

# Research paper on age of extremes: affluence and poverty

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



' 1950s is the period that is referred to as the age of affluence. During the period, affluence meant that a family was well off as compared to other groups in terms of income.'<sup>1</sup> The age was characterized by high income and huge spending by the United States citizens. The age had several impacts. This research will discuss what led to the age of affluence, the promises of the period and the impact that the age had on the lives of the people. During the age, United States had just got out of the great depression and it was benefiting from the fact that the expenditure was less considering that the government was not in war. Japan and European countries were also beginning to recover from the world war hence trade activities were increasing and United States was benefiting from the situation. The cold war was in progress and this made the United States government to invest a lot on the military and industrial sectors. This availed more cash to the citizen since they got employment opportunities. This is why the consumption of many citizens was almost the same.

The age of affluence had many promises. ' First, it was expected that poverty had to end.'<sup>1</sup> People aimed at ensuring that they have huge pension benefits in their future and the social security funds would be accumulated so that everyone could benefit in the rest of their future. With the huge amount of property available to the people, it was expected that no one would ever be poor in the future. The other promise of the age of affluence was that criminal activities were to be brought to an end since everyone was rich hence there was no reason to commit any crime with an aim of stealing property from the others.

- Vance P. The status seekers. 1959. Retrieved from: <http://www.english.>

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upenn. edu/~afilreis/50s/packard-ch1. html. 1959

The banks had no need to suspect the people. People were expected to get mortgages from the banks and invest in real estates. As a result, the age promised that people would be living in large buildings.

The other promise was that the social classes in the United States had to end. Everyone was becoming rich and there were no lower classes in the society. ' People therefore worshiped and interacted in other social areas without any fear.'<sup>1</sup> It was difficult to classify people according to their wealth because people wore the best clothes and drove similar cars. This is what made people believe that classes in the United States had been brought to an end.

The cold war brought a consensus, which facilitated the achievement of the goals of affluence. The capitalists realized that they needed a secure environment to facilitate their activities. They had to collaborate with the government to ensure their protection. By this, it became necessary to convince the people that there was a need to ensure unity so that United States would produce more good to benefits its citizens. ' The capitalists feared the spread of communism, which would hinder their accumulation of wealth.'<sup>2</sup> Through the government, laws such as GI was passed which enabled blacks and women to get college and university education. This enabled the various classes in the United States to interact hence the social classes in the United States were broken.

The fact that all people had greater opportunities of getting higher education means that all classes had equal chances of becoming rich after their education. Due to increased number of university students, women got jobs

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in these colleges as instructors.

- 1. Vance P. The status seekers. 1959. Retrieved from: <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/packard-ch1.html>. 1959

- James J. Salt of earth. Wisconsin magazine of history, 2001.

This shows that various classes started to accumulate wealth and their consumption increased. People drove cars and built good houses during the period, which demonstrated the achievement of the affluent promises.

It is during the period that the government applied macroeconomic theories of income distribution to ensure that equality between various groups in the society was enhanced. ' Cold war therefore played a role in enhancing the achievement of the affluent goals since it made people realize the importance of being together to protect themselves from international politics and ideologies.'<sup>2</sup>

The promises of affluence were however barely achieved. With time, the situation changed because the capitalists started exploiting the poor people in the society. These capitalists therefore became richer while the workers in the industries received poor pay hence became poor. The working conditions were also becoming worse. Even the children in the United States could realize that there were different classes in the United States society. With the change in conditions due to capitalism activities, some people could not afford constructing affluent buildings since their salaries were not enough for the purpose. The lower class in the industries also did not receive any pension funds at their old age. They therefore lived in poor conditions after their retirement. This shows that the promises of the age of affluence were not achieved.

Another inequality that shows that the age of affluence did not achieve its premises is the fact that most women were under tight control of their husbands. This shows that there was inequality in terms of gender. Women were required to be housewives and could not secure good jobs. Windows suffered most.

- James J. Salt of earth. Wisconsin magazine of history, 2001.

- Michael P. The politics and culture of abundance 1952 to 1960. Bedford martines, 2009

This is because as workers, they were not covered by minimum wage laws as men. These women therefore had trouble in raising their children. They were paid very low wages. The capitalists also resulted to child labour that was cheap. Many people lost their jobs and their previous living styles changed. The children who were working in the industries did not go to school and at the same time, they could not develop economically with their low salaries. 'Poverty increased which is against the promise of the age of affluence. The capitalists continued being rich increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. This is good evidence that social classes did not end due to age of affluence.'

Human rights activist and clergymen such as Martin Luther King Jr were among the people who criticized affluence in United States. Their argument was that affluence created cutthroat competition in the United States that was leading to the suffering of some people. They also argued that it is not fair that the United States citizens enjoy at the expense of the people in other continents.

These activists argued that people should be responsible for the welfare of

the other and the condition that existed at the period was showing that Americans are not responsible for the welfare of the people in other countries.

According to the critics, affluent was to be universal. This means that the United States should help people from other countries to enjoy the way they were enjoying. It is not fair that Americans enjoy whereas people from other continents such as Asia were suffering

- Michael P. The politics and culture of abundance 1952 to 1960. Bedford martines, 2009

‘ The critics also argued that capitalism was making people exploit others so that they could live affluent live.’<sup>3</sup> These acts were to be stopped according to the critics so that all the people in the United States could enjoy affluent. These arguments show that affluent was supposed to be universal.

### **Works cited.**

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