

Chapter 29: Society After World War II--1945-1960

Section 1: The Challenges of Peace

The Problems of Demobilization

- 9 million men/women left military after WWII
- Will there be jobs? Many lost jobs to vets (many women)
- Strikes became more common
 - **Taft-Hartley Act**: judges allowed to order end to strikes
- **GI Bill of Rights**: gov't loans to buy homes, businesses, farms, go to college (8 million went to college from 44-56)
- Bomb/gun factories quickly switched to making **consumer goods**
- US farmers sold food to Europe (wrecked by war)



The 1948 Election

- Harry Truman was very unpopular after WWII
- Pushed **civil rights** for African Americans--wanted to end segregation & pass **anti-lynching** laws
- Banned discrimination in the US Army
- Angered Southern voters--pledged to defeat him in election
- **Dixiecrat Party**: States' Rights Party--southern Democrats--nominated **Strom Thurmond** (SC)
- **Progressive Party**: Democrats that thought Truman didn't care enough about workers--**Henry Wallace**
- **Republican Party**: Thomas Dewey (NY)
- Most predictions showed that Dewey was going to win election easily
- Truman zig-zagged the country in train campaigning hard
- Greatest upset ever: Truman won 303-189



Fair Deal

- Truman's plan to give everyone a "fair deal"
- Promised full employment, raise minimum wage, national health insurance, cheaper housing, & more welfare
- Gov't hired more workers to build bridges, roads, dams, irrigation, etc.



Section 2: The Affluent Society

The Eisenhower Era

- Ike promised to reduce role of gov't--it's not job of gov't to hire workers--thousands of jobs cut
- Increased min. wage, education spending, & welfare programs
- Increased spending on military (nuclear arms race)



The Economy

- 1950s saw strong economy--unemployment was low & wages went up
- 60% of Americans lived in middle class
- Factories relied more on **automation**--less factory jobs
- **White-collar** jobs & **service jobs** became more common
- Unions became stronger--won higher wages & more benefits



Suburban Migration

- Millions of Americans moved to **suburbs** (1/3 of US population)
- **Planned Community**: cookie cutter houses--saved money in designs
- Small towns quickly grew into small cities (1 million new suburban homes each year from 1950-1960)
- Loans for homeowners easier to get
- **Highway Act** of 1956: spent billions of \$ to build more highways



Suburban Life

- During Great Depression & WWII, many people delayed having families
- **Baby Boom:** population grew by 30 million in 1950s-- increased birthrate
- Expectation that mothers would be "stay-at-home" parents
- **Consumerism:** increased advertising and focus on selling goods to people
 - Increase in advertising
 - We bought more home gadgets & cars
 - "Keeping up with the Joneses"
- Increase in social activities (Little League & Churches)-- desire to unite a community with activities



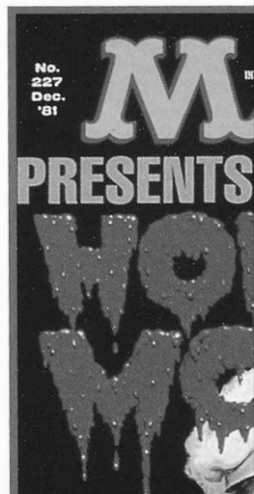
The Golden Age of Television

- TV was sold after WWII--quickly became popular form of entertainment
- 1959: 46 million homes had a TV
- TV ads influenced our actions more than ever
 - **Materialism:** love or fascination with having material goods
- Popular programs: sports (World Series), **situation comedies** (*The Honeymooners*), game shows
- Most popular show: *I Love Lucy* starring Lucille Ball
- Rarely showed minorities or poor people 🌐



Teenagers and Popular Culture

- Teens in '50s had more free time & more money than other generations...what to do?????
- Movies started being made to entertain teens--focus on the rebel
- Magazines & comic books became popular (*MAD*)
- Parents feared **juvenile delinquency** was a problem
- *Rebel Without a Cause* starring James Dean--cultural icon
- Rock 'n' Roll: combo of country w/ R&B--term made by Cleveland radio DJ
 - Popular among white teens
 - **Elvis Presley**--accused of being immoral & gibberish by adults
 - Challenged segregation--many black musicians listened to by white kids



Section 3: Voices of Dissent

Brown v. Board of Education

- "Separate-but-equal"--allowed segregation
- Linda Brown: black student in Topeka, KS lived near white school but forced to take long trip into dangerous neighborhood to black school--father sued to allow her to go to white school
- Brown's argument: segregation caused psychological damage & lowered self-worth
- SCOTUS ruled unanimously for Brown--desegregated public schools
- SC Governor: "End of civilization...as we know it."



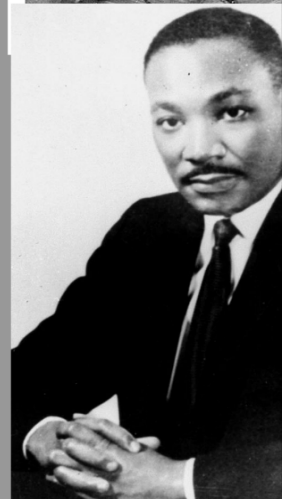
Showdown in Little Rock

- Desegregation moved slowly--much resistance from white populations
- Sept. 1957: Little Rock, Arkansas high school was scheduled to enroll 9 black students
- Governor ordered National Guard to circle high school & block **Little Rock Nine**
- Protestors showed up for 3 weeks--9 never entered the school
- Eisenhower ordered 1,000 US soldiers to protect students--"fixed bayonets"
- 1 year of harrassment--1 suspended for dumping food on white kid for racial slur--1 was expelled for using white slur
- Slow process of acceptance



The Montgomery Bus Boycott

- Montgomery, Alabama
- **Rosa Parks:** seamstress
- Dec. 1, 1955: refused to give up her seat on bus for white passenger--led to her arrest
- 50,000 black citizens boycotted bus system
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.:** 26-year-old pastor organized protests
- King's home & others' were bombed
- Protestors physically intimidated to break boycott
- King preached **non-violent civil disobedience**
- Nov. 1956: SCOTUS ruled Alabama law was unconstitutional--Parks & King won
- **Civil Rights Act of 1957:** prohibited anyone from restricting ANY voter from casting a vote



Questioning Conformity

- Many saw racism & ignoring poverty a "crack in picture window"
- Many hated materialism--happiness can't be bought
- **Conformity:** being like everyone else around you
- **Beats:** small group of writers and poets challenged the middle class lifestyle
 - Can the poor be happy?
 - Why do I need a job?
 - Why can't I have fun being me?
 - I want to reject what you think is "cool."





The Nonaffluent Society

- 30-40 million lived in poverty
- Most poor lived in rural areas (countryside like Appalachian Mountains)
- No indoor plumbing or electricity
- "Mood of apathy and despair"
- Farmers made less money as food prices went down during the 1950s
- Led to millions of rural citizens to flock to cities--caused crime and homelessness in cities to increase
- Inner cities became more poor



The Appalachian Region



Andrew A. Stern

