

American society



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Postwar American society during the 1950's was known for baby boomers and the return to achieving the all-American dream. Returning military men wanted the security of marriage and began building families. World War II (WWII) was over and so was the depression. SparkNotes Editors (2005) write, " The economy soared, creating a level of affluence not seen before in American History" (p. 218). The economy grew stronger, inflation remained low, incomes rose, and American spent money. Not everyone in America, however, enjoyed the economic boom.

A farmer in the 1950's and people living in rural America still suffered economically from falling prices. Minorities residing in the city still lived in poverty. Factories laid off unskilled laborers and discrimination kept many minorities out of work. Even though suburbs like Levittown sprung up quickly, African Americans were excluded from home ownership. In fact, African Americans rarely benefited from the economic boom. African American's in the 1950's reshaped U. S. History with huge civil rights protests that changed the face of the county forever. From desegregation, bus and restaurant boycotts, to the rise of Martin Luther King Jr., the black middle class materialized and their voice was beginning to be heard.

Americans who lived in the 1960's and 1970's still remember the events of those decades even today. The War in Vietnam, President John F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, and civil rights movement, changed American lives forever. The now famous " I Have a Dream" speech was given by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963. Sadly, he was assassinated in 1968. After his murder, riots broke out across the country. Americans were still feeling threatened by the Cold War with the Soviet Union. From the arms race, to

the space race, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, peace with the evil empire the Soviet Union, was constantly threatened. The space program was prioritized in an attempt to establish the United States as the leader in the space race over the Soviet Union. The younger generation protested the war in Vietnam that they considered a waste of money and innocent lives. The Watergate scandal of the Nixon administration in 1972, the Arab oil embargo of 1973 combined with inflation at home, which created the United States first energy crisis, added to Americans stress and anxiety about their future. The United States was losing ground in the world's economy. SparkNotes Editors (2005) write, " The United States gradually lost its predominant place in the world economy as foreign countries such as Japan and Germany finally rebounded from post-World War II depressions" (p. 255). By 1974, the United States suffered a severe economic crisis.

Vice president Gerald Ford was sworn in as president of the United States after Nixon's resignation over the Watergate scandal. Although he was able to pull the last American troops from Vietnam, he could not fix the economy. SparkNotes Editors (2005) write, " He lacked the resources, knowledge, and political clout to tackle the stagnant economy" (p. 257). As a result, Americans suffered the deepest recession since the Great Depression.

By the end of the 1970's American society was changing. The growth rate was slowing signaling the end of the baby boom. Divorce occurred more frequently and living together as unmarried couples became the common living arrangement. The population was growing older, as such senior citizens moved to warmer climates like Florida and Southern California. Illegal immigration also changed the face of America. The United States was

prime for significant changes, both socially and economically, religiously and politically, leading in to the 1980's.