

Conflicts the social system and government in



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Conflicts During the 1920s The contrast between the new and changing attitudes and traditional values was unmistakably present during the 1920's. This clash between the old and the new had many roots and was inevitable. A new sense of awareness washed over minorities in our nation, especially blacks who began to realize that they were entitled to their own subculture, pursuit of success, and share of the American dream. This ideal was expressed by Langston Hughes in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." They were supported by the growing number of young, financially well-to-do liberals who formed the new intelligencia. Each group sought the use of logic and rational reasoning in their rethinking of reevaluation of society's current status. Still, they constituted a minority and their reformist views were not well-taken by the greater part of the population who had become accustomed to a certain way of thinking were not willing to budge, thus keeping the radicals silent.

Individualism was also partially suppressed by the succession of three traditionalist Republican presidents whose partiality to the strong was displayed by their strong backing of big business while discouraging the Labor Union movement. Literature was one medium by which the new intelligencia could express their views on impracticality and injustice of the social system and government in the 1920's. Sinclair Lewis was one such author who used his writing to condemn the stale and outdated ways of thinking that were so widely popular in our nation during the 1920's. In addition to exposing the poor working conditions of most factory labor, particularly the meat-packing industry, he criticized the common man who could not think or act individually in his novel, *Babbalanza*, which was published in

1922. His description from the novel of the common man portrayed a person who acted in a manner that was socially acceptable who also strived for success based on society's definition of purchasing material goods. In essence he was a man defined by the society that he lived in. Religion was also a topic of controversy during the twenties. Traditionalists who were usually older and less intelligent than the rising young class of liberal intellectuals were primarily Christian and would only accept literal interpretations of the Bible.

The liberals were not so quick to take the Bible at face value and came up with their own interpretations. The tension between the old and the new regarding religion was perhaps most obviously prevalent at the Tennessee Evolution Court Case of 1925. In this time of where individual thinking was a rarity, public misconception and ignorance ran abound. People looked to scapegoats to account for society's problems. Often minorities such as black in addition to the young liberals were the source of such a scapegoat. For this reason, the Ku Klux Klan experienced widespread popularity during the 1920's. The KKK relieved the majority of white conservative America of any responsibility for the shortcomings of society.

It also gave them a sense of security by forming a large alliance against minorities. The conflict between patrons of the KKK and the uprising group of intellectual liberals was quite flagrant. The young continued to take more liberties and adhered less to society's standards than the preceding generation. They sought self-satisfaction rather than living in harmony with the rest of society. As a result, many non-traditional trends began to appear in the lives of the young liberals in the 1920's. Women began to feel more

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sexually liberated and realized that they also had needs aside from only existing to accommodate their male counterparts. Many women also took up smoking, an activity previously delegated exclusively to men.

In addition, more and more women pursued jobs outside of the home. The rate of divorce rose during these times as well. The young generation had stopped living their lives according to traditional society values and had inserted their own sets of desires, goals, and values by which to live instead.