March through July 1950 and issued a final report admonishing McCarthy for perpetrating a "fraud and a hoax" on the American public. American progressives saw McCarthy's crusade as nothing less than a political witch hunt. In June 1950, The Nation editor Freda Kirchwey characterized "McCarthyism" as "the means by which a handful of men, disguised as hunters of subversion, cynically subvert the instruments of justice . . . in order to help their own political fortunes."[30] Truman's liberal supporters, and leftists like Kirchwey, hoped in vain that McCarthy and the new "ism" that bore his name would blow over quickly.

There had, of course, been a communist presence in the United States. The CPUSA was formed in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution when the Bolsheviks created a Communist International (the Comintern) and invited socialists from around the world to join. During its first two years of existence, the CPUSA functioned in secret, hidden from a surge of antiradical and anti-immigrant hysteria, investigations, deportations, and raids at the end of World War I. The CPUSA began its public life in 1921, after the panic subsided, but communism remained on the margins of American life until the 1930s, when leftists and liberals began to see the Soviet Union as a symbol of hope amid the Great Depression. Then many communists joined the Popular Front, an effort to make communism mainstream by adapting it to American history and American culture. During the Popular Front era, communists were integrated into mainstream political institutions through alliances with progressives in the Democratic Party. The CPUSA enjoyed most of its influence and popularity among workers in unions linked to the newly formed CIO. Communists also became strong opponents of Jim Crow segregation and developed a presence in both the NAACP and the ACLU. The CPUSA, moreover, established "front" groups, such as the League of American Writers, in which intellectuals participated without even knowing of its ties to the Comintern. But even at the height of the global economic crisis, communism never attracted many Americans. Even at the peak of its membership, the CPUSA had just eighty thousand national "card-carrying" members. From the mid-1930s through the mid-1940s, the party exercised most of its power indirectly, through coalitions with liberals and reformers. When news broke of Hitler's and Stalin's 1939 nonaggression pact, many fled the party, feeling betrayed. A bloc of left-liberal anticommunists, meanwhile, purged remaining communists in their ranks, and the Popular Front collapsed.[31]

Lacking the legal grounds to abolish the CPUSA, officials instead sought to expose and contain CPUSA influence. Following a series of predecessor committees, HUAC was established in 1938, then reorganized after the war and given the explicit task of investigating communism. By the time the Communist Control Act was passed in August 1954, effectively criminalizing party membership, the CPUSA had long ceased to have meaningful influence. Anticommunists were driven to eliminate remaining CPUSA influence from progressive institutions, including the NAACP and the CIO. The Taft-Hartley Act (1947) gave union officials the initiative to purge communists from the labor movement. A kind of Cold War liberalism took hold. In January 1947, anticommunist liberals formed Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), whose founding members included labor leader Walter Reuther and NAACP chairman Walter White, as well as historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Working to help Truman defeat former vice president Henry Wallace's Popular Front–backed campaign in 1948, the ADA combined social and economic reforms with staunch anticommunism.[32]

The domestic Cold War was bipartisan, fueled by a consensus drawn from a left-liberal and conservative anticommunist alliance that included politicians and policy makers, journalists and scientists, business and civic/religious leaders, and educators and entertainers. Led by its imperious director, J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI took an active role in the domestic battle against communism. Hoover's FBI helped incite panic by assisting the creation of blatantly propagandistic films and television shows, including *The Red Menace* (1949), *My Son John* (1951), and *I Led Three Lives* (1953–1956). Such alarmist depictions of espionage and treason in a "free world" imperiled by communism heightened the 1950s culture of fear. In the fall of 1947, HUAC entered the fray with highly publicized hearings of Hollywood. Film mogul Walt Disney and actor Ronald Reagan, among others, testified to aid investigators' attempts to expose communist influence in the entertainment industry. A group of writers, directors, and producers who refused to answer questions were held in contempt of Congress. This "Hollywood Ten" created the precedent for a blacklist that effectively barred hundreds of film artists from industry work at the height of the Red Scare.



Many accused of Communist sentiments vehemently denied such allegations, including the one of the most well-known Americans at the time, African American actor and signer Paul Robeson. Unwilling to sign an affidavit confirming he was Communist, his U.S. passport was revoked. During the Cold War, he was condemned by the American press and neither his music nor films could be purchased in the U.S. Photograph. http://i.ytimg.com/vi/zDb9nM_iiXw/maxresdefault.jpg.

HUAC made repeated visits to Hollywood during the 1950s, and their interrogation of celebrities often began with the same intimidating refrain: "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?" Many witnesses cooperated and "named names," naming anyone they knew who had ever been associated with communist-related groups or organizations. In 1956, Black entertainer and activist Paul Robeson chided his HUAC inquisitors, claiming that they had put him on trial not for his politics but because he had spent his life "fighting for the rights" of his people. "You are the un-Americans," he told them, "and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves."[33] As Robeson and other victims of McCarthyism learned firsthand, this "second red scare," in the glow of nuclear annihilation and global totalitarianism, fueled an intolerant and skeptical political world, what Cold War liberal Arthur Schlesinger Jr. called an "age of anxiety."[34]

Anticommunist ideology valorized overt patriotism, religious conviction, and faith in capitalism. Those who shunned such "American values" were open to attack. If communism was a plague spreading across Europe and Asia, anticommunist hyperbole infected cities, towns, and suburbs throughout the country. The playwright Arthur Miller's popular 1953 play The Crucible compared the red scare to the Salem witch trials. Miller wrote, "In America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell. Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congerie of plots and counterplots, and the main role of government changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God."[35]

Rallying against communism, American society urged conformity. "Deviant" behavior became dangerous. Having entered the workforce en masse as part of a collective effort in World War II, middle-class women were told to return to their housekeeping responsibilities. Having fought and died abroad for American democracy, Black soldiers were told to return home and acquiesce to the American racial order. Homosexuality, already stigmatized, became dangerous. Personal secrets were seen as a liability that exposed one to blackmail. The same paranoid mindset that fueled the second red scare also ignited the Cold War "lavender scare" against gay Americans.[36]

American religion, meanwhile, was fixated on what McCarthy, in his 1950 Wheeling speech, called an "all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity." Cold warriors in the United States routinely referred to a fundamental incompatibility between "godless communism" and God-fearing Americanism. Religious conservatives championed the idea of the traditional nuclear, God-fearing family as a bulwark against the spread of atheistic totalitarianism. As Baptist minister Billy Graham sermonized in 1950, communism aimed to "destroy the American home and cause . . . moral deterioration," leaving the country exposed to communist infiltration.[37]

In an atmosphere in which ideas of national belonging and citizenship were so closely linked to religious commitment, Americans during the early Cold War years attended church, professed a belief in a supreme being, and stressed the importance of religion

in their lives at higher rates than in any time in American history. Americans sought to differentiate themselves from godless communists through public displays of religiosity. Politicians infused government with religious symbols. The Pledge of Allegiance was altered to include the words one nation, under God in 1954. In God We Trust was adopted as the official national motto in 1956. In popular culture, one of the most popular films of the decade, The Ten Commandments (1956), retold the biblical Exodus story as a Cold War parable, echoing (incidentally) NSC-68's characterization of the Soviet Union as a "slave state." Monuments of the Ten Commandments went up at courthouses and city halls across the country.

While the link between American nationalism and religion grew much closer during the Cold War, many Americans began to believe that just believing in almost any religion was better than being an atheist. Gone was the overt anti-Catholic and antisemitic language of Protestants in the past. Now, leaders spoke of a common Judeo-Christian heritage. In December 1952, a month before his inauguration, Dwight Eisenhower said that "our form of government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply-felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is."[38]

Joseph McCarthy, an Irish Catholic, made common cause with prominent religious anticommunists, including southern evangelist Billy James Hargis of Christian Crusade, a popular radio and television ministry that peaked in the 1950s and 1960s. Cold War religion in America also crossed the political divide. During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower spoke of US foreign policy as "a war of light against darkness, freedom against slavery, Godliness against atheism."[39] His Democratic opponent, former Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson, said that America was engaged in a battle with the "Anti-Christ." While Billy Graham became a spiritual advisor to Eisenhower as well as other Republican and Democratic presidents, the same was true of the liberal Protestant Reinhold Niebuhr, perhaps the nation's most important theologian, having appeared on the cover of Life in March 1948.

Though publicly rebuked by the Tydings Committee, McCarthy soldiered on. In June 1951, on the floor of Congress, McCarthy charged that the sitting secretary of defense (and former secretary of state), General George Marshall, had fallen prey to "a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man." He claimed that Marshall, a war hero, had helped to "diminish the United States in world affairs," enabling the United States to "finally fall victim to Soviet intrigue . . . and Russian military might." The speech caused an uproar. During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower, who was in all things moderate and politically cautious, refused to publicly denounce McCarthy. "I will not . . . get into the gutter with that guy," he wrote privately. McCarthy campaigned for Eisenhower, who won a stunning victory.[40]

So did the Republicans, who regained Congress. McCarthy became chairman of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (SPSI). He turned his newfound power against the government's overseas broadcast division, the Voice of America (VOA). McCarthy's investigation in February–March 1953 resulted in several resignations or transfers. McCarthy's mudslinging had become increasingly unrestrained. Soon he went after the US Army. After forcing the army to again disprove theories of a Soviet spy ring at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey, McCarthy publicly berated officers suspected of promoting leftists. McCarthy's badgering of witnesses created cover for critics to publicly denounce his abrasive fearmongering.

On March 9, CBS anchor Edward R. Murrow, a respected journalist, told his television audience that McCarthy's actions had "caused alarm and dismay amongst . . . allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies." Yet, Murrow explained, "he didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it—and rather successfully. Cassius was right. 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.'"[41]

Twenty million people saw the Army-McCarthy hearings unfold over thirty-six days in 1954. The army's head counsel, Joseph Welch, captured much of the mood of the country when he defended a fellow lawyer from McCarthy's public smears, saying, "Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?" In September, a senate subcommittee recommended that McCarthy be censured. On December 2, 1954, his colleagues voted 67–22 to "condemn" his actions. Humiliated, McCarthy faded into irrelevance and alcoholism and died in May 1957 at age forty-eight.[42]

By the late 1950s, the worst of the second red scare was over. Stalin's death, followed by the Korean War armistice, opened new space—and hope—for the easing of Cold War tensions. Détente and the upheavals of the late 1960s were on the horizon. But McCarthyism outlasted McCarthy and the 1950s. The tactics he perfected continued to be practiced long after his death. "Red-baiting," the act of smearing a political opponent by linking them to communism or some other demonized ideology, persevered. But McCarthy had hardly been alone.

Congressman Richard Nixon, for instance, used his place on HUAC and his public role in the campaign against Alger Hiss to catapult himself into the White House alongside Eisenhower and later into the presidency. Ronald Reagan bolstered the fame he had won in Hollywood with his testimony before Congress and his anticommunist work for major American corporations such as General Electric. He too would use anticommunism to enter public life and chart a course to the presidency. In 1958, radical

anticommunists founded the John Birch Society, attacking liberals and civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. as communists. Although joined by Cold War liberals, the weight of anticommunism was used as part of an assault against the New Deal and its defenders. The leftist American tradition was in tatters, destroyed by anticommunist hysteria. Movements for social justice, from civil rights to gay rights to feminism, were all suppressed under Cold War conformity.

V. Decolonization and the Global Reach of the 'American Century'

In an influential 1941 Life magazine editorial titled "The American Century," publishing magnate Henry Luce outlined his "vision of America as the principal guarantor of freedom of the seas" and "the dynamic leader of world trade." In his embrace of an American-led international system, the conservative Luce was joined by liberals including historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who in his 1949 Cold War tome The Vital Center proclaimed that a "world destiny" had been "thrust" upon the United States, with perhaps no other nation becoming "a more reluctant great power." Emerging from the war as the world's preeminent military and economic force, the United States was perhaps destined to compete with the Soviet Union for influence in the Third World, where a power vacuum had been created by the demise of European imperialism. As France and Britain in particular struggled in vain to control colonies in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, the United States assumed responsibility for maintaining order and producing a kind of Pax Americana. Little of the postwar world, however, would be so peaceful.[43]

Based on the logic of militarized containment established by NSC-68 and American Cold War strategy, interventions in Korea and Vietnam were seen as appropriate American responses to the ascent of communism in China. Unless Soviet power in Asia was halted, Chinese influence would ripple across the continent, and one country after another would fall to communism. Easily transposed onto any region of the world, the Domino Theory became a standard basis for the justification of US interventions abroad. Cuba was seen as a communist beachhead that imperiled Latin America, the Caribbean, and perhaps eventually the United States. Like Ho Chi Minh, Cuban leader Fidel Castro was a revolutionary nationalist whose career as a communist began in earnest after he was rebuffed by the United States, and American interventions targeted nations that never espoused official communist positions. Many interventions in Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere were driven by factors that were shaped by but also transcended anticommunist ideology.

Instead of the United States dismantling its military after World War II, as it had after every major conflict, the Cold War facilitated a new permanent defense establishment. Federal investments in national defense affected the entire country. Different regions housed various sectors of what sociologist C. Wright Mills, in 1956, called the "permanent war economy." The aerospace industry was concentrated in areas like Southern California and Long Island, New York; Massachusetts was home to several universities that received major defense contracts; the Midwest became home base for intercontinental ballistic missiles pointed at the Soviet Union; many of the largest defense companies and military installations were concentrated in the South, so much so that in 1956 author William Faulkner, who was born in Mississippi, remarked, "Our economy is the Federal Government."[44]

A radical critic of US policy, Mills was one of the first thinkers to question the effects of massive defense spending, which, he said, corrupted the ruling class, or "power elite," which now had the potential to take the country into war for the sake of corporate profits. Yet perhaps the most famous critique of the entrenched war economy came from an unlikely source. During his farewell address to the nation in January 1961, President Eisenhower cautioned Americans against the "unwarranted influence" of a "permanent armaments industry of vast proportions" that could threaten "liberties" and "democratic processes." While the "conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry" was a fairly recent development, this "military-industrial complex" had cultivated a "total influence," which was "economic, political, even spiritual . . . felt in every city . . . Statehouse . . . [and] office of the Federal government." There was, he said, great danger in failing to "comprehend its grave implications."[45]

In Eisenhower's formulation, the "military-industrial complex" referred specifically to domestic connections between arms manufacturers, members of Congress, and the Department of Defense. Yet the new alliance between corporations, politicians, and the military was dependent on having an actual conflict to wage—without which there could be no ultimate financial gain. To critics, military-industrial partnerships at home were now linked to US interests abroad. Suddenly American foreign policy had to secure foreign markets and protect favorable terms for American trade all across the globe. Seen in such a way, the Cold War was just a by-product of America's new role as the remaining Western superpower. Regardless, the postwar rise of US power correlated with what many historians describe as a "national security consensus" that has dominated American policy since World War II. And so the United States was now more intimately involved in world affairs than ever before.

Ideological conflicts and independence movements erupted across the postwar world. More than eighty countries achieved independence, primarily from European control. As it took center stage in the realm of global affairs, the United States played a complicated and often contradictory role in this process of "decolonization." The sweeping scope of post-1945 US military

expansion was unique in the country's history. Critics believed that the advent of a "standing army," so feared by many of the founding fathers, set a disturbing precedent. But in the postwar world, American leaders eagerly set about maintaining a new permanent military juggernaut and creating viable international institutions.

But what of independence movements around the world? Roosevelt had spoken for many in his remark to British prime minister Winston Churchill, in 1941, that it was hard to imagine "fight[ing] a war against fascist slavery, and at the same time not work to free people all over the world from a backward colonial policy."[46] American postwar foreign policy leaders therefore struggled to balance support for decolonization against the reality that national independence movements often posed a threat to America's global interests.

American strategy became consumed with thwarting Russian power and the concomitant global spread of communism. Foreign policy officials increasingly opposed all insurgencies or independence movements that could in any way be linked to international communism. The Soviet Union, too, was attempting to sway the world. Stalin and his successors pushed an agenda that included not only the creation of Soviet client states in Eastern and Central Europe but also a tendency to support left-wing liberation movements everywhere, particularly when they espoused anti-American sentiment. As a result, the United States and the USSR engaged in numerous proxy wars in the Third World.

American planners felt that successful decolonization could demonstrate the superiority of democracy and capitalism against competing Soviet models. Their goal was, in essence, to develop an informal system of world power based as much as possible on consent (hegemony) rather than coercion (empire). But European powers still defended colonization, and American officials feared that anticolonial resistance would breed revolution and push nationalists into the Soviet sphere. And when faced with such movements, American policy dictated alliances with colonial regimes, alienating nationalist leaders in Asia and Africa.

The architects of American power needed to sway the citizens of decolonizing nations toward the United States. In 1948, Congress passed the Smith-Mundt Act to "promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries." The legislation established cultural exchanges with various nations, including even the USSR, to showcase American values through American artists and entertainers. The Soviets did the same, through what they called an international peace offensive, which by most accounts was more successful than the American campaign. Although US officials made strides through the initiation of various overt and covert programs, they still perceived that they were lagging behind the Soviet Union in the "war for hearts and minds." As unrest festered in much of the Third World, American officials looked on warily.[47]

The National Security Act of 1947, passed by Congress the same month Kennan's articulation of anti-Soviet "containment" was published in Foreign Affairs, provided the tools for foreign interventionism. Framed as a necessary step to secure the nation against the Soviet threat, the act centralized the US military under the newly created position of secretary of defense, established a secretive National Security Council (NSC), and reorganized the temporary wartime intelligence and espionage unit—the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—into the more permanent Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). A bipartisan consensus on Cold War foreign policy built around the combined logic of anticommunist ideology and fragile "national security" unleashed American interventions in the Third World.

Through clandestine CIA operations, the US government worked abroad to achieve its geopolitical objectives. The CIA's role in a clandestine operation to overthrow the leader of Iran, for example, was motivated by a desire to maintain access to Iran's oil reserves in response to a March 1951 Iranian parliament vote to nationalize the country's oil industry. The CIA cooperated with its British counterpart to overthrow nationalist prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, who was toppled in a 1953 coup and replaced by the US-backed Shah, or monarch, who established a pro-Western dictatorship until it was overthrown by the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Less than a year after the Iranian coup, the CIA organized a paramilitary campaign in Guatemala to overthrow the country's democratically elected president, Jacobo Árbenz, whose land reforms threatened the interests of the American United Fruit Company. A US-backed coup in June 1954 installed a US-backed dictator, Carlos Castillo Armas, whose brutal regime gave way to decades of bloodshed, with hundreds of thousands killed, including tens of thousands becoming euphemistically "disappeared."



The Cuban Revolution seemed to confirm the fears of many Americans that the spread of communism could not be stopped. It is believed that American government intervened in the new government of Fidel Castro in covert ways, and many attribute the La Coubre explosion to the American Central Intelligence Agency. In this photograph, Castro and Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara march in a memorial for those killed in the explosion in March, 1960 in Havana Cuba. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...oubreMarch.jpg.

Emboldened, the CIA worked all across the world to undermine any government hostile to American interests. On January 8, 1959, Castro and his revolutionary army initiated a new era of Cuban history. Having ousted US-backed Cuban president Fulgencio Batista, who had fled Havana on New Year's Eve, Castro and his rebel forces triumphantly made their way through the capital city's streets. The United States had withdrawn support for Batista and immediately granted diplomatic recognition of Castro's new government. But when the new Cuban government instituted leftist economic policies centered on agrarian reform, land redistribution, and the nationalization of private enterprises, the Eisenhower administration balked. Upper- and middle-class Cubans, meanwhile, fled the island in droves, settling especially in Miami and other Florida cities.

US-Cuban relations deteriorated rapidly. On October 19, 1960, the United States instituted a near-total trade embargo to isolate the Cuban regime economically; in January 1961, the two nations broke formal diplomatic relations. Acting under the mistaken belief that the Castro government lacked popular support and that Cuban citizens would revolt if given the opportunity, the CIA began to recruit members of the Cuban exile community in the US to participate in a Cuban invasion. On April 16, 1961, an invasion force consisting primarily of Cuban émigrés landed on Girón Beach at the Bay of Pigs. It was a fiasco. Cuban soldiers quickly overwhelmed and imprisoned most of the exiles, strengthening support for Castro in Cuba and embarrassing the Kennedy administration abroad.



The Cuban Missile Crisis was a time of great fear throughout America. Women in this photograph urged President Kennedy to be cautious of instigating war. Phil Stanziola, "800 women strikers for peace on 47 St near the UN Bldg," 1962. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001696167/.

In the face of American aggression, the Cuban government aligned itself with the Soviet Union, setting the stage for the Cuban Missile Crisis, perhaps the most dramatic foreign policy crisis in the history of the United States. In 1962, in response to the United States' longtime maintenance of a nuclear arsenal in Turkey and at the invitation of the Cuban government, the Soviet Union deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba. On October 14, 1962, American spy planes detected the construction of missile launch sites, and on October 22, President Kennedy addressed the American people to alert them to this threat. Over the course of the next several days, the world watched in horror as the United States and the Soviet Union hovered on the brink of nuclear war. Finally, on October 28, the Soviet Union agreed to remove its missiles from Cuba in exchange for a US agreement to remove its missiles from Turkey and a formal pledge that the United States would not invade Cuba. The crisis was resolved peacefully. The world exhaled.

Though the Cuban Missile Crisis temporarily halted the flow of Cuban refugees into the United States, emigration began again in earnest in the mid-1960s. In 1965, the Johnson administration and the Castro government brokered a deal that facilitated the reunion of families that had been separated by earlier waves of migration, opening the door for thousands to leave the island. In 1966 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Cuban Adjustment Act, a law allowing Cuban refugees to become permanent residents. Over the course of the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Cubans left their homeland and built new lives in America, carrying with them a stark and vocal
anticommunism.

The American national security establishment continued to push for aggressive foreign interventions across the 1960s. The Kennedy administration, for instance, ratcheted up American support for the pro-American government in South Vietnam. Less than a thousand American military advisors were in South Vietnam when President Kennedy was elected. By the time he was assassinated in late 1963, he had deployed fifteen thousand more American military personnel there, readying for a direct American military intervention.



The Soviet Union took advantage of the very real racial tensions in the U.S. to create anti-American propaganda. This 1930 Soviet poster shows a black American being lynched from the Statue of Liberty, while the text below asserts the links between racism and Christianity. 1930 issue of Bezbozhnik. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...ka_US_1930.jpg.

Not all Americans, however, supported US efforts to stifle independence movements and prop up corrupt, antidemocratic regimes. As Black Americans fought for justice at home, for instance, prominent American Black radicals, including Malcolm X, Paul Robeson, and the aging W.E.B. Du Bois, joined in solidarity with the global anticolonial movement, arguing that the United States had inherited the racist European imperial tradition. Supporters of the Soviet Union made their own effort to win over countries, claiming that Marxist-Leninist doctrine offered a road map for their liberation from colonial bondage. Moreover, Kremlin propaganda pointed to the injustices of the American South as an example of American hypocrisy: how could the United States claim to fight for global freedom when it refused to guarantee freedoms for its own citizenry? In such ways the Cold War connected the Black freedom struggle, the Third World, and the global Cold War.

VII. Conclusion

In June 1987, American president Ronald Reagan stood at the Berlin Wall and demanded that Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev "Tear down this wall!" Less than three years later, amid civil unrest in November 1989, East German authorities announced that citizens were free to travel to and from West Berlin. The concrete curtain would be lifted, and East Berlin would be opened to the world. Within months, the Berlin Wall was reduced to rubble by jubilant crowds anticipating the reunification of their city and their nation, which took place on October 3, 1990. By July 1991 the Warsaw Pact had crumbled, and on December 25 of that year, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic States (Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) were freed from Russian domination.

Partisans fought to claim responsibility for the breakup of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War. Whether it was the triumphalist rhetoric and militaristic pressure of conservatives or the internal fracturing of ossified bureaucracies and the work of Russian reformers that shaped the ending of the Cold War is a question of later decades. Questions about the Cold War's end must pause before appreciations of the Cold War's impact at home and abroad. Whether measured by the tens of millions killed in Cold War–related conflicts, by the reshaping of American politics and culture, or by the transformation of America's role in the world, the Cold War pushed American history upon a new path, one that it has yet to yield.

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This chapter was edited by Ari Cushner, with content contributions by Michael Brenes, Ari Cushner, Michael Franczak, Joseph Haker, Jonathan Hunt, Jun Suk Hyun, Zack Jacobson, Micki Kaufman, Lucie Kyrova, Celeste Day Moore, Joseph Parrott, Colin Reynolds, and Tanya Roth.

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24: The Affluent Society



Little Rock schools closed rather than allow integration. This 1958 photograph shows an African American high school girl watching school lessons on television. Library of Congress (LC-U9- 1525F-28).

I. Introduction

In 1958, Harvard economist and public intellectual John Kenneth Galbraith published The Affluent Society. Galbraith's celebrated book examined America's new post–World War II consumer economy and political culture. While noting the unparalleled riches of American economic growth, it criticized the underlying structures of an economy dedicated only to increasing production and consuming goods. Galbraith argued that the US economy, based on an almost hedonistic consumption of luxury products, would inevitably lead to economic inequality as private-sector interests enriched themselves at the expense of the American public. Galbraith warned that an economy in which "wants are increasingly created by the process by which they are satisfied" was unsound, unsustainable, and, ultimately, immoral. The Affluent Society, he said, was anything but.[1]

While economists and scholars debate the merits of Galbraith's warnings and predictions, his analysis was so insightful that the title of his book has come to serve as a ready label for postwar American society. In the two decades after the end of World War II, the American economy witnessed massive and sustained growth that reshaped American culture through the abundance of consumer goods. Standards of living—across all income levels—climbed to unparalleled heights, and economic inequality plummeted.[2]

And yet, as Galbraith noted, the Affluent Society had fundamental flaws. The new consumer economy that lifted millions of Americans into its burgeoning middle class also reproduced existing inequalities. 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 and caused irreversible ecological disruptions. The Jim Crow South tenaciously defended segregation, and Black Americans and other minorities suffered discrimination all across the country.

The contradictions of the Affluent Society defined the decade: unrivaled prosperity alongside persistent poverty, life-changing technological innovation alongside social and environmental destruction, expanded opportunity alongside entrenched discrimination, and new liberating lifestyles alongside stifling conformity.

II. The Rise of the Suburbs



Levittown, early 1950s, via Flickr user markgregory.

The seeds of a suburban nation were planted in New Deal government programs. At the height of the Great Depression, in 1932, some 250,000 households lost their property to foreclosure. A year later, half of all US mortgages were in default. The foreclosure rate stood at more than one thousand per day. In response, FDR's New Deal created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which began purchasing and refinancing existing mortgages at risk of default. The HOLC introduced the amortized mortgage, allowing borrowers to pay back interest and principal regularly over fifteen years instead of the then-standard five-year mortgage that carried large balloon payments at the end of the contract. The HOLC eventually owned nearly one of every five mortgages in America. Though homeowners paid more for their homes under this new system, homeownership was opened to the multitudes who could now gain residential stability, establish lower monthly mortgage payments, and accrue wealth as property values rose over time.[3]

Additionally, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), another New Deal organization, increased access to homeownership by insuring mortgages and protecting lenders from financial loss in the event of a default. Lenders, however, had to agree to offer low rates and terms of up to twenty or thirty years. Even more consumers could afford homes. Though only slightly more than a third of homes had an FHA-backed mortgage by 1964, FHA loans had a ripple effect, with private lenders granting more and more home loans even to non-FHA-backed borrowers. Government programs and subsidies like the HOLC and the FHA fueled the growth of homeownership and the rise of the suburbs.

Government spending during World War II pushed the United States out of the Depression and into an economic boom that would be sustained after the war by continued government spending. Government expenditures provided loans to veterans, subsidized corporate research and development, and built the interstate highway system. In the decades after World War II, business boomed, unionization peaked, wages rose, and sustained growth buoyed the new consumer economy. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (popularly known as the G.I. Bill), passed in 1944, offered low-interest home loans, a stipend to attend college, loans to start businesses, and unemployment benefits.

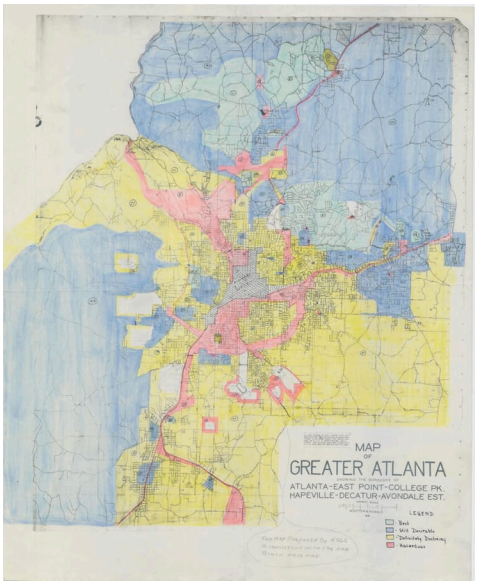
The rapid growth of homeownership and the rise of suburban communities helped drive the postwar economic boom. Builders created sprawling neighborhoods of single-family homes on the outskirts of American cities. William Levitt built the first Levittown, the prototypical suburban community, in Long Island, New York, in 1946. Purchasing large acreage, subdividing lots, and contracting crews to build countless homes at economies of scale, Levitt offered affordable suburban housing to veterans and their families. Levitt became the prophet of the new suburbs, and his model of large-scale suburban development was duplicated by developers across the country. The country's suburban share of the population rose from 19.5 percent in 1940 to 30.7 percent by 1960. Homeownership rates rose from 44 percent in 1940 to almost 62 percent in 1960. Between 1940 and 1950, suburban communities with more than ten thousand people grew 22.1 percent, and planned communities grew at an astonishing rate of 126.1 percent.[4] As historian Lizabeth Cohen notes, these new suburbs "mushroomed in territorial size and the populations they harbored."[5] Between 1950 and 1970, America's suburban population nearly doubled to seventy-four million. Eighty-three percent of all population growth occurred in suburban places.[6]

The postwar construction boom fed into countless industries. As manufacturers converted from war materials back to consumer goods, and as the suburbs developed, appliance and automobile sales rose dramatically. Flush with rising wages and wartime savings, homeowners also used newly created installment plans to buy new consumer goods at once instead of saving for years to make major purchases. Credit cards, first issued in 1950, further increased access to credit. No longer stymied by the Depression or wartime restrictions, consumers bought countless washers, dryers, refrigerators, freezers, and, suddenly, televisions. The percentage of American households that owned at least one television increased from 12 percent in 1950 to more than 87 percent in 1960. This new suburban economy also led to increased demand for automobiles. The percentage of American families owning cars increased from 54 percent in 1948 to 74 percent in 1959. Motor fuel consumption rose from some twenty-two million gallons in 1945 to around fifty-nine million gallons in 1958.[7]

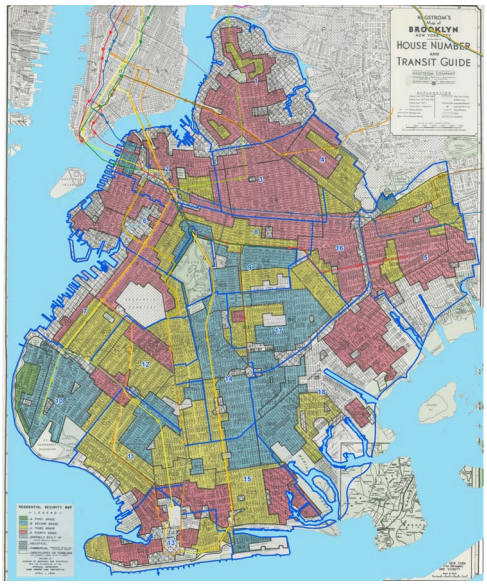
On the surface, the postwar economic boom turned America into a land of abundance. For advantaged buyers, loans had never been easier to obtain, consumer goods had never been more accessible, single-family homes had never been so cheap, and well-paying jobs had never been more abundant. "If you had a college diploma, a dark suit, and anything between the ears," a businessman later recalled, "it was like an escalator; you just stood there and you moved up."[8] But the escalator did not serve everyone. Beneath the aggregate numbers, racial disparity, sexual discrimination, and economic inequality persevered, undermining many of the assumptions of the Affluent Society.

In 1939, real estate appraisers arrived in sunny Pasadena, California. Armed with elaborate questionnaires to evaluate the city's building conditions, the appraisers were well versed in the policies of the HOLC. In one neighborhood, most structures were rated in "fair" repair, and appraisers noted a lack of "construction hazards or flood threats." However, they concluded that the area "is detrimentally affected by 10 owner occupant Negro families." While "the Negroes are said to be of the better class," the appraisers concluded, "it seems inevitable that ownership and property values will drift to lower levels."[9]

Wealth created by the booming economy filtered through social structures with built-in privileges and prejudices. Just when many middle- and working-class white American families began their journey of upward mobility by moving to the suburbs with the help of government programs such as the FHA and the G.I. Bill, many African Americans and other racial minorities found themselves systematically shut out.



Black communities in cities like Detroit, Chicago, Brooklyn, and Atlanta experienced "redlining," the process by which banks and other organizations demarcated minority neighborhoods on a map with a red line. Doing so made visible the areas they believed were unfit for their services, denying black residents loans, housing, groceries, and other necessities of modern life. Redlined Map of Greater Atlanta, http://blog.historian4hire.net/wp-co...neMap-NARA.jpg.



1938 Brooklyn Redline map. UrbanOasis.org via National Archives (NARA II RG 195 Entry 39 Folder “Brooklyn (Kings Co.)” Box 58). Edited by ASommer, PlaNYourCity. https://planyourcity.files.wordpress.../04/bk-map.jpg.

A look at the relationship between federal organizations such as the HOLC, the FHA, and private banks, lenders, and real estate agents tells the story of standardized policies that produced a segregated housing market. At the core of HOLC appraisal techniques, which reflected the existing practices of private real estate agents, was the pernicious insistence that mixed-race and minority-dominated neighborhoods were credit risks. In partnership with local lenders and real estate agents, the HOLC created “residential security maps” to identify high-risk and low-risk lending areas. People familiar with the local real estate market filled out uniform surveys on each neighborhood. Relying on this information, the HOLC assigned every neighborhood a letter grade from A to D and a corresponding color code. The least secure, highest-risk neighborhoods for loans received a D grade and were shaded in the color red. Banks limited loans in such “redlined” areas.[10]

Phrases like subversive racial elements and racial hazards pervade the redlined-area description files of surveyors and HOLC officials. Los Angeles’s Echo Park neighborhood, for instance, had concentrations of Japanese and African Americans and a “sprinkling of Russians and Mexicans.” The HOLC security map and survey noted that the neighborhood’s “adverse racial influences which are noticeably increasing inevitably presage lower values, rentals and a rapid decrease in residential desirability.”[11]

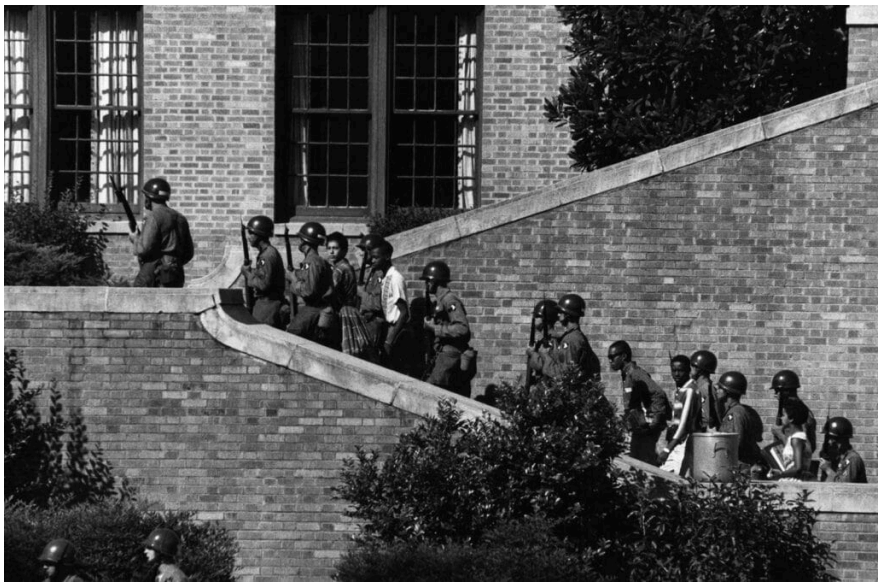
While the HOLC was a fairly short-lived New Deal agency, the influence of its security maps lived on in the FHA and Veterans Administration (VA), the latter of which dispensed G.I. Bill–backed mortgages. Both of these government organizations, which reinforced the standards followed by private lenders, refused to back bank mortgages in “redlined” neighborhoods. On the one hand, FHA- and VA-backed loans were an enormous boon to those who qualified for them. Millions of Americans received mortgages that they otherwise would not have qualified for. But FHA-backed mortgages were not available to all. Racial minorities could not get loans for property improvements in their own neighborhoods and were denied mortgages to purchase property in other areas for fear that their presence would extend the “red line” into a new community. Levittown, the poster child of the new suburban America, allowed only whites to purchase homes. Thus, FHA policies and private developers increased homeownership and stability for white Americans while simultaneously creating and enforcing racial segregation.

The exclusionary structures of the postwar economy prompted protest from African Americans and other minorities who were excluded. Fair housing, equal employment, consumer access, and educational opportunity, for instance, all emerged as priorities of a brewing civil rights movement. In 1948, the US Supreme Court sided with African American plaintiffs and, in Shelley v. Kraemer, declared racially restrictive neighborhood housing covenants—property deed restrictions barring sales to racial minorities—legally unenforceable. Discrimination and segregation continued, however, and activists would continue to push for fair housing practices.

During the 1950s and early 1960s many Americans retreated to the suburbs to enjoy the new consumer economy and search for some normalcy and security after the instability of depression and war. But many could not. It was both the limits and opportunities of housing, then, that shaped the contours of postwar American society. Moreover, the postwar suburban boom not only exacerbated racial and class inequalities, it precipitated a major environmental crisis.

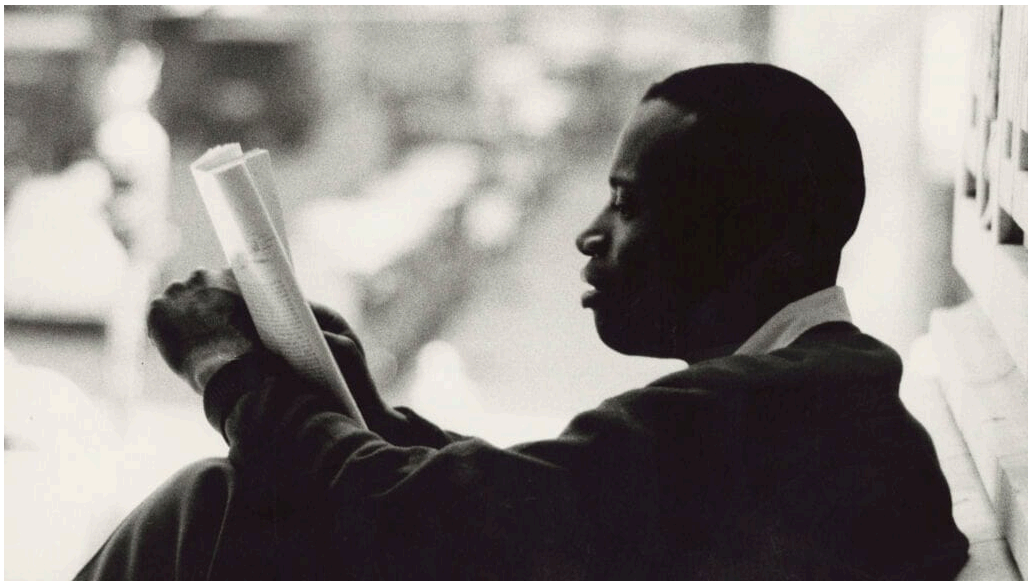
The introduction of mass production techniques in housing wrought ecological destruction. Developers sought cheaper land ever farther away from urban cores, wreaking havoc on particularly sensitive lands such as wetlands, hills, and floodplains. “A territory roughly the size of Rhode Island,” historian Adam Rome wrote, “was bulldozed for urban development” every year.[12] Innovative construction strategies, government incentives, high consumer demand, and low energy prices all pushed builders away from more sustainable, energy-conserving building projects. Typical postwar tract houses were difficult to cool in the summer and heat in the winter. Many were equipped with malfunctioning septic tanks that polluted local groundwater. Such destructiveness did not go unnoticed. Rachel Carson’s 1962 book Silent Spring exposed the damage wrought by the use of pesticides such as DDT in agricultural and domestic settings. Stories of kitchen faucets spouting detergent foams and children playing in effluents brought the point home: comfort and convenience did not have to come at such cost. And yet most of the Americans who joined the early environmentalist crusades of the 1950s and 1960s rarely questioned the foundations of the suburban ideal. Americans increasingly relied upon automobiles and idealized the single-family home, blunting any major push to shift prevailing patterns of land and energy use.[13]

III. Race and Education



School desegregation was a tense experience for all involved, but none more so than the African American students brought into white schools. The “Little Rock Nine” were the first to do this in Arkansas; their escorts, the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, provided protection to these students who so bravely took that first step. Photograph, 1957. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...ntral_High.jpg.

Older battles over racial exclusion also confronted postwar American society. One long-simmering struggle targeted segregated schooling. In 1896, the Supreme Court declared the principle of “separate but equal” constitutional. Segregated schooling, however, was rarely “equal”: in practice, Black Americans, particularly in the South, received fewer funds, attended inadequate facilities, and studied with substandard materials. African Americans’ battle against educational inequality stretched across half a century before the Supreme Court again took up the merits of “separate but equal.”



A young Black man reads a newspaper in 1954. Library of Congress.

On May 17, 1954, after two years of argument, re-argument, and deliberation, Chief Justice Earl Warren announced the Supreme Court's decision on segregated schooling in Brown v. Board of Education. The court found by a unanimous 9–0 vote that racial segregation violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court's decision declared, "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." "Separate but equal" was made unconstitutional.[14]

Decades of African American–led litigation, local agitation against racial inequality, and liberal Supreme Court justices made Brown possible. In the early 1930s, the NAACP began a concerted effort to erode the legal underpinnings of segregation in the American South. Legal, or de jure, segregation subjected racial minorities to discriminatory laws and policies. Law and custom in the South hardened anti-Black restrictions. But through a series of carefully chosen and contested court cases concerning education, disfranchisement, and jury selection, NAACP lawyers such as Charles Hamilton Houston, Robert L. Clark, and future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall undermined Jim Crow's constitutional underpinnings. These attorneys initially sought to demonstrate that states systematically failed to provide African American students "equal" resources and facilities and thus failed to live up to Plessy. By the late 1940s activists began to more forcefully challenge the assumptions that "separate" was constitutional at all.

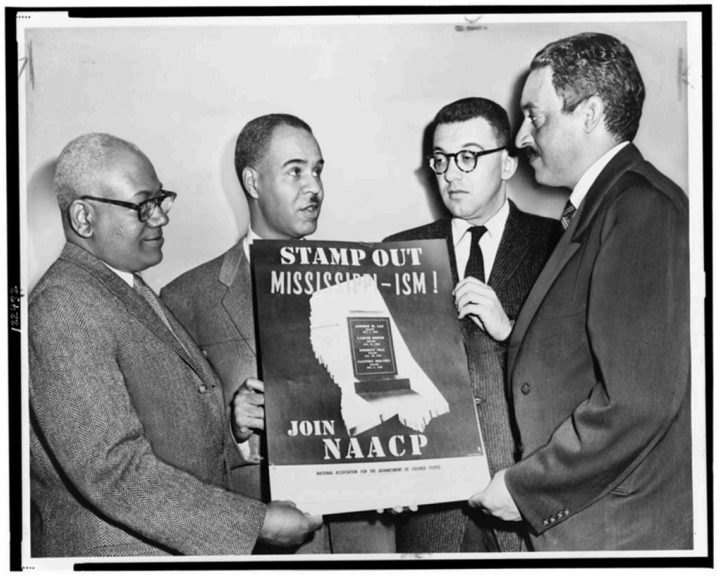
Although subject to the most far-reaching, legalistic, and systematic segregation, Black children were not the only segregated population in American schools. Mexican and Mexican American children across the Southwest, for instance, were sent to segregated "Mexican" schools. In the landmark case *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947), for instance, Gonzalo Mendez and other parents in Westminster, California, successfully argued before a US District Court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that the segregation of Mexican American children in California violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In Texas, the family of Minerva Delgado and other Mexican American children successfully made the same case before a US District Court. Both, however, turned on the peculiar racial logic that marked Mexican Americans as white and, therefore, maintained the "separate but equal" doctrine established by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that justified the continued segregation of Black schoolchildren.[15]

That all changed with *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka in 1954. Though remembered as just one lawsuit, *Brown v. Board* consolidated five separate cases that had originated in the southeastern United States: *Briggs v. Elliott* (South Carolina), *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (Virginia), *Beulah v. Belton* (Delaware), *Bolling v. Sharpe* (Washington, D.C.), and *Brown v. Board of Education* (Kansas). Working with local activists already involved in desegregation fights, the NAACP purposely chose cases with a diverse set of local backgrounds to show that segregation was not just an issue in the Deep South and that a sweeping judgment on the fundamental constitutionality of *Plessy* was needed.

Briggs v. Elliott, the first case accepted by the NAACP, illustrated the plight of segregated Black schools. *Briggs* originated in rural Clarendon County, South Carolina, where taxpayers in 1950 spent $179 to educate each white student and $43 for each Black student. The district's twelve white schools were cumulatively worth $673,850; the value of its sixty-one Black schools (mostly dilapidated, overcrowded shacks) was $194,575.[16] While *Briggs* underscored the South's failure to follow Plessy, the Brown suit focused less on material disparities between Black and white schools (which were significantly less than in places like Clarendon

County) and more on the social and spiritual degradation that accompanied legal segregation. This case cut to the basic question of whether "separate" was itself inherently unequal. The NAACP said the two notions were incompatible. As one witness before the US District Court of Kansas said, "The entire colored race is craving light, and the only way to reach the light is to start [Black and white] children together in their infancy and they come up together."[17]

To make its case, the NAACP marshaled historical and social scientific evidence. The Court found the historical evidence inconclusive and drew their ruling more heavily from the NAACP's argument that segregation psychologically damaged Black children. To make this argument, association lawyers relied on social scientific evidence, such as the famous doll experiments of Kenneth and Mamie Clark. The Clarks demonstrated that while young white girls would naturally choose to play with white dolls, young Black girls would, too. The Clarks argued that Black children's aesthetic and moral preference for white dolls demonstrated the pernicious effects and self-loathing produced by segregation.



The NAACP was a central organization in the fight to end segregation, discrimination, and injustice based on race. NAACP leaders, including Thurgood Marshall (who would become the first African American Supreme Court Justice), hold a poster decrying racial bias in Mississippi in 1956. Photograph, 1956. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99401448/.

Identifying and denouncing injustice, though, is different from rectifying it. Though *Brown* repudiated *Plessy*, the Court's orders did not extend to segregation in places other than public schools and, even then, to preserve a unanimous decision for such an historically important case, the justices set aside the divisive yet essential question of enforcement. Their infamously ambiguous order in 1955 (what came to be known as *Brown II*) that school districts desegregate "with all deliberate speed" was so vague and ineffectual that it left the actual business of desegregation in the hands of those who opposed it.



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. Library of Congress.

In most of the South, as well as the rest of the country, school integration did not occur on a wide scale until well after *Brown*. Only in the 1964 Civil Rights Act did the federal government finally implement some enforcement of the Brown decision by threatening to withhold funding from recalcitrant school districts, but even then, southern districts found loopholes. Court decisions such as *Green v. New Kent County* (1968) and *Alexander v. Holmes* (1969) finally closed some of those loopholes, such as "freedom of choice" plans, to compel some measure of actual integration.

When *Brown* finally was enforced in the South, the quantitative impact was staggering. In 1968, fourteen years after Brown, some 80 percent of school-age Black southerners remained in schools that were 90 to 100 percent nonwhite. By 1972, though, just 25 percent were in such schools, and 55 percent remained in schools with a simple nonwhite minority. By many measures, the public schools of the South became, ironically, the most integrated in the nation.[18]

As a landmark moment in American history, Brown's significance perhaps lies less in the immediate tangible changes—which were slow, partial, and inseparable from a much longer chain of events—than in the idealism it expressed and the momentum it created. The nation's highest court had attacked one of the fundamental supports of Jim Crow segregation and offered constitutional cover for the creation of one of the greatest social movements in American history.

IV. Civil Rights in the Affluent Society



Segregation extended beyond private business property; this segregated drinking fountain was located on the ground of the Halifax county courthouse in North Carolina. Photograph, April 1938. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...tion_1938b.jpg.

Education was but one aspect of the nation's Jim Crow machinery. African Americans had been fighting against a variety of racist policies, cultures, and beliefs in all aspects of American life. And while the struggle for Black inclusion had few victories before World War II, the war and the Double V campaign for victory against fascism abroad and racism at home, as well as the postwar economic boom, led to rising expectations for many African Americans. When persistent racism and racial segregation undercut the promise of economic and social mobility, African Americans began mobilizing on an unprecedented scale against the various discriminatory social and legal structures. The Affluent Society conflated citizenship with access to goods, services, and public spaces, and many of the fiercest Civil Rights battles therefore occurred not only in battles of voting and representation but at sites of public consumption: public transportation, lunch counters, movie theaters, and educational institutions.

While many of the civil rights movement's most memorable and important moments, such as the sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, and especially the March on Washington, occurred in the 1960s, the 1950s were a significant decade in the sometimes tragic, sometimes triumphant march of civil rights in the United States. In 1953, years before Rosa Parks's iconic confrontation on a Montgomery city bus, an African American woman named Sarah Keys publicly challenged segregated public transportation. Keys, then serving in the Women's Army Corps, traveled from her army base in New Jersey back to North Carolina to visit her family. When the bus stopped in North Carolina, the driver asked her to give up her seat for a white customer. Her refusal to do so landed her in jail in 1953 and led to a landmark 1955 decision, Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company, in which the Interstate Commerce Commission ruled that "separate but equal" violated the Interstate Commerce Clause of the US Constitution. Poorly enforced, it nevertheless gave legal coverage for the Freedom Riders years later and motivated further assaults against Jim Crow.

But if some events encouraged civil rights workers with the promise of progress, others were so savage they convinced activists that they could do nothing but resist. In the summer of 1955, two white men in Mississippi kidnapped and brutally murdered fourteen-year-old Emmett Till. Till, visiting from Chicago and perhaps unfamiliar with the "etiquette" of Jim Crow, allegedly whistled at a white woman named Carolyn Bryant. Her husband, Roy Bryant, and another man, J. W. Milam, abducted Till from his relatives' home, beat him, mutilated him, shot him, and threw his body in the Tallahatchie River. Emmett's mother held an open-casket funeral so that Till's disfigured body could make national news. The men were brought to trial. The evidence was damning, but an all-white jury found the two not guilty. Mere months after the decision, the two boasted of their crime, in all of its brutal detail, in Look magazine. "They ain't gonna go to school with my kids," Milam said. They wanted "to make an example of [Till]—just so everybody can know how me and my folks stand."[19] The Till case became an indelible memory for the young Black men and women soon to propel the civil rights movement forward.

On December 1, 1955, four months after Till's death and six days after the Keys v. Carolina Coach Company decision, Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat on a Montgomery city bus and was arrested. Montgomery's public transportation system had long-standing rules requiring African American passengers to sit in the back of the bus and to give up their seats to white passengers if the buses filled. Parks—a local activist, longtime secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, and a veteran of Septima Clark's activist workshops—was not the first to protest the policy by staying seated, but she was the first around whom

Montgomery activists rallied.

Activists sprang into action. Joanne Robinson, who as head of the Women's Political Council had long fought against the city's segregated busing, worked long into the night to with a colleague and two students from Alabama State College to mimeograph over fifty thousand handbills calling for an immediate boycott. Montgomery's Black community responded, and, in response, local ministers and civil rights workers formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to coordinate an organized, sustained boycott of the city's buses. The Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted from December 1955 until December 20, 1956, when the Supreme Court ordered their integration. The boycott not only crushed segregation in Montgomery's public transportation, it energized the entire civil rights movement and established the leadership of the MIA's president, a recently arrived, twenty-six-year-old Baptist minister named Martin Luther King Jr.

Motivated by the success of the Montgomery boycott, King and other Black leaders looked to continue the fight. In 1957, King, fellow ministers such as Ralph Abernathy and Fred Shuttlesworth, and key staffers such as Ella Baker and Septima Clark helped create and run the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to coordinate civil rights groups across the South in their efforts to organize and sustain boycotts, protests, and other assaults against Jim Crow discrimination.

As pressure built, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the first such measure passed since Reconstruction. The act was compromised away nearly to nothing, although it did achieve some gains, such as creating the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Commission, which was charged with investigating claims of racial discrimination. And yet, despite its weakness, the act signaled that pressure was finally mounting on Americans to confront the legacy of discrimination.

Despite successes at both the local and national levels, the civil rights movement faced bitter opposition. Those opposed to the movement often used violent tactics to scare and intimidate African Americans and subvert legal rulings and court orders. For example, a year into the Montgomery bus boycott, angry white southerners bombed four African American churches as well as the homes of King and fellow civil rights leader E. D. Nixon. Though King, Nixon, and the MIA persevered in the face of such violence, it was only a taste of things to come. Such unremitting hostility and violence left the outcome of the burgeoning civil rights movement in doubt. Despite its successes, civil rights activists looked back on the 1950s as a decade of mixed results and incomplete accomplishments. While the bus boycott, Supreme Court rulings, and other civil rights activities signaled progress, church bombings, death threats, and stubborn legislators demonstrated the distance that still needed to be traveled. And they were not the only ones fighting.

A generation of Mexican American activists who came of age after World War II were eager to dismantle the system of "Juan Crow" discrimination that reigned across the Southwest. A rejuvenated League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), founded in 1929, and the newly organized American G.I. Forum (AGIF) propelled a new Mexican American civil rights movement organized around claims to American citizenship and the rights such citizenship conferred. A public emphasis on cultural assimilation and "whiteness" coexisted with a proud Mexican heritage. Individuals such as Dr. Hector P. García leveraged Mexican American service in World War II to bolster citizenship claims by founding the AGIF in 1948; Henry B. González blended fierce patriotism with postwar liberalism on the San Antonio city council and in the Texas State Senate; and Professor George I. Sánchez spent decades at the University of Texas's College of Education recovering Spanish American history and sponsoring legal challenges to Mexican American educational segregation.[20] These impulses culminated in the Supreme Court ruling in Hernandez v. Texas (1954) that Mexican Americans were a distinct class entitled to Equal Protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. Though the case involved jury discrimination—Mexican American laborer Pete Hernandez was tried for murder in Edna, Texas, by an all-Anglo jury—its broader impact further empowered Mexican Americans to challenge unequal treatment in education and other public institutions.[21]

The Black freedom struggle, meanwhile, soldiered on. In 1957, Arkansas Governor Orval E. Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to block the integration of Little Rock Central High School by nine Black students ("The Little Rock Nine"). President Eisenhower deployed the 101st Airborne Division of the US Army to enforce the integration order. In response, Governor Faubus closed all of the city's high schools for the following school year.

Meanwhile, Black students were innovating new direct action protests. While lunch counter sit-ins garnered significant national attention beginning with the actions of students from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical Institute in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960, the tactic was deployed as early as 1953 by students from Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland. In July 1958, the NAACP Youth Council in Wichita, Kansas, sponsored a successful three-week sit-in at the lunch counter of Dockum Drug Store. Septima Clark, fired from South Carolina schools for her work with the NAACP, launched a number of "Citizenship Schools" across the Deep South, teaching literacy, citizenship, and leadership. Her efforts—Martin Luther King Jr. would call her the "mother of the movement"—and the efforts of countless others were busy laying the groundwork for the civil rights movement to continue to confront Jim Crow and conquer the national consciousness.

V. Gender and Culture in the Affluent Society



As shown in this 1958 advertisement for a "Westinghouse with Cold Injector," a midcentury marketing frenzy targeted female consumers by touting technological innovations designed to make housework easier.

The American consumer economy reshaped how Americans experienced culture and shaped their identities. The Affluent Society gave Americans new experiences, new outlets, and new ways to understand and interact with one another.

"The American household is on the threshold of a revolution," *The New York Times* declared in August 1948. "The reason is television."[22] Television was presented to the American public at the New York World's Fair in 1939, but commercialization of the new medium in the United States lagged during the war years. In 1947, though, regular full-scale broadcasting became available to the public. Television was instantly popular, so much so that by early 1948 Newsweek reported that it was "catching on like a case of high-toned scarlet fever."[23] Indeed, between 1948 and 1955 close to two thirds of the nation's households purchased a television set. By the end of the 1950s, 90 percent of American families had one, and the average viewer was tuning in for almost five hours a day.[24]

The technological ability to transmit images via radio waves gave birth to television. Television borrowed radio's organizational structure, too. The big radio broadcasting companies—NBC, CBS, and the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)—used their technical expertise and capital reserves to conquer the airwaves. They acquired licenses to local stations and eliminated their few independent competitors. The refusal of the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to issue any new licenses between 1948 and 1955 was a de facto endorsement of the big three's stranglehold on the market.

In addition to replicating radio's organizational structure, television also looked to radio for content. Many of the early programs were adaptations of popular radio variety and comedy shows, including *The Ed Sullivan Show* and Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theater*. These were accompanied by live plays, dramas, sports, and situation comedies. Because of the cost and difficulty of recording, most programs were broadcast live, forcing stations across the country to air shows at the same time. And since audiences had a limited number of channels to choose from, viewing experiences were broadly shared. More than two thirds of television-owning households, for instance, watched popular shows such as *I Love Lucy*.

The limited number of channels and programs meant that networks selected programs that appealed to the widest possible audience to draw viewers and advertisers, television's greatest financers. By the mid-1950s, an hour of prime-time programming cost about $150,000 (about $1.5 million in today's dollars) to produce. This proved too expensive for most commercial sponsors, who began turning to a joint financing model of thirty-second spot ads. The need to appeal to as many people as possible promoted the production of noncontroversial shows aimed at the entire family. Programs such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver* featured light topics, humor, and a guaranteed happy ending the whole family could enjoy.[25]



Advertising began creeping up everywhere in the 1950s. No longer confined to commercials or newspapers, advertisements were subtly (or not so subtly in this case) worked into TV shows like the Quiz Show "21". (Geritol is a dietary supplement.) Orlando Fernandez, "[Quiz show "21" host Jack Barry turns toward contestant Charles Van Doren as fellow contestant Vivienne Nearine looks on]," 1957. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00652124/.

Television's broad appeal, however, was about more than money and entertainment. Shows of the 1950s, such as *Father Knows Best* and *I Love Lucy*, idealized the nuclear family, "traditional" gender roles, and white, middle-class domesticity. Leave It to Beaver, which became the prototypical example of the 1950s television family, depicted its breadwinner father and homemaker mother guiding their children through life lessons. Such shows, and Cold War America more broadly, reinforced a popular consensus that such lifestyles were not only beneficial but the most effective way to safeguard American prosperity against communist threats and social "deviancy." In a time of global uncertainty, the postwar "nuclear" American family—a father, a mother, and two or more children—became the symbol and safeguard of the nation.

Postwar prosperity facilitated, and in turn was supported by, the ongoing postwar baby boom. From 1946 to 1964, American fertility experienced an unprecedented spike. A century of declining birth rates abruptly reversed. Although popular memory credits the cause of the baby boom to the virility of returning soldiers, the real story is more nuanced. After years of economic depression, families were now wealthy enough to support larger families and had homes large enough to accommodate them, while women married younger and American culture celebrated the ideal of a large, insular family.[26]

Underlying this "reproductive consensus" was the new cult of professionalism that pervaded postwar American culture, including the professionalization of homemaking. Mothers and fathers alike flocked to the experts for their opinions on marriage, sexuality, and, most especially, child-rearing. Psychiatrists held an almost mythic status as people took their opinions and prescriptions, as well as their vocabulary, into their everyday life. Books like Dr. Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care* (1946) were diligently studied by women who took their career as housewife as just that: a career, complete with all the demands and professional trappings of job development and training. And since most women had multiple children roughly the same age as their neighbors' children, a cultural obsession with kids flourished throughout the era. Women bore the brunt of this pressure, chided if they did not give enough of their time to the children—especially if it was because of a career—yet cautioned that spending too much time would lead to "Momism," producing "sissy" boys who would be incapable of contributing to society and extremely susceptible to the communist threat.

A new youth culture exploded in American popular culture. On the one hand, the anxieties of the atomic age hit America's youth particularly hard. Keenly aware of the discontent bubbling beneath the surface of the Affluent Society, many youth embraced rebellion. The 1955 film *Rebel Without a Cause* demonstrated the restlessness and emotional incertitude of the postwar generation raised in increasing affluence yet increasingly unsatisfied with their comfortable lives. At the same time, perhaps yearning for something beyond the "massification" of American culture yet having few other options to turn to beyond popular culture, American youth embraced rock 'n' roll. They listened to Little Richard, Buddy Holly, and especially Elvis Presley (whose sexually suggestive hip movements were judged too subversive for television audiences).



While black musicians like Chuck Berry created Rock and Roll, it was brought into the mainstream (white) American culture through performers like Elvis. His good looks, sensual dancing, and sonorous voice stole the hearts of millions of American teenage girls, which was at that moment becoming a central segment of the consumer population. Wikimedia, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...house_Rock.jpg.

The popularity of rock 'n' roll had not yet blossomed into the countercultural musical revolution of the coming decade, but it provided a magnet for teenage restlessness and rebellion. "Television and Elvis," the musician Bruce Springsteen recollected, "gave us full access to a new language, a new form of communication, a new way of being, a new way of looking, a new way of thinking; about sex, about race, about identity, about life; a new way of being an American, a human being; and a new way of hearing music." American youth had seen so little of Elvis's energy and sensuality elsewhere in their culture. "Once Elvis came across the airwaves," Springsteen said, "once he was heard and seen in action, you could not put the genie back in the bottle. After that moment, there was yesterday, and there was today, and there was a red hot, rockabilly forging of a new tomorrow, before your very eyes."[27]

Other Americans took larger steps to reject the expected conformity of the Affluent Society. The writers, poets, and musicians of the Beat Generation, disillusioned with capitalism, consumerism, and traditional gender roles, sought a deeper meaning in life. Beats traveled across the country, studied Eastern religions, and experimented with drugs, sex, and art.

Behind the scenes, Americans were challenging sexual mores. The gay rights movement, for instance, stretched back into the Affluent Society. While the country proclaimed homosexuality a mental disorder, gay men established the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles and gay women formed the Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco as support groups. They held meetings, distributed literature, provided legal and counseling services, and formed chapters across the country. Much of their work, however, remained secretive because homosexuals risked arrest and abuse if discovered.[28] Besides local law enforcement, the American administrative state also broadly sought to regulate and discipline what it viewed as deviant sexuality through explicit discrimination and a conflation of sexual and gender nonconformity with Cold War–era paranoias around subversion and political radicalism. Buffeted not only by the explicit institutions of the state, sexually and gender nonconforming people found themselves at the mercy of psychiatric and medical authorities increasingly interested in "curing" that nonconformity, whether through torturous "therapies," long-term incarceration, or chemical castration.[29]

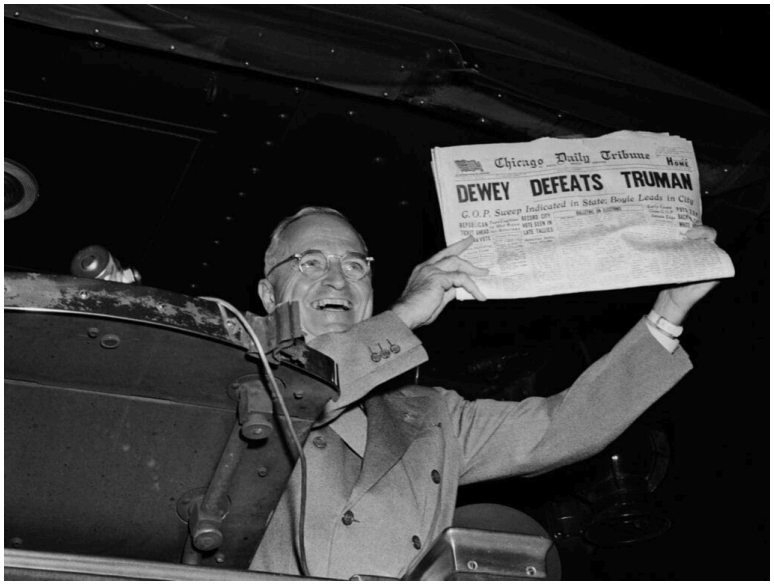
Society's "consensus," on everything from the consumer economy to gender roles, however repressive, did not go unchallenged. Much popular discontent was channeled through the machine itself: advertisers sold rebellion no less than they sold baking soda. Others, however, were rejecting the old ways, choosing new lifestyles, challenging old hierarchies, and embarking on new paths.

VI. Politics and Ideology in the Affluent Society

Postwar economic prosperity and the creation of new suburban spaces inevitably shaped American politics. In stark contrast to the Great Depression, the new prosperity renewed belief in the superiority of capitalism, cultural conservatism, and religion.

In the 1930s, the economic ravages of the international economic catastrophe knocked the legs out from under the intellectual

justifications for keeping government out of the economy. And yet pockets of true believers kept alive the gospel of the free market. The single most important such group was the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). In the midst of the depression, NAM reinvented itself and went on the offensive, initiating advertising campaigns supporting "free enterprise" and "The American Way of Life."[30] More importantly, NAM became a node for business leaders, such as J. Howard Pew of Sun Oil and Jasper Crane of DuPont Chemical Co., to network with like-minded individuals and take the message of free enterprise to the American people. The network of business leaders that NAM brought together in the midst of the Great Depression formed the financial, organizational, and ideological underpinnings of the free market advocacy groups that emerged and found ready adherents in America's new suburban spaces in the postwar decades.



Just like the internet, don't always trust what you read in newspapers. This obviously incorrect banner from the front page of the Chicago Daily Tribune on November 3, 1948 made its own headlines as the newspaper's most embarrassing gaff. Photograph, 1948. http://media-2.web.britannica.com/eb...0-D86AAA4E.jpg. Undated portrait of President Harry S. Truman. National Archives.

One of the most important advocacy groups that sprang up after the war was Leonard Read's Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). Read founded FEE in 1946 on the premise that "The American Way of Life" was essentially individualistic and that the best way to protect and promote that individualism was through libertarian economics. Libertarianism took as its core principle the promotion of individual liberty, property rights, and an economy with a minimum of government regulation. FEE, whose advisory board and supporters came mostly from the NAM network of Pew and Crane, became a key ideological factory, supplying businesses, service clubs, churches, schools, and universities with a steady stream of libertarian literature, much of it authored by Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises.[31]

Shortly after FEE's formation, Austrian economist and libertarian intellectual Friedrich Hayek founded the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947. The MPS brought together libertarian intellectuals from both sides of the Atlantic to challenge Keynesian economics—the dominant postwar macroeconomic notion that government fiscal and monetary policy were necessary economic tools for stability and growth—in academia. University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman became its president. Friedman (and the associated "Chicago School" of conservative economic thought at the University of Chicago) and the MPS became some of the most influential free market advocates in the world and helped legitimize for many the libertarian ideology so successfully evangelized by FEE, its descendant organizations, and libertarian popularizers such as the novelist Ayn Rand.[32]

Libertarian politics and evangelical religion were shaping the origins of a new conservative suburban constituency. Suburban communities' distance from government and other top-down community-building mechanisms—despite relying on government subsidies and government programs—left a social void that evangelical churches eagerly filled. More often than not, the theology and ideology of these churches reinforced socially conservative views while simultaneously reinforcing congregants' belief in economic individualism. Ayn Rand, meanwhile, whose novels *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) were two of the era's bestsellers, helped move the ideas of individualism, "rational self-interest," and "the virtue of selfishness" outside the halls of business and academia and into suburbia. The ethos of individualism became the building blocks for a new political movement. And yet, while the growing suburbs and their brewing conservative ideology eventually proved immensely important in American political life, their impact was not immediately felt. They did not yet have a champion.

In the post–World War II years, the Republican Party faced a fork in the road. Its complete lack of electoral success since the Depression led to a battle within the party about how to revive its electoral prospects. The more conservative faction, represented by Ohio senator Robert Taft (son of former president William Howard Taft) and backed by many party activists and financiers such as J. Howard Pew, sought to take the party further to the right, particularly in economic matters, by rolling back New Deal programs and policies. On the other hand, the more moderate wing of the party, led by men such as New York governors Thomas Dewey and Nelson Rockefeller, sought to embrace and reform New Deal programs and policies. There were further disagreements among party members about how involved the United States should be in the world. Issues such as foreign aid, collective security, and how best to fight communism divided the party.

Initially, the moderates, or "liberals," won control of the party with the nomination of Thomas Dewey in 1948. Dewey's shocking loss to Truman, however, emboldened conservatives, who rallied around Taft as the 1952 presidential primaries approached. With the conservative banner riding high in the party, General Dwight D. Eisenhower (known to all as "Ike"), Supreme Commander of Allied forces in Western Europe during World War II and the first Supreme Allied Commander in Europe for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), felt obliged to join the race in order to beat back the conservatives and "prevent one of our great two Parties from adopting a course which could lead to national suicide." In addition to his fear that Taft and the conservatives would undermine collective security arrangements such as NATO, he also berated the "neanderthals" in his party for their anti–New Deal stance. Eisenhower felt that the best way to stop communism was to undercut its appeal by alleviating the conditions under which it was most attractive. That meant supporting New Deal programs. There was also a political calculus to Eisenhower's position. He observed, "Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history."[33]

The primary contest between Taft and Eisenhower was close and controversial. Taft supporters claimed that Eisenhower stole the nomination from Taft at the convention. Eisenhower, attempting to placate the conservatives in his party, picked California congressman and virulent anticommunist Richard Nixon as his running mate. With the Republican nomination sewn up, the immensely popular Eisenhower swept to victory in the 1952 general election, easily besting Truman's hand-picked successor, Adlai Stevenson. Eisenhower's popularity boosted Republicans across the country, leading them to majorities in both houses of Congress.

The Republican sweep in the 1952 election, owing in part to Eisenhower's popularity, translated into few tangible legislative accomplishments. Within two years of his election, the moderate Eisenhower saw his legislative proposals routinely defeated by an unlikely alliance of conservative Republicans, who thought Eisenhower was going too far, and liberal Democrats, who thought he was not going far enough. For example, in 1954 Eisenhower proposed a national healthcare plan that would have provided federal support for increasing coverage across the nation without getting the government directly involved in regulating the healthcare industry. The proposal was defeated in the House of Representatives by a 238–134 vote with a swing bloc of seventy-five conservative Republicans joining liberal Democrats voting against the plan.[34] Eisenhower's proposals in education and agriculture often suffered similar defeats. By the end of his presidency, Ike's domestic legislative achievements were largely limited to expanding social security; making Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) a cabinet position; passing the National Defense Education Act; and bolstering federal support to education, particularly in math and science.

As with any president, however, Eisenhower's impact was bigger than just legislation. Ike's "middle of the road" philosophy guided his foreign policy as much as his domestic agenda. He sought to keep the United States from direct interventions abroad by bolstering anticommunist and procapitalist allies. Ike funneled money to the French in Vietnam fighting the Ho Chi Minh–led communists, walked a tight line between helping Chiang Kai-Shek's Taiwan without overtly provoking Mao Zedong's China, and materially backed groups that destabilized "unfriendly" governments in Iran and Guatemala. The centerpiece of Ike's Soviet policy, meanwhile, was the threat of "massive retaliation," or the threat of nuclear force in the face of communist expansion, thereby checking Soviet expansion without direct American involvement. While Ike's "mainstream" "middle way" won broad popular support, his own party was slowly moving away from his positions. By 1964 the party had moved far enough to the right to nominate Arizona senator Barry Goldwater, the most conservative candidate in a generation. The political moderation of the Affluent Society proved little more than a way station on the road to liberal reforms and a more distant conservative ascendancy.

VII. Conclusion

The postwar American "consensus" held great promise. Despite the looming threat of nuclear war, millions experienced unprecedented prosperity and an increasingly proud American identity. Prosperity seemed to promise ever higher standards of living. But things fell apart, the center could not hold: wracked by contradiction, dissent, discrimination, and inequality, the Affluent Society stood on the precipice of revolution.

VIII. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by James McKay, with content contributions by Moisés Acuña-Gurrola, Carlos Blanton, Edwin C. Breeden, Aaron Cowan, Elsa Devienne, Maggie Flamingo, Destin Jenkins, Kyle Livie, Jennifer Mandel, James McKay, Laura Redford, Ronny Regev, and Tanya Roth.

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25: The Sixties



"Participants, some carrying American flags, marching in the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965," via Library of Congress.

I. Introduction

Perhaps no decade has been so immortalized in American popular 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, the decade symbolized for many people the hope for a more inclusive, forward-thinking nation. But the decade was also plagued by strife, tragedy, and chaos. It was the decade not only of monumental civil rights legislation and cultural transformation but also the Vietnam War, inner-city riots, assassinations, and a political backlash 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.

II. The Civil Rights Movement Accelerates

So much of the energy and character of the sixties emerged from the civil rights movement, which won its greatest victories in the early years of the decade. The movement itself was changing. Many of the civil rights activists pushing for desegregation in the 1950s were middle-class and middle-aged. By the 1960s, a new student movement arose whose members wanted swifter, broader, and more immediate changes in the segregated South. Confrontational protests, marches, boycotts, and sit-ins accelerated.[1]

The tone of the modern US civil rights movement changed at a North Carolina department store in 1960, when four African American students participated in a sit-in at a whites-only lunch counter. The 1960 Greensboro sit-ins established a formula: Black and white activists sat at segregated lunch counters in defiance of segregation practices, refusing to leave until being served and willing to be ridiculed, attacked, and arrested if they were not. Inaction perpetuated segregation: sit-ins and the broader array of direct action tactics that followed were designed to break apart the southern status quo by finally forcing the issue. Store owners facing sit-ins, for instance, could desegregate and incur the wrath of segregationists or refuse service and draw the ire of Black customers and white liberals—photographers captured violent counterprotests by white crowds, images that stirred sympathies across the nation—or close altogether, conceding profits. Many campaigns succeeded not only in their narrow aims but in proving the viability of direct action: Woolworth's department stores desegregated within a month of the sit-ins, prompting copycat demonstrations across the South. Many Black southerners refused any longer to wait patiently for desegregation. Increasingly disenchanted with the seemingly distant, professionalized civil rights leadership of older southern

ministers, Ella Baker left King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and helped organize the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, often pronounced "snick") that year. She embraced the direct, grassroots action of student activists such as Julian Bond, Stokely Carmichael, Diane Nash, John Lewis, and countless others who would push the civil rights movement in a new, more confrontational direction.[2]

The following year, in 1961, activists innovated a variation of the sit-in by participating in what became known as the Freedom Rides. Members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized interstate bus rides to test a Supreme Court ruling that outlawed segregation on public buses and trains, which many southern states had ignored. An interracial group of Freedom Riders boarded buses in Washington, D.C., with the intention of sitting in integrated patterns on the buses as they traveled through the Deep South. On the initial rides in May 1961, the riders encountered fierce resistance in Alabama. Angry mobs composed of KKK members and other locals stopped the buses in Anniston, firebombing one, and beating the activists who escaped. The remaining bus continued to Birmingham, where the local police department granted a mob composed of Klan members and other locals fifteen minutes of freedom to bloody the riders at the city's Greyhound terminal. Additional Freedom Rides launched through the summer and generated national attention amid additional violent resistance. Ultimately, the Interstate Commerce Commission enforced integrated interstate buses and trains in November 1961.[3]

In the fall of 1961, civil rights activists descended on Albany, a small city in southwest Georgia. Albany may have seemed an unlikely place for the civil rights movement to rally, but the city, known for its entrenched segregation and racial violence, attracted local and regional civil rights activism that coalesced as the Albany Movement, a coalition of civil rights organizers that included locals as well as members of SNCC, the SCLC, and the NAACP. But the movement was stymied by Albany police chief Laurie Pritchett, who launched mass arrests but refused to engage in police brutality and bailed out leading activists, denying the movement the drama and the headlines that had buoyed them forward elsewhere. It was a lesson for civil rights activists.[4]



James Meredith, accompanied by U.S. Marshalls, walks to class at the University of Mississippi in 1962. Meredith was the first African-American student admitted to the still segregated Ole Miss. Marion S. Trikosko, "Integration at Ole Miss[issippi] Univ[ersity]," 1962. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003688159/.

As the civil rights movement garnered more followers and more attention, white resistance stiffened. In October 1962, James Meredith became the first African American student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Meredith's enrollment sparked riots on the Oxford campus, prompting President Kennedy to send in US Marshals and National Guardsmen to maintain order. On an evening that became known as the Battle of Ole Miss, segregationists clashed with troops in the middle of campus, resulting in two deaths and hundreds of injuries. Violence served as a reminder of the strength of white resistance to the civil rights movement, particularly in the realm of education.[2]

The following year, 1963, was perhaps the decade's most eventful year for civil rights. In April and May, the SCLC organized the Birmingham Campaign, a broad campaign of direct action aiming to topple segregation in what was widely considered America's most segregated city. Activists deployed a relentless series of boycotts, sit-ins, and peaceful marches as part of "Project C" (for "confrontation"). SCLC leader Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed, prompting his famous handwritten letter urging not only his nonviolent approach but active confrontation to directly challenge injustice. Unlike in Albany, Birmingham's police commissioner,

Eugene “Bull” Connor, embraced all-out violence. Photographs and footage of overflowing jails and police officers using fire hoses and attack dogs on Black activists spread around the world. Multiple bombs targeted Black homes, Black businesses, and Black churches that summer, part of a larger pattern of bombings by Klan members and other whites in “Bombingham” during the civil rights era. Four young Black girls were killed when the 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed on September 15. Birmingham’s brutality shocked the moral conscience of many otherwise indifferent Americans, and public pressure yielded an agreement to desegregate public accommodations in the city: activists in Birmingham scored a victory for civil rights and drew international praise for the nonviolent approach in the face of police-sanctioned violence and bombings (King, already the face of the American civil rights movement, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the following year).[5]

The prominence of King and other Black pastors underscored the particular role that Black churches, the Black faith, and Black religious figures played in the civil rights movement. Protesters sang hymns and spirituals as they marched. Preachers rallied the people with messages of justice and hope. Churches hosted meetings, prayer vigils, and conferences on nonviolent resistance. Not all civil rights workers, of course, embraced the role of Black pastors—younger activists, who mocked King as “da lawd,” complained about what they often saw as the capricious, autocratic nature of the pastors who led the SCLC; for their part, many women in the movement chafed against the male-dominated leadership. Nevertheless, the overtly spiritual thrust of much of the movement not only propelled Black activists forward with visions of a prophetic faith in the face of often violent resistance, it confronted the broader postwar American society by framing segregation as a moral evil.[6]



Alabama governor George Wallace stands defiantly at the door of the University of Alabama, blocking the attempted integration of the school. Wallace was perhaps the most notoriously pro-segregation politician of the 1960s, proudly proclaiming in his 1963 inaugural address “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.” Warren K. Leffler, “[Governor George Wallace attempting to block integration at the University of Alabama],” June 11, 1963. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003688161/.

At the same time, white resistance in the South intensified. Few political figures in the decade embodied the working-class, conservative views held by millions of white Americans quite like George Wallace. Wallace’s vocal stance on segregation was immortalized in his 1963 inaugural address as Alabama governor with the infamous line “Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!” Just as the civil rights movement began to gain unprecedented strength, Wallace became a champion to the many white Americans—in and out of the South—who opposed the movement.[7] Wallace loudly supported segregation as governor of Alabama. His efforts were largely symbolic, but they earned him national recognition as a political figure willing to fight for what many southerners saw as their traditional way of life. In June 1963, just five months after becoming governor, in his “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door,” Wallace famously blocked the door of Foster Auditorium to protest integration at the University of Alabama (he withdrew after President Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard). Kennedy addressed the nation that evening, criticizing Wallace and calling for a comprehensive civil rights bill. “This nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free,” he said, adding that “Those who do nothing are inviting shame as well as violence.” A day later, civil rights leader Medgar Evers, a thirty-seven-year-old World War II veteran and Mississippi’s first NAACP field secretary, was assassinated at his home in Jackson, Mississippi.[8]



Men and women demonstrate during the March on Washington on August 28, 1963. Library of Congress.

That summer, civil rights leaders organized the August 1963 March on Washington. The march called for, among other things, civil rights legislation, school integration, an end to discrimination by public and private employers, job training for the unemployed, and an increase in the minimum wage. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, an internationally renowned call for civil rights that raised the movement's profile to new heights and put unprecedented pressure on politicians to pass meaningful civil rights legislation.[9]



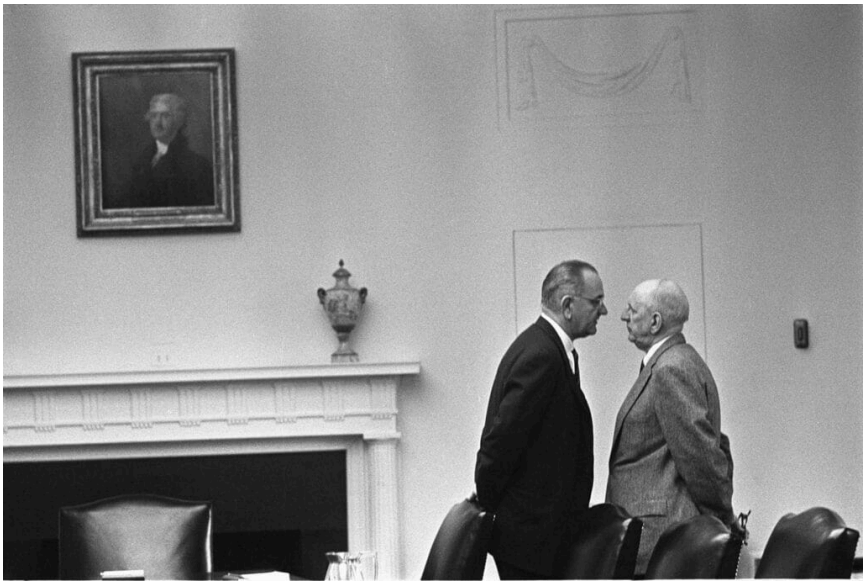
White activists increasingly joined African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. This photograph shows Martin Luther King, Jr., and other black civil rights leaders arm-in-arm with leaders of the Jewish community. Photograph, August 28, 1963. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...ug_28_1963.jpg.

Kennedy offered support for a civil rights bill, but southern resistance was intense, and Kennedy was unwilling to expend much political capital on it. And so the bill stalled in Congress. The months passed by, and Kennedy, with his eye on the following year's presidential election, traveled to Texas in the fall of 1963 to meet with fractious Democratic Party leaders there. On November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. The nation's youthful, popular president was gone. Vice President Lyndon Johnson took the oath of office before he left Dallas.



Lyndon B. Johnson sits with Civil Rights Leaders in the White House. One of Johnson's greatest legacies would be his staunch support of civil rights legislation. Photograph, January 18, 1964. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...ts_leaders.jpg.

Johnson lacked Kennedy's youth, his charisma, his popularity, and his aristocratic upbringing, but no one knew Washington better and no one before or since fought harder and more successfully to pass meaningful civil rights legislation. Raised in poverty in the Texas Hill Country, Johnson scratched and clawed his way up the political ladder. Both ruthlessly ambitious and keenly conscious of poverty and injustice, he idolized Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. Johnson, a fifty-five-year-old white southerner with a thick Texas drawl, embraced the civil rights movement. He took Kennedy's stalled civil rights bill, ensured that it would have teeth, and navigated it through Congress. The following summer he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, widely considered to be among the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in American history. The comprehensive act barred segregation in public accommodations and outlawed discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, and national or religious origin.



Lyndon B. Johnson was not afraid to use whatever means necessary to get his legislation passed. Johnson was notoriously crude, rude, and irreverent, making the massive amount of legislation he got passed even more incredible. Yoichi R. Okamoto, Photograph of Lyndon B. Johnson pressuring Senator Richard Russell, December 17, 1963. Wikimedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ly...rd_Russell.jpg.

The civil rights movement created space for political leaders to pass legislation, and the movement continued pushing forward. Direct action continued through the summer of 1964, as student-run organizations like SNCC and CORE helped with the Freedom Summer in Mississippi, a drive to register African American voters in a state with an ugly and extensive history of disenfranchisement. Freedom Summer campaigners set up schools for African American children. Even with progress, intimidation and violent resistance against civil rights continued, particularly in regions with long-standing traditions of

segregation and discrimination. Three young CORE activists, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, were murdered by local law enforcement officers and Klan members in Neshoba County, outside of Philadelphia, Mississippi.[10] With Black voters barred from participating in the Mississippi Democratic Party primary, a coalition of civil rights groups in Mississippi organized the alternative Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP); in August, over two thousand assembled in Jackson to select delegates. The MFDP demanded that its delegates be seated at the Democratic National Convention. Denied anything more than two at-large seats, the MFDP sprotested.[11] "I question America," co-founder Fannie Lou Hamer said in a nationally televised address. "Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?" she asked.



Five leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. From left: Bayard Rustin, Andrew Young, N.Y. Congressman William Ryan, James Farmer, and John Lewis in 1965. Stanley Wolfson, Photograph, 1965. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98515229/.

Activists kept fighting. In March 1965, activists attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, on behalf of African American voting rights. In a narrative that had become all too familiar, what became known as "Bloody Sunday"—Sunday, March 7, 1965—featured peaceful protesters being attacked by white law enforcement with batons and tear gas. After they were turned away violently a second time, marchers finally made the fifty-mile trek to the Alabama State Capitol later in the month. Coverage of the first march prompted President Johnson to present the bill that became the Voting Rights Act of 1965, an act that abolished voting discrimination in federal, state, and local elections. In two consecutive years, landmark pieces of legislation had assaulted de jure (by law) segregation and disenfranchisement.[12]

III. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society

On a May morning in 1964, President Johnson laid out a sweeping vision for a package of domestic reforms known as the Great Society. Speaking before that year's graduates of the University of Michigan, Johnson called for "an end to poverty and racial injustice" and challenged both the graduates and American people to "enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization." At its heart, he promised, the Great Society would uplift racially and economically disenfranchised Americans, too long denied access to federal guarantees of equal democratic and economic opportunity, while simultaneously raising all Americans' standards and quality of life.[13]

The Great Society's legislation was breathtaking in scope, and many of its programs and agencies are still with us today. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 codified federal support for many of the civil rights movement's goals by prohibiting job discrimination, abolishing the segregation of public accommodations, and providing vigorous federal oversight of southern states' election laws to guarantee equal access to the ballot. Ninety years after Reconstruction, these measures effectively ended Jim Crow. Moreover, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, or the Hart-Celler Act, abolished the national-origins quota regime established by the 1924 Reed-Johnson Act. American immigration, which had for more than four decades effectively barred legal immigration to the United States from anywhere other than Northern and Western Europe, finally opened the United States up to the world. Despite promises from Senator Ted Kennedy that "it will not upset the ethnic mix of our society," the new law forever reshaped the demographics of the nation.[14]

In addition to civil rights and immigration, the Great Society took on a range of quality-of-life concerns that seemed suddenly solvable in a society of such affluence. The first federal food stamp program tackled hunger. Medicare and Medicaid would ensure access to quality medical care for the aged and the poor. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was the first sustained and significant federal investment in public education, totaling more than $1 billion. Federal funds were poured into colleges and universities. The Great Society also established the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, offering federal investments in the world of arts and letters.

While these programs persisted and even thrived, in the years immediately following this flurry of legislative activity, the national conversation surrounding Johnson's domestic agenda largely focused on the $3 billion spent on War on Poverty programming within the Great Society's Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964. No EOA program was more controversial than Community Action, considered the cornerstone antipoverty program. Johnson's antipoverty planners felt that the key to uplifting disenfranchised and impoverished Americans was involving poor and marginalized citizens in the actual administration of poverty programs, what they called "maximum feasible participation." Community Action Programs would give disenfranchised Americans a seat at the table in planning and executing federally funded programs that were meant to benefit them—a significant sea change in the nation's efforts to confront poverty, which had historically relied on local political and business elites or charitable organizations for administration.[15]

In fact, Johnson himself had never conceived of poor Americans running their own poverty programs. While the president's rhetoric offered a stirring vision of the future, he had singularly old-school notions for how his poverty policies would work. In contrast to "maximum feasible participation," the president imagined a second New Deal: local elite-run public works camps that would instill masculine virtues in unemployed young men. Community Action Agencies almost entirely bypassed local administrations and sought to build grassroots civil rights and community advocacy organizations, many of which had originated in the broader civil rights movement. Despite widespread support for most Great Society programs, the War on Poverty increasingly became the focal point of domestic criticisms from the left and the right. On the left, frustrated Americans recognized the president's resistance to further empowering disenfranchised communities and assailed the growing American commitment to the war in Vietnam, the cost of which undercut domestic poverty spending. As racial unrest and violence swept across urban centers, critics from the right lambasted federal spending for "unworthy" citizens.

Johnson had secured a series of meaningful civil rights laws, but then things began to stall. Days after the ratification of the Voting Rights Act, race riots broke out in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. Rioting in Watts, triggered by an act of police violence, stemmed from local African American frustrations with residential segregation, police brutality, and racial profiling. Waves of riots rocked American cities every summer thereafter. Particularly destructive riots occurred in 1967—two summers later—in Newark and Detroit. Each resulted in deaths, injuries, arrests, and millions of dollars in property damage. In spite of Black achievements, struggles persisted for many African Americans. The phenomenon of "white flight"—when whites in metropolitan areas fled city centers for the suburbs—often resulted in resegregated residential patterns, the economic collapse of urban centers, and the decimation of tax bases and city services. Limited economic and social opportunities for those left behind bred despair. In addition to reminding the nation that the civil rights cause was a complex, ongoing movement without any concrete political endpoint, the unrest in northern cities reinforced the notion that the struggle was not occurring solely in the South. Many Americans also viewed the riots as an indictment of the Great Society, President Johnson's sweeping agenda of domestic programs that sought to remedy inner-city ills by offering better access to education, jobs, medical care, housing, and other forms of social welfare. The civil rights movement would never be the same.[16]

The Civil Rights Acts, the Voting Rights Acts, and the War on Poverty provoked conservative resistance and catalyzed the rise of the Republican Party in the South and the West. However, subsequent presidents and Congresses left intact the bulk of the Great Society, including Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, federal spending for arts and literature, and Head Start. Even Community Action Programs, so fraught during their few short years of activity, empowered future generations of community activists who had never before felt, as one put it, that "this government is with us." For all of their many accomplishments, Johnson's domestic programs frustrated both ends of American political spectrum and suffered neglect when Johnson turned his attention to the international stage.[17]

IV. The Origins of the Vietnam War

American involvement in the Vietnam War began during the postwar period of decolonization. The Soviet Union backed many nationalist movements across the globe, but the United States feared the expansion of communist influence and pledged to confront any revolutions aligned against Western capitalism. The Domino Theory—the idea that if a country fell to communism, then neighboring states would soon follow—governed American foreign policy. After the communist takeover of China in 1949, the United States financially supported the French military's effort to retain control over its colonies in Vietnam, Cambodia, and

Laos.

Between 1946 and 1954, France fought a counterinsurgency campaign against the nationalist Viet Minh forces, led by Ho Chi Minh, fighting for an independent Vietnam. The United States assisted the French war effort with funds, arms, and advisors, but it was not enough. On the eve of the Geneva Peace Conference in 1954, Viet Minh forces defeated the French army at Dien Bien Phu. The conference temporarily divided Vietnam into two separate states until UN-monitored elections occurred. But the United States, fearing a communist electoral victory, blocked the elections. The temporary partition became permanent. The United States established the Republic of Vietnam, or South Vietnam, with the US-backed Ngo Dinh Diem as prime minister. Diem, who had lived in the United States, was a committed anticommunist.

Diem's government, however, and its Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) could not contain the communist insurgency seeking the reunification of Vietnam. The Americans provided weapons and support, but despite a clear numerical and technological advantage, South Vietnam stumbled before insurgent Vietcong (VC) units. Diem, a corrupt leader propped up by the American government with little domestic support, was assassinated in 1963. A merry-go-round of military dictators followed as the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. The American public, though, remained largely unaware of Vietnam in the early 1960s, even as President Kennedy deployed some sixteen thousand military advisors to help South Vietnam suppress a domestic communist insurgency.[18]

This all changed in 1964. On August 2 of that year, the USS Maddox reported incoming fire from North Vietnamese ships in the Gulf of Tonkin. Although the details of the incident are controversial, the Johnson administration exploited the event to provide a pretext for escalating American involvement in Vietnam. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, granting President Johnson the authority to deploy the American military to defend South Vietnam. US Marines landed in Vietnam in March 1965, and the American ground war began.

American forces under General William Westmoreland were tasked with defending South Vietnam against the insurgent VC and the regular North Vietnamese Army (NVA). But no matter how many troops the Americans sent or how many bombs they dropped, they could not win. This was a different kind of war. Progress was not measured by cities won or territory taken but by body counts and kill ratios. Although American officials like Westmoreland and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara claimed a communist defeat was on the horizon, by 1968 half a million American troops were stationed in Vietnam, nearly twenty thousand had been killed, and the war was still no closer to being won. Protests, which provided the backdrop for the American counterculture, erupted across the country.

V. Culture and Activism



Epitomizing the folk music and protest culture of 1960s youth, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan are pictured here singing together at the March on Washington in 1963. Photograph, Wikimedia, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi..._Bob_Dylan.jpg.

The 1960s wrought enormous cultural change. The United States that entered the decade looked and sounded not much like the one that left it. Rebellion rocked the supposedly hidebound conservatism of the 1950s as the youth counterculture became

mainstream. Native Americans, Chicanos, women, and environmentalists participated in movements demonstrating that rights activism could be applied to ethnicity, gender, and nature. In each instance, the decade brought substantial progress, and activism remained fluid and unfinished.

Much of the American counterculture was filtered through popular culture and consumption. The consumer culture of the 1950s still saturated the country, and advertisers continued to appeal to teenagers and the expanding youth market. During the 1960s, though, advertisers looked to a growing counterculture to sell their products. Popular culture and popular advertising in the 1950s had promoted an ethos of "fitting in" and buying products to conform. The new countercultural ethos touted "individuality" and "rebellion." Some advertisers were subtle; ads for Volkswagens acknowledged the flaws and strange look of their cars. One VW ad perversely presented "America's slowest fastback," an automobile that "won't go over 72 mph" even if "the speedometer shows a wildly optimistic top speed of 90." Another stated, "If you run out of gas, it's easy to push." By marketing the car's flaws and reframing them as positive qualities, the advertisers commercialized young people's resistance to commercialism, while simultaneously positioning the Volkswagen as a car for those wanting to stand out in a crowd. A more obviously countercultural ad for the VW Bug showed two cars: one black and one painted in a messy, multicolor, hippie style; the contrasting captions read, "We do our thing," and "You do yours."

Companies marketed their products as countercultural in and of themselves. One of the more obvious examples was a 1968 ad from Columbia Records, a hugely successful record label since the 1920s. The ad pictured a group of stock rebellious characters—a shaggy-haired white hippie, a buttoned-up Beat, two biker types, and a Black jazz man sporting an Afro—in a jail cell. The counterculture had been busted, the ad states, but "The Man can't bust our music." Merely buying records from Columbia was an act of rebellion, one that brought the buyer closer to the counterculture figures portrayed in the ad.[19]

But it wasn't just advertising: the culture was changing and changing rapidly. Conservative cultural norms were falling everywhere. The dominant style of women's fashion in the 1950s, for instance, was the poodle skirt and the sweater, tight-waisted and buttoned up. The 1960s ushered in an era of much less restrictive clothing. Capri pants became popular casual wear. Skirts became shorter. When Mary Quant invented the miniskirt in 1964, she said it was a garment "in which you could move, in which you could run and jump."[20] By the late 1960s, the hippies' more androgynous look became trendy. Such trends bespoke the new popular ethos of the 1960s: freedom, rebellion, and individuality.

In a decade plagued by social and political instability, the American counterculture also sought psychedelic drugs as its remedy for alienation. For middle-class white teenagers, society had become stagnant and bureaucratic. The New Left, for instance, arose on college campuses frustrated with the lifeless bureaucracies that they believed strangled true freedom. Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) began its life as a drug used primarily in psychological research before trickling down into college campuses and out into the society at large. The counterculture's notion that American stagnation could be remedied by a spiritual-psychedelic experience drew heavily from psychologists and sociologists. The popularity of these drugs also spurred a political backlash. By 1966, enough incidents had been connected to LSD to spur a Senate hearing on the drug, and newspapers were reporting that hundreds of LSD users had been admitted to psychiatric wards.

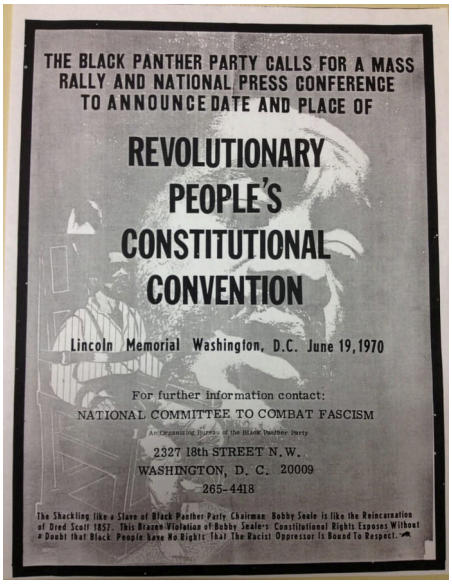
The counterculture conquered popular culture. Rock 'n' roll, liberalized sexuality, an embrace of diversity, recreational drug use, new age spiritualism, unalloyed idealism, and pure earnestness marked the new generation. Criticized by conservatives as culturally dangerous and by leftists as empty hedonistic narcissism, the youth culture nevertheless dominated headlines and steered American culture. Perhaps one hundred thousand youth descended on San Francisco for the utopic promise of 1967's Summer of Love. 1969's Woodstock concert in upstate New York became shorthand for the new youth culture and its mixture of politics, protest, and personal fulfillment. While the ascendance of the hippies would be both exaggerated and short-lived, and while Vietnam and Richard Nixon shattered much of its idealism, the counterculture's liberated social norms and its embrace of personal fulfillment still define much of American culture.

VI. Beyond Civil Rights



Like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois before them, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X represented two styles of racial uplift while maintaining the same general goal of ending racial discrimination. How they would get to that goal is where the men diverged. Marion S. Trikosko, "[Martin Luther King and Malcolm X waiting for press conference]," March 26, 1964. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/92522562/.

Despite substantial legislative achievements, frustrations grew with the slow pace of change not just in civil rights law but in addressing broader racial inequalities. Racial tensions continued to mount in cities, and the tone of the civil rights movement changed yet again. Activists became less conciliatory in their calls for progress. Many embraced the more militant message of the burgeoning Black Power movement and Malcolm X, a Nation of Islam (NOI) minister who encouraged African Americans to pursue freedom, equality, and justice "by any means necessary." Prior to his assassination in 1965, Malcolm X and the NOI emerged as the radical alternative to the racially integrated, largely Protestant approach of Martin Luther King Jr. Malcolm X advocated armed resistance in defense of the safety and well-being of Black Americans, stating, "I don't call it violence when it's self-defense, I call it intelligence." Even a less militant Black nationalism rejected the promises of racial integration, believing that only a Black-centric program of racial uplift would offer liberation through economic self-determination, Afrocentric cultural expression, and collective uplift. For his part, King and the leaders of more mainstream organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League criticized both Malcolm X and the NOI for what they perceived to be racial demagoguery. King believed Malcolm X's speeches were a "great disservice" to Black Americans, claiming that they lamented the problems of African Americans without offering solutions. The differences between King and Malcolm X represented a core ideological tension that would inhabit Black political thought throughout the 1960s and beyond.[21]



The Black Panther Party used radical and incendiary tactics to bring attention to the continued oppression of blacks in America. Read the bottom paragraph on this rally poster carefully. Wikimedia.

By the late 1960s, SNCC, led by figures such as Stokely Carmichael, had expelled its white members and shunned the interracial effort in the rural South, focusing instead on injustices in northern urban areas. After President Johnson refused to take up the cause of the Black delegates in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, SNCC activists became frustrated with institutional tactics and turned away from the organization's founding principle of nonviolence (the organization later changed its name from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to the Student National Coordinating Committee). This evolving, more assertive movement called for African Americans to play a dominant role in cultivating Black institutions and articulating Black interests rather than relying on more moderate, interracialist approaches. At a June 1966 civil rights march, Carmichael told the crowd, "What we gonna start saying now is black power!"[22] The slogan not only resonated with audiences, it also stood in direct contrast to King's "Freedom Now!" campaign. The political slogan of Black power could encompass many meanings, but at its core it stood for the self-determination of Black people in political, economic, cultural, and social organizations.

Carmichael asserted that "black power means black people coming together to form a political force."[23] For others it meant armed self-defense. Even in the South, groups such as the Deacons for Defense and Justice, which emerged in Louisiana in 1964, began arming themselves to protect Black activists against racial violence.[24] But Black armed resistance would find its most popular expression outside of the South. In 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party for Self Defense in Oakland, California. The Black Panthers became the standard-bearers for direct action and self-defense, using the concept of decolonization in their drive to liberate Black communities from white power structures. The revolutionary organization also sought reparations and exemptions for Black men from the military draft. Citing police brutality and racist governmental policies, the Black Panthers aligned themselves with the "other people of color in the world" against whom America was fighting abroad. Although many white Americans were most struck by the Panthers' open display of weapons, military-style dress, and Black nationalist beliefs, the Party was committed to racial uplift: their 10-Point Plan included employment, housing, and education. The Black Panthers worked in local communities to run "survival programs" that provided food, clothing, medical treatment, Afrocentric education, and drug rehabilitation. They focused on modes of resistance that empowered Black activists on their own terms.[25]

But African Americans weren't the only Americans working to assert themselves in the 1960s. The successes of the civil rights movement and growing grassroots activism inspired countless new movements. In the summer of 1961, for instance, frustrated Native American university students founded the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) to draw attention to the plight of Indigenous Americans. In the Pacific Northwest, the council advocated for tribal fisherman to retain immunity from conservation laws on reservations and in 1964 held a series of "fish-ins": activists and celebrities cast nets and waited for the police to arrest them.[26] The NIYC's militant rhetoric and use of direct action marked the beginning of what was called the Red Power movement, an intertribal movement designed to draw attention to Native issues and to protest discrimination. The American Indian Movement (AIM) and other activists staged dramatic demonstrations. In November 1969, dozens began a year-and-a-half-long occupation of the abandoned Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. In 1973, hundreds occupied the town of Wounded Knee,

South Dakota, site of the infamous 1890 massacre, for several months.[27]

Meanwhile, the Chicano movement in the 1960s emerged out of the broader Mexican American civil rights movement of the post–World War II era. The word Chicano was initially considered a derogatory term for Mexican immigrants, until activists in the 1960s reclaimed the term and used it as a catalyst to campaign for political and social change among Mexican Americans. The Chicano movement confronted discrimination in schools, politics, agriculture, and other formal and informal institutions. Organizations like the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) and the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDF) buoyed the Chicano movement and patterned themselves after similar influential groups in the African American civil rights movement.[28]



The 1966 Rio Grande Valley Farm Workers March ("La Marcha"). August 27, 1966. Via the University of Texas-San Antonio Libraries' Special Collections (MS 360: E-0012-187-D-16)

Cesar Chavez became the most well-known figure of the Chicano movement, using nonviolent tactics to campaign for workers' rights in the grape fields of California. Chavez and activist Dolores Huerta founded the National Farm Workers Association, which eventually merged and became the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA). The UFWA fused the causes of Chicano and Filipino activists protesting the subpar working conditions of California farmers on American soil. In addition to embarking on a hunger strike and a boycott of table grapes, Chavez led a three-hundred-mile march in March and April 1966 from Delano, California, to the state capital of Sacramento. The pro-labor campaign garnered the national spotlight and the support of prominent political figures such as Robert Kennedy. Today, Chavez's birthday, March 31, is observed as a federal holiday in California, Colorado, and Texas.

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales was another activist whose calls for Chicano self-determination resonated long past the 1960s. A former boxer and Denver native, Gonzales founded the Crusade for Justice in 1966, an organization that would establish the first annual Chicano Liberation Day at the National Chicano Youth Conference. The conference also yielded the Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, a Chicano nationalist manifesto that reflected Gonzales's vision of Chicanos as a unified, historically grounded, all-encompassing group fighting against discrimination in the United States. By 1970, the Texas-based La Raza Unida political party had a strong foundation for promoting Chicano nationalism and continuing the campaign for Mexican American civil rights.[29]

The feminist movement also grew in the 1960s. Rooted in activism that stretched back to the suffragists and the quest for the Equal Rights Amendment, American women advanced new causes during the 1960s. Soon the country felt the groundswell of a rising feminist consciousness.[30]

An older generation of women who preferred to work within state institutions figured prominently in the early part of the decade. When John F. Kennedy established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt headed the effort. The commission's official report, a self-declared "invitation to action," was released in 1963. Finding discriminatory provisions in the law and practices of industrial, labor, and governmental organizations, the commission advocated for "changes, many of them long overdue, in the conditions of women's opportunity in the United States."[31] Change was recommended in employment practices, federal tax and benefit policies affecting women's income, labor laws, and services

for women as wives, mothers, and workers. This call for action, if heeded, would ameliorate the types of discrimination primarily experienced by middle- and upper-class white working women, all of whom were used to advocating through institutional structures like government agencies and unions.[32] The specific concerns of poor and nonwhite women lay largely beyond the scope of the report.

Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique hit bookshelves in 1963, the same year the commission released its report. Friedan had been active in the union movement and was by this time a mother in the new suburban landscape of postwar America. In her book, Friedan called it "the problem that has no name," and the action helped many a white middle-class American woman come to see her dissatisfaction as a housewife not as "something . . . wrong with her marriage, or with herself," but as a social problem experienced by millions of American women. Friedan observed that there was "a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform, the image that I came to call the feminine mystique." No longer would women allow society to blame "the problem that has no name" on a loss of femininity, too much education, too much independence, or too much equality. In fact, Friedan's book sparked a "second wave" of American feminism that underlay much of the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s.[33]

In 1966, frustrated by the toothlessness of the Equal Opportunity Commission—job ads were still largely segregated by sex and American firms often explicitly designated lower pay for women[34]5—and the inabilities of existing organizations to address those frustrations, Friedan and other feminist leaders spearheaded the creation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in the belief that "the time has come for a new a new movement toward true equality for all women in America."[35]

Many feminists joined consciousness-raising groups. These groups met in women's homes and at women's centers, providing a safe environment for women to discuss everything from sex discrimination to women's self-image. The goals of consciousness-raising were to increase self-awareness and to validate the experiences of women. Women involved in the New Left and civil rights movement, for instance, found that while male organizers were eager to address issues of race and social class equality, discussion of sexism were often met with ridicule.[36] In 1965, for instance, Casey Hayden and Mary King circulated a memo on sexism in the civil rights movement, in which they captured the reaction of men to their call for women's equality, pointing out that "very few men can respond non-defensively, since the whole idea is either beyond their comprehension or threatens and exposes them. The usual response is laughter."[37]

Groups such as the Redstockings, formed in 1969 "to defend and advance the Women's Liberation Agenda," rejected the idea that women were responsible for their own oppression and instead pointed to larger societal powers and cultural forces. Groups framed such individual experiences as examples of society-wide sexism and insisted that "the personal is political."[38] Consciousness-raising groups created a wealth of personal stories that feminists could use in other forms of activism and crafted networks of women from which activists could mobilize support for protests.

The variety of lived experiences in the United States meant that different women experienced the world in different ways; the women's "movement," if it can be so termed, in the 1960s was necessarily a complex constellation of ideas, goals, and organizations that approached women's inequality from different points of view. Mothers on welfare, for instance, began to form local advocacy groups in addition to the National Welfare Rights Organization, founded in 1966. Mostly Black, these activists fought for greater benefits and more control over welfare policy and implementation. Women like Johnnie Tillmon successfully advocated for larger grants for school clothes and household equipment in addition to gaining due process and fair administrative hearings prior to termination of welfare entitlements. In response to the whiteness of many prominent feminist organizations (and the perceived narrowness of its imagination of "women's issues"), Black, Chicana, Asian, and Indigenous women often formed their own groups, existing alongside more prominent white-led organizations but operating with fewer resources and with much less attention. But they labored nonetheless.



The women's movement stagnated after gaining the vote in 1920, but by the 1960s it was back in full force. Inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and fed up with gender discrimination, women took to the streets to demand their rights as American citizens. Warren K. Leffler, "Women's lib[eration] march from Farrugut Sq[uare] to Layfette [i.e., Lafayette] P[ar]k," August 26, 1970. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003673992/.

The end of the decade was marked by the Women's Strike for Equality, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of women's right to vote. Sponsored by NOW, the 1970 protest focused on employment discrimination, political equality, abortion, free childcare, and equality in marriage. All of these issues foreshadowed the backlash against feminist goals in the 1970s. Not only would feminism face opposition from other women who valued the traditional homemaker role to which feminists so strenuously objected, the feminist movement would also fracture internally as women of color challenged white feminists' racism and lesbians vied for more prominence within feminist organizations.

American environmentalism's significant gains during the 1960s emerged, in part, from Americans' recreational use of nature. Postwar Americans backpacked, went to the beach, fished, and joined birding organizations in greater numbers than ever before. These experiences, along with increased formal education, made Americans more aware of threats to the environment and, consequently, to themselves. Many of these threats increased in the postwar years as developers bulldozed open space for suburbs and new hazards emerged from industrial and nuclear pollutants.

By the time biologist Rachel Carson published her landmark book Silent Spring in 1962, a nascent environmentalism had emerged in America. Silent Spring stood out as an unparalleled argument for the interconnectedness of ecological and human health. Pesticides, Carson argued, also posed a threat to human health, and their overuse threatened the ecosystems that supported food production. Carson's argument was compelling to many Americans, including President Kennedy, but was virulently opposed by chemical industries that suggested the book was the product of an emotional woman, not a scientist. A new environmental movement would emerge in the 1960s, rally the public to its cause, and, in the early 1970s, usher forth a bevy of bipartisan environmental legislation.[39]

VII. Conclusion

In 1969, Americans hailed the moon landing as a profound victory in the space race against the Soviet Union. This landmark achievement fulfilled the promise of the late John F. Kennedy, who had declared in 1961 that the United States would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. But while Neil Armstrong said his steps marked "one giant leap for mankind," and Americans marveled at the achievement, the brief moment of wonder only punctuated years of turmoil. The Vietnam War disillusioned a generation, riots rocked cities, protests hit campuses, and assassinations robbed the nation of many of its leaders. The forward-thinking spirit of a complex decade had waned. Uncertainty loomed.

VIII. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Samuel Abramson and Kerry Goldmann, with content contributions by Samuel Abramson, Moisés

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Notes

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25. Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).[↩]
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26: The Unraveling



Abandoned Packard Automotive Plant in Detroit, Michigan. Via Wikimedia.

I. Introduction

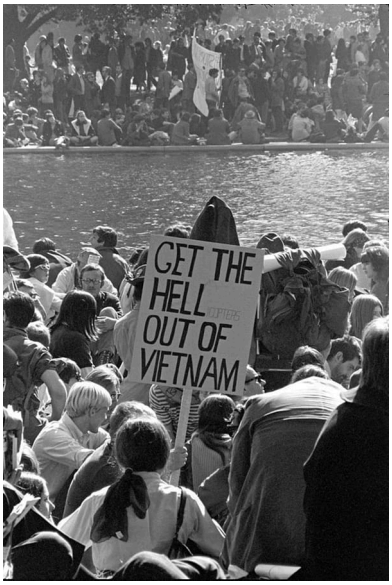
On December 6, 1969, an estimated three hundred thousand people converged on the Altamont Motor Speedway in Northern California for a massive free concert headlined by the Rolling Stones and featuring some of the era's other great rock acts.[1] Only four months earlier, Woodstock had shown the world the power of peace and love and American youth. Altamont was supposed to be "Woodstock West."[2]

But Altamont was a disorganized disaster. Inadequate sanitation, a horrid sound system, and tainted drugs strained concertgoers. To save money, the Hells Angels biker gang was paid $500 in beer to be the show's "security team." The crowd grew progressively angrier throughout the day. Fights broke out. Tensions rose. The Angels, drunk and high, armed themselves with sawed-off pool cues and indiscriminately beat concertgoers who tried to access the stage. The Grateful Dead refused to play. Finally, the Stones came on stage.[3]

The crowd's anger was palpable. Fights continued near the stage. Mick Jagger stopped in the middle of playing "Sympathy for the Devil" to try to calm the crowd: "Everybody be cool now, c'mon," he pleaded. Then, a few songs later, in the middle of "Under My Thumb," eighteen-year-old Meredith Hunter approached the stage and was beaten back. Pissed off and high on methamphetamines, Hunter brandished a pistol, charged again, and was stabbed and killed by an Angel. His lifeless body was stomped into the ground. The Stones just kept playing.[4]

If the more famous Woodstock music festival captured the idyll of the sixties youth culture, Altamont revealed its dark side. There, drugs, music, and youth were associated not with peace and love but with anger, violence, and death. 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. It seemed as if the nation was ready to unravel.

II. The Strain of Vietnam



Frank Wolfe, Vietnam War protestors at the March on the Pentagon, Lyndon B. Johnson Library via Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...e_Pentagon.jpg.

Perhaps no single issue contributed more to public disillusionment than the Vietnam War. As the war deteriorated, the Johnson administration escalated American involvement by deploying hundreds of thousands of troops to prevent the communist takeover of the south. Stalemates, body counts, hazy war aims, and the draft catalyzed an antiwar movement and triggered protests throughout the United States and Europe. With no end in sight, protesters burned draft cards, refused to pay income taxes, occupied government buildings, and delayed trains loaded with war materials. By 1967, antiwar demonstrations were drawing hundreds of thousands. In one protest, hundreds were arrested after surrounding the Pentagon.[5]

Vietnam was the first "living room war."[6] Television, print media, and open access to the battlefield provided unprecedented coverage of the conflict's brutality. Americans confronted grisly images of casualties and atrocities. In 1965, CBS Evening News aired a segment in which US Marines burned the South Vietnamese village of Cam Ne with little apparent regard for the lives of its occupants, who had been accused of aiding Vietcong guerrillas. President Johnson berated the head of CBS, yelling over the phone, "Yesterday your boys shat on the American flag."[7]

While the US government imposed no formal censorship on the press during Vietnam, the White House and military nevertheless used press briefings and interviews to paint a deceptive image of the war. The United States was winning the war, officials claimed. They cited numbers of enemies killed, villages secured, and South Vietnamese troops trained. However, American journalists in Vietnam quickly realized the hollowness of such claims (the press referred to afternoon press briefings in Saigon as the "Five o'Clock Follies").[8] Editors frequently toned down their reporters' pessimism, often citing conflicting information received from their own sources, who were typically government officials. But evidence of a stalemate mounted.

Stories like CBS's Cam Ne piece exposed a credibility gap, the yawning chasm between the claims of official sources and the increasingly evident reality on the ground in Vietnam.[9] Nothing did more to expose this gap than the 1968 Tet Offensive. In January, communist forces attacked more than one hundred American and South Vietnamese sites throughout South Vietnam, including the American embassy in Saigon. While US forces repulsed the attack and inflicted heavy casualties on the Vietcong, Tet demonstrated that despite the repeated claims of administration officials, the enemy could still strike at will anywhere in the country, even after years of war. Subsequent stories and images eroded public trust even further. In 1969, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh revealed that US troops had raped and/or massacred hundreds of civilians in the village of My Lai.[10] Three years later, Americans cringed at Nick Ut's wrenching photograph of a naked Vietnamese child fleeing a South Vietnamese napalm attack. More and more American voices came out against the war.

Reeling from the war's growing unpopularity, on March 31, 1968, President Johnson announced on national television that he would not seek reelection.[11] Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy unsuccessfully battled against Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey, for the Democratic Party nomination (Kennedy was assassinated in June). At the Democratic Party's national

convention in Chicago, local police brutally assaulted protesters on national television.

For many Americans, the violent clashes outside the convention hall reinforced their belief that civil society was unraveling. Republican challenger Richard Nixon played on these fears, running on a platform of "law and order" and a vague plan to end the war. Well aware of domestic pressure to wind down the war, Nixon sought, on the one hand, to appease antiwar sentiment by promising to phase out the draft, train South Vietnamese forces to assume more responsibility for the war effort, and gradually withdraw American troops. Nixon and his advisors called it "Vietnamization."[12] At the same time, Nixon appealed to the so-called silent majority of Americans who still supported the war (and opposed the antiwar movement) by calling for an "honorable" end to US involvement—what he later called "peace with honor."[13] He narrowly edged out Humphrey in the fall's election.

Public assurances of American withdrawal, however, masked a dramatic escalation of conflict. Looking to incentivize peace talks, Nixon pursued a "madman strategy" of attacking communist supply lines across Laos and Cambodia, hoping to convince the North Vietnamese that he would do anything to stop the war.[14] Conducted without public knowledge or congressional approval, the bombings failed to spur the peace process, and talks stalled before the American-imposed November 1969 deadline. News of the attacks renewed antiwar demonstrations. Police and National Guard troops killed six students in separate protests at Jackson State University in Mississippi and, more famously, Kent State University in Ohio in 1970.

Another three years passed—and another twenty thousand American troops died—before an agreement was reached.[15] After Nixon threatened to withdraw all aid and guaranteed to enforce a treaty militarily, the North and South Vietnamese governments signed the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973, marking the official end of US force commitment to the Vietnam War. Peace was tenuous, and when war resumed North Vietnamese troops quickly overwhelmed southern forces. By 1975, despite nearly a decade of direct American military engagement, Vietnam was united under a communist government.

The Vietnam War profoundly influenced domestic politics. Moreover, it poisoned many Americans' perceptions of their government and its role in the world. And yet, while the antiwar demonstrations attracted considerable media attention and stand today as a hallmark of the sixties counterculture, many Americans nevertheless continued to regard the war as just. Wary of the rapid social changes that reshaped American society in the 1960s and worried that antiwar protests threatened an already tenuous civil order, a growing number of Americans turned to conservatism.

III. Racial, Social, and Cultural Anxieties



Los Angeles police hustle rioter into car, August 13, 1965, Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...arrest-loc.jpg.

The civil rights movement looked dramatically different at the end of the 1960s than it had at the beginning. The movement had never been monolithic, but prominent competing ideologies had fractured the movement by the 1970s. The rise of the Black Power movement challenged the integrationist dreams of many older activists as the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X fueled disillusionment and many alienated activists recoiled from liberal reformers. By 1970, for instance, the Black Panthers had dozens of chapters with thousands of members across the country. The Chicago-based Illinois Black Panther Party (ILBPP), headed by the youthful Fred Hampton, was among its most active. Hampton worked to build a multiracial class-conscious

coalition—The Rainbow Coalition—in Chicago to push antipoverty programs, improved housing, and better policing. He was killed in a police raid on December 4, 1969.[16]

Black Americans, of course, were not the only racial group navigating the new world of the late 1960s and 1970s with new strategies and new organizations. The Chicano movement, for instance, continued to develop as Mexican Americans challenged systemic inequalities across the American Southwest while advancing new ethnic pride in a "Chicano" identity, captured formally by poets such as Corky Gonzales and writers such as Rodolfo Acuña in declarations such as El Pán Espiritual de Aztlán, and in ordinary everyday ways by a newfound refusal to cede Spanish-language names, Mexican foodways, and other expressions of Mexican American culture to integration with Anglo American norms. Youth, meanwhile, led the way, founding groups such as the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in San Antonio and United Mexican American Students (UMAS) in Los Angeles in 1967. Students targeted unequal school funding; opposed prohibitions against Spanish-speaking; championed greater attention to Mexican and Mexican American contributions in history, literature, and other subjects; and fought against the many daily indignities suffered by Mexican and Mexican American schoolchildren. Thousands walked out of Southern California schools to protest the inadequacy of funding and support for students. The next year, students in Crystal City, Texas, walked out when the local school board signaled that no more than one Mexican American would participate as a high school cheerleader. Months later, activists in Crystal City founded La Raza Unida, a third-party movement that challenged Texas Democrats and achieved electoral gains for Mexican Americans in communities across South Texas. Similar impulses swept across the Hispanic United States—in Chicago, for instance, a Puerto Rican street gang, the Young Lords, followed the example of the Black Panthers and evolved into a multiethnic community empowerment organization that organized community programs and protests.

Native Americans, meanwhile, continued to assert themselves. The "Red Power" movement fueled dramatic occupations of Alcatraz Island (1969–1971) and Wounded Knee, South Dakota (1973), as well as broader organizing: by the mid-1970s, hundreds of Indigenous organizations formed, including American Indians United, which participated in the Alcatraz occupations; the International Indian Treaty Council, which demanded that the US government recognize and follow through on its treaty commitments; and the Council of Energy Resource Tribes, which worked to ensure that Native people received a fair share of their oil and gas royalties after decades of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) fraud and mismanagement. Activism continued. University of New Mexico students protested at a BIA supply center that had ignored Native employees' complaints about racial discrimination. "We Indian college students can no longer sit back and watch our people being discriminated against," one Native student explained. "We must protest these injustices."[17] Navajo elders in Arizona, meanwhile, formed a picket line to prevent Peabody Coal Company's strip-mining bulldozers from destroying community sites. "Imagine," a young Navajo said afterwards, "seeing longhair Navajos carrying picket signs."[18] In response to such activism as well as lobbying by mainstream groups like the National Congress of American Indians, Congress passed legislation to meet Native people's demands for political and cultural autonomy, in particular the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act.

The political evolution of civil rights in America was reflected in popular culture. The lines of race, class, and gender ruptured American "mass" culture. The monolith of popular American culture, pilloried in the fifties and sixties as exclusively white, male-dominated, conservative, and stifling, finally shattered as Americans retreated into ever smaller, segmented subcultures. Marketers now targeted particular products to ever smaller pieces of the population, including previously neglected groups such as African Americans.[19] Subcultures often revolved around certain musical styles, whether pop, disco, hard rock, punk rock, country, or hip-hop. Styles of dress and physical appearance likewise aligned with cultures of choice.



CBS Television, All in the Family Cast 1973, Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi..._cast_1973.JPG.

If the popular rock acts of the sixties appealed to a new counterculture, the seventies witnessed the resurgence of cultural forms that appealed to a white working class confronting the social and political upheavals of the 1960s. Country hits such as Merle Haggard's "Okie from Muskogee" evoked simpler times and places where people "still wave Old Glory down at the courthouse" and they "don't let our hair grow long and shaggy like the hippies out in San Francisco." (Haggard would claim the song was satirical, but it nevertheless took hold.) A popular television sitcom, All in the Family, became an unexpected hit among "middle America." The show's main character, Archie Bunker, was designed to mock reactionary middle-aged white men, but audiences embraced him. "Isn't anyone interested in upholding standards?" he lamented in an episode dealing with housing integration. "Our world is coming crumbling down. The coons are coming!"[20]

As Bunker knew, African Americans were becoming much more visible in American culture. While Black cultural forms had been prominent throughout American history, they assumed new popular forms in the 1970s. Disco offered a new, optimistic, racially integrated pop music. Musicians such as Aretha Franklin, Andraé Crouch, and "fifth Beatle" Billy Preston brought their background in church performance to their own recordings as well as to the work of white artists like the Rolling Stones, with whom they collaborated. At the end of the decade, African American musical artists introduced American society to one of the most significant musical innovations in decades: the Sugarhill Gang's 1979 record "Rapper's Delight." A lengthy paean to Black machismo, it became the first rap single to reach the Top 40.[21]

Just as rap represented a hypermasculine Black cultural form, Hollywood popularized its white equivalent. Films such as 1971's Dirty Harry captured a darker side of the national mood. Clint Eastwood's titular character exacted violent justice on clear villains, working within the sort of brutally simplistic ethical standard that appealed to Americans anxious about a perceived breakdown in "law and order." ("The movie's moral position is fascist,"
wrote critic Roger Ebert, who nevertheless gave it three out of four stars.)[22]

Perhaps the strongest element fueling American anxiety over "law and order" was the increasingly visible violence associated with the civil rights movement. No longer confined to the anti-Black terrorism that struck the southern civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, publicly visible violence now broke out among Black Americans in urban riots and among whites protesting new civil rights programs. In the mid-1970s, for instance, protests over the use of busing to overcome residential segregation and truly integrate public schools in Boston washed the city in racial violence. Stanley Forman's Pulitzer Prize–winning photo, The Soiling of Old Glory, famously captured a Black civil rights attorney, Ted Landsmark, being attacked by a mob of anti-busing protesters, one of whom wields an American flag as a weapon.[23]

Urban riots, though, rather than anti-integration violence, tainted many white Americans' perception of the civil rights movement and urban life in general. Civil unrest broke out across the country, but the riots in Watts/Los Angeles (1965), Newark (1967), and Detroit (1967) were the most shocking. In each, a physical altercation between white police officers and African Americans spiraled into days of chaos and destruction. Tens of thousands participated in urban riots. Many looted and destroyed white-owned business. There were dozens of deaths, tens of millions of dollars in property damage, and an exodus of white capital that

only further isolated urban poverty.[24]

In 1967, President Johnson appointed the Kerner Commission to investigate the causes of America's riots. Their report became an unexpected bestseller.[25] The commission cited Black frustration with the hopelessness of poverty as the underlying cause of urban unrest. As the head of the Black National Business League testified, "It is to be more than naive—indeed, it is a little short of sheer madness—for anyone to expect the very poorest of the American poor to remain docile and content in their poverty when television constantly and eternally dangles the opulence of our affluent society before their hungry eyes."[26] A Newark rioter who looted several boxes of shirts and shoes put it more simply: "They tell us about that pie in the sky but that pie in the sky is too damn high."[27] But white conservatives blasted the conclusion that white racism and economic hopelessness were to blame for the violence. African Americans wantonly destroying private property, they said, was not a symptom of America's intractable racial inequalities but the logical outcome of a liberal culture of permissiveness that tolerated—even encouraged—nihilistic civil disobedience. Many white moderates and liberals, meanwhile, saw the explosive violence as a sign that African Americans had rejected the nonviolence of the earlier civil rights movement.

The unrest of the late sixties did, in fact, reflect a real and growing disillusionment among African Americans with the fate of the civil rights crusade. In the still-smoldering ashes of Jim Crow, African Americans in Watts and other communities across the country bore the burdens of lifetimes of legally sanctioned discrimination in housing, employment, and credit. Segregation survived the legal dismantling of Jim Crow. The perseverance of stark racial and economic segregation in nearly all American cities destroyed any simple distinction between southern de jure segregation and nonsouthern de facto segregation. Black neighborhoods became traps that too few could escape.

Political achievements such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were indispensable legal preconditions for social and political equality, but for most, the movement's long (and now often forgotten) goal of economic justice proved as elusive as ever. "I worked to get these people the right to eat hamburgers," Martin Luther King Jr. supposedly said to Bayard Rustin as they toured the devastation in Watts some years earlier, "and now I've got to do something . . . to help them get the money to buy it."[28] What good was the right to enter a store without money for purchases?

IV. The Crisis of 1968

To many Americans in 1968, the country seemed to be unraveling. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed on April 4, 1968. He had been in Memphis to support striking sanitation workers. (Prophetically, he had reflected on his own mortality in a rally the night before. Confident that the civil rights movement would succeed without him, he brushed away fears of death. "I've been to the mountaintop," he said, "and I've seen the promised land.") The greatest leader in the American civil rights movement was lost. Riots broke out in over a hundred American cities. Two months later, on June 6, Robert F. Kennedy was killed campaigning in California. He had represented the last hope of liberal idealists. Anger and disillusionment washed over the country.

As the Vietnam War descended ever deeper into a brutal stalemate and the Tet Offensive exposed the lies of the Johnson administration, students shut down college campuses and government facilities. Protests enveloped the nation.

Protesters converged on the Democratic National Convention in Chicago at the end of August 1968, when a bitterly fractured Democratic Party gathered to assemble a passable platform and nominate a broadly acceptable presidential candidate. Demonstrators planned massive protests in Chicago's public spaces. Initial protests were peaceful, but the situation quickly soured as police issued stern threats and young people began to taunt and goad officials. Many of the assembled students had protest and sit-in experiences only in the relative safe havens of college campuses and were unprepared for Mayor Richard Daley's aggressive and heavily armed police force and National Guard troops in full riot gear. Attendees recounted vicious beatings at the hands of police and Guardsmen, but many young people—convinced that much public sympathy could be won via images of brutality against unarmed protesters—continued stoking the violence. Clashes spilled from the parks into city streets, and eventually the smell of tear gas penetrated the upper floors of the opulent hotels hosting Democratic delegates. Chicago's brutality overshadowed the convention and culminated in an violent, internationally televised standoff in front of the Hilton Hotel. "The whole world is watching," the protesters chanted. The Chicago riots encapsulated the growing sense that chaos now governed American life.

For many idealists of the time, the violence of 1968 represented the death of a dream. Disorder and chaos overshadowed hope and progress. And for conservatives, it was confirmation of all of their fears and hesitations. Americans of 1968 turned their back on hope. They wanted peace. They wanted stability. They wanted "law and order."

V. The Rise and Fall of Richard Nixon



Richard Nixon campaigns in Philadelphia during the 1968 presidential election. National Archives via Wikimedia

Beleaguered by an unpopular war, inflation, and domestic unrest, President Johnson opted against reelection in March 1968—an unprecedented move in modern American politics. The forthcoming presidential election was shaped by Vietnam and the aforementioned unrest as much as by the campaigns of the Democratic nominee, Vice President Hubert Humphrey; Republican Richard Nixon; and third-party challenger George Wallace, the infamous segregationist governor of Alabama. The Democratic Party was in disarray in the spring of 1968, when senators Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy challenged Johnson's nomination and the president responded with his shocking announcement. Nixon's candidacy was aided further by riots that broke out across the country after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the shock and dismay experienced after the slaying of Robert Kennedy in June. The Republican nominee's campaign was defined by shrewd maintenance of his public appearances and a pledge to restore peace and prosperity to what he called "the silent center; the millions of people in the middle of the political spectrum." This campaign for the "silent majority" was carefully calibrated to attract suburban Americans by linking liberals with violence and protest and rioting. Many embraced Nixon's message; a September 1968 poll found that 80 percent of Americans believed public order had "broken down."

Meanwhile, Humphrey struggled to distance himself from Johnson and maintain working-class support in northern cities, where voters were drawn to Wallace's appeals for law and order and a rejection of civil rights. The vice president had a final surge in northern cities with the aid of union support, but it was not enough to best Nixon's campaign. The final tally was close: Nixon won 43.3 percent of the popular vote (31,783,783), narrowly besting Humphrey's 42.7 percent (31,266,006). Wallace, meanwhile, carried five states in the Deep South, and his 13.5 percent (9,906,473) of the popular vote constituted an impressive showing for a third-party candidate. The Electoral College vote was more decisive for Nixon; he earned 302 electoral votes, while Humphrey and Wallace received only 191 and 45 votes, respectively. Although Republicans won a few seats, Democrats retained control of both the House and Senate and made Nixon the first president in 120 years to enter office with the opposition party controlling both houses of Congress.

Once installed in the White House, Richard Nixon focused his energies on American foreign policy, publicly announcing the Nixon Doctrine in 1969. On the one hand, Nixon asserted the supremacy of American democratic capitalism and pledged that the United States would continue supporting its allies financially. However, he denounced previous administrations' willingness to commit American forces to Third World conflicts and warned other states to assume responsibility for their own defense. Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, believed the world was entering a new era of multipolarity and that the United States needed to be realistic about what it could accomplish: "Political multipolarity makes it impossible to impose an American design," he wrote.[29] Under Kissinger's guidance, Nixon was turning America away from the policy of active, anticommunist containment and toward a new strategy of détente.[30]

Détente sought to stabilize the international system by thawing relations with Cold War rivals and bilaterally freezing arms levels. Taking advantage of tensions between communist China and the Soviet Union, Nixon pursued closer relations with both in order to de-escalate tensions and strengthen the United States' position relative to each. The strategy seemed to work. In 1972, Nixon

became the first American president to visit communist China and the first since Franklin Roosevelt to visit the Soviet Union. Direct diplomacy and cultural exchange programs with both countries grew and culminated with the formal normalization of US-Chinese relations and the signing of two US-Soviet arms agreements: the antiballistic missile (ABM) treaty and the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT I). By 1973, after almost thirty years of Cold War tension, peaceful coexistence suddenly seemed possible.

Soon, though, a fragile calm gave way again to Cold War instability. In November 1973, Nixon appeared on television to inform Americans that energy had become "a serious national problem" and that the United States was "heading toward the most acute shortages of energy since World War II."[31] The previous month Arab members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a cartel of the world's leading oil producers, embargoed oil exports to the United States in retaliation for American intervention in the Middle East. The embargo launched the first US energy crisis. By the end of 1973, the global price of oil had quadrupled.[32] Drivers waited in line for hours to fill up their cars. Individual gas stations ran out of gas. American motorists worried that oil could run out at any moment. A Pennsylvania man died when his emergency stash of gasoline ignited in his trunk and back seat.[33] OPEC rescinded its embargo in 1974, but the economic damage had been done. The crisis extended into the late 1970s.

Like the Vietnam War, the oil crisis showed that small countries could still hurt the United States. At a time of anxiety about the nation's future, Vietnam and the energy crisis accelerated Americans' disenchantment with the United States' role in the world and the efficacy and quality of its leaders. Furthermore, government scandals in the 1970s and early 1980s sapped trust in America's public institutions. In 1971, the Nixon administration tried unsuccessfully to sue The New York Times and The Washington Post to prevent the publication of the Pentagon Papers, a confidential and damning history of US involvement in Vietnam commissioned by the Defense Department and later leaked. The papers showed how presidents from Truman to Johnson repeatedly deceived the public on the war's scope and direction.[34] Nixon faced a rising tide of congressional opposition to the war, and Congress asserted unprecedented oversight of American war spending. In 1973, it passed the War Powers Resolution, which dramatically reduced the president's ability to wage war without congressional consent.

However, no scandal did more to unravel public trust than Watergate. On June 17, 1972, five men were arrested inside the offices of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in the Watergate Complex in downtown Washington, D.C. After being tipped off by a security guard, police found the men attempting to install sophisticated bugging equipment. One of those arrested was a former CIA employee then working as a security aide for the Nixon administration's Committee to Re-Elect the President (lampooned as "CREEP").

While there is no direct evidence that Nixon ordered the Watergate break-in, he had been recorded in conversation with his chief of staff requesting that the DNC chairman be illegally wiretapped to obtain the names of the committee's financial supporters. The names could then be given to the Justice Department and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to conduct spurious investigations into their personal affairs. Nixon was also recorded ordering his chief of staff to break into the offices of the Brookings Institution and take files relating to the war in Vietnam, saying, "Goddammit, get in and get those files. Blow the safe and get it."[35]

Whether or not the president ordered the Watergate break-in, the White House launched a massive cover-up. Administration officials ordered the CIA to halt the FBI investigation and paid hush money to the burglars and White House aides. Nixon distanced himself from the incident publicly and went on to win a landslide election victory in November 1972. But, thanks largely to two persistent journalists at the Washington Post, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, information continued to surface that tied the burglaries ever closer to the CIA, the FBI, and the White House. The Senate held televised hearings. Citing executive privilege, Nixon at first refused to comply with orders to produce tapes from the White House's secret recording system (eighteen and a half minutes from a conversation with his chief of staff about the break-in were missing when the first tranche of tapes were turned over; later tapes revealed Nixon's active orchestration of a coverup) and ordered US Attorney General Elliot Richardson, head of the Justice Department, to fire the special prosecutor appointed to investigate the break-in (Richardson and his deputy, William Ruckelshaus, both resigned rather than do so). Such blatant executive corruption and stonewalling proved too much for the American public. Democrats controlled Congress, but even Nixon's Republican allies refused to prioritize their party affiliation above the rule of law. In July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee approved a bill to impeach the president. Nixon resigned before the full House could vote on impeachment. He became the first and only American president to resign from office.[36]

Vice President Gerald Ford was sworn in as his successor and a month later granted Nixon a full presidential pardon. Nixon largely disappeared from public life without ever publicly apologizing, accepting responsibility, or facing charges.

VI. Deindustrialization and the Rise of the Sunbelt

American workers had made substantial material gains throughout the 1940s and 1950s. During the so-called Great Compression, Americans of all classes benefited from postwar prosperity. Segregation and discrimination perpetuated racial and gender inequalities, but unemployment continually fell and a highly progressive tax system and powerful unions lowered general income inequality as working-class standards of living nearly doubled between 1947 and 1973.

But general prosperity masked deeper vulnerabilities. Perhaps no case better illustrates the decline of American industry and the creation of an intractable urban crisis than Detroit. Detroit boomed during World War II. When auto manufacturers like Ford and General Motors converted their assembly lines to build machines for the American war effort, observers dubbed the city the "arsenal of democracy."

After the war, however, automobile firms began closing urban factories and moving to outlying suburbs. Several factors fueled the process. Some cities partly deindustrialized themselves. Municipal governments in San Francisco, St. Louis, and Philadelphia banished light industry to make room for high-rise apartments and office buildings. Mechanization also contributed to the decline of American labor. A manager at a newly automated Ford engine plant in postwar Cleveland captured the interconnections between these concerns when he glibly noted to United Automobile Workers (UAW) president Walter Reuther, "You are going to have trouble collecting union dues from all of these machines."[37] More importantly, however, manufacturing firms sought to reduce labor costs by automating, downsizing, and relocating to areas with "business friendly" policies like low tax rates, anti-union right-to-work laws, and low wages.



Abandoned Youngstown factory, via Flickr user stu_spivack.

Detroit began to bleed industrial jobs. Between 1950 and 1958, Chrysler, which actually kept more jobs in Detroit than either Ford or General Motors, cut its Detroit production workforce in half. In the years between 1953 and 1960, East Detroit lost ten plants and over seventy-one thousand jobs. Because Detroit was a single-industry city, decisions made by the Big Three automakers reverberated across the city's industrial landscape. When auto companies mechanized or moved their operations, ancillary suppliers like machine tool companies were cut out of the supply chain and were likewise forced to cut their own workforce. Between 1947 and 1977, the number of manufacturing firms in the city dropped from over three thousand to fewer than two thousand. The labor force was gutted. Manufacturing jobs fell from 338,400 to 153,000 over the same three decades.[38]

Industrial restructuring decimated all workers, but deindustrialization fell heaviest on the city's African Americans. Although many middle-class Black Detroiters managed to move out of the city's ghettos, by 1960 19.7 percent of Black autoworkers in Detroit were unemployed, compared to just 5.8 percent of whites. Overt discrimination in housing and employment had for decades confined African Americans to segregated neighborhoods where they were forced to pay exorbitant rents for slum housing. Subject to residential intimidation and cut off from traditional sources of credit, few could afford to follow industry as it left the city for the suburbs and other parts of the country, especially the South. Segregation and discrimination kept them stuck where there were fewer and fewer jobs. Over time, Detroit devolved into a mass of unemployment, crime, and crippled municipal resources. When riots rocked Detroit in 1967, 25 to 30 percent of Black residents between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four

were unemployed.[39]



Two subway riders sit in a heavily graffitied subway car in New York City, 1973. “Urban decay” confronted Americans of the 1960s and 1970s. As the economy sagged and deindustrialization hit much of the country, Americans increasingly associated major cities with poverty and crime. National Archives.

Deindustrialization in Detroit and elsewhere also went hand in hand with the long assault on unionization that began in the aftermath of World War II. Lacking the political support they had enjoyed during the New Deal years, labor organizations such as the CIO and the UAW shifted tactics and accepted labor-management accords in which cooperation, not agitation, was the strategic objective.

This accord held mixed results for workers. On the one hand, management encouraged employee loyalty through privatized welfare systems that offered workers health benefits and pensions. Grievance arbitration and collective bargaining also provided workers official channels through which to criticize policies and push for better conditions. At the same time, bureaucracy and corruption increasingly weighed down unions and alienated them from workers and the general public. Union management came to hold primary influence in what was ostensibly a “pluralistic” power relationship. Workers—though still willing to protest—by necessity pursued a more moderate agenda compared to the union workers of the 1930s and 1940s. Conservative politicians meanwhile seized on popular suspicions of Big Labor, stepping up their criticism of union leadership and positioning themselves as workers’ true ally.

While conservative critiques of union centralization did much to undermine the labor movement, labor’s decline also coincided with ideological changes within American liberalism. Labor and its political concerns undergirded Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition, but by the 1960s, many liberals had forsaken working-class politics. More and more saw poverty as stemming not from structural flaws in the national economy but from the failure of individuals to take full advantage of the American system. Roosevelt’s New Deal might have attempted to rectify unemployment with government jobs, but Johnson’s Great Society and its imitators funded government-sponsored job training, even in places without available jobs. Union leaders in the 1950s and 1960s typically supported such programs and philosophies.

Internal racism also weakened the labor movement. While national CIO leaders encouraged Black unionization in the 1930s, white workers on the ground often opposed the integrated shop. In Detroit and elsewhere after World War II, white workers participated in “hate strikes” in which they walked off the job rather than work with African Americans. White workers similarly opposed residential integration, fearing, among other things, that Black newcomers would lower property values.[40]

By the mid-1970s, widely shared postwar prosperity leveled off and began to retreat. Growing international competition, technological inefficiency, and declining productivity gains stunted working- and middle-class wages. As the country entered recession, wages decreased and the pay gap between workers and management expanded, reversing three decades of postwar contraction. At the same time, dramatic increases in mass incarceration coincided with the deregulation of prison labor to allow more private companies access to cheaper inmate labor, a process that, whatever its aggregate impact, impacted local communities where free jobs were moved into prisons. The tax code became less progressive and labor lost its foothold in the

marketplace. Unions represented a third of the workforce in the 1950s, but only one in ten workers belonged to one as of 2015.[41]

Geography dictated much of labor's fall, as American firms fled pro-labor states in the 1970s and 1980s. Some went overseas in the wake of new trade treaties to exploit low-wage foreign workers, but others turned to anti-union states in the South and West stretching from Virginia to Texas to Southern California. Factories shuttered in the North and Midwest, leading commentators by the 1980s to dub America's former industrial heartland the Rust Belt; the implied contrast was with the prosperous and dynamic Sunbelt.

Coined by journalist Kevin Phillips in 1969, the term Sunbelt refers to the swath of southern and western states that saw unprecedented economic, industrial, and demographic growth after World War II.[42] During the New Deal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared the American South "the nation's No. 1 economic problem" and injected massive federal subsidies, investments, and military spending into the region. During the Cold War, Sunbelt politicians lobbied hard for military installations and government contracts for their states.[43]

Meanwhile, southern states' hostility toward organized labor beckoned corporate leaders. The Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 facilitated southern states' frontal assault on unions. Thereafter, cheap, non-unionized labor, low wages, and lax regulations pulled northern industries away from the Rust Belt. Skilled northern workers followed the new jobs southward and westward, lured by cheap housing and a warm climate slowly made more tolerable by modern air conditioning.

The South attracted business but struggled to share their profits. Middle-class whites grew prosperous, but often these were recent transplants, not native southerners. As the cotton economy shed farmers and laborers, poor white and Black southerners found themselves mostly excluded from the fruits of the Sunbelt. Public investments were scarce. White southern politicians channeled federal funding away from primary and secondary public education and toward high-tech industry and university-level research. The Sunbelt inverted Rust Belt realities: the South and West had growing numbers of high-skill, high-wage jobs but lacked the social and educational infrastructure needed to train native poor and middle-class workers for those jobs.

Regardless, more jobs meant more people, and by 1972, southern and western Sunbelt states had more electoral votes than the Northeast and Midwest. This gap continues to grow.[44] Though the region's economic and political ascendance was a product of massive federal spending, New Right politicians who had constructed an identity centered on "small government" found their most loyal support in the Sunbelt. These business-friendly politicians successfully synthesized conservative Protestantism and free market ideology, creating a potent new political force. Housewives organized reading groups in their homes, and from those reading groups sprouted new organized political activities. Prosperous and mobile, old and new suburbanites gravitated toward an individualistic vision of free enterprise espoused by the Republican Party. Some, especially those most vocally anticommunist, joined groups like the Young Americans for Freedom and the John Birch Society. Less radical suburban voters, however, still gravitated toward the more moderate brand of conservatism promoted by Richard Nixon.

VII. The Environmental Movement

The American environmental movement accelerated in the 1960s, nurtured by the ideals of the counterculture and spurred by the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's landmark Silent Spring. Astronaut Will Anders captured a newfound sense of the fragility of the planet in his 1968 photograph of an "earthrise," taken aboard Apollo 8. Meanwhile, a Santa Barbara oil spill unleashed devastation along the California coast in 1969 and, that summer, the Cuyahoga River, choked with industrial pollutants, caught fire. Americans had had enough. Over twenty million Americans rallied on April 22, 1970, for the inaugural Earth Day.

Intellectual and social changes had begun to reshape public debates about the environment. A key voice was Barry Commoner, whose book The Closing Circle (1971) blamed industrial production and technology for environmental degradation and argued that technologies should be modified to have less environmental impacts. Other works, like Paul and Anne Ehrlich's The Population Bomb (1968) and Donella Meadows's The Limits to Growth (1972), presented scathing critiques of consumerism and population growth, foreseeing civilizational demise.[45]

A raft of environmental legislation followed. President Nixon had already signed the National Environmental Policy Act into law, requiring environmental impact statements for any project directed or funded by the federal government. After Earth Day, Nixon consolidated several environmental programs and departments under the Environmental Protection Agency, the first agency charged with studying, regulating, and disseminating knowledge about the environment.

More legislation followed: the Clean Water Act (1972) prevented water pollution, protected wetlands, and created wastewater treatment regulations; the Ocean Dumping Act (1972) prevented ocean pollution; the Safe Water Drinking Act (1974) regulated

drinking water; the Toxic Substances Control Act (1976) protected Americans from dangerous chemicals; and two 1977 bills strengthened the existing Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. The EPA also banned dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), the pesticide that inspired Rachel Carson's Silent Spring; phased out leaded gasoline, lead paint, and highly toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs); and prevented the federal government from contracting with companies committing environmental violations.[46]

Continuing environmental catastrophes sustained support for environmental legislation. In the working-class neighborhood of Love Canal in Niagara Falls, New York, toxins seeped into family homes and plagued the community, causing chronic childhood illnesses, birth defects, and miscarriages. Lois Gibbs led residents in their fight for the federal government to clean up the approximately twenty-one thousand tons of toxic sludge buried nearby and to buy out their newly worthless homes. Significant pressure from activists in the emotionally charged and high-profile campaign forced President Jimmy Carter to evacuate families in 1978. The event is widely considered to be the impetus for the 1980 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund, establishing a federal fund for hazardous waste site remediation.[47] Nevertheless, poor Americans clustered around "sacrifice zones" and "cancer allies" near heavy industrial pollution, such as the Ironbound district in Newark, New Jersey, one of the country's densest industrial landscapes.[48]

Scientific and academic conceptions of environmental processes were rapidly changing as well. The idea of "global warming"—a kind of manmade climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels and the release of "greenhouse gases"—emerged in the late 1970s, characterizing what scientists were, with greater certainty and precision, coming to see as a major environmental problem.[49] "All of us must learn to waste less energy," Carter declared. Soon after assuming office, President Carter appeared on television in a sweater, urging Americans to conserve energy amid the energy crisis. He established the Department of Energy, pushed for better fuel efficiency standards in cars, and advocated for the development and adoption of renewable energy sources, notably installing solar cells on the White House roof.

VIII. The Politics of Love, Sex, and Gender



Warren K. Leffler, Demonstrators opposed to the ERA in front of the White House, 1977, http://www.loc.gov/item/2002712194/.

As rights-based social and political movements multiplied and accelerated, the sexual revolution and its many offshoots pushed on into the 1970s. In particular, many Americans—feminists, gay men, lesbians, transgender individuals, and straight couples—increasingly rejected the rigid roles of the nuclear family. More and more women worked outside of the home—in some instances to achieve a more fulfilling life and, in others, practically, to supplement household incomes in an era of stagnant wages—while, at the same time, cohabitation without marriage spiked, straight couples married later (if at all), and divorce levels climbed. Sexuality, decoupled from marriage and procreation, became for many not only a source of personal fulfillment but an urgent political cause.

At the turn of the decade, sexuality was considered a private matter yet was rigidly regulated by federal, state, and local law. Statutes typically defined legitimate sexual expression within narrow bounds, often within the confines of straight, procreative marriage. Interracial marriage, for instance, was illegal in many states until 1967 and remained socially taboo for many long after.

Same-sex intercourse and cross-dressing were criminalized in most states, and gay men, lesbians, and transgender people were vulnerable to violence and policing as well as discrimination in housing and employment.

Two landmark legal rulings in 1973 established the battle lines for the "sex wars" of the 1970s. First, the Supreme Court's 7–2 ruling in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) struck down a Texas abortion ban. The Court's decision built on precedent from a 1965 ruling that, in striking down a Connecticut law prohibiting married couples from using birth control, recognized a constitutional "right to privacy."[50] In Roe, the Court reasoned that "this right of privacy . . . is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy."[51] The Court held that states could not interfere with a woman's right to an abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy and could only fully prohibit abortions during the third trimester.

Other Supreme Court rulings, however, found that sexual privacy could be sacrificed for the sake of the "public" good. *Miller v. California* (1973), a case over the unsolicited mailing of sexually explicit advertisements for illustrated "adult" books, held that the First Amendment did not protect "obscene" material, defined by the Court as anything with sexual appeal that lacked "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."[52] The ruling expanded states' abilities to pass laws prohibiting materials such as pornography. However, uneven enforcement allowed pornographic theaters and sex shops to proliferate despite whatever laws states had on the books. Americans debated whether these represented the pinnacle of sexual liberation or, as lesbian poet and feminist Rita Mae Brown suggested, "the ultimate conclusion of sexist logic."[53]

Of more tangible concern for many women, though, were equal employment practices. As more and more women entered the labor force, and female-headed households more than doubled between 1960 and 1980, women fought for equal employment laws.[54] Thanks partly to the work of Black feminists such as Pauli Murray, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act banned employment discrimination based on sex, in addition to race, color, religion, and national origin. "If sex is not included," Murray argued in a memorandum sent to members of Congress, "the civil rights bill would be including only half of the Negroes."[55] Like most laws, Title VII's full impact came about slowly, as women across the nation entered into litigation and pressured employers to offer them equal opportunities compared to those they offered to men. Until the late sixties and early seventies, the labor market was usually explicitly segregated between jobs for men and women—a separate and unequal categorization that limited women's opportunities. Some pushed against sexist policies. The National Organization for Women (NOW), for instance, organized airline workers against a sexist ad campaign that showed female flight attendants wearing buttons that read, "I'm Debbie, Fly Me" or "I'm Cheryl, Fly Me."[56] Other women sued to gain access to traditionally male jobs, such as factory work and executive leadership. Protests prompted the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to issue a more robust set of protections between 1968 and 1971. Though advancement came haltingly and partially, women used these protections to eventually move into traditional male occupations and into leadership positions within companies.



Shirley Chisolm addressing the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami Beach. Library of Congress.

In 1968, Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to the United States Congress. Born to immigrant parents in Brooklyn, Chisholm reintroduced and championed the Equal Rights Amendment. Chisholm also ensured domestic workers the right to a minimum wage in the 1974 Fair Labor Standards Amendments (Chisholm gained assistance from segregationist George

Wallace to secure the necessary votes). In 1972, Chisholm became the first Black candidate to push for a major-party presidential nomination and the first woman to seriously seek the Democratic Party's nomination. Chisholm labored to build an electoral coalition out of underappreciated voters—the young, Black, female, and poor—to force the Democratic Party to take those voters seriously. Chisholm lost the nomination but served another decade in Congress.[57]

The battle for sexual freedom, though, was not just about the right to get into places. It was also about the right to get out of them. Women, historically, had little freedom to leave their marriages. Before 1969, most states required one spouse to prove that the other was guilty of a specific offense, such as adultery. Even couples seeking an amicable split were sometimes forced to claim that one spouse had cheated on the other even if neither (or both) had. Other couples temporarily relocated to states with more lenient divorce laws, such as Nevada.[58] In 1969, California adopted the first no-fault divorce law and, by the end of the 1970s, almost every other state had adopted some form of it, allowing for divorce on the basis of "irreconcilable differences," even if only one party felt that he or she could not stay in the marriage.[59]

Liberalizing divorce laws facilitated skyrocketing divorce rates: between 1959 and 1979, the American divorce rate more than doubled. By the early 1980s, nearly half of all American marriages ended in divorce.[60] Religious conservatives recoiled, but the widespread social stigma attached to divorce rapidly diminished and a growing sense of sexual and personal freedom motivated individuals to leave abusive or unfulfilling marriages.

Gay men and women, meanwhile, negotiated a harsh world that stigmatized homosexuality as a mental illness or an immoral depravity. Building on postwar efforts by gay rights organizations such as the Mattachine Society to bring homosexuality into the mainstream of American culture, young gay activists of the late sixties and seventies began to challenge what they saw as the conservative, gender-conforming gradualism of the "homophile" movement. Inspired by the burgeoning radicalism of the Black Power movement, the New Left protests of the Vietnam War, and the counterculture movement for sexual freedom, gay and lesbian activists agitated for a broader set of sexual rights that emphasized an assertive notion of liberation rooted not in mainstream assimilation but in pride of sexual difference.



The window under the Stonewall sign reads: "We homosexuals plead with our people to please help maintain peaceful and quiet conduct on the streets of the Village–Mattachine." Stonewall Inn 1969, Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...l_Inn_1969.jpg.

Perhaps no single incident did more to galvanize gay and lesbian activism than the 1969 uprising at the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village. Police regularly raided gay bars and hangouts such as Stonewall. But when the New York Police Department raided Stonewall in June 1969, the bar patrons protested and sparked a multiday street battle. Rather than meekly assent, Sylvia Rivera, a Latina transwoman, recalled that patrons formed a chorus line and threw coins at the officers in protest of the alleged payoffs that police regularly shook bar owners down for. Stonewall's patrons had had enough. "To be there was so beautiful," Rivera recalled. "It was so exciting. It was like, 'Wow, we're doing it! We're doing it!'"[61] The resistance at Stonewall catalyzed a national movement for gay liberation. Seemingly overnight, calls for public-facing respectability were replaced with chants of "Gay Power!"[62]

In the following years, gay Americans gained unparalleled mainstream visibility and expanded access to private and public spaces. Gay activists increasingly attacked cultural norms that demanded they keep their sexuality hidden. Citing statistics that sexual secrecy contributed to stigma and suicide, gay activists urged people to come out and embrace their sexuality. A step toward the normalization of homosexuality occurred in 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association stopped classifying homosexuality as a mental illness. Pressure mounted on politicians. In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. More than eighty cities and nine states followed suit over the following decade. But progress proceeded unevenly, and gay Americans continued to suffer hardships from a hostile culture.

Like any social movements, the sexual revolution was not free of division. Transgender people were often banned from participating in Gay Pride rallies and lesbian feminist conferences. They, in turn, mobilized to fight the high incidence of rape, abuse, and murder of transgender people. A 1971 newsletter denounced the notion that transgender people were mentally ill and highlighted the particular injustices they faced in and out of the gay community, declaring, "All power to trans liberation."[63]

As events in the 1970s broadened sexual freedoms and promoted greater gender equality, so too did they generate sustained and organized opposition. Evangelical Christians and other cultural conservatives, for instance, mobilized to reverse gay victories. In 1977, activists in Dade County, Florida, used the slogan "Save Our Children" to overturn an ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.[64] A leader of the ascendant religious right, a Baptist minister and religious broadcaster from Lynchburg, Virginia, named Jerry Falwell, said in 1980, "It is now time to take a stand on certain moral issues. . . . We must stand against the Equal Rights Amendment, the feminist revolution, and the homosexual revolution. We must have a revival in this country."[65]

Much to Falwell's delight, conservative Americans did, in fact, stand against and defeat the Equal Rights Amendment. Versions of the amendment—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"—were introduced to Congress each year since 1923. It finally passed amid the upheavals of the sixties and seventies and went to the states for ratification in March 1972.[66] With high approval ratings, the ERA seemed destined to pass swiftly through state legislatures and become the Twenty-Seventh Amendment. Hawaii ratified the amendment the same day it cleared Congress. Within a year, thirty states had done so. But then the amendment stalled. It took years for more states to pass it. In 1977, Indiana became the thirty-fifth and final state to ratify.[67]

Anti-ERA forces had successfully turned the political tide against the amendment. At a time when many women shared Betty Friedan's frustration that society seemed to confine women to the role of homemaker, Phyllis Schlafly's STOP ERA organization ("Stop Taking Our Privileges") trumpeted the value and advantages of being a homemaker and mother.[68] Marshaling the support of evangelical Christians and other religious conservatives, Schlafly worked tirelessly to stifle the ERA. She lobbied legislators and organized counter-rallies to ensure that Americans heard "from the millions of happily married women who believe in the laws which protect the family and require the husband to support his wife and children."[69] The amendment needed only three more states for ratification. It never got them. In 1982, the time limit for ratification expired—and along with it, the amendment.[70]

The failed battle for the ERA revealed deep fault lines over the politics of sex and gender in the United States. Campaigns for gender equality and sexual freedom advanced across the 1960s and 1970s before stalling in the face of conservative resistance, heralding a mounting political counterrevolution that would sweep its way across the political landscape of the 1980s.

IX. The Misery Index



President Jimmy Carter at a press conference in 1979. Library of Congress.

Although Nixon eluded prosecution, Watergate continued to weigh on voters' minds. It netted big congressional gains for Democrats in the 1974 midterm elections, and Ford's pardon damaged his chances in 1976. Former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter, a nuclear physicist and peanut farmer who represented the rising generation of younger, racially liberal "New South" Democrats, captured the Democratic nomination. Carter did not identify with either his party's liberal or conservative wing; his appeal was more personal and moral than political. He ran on no great political issues but instead let his background as a hardworking, honest, Southern Baptist navy man ingratiate him to voters around the country, especially in his native South, where support for Democrats had wavered in the wake of the civil rights movement. Carter's wholesome image was painted in direct contrast to the memory of Nixon, and by association with the man who pardoned him. Carter sealed his party's nomination in June and won a close victory in November.[71]

The election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 brought a Democrat to the White House for the first time since 1969. Large Democratic majorities in Congress provided the new president with an opportunity to move aggressively on the legislative front. With the infighting of the early 1970s behind them, many Democrats hoped the Carter administration would update and expand the New Deal. But Carter won the presidency on a wave of post-Watergate disillusionment with government that did not translate into support for liberal ideas.

In its early days, the Carter administration embraced several policies backed by liberals. It pushed an economic stimulus package containing $4 billion for public works, extended food stamp benefits to 2.5 million new recipients, enlarged the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income households, and expanded the Nixon-era Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).[72] But the White House quickly realized that Democratic control of Congress did not guarantee support for its initially left-leaning economic proposals. Many of the Democrats elected to Congress in the aftermath of Watergate were more moderate than their predecessors, who had been trained in the New Deal gospel. These conservative Democrats sometimes partnered with congressional Republicans to oppose Carter, most notably in response to the administration's proposal for a federal office of consumer protection.

Events outside Carter's control certainly helped discredit liberalism, but the president's own temperamental and philosophical conservatism hamstrung the administration and pushed national politics further to the right. In his 1978 State of the Union address, Carter lectured Americans that "government cannot solve our problems . . . it cannot eliminate poverty, or provide a bountiful economy, or reduce inflation, or save our cities, or cure illiteracy, or provide energy."[73] The statement neatly captured the ideological transformation of the country. Rather than leading a resurgence of American liberalism, Carter became, as one historian put it, "the first president to govern in a post–New Deal framework."[74] Organized labor felt abandoned by Carter, who remained cool to several of their highest legislative priorities. The president offered tepid support for a national health insurance proposal and declined to lobby aggressively for a package of modest labor law reforms. The business community rallied to defeat the latter measure, in what AFL-CIO chief George Meany described as "an attack by every anti-union group in America to kill the labor movement."[75] In 1977 and 1978, liberal Democrats rallied behind the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Training Act,

which promised to end unemployment through extensive government planning. The bill aimed not only to guarantee a job to every American but also to reunite the interracial, working-class Democratic coalition that had been fractured by deindustrialization and affirmative action.[76] But Carter's lack of enthusiasm for the proposal allowed conservatives from both parties to water the bill down to a purely symbolic gesture. Liberals, like labor leaders, came to regard the president as an unreliable ally.

Carter also came under fire from Republicans, especially the religious right. His administration incurred the wrath of evangelicals in 1978 when the IRS established new rules revoking the tax-exempt status of racially segregated, private Christian schools. The rules only strengthened a policy instituted by the Nixon administration; however, the religious right accused Carter of singling out Christian institutions. Republican activist Richard Viguerie described the IRS controversy as the "spark that ignited the religious right's involvement in real politics."[77] Race sat just below the surface of the IRS fight—after all, many of the schools had been founded to circumvent court-ordered desegregation. But the IRS ruling allowed the New Right to rain down fire on government interference while downplaying the practice of segregation at the heart of the case.



The 1979 energy crisis prompted a panic for consumers who remembered the 1973 oil shortage, prompting many Americans to buy oil in huge quantities. Long lines and high gas prices characterized 1979, oil prices to remained quite high until the mid-1980s. Warren K. Leffler, "Gasoline lines," June 15, 1979. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003677600/.

It was the economy, however, that most devastated Carter's presidency. When Carter took the oath of office on January 20, 1977, he became president of a nation in the midst of economic turmoil. Oil shocks, inflation, stagnant growth, unemployment, and sinking wages weighed down the nation's economy. Some of these problems were traceable to the end of World War II when American leaders erected a complex system of trade policies to help rebuild the shattered economies of Western Europe and Asia. After the war, American diplomats and politicians used trade relationships to win influence and allies around the globe. They saw the economic health of their allies, particularly West Germany and Japan, as a crucial bulwark against the expansion of communism. Americans encouraged these nations to develop vibrant export-oriented economies and tolerated restrictions on US imports.

This came at great cost to the United States. As the American economy stalled, Japan and West Germany soared and became major forces in the global production for autos, steel, machine tools, and electrical products. By 1970, the United States began to run massive trade deficits. The value of American exports dropped, and the prices of its imports skyrocketed. Coupled with the huge cost of the Vietnam War and the rise of oil-producing states in the Middle East, growing trade deficits sapped the United States' dominant position in the global economy.

American leaders didn't know how to respond. After a series of negotiations with leaders from France, Great Britain, West Germany, and Japan in 1970 and 1971, the Nixon administration allowed these rising industrial nations to continue flouting the principles of free trade. They maintained trade barriers that sheltered their domestic markets from foreign competition while at the same time exporting growing amounts of goods to the United States. By 1974, in response to US complaints and their own domestic economic problems, many of these industrial nations overhauled their protectionist practices but developed even subtler methods (such as state subsidies for key industries) to nurture their economies.

The result was that Carter, like Ford before him, presided over a hitherto unimagined economic dilemma: the simultaneous onset

of inflation and economic stagnation, a combination popularized as stagflation.[78] Neither Ford nor Carter had the means or ambition to protect American jobs and goods from foreign competition. As firms and financial institutions invested, sold goods, and manufactured in new rising economies like Mexico, Taiwan, Japan, Brazil, and elsewhere, American politicians allowed them to sell their often-cheaper products in the United States.

As American officials institutionalized this new unfettered global trade, many American manufacturers perceived only one viable path to sustained profitability: moving overseas, often by establishing foreign subsidiaries or partnering with foreign firms. Investment capital, especially in manufacturing, fled the United States looking for overseas investments and hastened the decline in the productivity of American industry.

During the 1976 presidential campaign, Carter had touted the "misery index," the simple addition of the unemployment rate to the inflation rate, as an indictment of Gerald Ford and Republican rule. But Carter failed to slow the unraveling of the American economy, and the stubborn and confounding rise of both unemployment and inflation damaged his presidency. Unemployment reached 7.8 percent in May 1980, up from 6 percent at the start of Carter's first term.[79] Inflation (the rate at which the cost of goods and services increases) jumped from 6 percent in 1978 to a staggering 20 percent by the winter of 1980.[80]

Just as Carter failed to offer or enact policies to stem the unraveling of the American economy, his idealistic vision of human rights–based foreign policy crumbled. He had not made human rights a central theme in his campaign, but in May 1977 he declared his wish to move away from a foreign policy in which "inordinate fear of communism" caused American leaders to "adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries." Carter proposed instead "a policy based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in our historical vision."[81]

Carter's human rights policy achieved real victories: the United States either reduced or eliminated aid to American-supported right-wing dictators guilty of extreme human rights abuses in places like South Korea, Argentina, and the Philippines. In September 1977, Carter negotiated the return to Panama of the Panama Canal, which cost him enormous political capital in the United States.[82] A year later, in September 1978, Carter negotiated a peace treaty between Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. The Camp David Accords—named for the president's rural Maryland retreat, where thirteen days of secret negotiations were held—represented the first time an Arab state had recognized Israel, and the first time Israel promised Palestine self-government. The accords had limits, for both Israel and the Palestinians, but they represented a major foreign policy coup for Carter.[83]

And yet Carter's dreams of a human rights–based foreign policy crumbled before the Cold War and the realities of American politics. The United States continued to provide military and financial support for dictatorial regimes vital to American interests, such as the oil-rich state of Iran. When the president and First Lady Rosalynn Carter visited Tehran, Iran, in January 1978, the president praised the nation's dictatorial ruler, Shah Reza Pahlavi, and remarked on the "respect and the admiration and love" Iranians had for their leader.[84] When the shah was deposed in November 1979, revolutionaries stormed the American embassy in Tehran and took fifty-two Americans hostage. Americans not only experienced another oil crisis as Iran's oil fields shut down, they watched America's news programs, for 444 days, remind them of the hostages and America's new global impotence. Carter couldn't win their release. A failed rescue mission ended in the deaths of eight American servicemen. Already beset with a punishing economy, Carter's popularity plummeted.

Carter's efforts to ease the Cold War by achieving a new nuclear arms control agreement disintegrated under domestic opposition from conservative Cold War hawks such as Ronald Reagan, who accused Carter of weakness. A month after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, a beleaguered Carter committed the United States to defending its "interests" in the Middle East against Soviet incursions, declaring that "an assault [would] be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." The Carter Doctrine not only signaled Carter's ambivalent commitment to de-escalation and human rights, it testified to his increasingly desperate presidency.[85]

Carter, meanwhile, also struggled to enact a domestic humanitarian policy. A moderate, he nevertheless championed the Equal Rights Amendment, supported legal protections for gay and lesbian individuals, and went after the most overt forms of institutional segregation. Under Carter, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) attempted to close the "segregation academy" loophole by revoking the tax exemptions of religious schools that persisted in practicing segregation, angering southern evangelical leaders such as Jerry Falwell, who operated such academies and provoking many to take up partisan political activism. Meanwhile, when the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) failed to follow through on Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, which protected individuals with certain disabilities from discrimination, activists with the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) and their allies occupied several HEW offices in major cities, prompting the federal government to finally begin drafting guidelines.

The collapse of American manufacturing, the stubborn rise of inflation, the sudden impotence of American foreign policy, and a culture ever more divided: the sense of unraveling pervaded the nation. “I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy,” Jimmy Carter said in a televised address on July 15, 1979. “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.”

X. Conclusion

Though American politics moved right after Lyndon Johnson’s administration, Nixon’s 1968 election was no conservative counterrevolution. American politics and society remained in flux throughout the 1970s. American politicians on the right and the left pursued relatively moderate courses compared to those in the preceding and succeeding decades. But a groundswell of anxieties and angers brewed beneath the surface. The world’s greatest military power had floundered in Vietnam, and an American president stood flustered by Middle Eastern revolutionaries. The cultural clashes from the sixties persisted and accelerated. While cities burned, a more liberal sexuality permeated American culture. The economy crashed, leaving America’s cities prone before poverty and crime and its working class gutted by deindustrialization and globalization. American weakness was everywhere. And so, by 1980, many Americans—especially white middle- and upper-class Americans—felt a nostalgic desire for simpler times and simpler answers to the frustratingly complex geopolitical, social, and economic problems crippling the nation. The appeal of Carter’s soft drawl and Christian humility had signaled this yearning, but his utter failure to stop the unraveling of American power and confidence opened the way for a new movement, one with new personalities and a new conservatism—one that promised to undo the damage and restore the United States to its own nostalgic image of itself.

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27: The Triumph of the Right



Activist Phyllis Schlafly campaigns against the Equal Rights Amendment in 1978. Bettmann/Corbis.

I. Introduction

Speaking to Detroit autoworkers in October 1980, Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan described what he saw as the American Dream under Democratic president Jimmy Carter. The family garage may have still held two cars, cracked Reagan, but they were "both Japanese and they're out of gas."[1] A once-proud nation, the charismatic former governor of California suggested, was running on empty. But Reagan held out hope for redemption. Stressing the theme of "national decline," he nevertheless promised to make the United States once again a glorious "city upon a hill."[2] In November, Reagan's vision triumphed.

Reagan rode the wave of a powerful political movement referred to by historians as the New Right. More libertarian in its economics and more politically forceful in its conservative religious principles than the more moderate brand of conservatism familiar to Americans after World War II, the New Right had by the 1980s evolved into both the most influential wing of the Republican Party—it propelled Republican electoral successes—and an increasingly vocal, reactionary force in American culture. Building on the gradual unraveling of the New Deal political order in the 1960s and 1970s, the conservative movement drew from the leadership of skilled politicians such as Ronald Reagan as well as tremendous energy from a broad range of grassroots activists. Countless ordinary citizens—newly mobilized Christian conservatives in particular—helped the Republican Party steer the country's politics and culture rightward. Enduring conflicts over race, economic policy, sexual politics, and foreign affairs fatally fractured the liberal consensus that had dominated American politics since the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt as the New Right attracted support from Reagan Democrats, blue-collar voters who had lost faith in the old liberal creed.

The rise of the right affected Americans' everyday lives in numerous ways. The Reagan administration's embrace of free markets dispensed with the principles of active income redistribution and social welfare spending that had animated the New Deal and Great Society in the 1930s and 1960s. As American liberals increasingly embraced a "rights" framework that singled out African Americans, Latinos, women, lesbians and gays, and other marginalized groups, conservative policy makers targeted the regulatory and legal landscape of the United States. Critics complained that Reagan's policies served the interests of corporations and wealthy individuals and pointed to the sudden widening of economic inequality. But the New Right harnessed popular distrust of regulation, taxes, and bureaucrats, and conservative activists celebrated the end of hyperinflation and substantial growth in GDP.

In many ways, however, the rise of the right promised more than it delivered. Battered but intact, most of the social welfare programs of the New Deal and Great Society survived the 1980s and 1990s. Despite Republican vows of fiscal discipline, both the federal government and the national debt ballooned. At the end of the period, conservative Christians viewed popular culture

as more vulgar and hostile to their values than ever before—American culture had dramatically liberalized by the end of the millennium. And in the near term, the New Right registered only partial victories on a range of public policies and cultural issues. Yet from a long-term perspective, conservatives achieved a subtler and more enduring transformation of American politics and society. In the words of one historian, the conservative movement successfully "changed the terms of debate and placed its opponents on the defensive."[3] Liberals and their programs and policies did not disappear, but they increasingly fought battles on terrain chosen by the New Right. By the 1990s, even as the country's culture sloughed off much of its old postwar propriety and prudishness, the nation's politics had been transformed—even two-term Democratic president Bill Clinton was a so-called "New Democrat" who championed free trade, deregulation, privatization, and other historically conservative causes. Conservatism had triumphed.

II. Conservative Ascendance

The Reagan Revolution marked the culmination of a long process of political mobilization on the American right. In the first two decades after World War II the New Deal seemed firmly embedded in American electoral politics and public policy. Even two-term Republican president Dwight D. Eisenhower declined to roll back the welfare state. To be sure, William F. Buckley Jr. tapped into a deep vein of elite conservatism in 1955 by announcing in the first issue of National Review that his magazine "stands athwart history, yelling Stop."[4] Senator Joseph McCarthy and John Birch Society founder Robert Welch stirred anticommunist fervor. But in general, the far right lacked organizational cohesion. Following Lyndon Johnson's resounding defeat of Republican Barry Goldwater—"Mr. Conservative"—in the 1964 presidential election, many observers declared American conservatism finished. New York Times columnist James Reston wrote that Goldwater had "wrecked his party for a long time to come."[5]

Despite these dire predictions, conservatism not only persisted, it prospered. Its growing appeal had several causes. The expansive social and economic agenda of Johnson's Great Society reminded anticommunists of Soviet-style central planning, and deficits alarmed fiscal conservatives. Race also drove the creation of the New Right. The civil rights movement, along with the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, challenged the racial hierarchy of the Jim Crow South. All of these occurred under Democratic leadership, pushing white southerners toward the Republican Party. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Black Power, affirmative action, and court-ordered busing of children between schools to achieve racial balance brought "white backlash" in the North, often in cities previously known for political liberalism. To many white Americans, the urban rebellions, antiwar protests, and student uprisings of the late 1960s signaled social chaos. At the same time, slowing wage growth, rising prices, and growing tax burdens threatened many working- and middle-class citizens who had long formed the core of the New Deal coalition. Liberalism no longer seemed to offer the great mass of white Americans a road map to prosperity, so they searched for new political solutions.

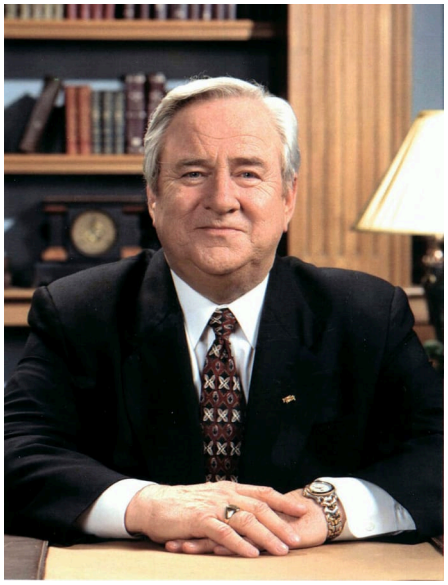
Former Alabama governor and conservative Democrat George Wallace masterfully exploited the racial, cultural, and economic resentments of working-class whites during his presidential runs in 1968 and 1972. Wallace's record as a staunch segregationist made him a hero in the Deep South, where he won five states as a third-party candidate in the 1968 general election (becoming the last third-party candidate to win any state's electoral votes). Wallace's populist message also resonated with blue-collar voters in the industrial North who felt left behind by the rights revolution. On the campaign stump, the fiery candidate lambasted hippies, antiwar protesters, and government bureaucrats. He assailed female welfare recipients for "breeding children as a cash crop" and ridiculed "over-educated, ivory-tower" intellectuals who "don't know how to park a bicycle straight."[6] Wallace also advanced progressive proposals for federal job training programs, a minimum wage hike, and legal protections for collective bargaining. Running as a Democrat in 1972, Wallace captured the Michigan primary and polled second in the industrial heartland of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. In May 1972, an assassin's bullet left Wallace paralyzed and ended his campaign. Nevertheless, his amalgamation of older, New Deal–style proposals and conservative populism represented the rapid reordering of party loyalties in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Richard Nixon similarly harnessed the New Right's sense of grievance through his rhetoric about "law and order" and the "silent majority."[7] But Nixon and his Republican successor, Gerald Ford, continued to accommodate the politics of the New Deal order. The New Right remained without a major public champion.

Christian conservatives also felt themselves under siege from liberalism. In the early 1960s, Supreme Court decisions prohibiting teacher-led prayer (*Engel v. Vitale*) and Bible reading in public schools (*Abington v. Schempp*) led some on the right to conclude that a liberal judicial system threatened Christian values. In the following years, the counterculture's celebration of sex and drugs, along with relaxed obscenity and pornography laws, intensified the conviction that "permissive" liberalism encouraged immorality in private life. Evangelical Protestants—Christians who professed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, upheld the Bible as an infallible source of truth, and felt a duty to convert, or evangelize, nonbelievers—composed the core of the religious right.

With increasing assertiveness in the 1960s and 1970s, Christian conservatives mobilized to protect the "traditional" family.

Women composed a striking number of the religious right's foot soldiers. In 1968 and 1969 a group of newly politicized mothers in Anaheim, California, led a sustained protest against sex education in public schools.[8] Catholic activist Phyllis Schlafly marshaled opposition to the ERA, while evangelical pop singer Anita Bryant drew national headlines for her successful fight to repeal Miami's gay rights ordinance in 1977. In 1979, Beverly LaHaye (whose husband, Tim—an evangelical pastor in San Diego—later coauthored the wildly popular Left Behind Christian book series) founded Concerned Women for America, which linked small groups of local activists opposed to the ERA, abortion, homosexuality, and no-fault divorce.

Activists like Schlafly and LaHaye valorized motherhood as women's highest calling. Abortion therefore struck at the core of their female identity. More than perhaps any other issue, abortion drew different segments of the religious right—Catholics and Protestants, women and men—together. The Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling outraged many devout Catholics and evangelicals (who had previously been less universally opposed to the procedure than their Catholic counterparts). Christian author Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop staked out some clear battle lines in their 1979 book Whatever Happened to the Human Race?, arguing that "the fate of the unborn is a question of the fate of the human race."[9] With abortion framed in stark, existential terms, many evangelicals felt compelled to combat the procedure through political action.



Jerry Falwell, the wildly popular TV evangelist, founded the Moral Majority political organization in the late 1970s. Decrying the demise of the nation's morality, the organization gained a massive following, helping to cement the status of the New Christian Right in American politics. Photograph, date unknown. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...l_portrait.jpg.

Grassroots passion drove anti-abortion activism, but a set of religious and secular institutions turned the various strands of the New Right into a sophisticated movement. In 1979 Jerry Falwell founded the Moral Majority, an explicitly political organization dedicated to advancing a "pro-life, pro-family, pro-morality, and pro-American" agenda. The Moral Majority skillfully wove together social and economic appeals to make itself a force in Republican politics. Secular, business-oriented institutions also joined the attack on liberalism, fueled by stagflation and by the federal government's creation of new regulatory agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Conservative business leaders bankrolled new "think tanks" like the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute. These organizations provided grassroots activists with ready-made policy prescriptions. Other business leaders took a more direct approach by hiring Washington lobbyists and creating political action committees (PACs) to press their agendas in the halls of Congress and federal agencies. Between 1976 and 1980 the number of corporate PACs rose from under three hundred to over twelve hundred.

Grassroots activists and business leaders received unlikely support from a circle of neoconservatives—disillusioned intellectuals who had rejected liberalism and the left and become Republicans. Irving Kristol, a former Marxist who went on to champion free market capitalism as a Wall Street Journal columnist, defined a neoconservative as a "liberal who has been mugged by reality."[10] Neoconservative journals like Commentary and The Public Interest argued that the Great Society had proven counterproductive, perpetuating the poverty and racial segregation that it aimed to cure. By the middle of the 1970s, neoconservatives felt mugged by foreign affairs as well. As ardent Cold Warriors, they argued that Nixon's policy of détente had left the United States vulnerable to the Soviet Union.

In sum, several streams of conservative political mobilization converged in the late 1970s. Each wing of the burgeoning

New Right—disaffected northern blue-collar workers, white southerners, evangelicals and devout Catholics, business leaders, disillusioned intellectuals, and Cold War hawks—turned to the Republican Party as the most effective vehicle for their political counterassault on liberalism and the New Deal political order. After years of mobilization, the domestic and foreign policy storms of the Carter administration provided the tailwinds that brought the conservative movement to shore.

III. The Election of 1980

The inability to slow inflation or stem unemployment, combined with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the hostage crisis in Iran, hobbled Carter heading into his 1980 reelection campaign. Many Democrats were dismayed by his policies. The president of the International Association of Machinists dismissed Carter as "the best Republican President since Herbert Hoover."[11] Angered by the White House's refusal to back a national health insurance plan, Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy challenged Carter in the Democratic primaries. Running as the party's liberal standard-bearer and heir to the legacy of his slain older brothers, Kennedy garnered support from key labor unions and left-wing Democrats. Carter ultimately vanquished Kennedy, but the close primary tally exposed the president's vulnerability.

Carter's opponent in the general election was Ronald Reagan, a former Hollywood actor who had served two terms as governor of California. Reagan ran as a staunch fiscal conservative and a Cold War hawk, vowing to reduce government spending and shrink the federal bureaucracy. Reagan also accused his opponent of failing to confront the Soviet Union and vowed steep increases in military spending. Carter responded by calling Reagan a warmonger, but the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the confinement of fifty-two American hostages in Iran discredited Carter's foreign policy in the eyes of many Americans.

The incumbent fared no better on domestic affairs. Unemployment remained at nearly 8 percent.[12] Meanwhile the Federal Reserve's anti-inflation measures pushed interest rates to an unheard-of 18.5 percent.[13] Reagan seized on these bad economic trends. On the campaign trail he brought down the house by proclaiming: "A recession is when your neighbor loses his job, and a depression is when you lose your job." Reagan would then pause before concluding, "And a recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his job."[13]

Social and cultural issues presented yet another challenge for the president. Although a self-proclaimed "born-again" Christian and Sunday school teacher, Carter struggled to court the religious right. Carter scandalized devout Christians by admitting to lustful thoughts during an interview with Playboy magazine in 1976, telling the reporter he had "committed adultery in my heart many times."[14] Although Reagan was only a nominal Christian and rarely attended church, the religious right embraced him. Jerry Falwell directed the full weight of the Moral Majority behind Reagan. The organization registered an estimated two million new voters in 1980. Reagan also cultivated the religious right by denouncing abortion and endorsing prayer in school. The IRS tax exemption issue resurfaced as well, with the 1980 Republican platform vowing to "halt the unconstitutional regulatory vendetta launched by Mr. Carter's IRS commissioner against independent schools."[15] Early in the primary season, Reagan condemned the policy during a speech at South Carolina's Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist Christian school which had recently sued the IRS after the school's ban on interracial dating led to the loss of its tax-exempt status.

Reagan's campaign appealed subtly but unmistakably to the racial hostilities of white voters. After winning the nomination, the candidate held his first rally at the Neshoba County Fair near Philadelphia, Mississippi, the town where three civil rights workers had been murdered in 1964. In his speech, Reagan championed the doctrine of "states' rights," which had been the rallying cry of segregationists in the 1950s and 1960s. In criticizing the welfare state, Reagan had long employed thinly veiled racial stereotypes about the "welfare queen" in Chicago who drove a Cadillac while defrauding the government or the "strapping young buck" purchasing T-bone steaks with food stamps.[16] Like George Wallace before him, Reagan exploited the racial and cultural resentments of struggling white working-class voters. And like Wallace, he attracted blue-collar workers in droves.

With the wind at his back on almost every issue, Reagan needed only to blunt Carter's characterization of him as an angry extremist. Reagan did so during their only debate by appearing calm and amiable. "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" he asked the American people at the conclusion of the debate.[17] The American people answered no. Reagan won the election with 51 percent of the popular vote to Carter's 41 percent. (Independent John Anderson captured 7 percent.)[18] Despite capturing only a slim majority of the overall popular vote, Reagan scored a decisive 489–49 victory in the Electoral College.[19] Republicans gained control of the Senate for the first time since 1955 by winning twelve seats. Liberal Democrats George McGovern, Frank Church, and Birch Bayh went down in defeat, as did liberal Republican Jacob Javits. The Republicans picked up thirty-three House seats, narrowing the Democratic advantage in the lower chamber.[13] The New Right had arrived in Washington, D.C.

IV. The New Right in Power



Harkening back to Jeffersonian politics of limited government, a viewpoint that would only increase in popularity over the next three decades, Ronald Reagan launched his campaign by saying bluntly, "I believe in states' rights." Reagan secured the presidency through appealing to the growing conservatism of much of the country. Ronald Reagan and wife Nancy Reagan waving from the limousine during the Inaugural Parade in Washington, D.C. on Inauguration Day, 1981. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...arade_1981.jpg.

In his first inaugural address Reagan proclaimed that "government is not the solution to the problem, government is the problem."[20] In reality, Reagan focused less on eliminating government than on redirecting government to serve new ends. In line with that goal, his administration embraced supply-side economic theories that had recently gained popularity among the New Right. While the postwar gospel of Keynesian economics had focused on stimulating consumer demand, supply-side economics held that lower personal and corporate tax rates would encourage greater private investment and production. Supply-side advocates promised that the resulting wealth would reach—or "trickle down" to, in the words of critics—lower-income groups through job creation and higher wages. Conservative economist Arthur Laffer predicted that lower tax rates would generate so much economic activity that federal tax revenues would actually increase. The administration touted the so-called Laffer Curve as justification for the tax cut plan that served as the cornerstone of Reagan's first year in office. Republican congressman Jack Kemp, an early supply-side advocate and co-sponsor of Reagan's tax bill, promised that it would unleash the "creative genius that has always invigorated America."[21]



The Iranian hostage crisis ended literally during President Reagan's inauguration speech. The Reagan administration received credit for bringing the hostages home. This group photograph shows the former hostages in the hospital in 1981 before being released back to the U.S. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...N-82-06759.jpg.

The tax cut faced early skepticism from Democrats and even some Republicans. Vice President George H. W. Bush had belittled supply-side theory as "voodoo economics" during the 1980 Republican primaries.[22] But a combination of skill and serendipity pushed the bill over the top. Reagan aggressively and effectively lobbied individual members of Congress for support on the measure. Then, on March 30, 1981, Reagan survived an assassination attempt by a mentally unstable young man named John Hinckley. Public support swelled for the hospitalized president. Congress ultimately approved a $675 billion tax cut in July 1981 with significant Democratic support. The bill reduced overall federal taxes by more than one quarter and lowered the top marginal rate from 70 percent to 50 percent, with the bottom rate dropping from 14 percent to 11 percent. It also slashed the rate on capital gains from 28 percent to 20 percent.[23] The next month, Reagan scored another political triumph in response to a strike called by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). During the 1980 campaign, Reagan had wooed organized labor, describing himself as "an old union man" (he had led the Screen Actors Guild from 1947 to 1952) who still held Franklin Roosevelt in high regard.[24] PATCO had been one of the few labor unions to endorse Reagan. Nevertheless, the president ordered the union's striking air traffic controllers back to work and fired more than eleven thousand who refused. Reagan's actions crippled PATCO and left the American labor movement reeling. For the rest of the 1980s the economic terrain of the United States—already unfavorable to union organizing—shifted decisively in favor of employers. The unionized portion of the private-sector workforce fell from 20 percent in 1980 to 12 percent in 1990.[25] Reagan's tax bill and the defeat of PATCO not only enhanced the economic power of corporations and high-income households, they confirmed that a new conservative age had dawned in American life.

The new administration appeared to be flying high in the fall of 1981, but developments challenged the rosy economic forecasts emanating from the White House. As Reagan ratcheted up tension with the Soviet Union, Congress approved his request for $1.2 trillion in new military spending.[26] The combination of lower taxes and higher defense budgets caused the national debt to balloon. By the end of Reagan's first term it equaled 53 percent of GDP, as opposed to 33 percent in 1981.[27] The increase was staggering, especially for an administration that had promised to curb spending. Meanwhile, Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker continued his policy from the Carter years of combating inflation by maintaining high interest rates, which surpassed 20 percent in June 1981.[28] The Fed's action increased the cost of borrowing money and stifled economic activity.

As a result, the United States experienced a severe economic recession in 1981 and 1982. Unemployment rose to nearly 11 percent, the highest figure since the Great Depression.[29] Reductions in social welfare spending heightened the impact of the recession on ordinary people. Congress had followed Reagan's lead by reducing funding for food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children and removed a half million people from the Supplemental Social Security program for the physically disabled.[30] The cuts exacted an especially harsh toll on low-income communities of color. The head of the NAACP declared that the administration's budget cuts had rekindled "war, pestilence, famine, and death."[31] Reagan also received a bipartisan rebuke in 1981 after proposing cuts to social security benefits for early retirees. The Senate voted unanimously to condemn the plan, and Democrats framed it as a heartless attack on the elderly. Confronted with recession and harsh public criticism, a

chastened White House worked with Democratic House Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill in 1982 on a bill that restored $98 billion of the previous year's tax cuts.[32] Despite compromising with the administration on taxes, Democrats railed against the so-called Reagan Recession, arguing that the president's economic policies favored the most fortunate Americans. This appeal, which Democrats termed the "fairness issue," helped them win twenty-six House seats in the autumn congressional races.[33] The New Right appeared to be in trouble.

V. Morning in America



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. National Archives (198527).

Reagan nimbly adjusted to the political setbacks of 1982. Following the rejection of his social security proposals, Reagan appointed a bipartisan panel to consider changes to the program. In early 1983, the commission recommended a onetime delay in cost-of-living increases, a new requirement that government employees pay into the system, and a gradual increase in the retirement age from sixty-five to sixty-seven. The commission also proposed raising state and federal payroll taxes, with the new revenue poured into a trust fund that would transform social security from a pay-as-you-go system to one with significant reserves.[34] Congress quickly passed the recommendations into law, allowing Reagan to take credit for strengthening a program cherished by most Americans. The president also benefited from an economic rebound. Real disposable income rose 2.5 percent in 1983 and 5.8 percent the following year.[35] Unemployment dropped to 7.5 percent in 1984.[36] Meanwhile, the "harsh medicine" of high interest rates helped reduce inflation to 3.5 percent.[37] While campaigning for reelection in 1984, Reagan pointed to the improving economy as evidence that it was "morning again in America."[38] His personal popularity soared. Most conservatives ignored the debt increase and tax hikes of the previous two years and rallied around the president.

The Democratic Party, on other hand, stood at an ideological crossroads in 1984. The favorite to win the party's nomination was Walter Mondale, a staunch ally of organized labor and the civil rights movement as a senator during the 1960s and 1970s. He later served as Jimmy Carter's vice president. Mondale's chief rivals were civil rights activist Jesse Jackson and Colorado senator Gary Hart, one of the young Democrats elected to Congress in 1974 following Nixon's downfall. Hart and other "Watergate babies" still identified themselves as liberals but rejected their party's faith in activist government and embraced market-based approaches to policy issues. In so doing, they conceded significant political ground to supply-siders and conservative opponents of the welfare state. Many Democrats, however, were not prepared to abandon their New Deal heritage, and so the ideological tension within the party played out in the 1984 primary campaign. Jackson offered a largely progressive program but won only two states. Hart's platform—economically moderate but socially liberal—inverted the political formula of Mondale's New Deal–style liberalism. Throughout the primaries, Hart contrasted his "new ideas" with Mondale's "old-fashioned" politics. Mondale eventually secured his party's nomination but suffered a crushing defeat in the general election. Reagan captured forty-nine of fifty states, winning 58.8 percent of the popular vote.[13]

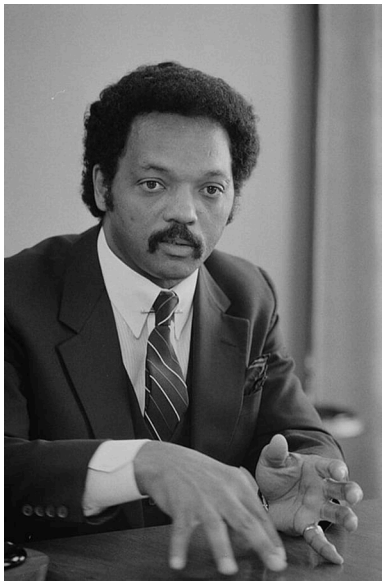
Mondale's loss seemed to confirm that the new breed of moderate Democrats better understood the mood of the American people. The future of the party belonged to post–New Deal liberals like Hart and to the constituency that supported him in the

primaries: upwardly mobile, white professionals and suburbanites. In February 1985, a group of centrists formed the Democratic Leadership Council as a vehicle for distancing the party from organized labor and Keynesian economics while cultivating the business community. Jackson dismissed the DLC as "Democrats for the Leisure Class," but the organization included many of the party's future leaders, including Arkansas governor Bill Clinton.[39] The formation of the DLC illustrated the degree to which the New Right had transformed American politics: the New Democrats looked a lot like the old Republicans.

Reagan entered his second term with a much stronger mandate than in 1981, but the Republican makeover of Washington, D.C., stalled. The Democrats regained control of the Senate in 1986, and Democratic opposition prevented Reagan from eliminating means-tested social welfare programs, although Congress failed to increase benefit levels for welfare programs or raise the minimum wage, decreasing the real value of those benefits. Democrats and Republicans occasionally fashioned legislative compromises, as with the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The bill lowered the top corporate tax rate from 46 percent to 34 percent and reduced the highest marginal income tax rate from 50 percent to 28 percent, while also simplifying the tax code and eliminating numerous loopholes.[40] The steep cuts to the corporate and individual rates certainly benefited wealthy individuals, but the legislation made virtually no net change to federal revenues. In 1986, Reagan also signed into law the Immigration Reform and Control Act. American policy makers hoped to do two things: deal with the millions of undocumented immigrants already in the United States while simultaneously choking off future unsanctioned migration. The former goal was achieved (nearly three million undocumented workers received legal status), but the latter proved elusive.

One of Reagan's most far-reaching victories occurred through judicial appointments. He named 368 district and federal appeals court judges during his two terms.[41] Observers noted that almost all of the appointees were white men. (Seven were African American, fifteen were Latino, and two were Asian American.) Reagan also appointed three Supreme Court justices: Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to serve on the US Supreme Court, who to the dismay of the religious right turned out to be a moderate; Anthony Kennedy, a solidly conservative Catholic who occasionally sided with the court's liberal wing; and archconservative Antonin Scalia. The New Right's transformation of the judiciary had its limits, though. In 1987, Reagan nominated Robert Bork to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court. Bork, a federal judge and former Yale University law professor, was a staunch conservative. He had opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, affirmative action, and the Roe v. Wade decision. After acrimonious confirmation hearings, the Senate rejected Bork's nomination by a vote of 58 to 42.[42]

VI. Race in Reagan's America



Jesse Jackson was only the second African American to mount a national campaign for the presidency. His work as a civil rights activist and Baptist minister garnered him a significant following in the African American community, but never enough to secure the Democratic nomination. His Warren K. Leffler, "IVU w/ [i.e., interview with] Rev. Jesse Jackson," July 1, 1983. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003688127/.

Reagan's election marked America's pivot away from the civil rights era, but questions of race still reigned over much of the country. African Americans, for instance, read Bork's nomination as another signal of the conservative movement's hostility to their social, economic, and political aspirations. Indeed, Ronald Reagan's America presented African Americans with a series of contradictions. Black Americans achieved significant advances in politics, culture, and socioeconomic status. A trend from

the late 1960s and 1970s continued, and Black politicians gained control of major municipal governments across the country during the 1980s. In 1983, voters in Philadelphia and Chicago elected Wilson Goode and Harold Washington, respectively, as their cities' first Black mayors. At the national level, civil rights leader Jesse Jackson became the first African American man to run for president when he campaigned for the Democratic Party's nomination in 1984 and 1988. Propelled by chants of "Run, Jesse, run," Jackson achieved notable success in 1988, winning nine state primaries and finishing second with 29 percent of the vote.[43]

The excitement created by Jackson's campaign mirrored the acclaim received by a few prominent African Americans in media and entertainment. Comedian Eddie Murphy rose to stardom on television's *Saturday Night Live* and achieved box office success with movies like 48 Hours and Beverly Hills Cop. In 1982, pop singer Michael Jackson released Thriller, the bestselling album of all time. Oprah Winfrey began her phenomenally successful nationally syndicated talk show in 1985. Comedian Bill Cosby's sitcom about an African American couple (a doctor and a lawyer) raising their four children drew the highest ratings on television for most of the decade. The popularity of *The Cosby Show* revealed how class informed perceptions of race in the 1980s. Cosby's fictional TV family represented the growing number of Black middle-class professionals in the United States. Indeed, income for the top fifth of African American households increased faster than that of white households for most of the decade. Middle-class African Americans found new doors open to them in the 1980s, but poor and working-class Black Americans faced continued challenges. During Reagan's last year in office the African American poverty rate stood at 31.6 percent, as opposed to 10.1 percent for whites.[44] Black unemployment remained double that of whites throughout the decade.[45] By 1990, the median income for Black families was $21,423, 42 percent below the median income for white households.[46] The Reagan administration failed to address such disparities, and in many ways intensified them.

New Right values threatened the legal principles and federal policies of the Great Society and the "rights revolution." Reagan's appointment of conservatives to agencies such as the Justice Department and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission took aim at key policy achievements of the civil rights movement. When the 1965 Voting Rights Act came up for renewal during Reagan's first term, the Justice Department pushed the president to oppose any extension. Only the intervention of more moderate congressional Republicans saved the law. The administration also initiated a plan to rescind federal affirmative action rules. In 1986, a broad coalition of groups—including the NAACP, the Urban League, the AFL-CIO, and even the National Association of Manufacturers—compelled the administration to abandon the effort. Despite the conservative tenor of the country, diversity programs were firmly entrenched in the corporate world by the end of the decade.

Americans increasingly embraced racial diversity as a positive value but most often approached the issue through an individualistic—not a systemic—framework. Certain federal policies disproportionately affected racial minorities. Spending cuts enacted by Reagan and congressional Republicans shrank Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid, food stamps, school lunch programs, and job training programs, all of which provided crucial support to African American households. In 1982, the National Urban League's annual "State of Black America" report concluded that "never [since the first report in 1976] . . . has the state of Black America been more vulnerable. Never in that time have black economic rights been under such powerful attack."[47] African American communities, especially in urban areas, also bore the stigma of violence and criminality. Homicide was the leading cause of death for Black males between ages fifteen and twenty-four, occurring at a rate six times that of other groups.[48] Although African Americans were the most common victims of violent crime, sensationalist media reports incited fears about Black-on-white crime in big cities. Ironically, such fear could by itself spark violence. In December 1984 a thirty-seven-year-old white engineer, Bernhard Goetz, shot and seriously wounded four Black teenagers on a New York City subway car. The so-called Subway Vigilante suspected that the young men—armed with screwdrivers—planned to rob him. Pollsters found that 90 percent of white New Yorkers sympathized with Goetz.[49] Echoing the law-and-order rhetoric (and policies) of the 1960s and 1970s, politicians—both Democratic and Republican—and law enforcement agencies implemented more aggressive policing of minority communities and mandated longer prison sentences for those arrested. The explosive growth of mass incarceration exacted a heavy toll on African American communities long into the twenty-first century.

Race in America, of course, was not only a question of Black and white. Commentators often referred to the 1980s as the "Decade of the Hispanic." In 1970, the US census introduced a new category, "Hispanic," that enumerated a distinct ethnic identity held by "a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race." Five percent of all Americans were counted as Hispanic in 1970, and 9 percent by 1990, representing, in absolute numbers, a more than doubling of the US Hispanic population. Ethnic Mexicans represented the bulk, Puerto Ricans and Cubans—more than 100,000 arrived in Florida in 1980 alone as part of the Mariel Boatlift—constituted large and growing numbers, as well. As American-backed military regimes in Central America threw the region into chaos, thousands of refugees came to the United States, where churches launched the Sanctuary Movement to shield refugees from deportation. Reagan, meanwhile, seeking to modernize American immigration enforcement, signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986, offering amnesty to nearly three million undocumented Americans. Hundreds of thousands of Latin American migrants, meanwhile, continued to

flow across the southern border every year, a stream of immigration only exacerbated by the economic disruptions in Mexico wrought by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the sudden rush of American goods and American capital into Mexico in the 1990s.

At the same time, Native Americans continued to fight in courts and in public. The Red Power movement had borne fruit: the Supreme Court's ruling in Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez (1978) solidified Native people's right to define their own citizenship criteria. A US district court case, *Windy Boy v. County of Big Horn* (1986), ruled that Crow and Northern Cheyenne citizens in Big Horn County, Montana, had faced racial discrimination in violation of the Voting Rights Act and ordered the county to reform a system that had restricted Native suffrage for decades. The Reagan administration, in support of extractive industries challenging Indigenous control of land and resources, gutted the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) by 40 percent. Legislative gains, however, won cultural and financial victories for Indigenous Americans. The 1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) permitted Native nations to operate Class III casino games such as blackjack and roulette, sparking a bonanza of casino construction and operation on reservations, leading to vast new revenue streams. Within five years, over half of all federally recognized tribes had some form of gambling, offsetting federal budget cuts. Meanwhile, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) allowed Indigenous nations to exercise power over human remains, sacred items, and cultural patrimony, repatriating Indigenous artifacts and remains from museums and other non-Native institutions to Native control. Requirements for documentation spurred the creation of vast new libraries, archives, and museums dedicated to historic preservation.

America had seemingly moved on from the civil rights era, but it could not escape race as a major fault line in American life. On March 3, 1991, Los Angeles police officers were videotaped violently beating a Black man, Rodney King, after a high-speed chase. The incident sparked a national furor and, a year later, when four LAPD officers were acquitted, the city of Los Angeles went up in flames. The 1992 Los Angeles Riots resulted in over sixty deaths, ten thousand arrests, and more than a billion dollars in property damage. Race was still everywhere in the public conscious when, two years later, ninety million Americans stopped what they were doing to watch broadcasts of a highway police chase involving former star football player, rental car pitchman, and comic actor O. J. Simpson, suspected of brutally murdering his wife and another man found at his Los Angeles home. The resulting trial, a sprawling eight-month media circus that dominated the country's attention and resulted in Simpson's eventual acquittal, refracted American race relations back upon the nation, exposing the deep and painful wounds left unhealed by the activism of earlier decades.

VII. Bad Times and Good Times

Working- and middle-class Americans struggled to maintain economic equilibrium during the Reagan years. The growing national debt generated fresh economic pain. The federal government borrowed money to finance the debt, raising interest rates to heighten the appeal of government bonds. Foreign money poured into the United States, raising the value of the dollar and attracting an influx of goods from overseas. The imbalance between American imports and exports grew from $36 billion in 1980 to $170 billion in 1987.[50] Foreign competition battered the already anemic manufacturing sector. The appeal of government bonds likewise drew investment away from American industry.

Continuing an ongoing trend, many steel and automobile factories in the industrial Northeast and Midwest closed or moved overseas during the 1980s. Bruce Springsteen, the self-appointed bard of blue-collar America, offered eulogies to Rust Belt cities in songs like "Youngstown." The narrator of Springsteen's song "My Hometown" laments that his "foreman says these jobs are going, boys / and they ain't coming back."[51] Competition from Japanese carmakers spurred a "Buy American" campaign. Meanwhile, a farm crisis gripped the rural United States. Expanded world production meant new competition for American farmers, while soaring interest rates caused the already sizable debt held by family farms to mushroom. Farm foreclosures skyrocketed during Reagan's tenure. In September 1985, prominent musicians including Neil Young and Willie Nelson organized Farm Aid, a benefit concert at the University of Illinois football stadium designed to raise money for struggling farmers.

At the other end of the economic spectrum, wealthy Americans thrived under the policies of the New Right. The financial industry found new ways to earn staggering profits during the Reagan years. Wall Street brokers like junk bond king Michael Milken reaped fortunes selling high-risk, high-yield securities. Reckless speculation helped drive the stock market steadily upward until the crash of October 19, 1987. On Black Monday, as it immediately came to be known, the market plunged eight hundred points, erasing 13 percent of its value. Investors lost more than $500 billion.[52] An additional financial crisis loomed in the savings and loan (S&L) industry, for which Reagan's deregulatory policies bore significant responsibility. In 1982 Reagan signed a bill increasing the amount of federal insurance available to savings and loan depositors, making those financial institutions more popular with consumers, and also allowing S&Ls to engage in high-risk loans and investments for the first time. Many such deals failed catastrophically, while some S&L managers brazenly stole from their institutions. In the late 1980s, S&Ls failed with regularity, and ordinary Americans lost precious savings. The 1982 law left the government responsible for bailing out the S&Ls out at an

eventual cost of $132 billion.[53]

VIII. Culture Wars

Popular culture of the 1980s offered another venue in which conservatives and liberals waged a battle of ideas. The militarism and patriotism of Reagan's presidency pervaded movies like Top Gun, Red Dawn, and Rambo: First Blood Part II. In contrast, director Oliver Stone offered searing condemnations of the war in Platoon and Born on the Fourth of July. Television shows like Dynasty and Dallas celebrated wealth and glamour, reflecting the pride in conspicuous consumption that emanated from the White House and corporate boardrooms during the decade. At the same time, films like Stone's Wall Street and novels like Bret Easton Ellis's Less Than Zero skewered the excesses of the rich.

The most significant aspect of much popular culture in the 1980s, however, was its lack of political content. Steven Spielberg's *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* and his Indiana Jones adventure trilogy topped the box office. Cinematic escapism, influenced by George Lucas's immensely profitable 1977 movie *Star Wars* and its sequels, replaced the social films of the 1970s. Quintessential Hollywood leftist Jane Fonda appeared frequently on television but only to peddle exercise videos. Television viewership—once dominated by the big three networks of NBC, ABC, and CBS—fragmented with the rise of cable television outlets catering to particularized tastes. Few cable channels so captured the popular imagination as MTV, which debuted in 1981. Telegenic artists like Madonna, Prince, and Michael Jackson skillfully used MTV to boost their reputations and album sales. Conservatives condemned music videos for corrupting young people with vulgar, anti-authoritarian messages, but the medium only grew in stature. Critics of MTV targeted Madonna in particular. Her 1989 video "Like a Prayer" drew protests for what some people viewed as sexually suggestive and blasphemous scenes. The religious right increasingly perceived popular culture as hostile to Christian values.

Cultural battles were even more heated in the realm of gender and sexual politics. American women pushed further into male-dominated spheres during the 1980s. By 1984, women in the workforce outnumbered those who worked at home.[54] That same year, New York representative Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman to run on a major party's presidential ticket when the Democratic candidate, Walter Mondale, named her his running mate. Despite (or perhaps in part because of) these trends, American feminism drew attacks from cultural conservatives. Susan Faludi's *1991 Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* argued that some Americans increasingly saw feminism not only as an outdated and unnecessary relic of the 1960s and 1970s—women already had equality, the argument went—but as the source of new social problems itself: feminism was blamed for women's declining fertility rates, decreasing mental health, poverty, disordered eating, and soaring divorce rates.

Impoverished Black women were often singled out in the conservative assault on American social welfare programs. Everyday life became harsher for poor women and their families, who were hit hardest by the Reagan-era cuts to food and childhood development support and the ending of programs to address gender discrimination in education and employment. The 1980s saw increasing economic inequality among African Americans. The expansion of the Black middle class so winningly portrayed by *The Cosby Show* was at odds with a harsher reality in which single Black mothers were losing ground as the national economy shifted from industrial labor to low-wage retail and service work. Women overall became poorer during this period, but Black women were singled out in Reagan's demagogic image of the "welfare queen," which drew attention to mythical lazy cheats fraudulently collecting government relief. Welfare programs for mothers and families survived the Reagan administration, but they entered the 1990s battered by the relentless political attacks that delegitimized the social safety net.

American women nevertheless mobilized for new feminist demands in the 1980s. The fight to end violence against women became a widely and deeply held feminist priority, although advocates disagreed over priorities and strategies. Some sided with conservative critics: in the feminist "sex wars," a vocal contingent of white feminists argued that pornography was the fundamental expression of women's systematically degraded status in male society and fought for legal measures to ban it. Catharine MacKinnon, a legal scholar, and Andrea Dworkin, a polemical feminist writer, lobbied for their model anti-pornography legislation across the nation. Other feminists argued that queer and feminist literature would be among the first targets in pornography bans and charged that the anti-porn wing of feminist movement were inviting sexual repression, not sexual freedom. This hunch was confirmed when MacKinnon, Dworkin, and other feminists worked with Reagan's attorney general, Edwin Meese, to produce a massive report condemning pornography. The report, burnished with feminist support, did not condemn pornography as an attack on women's bodily autonomy but as a threat to "the family concept and its value to society."

Feminist campaigns against gender-based violence and harassment met popular resistance. MacKinnon, leader of the anti-porn campaign, developed the name and legal category for "sexual harassment" as a form of sex discrimination in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Critics such as influential anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly dismissed the idea: "sexual harassment on the job," she argued, "is not a problem for the virtuous woman." But as a 1992 *ABC News/Washington Post* poll found, 85 percent of

Americans considered sexual harassment in the workplace a problem—a third of working women reported having been harassed on the job.[55] Anita Hill, a lawyer at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), was one of those women. Her boss, Clarence Thomas, the Reagan-appointed head of the EEOC, repeatedly described sex acts and made other unwanted comments in her presence, she said. In 1991, when George H. W. Bush nominated Thomas to the Supreme Court, Hill went public with her experiences and testified in a grueling Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in 1991. Despite widespread outrage—Hill was both belittled and believed—Thomas was narrowly confirmed. The hearings brought new attention to workplace sexual harassment. Four in ten working men reported adjusting their workplace behavior in the wake of the hearings.[13]

Histories of women's liberation often end with second-wave feminism breaking apart during the "sex wars" of the 1980s, but new causes, strategies, and demographics advanced the American women's movement. The 1980s were a veritable heyday for multiracial feminism. Lesbian poets published classic feminist texts, such as Audre Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Feminists of color developed a new analysis of the compounding harms of racism and sexism like welfare cuts and violence against women, or what law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw identified at the end of the decade as "intersectional" oppression. Leading feminists in this movement called for an expansive understanding of women's bodily autonomy, highlighting the disproportionate rates of sexual assault, reproductive coercion, and high rates of infant and maternal mortality among poor women of color. Organizations and coalitions bloomed to meet the rollbacks in welfare and healthcare that threatened the lives of poor women of color, like the National Black Women's Health Project, the National Latina Health Organization, Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, and Sakhi for South Asian Women, an organization mobilizing against domestic violence in New York.

Many white feminists responded by adopting a greater emphasis on race. In response to attacks on immigrants and the partial revitalization of the Ku Klux Klan, white women in Austin, Texas, organized the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee, whose chapters disrupted Klan rallies and neo-Nazi rallies and protected Gay Pride marches across the nation. A similar mobilization took root in the punk counterculture, where anti-fascists in Minneapolis organized Anti-Racist Action (ARA) to block a white power takeover. By the end of the 1980s there were hundreds of ARA chapters across the nation. Other women in the punk scene, self-styled in the 1990s as "riot grrrls," made music and DIY booklets, or "zines," that fought back against macho punk culture and reclaimed demeaning slurs like "slut" and "bitch." Other women organized against American militarism, interventions in the Middle East and Latin America, the Jewish occupation of Palestine, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The ascendance of the conservative movement placed fundamental questions about women's rights near the center of American politics—particularly in regard to abortion. The issue increasingly divided Americans. Pro-life Democrats and pro-choice Republicans grew rare, as the National Abortion Rights Action League enforced pro-choice orthodoxy on the left and the National Right to Life Commission exerted comparable influence on the right. Religious conservatives took advantage of the Republican takeover of the White House and Senate in 1980 to push for new restrictions on abortion—with limited success. Senators Jesse Helms of North Carolina and Orrin Hatch of Utah introduced versions of a Human Life Amendment to the US Constitution that defined life as beginning at conception; both efforts failed.[56] Reagan, more animated by economic issues than religious ones, provided only lukewarm support for the anti-abortion movement. He outraged anti-abortion activists by appointing Sandra Day O'Connor, a supporter of abortion rights, to the Supreme Court. Despite these setbacks, anti-abortion forces succeeded in defunding some abortion providers. The 1976 Hyde Amendment prohibited the use of federal funds to pay for abortions; by 1990 a number of states had their own version of the Hyde Amendment. Yet some anti-abortion activists demanded more. In 1988 evangelical activist Randall Terry founded Operation Rescue, an organization that targeted abortion clinics and pro-choice politicians with confrontational—and sometimes violent—tactics. Operation Rescue demonstrated that the fight over abortion would grow only more heated in the 1990s.



The AIDS epidemic hit the gay and African American communities particularly hard in the 1980s, prompting awareness campaigns by celebrities like Patti LaBelle. Poster, c. 1980s. Wikimedia.

The emergence of a deadly new illness, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), simultaneously devastated, stigmatized, and energized the nation's homosexual community. When AIDS appeared in the early 1980s, most of its victims were gay men. For a time the disease was known as GRID—gay-related immune deficiency. The epidemic rekindled older pseudoscientific ideas about the inherently diseased nature of homosexual bodies. The Reagan administration met the issue with indifference, leading liberal congressman Henry Waxman to rage that "if the same disease had appeared among Americans of Norwegian descent . . . rather than among gay males, the response of both the government and the medical community would be different."[57] Some religious figures seemed to relish the opportunity to condemn homosexual activity; Catholic columnist Patrick Buchanan remarked that "the sexual revolution has begun to devour its children."[58]

Gay Americans were left to forge their own response to the crisis. Some turned to confrontation—like New York playwright Larry Kramer. Kramer founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis, which demanded a more proactive response to the epidemic. Others sought to humanize AIDS victims; this was the goal of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a commemorative project begun in 1985. By the middle of the decade the federal government began to address the issue haltingly. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, an evangelical Christian, called for more federal funding on AIDS-related research, much to the dismay of critics on the religious right. By 1987 government spending on AIDS-related research reached $500 million—still only 25 percent of what experts advocated.[59] In 1987 Reagan convened a presidential commission on AIDS; the commission's report called for antidiscrimination laws to protect people with AIDS and for more federal spending on AIDS research. The shift encouraged activists. Nevertheless, on issues of abortion and gay rights—as with the push for racial equality—activists spent the 1980s preserving the status quo rather than building on previous gains. This amounted to a significant victory for the New Right.

For all of the political gains of the conservative movement in the 1980s, cultural conservatives were forced to cede new cultural ground. American culture liberalized throughout the 1990s. "Parental Advisory" labels emblazoned popular music with explicit lyrics, but the energy that fueled the Parents Music Resource Center—which in turn compelled rock musicians such as Frank Zappa and Dee Snider to testify in the US Senate in 1985—was very nearly spent. First Lady Barbara Bush complained publicly about the animated television show *The Simpsons* in 1990, and controversy compelled Ice-T to pull his controversial song "Cop Killer" from the shelves in 1992, but the culture was opening up by the time Bill Clinton took office in 1993. Moral panics met new cultural forms, including the violence of the arcade game Mortal Kombat (1992), the blazingly popular new musical form of "gangsta rap," the decision of the working woman at the center of television's Murphy Brown to raise a child alone in 1992, the vulgarity of the television show South Park after its 1997 debut, and the first appearance of a self-identified gay lead TV character in the sitcom *Ellen* (1994–1998; "Yep, I'm Gay" read the cover of Time featuring the show's also-out star, Ellen DeGeneres). Although Americans realized how far popular culture had traveled—"It's the nineties," a popular refrain went—conservatives still challenged the culture's persistent envelope-pushing. They fought back. "It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as was the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America," failed presidential candidate Pat Buchanan thundered at the 1992 Republican National Convention. But while they fought the war—and gained strength and unity of purpose from the fight—they were fighting a rearguard action. By the end of the 1990s, American culture was broader, more diverse, and more explicit than ever.

IX. The New Right Abroad



Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, leaders of two of the world's most powerful countries, formed an alliance that benefited both throughout their tenures in office. Photograph of Margaret Thatcher with Ronald Reagan at Camp David, December 22, 1984. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi..._sofa_1984.jpg.

The conservative movement profited by dipping into gender and sexual politics, but it captured American politics in large measure on American foreign policy. Ronald Reagan entered office a committed Cold Warrior. In a 1983 speech, he denounced the Soviet Union as an "evil empire."[60] And he never doubted that the Soviet Union would end up "on the ash heap of history," as he stated in a 1982 speech to the British Parliament.[61] Indeed, Reagan believed it was the duty of the United States to speed the Soviet Union to its inevitable demise. His Reagan Doctrine declared that the United States would supply aid to anticommunist forces everywhere in the world.[62] To give this doctrine force, Reagan oversaw an enormous expansion in the defense budget. Federal spending on defense rose from $171 billion in 1981 to $229 billion in 1985, the highest level since the Vietnam War.[63] He described this as a policy of "peace through strength," a phrase that appealed to Americans who, during the 1970s, feared that the United States was losing its status as the world's most powerful nation. Yet the irony is that Reagan, for all his militarism, helped bring the Cold War to an end through negotiation, a tactic he had once scorned.

Reagan's election came at a time when many Americans feared their country was in irreversible decline. American forces withdrew in disarray from South Vietnam in 1975. The United States returned sovereignty over the Panama Canal to Panama in 1978, despite protests from conservatives. Pro-American dictators were toppled in Iran and Nicaragua in 1979. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan that same year, leading conservatives to warn about American weakness in the face of Soviet expansion. Reagan spoke to fears of decline, warning in 1976 that "this nation has become Number Two in a world where it is dangerous—if not fatal—to be second best."[64]

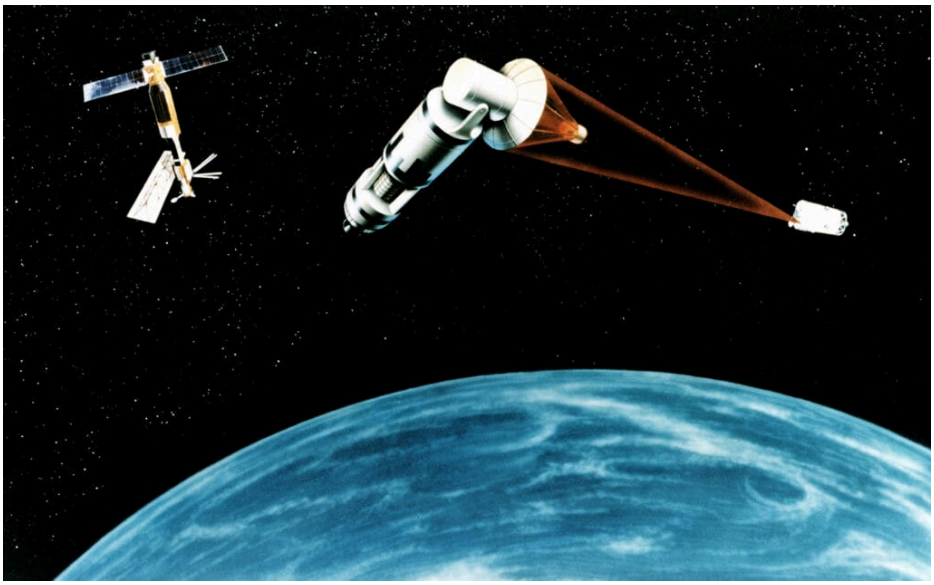
The Reagan administration made Latin America a showcase for its newly assertive policies. Jimmy Carter had sought to promote human rights in the region, but Reagan and his advisors scrapped this approach and instead focused on fighting communism—a term they applied to all Latin American left-wing movements. And so when communists with ties to Cuba overthrew the government of the Caribbean nation of Grenada in October 1983, Reagan dispatched the US Marines to the island. Dubbed Operation Urgent Fury, the Grenada invasion overthrew the leftist government after less than a week of fighting. Despite the relatively minor nature of the mission, its success gave victory-hungry Americans something to cheer about after the military debacles of the previous two decades.



Operation Urgent Fury, the U.S. invasion of Grenada, was broadly supported by the U.S. public. This photograph shows the deployment of U.S. Army Rangers into Grenada. Photograph, October 25, 1983. Wikimedia.

Grenada was the only time Reagan deployed the American military in Latin America, but the United States also influenced the region by supporting right-wing, anticommunist movements there. From 1981 to 1990, the United States gave more than $4 billion to the government of El Salvador in a largely futile effort to defeat the guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).[65] Salvadoran security forces equipped with American weapons committed numerous atrocities, including the slaughter of almost one thousand civilians at the village of El Mozote in December 1981.

The Reagan administration took a more cautious approach in the Middle East, where its policy was determined by a mix of anticommunism and hostility toward the Islamic government of Iran. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the United States supplied Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with military intelligence and business credits—even after it became clear that Iraqi forces were using chemical weapons. Reagan's greatest setback in the Middle East came in 1982, when, shortly after Israel invaded Lebanon, he dispatched Marines to the Lebanese city of Beirut to serve as a peacekeeping force. On October 23, 1983, a suicide bomber killed 241 Marines stationed in Beirut. Congressional pressure and anger from the American public forced Reagan to recall the Marines from Lebanon in March 1984. Reagan's decision demonstrated that, for all his talk of restoring American power, he took a pragmatic approach to foreign policy. He was unwilling to risk another Vietnam by committing American troops to Lebanon.



President Reagan proposed space- and ground-based systems to protect the United States from nuclear missiles in his 1984 Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Scientists argued it was unrealistic or impossible with contemporary technology, and it was lambasted in the media as "Star Wars." Indeed, as this artist's representation of SDI shows, it was rather ridiculous. Created October 18, 1984. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...em_Concept.jpg.

Though Reagan's policies toward Central America and the Middle East aroused protest, his policy on nuclear weapons generated the most controversy. Initially Reagan followed the examples of presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter by pursuing arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union. American officials participated in the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) Talks that began in 1981 and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) in 1982. But the breakdown of these talks in 1983 led Reagan to proceed with plans to place Pershing II nuclear missiles in Western Europe to counter Soviet SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe. Reagan went a step further in March 1983, when he announced plans for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a space-based system that could shoot down incoming Soviet missiles. Critics derided the program as a "Star Wars" fantasy, and even Reagan's advisors harbored doubts. "We don't have the technology to say this," Secretary of State George Shultz told aides.[66] These aggressive policies fed a growing nuclear freeze movement throughout the world. In the United States, organizations like the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy organized protests that culminated in a June 1982 rally that drew almost a million people to New York City's Central Park.

Protests in the streets were echoed by resistance in Congress. Congressional Democrats opposed Reagan's policies on the merits; congressional Republicans, though they supported Reagan's anticommunism, were wary of the administration's fondness for circumventing Congress. In 1982, the House voted 411–0 to approve the Boland Amendment, which barred the United States from supplying funds to the Contras, a right-wing insurgency fighting the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Reagan, overlooking the Contras' brutal tactics, hailed them as the "moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers."[67] The Reagan administration's determination to flout these amendments led to a scandal that almost destroyed Reagan's presidency. Robert McFarlane, the president's national security advisor, and Oliver North, a member of the National Security Council, raised money to support the Contras by selling American missiles to Iran and funneling the money to Nicaragua. When their scheme was revealed in 1986, it was hugely embarrassing for Reagan. The president's underlings had not only violated the Boland Amendment but had also, by selling arms to Iran, made a mockery of Reagan's declaration that "America will never make concessions to the terrorists." But while the Iran-Contra affair generated comparisons to the Watergate scandal, investigators were never able to prove Reagan knew about the operation. Without such a "smoking gun," talk of impeaching Reagan remained simply talk.

Though the Iran-Contra scandal tarnished the Reagan administration's image, it did not derail Reagan's most significant achievement: easing tensions with the Soviet Union. This would have seemed impossible in Reagan's first term, when the president exchanged harsh words with a rapid succession of Soviet leaders—Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko. In 1985, however, the aged Chernenko's death handed leadership of the Soviet Union to Mikhail Gorbachev, who, while a true believer in socialism, nonetheless realized that the Soviet Union desperately needed to reform itself. He loosened the Soviet Union's tight personal restraints and censorship (glasnost) and liberalized the repressive Soviet political machinery (perestroika). Gorbachev also reached out to Reagan in hopes of negotiating an end to the arms race, which was bankrupting the Soviet Union. Reagan and Gorbachev met in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1985 and Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986. The summits failed to produce any concrete agreements, but the two leaders developed a relationship unprecedented in the history of US-Soviet relations. This trust

made possible the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987, which committed both sides to sharp reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

By the late 1980s the Soviet empire was crumbling. Reagan successfully combined anticommunist rhetoric (such as his 1987 speech at the Berlin Wall, where he declared, "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace . . . tear down this wall!") with a willingness to negotiate with Soviet leadership.[68] But the most significant causes of collapse lay within the Soviet empire itself. Soviet-allied governments in Eastern Europe tottered under pressure from dissident organizations like Poland's Solidarity and East Germany's Neues Forum. Some of these countries, such as Poland, were also pressured from within by the Roman Catholic Church, which had turned toward active anticommunism under Pope John Paul II, the first Polish pope. When Gorbachev made it clear that he would not send the Soviet military to prop up these regimes, they collapsed one by one in 1989—in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and East Germany. Within the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's proposed reforms unraveled the decaying Soviet system rather than bringing stability. By 1991 the Soviet Union itself had vanished, dissolving into the Commonwealth of Independent States.

X. Toward the New Millennium



The Apple II computer, introduced in 1977, was the first successful mass-produced microcomputer meant for home use. Rather clunky-looking to our twenty-first-century eyes, this 1984 version of the Apple II was the smallest and sleekest model yet introduced. Indeed, it revolutionized both the substance and design of personal computers. Photograph of the Apple iicb. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Apple_iicb.jpg.

The conservative Reagan Revolution lingered over the presidential election of 1988. At stake was the legacy of a newly empowered conservative movement, a movement that would move forward with Reagan's vice president, George H. W. Bush, who triumphed over Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis with a promise to continue the conservative work that had commenced in the 1980s.

The son of a US senator from Connecticut, George H. W. Bush had over the decades been a navy pilot duing World War II, president of a successful oil company, chair of the Republican National Committee, director of the CIA, and member of the House of Representatives from Texas. After failing to best Reagan in the 1980 Republican primaries, he was elected as his vice president in 1980 and again in 1984. In 1988, Michael Dukakis, a proud liberal from Massachusetts, challenged Bush for the White House.

Dukakis ran a weak campaign. Bush, a Connecticut aristocrat who had never been fully embraced by movement conservatism, particularly the newly animated religious right, nevertheless hammered Dukakis with moral and cultural issues. Bush said Dukakis had blocked recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in Massachusetts schools and was a "card-carrying member" of the ACLU. Bush meanwhile dispatched his eldest son, George W. Bush, as his ambassador to the religious right.[69] Bush also infamously released a political ad featuring the face of Willie Horton, a Black Massachusetts man and convicted murderer who raped a woman after being released through a prison furlough program during Dukakis's tenure as governor. "By the time we're finished," Bush's campaign manager, Lee Atwater, said, "they're going to wonder whether Willie Horton is Dukakis' running mate."[70] Liberals attacked conservatives for perpetuating the ugly "code word" politics of the old Southern Strategy—the underhanded appeal to

white racial resentments perfected by Richard Nixon in the aftermath of civil rights legislation.[71] Buoyed by such attacks, Bush won a large victory and entered the White House.

Bush's election signaled Americans' continued embrace of Reagan's conservative program and further evidenced the disarray of the Democratic Party. American liberalism, so stunningly triumphant in the 1960s, was now in full retreat. It would still claim scattered victories. Protests by disability activists in 1990—sixty individuals with physical disabilities, including eight-year-old Jennifer Keelan, notably crawled up the seventy-eight marble steps of the US Capitol Building without their mobility support—successfully pressured lawmakers to finally push the American Disabilities Act (ADA) through Congress. Signing the bill was "something I'm very proud of," President Bush later recalled, "perhaps proudest of when I was President." Despite such gains, however, political and cultural conservatism continued to reign. It was still, as one historian put it, the "Age of Reagan."[72]

The Soviet Union collapsed during Bush's tenure. Devastated by a stagnant economy, mired in a costly and disastrous war in Afghanistan, confronted with dissident factions in Eastern Europe, and rocked by internal dissent, the Soviet Union crumbled. Eastern Bloc nations turned against their communist organizations and declared their independence from the Soviet Union. Gorbachev let them go. Soon, the Soviet Union unraveled. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned his office, declaring that the Soviet Union no longer existed. At the Kremlin—Russia's center of government—the new tricolor flag of the Russian Federation was raised.[73]

The dissolution of the Soviet Union left the United States as the world's only remaining superpower. The United States suddenly and surprisingly towered over a seemingly unipolar world. Global capitalism seemed triumphant. Observers wondered if some final stage of history had been reached, if the old battles had ended and a new global consensus built around peace and open markets would reign forever. "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such," wrote Francis Fukuyama in his much-talked-about 1989 essay "The End of History?"[74] Assets in Eastern Europe were privatized and auctioned off as newly independent nations introduced market economies. New markets were rising in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe. India, for instance, began liberalizing its economic laws and opening itself up to international investment in 1991. China's economic reforms, advanced by Chairman Deng Xiaoping and his handpicked successors, accelerated as privatization and foreign investment proceeded.



The Iraqi military set fire to Kuwait's oil fields during the Gulf War, many of which burned for months and caused massive pollution. Photograph of oil well fires outside Kuwait City, March 21, 1991. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...t_Storm_22.jpg.

The post–Cold War world was not without international conflicts, however. When Iraq invaded the small but oil-rich nation of Kuwait in 1990, Congress granted President Bush approval to intervene. The United States laid the groundwork for intervention (Operation Desert Shield) in August and commenced combat operations (Operation Desert Storm) in January 1991. With the memories of Vietnam still fresh, many Americans were hesitant to support military action that could expand into a protracted war or long-term commitment of troops. But the Gulf War was a swift victory for the United States. New technologies—including laser-guided precision bombing—amazed Americans, who could now watch twenty-four-hour live coverage of the war on the Cable News Network (CNN). The Iraqi army disintegrated after only a hundred hours of ground combat. President Bush and his advisors opted not to pursue the war into Baghdad and risk an occupation and insurgency. And so the war was won. Many entertained

the notion that the "ghosts of Vietnam" had been exorcised.[75] Bush won enormous popular support. Gallup polls showed a job approval rating as high as 89 percent in the weeks after the end of the war.[76]

President Bush's popularity seemed to suggest an easy reelection in 1992, but Bush had still not won over the New Right, the aggressively conservative wing of the Republican Party, despite his attacks on Dukakis, his embrace of the flag and the pledge, and his promise, "Read my lips: no new taxes" (his inability to follow through on this latter pledge woud spell problems for him later). He faced a primary challenge from political commentator Patrick Buchanan, a former Reagan and Nixon White House advisor, who cast Bush as a moderate, as an unworthy steward of the conservative movement who was unwilling to fight for conservative Americans in the nation's ongoing culture war. Buchanan did not defeat Bush in the Republican primaries, but he inflicted enough damage to weaken his candidacy.[77]



Bill and Hillary Clinton in 1993. Wikimedia.

Still thinking that Bush would be unbeatable in 1992, many prominent Democrats passed on a chance to run, and the Democratic Party nominated a relative unknown, Arkansas governor Bill Clinton. Dogged by charges of marital infidelity and draft dodging during the Vietnam War, Clinton was a consummate politician with enormous charisma and a skilled political team. He framed himself as a New Democrat, a centrist open to free trade, tax cuts, and welfare reform. Twenty-two years younger than Bush, he was the first baby boomer to make a serious run at the presidency. Clinton presented the campaign as a generational choice. During the campaign he appeared on MTV, played the saxophone on *The Arsenio Hall Show*, and told voters that he could offer the United States a new way forward.

Bush ran on his experience and against Clinton's moral failings. The GOP convention in Houston that summer featured speeches from Pat Buchanan and religious leader Pat Robertson decrying the moral decay plaguing American life. Clinton was denounced as a social liberal who would weaken the American family through both his policies and his individual moral character. But Clinton was able to convince voters that his moderated southern brand of liberalism would be more effective than the moderate conservatism of George Bush. Bush's candidacy, of course, was perhaps most damaged by a sudden economic recession. As Clinton's political team reminded the country, "It's the economy, stupid."

Clinton won the election, but the Reagan Revolution still reigned. Clinton and his running mate, Tennessee senator Albert Gore Jr., both moderate southerners, promised a path away from the old liberalism of the 1970s and 1980s (and the landslide electoral defeats of the 1980s). They were Democrats, but conservative Democrats, so-called New Democrats. In his first term, Clinton set out an ambitious agenda that included an economic stimulus package, universal health insurance, continuation of the Middle East peace talks initiated by Bush secretary of state James A. Baker III, welfare reform, and the completion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to abolish trade barriers between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. His moves to reform welfare, open trade, and deregulate financial markets were particular hallmarks of Clinton's Third Way, a new Democratic embrace of heretofore conservative policies.[78]

By implementing and championing NAFTA, Clinton reversed decades of Democratic opposition to free trade and opened the nation's northern and southern borders to the free flow of capital and goods. "NAFTA represents the first giant step towards

fulfillment of a dream that has long inspired us all," President Bush said in 1992, "the dream of a hemisphere united by economic cooperation and free competition." Critics, particularly in the Midwest's Rust Belt, blasted the agreement for opening American workers to competition by low-paid foreign workers. Many American factories relocated and set up shops—maquilas—in northern Mexico that took advantage of Mexico's low wages. Thousands of Mexicans rushed to the maquilas. Thousands more continued on past the border.

If NAFTA opened American borders to goods and services, people still navigated strict legal barriers to immigration. Policy makers believed that free trade would create jobs and wealth that would incentivize Mexican workers to stay home, and yet multitudes continued to leave for opportunities in el norte. The 1990s proved that prohibiting illegal migration was, if not impossible, exceedingly difficult. Poverty, political corruption, violence, and hopes for a better life in the United States—or simply higher wages—continued to lure immigrants across the border. Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of foreign-born individuals in the United States grew from 7.9 percent to 12.9 percent, and the number of undocumented immigrants tripled from 3.5 million to 11.2 million. While large numbers continued to migrate to traditional immigrant destinations—California, Texas, New York, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois—the 1990s also witnessed unprecedented migration to the American South. Among the fastest-growing immigrant destination states were Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgia, and North Carolina, all of which had immigration growth rates in excess of 100 percent during the decade.[79]

The influx of immigrants provoked anti-immigration activists and spurred government policy. Immigration was a bipartisan fear. A 1994 ballot initiative in California, Proposition 187, promised to prohibit undocumented immigrants from accessing non-emergency healthcare, public services, and education, while encouraging stricter immigration enforcement. Although declared unconstitutional, it nevertheless passed with 59 percent of the vote. Under President Bill Clinton, the US government launched Operation Hold the Line in El Paso in 1993 and Operation Gatekeeper outside San Diego in 1994, but fencing and Border Patrol vehicles did little more than steer migrants toward more dangerous crossings. Immigration officials hoped the brutal natural landscape would serve as a natural deterrent. It wouldn't. By 2017, hundreds of immigrants were dying each year of drowning, exposure, and dehydration.[80] Clinton, meanwhile, continued to carve out a Third Way middle ground for his domestic agenda. In his first weeks in office, Clinton reviewed Department of Defense policies restricting homosexuals from serving in the armed forces. He pushed through a compromise plan, Don't Ask, Don't Tell, that removed any questions about sexual orientation in induction interviews but also required that gay military personnel keep their sexual orientation private. The policy alienated many. Social conservatives were outraged, and liberals recoiled at continued antigay discrimination.

In his first term, Clinton also put forward universal healthcare as a major policy goal, and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton played a major role in the initiative. But the push for a national healthcare law collapsed on itself. Conservatives revolted, the healthcare industry flooded the airwaves with attack ads, Clinton struggled with congressional Democrats, and voters bristled. A national healthcare system was again repulsed.

The midterm elections of 1994 were a disaster for the Democrats, who lost the House of Representatives for the first time since 1952. Congressional Republicans, led by Georgia congressman Newt Gingrich and Texas congressman Dick Armey, offered a policy agenda they called the Contract with America. Republican candidates from around the nation gathered on the steps of the Capitol to pledge their commitment to a conservative legislative blueprint to be enacted if the GOP won control of the House. The strategy worked.

Social conservatives were mobilized by an energized group of religious activists, especially the Christian Coalition, led by Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed. Robertson was a television minister and entrepreneur whose 1988 long-shot run for the Republican presidential nomination brought him a massive mailing list and a network of religiously motivated voters around the country. From that mailing list, the Christian Coalition organized around the country, seeking to influence politics on the local and national levels.

In 1996 the generational contest played out again when the Republicans nominated seventy-three-year-old Senator Bob Dole of Kansas, but Clinton again won the election, becoming the first Democrat to serve two full terms since Franklin Roosevelt. He had ameliorated conservative opposition, in part, by signing welfare reform legislation, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which decreased welfare benefits, restricted eligibility, and turned over many responsibilities to states. Clinton said it would "break the cycle of dependency."[81]

Clinton presided over a booming economy fueled by emergent computing technologies. Personal computers had skyrocketed in sales, and the Internet became a mass phenomenon. Communication and commerce were never again the same. The tech boom was driven by business, and the 1990s saw robust innovation and entrepreneurship. Investors scrambled to find the next Microsoft or Apple, suddenly massive computing companies. But it was the Internet that sparked a bonanza. The dot-com boom fueled enormous economic growth and substantial financial speculation.

Stymied at the polls in 1996, Republicans looked for other ways to undermine Clinton's presidency. Political polarization seemed unprecedented, and a sensation-starved, post-Watergate media demanded scandal. The Republican Congress spent millions on investigations hoping to uncover some shred of damning evidence to sink Clinton's presidency, whether it be real estate deals, White House staffing—or adultery. Rumors of sexual misconduct had always swirled around Clinton. The press saturated the media with Clinton's sex scandals. Congressional investigations targeted the allegations and Clinton denied having "sexual relations" with Monica Lewinsky before a grand jury and in a statement to the American public. Republicans used the testimony to allege perjury. In December 1998, the House of Representatives voted to impeach the president. It was a wildly unpopular step. Two thirds of Americans disapproved, and a majority told Gallup pollsters that Republicans had abused their constitutional authority. Clinton's approval rating, meanwhile, jumped to 78 percent.[82] In February 1999, Clinton was acquitted by the Senate by a vote that mostly fell along party lines.

The 2000 election pitted Vice President Albert Gore Jr. against George W. Bush, the twice-elected Texas governor and son of the former president. Gore, wary of Clinton's recent impeachment despite Clinton's enduring approval ratings, distanced himself from the president and eight years of relative prosperity. Instead, he ran as a pragmatic, moderate liberal. Bush, too, ran as a moderate, claiming to represent a "compassionate conservatism" and a new form of faith-based politics. Bush was an outspoken evangelical. In a presidential debate, he declared Jesus Christ his favorite political philosopher. He promised to bring church leaders into government, and his campaign appealed to churches and clergy to get out the vote. Moreover, he promised to bring honor, dignity, and integrity to the Oval Office, a clear reference to Clinton's many vices. Utterly lacking the political charisma that had propelled Clinton, Gore withered under Bush's attacks. Instead of trumpeting the Clinton presidency, Gore found himself answering the media's questions about whether he was sufficiently an alpha male and whether he had invented the Internet.

Few elections have been as close and contentious as the 2000 election, which ended in a deadlock. Gore had won the popular vote by five hundred thousand votes, but the Electoral College hinged on a contested Florida election. On election night the media called Florida for Gore, but then Bush made late gains and news organizations reversed themselves by declaring the state for Bush—and Bush the probable president-elect. Gore conceded privately to Bush, then backpedaled as the counts edged back toward Gore yet again. When the nation awoke the next day, it was unclear who had been elected president. The close Florida vote triggered an automatic recount.

Lawyers descended on Florida. The Gore campaign called for manual recounts in several counties. Local election boards, Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris, and the Florida Supreme Court all weighed in until the US Supreme Court stepped in and, in an unprecedented 5–4 decision in Bush v. Gore, ruled that the recount had to end. Bush was awarded Florida by a margin of 537 votes, enough to win him the state and give him a majority in the Electoral College. He had won the presidency.

In his first months in office, Bush fought to push forward enormous tax cuts skewed toward America's highest earners. The bursting of the dot-com bubble weighed down the economy. Old political and cultural fights continued to be fought. And then, in New York, the towers fell.

XI. Conclusion

Reagan left office in 1988 with the Cold War waning and the economy booming. Unemployment had dipped to 5 percent by 1988. Between 1981 and 1986, gas prices fell from $1.38 per gallon to 95¢. The stock market rapidly recovered from the 1987 crash, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average—which stood at 950 in 1981—reached 2,239 by the end of Reagan's second term.[83] Yet the economic gains of the decade were unequally distributed. The top fifth of households enjoyed rising incomes while the rest stagnated or declined.[84] In constant dollars, annual chief executive officer (CEO) pay rose from $3 million in 1980 to roughly $12 million during Reagan's last year in the White House.[85] Between 1985 and 1989 the number of Americans living in poverty remained steady at thirty-three million.[86] Real per capita money income grew at only 2 percent per year, a rate roughly equal to the Carter years.[87] The American economy saw more jobs created than lost during the 1980s, but half of the jobs eliminated were in high-paying industries.[88] Furthermore, half of the new jobs failed to pay wages above the poverty line. The economic divide was most acute for African Americans and Latinos, one third of whom qualified as poor.

The triumph of the right proved incomplete. The number of government employees actually increased under Reagan. With more than 80 percent of the federal budget committed to defense, entitlement programs, and interest on the national debt, the right's goal of deficit elimination floundered for lack of substantial areas to cut.[89] Between 1980 and 1989 the national debt rose from $914 billion to $2.7 trillion.[90] Despite steep tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, the overall tax burden of the American public basically remained unchanged. Moreover, so-called regressive taxes on payroll and certain goods actually increased the tax burden on low- and middle-income Americans. Finally, Reagan slowed but failed to vanquish the five-decade legacy of liberal

economics. Most New Deal and Great Society programs proved durable. Government still offered its neediest citizens a safety net, if a now continually shrinking one.

Yet the discourse of American politics had irrevocably changed. The preeminence of conservative political ideas grew ever more pronounced, even when Democrats controlled Congress or the White House. In response to the conservative mood of the country, the Democratic Party adapted its own message to accommodate many of the Republicans' Reagan-era ideas and innovations. The United States was on a rightward path.

XII. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Richard Anderson and William J. Schultz, with content contributions by Emiliano Aguilar, Richard Anderson, Laila Ballout, Marsha Barrett, Seth Bartee, Eladio Bobadilla, Kyle Burke, Andrew Chadwick, Aaron Cowan, Jennifer Donnally, Leif Fredrickson, Anne Gray Fischer, Kori Graves, Rachel Michelle Gunter, Karissa A. Haugeberg, Jonathan Hunt, Stephen Koeth, Zeb Larson, Rose Miron, Colin Reynolds, Paul C. Rosier, William J. Schultz, and Daniel Spillman.

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28: American Carnage



Supporters of defeated U.S. President Donald Trump cheer the breaching of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. Wikimedia.

I. Introduction

On January 6, 2021, thousands of right-wing protestors stormed the US Capitol Building. Fueled by an unprecedented onslaught of lies and fabrications and conspiracy theories surrounding the November 2020 elections, they had rallied that morning in front of the White House to "Stop the Steal." Repeating a familiar litany of easily disproven falsehoods about the election,[1] the sitting president of the United States urged them to march on the Capitol and stop the certification of the November election. "You'll never take back our country with weakness," he said. "Fight like hell," he said. "If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore."[2] And so they did. They marched on the Capitol, armed themselves with metal pipes, baseball bats, hockey sticks, pepper spray, stun guns, and flagpoles, and attacked the police officers barricading the building.

"It was like something from a medieval battle," Capitol Police Officer Aquilino Gonell recalled.[3] The mob pulled D.C. Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone into the crowd, beat him with flagpoles, and tasered him. "Kill him with his own gun," Fanone remembered the mob shouting just before he lost consciousness. "I can still hear those words in my head today," he testified a few months later.[4]

The mob breached the outside barriers and, as legislators cowered in their chambers and fumbled with gas masks, poured into the building and attacked hastily built barriers, occupying the Capitol rotunda, the Senate chamber, and legislative offices, including that of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. In all of American history, nothing like it had ever happened. Perhaps the greatest domestic assault on the American federal government and its democratic institutions since the Civil War, the events of January 6 were nevertheless rooted in a historical context.

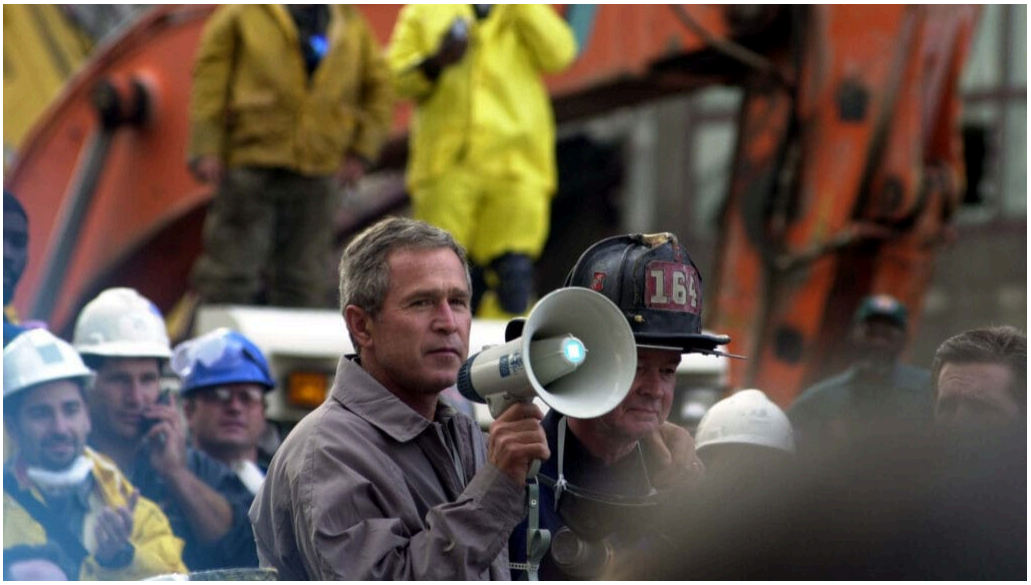
Revolutionary technological change, unprecedented global flows of goods and people and capital, an amorphous decades-long War on Terror, accelerating inequality, growing demographic diversity, a changing climate, political gridlock, declining faith in institutions: our present is not an island of circumstance but a product of history. Time marches forever on, but, as William Faulkner put it, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."[5] The last several decades of American history have culminated in an era not only of stunning technological innovation but also of stark partisan division, racial and ethnic tension, protests, gender divides, uneven economic growth, widening inequalities, military interventions, bouts of mass violence, and pervasive anxieties about the present and future of the United States. Through boom and bust, national tragedy, foreign wars, and the maturation of new generations, a new chapter of American history is still being written.

II. September 11 and the War on Terror



New York City, before September 11, 2001, via Library of Congress.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen operatives of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization hijacked four passenger planes on the East Coast. American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City at 8:46 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower at 9:03. American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the western façade of the Pentagon at 9:37. At 9:59, the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapsed. At 10:03, United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in a field outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania, brought down by passengers who had received news of the earlier hijackings. At 10:28, the North Tower collapsed. In less than two hours, nearly three thousand Americans had been killed.



President Bush addresses rescue workers at Ground Zero. FEMA Photo Library.

The attacks stunned Americans. That night, President Bush addressed the nation and assured the country that “the search is under way for those who are behind these evil acts.” At Ground Zero three days later, Bush thanked first responders for their work. A worker said he couldn’t hear him. “I can hear you,” Bush shouted back. “The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.”

American intelligence agencies quickly identified the radical Islamic militant group al-Qaeda, led by the wealthy Saudi Osama bin Laden, as the perpetrator of the attack. Sheltered in Afghanistan by the Taliban, the country’s radical Islamic government, al-Qaeda was responsible for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and a string of attacks at US embassies and military

bases across the world. Bin Laden's Islamic radicalism and his anti-American aggression attracted supporters across the region; by 2001, al-Qaeda was active in over sixty countries.

Although in his presidential campaign Bush had denounced foreign nation-building, he populated his administration with neoconservatives, firm believers in the expansion of American democracy and American interests abroad. Bush advanced what was sometimes called the Bush Doctrine, a policy in which the United States would have the right to unilaterally and preemptively make war on any regime or terrorist organization that posed a threat to the United States or to US citizens. It would lead the United States into protracted conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and entangle the United States in nations across the world. Journalist Dexter Filkins called it a "forever war," a perpetual conflict waged against an amorphous and undefeatable enemy.[6] The geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century world were transformed.

More immediately, September 11 led to war. The United States, of course, had a history in Afghanistan. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 to quell an insurrection that threatened to topple Kabul's communist government, the United States financed and armed anti-Soviet insurgents, the mujahideen. In 1981, the Reagan administration authorized the CIA to provide the mujahideen with weapons and training to strengthen the insurgency. Bin Laden also fought with and funded the mujahideen during this period. And they began to win. Afghanistan bled the Soviet Union dry. The costs of the war, coupled with growing instability at home, convinced the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989.[7]

Bin Laden relocated al-Qaeda to Afghanistan after the country fell to the Taliban in 1996. Under Bill Clinton, the United States launched cruise missiles at al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan in retaliation for al-Qaeda bombings on American embassies in Africa.

After September 11, with a broad authorization of military force, Bush administration officials made plans for military action against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. What would become the longest war in American history began with the launching of Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001. Air and missile strikes hit targets across Afghanistan. US Special Forces joined with fighters in the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. Major Afghan cities fell in quick succession. The capital, Kabul, fell on November 13. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda operatives retreated into the rugged mountains along the border of Pakistan in eastern Afghanistan. The American occupation of Afghanistan continued.

As American troops struggled to contain the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Bush administration set its sights on Iraq. After the conclusion of the Gulf War in 1991, American officials established economic sanctions, weapons inspections, and no-fly zones. By mid-1991, American warplanes were routinely patrolling Iraqi skies and coming under periodic fire from Iraqi missile batteries. The overall cost to the United States of maintaining the two no-fly zones over Iraq was roughly $1 billion a year. Related military activities in the region added almost another $500 million to the annual bill. On the ground in Iraq, meanwhile, Iraqi authorities clashed with UN weapons inspectors. Iraq had suspended its program for weapons of mass destruction, but Saddam Hussein fostered ambiguity about the weapons in the minds of regional leaders to forestall any possible attacks against Iraq.

In 1998, a standoff between Hussein and the United Nations over weapons inspections led President Bill Clinton to launch punitive strikes aimed at debilitating what was thought to be a developed chemical weapons program. Attacks began on December 16, 1998. More than two hundred cruise missiles fired from US Navy warships and Air Force B-52 bombers flew into Iraq, targeting suspected chemical weapons storage facilities, missile batteries, and command centers. Airstrikes continued for three more days, unleashing in total 415 cruise missiles and 600 bombs against 97 targets. The number of bombs dropped was nearly double the number used in the 1991 conflict.

The United States and Iraq remained at odds throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, when Bush administration officials began championing "regime change." The administration publicly denounced Saddam Hussein's regime and its alleged weapons of mass destruction. Deceptively tying Saddam Hussein to international terrorists was strikingly effective—a majority of Americans linked Hussein to the 9/11 attack despite the total lack of evidence for such a link.[8] The administration's push for war was in full swing. Protests broke out across the country and all over the world, but majorities of Americans supported military action. On October 16, Congress passed the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq resolution, giving Bush the power to make war in Iraq. Iraq began cooperating with UN weapons inspectors in late 2002, but the Bush administration pressed on. On February 6, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell, who had risen to public prominence as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Persian Gulf War in 1991, presented allegations of a robust Iraqi weapons program to the UN. Protests continued.

The first American bombs hit Baghdad on March 20, 2003. Several hundred thousand troops moved into Iraq, and Hussein's regime quickly collapsed. Baghdad fell on April 9. On May 1, 2003, aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, beneath a banner reading Mission Accomplished, George W. Bush announced that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."[9] No evidence of weapons of mass destruction were ever found. And combat operations had not ended, not really. The Iraqi insurgency had begun, and the

United States would spend the next ten years struggling to contain it.



Despite the celebration of President Bush, combat operations in Iraq would continue for years more. In some ways, it has not ended. Although combat troops were withdrawn from Iraq by December 2011, President Obama announced the use of airstrikes against Iraqi militants in August 2014. Wikimedia, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedi...complished.jpg.

Efforts by various intelligence gathering agencies led to the capture of Saddam Hussein, found hiding in an underground compartment near his hometown, on December 13, 2003. The new Iraqi government found him guilty of crimes against humanity and he was hanged on December 30, 2006. But the war in Iraq was not over.

III. The End of the Bush Years

The War on Terror was a centerpiece in the race for the White House in 2004. The Democratic ticket, headed by Massachusetts senator John Kerry, a Vietnam War hero who entered the public consciousness for his 1971 testimony against the conflict, attacked Bush for the ongoing inability to contain the Iraqi insurgency or to find weapons of mass destruction, the revelation and photographic evidence that American soldiers had abused prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad, and the inability to find Osama bin Laden. Moreover, many enemy combatants who had been captured in Iraq and Afghanistan were "detained" indefinitely at a military prison in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. "Gitmo" became infamous for its harsh treatment, indefinite detentions, and torture of prisoners. Bush defended the War on Terror, and his allies attacked critics for failing to support the troops. Moreover, Kerry had voted for the war—and now had to attack the very thing he had authorized.

Bush also harnessed post-9/11 cultural anxieties in 2004, using abortion and same-sex marriage ("gay marriage") as "wedge issues" to rally key constituencies. The Supreme Court, for instance, had struck down "sodomy laws"—the criminalization of gay sex—in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), but majorities still told pollsters that gay and lesbian relationships were "morally wrong."[10] Bush—an evangelical who had relied upon the religious right throughout his 2000 presidential campaign—used the specter of same-sex marriage—which gay rights advocates were busy building support for, as Democratic allies awkwardly embraced "civil unions"—to appeal to religious conservatives. Such issues spoke to widespread social divisions: popular media outlets increasingly focused on a cultural divide between a "blue America"—urban, Democratic, secular, younger, diverse, liberal—and a "red America"—rural, Republican, religious, older, native-born, conservative. Books such as Thomas Frank's What's the Matter with Kansas? captured the exasperation of some political observers that cultural issues were dividing Americans, but in an increasingly impotent political system, culture and group identity increasingly defined politics and motivated voters. In November, Bush won a close but clear victory.

The second Bush term saw the continued deterioration of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but Bush's presidency would take a bigger hit from his perceived failure to respond to the domestic tragedy that followed Hurricane Katrina's devastating hit on the Gulf Coast. Katrina had been a Category 5 hurricane. It was, the New Orleans Times-Picayune reported, "the storm we always feared."[11]



Hurricane Katrina was one of the deadliest and more destructive hurricanes to hit American soil in U.S. history. It nearly destroyed New Orleans, Louisiana, as well as cities, towns, and rural areas across the Gulf Coast. It sent hundreds of thousands of refugees to near-by cities like Houston, Texas, where they temporarily resided in massive structures like the Astrodome. Photograph, September 1, 2005. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...rina-14461.jpg.

New Orleans suffered a direct hit, the levees broke, and the bulk of the city was flooded. Thousands of refugees flocked to the Superdome—where supplies and medical treatment and evacuation were slow to come. Individuals died in the heat. Bodies wasted away. Americans saw poor Black Americans abandoned. Katrina became a symbol of a broken administrative system, a devastated coastline, and irreparable social structures that allowed escape and recovery for some and not for others. Critics charged that Bush had staffed his administration with incompetent supporters and had ignored the displaced poor and Black residents of New Orleans.[12]

Immigration, meanwhile, had become an increasingly potent political issue amid the wave of nativism and nationalistic paranoia unleashed by 9/11. George W. Bush fanned widespread anti-immigration sentiment to win reelection and Republicans used it in the 2006 midterms, passing legislation—with bipartisan support from Democrats such as Senators Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama—that provided for a border "fence." Seven hundred miles of towering steel barriers sliced through border towns and deserts. Many immigrants and their supporters tried to fight back. The spring and summer of 2006 saw waves of protests across the country. Hundreds of thousands marched in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, and tens of thousands marched in smaller cities around the country. Legal change, however, went nowhere. Moderate conservatives feared upsetting business interests' demand for cheap, exploitable labor and alienating large voting blocs by stifling immigration, and moderate liberals feared upsetting anti-immigrant groups by pushing too hard for liberalization of immigration laws. The fence was built and the border was tightened.

At the same time, Iraq descended further into chaos as insurgents battled against American troops and groups such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq bombed civilians and released video recordings of beheadings. In 2007, twenty-seven thousand additional US forces deployed to Iraq under the command of General David Petraeus. The effort, known as "the surge," employed more sophisticated anti-insurgency strategies and, combined with Sunni efforts, pacified many of Iraq's cities and provided cover for the withdrawal of American forces. On December 4, 2008, the Iraqi government approved the US-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement, and US combat forces withdrew from Iraqi cities before June 30, 2009. The last US combat forces left Iraq on December 18, 2011. Violence and instability continued to rock the country.

Afghanistan, meanwhile, had also continued to deteriorate. In 2006, the Taliban reemerged, as the Afghan government proved both highly corrupt and incapable of providing social services or security for its citizens. The Taliban began reacquiring territory. Money and American troops continued to prop up the Afghanistan government until American forces withdrew hastily in August 2021. The Taliban immediately took over the remainder of the country, outlasting America's twenty-year occupation.

IV. The Great Recession

The Great Recession began, as most American economic catastrophes begin, with the bursting of a speculative bubble.

Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, home prices continued to climb, and financial services firms looked to cash in on what seemed to be a safe but lucrative investment. After the dot-com bubble burst, investors searched for a secure investment rooted in clear value, rather than in trendy technological speculation. What could be more secure than real estate? But mortgage companies began writing increasingly risky loans and then bundling them together and selling them over and over again, sometimes so quickly it became difficult to determine exactly which financial services entity had an interest in what tranche of loans.

Decades of financial deregulation had rolled back Depression-era restraints and again allowed risky business practices to dominate the world of American finance. It was a bipartisan agenda. In the 1990s, for instance, Bill Clinton signed the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, repealing provisions of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act separating commercial and investment banks, and the Commodity Futures Modernization Act, which exempted credit-default swaps—perhaps the key financial mechanism behind the crash—from regulation.

Mortgages had been so heavily leveraged that when American homeowners began to default on their loans, the whole system collapsed. Major financial services firms such as Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers disappeared almost overnight. In order to prevent the crisis from spreading, President Bush signed the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act and the federal government immediately began pouring billions of dollars into the industry, propping up hobbled banks. Massive giveaways to bankers created shock waves of resentment throughout the rest of the country, contributing to Obama's 2008 election. But Obama oversaw the program after his inauguration. Thereafter, conservative members of the Tea Party decried the cronyism of an incoming Obama administration filled with former Wall Street executives. The same energies also motivated the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011, in which young, left-leaning New Yorkers protested an American economy that seemed overwhelmingly tilted toward "the one percent."[13]

The Great Recession only magnified already rising income and wealth inequalities. According to the chief investment officer at JPMorgan Chase, the largest bank in the United States, "profit margins have reached levels not seen in decades," and "reductions in wages and benefits explain the majority of the net improvement."[14] A study from the Congressional Budget Office found that since the late 1970s, after-tax benefits of the wealthiest 1 percent grew by over 300 percent. The "average" American's after-tax benefits had grown 35 percent. Economic trends have disproportionately and objectively benefited the wealthiest Americans. Still, despite political rhetoric, American frustration failed to generate anything like the social unrest of the early twentieth century. A weakened labor movement and a strong conservative bloc continue to stymie serious attempts at reversing or even slowing economic inequalities. Occupy Wall Street managed to generate a fair number of headlines and shift public discussion away from budget cuts and toward inequality, but its membership amounted to only a fraction of the far more influential (and money-driven) Tea Party. Its presence on the public stage was fleeting.

The Great Recession, however, was not. While American banks quickly recovered and recaptured their steady profits and the American stock market climbed again to new heights, American workers continued to drift. Job growth was slow and unemployment rates would remain stubbornly high for years. Wages froze, meanwhile, and the well-paying full-time jobs that were lost were too often replaced by low-paying, part-time work. A generation of workers coming of age within the crisis, moreover, had been savaged by the economic collapse. Unemployment among young Americans hovered for years at rates nearly double the national average.

V. The Obama Years

By the 2008 election, with Iraq still in chaos, the ever-cautious Democrats, finally ready to embrace the antiwar position, chose a candidate who had consistently opposed military action in Iraq. Senator Barack Obama had been a member of the Illinois Senate when Congress debated the war actions, but he had publicly denounced the war, predicting the sectarian violence that would ensue, and remained critical of the invasion through his 2004 campaign for the US Senate. He began running for president almost immediately after arriving in Washington.

A former law professor and community activist, Obama became the first African American candidate to capture the nomination of a major political party.[15] During the election, Obama won the support of an increasingly antiwar electorate. When the already fragile economy finally collapsed in 2007 and 2008, Bush's policies were widely blamed. Obama's opponent, Republican senator John McCain, was tied to those policies and struggled to fight off the nation's desire for a new political direction. Obama won a convincing victory in the fall and became the nation's first African American president.



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.” The White House via Flickr.

President Obama’s first term was marked by domestic affairs, especially his efforts to combat the Great Recession and to pass a national healthcare law. Obama came into office as the economy continued to deteriorate. He continued the bank bailout begun under his predecessor and launched a limited economic stimulus plan to provide government spending to reignite the economy.

Despite Obama’s dominant electoral victory, national politics fractured, and a conservative Republican firewall quickly arose against the Obama administration. “The Tea Party” became a catchall term for a diffuse movement of fiercely conservative and politically frustrated American voters. Typically whiter, older, and richer than the average American, flush with support from wealthy backers, and clothed in the iconography of the founding fathers, Tea Party activists registered their deep suspicions of the federal government.[16] Tea Party protests dominated the public eye in 2009, and activists steered the Republican Party far to the right, capturing primary elections all across the country.

Obama’s most substantive legislative achievement proved to be a national healthcare law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare. Presidents since Theodore Roosevelt had striven to pass national healthcare reform and failed. Obama’s plan forsook liberal models of a national healthcare system and instead adopted a heretofore conservative model of subsidized private care (similar plans had been put forward by Republicans Richard Nixon, Newt Gingrich, and Obama’s 2012 opponent, Mitt Romney). Beset by conservative protests, Obama’s healthcare reform narrowly passed through Congress. It abolished preexisting conditions as a cause for denying care, scrapped junk plans, provided for state-run healthcare exchanges (allowing individuals without healthcare to pool their purchasing power), offered states funds to subsidize an expansion of Medicaid, and required all Americans to provide proof of a health insurance plan that measured up to government-established standards (those who did not purchase a plan would pay a penalty tax, and those who could not afford insurance would be eligible for federal subsidies). The number of uninsured Americans remained stubbornly high, however, and conservatives spent most of the next decade attacking the bill.



These former Taliban fighters surrendered their arms to the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during a reintegration ceremony at the provincial governor's compound in May 2012. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...eturn_arms.jpg.

Meanwhile, in 2009, President Barack Obama deployed seventeen thousand additional troops to Afghanistan as part of a counterinsurgency campaign that aimed to "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat" al-Qaeda and the Taliban. US Special Forces and CIA drones targeted al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. In May 2011, US Navy Sea, Air and Land Forces (SEALs) conducted a raid deep into Pakistan that led to the killing of Osama bin Laden. The United States and NATO began a phased withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2011, with the aim of removing all combat troops by 2014. Although weak militarily, the Taliban had not been defeated. They remained politically influential in southern and eastern Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda remained active in Pakistan but shifted its bases to Yemen and the Horn of Africa. Through December 2013, the war in Afghanistan had claimed the lives of 3,397 US service members.

VI. Stagnation

In 2012, Barack Obama won a second term by defeating Republican Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts. However, Obama's inability to control Congress and the ascendancy of Tea Party Republicans stunted the passage of meaningful legislation. Obama was a lame duck before he ever won reelection, and gridlocked government came to represent an acute sense that much of American life—whether in politics, economics, or race relations—had grown stagnant.

The economy continued its halfhearted recovery from the Great Recession. The Obama administration campaigned on little to specifically address the crisis and, faced with congressional intransigence, accomplished even less. While corporate profits climbed and stock markets soared, wages stagnated and employment sagged for years after the Great Recession. By 2016, the statistically average American worker had not received a raise in almost forty years. The average worker in January 1973 earned $4.03 an hour. Adjusted for inflation, that wage was about two dollars per hour more than the average American earned in 2014. Working Americans were losing ground. Moreover, most income gains in the economy had been largely captured by a small number of wealthy earners. Between 2009 and 2013, 85 percent of all new income in the United States went to the top 1 percent of the population.[17]

But if money no longer flowed to American workers, it saturated American politics. In 2000, George W. Bush raised a record $172 million for his campaign. In 2008, Barack Obama became the first presidential candidate to decline public funds (which had the effect of removing all applicable caps to his total fundraising) and raised nearly three quarters of a billion dollars for his campaign. The average House seat, in the meantime, cost about $1.6 million, and the average Senate Seat over $10 million.[18] The Supreme Court, meanwhile, removed barriers to outside political spending. In 2002, Senators John McCain and Russ Feingold crossed party lines to pass the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, bolstering campaign finance laws passed in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal in the 1970s. But political organizations—particularly PACs—exploited loopholes to raise large sums of money, and in 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in Citizens United v. FEC that no limits could be placed on political spending by corporations, unions, and nonprofits. Money flowed even deeper into politics.

The influence of money in politics only heightened partisan gridlock, further blocking bipartisan progress on particular political issues. Climate change, for instance, has failed to transcend partisan barriers. In the 1970s and 1980s, experts substantiated the theory of anthropogenic (human-caused) global warming. Eventually, the most influential of these panels, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded in 1995 that there was a "discernible human influence on global climate."[19] This conclusion, though stated conservatively, was by that point essentially the scientific consensus. By 2007, the IPCC considered the evidence "unequivocal" and warned that "unmitigated climate change would, in the long term, be likely to exceed the capacity of natural, managed and human systems to adapt."[20]

Climate change became a permanent and major topic of public discussion and policy in the twenty-first century. Fueled by popular coverage—most notably, perhaps, the documentary An Inconvenient Truth, based on Al Gore's book and presentations of the same name—addressing climate change became a plank of the American left and a point of denial for the American right. American public opinion and political action still lagged far behind the scientific consensus on the dangers of global warming. Conservative politicians, conservative think tanks, and energy companies waged war to sow questions in the minds of Americans, who remained divided on the question, as they did on so many others.[21]

Some of the resistance to addressing climate change was rooted in national economic anxieties. As Americans looked over their shoulder at China, many refused to sacrifice immediate economic growth for long-term environmental security. Twenty-first-century relations with China remained characterized by contradictions and interdependence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, China reinvigorated its efforts to modernize its country. By liberating and subsidizing much of its economy and drawing enormous foreign investments over the last several decades, China posted massive growth rates. Enormous cities rose by the day. US-China cultural exchange increased as students, immigrants, and tourists traveled between nations. China, meanwhile, emerged as a manufacturing hub for US (and global) trade. In 2000, China had a GDP around an eighth the size of US GDP, but, based on growth rates and trends, many analysts predicted that China's economy would soon bypass United States's. The US defied prognosticators by maintaining its global lead, but American concerns about China's rising global power persisted alongside ever-increasing consumption of Chinese goods.

VII. American Carnage



Donald Trump speaking at a 2018 rally. Photo by Gage Skidmore. Wikimedia.

By 2016, American voters were fed up. In that year's presidential race, Republicans spurned their political establishment and nominated a real estate developer and celebrity billionaire, Donald Trump, who, decrying the tyranny of political correctness and promising to "Make America Great Again," vowed to build a wall to keep out Mexican immigrants and bar Muslim immigrants. Democrats, meanwhile, flirted with the candidacy of Senator Bernie Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist from Vermont, before ultimately nominating Hillary Clinton, who, after eight years as first lady in the 1990s, had served eight years in the Senate and four more as secretary of state. Voters despaired: Trump and Clinton were the most unpopular nominees in modern American history. Majorities of Americans viewed each candidate unfavorably, and majorities in both parties said, early in the election season, that they were motivated more by voting against their rival candidate than for their own.[22] With incomes frozen, politics

gridlocked, race relations tense, and headlines full of violence, such frustrations only channeled a larger sense of stagnation, upsetting traditional political allegiances. In the end, despite winning nearly three million more votes nationwide, Clinton failed to carry key Midwestern battlegrounds where frustrated white working-class voters abandoned the Democratic Party—a Republican presidential candidate had not carried Wisconsin, Michigan, or Pennsylvania since the 1980s—and swung their support to the Republicans. Donald Trump won the presidency.

Political divisions only deepened after the election. A nation already deeply split by income, culture, race, geography, and ideology continued to come apart. Trump's presidency consumed national attention. Traditional print media and the consumers and producers of social media could not help but throw themselves at the ins and outs of Trump's norm-smashing first years while seemingly refracting every major event through the prism of the Trump presidency. Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian election-meddling and the alleged collusion of campaign officials in that effort produced countless headlines, if not that much else.

New policies, meanwhile, enflamed widening cultural divisions. Migration from Central America spiked between 2007 and 2015, and border apprehensions and deportations reached record levels under the Obama administration. Trump pushed even farther. Anti-immigration politics suffused his campaign. He pushed for a massive wall along the border to supplement the fence built under the Bush administration. He began ordering the deportation of so-called Dreamers—students who were born elsewhere but grew up in the United States—and immigration officials forcibly separated refugee-status-seeking parents and children at the border. Trump's border policies heartened his base and aggravated his opponents. While Trump stoked America's enduring culture war, his narrowly passed 2017 tax cut continued the redistribution of American wealth toward corporations and wealthy individuals. The tax cut grew the federal deficit and further exacerbated America's widening economic inequality.

In his inaugural address, Donald Trump promised to end what he called "American carnage"—a nation ravaged, he said, by illegal immigrants, crime, and foreign economic competition. But, under his presidency, the nation only spiraled deeper into cultural and racial divisions, domestic unrest, and growing anxiety about the nation's future. Trump represented an aggressive, pugilistic anti-liberalism, and as president, he never missed an opportunity to fuel the fires of right-wing rage. Refusing to settle for the careful statement or defer to bureaucrats, Trump smashed many of the norms of the presidency and raged on his personal Twitter account. And he refused to be governed by the truth.

Few Americans, especially after the Johnson and Nixon administrations, believed that presidents never lied. Liberal critics, for instance, repeatedly derided the Bush administration for what comedian Stephen Colbert mocked as its "truthiness" (Merriam-Webster's word of the year for 2006). But perhaps no president ever lied so boldly, so compulsively, or so often as Donald Trump, who made, according to a 2021 Washington Post tally, 30,573 "false or misleading claims" during his first term, roughly twenty-one per day.[23] What proved so perplexing was the obvious absurdity of so many of them. On the administration's very first day in office, for instance, the White House Press Secretary made verifiably false claims about the size of its inauguration crowds. Rather than retreat, a White House spokeswoman defended the administration's "alternative facts." By the latter years of his first term, only about a third of Americans counted him as trustworthy.[24] Long decades of blatant and sustained political cynicism had undermined much faith in the integrity of politicians and political media, but Trump—and the larger world of online misinformation in which he had long trafficked—seemingly broke apart whatever remained of an expectation for a basic shared reality among Americans. And that shattered reality led directly to January 6, 2021.

In November 2020, Joseph R. Biden, a longtime senator from Delaware and former vice president under Barack Obama, running alongside Kamala Harris, a California senator who would become the nation's first female vice president, convincingly defeated Donald Trump at the polls: Biden won the popular vote by a margin of 4 percent and the electoral vote by a margin of seventy-four votes, marking the first defeat for an incumbent president in nearly thirty years. But Trump refused to concede the election. He said it had been stolen. He said votes had been manufactured. He said it was all rigged. The claims were easily debunked, but it didn't seem to matter: months after the election, somewhere between one-half and two-thirds of self-identified Republicans judged the election stolen.[25] So when, on the afternoon of January 6, 2021, the president again articulated a litany of lies about the election and told the crowd of angry conspiracy-minded protestors to march to the Capitol and "fight like hell," they did.

Thousands of Trump's followers converged on the Capitol. Roughly one in seven of the more than five hundred rioters first arrested were affiliated with extremist groups organized around conspiracy theories, white supremacy, and the right-wing militia movement.[26] They waved American and Confederate flags, displayed conspiracy theory slogans and white supremacist icons, carried Christian iconography, and, above all, bore flags, hats, shirts, and other garb emblazoned with the name of Donald Trump.[27] Arming themselves for hand-to-hand combat, they pushed past barriers and battled barricaded police officers. The Capitol attackers injured about 150 of them. Officers suffered concussions, burns, bruises, stab wounds, and broken bones.[28] One suffered a nonfatal heart attack after being shocked repeatedly by a stun gun. Capitol Police Officer Brian D. Sicknick was killed,

either by repeated attacks with a fire extinguisher or from mace or bear spray. Four other officers later died by suicide.

As the rioters breached the building, officers inside the House chamber moved furniture to barricade the doors as House members huddled together on the floor, waiting for a breach. Ashli Babbitt, a thirty-five-year-old Air Force veteran consumed by social-media conspiracy theories and wearing a Trump flag around her neck, was shot and killed by a Capitol Police officer when she attempted to storm the chamber ("I'm a big fan of Ashli Babbitt, okay," President Trump said in 2025). The House Chamber held, but attackers breached the Senate Chamber on the opposite end of the building. The lawmakers had, by then, been evacuated.

The rioters held the Capitol for several hours before the National Guard cleared them out that evening. Congress, refusing to back down, stayed into the night to certify the results of the election. And yet, despite everything that had happened the day, the president's unfounded claims of election fraud kept their grip on Republican lawmakers: eleven Republican senators and 150 of the House's 212 Republicans lodged objections to the certification. And a little more than a month later, they refused to convict Donald Trump during his quickly organized second impeachment trial, this time for "incitement of insurrection."

When he returned to office following the 2024 election, Trump, on January 20, 2025, the first day of his second term in office, granted "a full, complete and unconditional pardon" to the more than fifteen hundred January 6 rioters.

VIII. The Pandemic

In the winter of 2019 and 2020, a new respiratory virus, Covid-19, emerged in Wuhan, China. It was a coronavirus, named after its spiky, crown-like appearance under a microscope. Other coronaviruses had been identified and contained in previous years, but, by December, Chinese doctors were treating dozens of cases, and, by January, hundreds. Wuhan shut down to contain the outbreak, but the virus escaped. In January, the United States confirmed its first case. Deaths were reported in the Philippines and in France. Outbreaks struck Italy and Iran. And the American case counts grew. Countries began locking down. Air travel slowed.

The virus was highly contagious and could be spread before the onset of symptoms. Many who had the virus were asymptomatic: they didn't exhibit any symptoms at all. But others, especially the elderly and those with "comorbidities," were struck down. The virus attacked their airways, suffocating them. Doctors didn't know what they were battling. They struggled to procure oxygen and respirators and incubated the worst cases with what they had. But the deaths piled up.

The virus hit New York City in the spring. The city was devastated. Hospitals overflowed as doctors struggled to treat a disease they barely understood. By April, thousands of patients were dying every day. The city couldn't keep up with the bodies. Dozens of "mobile morgues" were set up to house bodies that wouldn't be processed for months.[29]

With medical-grade masks in short supply, Americans made their own homemade cloth masks. Many right-wing Americans notably refused to wear them at all, further exposing workers and family members to the virus.

Failing to contain the outbreak, the country shut down. Flights stopped. Schools and restaurants closed. White-collar workers transitioned to working from home when offices shut down. But others weren't so lucky. By April, 10 million Americans had lost their jobs.[30]

But the shutdowns were scattered and incomplete. States were left to fend for themselves, setting their own policies and competing with one another to acquire scarce personal protective equipment (PPE). Many workers couldn't stay home. Hourly workers, lacking paid sick leave, often had to choose between a paycheck and reporting to work having been exposed or even when presenting symptoms. Mask-wearing, meanwhile, became politicized. By May, one hundred thousand Americans were dead. A new wave of cases hit the South in July and August, overwhelming hospitals across much of the region. But the worst came in the winter, when the outbreak went fully national. Hundreds of thousands tested positive for the virus every day, and nearly three thousand Americans died every day throughout January and much of February 2021.

The outbreak retreated in early 2021, and pharmaceutical labs, flush with federal dollars, released new, cutting-edge vaccines. By late spring, Americans were getting vaccinated by the millions. But many, variously swayed by conspiracy theories peddled on social media or simply politically radicalized into associating vaccinations or other mitigation measures with anti-Trump politics, refused them. By late summer, barely a majority of those eligible for vaccines were fully vaccinated. More contagious and elusive strains of the virus evolved and spread, and the virus continued churning through the population, sending many, especially the elderly, the chronically ill, and the unvaccinated, to hospitals and to early deaths. By the end of the summer of 2021, according to official counts, over six hundred thousand Americans had died from Covid-19. By May 2022, the official death toll in the

United States crossed one million. Most Americans eventually acquired Covid—often multiple times—or had been vaccinated, mitigating mortality. At the same time, the new most dominant strain of the virus was more transmissible but less deadly. The pandemic became endemic, defined by seasonal patterns in a manner more consistent with the patterns of regular life. Covid never disappeared. In 2023, Covid was the tenth leading cause of death in the United States; in 2024, provisionally, it was the fifteenth.

IX. New Horizons

Americans looked anxiously to the future, and yet also, often, to new generations busy discovering, perhaps, that change was not impossible. Much public commentary in the early twenty-first century concerned "millennials" and "Generation Z," the generations that came of age during the new millennium. Commentators, demographers, and political prognosticators continued to ask what the new generations would bring. A cheeky sub-headline on the cover of Time's May 20, 2013, issue, for instance, read "Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists who still live with their parents: Why they'll save us all." Pollsters focused on features that distinguish millennials and Gen Z from older Americans: millennials, the pollsters said, were more diverse, more liberal, less religious, and harder hit by economic insecurity. "They are," as one 2014 Pew report read, "relatively unattached to organized politics and religion, linked by social media, burdened by debt, distrustful of people, in no rush to marry—and optimistic about the future."[31] Gen Z, meanwhile, attracted its own genre of generational definition, unleashing streams of polls and articles trying to nail down the unique outlooks of a new generation.

Changing attitudes toward homosexuality, gay marriage, and "queer" sexuality reflected one of the most dramatic changes in the popular attitudes of recent years. After decades of advocacy, American attitudes shifted rapidly. In 2006, a majority of Americans were still telling Gallup pollsters that "gay or lesbian relations" was "morally wrong."[32] But prejudice against homosexuality plummeted, and greater public acceptance of coming out opened up in the culture—in 2001, 73 percent of Americans said they knew someone who was gay, lesbian, or bisexual; in 1983, only 24 percent did. Gay characters—and in particular, gay characters with depth and complexity—could be found across the cultural landscape. Attitudes shifted such that, by the 2010s, polls registered majority support for the legalization of gay marriage. A writer for *The Wall Street Journal* called it "one of the fastest-moving changes in social attitudes of this generation."[33]

Such change was, in many respects, a generational one: on average, younger Americans supported gay marriage in higher numbers than older Americans. The Obama administration, meanwhile, moved tentatively. Refusing to push for national interventions on the gay marriage front, Obama did, however, direct a review of Defense Department policies that repealed the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy in 2011. Without the support of national politicians, gay marriage was left to the courts. Beginning in Massachusetts in 2003, state courts had begun slowly ruling against gay marriage bans. Then, in June 2015, the Supreme Court ruled 5–4 in Obergefell v. Hodges that same-sex marriage was a constitutional right. Nearly two thirds of Americans supported the position.[34]

While liberal social attitudes marked the younger generation, perhaps nothing defined young Americans more than the embrace of technology. The Internet in particular, liberated from desktop modems, shaped more of daily life than ever before. The release of the Apple iPhone in 2007 popularized the concept of smartphones for millions of consumers. By 2011, about a third of Americans owned a mobile computing device; four years later, two thirds did.[35]

Together with the advent of social media, Americans used their smartphones and their desktops to stay in touch with old acquaintances, chat with friends, share photos, and interpret the world—as newspaper and magazine subscriptions dwindled, Americans increasingly turned to their social media networks for news and information.[36] Ambitious new online media companies, hungry for clicks and the ad revenue they represented, churned out provocatively titled, easy-to-digest stories that could be linked and tweeted and shared widely among like-minded online communities, but even traditional media companies, forced to downsize their newsrooms to accommodate shrinking revenues, fought to adapt to their new online consumers.[37]

The ability of individuals to share stories through social media apps revolutionized the media landscape—smartphone technology and the democratization of media reshaped political debates and introduced new political questions. The easy accessibility of video capturing and the ability for stories to go viral outside traditional media, for instance, brought new attention to the tense and often violent relations between municipal police officers and African Americans. The 2014 death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked protests and focused the issue. It perhaps became a testament to the power of social media platforms such as Twitter that a hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, became a rallying cry for protesters and counterhashtags, #alllivesmatter and #bluelivesmatter, for critics.[38] But a relentless number of videos documenting the deaths of Black men at the hands of police officers continued to circulated across social media networks. The deaths of Eric Garner, twelve-year-old Tamir Rice, and Philando

Castile were captured on cell phone cameras and went viral. So too did the stories of Breonna Taylor and Botham Jean. “Say their names,” ran a popular chant at Black Lives Matters marches. And then, in the first weeks of the Covid-19 epidemic, George Floyd was murdered.



George Floyd’s murder in 2020 sparked the largest protests in American history. Here, crowds holding homemade signs protest in New York City. Wikimedia.

On May 25, 2020, a teenager, Darnella Frazier, filmed Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin with his knee on the neck of George Floyd. “I can’t breathe,” Floyd said. Despite his pleas and those of bystanders, Chauvin kept his knee on Floyd’s neck for nine minutes. Floyd’s body had long gone limp. The horrific footage shocked much of the country. Despite state and local lockdowns to slow the spread of Covid-19, spontaneous demonstrations broke out across the country. Protests erupted not only in major cities but in small towns and rural communities. The demonstrations dwarfed, in raw numbers, any comparable protest in American history up to that point. Taken together, as many as twenty-five million Americans may have participated in racial justice demonstrations that summer.[39] And yet, despite the marches, no great national policy changes followed. The “system” resisted calls to address “systemic racism.” Localities made efforts, of course. Criminal justice reformers won elections as district attorneys. Police departments mandated that their officers carry body cameras. As cries of “defund the police” sounded among left-wing Americans, some cities experimented with alternative emergency services that emphasized mediation and mental health. Conservatives, however, recoiling at a post-2020 uptick in violent crime, re-dedicated themselves to a “law and order” politics that would be championed by Donald Trump in his successful 2024 election campaign. Meanwhile, in a symbolic gesture, Democratic-leaning towns and cities in the South pulled down their Confederate iconography. But the intractable racial injustices embedded deeply within American life had not been uprooted, and racial disparities in wealth, education, health, and other measures persevered, as they already had, in the United States, for hundreds of years.

As the Black Lives Matter movement captured national attention, another social media phenomenon, the #MeToo movement, began as the magnification of outrage against the past sexual crimes of notable male celebrities before injecting a greater social intolerance toward men accused of sexual harassment and sexual violence into much of the rest of American society. The sudden zero tolerance reflected the new political energies of many American women, sparked in large part by the candidacy and presidency of Donald Trump. The day after Trump’s first inauguration, between five hundred thousand and one million people descended on Washington, D.C., for the Women’s March, and millions more demonstrated in cities and towns around the country to show a broadly defined commitment toward the rights of women and others in the face of the Trump presidency. And with three appointments to the Supreme Court, Donald Trump’s legacy persisted past his presidency. On June 24, 2022, the new conservative majority decided *Dobbs v. Jackson*, overturning *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), cases that established a constitutional right to abortion.

Meanwhile, other avenues of sexual politics opened up across the country. By the 2020s, culturally liberal Americans began to champion transgender rights and other expressions of “queer” sexuality. The broader American culture increasingly featured transgender individuals in media, and many Americans began making their preferred pronouns explicit to undermine fixed notions of gender. Many conservatives, however, fought back. State legislators around the country sponsored “bathroom bills” to keep transgender individuals out of the bathroom of their identified gender, alleging that they posed a violent sexual risk. In Texas,

Attorney General Ken Paxton declared pediatric gender-affirming care to be "child abuse." Others focused on the participation of trans women in women's sports. Donald Trump harnessed these attitudes in his 2024 reelection campaign: "Kamala is for they/them," declared one notable television ad, played as many as fifty thousand times on air. "President Trump is for you."

As issues of race and gender captured much public discussion, immigration continued to be a potent political issue. Anti-immigrant initiatives like California's Proposition 187 (1994) and Arizona's SB1070 (2010) reflected the anxieties of many native-born Americans, but millennials proved far more comfortable with immigration and diversity (which makes sense, given that they are the most diverse American generation in living memory). Since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society liberalized immigration laws in the 1960s, the demographics of the United States have been transformed. In 2012, nearly a quarter of all Americans were immigrants or the sons and daughters of immigrants. Half came from Latin America. The ongoing Hispanicization of the United States and the ever-shrinking proportion of non-Hispanic whites have been among the most talked-about trends among demographic observers. By 2013, 17 percent of the nation was Hispanic. In 2014, Latinos surpassed non-Latino whites to become the largest ethnic group in California. In Texas, the image of a white cowboy hardly captures the demographics of a minority-majority state in which Hispanic Texans will soon become the largest ethnic group. For the nearly 1.5 million people of Texas's Rio Grande Valley, for instance, where most residents speak Spanish at home, a full three fourths of the population is bilingual.[40]

And yet, it is not clear whether dramatic cultural changes were pushing the nation forward in any particular direction or whether they simply accelerated affective polarization—division rooted in abstract group identity, rather than in policy or class affiliation—ever more. Increasing diversity, for instance, did not increase support for immigration. Gen Z—men, in particular—did not follow the millennials leftward but moved to the right culturally. The Rio Grande Valley did not embrace a more liberal and humane immigration policy—the region moved farther rightward as a percentage, politically, than any other part of the country in 2020 and 2024. Many Democrats, for instance, dismissed Donald Trump's immigration rhetoric as the ugly product of a raw and vile racism, and yet he and the Republican Party captured areas such as Hidalgo County in South Texas, the largest county in America with a population that is more than 90 percent Hispanic.

Class dealignment rendered old political truths increasingly uncertain: the Democratic Party—the party of labor, the Rooseveltian "common man," and the postwar civil rights movement—seemed often to respond to the narrow concerns of its well-educated, white-collar core; the Republican Party—the party of the chamber of commerce and the country club—appealed to an increasingly multiracial constituency of working-class voters. Neither attacked the economic roots of a widespread economic crisis: as acute bouts of inflation—attributed, variously, to the logistical disruptions of Covid, Covid-era infusions of government spending, runaway deficit spending, historically low interest rates, and corporate greed—devastated American purchasing power after 2020, more and more Americans simply despaired.

Donald Trump mounted his reelection campaign against President Joe Biden in 2024. After the octogenarian sitting president appeared befuddled at a July debate, following months of speculation about his physical and mental capacities, Biden stepped aside for his vice president, Kamala Harris, to run in his stead. Without a clear message and refusing to either repudiate President Biden's policies or distinguish herself in any particularly meaningful way, Harris mounted a short and feeble campaign incapable of either countering conservatives' culture war attacks on immigrants and trans rights or overcoming the widespread economic pessimism wrought by rampant inflation.

Whatever norms that had limited Donald Trump's first-term ambitions fell quickly in his second term. Having already declared that the presidency came with "a no-conflict-of-interest provision," President Trump took money, brazenly and unapologetically, seemingly wherever he could. A 2025 *New Yorker* investigation estimated that the president had personally profited no less than $3 billion from overseas construction projects, crypto-currency schemes, and other money-grabbing ventures. The office of the presidency had never seen anything like it. At the same time, he extracted direct payments through legal settlements from major media companies. Elon Musk, the world's richest man, spent more than a quarter of a billion dollars on the campaign and was rewarded, for a time, with an extralegal political office.[41] President Trump, meanwhile, staffed his cabinet with unalloyed loyalists, whatever their qualifications. Rejecting the sludge of bureaucracy or the constraints of established legality, Trump deployed the full weight of his office to advance his agenda, issuing a flurry of executive orders (many of which were insulated from contravening court orders by the Supreme Court and its rapid-fire, explanation-free "shadow docket"). He deployed plainclothes federal immigration officers into cities and won headlines with dramatic, terrorizing immigration raids. Few presidents had so boldly wielded executive power and, with a pliant Republican Congress and a conservative Supreme Court, few had been so unrestrained. And, throughout it all, of course, Trump extended the tax cuts passed during his first term, marking a signature legislative accomplishment that exploded the federal deficit to sustain tax breaks disproportionally benefiting wealthy Americans—again.

Liberals and left-leaning Americans despaired of Trump's second presidency no less than the first, but pessimism was seemingly everywhere. Political commentators fretted about self-perpetuating social media bubbles fueling perpetual outrage machines;

academics worried about the decline of recreational reading and revolutionary changes wrought by large language models; schoolteachers despaired of plummeting test scores and diminished student abilities; magazine writers raised alarms about the psychological devastations wrought by smartphones and the collapse of friendships, romantic relationships, and general socializing. Everything seemed to be degrading. Popular online rhetoric circled around ideas such as “brain rot,” “enshittification,” and “slop.” All the while, Americans remained squeezed by an economy whose rewards continued to flow disproportionately to those who needed them the least.

Americans entered the second quarter of their new century in despair. In 2023, only 23 percent said “life in America today is better than it was 50 years ago,” and, far from improving, vast majorities predicted that American life would continue to worsen.[42] Americans entered the second quarter of their new century in despair. In December 2024, only 19 percent of Americans said they were “satisfied” with “the way things are going in the United States at this time.”[43] All they could see, it seemed, was American carnage.

X. Conclusion

The attacks of September 11, 2001, plunged the United States into interminable conflicts around the world and unleashed cultural divisions that have raged for more than two decades. Economic recession, a slow recovery, stagnant wage growth, and general pessimism infected American life as contentious politics and cultural divisions poisoned social harmony, leading to unprecedented polarization and alienation that culminated in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol. And yet the stream of history changes course. Trends shift, things change, and events turn. Nothing is foreordained. The United States is the product of history. New generations, bringing with them new perspectives, rise to put their own weight upon history, sounding their own raw and distinctive American yawp as they forge futures yet unforeseen.

XI. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Joseph Locke and Michael D. Hammond, with content contributions by Eladio Bobadilla, Andrew Chadwick, Elsa Devienne, Zach Fredman, Leif Fredrickson, Michael Hammond, Richara Hayward, Joseph Locke, Mark Kukis, Shaul Mitelpunkt, Michelle Reeves, Elizabeth Skilton, Bill Speer, Patrick T. Troester, and Ben Wright.

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