**Unit 10: America in the Modern Age (1950-?)**

**Chapter 28: Rebellion in the Post-War United States, 1950s-1970s**

“Whither goest thou, America, in thy shiny car in the night?

—Jack Kerouac, rhymiest name in American history

**Lesson Objective**

Explain origins and results of movements for change after the Second World War.

Explain intellectual changes in mid-twentieth century United States

**Thesis**

The political, economic, and social conformity of post-war America motivated a variety of movements for change, building upon earlier calls for reform. Despite some gains for women, racial minorities, the environment, and even young people, most of these movements lost steam by the late 1970s, doomed by an eventual loss of interest in progressive social movements with the rise of the New Right.

1. Mid-Century Context (1945-1960)
   1. Consensus Culture
      1. Prosperity and Progress!
         1. Middle class grows! (5 million to 12 million by 1960)
            1. Height of blue collar labor/unions🡪 high incomes
         2. Symbols of wealth: cars, suburban homes, consumer products, television, microwaves
         3. Technology rapidly advancing!
            1. Advances in medicine: Polio vaccine!
            2. Advances in agriculture! Improved fertilizer + insecticide🡪 more food!
            3. Advances in manufacturing🡪 MORE STUFF!
            4. COMPUTERS! WE WENT TO THE MOON! ATOMIC ENERGY!
      2. AND YET
         1. Increased pollution
            1. More food🡪 more people
            2. Plastic and paper🡪 mountains of garbage
            3. Automobiles + air pollution🡪 smog
            4. DDT (insecticide)🡪 killing eagles

Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962)

* + - 1. Increased conformity
         1. Pop culture: lowest common denominator (LCD)

“TV Generation:” kids raised by TV, values reinforced through TV

* + - * 1. Consumer culture: sense of sameness
        2. Red Scare🡪 political conformity
      1. Increased anxiety
         1. GENERAL FEELING: alienation (cog in the machine)
         2. Advances in transportation/increased demographic changes🡪 rootless society
         3. Consumer culture🡪 what’s the point?

BUY! BUY! BUY!

Economy based on debt (govt and private)

* + - * 1. Rapid advances in science🡪 anxiety

Pollution

Fear of nuclear weapons….

Wars with no clear morality

Korea, Vietnam….

* + - * 1. Religion in mid-century: not a spiritual refuge

Religion becomes commodified (Megachurches)

Religious doctrine less important

Religion: “feel good” and consumerist

New Deal replaces religious social welfare

Religion becomes more associated with political right by 1980s…

We need to go back

* 1. Intellectual Context
     1. On the one hand: Optimism
        1. USA! USA! USA!
        2. Neo-conservative historians
           1. Americans are more the same than they are different
     2. **Rejections of conformity**
        1. Avant Garde, 1930s (Jean Paul Sartre and Erich Fromm)
           1. Does freedom exist under capitalism?
           2. Echoed Alexis de Tocqueville (CALL BACK to Unit 3!)

Culture: LCD

Democratic capitalism: focus on consumption

No true individualism (tyranny of the majority)

* + - 1. Art/Literature
         1. J.D. Salinger (*Catcher in the Rye*)
         2. Jackson Pollock: find meaning in abstract expressionism?

FBI plant? (lol)

* + - * 1. **Pop Art**: commentary on shallowness of society

Satirize American life

1. Civil Rights Movements
   1. African American Civil Rights
      1. Transformative years (1954-1965)
         1. 1954: Brown v. Board of Education
         2. Martin Luther King Jr. and SCLC
            1. Non-violence (sit ins, boycotts, Freedom Riders)
            2. “Liberal” approach

Convince Democratic Party to push for civil rights

Cooperate with white liberals

JFK: go slow…

MLK: March on Washington (1963)

“I have a dream!”

JFK eventually calls for Civil Rights Act…

Stalled by Southern congressmen

Death of JFK🡪 warms country to fulfilling his goals

LBJ

Civil Rights Act (1964): outlaws discrimination

Voting Rights Act (1965): outlaws voter discrimination practices

24th Amendment: no poll tax

* + - * 1. Further action

Freedom Summer (1964)

MLK: push to end de facto segregation in North/South, oppose Vietnam War, oppose class inequality

* + - 1. AND YET, continued white pushback
         1. Third Klan (1950s-?), White Citizens Council
         2. Chaney, Goodman, Schwerner murders (1964), Birmingham Sunday (1965)
    1. The End of Non-Violence? (1965-1970s)
       1. SNCC and SCLC split over tactics
          1. African American militancy
          2. Stokely Carmichael (Khame Ture)🡪 Black Power

AA self-sufficiency (school lunch programs)

Protect AA communities…with guns

“In order for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none.”

Reject capitalism, reject imperialism

* + - 1. Black separation movements
         1. Huey Newton: Black Panther Party
         2. Malcom X

MLK was wrong

Violence can be acceptable

“It is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks.”

* + - 1. Anger over police brutality, unemployment, housing discrimination, general economic frustration🡪 riots
         1. Watts (1965), Newark, Detroit, LA (1967)
      2. White reaction
         1. **White liberals abandon civil rights**

“Black separatists? Communism? Violence? Not in my neighborhood!”

White flight increases

* + - * 1. Violence

Police brutality

Malcolm X assassinated (1964), MLK (1968)

* + - * 1. Political pushback

George Wallace and the American Independent Party (1968)

“Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever”

Nixon and the Southern Strategy (1968)

Republicans begin courting Southern voters

“Law and Order”

Affirmative Action under fire (Davis v. Bakke, 1978)

No new civil rights legislation…

* + - * 1. Positive results of Civil Rights Movement

Increased African American education

Black middle-class increases

Pride in ethnic background, celebration of diversity

Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act

Hopefully that last one never goes away!

* 1. Mexican-American Movement
     1. Bracero Program🡪 increased Mexican descent presence in United States
        1. Yet, abuse of workers’ rights, civil rights, voting rights, segregation
     2. **Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta**
        1. United Farm Workers: Labor union
           1. Intersectional: Filipino and Latino
        2. Delano Grape Strike (1965-1970)
           1. Better working conditions, wages, housing, no child labor
           2. Huelga!
           3. Nationwide boycott🡪 eventual success
     3. Chicano Movement
        1. Inspired by Black Power
        2. La Raza: political party
        3. East LA walkouts (1968)
     4. Legacy
        1. Mexican American pride
        2. Spanish: second largest language
        3. Mexican-American: one of the largest cultural groups in USA
           1. YET, lingering issues especially about immigration
  2. American Indian Movement (AIM)
     1. Problems
        1. Income inequality
        2. Political corruption on reservations
        3. Violation of treaty rights
           1. Uranium mining in AZ
           2. “Indian Termination policies”
     2. Demand for self-determination🡪 AIM
        1. Occupation of Alcatraz Island (1969-1971)
        2. Second Wounded Knee (1973)

1. Youth Movement (“Privileged revolutionaries”)
   1. Causes?
      1. Hard to define…
         1. Literally, white middle class men ~~have~~ had it the ***best*** in society
            1. BUT cultural anxiety from conformity

Value of individualism, but hardly any in society

Alienation from mainstream society

* + - * 1. Rejection of nuclear family

Parents as guards of morality

Masculinity

* + - * 1. Restrictions on civil liberties on college campuses
        2. JFK and atmosphere of youth=change?
    1. Influenced by 1950s intellectual/artistic critics
       1. “The Beats” (aka origins of the hippie movement)
          1. **Jack Kerouac** (On the Road)
          2. Alan Ginsberg (Howl)
       2. Artistic shock
          1. James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*
          2. Rock and Roll

“I can’t get no (sick guitar riff) satisfaction”

* + 1. Would have all stayed underground (like 1920s)….
    2. **…if not for the Vietnam War, civil rights movement, etc.**
       1. “Old enough to kill, but not for votin’”
       2. “Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?”
  1. Challenges to status quo
     1. THIS IS WHERE THE NEW LEFT COMES FROM!
     2. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)
        1. Port Huron Statement (1962), Tom Hayden
           1. Broad critique of USA society/govt./economy
           2. Reject materialism, war, racism, poverty
           3. Individuals against bureaucracy
     3. Student protests: anti-war protests, pro-civil rights
        1. Adopt tactics of Civil Rights movements: sit ins, marches, teach ins
        2. Free Speech Movement (1964), Mario Savio: campus free speech
           1. “Bodies Upon the Gears”
        3. Youth International Party (Yippies)
        4. Met with expulsions, police brutality (esp. black protestors)
           1. 1968 Democratic National Convention protest

**Anger at Eugene McCarthy pass**

* + - * 1. Kent State Massacre (1972)
      1. More radical area: The Weathermen Underground
         1. “Oh my God, they hit the Pentagon” (1972)
    1. Counterculture: The Hippies (Timothy Leary)
       1. Tone setters, but nothing that radical
          1. Too far out of this world if you know what I mean
          2. Small communities in urban centers (Greenwich Village, Haight Ashbury), communes in rural areas
       2. Reject conformity
          1. Rebellious rock and roll (Acid Rock)

Woodstock

* + - * 1. Sexual freedom, drug use
  1. Impact of Youth Movement
     1. Youth activism increases
        1. 26th Amendment: 18 to vote!
        2. Parties try to appeal to younger voters
     2. More acceptance of non-traditional lifestyles and identities
        1. Not universally obviously
        2. Sexual freedom
     3. Honestly, not much structurally changed
        1. Yippies🡪 Yuppies (lookin at you Jerry Rubin)
        2. Not a widespread movement (urbanites)
        3. Absorbed into mainstream parties
           1. Some go Democrat, others do 180 and become conservative

1. Gender and Sexuality (most rapid change)
   1. Sexual Revolution
      1. Origins with Freud and Sanger
      2. Alfred Kinsey and *Sexual Behavior* (1948)
         1. Sex is natural, impossible to control it
         2. “We’re all a little gay too”
      3. Advances in medicine
         1. Contraceptives (oral birth control pill, 1960)
         2. Safer abortions
      4. Gay Liberation
         1. Stonewall Riots (1969)
         2. Organizations like Gay Liberation Front
         3. Successes
            1. Decriminalization of homosexuality
            2. Gay Pride parades by 1970s
            3. Harvey Milk in San Francisco
   2. Women’s Movement (aka Second Wave Feminism)
      1. Causes
         1. Sexual Revolution🡪more freedom for women
         2. Increased economic independency in post-war era
            1. ½ of women work by 1960
         3. Lingering social and economic restrictions
            1. Domestic violence, lack of reproductive rights
         4. Social stereotypes (secretaries, nurses, teachers, etc.)
         5. Influence of civil rights movements
      2. Organizations and figures
         1. National Organization for Women (NOW)
         2. **Betty Friedan** (*Feminine Mystique*)
            1. Society assumes what roles women feel fulfilled in
            2. Women aren’t satisfied being homemakers, unhappy
            3. Pro-ERA
         3. Gloria Steinem and *Ms*.
         4. More radical racial feminism: Angela Davis
         5. Not universally joined by women
            1. Most are still mothers and wives
      3. Legacy
         1. Legal Successes
            1. Civil Rights Act (1964) and Title IX (1972)

No discrimination based on sex

* + - * 1. Roe v. Wade (1973): legalized abortion

And no one ever challenged it again. The end.

* + - 1. Social/Economic Successes
         1. More female college graduates (60% in Law/Medicine)
         2. More women in positions of power

Sandra Day O’Connor, first Justice

* + - * 1. More sexual freedom

Marriage age increases, birth rates drop

* + - 1. Obstacles
         1. 86% pay of men
         2. Exclusion of lesbians, African-Americans, transwomen🡪 Third Wave Feminism
         3. Failure of Equal Rights Amendment

ERA never passed

* + - 1. Rise of Conservative Women’s Movement
         1. Phyllis Schlafly

Helps defeat ERA

Should women have special rights? Do they need them?

What’s the impact on children?