

# HOWARD ZINN

*adapted by* REBECCA STEFOFF

A YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
HISTORY  
*of the* UNITED STATES



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A YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
**HISTORY**  
*of the* UNITED STATES

COLUMBUS  
*to the*  
WAR ON TERROR

HOWARD  
**ZINN**

*Adapted by*

REBECCA STEFOFF

**7**

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*To all the parents and teachers over the years who have asked  
for a people's history for young people, and to the younger  
generation, who we hope will use their talents to make a better  
world.*



Thanks to Dan Simon, of Seven Stories Press, for initiating this *Young People's History* and to Theresa Noll of Seven Stories Press, for steering the project so carefully through its various stages.



A special appreciation to Rebecca Steffoff, who undertook the heroic job of adapting *A People's History* for young readers.

## *Introduction*

EVER SINCE my book *A People's History of the United States* was published twenty-five years ago, parents and teachers have been asking me about an edition that would be attractive to youngsters. So I am very pleased that Seven Stories Press and Rebecca Stefoff have undertaken the heroic job of adapting my book for younger readers.

Over the years, some people have asked me: “Do you think that your history, which is radically different than the usual histories of the United States, is suitable for young people? Won’t it create disillusionment with our country? Is it right to be so critical of the government’s policies? Is it right to take down the traditional heroes of the nation, like Christopher Columbus, Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt? Isn’t it unpatriotic to emphasize slavery and racism, the massacres of Indians, the exploitation of working people, the ruthless expansion of the United States at the expense of the Indians and people in other countries?”

I wonder why some people think it is all right for adults to hear such a radical, critical point of view, but not teenagers or sub-teenagers? Do they think that young people are not able to deal with such matters? It seems to me it is wrong to treat young readers as if they are not mature enough to look at their nation’s policies honestly. Yes, it’s a matter of being honest. Just as we must, as individuals, be honest about our own failures in order to correct them, it seems to me we must do the same when evaluating our national policies.

Patriotism, in my view, does not mean unquestioning acceptance of whatever the government does. To go along with whatever your government does is not a characteristic of democracy. I remember in my own early education we were taught that it was a sign of a totalitarian state, of a dictatorship, when people did not question what their government did. If you live in a democratic state, it means you have the right to criticize your government’s policies.

The basic principles of democracy are laid out in the Declaration of Independence, which was adopted in 1776 to explain why the colonies were no longer willing to accept British rule. The Declaration makes it clear that governments are not holy, not beyond criticism, because they are artificial creations, set up by the people to protect the equal right of everyone to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And when governments do not fulfill this obligation, the Declaration says that “it is the right of the people to alter or abolish the government.”

And, if it is the right of the people to “alter or abolish” the government, then surely it is their right to criticize it.

I am not worried about disillusioning young people by pointing to the flaws in the traditional heroes. We should be able to tell the truth about people whom we have been taught to look upon as heroes, but who really don’t deserve that admiration. Why should we think it heroic to do as Columbus did, arrive in this hemisphere and carry on a rampage of violence, in order to find gold? Why should we think it heroic for Andrew Jackson to drive Indians out of their land? Why should we think of Theodore Roosevelt as a hero because he fought in the Spanish-American War, driving Spain out of Cuba, but also paving the way for the United States to take control of Cuba?

Yes, we all need heroes, people to admire, to see as examples of how human beings should live. But I prefer to see Bartolomé de Las Casas as a hero, for exposing Columbus’s violent behavior against the Indians he encountered in the Bahamas. I prefer to see the Cherokee Indians as heroes, for resisting their removal from the lands on which they lived. To me, it is Mark Twain who is a hero, because he denounced President Theodore Roosevelt after Roosevelt had praised an American general who had massacred hundreds of people in the Philippines. I consider Helen Keller a hero because she protested against President Woodrow Wilson’s decision to send young Americans into the slaughterhouse of the First World War.



My point of view, which is critical of war, racism, and economic injustice, carries over to the situation we face in the United States today.

More than five years have elapsed since the most recent edition of *A People's History*, and this young people's edition gives me an opportunity, in the final chapter of Volume Two, to bring the story up to date, to the end of 2006, halfway through the second administration of George W. Bush, and three and a half years after the start of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

# PART ONE

## COLOMBUS *to* THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

(left, detail) Captain Mason's attack on the Pequots' fortified village, 1637.



# CHAPTER ONE

## COLUMBUS AND THE INDIANS

ARAWAK MEN AND WOMEN CAME OUT OF their villages onto the beaches. Full of wonder, they swam out to get a closer look at the strange big boat. When Christopher Columbus and his soldiers came ashore, carrying swords, the Arawaks ran to greet them. Columbus later wrote about the Indians in his ship's log:

They ... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells. They willingly traded everything they owned... . They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features... . They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They had no iron. Their spears are made of cane... . They would make fine servants... . With fifty men we could subjugate [overpower] them and make them do whatever we want.

The Arawaks lived in the Bahama Islands. Like Indians on the American mainland, they believed in hospitality and in sharing. But Columbus, the first messenger to the Americas from the civilization of western Europe, was hungry for money. As soon as he arrived in the islands, he seized some Arawaks by force so that he could get information from them. The information that Columbus wanted was this: Where is the gold?

Columbus had talked the king and queen of Spain into paying for his expedition. Like other European states, Spain wanted gold. There was gold in the Indies, as the people of Europe called India and southeastern Asia. The Indies had other valuable goods, too, such as silks and spices. But traveling by land from Europe to Asia was a long and dangerous journey, so the nations of Europe were searching for a way to reach the Indies by sea. Spain decided to gamble on Columbus. In return for bringing back gold and spices, Columbus would get 10 percent of the profits. He would be made governor of any newly discovered lands, and he would win the title Admiral of the Ocean Sea. He set out with three ships, hoping to become the first European to reach Asia by sailing across the Atlantic Ocean.

Like other informed people of his time, Columbus knew that the world was round. This meant that he could sail west from Europe to reach the East. The world Columbus imagined, however, was small. He would never have made it to Asia, which was thousands of miles farther away than he thought. But he was lucky. One-fourth of the way there he came upon an unknown land between Europe and Asia.

Thirty-three days after leaving waters known to Europeans, Columbus and his men saw branches floating in the water and flocks of birds in the air. These were signs of land. Then, on October 12, 1492, a sailor called Rodrigo saw the moon shining on white sands, and cried out. It was an island in the Bahamas, in the Caribbean Sea. The first man to sight land was supposed to get a large reward, but Rodrigo never got it. Columbus claimed that he had seen a light the evening before. He got the reward.



## CHILD SAILORS

LIKE MOST HISTORIANS, I WRITE ABOUT COLUMBUS and his “men,” but many of those who sailed with Columbus in 1492—on the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria—were children. One of those children was twelve-year-old Diego Bermúdez, a page who sailed with Columbus on the Santa Maria. Of the ninety sailors who sailed on the three ships, nearly twenty were boys!

The children who sailed with Columbus worked in their bare feet, took showers by dumping buckets of seawater over their heads, and used a toilet that stuck out from the ships’ decks over the sea. And even the youngest boys drank strong white wine with their food.

Older boys, called “criados,” assisted ships’ officers, or apprenticed as “gromets,” climbing ropes high above to trim the sails. Gromets became expert at tying different kinds of knots. They hung lengths of rope from their belts and carried knives at all times to help them in their work. Younger boys like Diego worked as

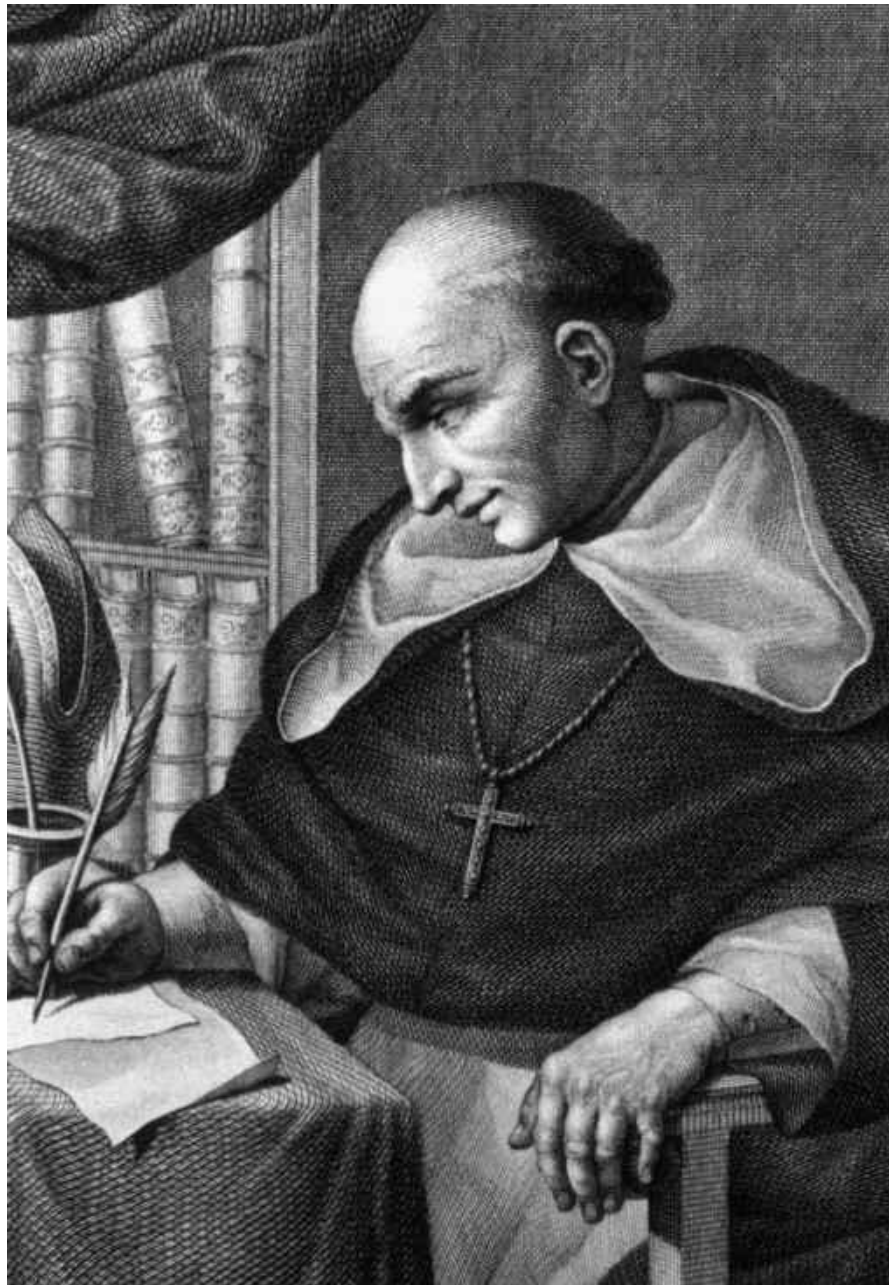
“pages,” who cooked and scrubbed the decks, though their most important job was to tell time. There were no clocks on board, so they kept time by using an ampolleta, which was a half-hour glass filled with sand. As soon as all the sand ran out, the page turned it over and ran to the poop deck, where he rang a bell and sang out a prayer to signify that another half-hour had passed. Pages had to learn sixteen different prayers by heart, each one for a different half-hour of the working day. Here is one of them:

*Blessed be the hour God came to earth,  
Holy Mary who gave him birth,  
And St. John who saw his worth.  
The guard is posted,  
The watchglass filling,  
We'll have a good voyage,  
If God be willing.*

Source: Hoose, Phillip. *We Were There, Too!: Young People in U.S. History*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2001.



(left) Bartolomé de Las Casas, 1791.



## **The Arawaks' Impossible Task**

THE ARAWAK INDIANS who greeted Columbus lived in villages and practiced agriculture. Unlike the Europeans, they had no horses or other work animals, and they had no iron. What they did have was tiny gold ornaments in their ears.

Those little ornaments shaped history. Because of them, Columbus started his relationship with the Indians by taking prisoners, thinking that they could lead him to the source of the gold. He sailed to several other Caribbean islands, including Hispaniola, an island now divided between two countries, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. After one of Columbus's ships ran aground, he used wood from the wreck to build a fort in Haiti. Then he sailed back to Spain with news of his discovery, leaving thirty-nine crewmen at the fort. Their orders were to find and store the gold.

The report Columbus made to the royal Spanish court was part fact, part fiction. He claimed to have reached Asia, and he called the Arawaks "Indians," meaning people of the Indies. The islands Columbus had visited must be off the coast of China, he said. They were full of riches:

Hispaniola is a miracle. Mountains and hills, plains and pastures, are both fertile and beautiful ... the harbors are unbelievably good and there are many wide rivers of which the majority contain gold... . There are many spices, and great mines of gold and other metals...

If the king and queen would give him just a little more help, Columbus said, he would make another voyage. This time he would come back to Spain with "as much gold as they need ... and as many slaves as they ask."

Columbus's promises won him seventeen ships and more than 1,200 men for his second expedition. The aim was clear: slaves and gold. They went from island to island in the Caribbean, capturing Indians. But as word spread among the Indians, the Spaniards found more and more empty villages. When they got to Haiti, they found that the sailors left behind at the fort were dead. The sailors had roamed the island in gangs looking for gold, taking women and children as slaves, until the Indians had killed them in a battle.

Columbus's men searched Haiti for gold, with no success. They had to fill up the ships returning to Spain with something, so in 1495 they went on a great slave raid. Afterward, they picked five hundred captives to send to Spain. Two hundred of the Indians died on the voyage. The rest arrived alive in Spain and were put up for sale by a local church official. Columbus, who was full of religious talk, later wrote, "Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold."

But too many slaves died in captivity. Columbus was desperate to show a profit on his voyages. He had to make good on his promises to fill the ships with gold. In a part of Haiti where Columbus and his men imagined there was much gold, they ordered everyone over the age of thirteen to collect gold for them. Indians who did not give gold to the Spaniards had their hands cut off and bled to death.

The Indians had been given an impossible task. The only gold around was bits of gold dust in streams. So they ran away. The Spaniards hunted them down with dogs and killed them. When they took prisoners, they hanged them or burned them to death. Unable to fight against the Spanish soldiers' guns, swords, armor, and horses, the Arawaks began to commit mass suicide with poison. When the Spanish search for gold began, there were a quarter of a million Indians on Haiti. In two years, through murder or suicide, half them were dead.



When it was clear that there was no gold left, the Indians were enslaved on the Spaniards' huge estates. They were overworked and mistreated, and they died by the thousands. By 1550, only five hundred Indians remained. A century later, no Arawaks were left on the island.

## Telling Columbus's Story

WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED ON THE Caribbean islands after Columbus came because of Bartolomé de Las Casas. He was a young priest who helped the Spanish conquer Cuba. For a while he owned a plantation where Indian slaves worked. But then Las Casas gave up his plantation and spoke out against Spanish cruelty.

Las Casas made a copy of Columbus's journal, and he also wrote a book called *History of the Indies*. In this book, he described the Indians' society and their customs. He also told how the

Spaniards treated the Indians:

As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished [starving], had no milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7,000 children died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation... . In this way, husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk... . My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now I tremble as I write... .

This was the start of the history of Europeans in the Americas. It was a history of conquest, slavery, and death. But for a long time, the history books given to children in the United States told a different story—a tale of heroic adventure, not bloodshed. The way the story is taught to young people is just beginning to change.

The story of Columbus and the Indians shows us something about how history gets written. One of the most famous

historians to write about Columbus was Samuel Eliot Morison. He even sailed across the Atlantic Ocean himself, retracing Columbus's route. In 1954 Morison published a popular book called *Christopher Columbus, Mariner*. He said that cruel treatment by Columbus and the Europeans who came after him caused the "complete genocide" of the Indians. *Genocide* is a harsh word. It is the name of a terrible crime—the deliberate killing of an entire ethnic or cultural group.

Morison did not lie about Columbus. He did not leave out the mass murder. But he mentioned the truth quickly and then went on to other things. By burying the fact of genocide in a lot of other information, he seemed to be saying that the mass murder wasn't very important in the big picture. By making genocide seem like a small part of the story, he took away its power to make us think differently about Columbus. At the end of the book, Morison summed up his idea of Columbus as a great man. Columbus's most important quality, Morison said, was his seamanship.

A historian must pick and choose among facts, deciding which ones to put into his or her work, which ones to leave out, and which ones to place at the center of the story. Every historian's own ideas and beliefs go into the way he or she writes history. In turn, the way history is written can shape the ideas and beliefs of the people who read it. A view of history like Morison's, a picture of the past that sees Columbus and others like him as great sailors and discoverers, but says almost nothing about their genocide, can make it seem as though what they did was right.

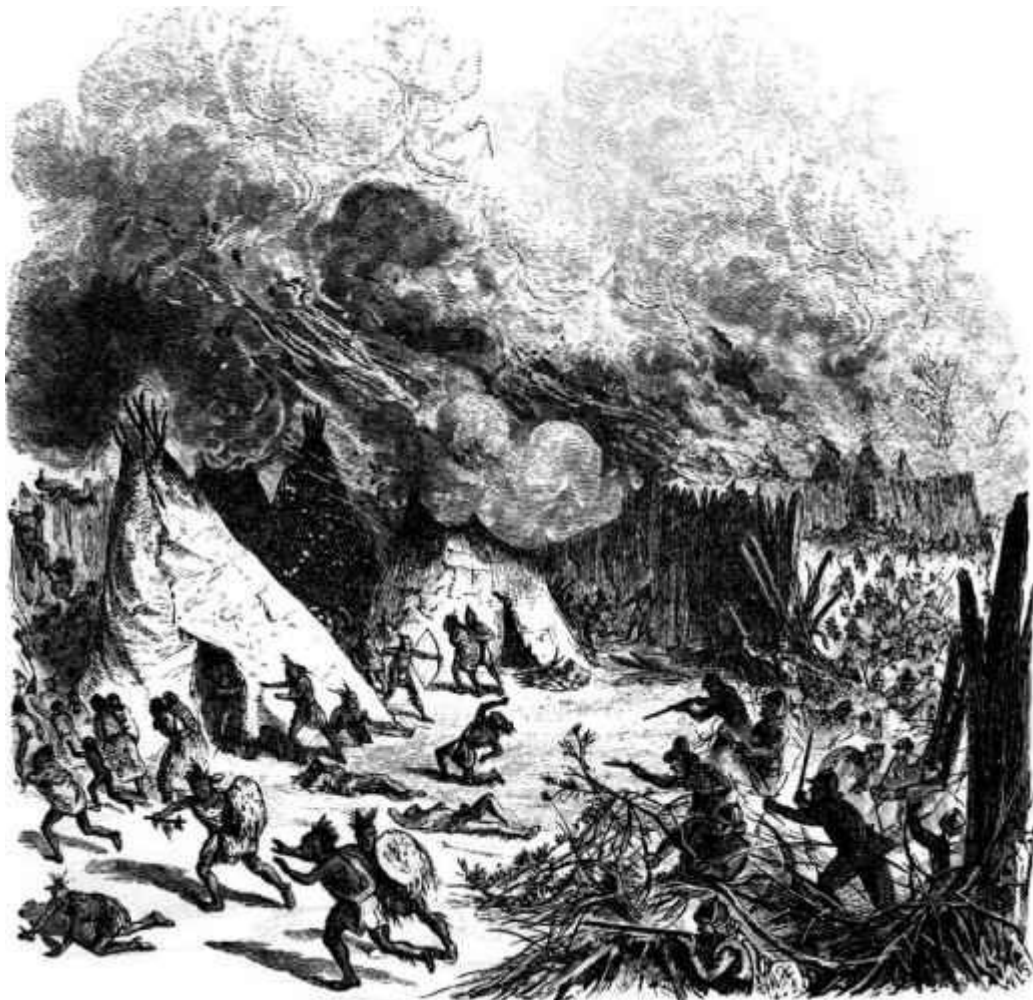
People who write and read history have gotten used to seeing terrible things such as conquest and murder as the price of progress. This is because many of them think that history is the story of governments, conquerors, and leaders. In this way of looking at the past, history is what happens to states, or nations. The actors in history are kings, presidents, and generals. But what about factory workers, farmers, people of color, women, and children? They make history, too.

The story of any country includes fierce conflicts between conquerors and the conquered, masters and slaves, people with

power and those without power. Writing history is always a matter of taking sides. For example, I choose to tell the story of the discovery of America from the point of view of the Arawaks. I will tell the story of the U.S. Constitution from the point of view of the slaves, and the story of the Civil War from the point of view of the Irish in New York City.

I believe that history can help us imagine new possibilities for the future. One way it can do this is by letting us see the hidden parts of the past, the times when people showed that they could resist the powerful, or join together. Maybe our future can be found in the past's moments of kindness and courage rather than its centuries of warfare. That is my approach to the history of the United States, which started with the meeting between Columbus and the Arawaks.

*(left)* Captain Mason's attack on the Pequots' fortified village, 1637.





## **More Meetings, More Fighting**

The tragedy of Columbus and the Arawaks happened over and over again. Spanish conquerors Hernan Cortés and Francisco Pizarro destroyed the Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of South America. When English settlers reached Virginia and Massachusetts, they did the same thing to the Indians they met.

Jamestown, Virginia, was the first permanent English settlement in the Americas. It was built inside a territory governed by an Indian chief named Powhatan. He watched the English settle on his land but did not attack. In 1607, Powhatan spoke to John Smith, one of the leaders at Jamestown. The statement that has come down to us may not truly be Powhatan's words, but it sounds a lot like what other Indians said and wrote at later times. We can read Powhatan's statement as the spirit of what he thought as he watched the white men enter his territory:

I know the difference between peace and war better than any man in my country. Why will you take by force what you may have quietly by love? Why will you destroy us who supply you with food? What can you get by war? Why are you jealous of us? We are unarmed, and willing to give you what you ask, if you come in a friendly manner, and not so simple as not to know that it is much better to eat good meat, sleep comfortably, live quietly with my wives and children, laugh and be merry with the English, and trade for their copper and hatchets, than to run away from them, and to lie cold in the woods, and feed on acorns, roots, and such trash, and be so hunted that I can neither eat nor sleep.

In the winter of 1609-1610, the English at Jamestown went through a terrible food shortage they called the "starving time." They roamed the woods looking for nuts and berries, and they dug up graves to eat the corpses. Out of five hundred colonists, all but sixty died.

Some of the colonists ran off to join the Indians, where they would at least be fed. The next summer, the governor of the colony asked Powhatan to send them back. When he refused, the colonists destroyed an Indian settlement. They kidnapped the queen of the tribe, threw her children into the water and shot them, and then stabbed her.

Twelve years later, the Indians tried to get rid of the growing English settlements. They massacred 347 men, women, and children. From then on it was total war. The English could not enslave the Indians, and they would not live with them, so they decided to wipe them out.

To the north, the Pilgrims settled in New England. Like the Jamestown colonists, they came to Indian land. The Pequot tribe lived in southern Connecticut and Rhode Island. The colonists wanted this land, so the war with the Pequots began. Massacres took place on both sides. The English used a form of warfare that Cortés had used in Mexico. To fill the enemy with terror, they attacked civilians, people who were not warriors.



## **“WHITE INDIANS”**

ENGLISH COLONISTS CAPTURED IN BATTLE by Native Americans who found that they preferred life in Native American communities over their own were referred to as “white Indians.” Eunice Williams was one such example. She was seven years old when she was taken prisoner by the Kahnawake Mohawks. Her mother and two of her brothers were among those killed. Her other two brothers were also captured. Two and a half years later, her father, Reverend John Williams, negotiated the return of Eunice and her brothers, but Eunice refused to leave the Native American community. As a Mohawk, she converted to Catholicism and married another Mohawk.

It was said that the Mohawks were kinder to children and that females were respected as the equals of males. Where European parents considered physical punishment essential, the Native Americans believed that children should be “reproved with gentle words,” and that corporal punishment would weaken character and make children submissive. In Native American cultures, the goal was to imbue children with independence and courage.



Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1753, “When white persons of either sex have been taken prisoners young by the Indians, and lived awhile among them, tho’ ransomed by their Friends, and treated with all imaginable tenderness to prevail with them to stay among the English, yet in a Short time they become disgusted with our manner of life, and the care and pains that are necessary to support it, and take the first good Opportunity of escaping again into the woods, from whence there is no reclaiming them.”

Source: Mintz, Steven. *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 7, 8, 15, 35.

They set fire to wigwams, and as the Indians ran out to escape the flames, the English cut them to bits with their swords.

When Columbus came to the Americas, 10 million Indians lived north of what is now Mexico. After the Europeans began taking that land, the number of Indians was reduced until, in time, fewer than a million remained. Many Indians died from diseases brought by the whites.

Who were these Indians? Who were the people who came out onto the beaches with presents for Columbus and his crew and who peered out of the forests at the first white settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts?

As many as 75 million Indians lived throughout the Americas before Columbus. They had hundreds of different tribal cultures and about two thousand languages. Many tribes were nomads, wanderers who lived by hunting and gathering food. Others, were expert farmers and lived in settled communities. Among the Iroquois, the most powerful of the northeastern tribes, land did not belong to individuals. It belonged to the



entire community. People shared the work of farming and hunting, and they also shared food.

Women were important and respected in Iroquois society, and the sexes shared power. Children were taught to be independent. Not only the Iroquois but other Indian tribes behaved in similar ways.

So Columbus and the Europeans who followed him did not come to an empty wilderness. They came to a world that was, in some places, as crowded as Europe. The Indians had their own history, laws, and poetry. They lived in greater equality than people in Europe did. Was “progress” enough of a reason to decimate their population and wipe out their societies? The fate of the Indians reminds us to look at history as something more than just a story of conquerors and leaders.

*(left, detail)* A slave auction in Virginia, 1861.



# CHAPTER TWO

## **BLACK AND WHITE**

IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, THERE IS no country where racism has been more important than in the United States. How did this racism start? How might it end? Another way of asking the question might be: Is racism natural?

Maybe history can help answer these questions. If so, the history of slavery in North America could hold some clues, because we can trace the coming of the first white people and the first black people to this continent.

In North America, slavery became a widespread substitute for paid labor. At the same time, whites came to believe that blacks were not their equals. For 350 years, blacks would suffer inhumane treatment in American society because of racism, which combines ideas about black inferiority with the unequal treatment of black people.

## Why Turn to Slavery?

EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED TO THE FIRST white settlers pushed them toward the enslavement of blacks. In Virginia, the settlers who had survived the “starving time” of 1609-1610 were joined by new arrivals. They were desperate for labor to grow enough food to stay alive. But they wanted to grow more than corn. The Virginia settlers had learned from the Indians how to grow tobacco, and in 1617 they sent the first cargo to England. The tobacco brought a high price. Even though some people thought smoking was sinful, the planters were not going to let such thoughts get in the way of making a profit. They would supply England with tobacco.

But who would do the hard work of growing the tobacco and preparing it for sale? The settlers couldn’t force the Indians to work for them. The Indians outnumbered the settlers. Even though the settlers could kill Indians with their guns, other Indians would massacre settlers in return. The settlers couldn’t capture Indians and make them into slaves, either. The Indians were tough and defiant. And while the North American woods seemed strange and hostile to the settlers, the Indians were at home there. They could avoid the settlers—or escape from them.

Maybe the Virginians were angry that they could-n’t control the Indians. Maybe they envied the way the Indians could take care of themselves better than the whites did, even though the whites thought that they themselves were civilized and that the Indians were savages. In his book *American Slavery, American Freedom*, historian Edmund Morgan imagines how the colonists felt about their failure to live better than the Indians, or to control them:

The Indians, keeping to themselves, laughed at your superior methods and lived from the land more abundantly and with less labor than you did... . And when your own people starting deserting in order to live with them, it was too much... . So you killed the Indians, tortured them, burned

their villages, burned their cornfields... . But you still did not grow much corn.

Maybe those feelings of envy and anger made the settlers especially ready to become the masters of slaves. It was profitable to the Virginians to import blacks as slave labor. After all, other colonies in the Americas were already doing it.

By 1619, a million blacks had been forcibly brought from Africa to work as slaves in the mines and sugar plantations of the Portuguese and Spanish colonies in South America and the Caribbean islands. Even earlier, fifty years before Columbus, the slave trade started when ten Africans were taken to Portugal and sold. So that in 1619, when the first twenty blacks were brought by force to Jamestown and sold to settlers, white people had been thinking of Africans as slave labor for a long time.

The Africans' having been torn from their land and their cultures made enslavement easier. The Indians were on their own land. The whites were in a new continent, but they had brought their English culture with them. But the blacks had been torn from their land and their culture. They were forced into a situation where their heritage—languages, clothes, customs, and family life—was wiped out bit by bit. Only with amazing strength of will could blacks hold on to pieces of this heritage.

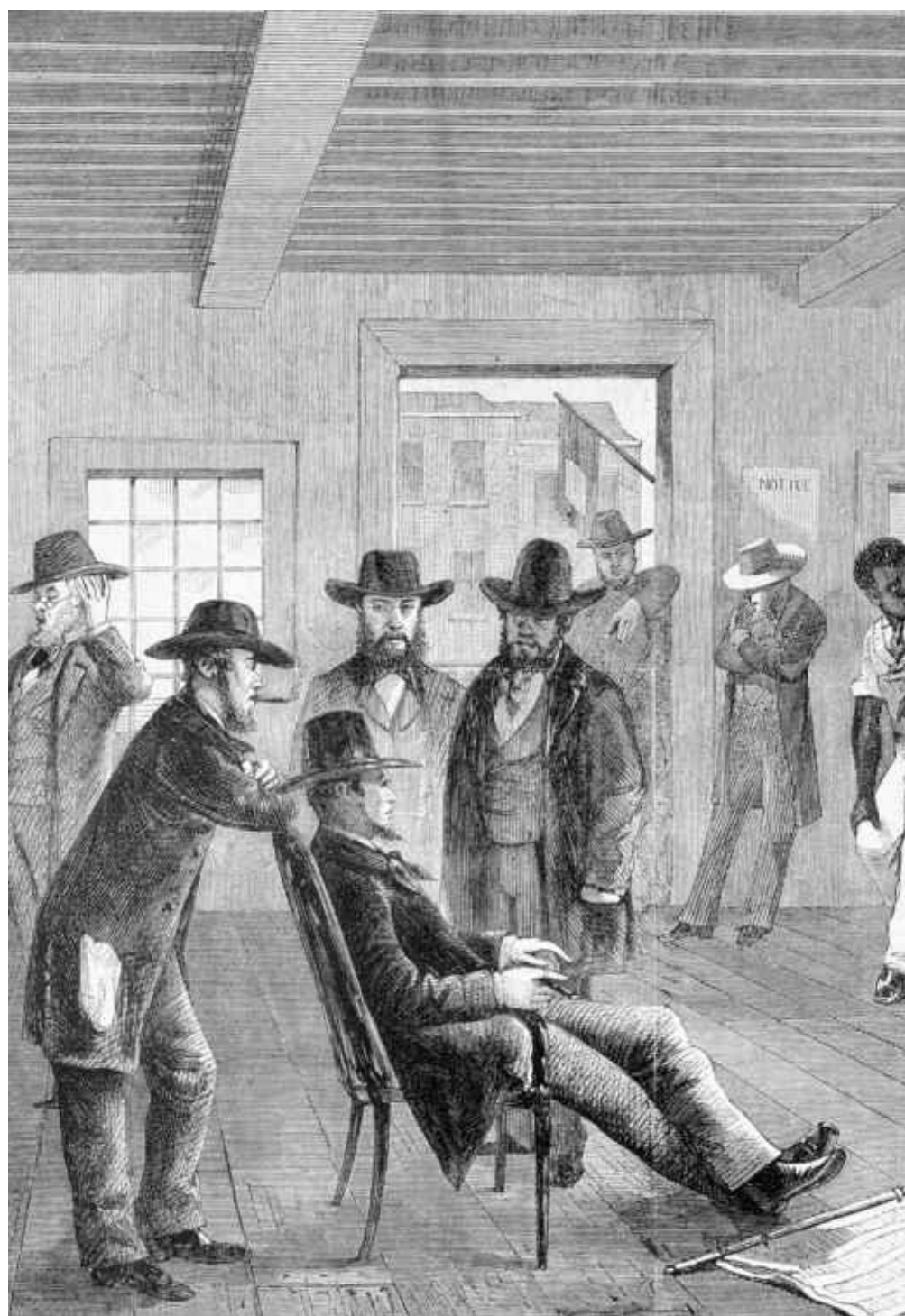
Was African culture easy to destroy because it was inferior to European culture? African civilization was in some ways more advanced than that of Europe. It was a civilization of 100 million people. They built large cities, they used iron tools, and they were skilled at farming, weaving, pottery making, and sculpture. Europeans who traveled in Africa in the sixteenth century were impressed with the kingdoms of Timbuktu and Mali. These African states were stable and organized, at a time when European states were just beginning to develop into modern nations.

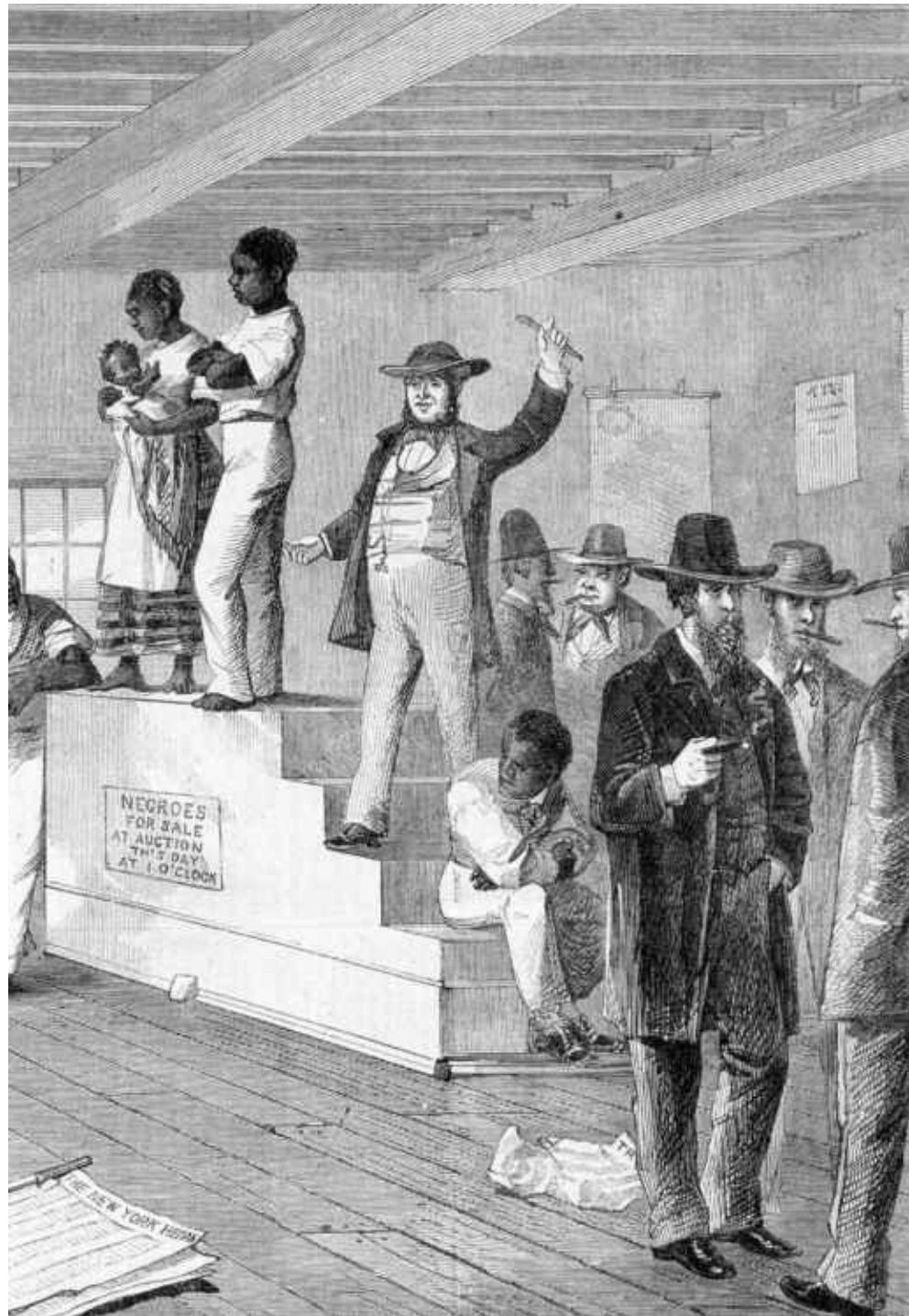
Slavery existed in Africa, and Europeans sometimes pointed to that fact to excuse their own slave trade. But

although slaves in Africa had a harsh life, they also had rights that those brought to America did not have. American slavery was the most cruel form of slavery in history because of two things. First, American slavery was driven by a frenzy for limitless profit. Second, it was based on racial hatred, a view that saw whites as masters and blacks as slaves. For these reasons, American slavery treated slaves as less than human.

The inhuman treatment began in Africa, where captured slaves were chained together and forced to walk to the coast, sometimes for a thousand miles. For every five blacks captured, two died during these death marches. When the survivors reached the coast they were kept in cages until they were sold.

*(overleaf)* A Slave Auction in Virginia, 1861.





*(left)*

African captives leaping off a slave ship off the coast of Africa, 1700s.





Then they were packed aboard the slave ships, chained together in the dark, in spaces not much bigger than coffins. Some died for lack of air in the crowded, dirty cargo holds of

the ships. Others jumped overboard to end their suffering. As many as a third of all the Africans shipped overseas may have died during the journey. But the trade was profitable, so merchants crammed the blacks into the holds of the slave ships like fish.

At first, the Dutch were the main slave traders. Later the English led the trade. Some Americans in New England entered the business, too. In 1637 the first American slave ship sailed from Massachusetts. Its holds were divided into racks two feet wide and six feet long, with leg irons to hold the captives in place.

By 1800, somewhere between 10 million and 15 million black Africans had been brought to the Americas. In all, Africa may have lost as many as 50 million human beings to death and slavery during the centuries that we call the beginnings of modern civilization.

Slavery got started in the American colonies because the Jamestown settlers were desperate for labor. They couldn't use Indians, and it would have been hard to use whites. But blacks were available in growing numbers, thanks to profit-seeking dealers in human flesh. And the terrible treatment Africans suffered after being captured left many of them in a state of helplessness. All of these things led to the enslavement of the blacks.

## **Fear and Racism**

WERE ALL BLACKS SLAVES? MAY BE THE SETTLERS considered some blacks to be servants, not slaves. The settlers had white servants, too. Would they have treated white servants differently from black ones?

A case from colonial Virginia shows that whites and blacks received very different treatment. In 1640, six white servants and one black started to run away. They were caught. The black man, named Emanuel in the court record, received thirty blows with a whip. He was also branded on one cheek and sentenced to work in shackles for a year or longer. The whites received lighter sentences.

This unequal treatment was racism, which showed itself in feelings and in actions. The whites felt superior to the blacks, and they looked at blacks with contempt. They also treated the blacks more harshly and oppressively than they treated each other. Was this racism “natural”? Did the whites dislike and mistreat the blacks because of some instinct born into them? Or was racism the result of certain conditions that can be removed?

One way to answer those questions is to find out whether any whites in the American colonies viewed blacks as their equals. And evidence shows that they did. At times when whites and blacks found themselves sharing the same problems and the same work, with the same master as their enemy, they treated each other as equals.

We don't have to talk about “natural” racial dislike to explain why slavery became established on the plantations of the American colonies. The need for labor is enough of a reason. The number of whites who came to the colonies was

just not enough to meet the needs of the plantations, so the settlers turned to slaves to meet those needs. And the needs kept rising. In 1700, Virginia had six thousand slaves, one-twelfth of the colony's population. By 1763, there were 170,000 slaves, about half the population.

From the beginning, black men and women resisted their enslavement. Through resistance, they showed their dignity as human beings, if only to themselves and their brothers and sisters. Often they used methods that were hard to identify and punish, such as working slowly or secretly destroying white property. Another form of resistance was running away. Slaves just arrived from Africa, still holding on to the heritage of village life, would run away in groups and try to set up communities in the wilderness. Enslaved people born in America were more likely to run off alone and try to pass as free.

Runaway slaves risked pain and death. If they were caught even planning to escape, they could be punished in terrible ways. Slaves were burned, mutilated, and killed. Whites believed that severe punishments would keep other slaves from becoming rebellious.

White settlers were terrified of organized black uprisings. Fear of slave revolts, it seems, was a fact of plantation life. A Virginia planter named William Byrd wrote in 1736 that if a bold slave leader arose, "a man of desperate fortune," he might start a war that would "tinge our rivers wide as they are with blood."

Such rebellions did take place—not many, but enough to create constant fear among the planters. In 1720 a settler in South Carolina wrote to London about a planned slave uprising that had been caught just in time:

I am now to acquaint you that very lately we have had a very wicked and barbarous plot of the ... negroes rising with a designe to destroy all the white people in the country and then to take Charles Town ... but it pleased God it was discovered and many of them taken prisoners and some burnt and some hang'd and some banish'd.

We know of about 250 cases in which ten or more slaves joined in a revolt or plot. But not all rebellions involved slaves alone. From time to time, whites were involved in the slave resistance. As early as 1663, white servants and black slaves in Virginia formed a conspiracy to rebel and gain their freedom. The plot was betrayed and ended with executions.

In 1741, New York had ten thousand white and two thousand black slaves. After a hard winter brought much misery to poor people of both races, mysterious fires broke out. Blacks and whites were accused of conspiring together. The trial was full of high emotion and wild claims. Some people made confessions under force. Eventually two white men and two white women were executed, eighteen slaves were hanged, and thirteen slaves were burned alive.

Only one fear in the American colonies was greater than the fear of black rebellion. That was the fear that whites who were unhappy with the state of things might join with blacks to overthrow the social order. Especially in the early years of slavery, before racism was well established, some white servants were treated as badly as slaves. There was a chance that the two groups might work together.

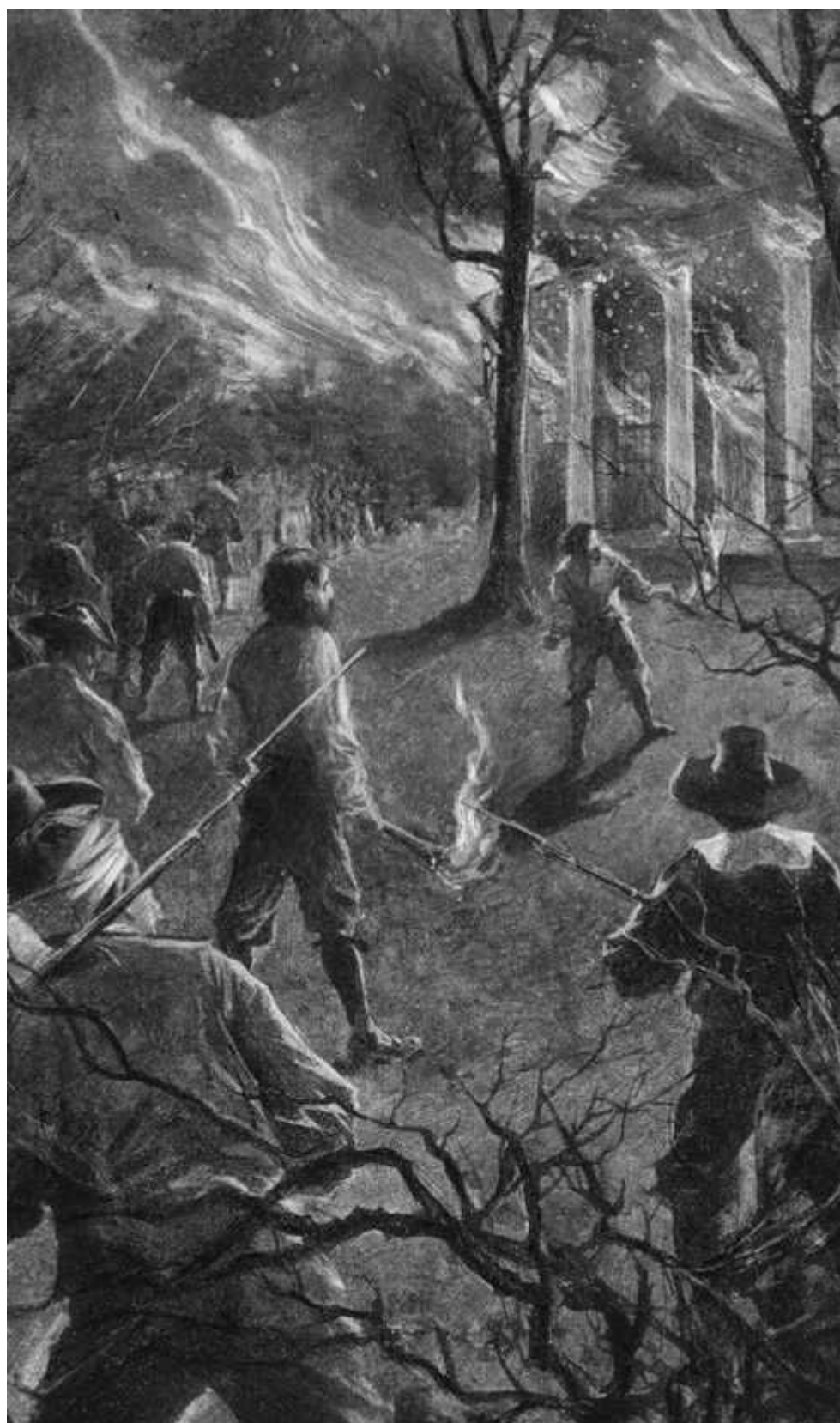
To keep that from happening, the leaders of the colonies took steps. They gave a few new rights and benefits to poor whites. For example, in 1705 Virginia passed a law that said that masters had to give white servants some money and corn when their term of service ended. Newly freed servants would also receive some land. This made white people of the servant class less unhappy with their place in society—and less likely to side with the black slaves against the white masters.

A web of historical threads trapped blacks in American slavery. These threads were the desperation of the starving settlers, the helplessness of Africans torn from their homeland, the high profits available to slave traders and tobacco growers, and the laws and customs that allowed masters to punish

rebellious slaves. Finally, to keep whites and blacks from joining together as equals, the leaders of the colonies gave poor whites small benefits and gifts of status.

The threads of this web are not “natural.” They are historical, created by special circumstances. This does not mean that they would be easy to untangle. But it does mean that there is a possibility for blacks and whites to live together in a different way, under different historical circumstances.

*(left)* Nathaniel Bacon and his followers burning Jamestown, Virginia, 1676.



## CHAPTER THREE

### WHO WERE THE COLONISTS?

A HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE THE AMERICAN Revolution, a rebellion broke out in Virginia. Angry colonists set Jamestown, their capital, on fire. The governor fled the burning town, and England shipped a thousand soldiers across the Atlantic, hoping to keep control of the forty thousand colonists.

This was Bacon's Rebellion. It was not a war of American colonists against the British. Instead, Bacon's Rebellion was an uprising of angry, poor colonists against two groups they saw as their enemies. One was the Indians. The other was the colonists' own rich and privileged leaders.

Bacon's Rebellion brought together groups from the lower classes. White frontiersmen started the uprising because they were angry about the way the colony was being run. Then white servants and black slaves joined the rebellion. They were angry, too—mostly about the huge gap between rich and poor in Virginia.



## **Nathaniel Bacon and the Rebellion**

BACON'S REBELLION STARTED WITH TROUBLE on Virginia's western frontier. By the 1670s rich landowners controlled most of eastern Virginia. As a result, many ordinary people felt that they were pushed toward the frontier. Life was more dangerous there. The settlers had problems with Native Americans. They wanted the colony's leaders to fight the Indians, but the politicians and big landowners who ran the colony wouldn't fight—maybe because they were using some of the Indians as spies and allies against the others.

The frontiersmen felt that the colonial government had let them down. They were angry, and they weren't the only ones. Times were hard. Many Virginians scraped out a living in poverty or worked as servants in terrible conditions. In 1676, these unhappy Virginians found a leader in Nathaniel Bacon.

A British government report explained how Bacon appealed to his followers:

He seduced the Vulgar and most ignorant people to believe ... that their whole hearts and hopes were now set on Bacon. Next he charges the Governour as negligent [neglectful] and wicked, treacherous and incapable, the Lawes and Taxes as unjust and oppressive....

Bacon owned a good bit of land. He probably cared more about fighting Indians than about helping the poor. Still, the common people of Virginia felt that he was on their side. They elected Bacon to the colonial government, called the House of Burgesses. Bacon was ready to send armed militias, or armed groups of citizens, to fight the Indians. These militias would act outside government control. This alarmed William

Berkeley, the governor of the colony. Berkeley called Bacon a rebel and had him captured.

After two thousand of Bacon's supporters marched into Jamestown, the governor let Bacon go, in return for an apology. But as soon as Bacon was free, he gathered his militia and began raiding the Indians. The rebellion was under way.

Bacon gave his reasons for the rebellion in a paper called "Declaration of the People." It blended the frontiersmen's hatred of the Indians with the common people's anger toward the rich. Bacon accused the Berkeley government of wrongdoing, including unfair taxes and not protecting the western farmers from the Indians.

A few months later, Bacon fell sick and died at the age of twenty-nine. The rebellion didn't last long after that. A ship armed with thirty guns cruised the York River, one of the main waterways of the colony, to restore order. Its captain, Thomas Grantham, used force and tricks to disarm the last rebel bands. At the rebellion's main stronghold, Grantham found four hundred armed whites and blacks—freemen, servants, and slaves. He promised to pardon them and to free the servants and slaves. Instead, he turned his boat's guns on the rebels and took their weapons. Then he returned the servants and slaves to their masters. Eventually, twenty-three rebel leaders were hanged.

Bacon's Rebellion came about because of a chain of oppression in Virginia. The Indians had their lands seized by white frontiersmen. The frontiersmen were taxed and controlled by the rich upper classes in Jamestown. And the whole colony, rich and poor, was being used by England. The colonists grew tobacco to sell to England, but the English set the price. Each year, the king of England made a large profit from the Virginia colony.

Most people in Virginia had supported the rebellion. One member of Governor Berkeley's council said that the rebels wanted to take the colony out of the king's hands and into their own. Another said that the Indian problem was the original

cause of Bacon's Rebellion, but that poor people had joined because they wanted to seize and share the wealth of the rich. Who were these rebels?

## **The Underclass**

THE SERVANTS WHO JOINED BACON's Rebellion were part of a large underclass of miserably poor whites. They came to the North American colonies from English and European cities whose governments wanted to get rid of them. In England, for example, changes in land laws had driven many farmers into poverty and homelessness in the cities. New laws were passed to punish the poor, imprison them in workhouses, or send them out of the country. So some of the poor were forced to leave their homes for America. Others were drawn to America by hope—or by promises and lies about the good lives they would have there.

Many poor people bound for America became indentured servants. They signed an agreement called an indenture that said that they would repay the cost of their journey to America by working for a master for five or seven years. Often they were imprisoned after signing the indenture, so that they couldn't run away before their ship sailed.

The voyage to America from England or Europe lasted from eight to twelve weeks. If the weather was bad, the trip could take even longer, and passengers could run out of food. Poor people crossing the ocean to work as servants in the American colonies were crammed into crowded, dirty quarters. Not all of them survived the journey. Gottlieb Mittelberger, a musician who sailed from Germany to America around 1750, wrote about the terrible trip:

During the journey the ship is full of pitiful signs of distress—smells, fumes, horrors, vomiting, various kinds of sea-sickness, fever, dysentery, headaches, heat, constipation, boils, scurvy, cancer, mouth-rot... . Add to that shortage of food, hunger, thirst, frost, heat, dampness, fear, misery, vexation, and lamentation as well

as other troubles... . On board our ship, on a day on which we had a great storm, a woman about to give birth and unable to deliver under the circumstances, was pushed through one of the portholes into the sea... .

Once they arrived in America, indentured servants were bought and sold like slaves. On March 28, 1771, the *Virginia Gazette* reported: “Just arrived ... the Ship Justitia, with about one Hundred Healthy Servants, Men Women & Boys... . The Sale will commence on Tuesday the 2nd of April.”

More than half the colonists who came to North America came as servants. They were mostly English in the seventeenth century, Irish and German in the eighteenth century. Many of them found that life in the American colonies was worse than they had imagined.

Beatings and whippings were common. Servant women were raped. Masters had other means of control. Strangers had to show papers to prove that they were freemen, not runaway servants. The colonial governments agreed among themselves that servants who escaped from one colony to another must be returned. (This later became part of the U.S. Constitution.)

Masters lived in fear of servants’ rebellions. After Bacon’s Rebellion, English soldiers stayed in Virginia to guard against future trouble. One report at the time said, “Virginia is at present poor and more populous than ever.” The writer added that many people were afraid of an uprising by servants who needed basic necessities, such as clothes.

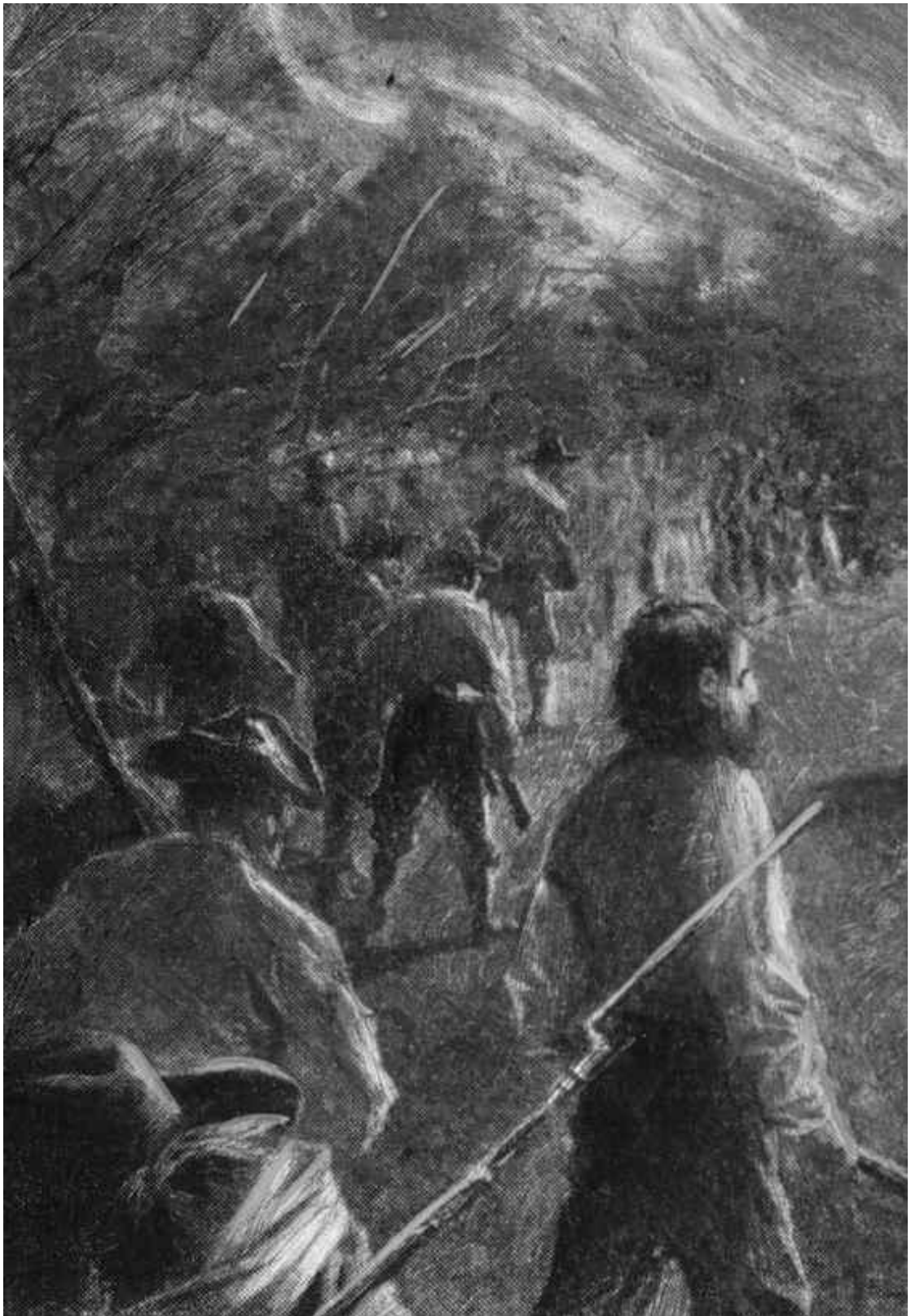
Escape was easier than rebellion. Historian Richard Morris, who wrote a book called *Government and Labor in Early America*, studied colonial newspapers and found many reports of white servants running away, sometimes in groups. Other servants went on strike and refused to work. In 1663, a Maryland master complained to the court that his servants would not do “their ordinary labor.” The servants said that they were too weak to work, because the master fed them only

beans and bread. The court ordered the servants to receive thirty lashes with a whip.

More and more, as servants ran away or finished their indentures, slaves replaced them. What happened to the servants after they became free? Cheerful stories tell of former servants who rose to wealth, owned land, and became important people. But in his book *Colonists in Bondage*, historian Abbot Smith reported that almost none of the wealthy, important men in the colonies had been indentured servants, and only a few of them were descended from servants.

## **Rich and Poor**

CLASS LINES HARDENED DURING THE colonial period. The difference between rich and poor grew sharper. At the very beginning of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, in 1630, Governor John Winthrop showed the thinking of colonial leaders when he said that “in all times some must be rich, some poore.” The leaders of the colonies were men of money and status. They wanted society in North America to mirror England, where a small number of people controlled the best land and much of the wealth.



*(detail)*



Nathaniel Bacon and his followers burning Jamestown,  
Virginia, 1676.



The colonies grew fast in the eighteenth century. Between 1700 and 1760, their population rose from one-quarter of a million people to more than a million and a half. Agriculture, shipping, and trading grew. Small factories developed. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston doubled and tripled in size.

Through all that growth, the upper class got most of the benefit and held most of the political power. For example, in Boston in 1770, the top 1 percent of property owners had 44 percent of the wealth.

Rich colonial merchants built mansions. People of the upper classes had their portraits painted and traveled in coaches or in chairs carried by servants or slaves. Meanwhile, the poor struggled to stay alive, to keep from freezing in cold weather. And their numbers kept rising. By the 1730s, people demanded institutions to hold the “many Beggary people daily suffered to wander about the Streets.”

The cities built poorhouses for old people, widows, cripples, and orphans, and also for unemployed people and new immigrants. The poorhouses quickly became overcrowded. A Philadelphia citizen wrote in 1748, “It is remarkable what an increase of the number of Beggars there is about town this winter.” Nine years later, Boston officials spoke of “a great number of Poor” who found it hard to feed their families.

Traditional histories of the colonies make it seem that the colonists were united in the struggle against England, their outside enemy. But there was much conflict within the colonies. Slave and free, servant and master, tenant and landlord, poor and rich—disorder broke out along these lines of tension.

In 1713, Boston suffered a severe food shortage. In spite of the city’s hunger, a wealthy merchant named Andrew Belcher shipped grain to the Caribbean islands, because the profit was greater there. A mob of two hundred people rioted, broke into Belcher’s warehouses looking for food, and shot the lieutenant governor of the colony when he tried to stop them. Later,

another Boston mob beat up the sheriff and surrounded the governor's house to protest impressment, or forced service in the navy. In 1747, poor Bostonians felt that Thomas Hutchinson, a rich merchant and official, had discriminated against them. His house mysteriously burned, while a crowd watched and cheered.

In New Jersey in the 1740s and 1750s, poor farmers clashed with rich landowners. Both groups claimed they owned the land, and the farmers rioted when the landowners demanded rent. During this time, England fought several wars that brought wealth to a few colonial shipbuilders and merchants. But to the mass of colonists, England's wars brought high taxes, unemployment, and poverty—and more anger against the rich and powerful.

## How to Rule

BY THE 1760s, THE WEALTHY ELITE that controlled the British colonies in North America had three big fears: Indian hostility, the danger of slave revolts, and the growing class anger of poor whites. What if these three groups should join together?

Bacon's Rebellion had shown the colonial leaders that it was risky to ignore the Indians, because that infuriated the white people living near the frontier. Better to make war on the Indians and gain the support of the whites. By turning the poor against the Indians, authorities might head off possible class conflict between poor and rich.

Could blacks join the Indians against the whites? This was a real threat. In the Carolinas in the 1750s, twenty-five thousand whites were outnumbered by forty thousand black slaves and sixty thousand Native Americans. Authorities decided to turn blacks and Indians against each other. They bribed Indians to return runaway slaves, and they also made it illegal for free blacks to travel in Indian country. Indian villages did shelter hundreds of runaway slaves, but blacks and Indians never united on a large scale.

The greatest fear of wealthy southern planters was that black slaves and poor whites would combine in another uprising like Bacon's Rebellion. One tool to keep blacks and whites from uniting was racism. Edmund Morgan, a historian of slavery in Virginia, wrote in his *American Slavery, American Freedom* that racism was not a "natural" feeling about the differences between black and white. Instead, white leaders encouraged a negative view of blacks. If poor whites felt contempt for African Americans, they were less likely to join with them in rebellion.

As the colonies grew, the ruling class found another way of keeping control. Along with the very rich and the very poor, a white middle class was developing. It was made up of small planters, independent farmers, and craft workers in cities and

towns. If these middle-class colonists joined forces with the merchants and big planters, they would be a solid buffer against the frontier Indians, the black slaves, and the poor whites.

The upper classes had to win the loyalty of the middle class. This meant that they had to give the middle class something, but how could they do this without damaging their own wealth or power? In the 1760s and 1770s, the ruling group found a wonderfully useful tool. That tool was the language of liberty and equality. It could unite just enough whites to fight a revolution against England—without ending slavery or inequality.

*(left)* Bonfire at the Bowling Green to protest the Stamp Act, New York City, 1765.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **TYRANNY IS TYRANNY**

AROUND 1776, SOME IMPORTANT PEOPLE in the British colonies of North America made a discovery. They found that by creating a nation and a symbol called the United States, they could take over land, wealth, and political power from other people who had been ruling the colonies for Great Britain.

When we look at the American Revolution this way, it was a work of genius. The Founding Fathers created a new system of national control that has worked very well for more than two hundred years.

Control was desperately needed. The colonies boiled with discontent. By 1760 there had been eighteen uprisings aimed at overthrowing the government of one or more colonies. There were also six black rebellions, from South Carolina to New York, and forty other riots.

But by the 1760s the colonies also had people we call local elites. These were political and social leaders in their city, town, or colony. Most of them were educated people, such as lawyers, doctors, and writers. Their thoughts carried weight. Some of these elite colonists were close to the ruling circles, made up of governors, tax collectors, and other officials who represented Great Britain. Other elite colonists were outside the ruling circles, but their fellow colonists looked up to them anyway.

These local elites were disturbed by the rising disorder. They feared that if the social order of the colonies were overturned, their own property and importance could be harmed. Then the elites saw a way to protect themselves and their positions. They could turn the rebellious energy of the colonists against Britain and its officials. This discovery was

not a plan or a simple decision. Instead, it took shape over a few years as the elites faced one crisis after another.



## **Anger and Violence**

IN 1763 THE BRITISH DEFEATED FRANCE in the Seven Years' War (called the French and Indian War in the colonies). France no longer threatened Britain's colonies in North America. But after the war, the British government tightened its control over those colonies, because they were valuable. Britain needed taxes from the colonists to help pay for the war. Also, trade with the colonies brought large profits to Great Britain every year.

But unemployment and poverty were rising in the colonies. Poor people wandered the streets, begging. At the same time, the richest colonists controlled fortunes worth millions in today's dollars. There were many very poor people but only a few very rich people.

Hardship made some colonists restless, even rebellious. In the countryside, where most people lived, poor and rich came into conflict. From the 1740s to the 1760s, tenants rioted and rebelled against landlords in New York and New Jersey.

White farmers in North Carolina formed a "Regulator Movement" in 1766. The Regulators called themselves poor peasants and laborers. They claimed to stand for the common people against rich, powerful officials who governed unfairly. The Regulators were angry about high taxes. They also resented lawyers and merchants taking poor people to court over debts. When Regulators organized to keep taxes from being collected, the governor used military force against them. In May 1771, an army with cannon defeated several thousand Regulators. Six Regulators were hanged.

In Boston, the lower classes started using town meetings to air their complaints. One governor of Massachusetts wrote that Boston's poor people and common folk came regularly to the

meetings. There were so many of them that they outvoted the “Gentlemen” and other Bostonians close to the ruling circle.

Something important was happening in Boston. It started with men like James Otis and Samuel Adams. They belonged to the local elite, but they were not part of the ruling group that was tied to Britain. Otis, Adams, and other local leaders recognized the feelings of the poorer Bostonians. Through powerful speeches and written articles, they stirred up those angry feelings and called the lower classes into action.

The Boston mob showed what it could do after the British government passed the Stamp Act of 1765. This law taxed the colonists to pay for the Seven Years’ War. Colonists had already suffered during the war, and now they didn’t want to pay for it. Crowds destroyed the homes of a rich merchant and of Thomas Hutchinson, one of those who ruled in the name of Britain. They smashed Hutchinson’s house with axes, drank his wine, and carried off his furniture and other belongings.

Officials reported to Britain that the destruction of Hutchinson’s property was part of a plan to attack other rich people. It was to be “a War of Plunder, of general levelling and taking away the Distinction of rich and poor.” But such outbursts worried local leaders like James Otis. They wanted the class hatred of the poor to be turned only against the rich who served the British—not against themselves.

A group of Boston merchants, shipowners, and master craftsmen formed a political group called the Loyal Nine. They set up a march to protest the Stamp Act. The Loyal Nine belonged to the upper and middle classes, but they encouraged lower-class people such as shipworkers, apprentices, and craftsmen to join their protest (but they did not include blacks). Two or three thousand people demonstrated outside a local official’s home. But after the “gentlemen” who planned and organized the protest left, the crowd went further and destroyed some of the official’s property. Later, the leaders said that the violence was wrong. They turned against the crowd and cut all ties with the rioters.

The next time the British government tried to tax the colonies, the colonial elites called for more demonstrations. But this time leaders like Samuel Adams and James Otis insisted, “No Mobs—No Confusions—No Tumults.” (A “tumult” was a riot.) They wanted the people to show their anger against Britain, but they also wanted “Persons and Properties” to remain safe.

## **Revolution in the Air**

AS TIME WENT ON, FEELING AGAINST the British grew stronger. After 1768, two thousand British troops were stationed in Boston. At a time when jobs were scarce, these soldiers began taking the jobs of working people. On March 5, 1770, conflict between local workers and British soldiers broke into a tumult called the Boston Massacre.

Soldiers fired their guns at a crowd of demonstrators. They killed a mixed-race worker named Crispus Attucks, and then others. Colonist John Adams, a lawyer, defended the eight British soldiers at their trial. Adams called the crowd at the massacre “a motley rabble” and described it in scornful terms. Two of the soldiers were discharged from the army. The other six were found not guilty, which made some Bostonians even angrier. Britain took its troops out of the city, hoping things would quiet down.

But the colonists’ anger did not go away. Political and social leaders in Boston formed a Committee of Correspondence to plan actions against the British. One of their actions was the Boston Tea Party of 1773. To protest the tax on tea, a group of colonists seized the cargo from a British ship and dumped it into Boston Harbor.

Britain’s answer to the Boston Tea Party was a set of new, stricter laws. The British closed the port in Boston, broke up the colonial government, and sent in troops. Colonists held mass meetings of protest.

What about the other colonies? In Virginia, the educated elite wanted to turn the anger of the lower orders against Britain. They found a way in the speechmaking talents of Patrick Henry. In inspiring words, Henry told the colonists

why they should be angry at Britain. At the same time, he avoided stirring up class conflict among the colonists. His words fed a feeling of patriotism, a growing resistance against Britain.

Other inspiring words helped turn the resistance movement toward independence. In 1776 Thomas Paine published a pamphlet, or short book, called *Common Sense*. It boldly made the first claim that the colonies should be free of British control.

Paine argued that sticking to Great Britain would do the colonists no good and that separating from Britain would do them no harm. He reminded his readers of all the wars that Britain had dragged them into—and of the lives and money those wars had cost them. Finally he made a thundering statement:

Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, ‘TIS TIME TO PART.’

*Common Sense* was the most popular pamphlet in colonial America. But it caused some alarm in elite colonists like John Adams. These elites supported the patriot cause of independence from Britain, but they didn’t want to go too far toward democracy. Rule by the people had to be kept within limits, Adams thought, because the masses made hasty, foolish decisions.

Thomas Paine did not belong to the elite class. He came to America as a poor emigrant from England. But once the Revolution started, he separated himself from the crowd actions of the lower classes. Still, Paine’s words in *Common Sense* became part of the myth of the Revolution—that it was the movement of a united people.

(left) Title page of Thomas Paine’s revolutionary pamphlet “Common Sense,” 1776.

COMMON SENSE:  
ADDRESSED TO THE  
INHABITANTS  
OF  
A M E R I C A.

On the following interesting  
S U B J E C T S.

- I. Of the Origin and Design of Government in general,  
with concise Remarks on the English Constitution.
- II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession.
- III. Thoughts on the present State of American Affairs.
- IV. Of the present Ability of America, with some miscellaneous  
Reflections.

Written by an ENGLISHMAN.

*By Thomas Paine*

---

Man knows no Master save creating HEAVEN;  
Or those whom choice and common good ordain.

THOMSON.

---

PHILADELPHIA, Printed  
And Sold by R. BELL, in Third-Street, 1776.

## **Whose Independence?**

EVERY HARSH ACT OF BRITISH CONTROL made the colonists more rebellious. By 1774 they had set up the Continental Congress. It was an illegal political body, but it was also a step toward independent government.

The first military clash between colonists and British troops came at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. Afterward, the Continental Congress decided on separation from Great Britain. Thomas Jefferson wrote a Declaration of Independence. The Congress adopted it on July 2, 1776, and announced it two days later.

Throughout the colonies, there was already a strong feeling for independence. The opening words of the Declaration gave shape to that feeling:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government... .

Next, the Declaration listed the unjust or harmful acts of the British king. It described his rule as tyranny, or oppression—that is, rule by force, without fairness. The Declaration called for the people to control their government. It reminded them of the burdens and difficulties Britain had caused them. This language was well suited to bring various groups of colonists

together. It could even make those who were at odds with each other turn against Britain.

But the Declaration did not include Indians, enslaved blacks, or women. As for the Indians, just twenty years earlier the government of Massachusetts had called them “rebels, enemies and traitors” and offered cash for each Indian scalp.

Black slaves were a problem for the author of the Declaration. At first, Jefferson’s Declaration blamed the king for sending slaves to America, and also for not letting the colonies limit the slave trade. Maybe this statement grew out of moral feelings against slavery. Maybe it came from the fear of slave revolts. But the Continental Congress removed it from the Declaration of Independence because slaveholders in the colonies disagreed among themselves about whether or not to end slavery. So Jefferson’s gesture toward the enslaved black was left out of the Revolution’s statement of freedom.

“All men are created equal,” claimed the Declaration. Jefferson probably didn’t use the word “men” on purpose, to leave out women. He just didn’t think of including them. Women were invisible in politics. They had no political rights and no claim to equality.

By its own language, the Declaration of Independence limited life, liberty, and happiness to white males. But the makers and signers of the Declaration were like other people of their time. Their ideas grew out of the ordinary thinking of their age. We don’t study the Declaration of Independence so that we can point out its moral failures. We study it so we can see how the Declaration drew certain groups of Americans into action while it ignored others. In our time, inspiring words are still used to get large numbers of people to support a cause, even while the same language covers up serious conflicts among people or leaves out whole parts of the human race.

The reality behind the Declaration of Independence was that a rising class of important people in the colonies needed enough support to defeat England. At the same time, they didn’t want to disturb too much of the settled order of wealth



and power. In fact, the makers of independence were part of that settled order. More than two-thirds of the men who signed the Declaration had served as colonial officials under the British.

When the fiery Declaration of Independence was read from Boston's town hall, the reader was Thomas Crafts. He was one of the Loyal Nine, who had opposed militant action against the British. Four days later, Boston's Committee of Correspondence ordered the town's men to show up to be drafted into a new patriot army. But the rich, it turned out, could avoid the draft. They could pay someone else to serve in the army for them. The poor had no choice but to serve. This led to rioting and shouting: "Tyranny is tyranny, let it come from whom it may."

# CHAPTER FIVE

## **REVOLUTIONS**

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR WAS FOUGHT between Great Britain and its colonies in North America. But other rebellions took place during the revolutionary years. Soldiers turned against their officers, Indians sided with their old enemies, and poor farmers in Massachusetts took up arms against their brand-new American government.

## War and Mutiny

JOHN ADAMS, THE MASSACHUSETTS lawyer who defended the soldiers who had fired in the Boston Massacre, believed that only a third of the people in the colonies supported the Revolution. A modern historian named John Shy, who studied the Revolutionary Army, thinks that only about a fifth of the total population actively turned against Britain.

*(left)* Blacksmith being served a tax writ, 1786.



But just about every white male in the colonies had a gun and could shoot. The leaders of the Revolution distrusted mobs of the poor, but they needed their help if they were going to beat Britain. How could the Revolutionary leaders win more people to their cause? One way to win support was by offering the rewards of military service. Men from the lower classes joined the army hoping to rise in rank, gain some money, and move up in society.

Historian Shy found that poor people “did much of the actual fighting and suffering” in the Revolution. Not all of them were volunteers. Just a few years earlier, colonists had

rioted against the British practice of impressment, seizing men and forcing them to serve in the navy. But by 1779, in the middle of the Revolution, the American navy was doing the same thing.

The Americans lost the first battles of the war, at Bunker Hill and Brooklyn Heights. They won small battles at Trenton and Princeton, then a big battle at Saratoga, New York, in 1777. While George Washington's frozen army hung on at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Benjamin Franklin was in France, looking for help. Britain had defeated France in the Seven Years' War, and the French were hungry for revenge. They joined the war on the American side.

The war moved to the South. The British won victory after victory, until British and American armies met at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781. With the help of a large French army, and with the French navy blocking the British from getting more men or supplies, the Americans won this final victory, and the war was over.

Throughout the war, rich and poor Americans came into conflict. Rich men led the Continental Congress, which governed the colonies. These men were connected to each other by marriage and family relationships, and also by business ties. They looked out for each other.

The Congress voted that army officers who stuck to the end of the war would receive half their military pay for the rest of their lives. This ignored the common soldiers, who were not getting paid.

On New Year's Day, 1781, some Pennsylvania troops mutinied. They killed one of their captains, wounded others, and marched with cannon toward Philadelphia and the Congress. George Washington, commander of the army, made peace with the rebellious soldiers.

Soon afterward, when soldiers mutinied in New Jersey, Washington took a sterner stand. He ordered two of the ringleaders shot by firing squads made up of their friends, who

cried as they pulled the triggers. It was “an example,” Washington said.

Soldiers’ mutinies were rare. Rebellion was easier for people who were not in the army. Civil disorder flared up in half a dozen colonies, even while the colonies were fighting against Great Britain.

In the southern colonies, the lower classes did not want to join the Revolution. They thought the war had nothing to do with them. Whether or not the colonies won independence from Britain, they would still be ruled by a political elite.

Nathanael Greene, Washington’s general in the South, wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson telling how his troops dealt with some Loyalists, colonists who had remained loyal to Britain. Greene wrote that “upwards of one hundred were killed and most of the rest cut to pieces.” He added that this action had a “happy effect” on people in the area who had held back from supporting the Revolution.

Tenant farmers became a threatening force during the war. These farmers paid rent to landlords who owned huge estates. When they stopped paying rent, the Revolutionary government feared a rebellion. So the government seized Loyalists’ land and sold some of it to tenants. These new landholders no longer had to pay rent—but now they had to pay the banks that had loaned them money to buy land.

Much property taken from Loyalists went to enrich the Revolutionary leaders and their friends. The Revolution gave these colonial elites a chance to seize power and property from those who had been loyal to Britain. The war also gave some benefits to small landholders. But for most poor white working people and tenant farmers, the Revolution brought little change.

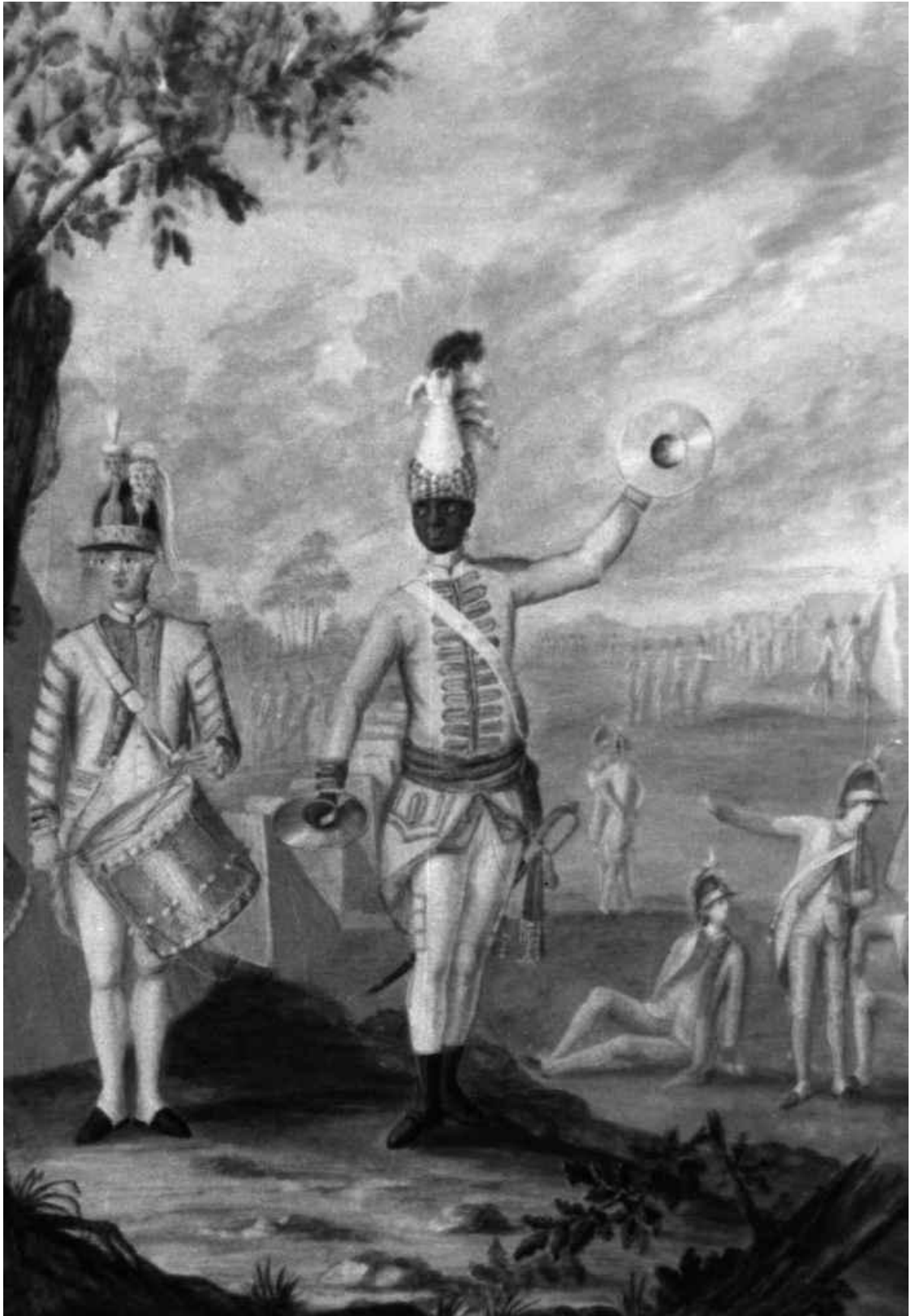
## **Indians and Blacks in the Revolution**

IN THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR BETWEEN Britain and France, many of the Indians of North America had fought on the side of France. The French were traders who did not try to take over Indian lands, but the British wanted living space.

After the Seven Years' War, the French ignored their Indian allies and gave French territory in the Ohio Valley to the British. There the Indians attacked British forts, and the British fought back. One of their weapons was biological warfare. They gave the Indians blankets from a hospital, hoping to spread the deadly disease smallpox among the tribes.

But the British could not destroy the will of the Indians, so in 1763 they made peace. Britain declared that the land west of the Appalachian Mountains was Indian territory. Colonists were forbidden to settle there. This angered the colonists and gave them another reason to turn against Britain. It also explains why many Indians fought on the side of the British, their old enemies, during the Revolution. After the war, with the British out of the way, the Americans could begin pushing the Indians off their lands, killing them if they fought back.

*(left)* Revolutionary War soldiers, 1780.



Black slaves also fought in the Revolution—on both sides. Blacks seeking freedom offered to fight in the Revolutionary Army. George Washington turned them down. In the end, though, about five



thousand blacks served with the Revolutionaries. Thousands more fought for the British.

The Revolution encouraged some blacks to demand more from white society. In 1780, for example, seven blacks in Massachusetts asked the legislature for the right to vote. They pointed out that Americans had just been fighting a war for the right to govern themselves, and they reminded lawmakers that many “of our Colour” had fought for the Revolutionary cause.

After the war, slavery ended in the northern states—but slowly. In 1810 about thirty thousand people remained enslaved in the North. By 1840 there were still a thousand slaves. In the lower South, slavery expanded with the growth of rice and cotton plantations.

## Farmers in Revolt

BY THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION, certain patterns were already set in the American colonies. Indians had no place in the new society. Blacks were not treated as the equals of whites. The rich and powerful ran things. After the war, the Revolutionary leaders could make those patterns into the law of the new nation.

A group of leaders met in Philadelphia in 1787 to write the United States Constitution. Hanging over them was the fear of revolt. The year before, a farmers' uprising called Shays' Rebellion had turned western Massachusetts into a battleground.

Massachusetts had passed state laws that raised the property qualifications for voting. People couldn't vote if they didn't own enough land. In addition, only the very wealthy could hold state office. Farmers who could not pay their debts were angry that the state lawmakers did nothing to help them.

A countryman named Plough Jogger spoke up at a meeting to say how the government had mistreated him—and what he wanted to do about it:

I have been greatly abused, have been obliged to do more than my part in the war; have been loaded with class rates [taxes], town rates, province rates, Continental rates and all rates ... been pulled and hauled by sheriffs, constables and [tax] collectors, and had my cattle sold for less than they were worth... . The great men are going to get all we have and I think it is time for us to rise up and put a stop to it, and have no more courts, nor sheriffs, nor collectors nor lawyers... .

Some of the discontented farmers were veterans of the Continental Army. They had fought for the Revolutionary cause, but when the war ended, they did not receive their pay in cash. They were in debt, but they had no money. When the courts met to take away their cattle and land, the farmers protested. Large, armed groups marched to courthouse steps, keeping the courts from carrying out their actions. Farmers' mobs also broke into jails to free imprisoned debtors.

The political leaders of Massachusetts became alarmed. Samuel Adams, who had acted against the British government in Boston, now insisted that people stay within the law. People in the town of Greenwich answered back. They said: You in Boston have the money. We don't. And didn't you act illegally yourselves in the Revolution?

Daniel Shays was a poor farm hand when the Revolution broke out. He joined the army and fought at Lexington, Bunker Hill, and Saratoga. In 1780 he quit the army because he had not been paid. Back home, he found himself in court because he couldn't pay his debts. He saw the same thing happening to others. One sick woman, unable to pay, had her bed taken from under her.

When the Massachusetts Supreme Court charged leaders of the farmers' rebellion with crimes, Shays organized seven hundred armed farmers, mostly veterans. As they marched toward Springfield and the court, others joined them. The judges cut the court session short.

The farmers kept up the pressure, but winter snows began to interfere with their trips to the courthouses. When Shays marched a thousand men toward Boston, a storm forced them back, and one man froze to death. Then Boston merchants raised money to pay for an army to take the field against the farmers. The rebels were outnumbered and on the run. Shays fled to Vermont. Some of his followers surrendered. A few died in battle. Others carried out desperate acts of violence against authority, such as burning barns or killing a general's horse.

Captured rebels were put on trial. Although Shays was later pardoned, a dozen were sentenced to die. Sam Adams claimed that there was a difference between rebelling against a king, as he had done, and the farmers' uprising. Treason against a king might be pardoned, Adams said, "but the man who dares rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death."

Thomas Jefferson felt differently. He thought that such uprisings were healthy for society. Jefferson wrote, "I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing... . It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government."

But the political and economic leaders of the new nation did not share Jefferson's view. They feared that revolt would spread, and that the poor would demand a share of the rich people's property. These fears were in the minds of those who wrote the U.S. Constitution.

## **The Constitution—Business as Usual**

MANY AMERICANS HAVE SEEN THE Constitution as a work of genius, put together by wise men who created a legal framework for democracy and equality. But there is another way to look at it.

In 1935, historian Charles Beard put forward a view of the Constitution that angered some people. Beard studied the fifty-five men who met to write the Constitution. He found that most were wealthy. Half of them were moneylenders, and many were lawyers. They had reasons to create a strong federal, or central, government that could protect the economic system that they understood and were part of. Beard also noted that no women, blacks, indentured servants, or people without property helped write the Constitution. So the Constitution did not reflect the interests of those groups.

The Constitution said that each state's lawmakers would elect the senators who would represent that state in the federal Congress. The state lawmakers would also choose electors, who would elect the president. The president would name the members of the Supreme Court. The only part of the government that the people would elect directly was the U.S. House of Representatives. Even in those elections, each state set its own voting requirements. Women, Indians, and slaves could not vote. In almost every state, men without property could not vote, either.

The problem of democracy went deeper than the Constitution's limits on voting. It lay in the division of society into rich and poor. Some people had great wealth and power. They owned and controlled the land, the money, the

newspapers, the churches, and the educational system. How could voting cut into such power?

The time came for the states to ratify the Constitution—to accept it and make it the new national law. Some people wanted the Constitution and its strong central government. Others felt that the thirteen states should remain independent or loosely connected.

In New York, debate over ratification was intense. Supporters of the Constitution were called Federalists. One of the leading Federalists was Alexander Hamilton, who believed that society was naturally divided into classes. In Hamilton's view, the upper class should run things, because true democracy was dangerous:

All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people... . The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct permanent share in the government... . Nothing but a permanent body can check the imprudence of democracy... .

The Federalists published papers explaining the advantages of a central government. One advantage, said James Madison, was that riots, revolts, and civil disorder would be less likely to arise in “a large nation ranging over thirteen states” than in a single state. People's desire for such “wicked” things as “an equal division of property” might overcome a state government, but not a federal one.

About a third of the people in the United States owned some property. Most of them owned only small amounts of land. Still, one-third of the population felt they had something that a strong, stable government could protect. In addition, crafts workers in the cities wanted a central government that could protect their jobs by taxing imported goods. This was a larger base of support for government than anywhere else in the world at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Constitution served the interests of a wealthy elite. But it also did enough for small property owners and middle-income workers and farmers to win their support. The Constitution became even more acceptable after Congress passed the amendments, or changes, known as the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights seemed to make the new government a protector of people's liberties. It guaranteed the right to speak, to publish, to worship, to be tried fairly, and so on. It also guaranteed the right of habeas corpus, which means that no one can be imprisoned without a hearing. But the First Amendment shows how quickly liberty could be taken away.

The First Amendment says that Congress will make no law that limits freedom of speech or of the press. But in 1798, just seven years after the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution, Congress passed a law that clearly limited the right of free speech.

That law was the Sedition Act, which made it a crime to say anything "false, scandalous and malicious" against the federal government. Criticism that might turn the people against the government was forbidden. The Sedition Act seemed to violate the First Amendment, but ten people went to prison for saying things against the government.

Congress also passed new taxes to pay for war bonds. Although society's richest people owned most of the bonds, ordinary people had to pay the taxes. One law, the Whiskey Tax, hurt small farmers who made whiskey to sell. When farmers took up arms against the tax in 1794, the government sent troops to put down the rebellion. Even in the early years of the Constitution, some parts of it, such as the First Amendment, could be treated lightly. Other parts, such as the power to tax, were powerfully enforced.

Were the Founding Fathers wise and just men trying to create a balance of power? They did not want a balance, except one that kept things as they were. They certainly did not want an equal balance between slave and master, rich and poor, or Indian and white. Half the people in the country were not even considered by the Founding Fathers. These "invisible" citizens were the women of early America.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE WOMEN OF EARLY AMERICA

SOME HISTORY BOOKS MAKE IT LOOK as if half the people in America never even existed. History books talk about explorers, merchants, politicians, and generals—but these are all men. In early America, women couldn't hold any of those jobs. They were invisible to history.

For the European people who settled the Americas, law and social customs said clearly that women were not the equals of men. Fathers and husbands had the right to control women. Women were oppressed, which means that they could not control their own lives. The oppression of women would be hard to uproot.



## How Women Were Treated

THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS IN THE AMERICAN colonies were made up almost completely of men. Women were brought in to be wives, childbearers, and companions. In 1619, a ship arrived at the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, carrying ninety women. They had agreed to come to the colony to marry men they had never met, in exchange for the cost of their passage across the Atlantic Ocean.

Many women and teenaged girls came to the colonies as indentured servants. Their lives were not very different from slaves' lives, except that their service had an end. While they were servants, they had to obey their masters and mistresses, and they sometimes experienced sexual abuse. Female servants "were poorly paid and often treated rudely and harshly," according to a history called *America's Working Women*.

Black women suffered doubly. They were oppressed as blacks *and* as women. A slave trader reported on the terrible conditions they endured crossing the Atlantic:

I saw pregnant women giving birth to babies while chained to corpses which our drunken overseers had not removed... . On board the ship was a young negro woman chained to the deck, who had lost her senses soon after she was purchased and taken on board.

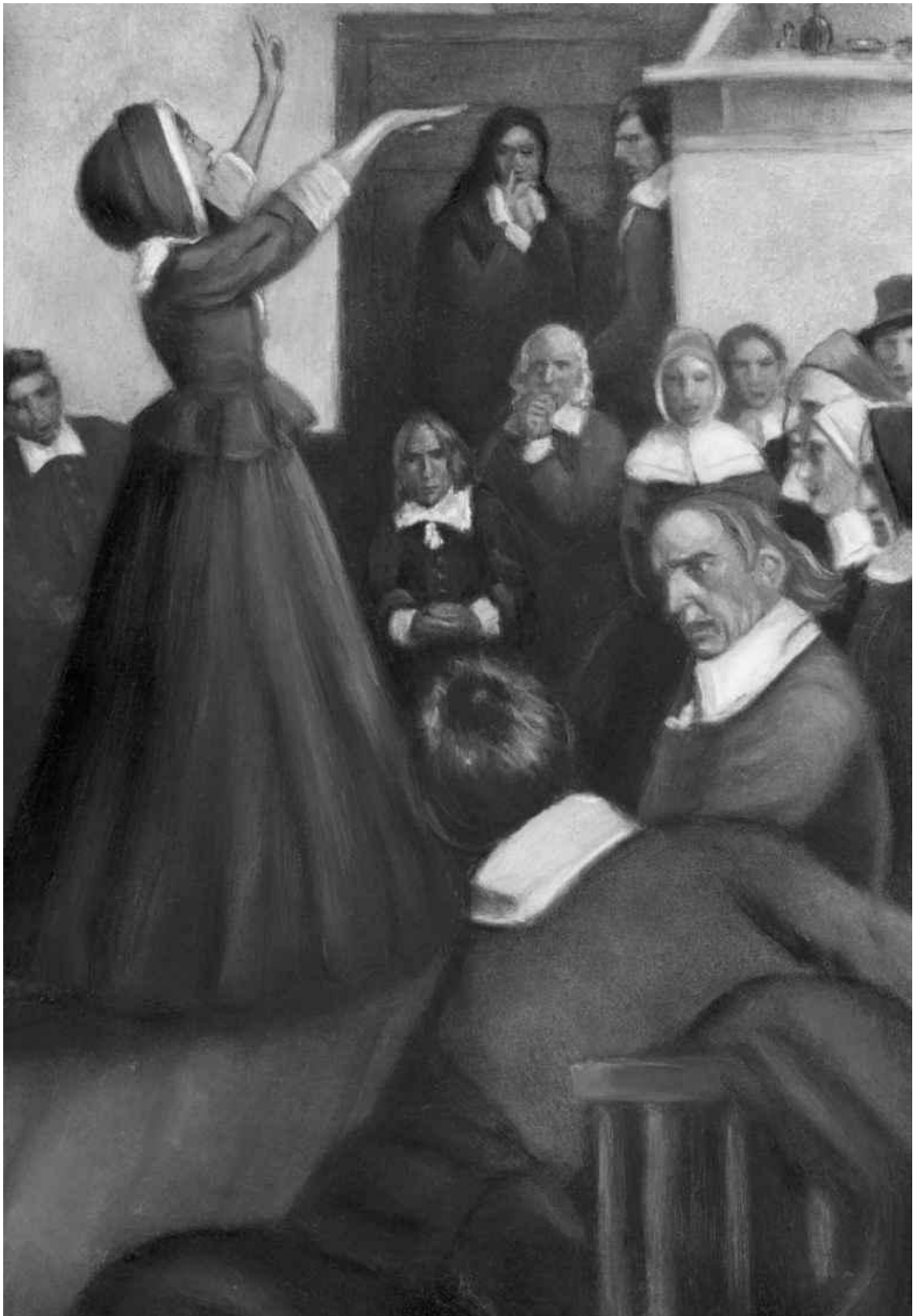
Even free white women faced hardships. Giving birth and raising children were difficult in a time when medical care was poor and disease was common. Eighteen married women came to America on the *Mayflower*, the Pilgrims' ship. Three were pregnant. Less than a year later, only four of the women were alive. Childbirth and sickness had taken the others.

Laws and ideas carried over from England were another burden for women. Under the law, when a woman married, her husband became her master. Husbands had the legal right to control their

wives in every way. A man could physically punish his wife (although he could not kill her or give her a permanent injury). Her property and possessions became his. If she earned money, that was his, too.

*Advice to a Daughter* was a bestselling English book. It claimed that “Inequality in Sexes” was a fact of life. Many Americans read this book, which said that men were meant to be the lawgivers and that they had more power of reason—more thinking ability—than did women. But in spite of powerful messages that women were inferior to men, some women found ways to show their independence.

(left) “Anne Hutchinson Preaches,” 20th Century.



## **Independent Women**

ANNE HUTCHINSON WAS A RELIGIOUS woman in the early years of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. She stood up to the church fathers by insisting that she could read the Bible and figure out its meaning for herself, and so could other ordinary people.

Hutchinson went to trial twice. The church put her on trial for heresy, the crime of holding beliefs that were not approved by the religious leaders. The government of the colony put her on trial for standing up against its authority.

Hutchinson was ordered to leave the Massachusetts Bay Colony. When she left for Rhode Island in 1638, thirty-five other families followed her. Later Hutchinson went to Long Island. Indians there thought that she was one of the enemies who had cheated them out of their land, and they killed her and her family. Another woman in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Mary Dyer, was hanged because of her “rebellious” beliefs and behavior.

Few women took part in public affairs such as politics. But during the American Revolution, the pressures of war brought some women into public life. Women formed patriotic groups, carried out anti-British actions, and wrote articles for independence.

In 1777, women even had their own version of the Boston Tea Party. Abigail Adams described it in a letter to her husband John Adams, a lawyer and one of the Founding Fathers. When a rich merchant refused to sell coffee at a fair price, a band of women marched to his warehouse. After one of the women threw the merchant into a cart, he handed over his keys, and the women helped themselves to the coffee and

left. Abigail Adams wrote, “A large concourse of men stood amazed, silent spectators of the whole transaction.”

On the frontier, when skill and labor were in short supply, some women had the chance to prove that they were equal to men. Before and after the Revolution, they worked at important jobs, such as publishing newspapers, running shops, and managing inns. Other women—and children, too—worked in their homes, spinning thread for local plants to weave into cloth.

When industry started to be an important part of the economy, women were pulled out of the home and into factory jobs. But at the same time, there was pressure for women to stay at home where they could be more easily controlled.

What some claimed to be the perfect woman began to appear in sermons and books. Her job was to keep the home cheerful, religious, and patriotic. She was supposed to be her family’s nurse, cook, cleaner, seamstress, teacher, and flower arranger. She shouldn’t read too much—and certain books must be avoided. Above all, a woman’s role was to meet her husband’s needs.

## **Women at Work**

WHILE PREACHERS AND WRITERS WERE PRAISING proper “womanly” behavior, women started pushing against the limits that society set on what they could do. They couldn’t vote or own property. They couldn’t go to college or study law and medicine. If they worked, their wages would be much less than men’s, for the same jobs.



Striking Women, 1860.



But women *were* going to work. In the nineteenth century many of them found jobs in textile, or clothmaking factories, where they operated new industrial machines such as power looms. Out of every ten textile workers, eight or nine were women. Most of those women were between fifteen and thirty years old.



These working women led some of the first industrial strikes. They walked off their jobs in the textile mills to demand higher wages and better working conditions. The earliest known strike of female factory workers came in 1824, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Ten years later, when a young woman was fired from her job in Lowell, Massachusetts, other young women left their looms in protest. One of them climbed onto the town pump and made a fiery speech about the rights of women.

Catherine Beecher was in Lowell at that time. Beecher later became a reformer who worked to improve education for women. She wrote about the mill system that inspired the women's revolt:

I was there in mid-winter, and every morning I was awakened at five, by the bells calling to labor... . Then half an hour only allowed for dinner, from which the time for going and returning was deducted. Then back to the mills, to work till seven o'clock... . [I]t must be remembered that all the hours of labor are spent in rooms where oil lamps, together with from 40 to 80 persons, are exhausting the healthful principle of the air ... and where the air is loaded with particles of cotton thrown from thousands of cards, spindles, and looms.

## **Rights for Women?**

THE TEXTILE MILLS WEREN'T THE ONLY places where people were talking about women's rights. The place of women in society was beginning, slowly, to change.

Middle-class women couldn't go to college, but they could become teachers in primary schools. They began to take over that profession. As teachers, they read more and communicated more.

Girls and women started to knock more loudly on the doors of higher education.

In 1821, Emma Willard founded the first school specially for girls. Twenty-eight years later, Elizabeth Blackwell became a pioneer when she managed to earn a medical degree.

Women also began to write for magazines, and they even started some women's magazines. Between 1780 and 1840, the percentage of American women who could read and write doubled. Women joined religious organizations and became health reformers. Some of the most powerful of them joined the antislavery movement.

Through all of these activities, women gained experience in organizing, giving speeches, and taking action for causes. Soon they would use that experience in a new cause: women's rights.

Lucy Stone was a lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society. She was a firm speaker who wasn't afraid to voice ideas that were unpopular. During her speeches Stone was soaked with cold water, struck by a thrown book, and attacked by mobs. Still, she started lecturing about women's rights in 1847, in a church in Massachusetts where her brother was a minister.

Angelina Grimké was another antislavery activist who turned to the cause of women's rights. She believed that if the United States could "lift up millions of slaves of both sexes from the dust, and turn them into men and women," then it could also take "millions of females from their knees and set them on their feet."

All over the country, women did an enormous amount of work for the antislavery societies. This helped inspire a movement for women's equality that raced alongside the movement against slavery. An important starting point for the women's rights movement was a World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England, in 1840.

The organizers of the meeting almost kept women from attending it at all, because it wasn't "proper" for women to go to public conventions. In the end, women were allowed to attend—but only if they sat behind a curtain. American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who supported the rights of women as well as the end of slavery, sat with them.

Being treated as second-class members of the antislavery movement angered women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. They were antislavery activists who became deeply concerned with the roles and rights of women in society.

Stanton and Mott organized the first women's rights convention in history. It took place in Stanton's hometown of Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Three hundred women came to the meeting. So did some men who were in favor of women's rights.

At the end of the convention, a hundred people signed a Declaration of Principles that used some of the language of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence—but changed to include women. The Declaration of Principles said that "all men and women are created equal." It described the unfair treatment of women and outlined steps toward greater equality.

But true equality would mean more than giving rights to women. It would mean treating black women equally with white women. In 1851, at a meeting in support of women's rights, an elderly black woman sat listening to some male ministers. They were doing most of the talking. Then she rose to her feet. Tall and thin, wearing a gray dress and a white turban, this former slave named Sojourner Truth told about her life as a black woman:

That man over there says that woman needs to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches... . Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles or gives me any best place. And a'nt I a woman?

Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And a'nt I a woman?

I would work as much and eat as much as a man, when I could get it, and bear the lash as well. And a'nt I a woman?

I have born thirteen children and seen em most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And a'nt I a woman?

As other women held conventions around the country, the movement gained strength. Women were fighting back against those who wanted to keep them in "a woman's place." They took part in all sorts of movements—not just for women's rights but for prison reform, health care, and the end of slavery.

In the middle of all these movements, a new urge seized the United States. It was the urge to expand, to become larger. Americans wanted more land. They would take it from the Indians, as they had done from the start.

IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, ALMOST every important Indian nation fought on the side of the British. They knew that if the British lost the war, there would be no holding

back the Americans. Settlers would pour across the Appalachian Mountains into Indian territory.

The Indians were right. By the time Thomas Jefferson became president in 1800, about 700,000 white settlers were already living west of the mountains. Americans were eager to fill up the land between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. They wanted to cut forests, plant cotton and grain, and build roads, cities, and canals. In time, they came to think that their nation should reach all the way across North America to the Pacific Ocean.

The Indians stood in the way of these plans. So the United States government came up with the idea of “Indian removal” to clear the land so that whites could use it. This “removal” cost a great deal in lives and suffering. It is hard for historians to measure this huge loss.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

**AS LONG AS GRASS GROWS OR WATER RUNS**

## **From Indian Fighter to President**

AFTER THE REVOLUTION, RICH AMERICANS bought up huge pieces of land on the frontier. They planned to sell it later for great profits. This was called speculating. Some of the speculators were Founding Fathers, including George Washington and Patrick Henry.

Another land speculator was also a merchant, slave trader, soldier, and future president. He was Andrew Jackson, the harshest enemy of the Indians in early American history.

Jackson became famous during the War of 1812. Textbooks usually say that the war was a struggle against Britain for America's survival, but it was more than that. It was also a war for territory. It allowed the United States to expand into Canada, into Florida (which was owned by Spain), and into Indian territory.

Jackson's first Indian wars were against the Creeks, who lived in most of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. In the midst of the war, Creek warriors massacred 250 whites at an Alabama fort. Jackson's troops took revenge by burning down a Creek village, killing women and children as well as men. A year later, in 1814, Jackson became a national hero when he fought the Battle of Horseshoe Bend against a thousand Creeks. He killed eight hundred of them, with few deaths on his side. Jackson owed his victory to Cherokees who fought on his side because the government had promised to treat them well if they joined the war. Jackson's white troops failed in an attack on the Creeks, but the Cherokees swam a river, came up behind the Creeks, and won the battle for Jackson.

When the war ended, Jackson and his friends started buying up Creek lands. Jackson got himself put in charge of treaties. In 1814 he wrote a treaty that took away half the land of the Creek nation.

This treaty started something new and important. The Indians had never thought that land belonged to individual owners. As a Shawnee chieftain named Tecumseh said, "The land belongs to all, for the use of each... ." But Jackson's treaty gave the Indians individual ownership of land and broke up their shared landholdings.

The treaty turned Indian against Indian, bribing some of them with land and leaving others out.

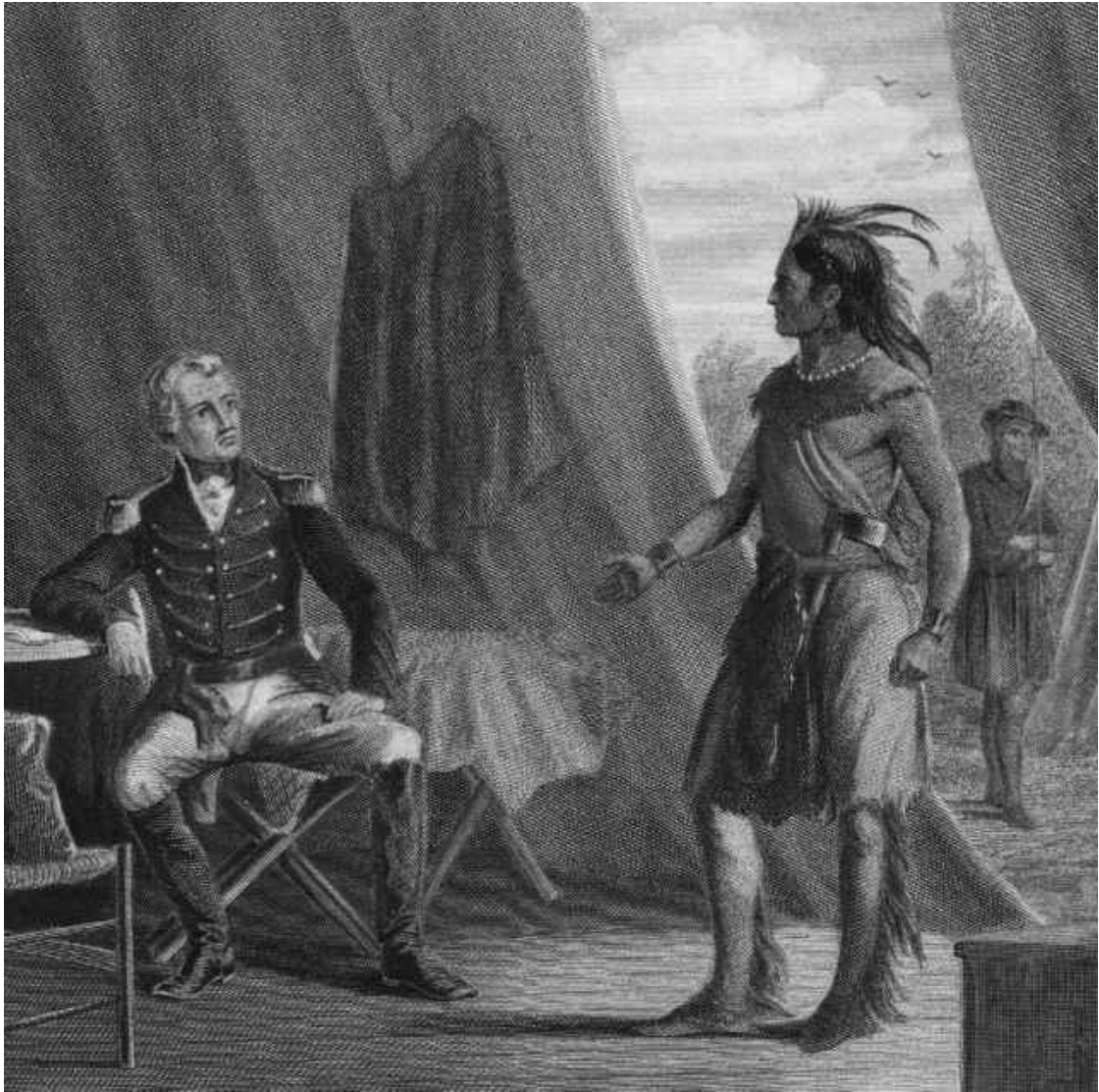
Over the next ten years, Jackson was involved in many more treaties with the southern Indians. Through force, bribery, and tricks, he helped whites take over three-fourths of Alabama and Florida, a third of Tennessee, and parts of four other states. These land grabs became the basis for the cotton kingdom of the South, where slaves labored on white-owned plantations.

Soon white settlement reached the edge of Spanish Florida, home of the Seminole Indians and some escaped black slaves. Jackson claimed that the United States had to control Florida in order to defend itself—just what modern nations often say before starting a war of conquest in some other country's territory.

Jackson started making raids into Florida, burning Seminole villages and seizing Spanish forts. As a result of these attacks, Spain agreed to sell Florida to the United States. Jackson became governor of the new territory. He also gave his friends and relatives advice on buying slaves and speculating in land.

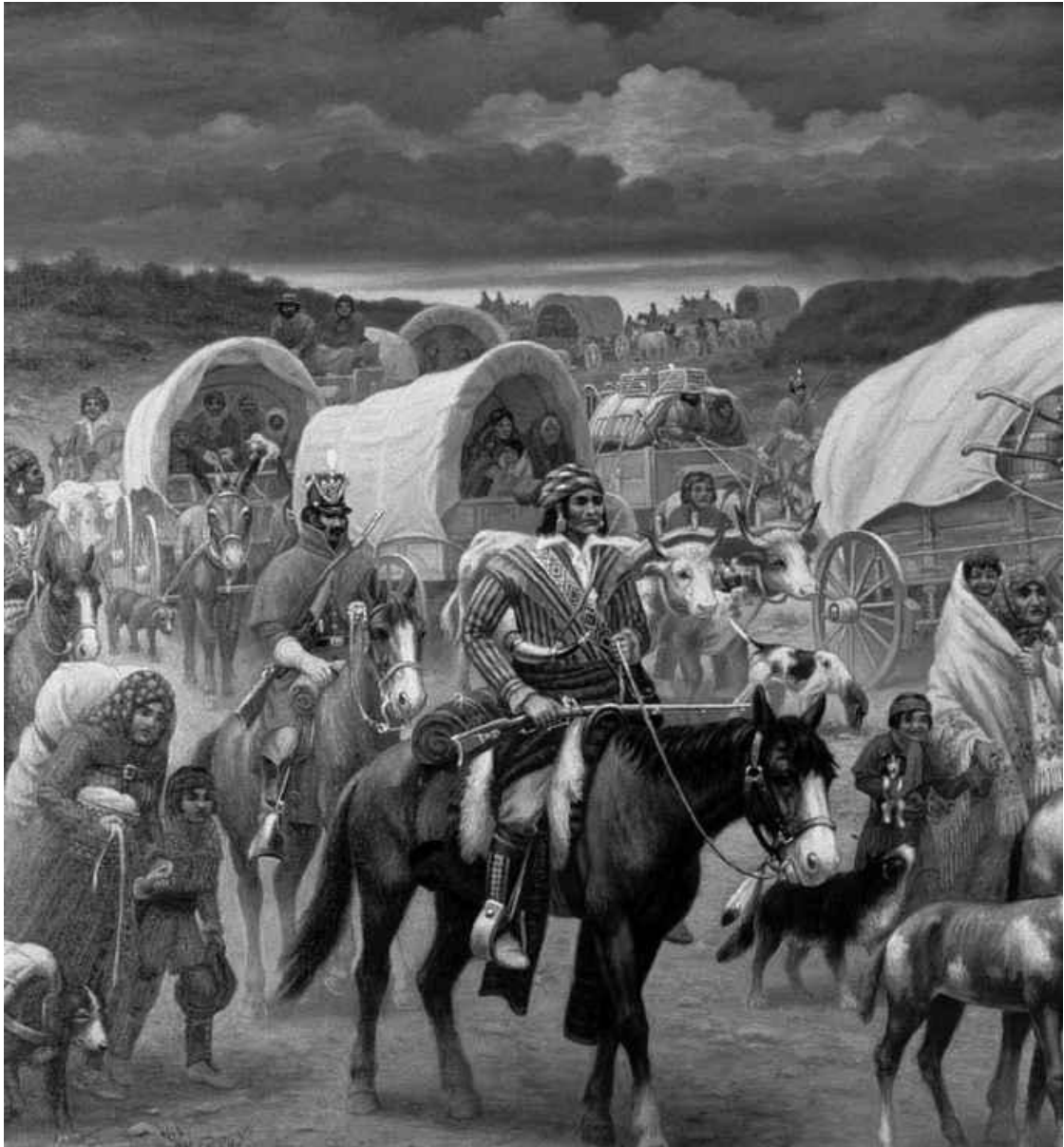
*(left)* Jackson & Weatherford, 19th century.



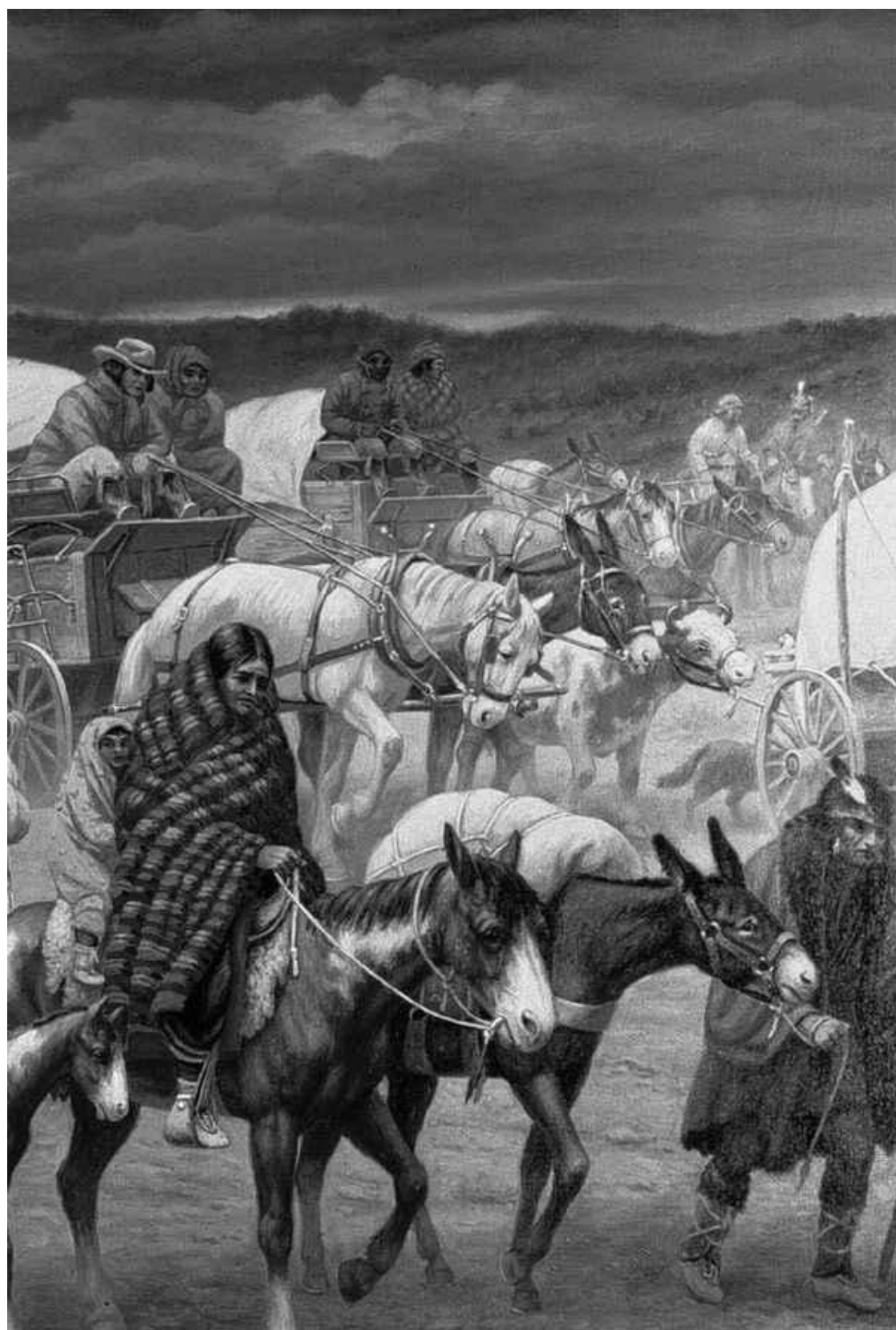


In 1828, Americans elected Jackson president. Under Jackson and Martin Van Buren, the man he chose to follow him as president, the U.S. government removed seventy thousand Indians from their homelands east of the Mississippi River. A government official named Lewis Cass explained the removal by saying that “savages” could not live “in contact with a civilized community.”

Cass had taken millions of acres from the Indians when he was governor of the Michigan Territory. In 1825, at a treaty meeting with the Shawnees and Cherokees, he had promised them that if they moved west, across the Mississippi River, “The United States will never ask for your land there.” The land beyond the river, Cass declared, would remain Indian territory forever.



The Trail of Tears, 1838.



## **The Terrible Choice**

FOR A FEW YEARS IN THE 1820s, BEFORE Jackson became president, the southern Indians and whites had settled down. They lived in peace, often close to one another. White men visited Indian communities, and Indians were guests in white homes. Frontier figures like Davy Crockett and Sam Houston came out of this setting. Both of them—unlike Andrew Jackson—were friends of the Indians.

Pressure to remove the Indians from the land came from politicians, business interests, land speculators, and population growth that demanded new railroads and cities. These pressures might push poor white frontiersmen into the first violent clashes with the Indians, but the frontiersmen who were neighbors of the Indians did not lead the movement to get rid of them.

Just *how* did the government remove the Indians from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and other places? The answer lies in the difference between federal (or national) laws and state laws. Federal laws, like treaties between the federal government and the tribes, put the U.S. Congress in charge of Indian affairs. But the states passed their own laws that gave away Indian land to whites.

As president, Jackson was supposed to enforce the federal laws. Instead he ignored them, letting the states do what they wanted. This put the Indians in a terrible position. They would not be “forced” to go west. But if they stayed, they would have to obey state laws, which destroyed their rights. They would suffer endless trouble from whites who wanted their land.

On the other hand, if the Indians agreed to leave, the federal government would help them with money and give them land west of the Mississippi. Jackson told the Choctaws and

Cherokees that if they left their old lands peacefully, they would be given new lands, and the government would leave them alone. He sent them this message:

Say to the chiefs and warriors that I am their friend ... but they must, by removing from the limits of the States of Mississippi and Alabama and by being settled on the lands I offer them, put it in my power to be such—There, beyond the limits of any State, in possession of land of their own, which they shall possess as long as Grass grows or water runs. I am and will protect them and be their friend and father.

Now the pressures began on the tribes, one by one. The Choctaws didn't want to leave, but after fifty members of the tribe were bribed with money and land, they signed a treaty that gave up Choctaw lands east of the Mississippi. In return, the Choctaws were supposed to get financial help for the journey west. Thirteen thousand of them began that journey in late 1831, migrating to a land and climate completely different from everything they knew. The army was supposed to organize their trip, but it failed miserably. Indians died by the thousands from hunger, cold, and disease. The seven thousand Choctaws still in Mississippi refused to follow them. Some of their descendants still live in Mississippi.

After Jackson was re-elected to the presidency in 1832, he speeded up what was called the Indian removal. By this time, Alabama's twenty-two thousand Creeks lived on a tiny portion of their former territory. They agreed to leave in exchange for the federal government's promise that some of that land would be given to individual Creeks, who could either sell it or stay on it with federal protection.

The government immediately broke its promise. It didn't protect Creeks from whites who swarmed onto their land. An army officer wrote that the Creeks were "brow beat, and cowed, and imposed upon, and depressed with the feeling that they have no adequate protection in the United States... ."

Speckled Snake was a man of the Creek nation. During his long life, he saw the white American government cheat and mistreat the Indians over and over again. When he was more than a hundred years old, he told a story about how the white man had betrayed the Indian:

Brothers! I have listened to many talks from our great white father. When he first came over the wide waters, he was but a little man ... very little. His legs were cramped by sitting long in his big boat, and he begged for a little land to light his fire on... . But when the white man had warmed himself before the Indians' fire and filled himself with their hominy, he became very large. With a step he bestrode the mountains, and his feet covered the plains and the valleys. His hand grasped the eastern and the western sea, and his head rested on the moon. Then he became our Great Father. He loved his red children, and he said, "Get a little further, lest I tread on thee."

After some desperate Creeks attacked white settlers, the government claimed that this "war" had broken the treaty. Now the U.S. Army could use force to make the Creeks go west. Soldiers invaded Creek communities and marched the people westward in groups of two or three thousand. The government was supposed to supply things like food, shelter, and blankets to the marchers, but again it failed. Starvation and sickness killed hundreds as the Creeks were carried across the Mississippi on old, rotting boats. More than three hundred Indians died when one boat sank.

## **Fighting for Freedom**

IN DECEMBER 1835 A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL ordered the Seminoles of Florida to gather at a meeting place to begin their journey west. No one showed up. The Seminoles had decided to fight.

They started making surprise attacks on white settlements along the coast, striking quickly from hideouts in the interior. They murdered white families, captured slaves, and destroyed property. General Winfield Scott led U.S. troops into Florida to fight the Seminoles, but they found no one. Two-thirds of Scott's officers resigned from the army, worn out by mud, swamps, heat, and disease.

The war lasted eight years and cost \$20 million and 1,500 American lives. But the Seminoles were a tiny force fighting a huge nation that had great resources. Finally, in the 1840s, they got tired. The Seminoles asked for a truce but were arrested. Their leader, Osceola, died in prison, and the war died out.

In Georgia, the Cherokees were fighting back in their own way, without violence. They tried to fit into the white man's world by becoming farmers, blacksmiths, and carpenters. They set up a governing council and welcomed Christianity and white missionaries. After their chief, Sequoyah, invented a written form of their language, they printed a newspaper in both English and Cherokee. But although the Cherokees were taking up the ways of white society, the whites still wanted their land.

Georgia passed laws that stripped the Cherokees of their land and outlawed the tribal government, meetings, and newspaper. Any Indian who encouraged others to stay in the homeland could go to prison. White missionaries who said that the Cherokees should be allowed to remain on their land also received punishments such as four years at hard labor in prison.

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## Writing Cherokee

PHILLIP HOOSE, IN HIS WONDERFUL BOOK *We Were There, Too!*, argues that it wasn't Cherokee chief Sequoyah alone, but also his six-year-old daughter Anyokah, who brought a written language to the Cherokee people and found a way to prove its importance to the tribal elders.

First, father and daughter tried to make a list of every sound in the spoken language of the Cherokee people and to draw a picture for each sound. Then they made a list of all the spoken syllables. They came up with about two hundred, but were able to narrow down the list to eighty-six distinct syllables, each with its own written expression.

By now Anyokah was ten years old. It was 1821. Sequoyah and Anyokah rode to the Cherokee Tribal Council to present their idea. At first, the Council laughed because they couldn't see how writing down sayings could



be useful in any way. So, Sequoyah proposed a test. He would leave the room. The Tribal Council could tell Anyokah anything they wanted, and she would write it down. Then Sequoyah would come back, look at the marks on the deerskin, and tell them what they had said. It worked again and again. “The first few times the elders called it luck,” Hoose writes, “but gradually doubt gave way to excitement. Soon thousands of Cherokees wanted to learn how to read. The syllabic alphabet led to the preservation of the Cherokee language and then to the first American Indian newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix. Before long schoolchildren were learning to read in both Cherokee and English. The letters were called talking leaves.”

Source: Hoose, Phillip. *We Were There, Too!: Young People in U.S. History*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2001.

Once again, the federal government arranged a removal treaty with a few Cherokees, who signed it behind the backs of most of the tribe. And once again the government sent the army to enforce the treaty. Seventeen thousand Cherokees were rounded up and crowded into stockades. On October 1, 1838, the first group set out on what came to be called the Trail of Tears.

Four thousand Cherokees died of hunger, thirst, sickness, or exposure in the stockades or on the brutal march westward. But in December 1838, President Martin Van Buren told Congress about “the entire removal of the Cherokee Nation of Indians to their new homes west of the Mississippi.” Congress’s decision to remove the Cherokees, Van Buren said, had had “the happiest effects.”

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## WAR WITH MEXICO

“I HAVE SCARCELY SLEPT A WINK,” Ethan Allen Hitchcock wrote in his diary on June 30, 1845. Hitchcock was a colonel in the U.S. Army, stationed in Louisiana. His commander, General Zachary Taylor, had just been ordered to lead his men to the banks of the Rio Grande, a river on the southwest side of Texas. Hitchcock knew that this would bring trouble.

“Violence leads to violence,” he wrote, “and if this movement of ours does not lead to others and to bloodshed, I am much mistaken.” Hitchcock was not mistaken. Taylor’s march to the Rio Grande started a bloody war—a war that gave Americans a huge new western territory, taken from a defeated Mexico.

## Manifest Destiny

EVEN THOUGHT THOMAS JEFFERSON's Louisiana Purchase of 1803 had doubled the size of the United States, the country was a lot smaller in 1845 than it is today. Its western border was the Rocky Mountains. To the southwest was Mexico, which had won its independence from Spain in 1821.

Mexico was originally much larger than it is now. It included Texas, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, California, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Then, with help from the United States, Texas broke away from Mexico in 1836, calling itself the "Lone Star Republic." In 1845, the U.S. Congress added Texas to the United States.

By that time, many Americans believed that their country should expand, or grow larger, toward the west. One of these expansionists was President James Polk. He told his secretary that one of his main goals as president was to get California into the United States. A newspaper called the *Washington Union* supported Polk's idea with these words: "The road to California will be open to us. Who will stay [meaning halt, or stop] the march of our western people?"

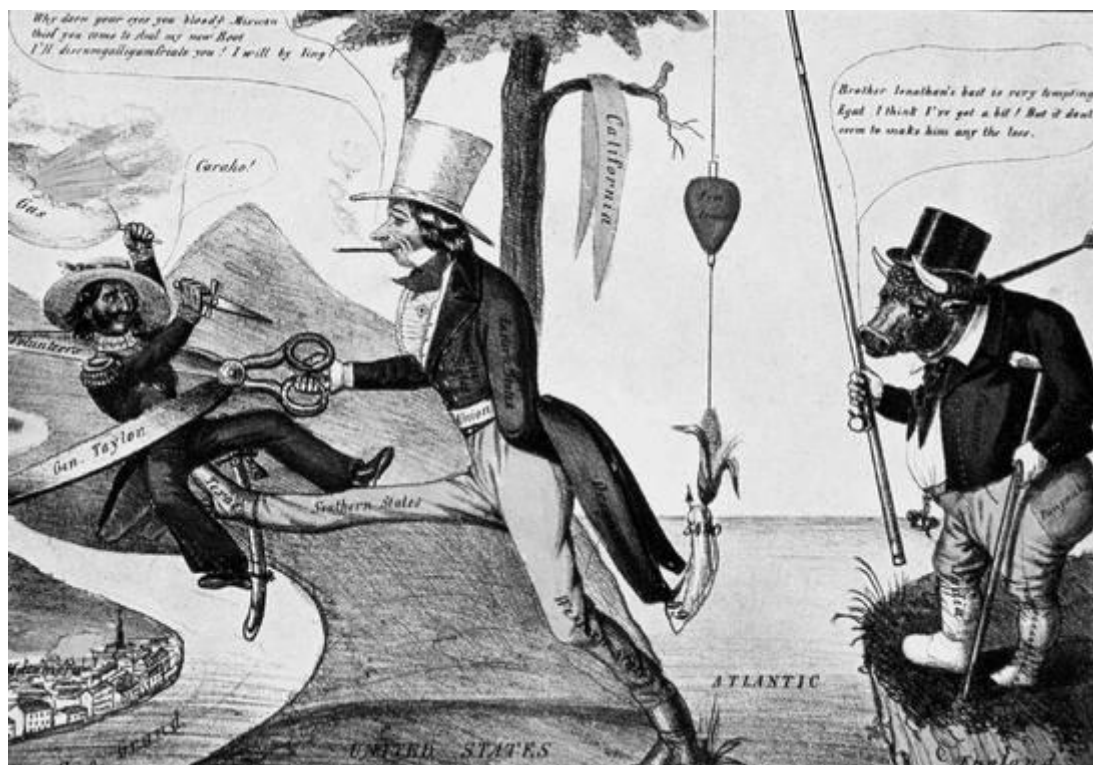
Soon afterward, in the summer of 1845, another newspaper editor, John O'Sullivan, wrote, "Our manifest destiny [is] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." O'Sullivan was saying that Americans should be free to occupy all of North America, because God meant for them to. His words "manifest destiny"—a fate or purpose that was clear to see—became a slogan for expansionists.

For a long time, Mexico and the United States had agreed that the border between them was the Nueces River, about 150

miles north of the Rio Grande. But during Texas's fight for independence from Mexico, Texans had captured the Mexican general Santa Anna and forced him to say that the border was the Rio Grande. This made Texas bigger. Afterward, President Polk promised the Texans that he would consider the Rio Grande the border, even though Mexicans still lived in the area between the two rivers.

So when Polk ordered General Taylor to move troops to the Rio Grande, he was challenging Mexico. Sending the army into territory inhabited by Mexicans was sure to cause conflict. But when the soldiers reached the Rio Grande, they found empty villages. The local Mexicans had fled across the river to the city of Matamoros. Taylor started building a fort with cannons pointed at Matamoros.

(left) Mexican War Cartoon, 1846.



By the spring of 1846, the army was ready to start the war that Polk wanted. All it needed was an excuse. Then one of Taylor's officers disappeared while riding along the river. He

was later found with a smashed skull. Everyone figured that Mexican guerrilla fighters had crossed the river and killed him. The very next day, Mexicans attacked a patrol, killing sixteen soldiers. Taylor sent a message to Polk that the fighting had begun.

The Mexicans had fired the first shot. But they had done what the American government wanted. Colonel Ethan Allan Hitchcock knew that. Even before the attacks, he wrote in his diary:

I have said from the first that the United States are the aggressors... . We have not one particle of right to be here... . It looks as if the government sent a small force on purpose to bring on a war, so as to have a pretext [reason] for taking California and as much of this country as it chooses... . My heart is not in this business ... but, as a military man, I am bound to execute orders.

## **For and Against the War**

PRESIDENT POLK HAD BEEN URGING Congress to declare war even before he received word of the attacks from General Taylor. As soon as Taylor's messages arrived, Polk told Congress, "Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil... ."

Congress declared war. Only a handful of congressmen voted against it. They were strongly opposed to slavery, and they believed that the war was an excuse to gain territory that would be made into new slave states. Joshua Giddings of Ohio called it "an aggressive, unholy, and unjust war."

Many Americans cheered the news of war. They held rallies to support it in cities across the land, and they volunteered for the army by the thousands. The poet Walt Whitman wrote proudly in a newspaper that "America knows how to crush, as well as how to expand!"

Another poet, James Russell Lowell, took a different view of the war. He wrote a poem saying that the only reason for it was "to lug new slave states in." Massachusetts writer Henry David Thoreau criticized the war. He was also jailed for refusing to pay a poll tax, but he only spent one night there. He was released because his friends paid the tax for him, without his permission.

Two years later, Thoreau wrote an essay called "Civil Disobedience." It talks about the difference between law and justice, and about how soldiers sometimes know that the orders they are following are wrong:

Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. A common and natural result of undue respect for law is, that you may see a file of soldiers ... marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed... .

Many members and leaders of churches spoke out against the war. As the months passed, other voices joined in. Newspaperman Horace Greeley wrote in the *New York Tribune* that the war was unnecessary. Antislavery activist Frederick Douglass, who had once been a slave, called the war “disgraceful” and “cruel.” The antislavery paper *The Liberator* went even further, wishing “the most triumphant success” to the Mexicans.

(left) Texas Rangers, 1842.



What about ordinary people? It’s impossible to know how many of them supported the war, but there is evidence that some workers were against it. Many Irish workers showed up at an antiwar meeting in New York City. They called the war a plot by slave owners. The New England Workingmen’s Association also spoke out against the war.

The flood of army volunteers slowed down after the first rush of excitement. To get enough soldiers, the army was forced to pay for new recruits. It also offered land to volunteers if they served for the entire war.

Some of the men who did enlist were shocked by the bloody horror of war. After a battle outside Matamoros, for example, fifty Americans and five hundred Mexicans lay dead or wounded on the field. The screaming and groaning from both sides was terrible to hear. Other new soldiers sickened and died in miserable, unhealthy conditions, such as the crowded ships that carried them to the front. And still others deserted to the Mexican side for better pay.



## **The Conquest of California**

A SEPARATE WAR WENT ON IN CALIFORNIA. Soldiers moved into California by land and sea. One of them was a young naval officer who imagined what would happen when the United States owned this western territory. "Population will flow into the fertile regions of California," he wrote in his diary.

Americans in California raided Mexican settlements that had been founded by the Spanish. They stole horses. And they declared the territory independent, calling it the "Bear Flag Republic."

An American naval officer gathered chiefs from the Indian tribes in California and told them:

The country you inhabit no longer belongs to Mexico, but to a mighty nation whose territory extends from the great ocean you have all seen or heard of [the Pacific], to another great ocean thousands of miles toward the rising sun [the Atlantic]... . Our armies are now in Mexico, and will soon conquer the whole country. But you have nothing to fear from us, if you do what is right ... if you are faithful to your new rulers... . We shall watch over you and give you true liberty; but beware of sedition [treason], lawlessness, and all other crimes, for the army which shields can assuredly punish, and it will reach you in your most retired hiding places.

Meanwhile, American soldiers advanced westward through New Mexico. They captured the city of Santa Fe without a battle. A few months later, though, Mexicans in the nearby city of Taos revolted against American rule. The revolt was stopped, but some of the rebels escaped to the hills. They

carried out occasional attacks, killing Americans, until the U.S. Army killed 150 of them in a final battle.

In Los Angeles, too, there was a revolt. Mexicans forced the American troops to surrender in September 1846. The U.S. military did not recapture Los Angeles until December, after a bloody battle.

## **Victory over Mexico**

BY THIS TIME GENERAL TAYLOR HAD MOVED across the Rio Grande and taken Matamoros. His army was marching southward through Mexico.

The men were becoming hard to control. Soldiers got drunk and looted Mexican villages. Cases of rape increased.

At the same time, sickness and heat were killing the soldiers. A thousand of them died on the march. At Monterrey they fought another battle with the Mexicans. So many men and horses died in agony that one U.S. officer said that the ground was slippery with foam and blood.

The U.S. Navy fired shells on the Mexican coastal city of Veracruz, killing many civilians. One shell hit a post office. Another hit a hospital. After two days and 1300 shells, the city surrendered. An American reporter wrote, "The Mexicans variously estimate their losses at from 500 to 1000 killed and wounded, but all agree that the loss among the soldiery is comparatively small and the destruction among the women and children is very great."

General Winfield Scott now moved an army of ten thousand soldiers into the heart of Mexico. A series of battles that had little point killed thousands of people on both sides. Finally, the armies of the two nations met to fight for control of Mexico City. A Mexican merchant wrote to a friend about the American conquest of the city, "In some cases whole blocks were destroyed and a great number of men, women and children killed and wounded."

In spite of their victories, the American soldiers were getting tired of marching, fighting, and risking death.

Desertions were a problem. In March 1847 the army reported over a thousand deserters. More than nine thousand deserted over the course of the war.

In northern Mexico, volunteers from Virginia, Mississippi, and North Carolina rebelled against their commander. He killed one of the mutineers, but two of his lieutenants refused to help him stop the mutiny. The army later forgave the rebellious soldiers in order to keep the peace.

The glory of victory was for the president and the generals, not for the deserters, the dead, and the wounded. Many men felt anger toward those who had led them into deadly conditions and battles where so many had died. One group, the Massachusetts Volunteers, had started with 630 men. They came home with three hundred dead, mostly from disease. At a celebration dinner on their return, the men hissed at their commander.

Some volunteers who made it home ended up with little to show for their soldiering. The government had promised them land, but speculators immediately showed up to buy the land from them. Many of the men, desperate for money, sold their 160 acres for less than fifty dollars.

When Mexico surrendered, some Americans thought that the United States should take the whole country. Instead, it took just half.

In February 1848 Mexico and the United States signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In the treaty, Mexico gave the entire Southwest and California to the United States. It also agreed that the border between the two nations was the Rio Grande. The United States, in turn, agreed to pay Mexico \$15 million. This let people say that the nation's new territories were bought, not seized by force. One American newspaper claimed that "we take nothing by conquest... . Thank God."

## CHAPTER NINE

### **SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION**

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED slavery. As the economy of the South grew, so did the number of enslaved people. Between 1790 and 1860, the amount of cotton that the South produced rose from one thousand tons a year to 1 million tons a year. In that same period, the number of slaves rose from half a million to 4 million. Slavery was so well established that only something enormous—something like a full-scale war—could end it.

## Slavery in the American South

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT MADE it illegal to import new slaves in 1808. Previously, many northern port cities had benefited from the slave trade. From 1808 on, slavery in the U.S. was supposed to be limited to Africans who were already enslaved and their children. But the demand for new slaves was great, so the law was often broken. In his book *From Slavery to Freedom*, historian John Hope Franklin estimates that a quarter of a million slaves were illegally imported before the Civil War began in 1861.

How can slavery be described? Maybe only people who have experienced it can say what it was like. People like John Little, a former slave, who wrote:

They say that slaves are happy, because they laugh, and are merry. I myself and three or four others, have received two hundred lashes in the day, and had our feet in fetters; yet, at night, we would sing and dance, and make others laugh at the rattling of our chains. Happy men we must have been! We did it to keep down trouble, and to keep our hearts from being completely broken: that is as true as the gospel!

Desperation drove some slaves to revolt. Probably the largest revolt in the United States took place near New Orleans in 1811. It involved four to five hundred slaves. The U.S. Army and militia forces attacked them and ended their revolt. In 1822 a free black man named Denmark Vesey tried to launch a revolt in South Carolina, but authorities found out about it and hanged him, along with thirty-four others. Then, in Virginia, in the summer of 1831, a slave named Nat Turner led about seventy others on a rampage from plantation to plantation. They murdered at least fifty-five men, women, and children. As their ammunition ran out, they were captured. Turner and others were hanged.

Other slaves ran away. Each year during the 1850s, about a thousand slaves escaped into the North, Canada, and Mexico. One famous escaped slave, Harriet Tubman, made nineteen dangerous

trips back into slave territory, helping slaves escape on the Underground Railroad. She told them, “You’ll be free or die.”

Whites sometimes helped slaves, and that worried the authorities. Some feared that poor whites would encourage slave revolts—not just because they felt sorry for the slaves, but because they hated the rich planters and wanted to see their property destroyed. Fanny Kemble, a famous actress who married a Southern planter, wrote in her journal that black slaves and white Irish workers were kept apart when they were building a canal in Georgia. The Irish were a “warm-hearted, generous people,” she said, who “might actually take to sympathy with the slaves.”

*(left)* Underground Railroad, 1893.



## The Abolition Movement

SOME WHITE AMERICANS DID “TAKE TO sympathy with the slaves.” They were called abolitionists because they called for the abolition, or end, of slavery. They bravely wrote newspaper articles and made speeches against slavery. They also helped many slaves escape on the Underground Railroad, a network of people who worked together to conduct runaway slaves to free territory, providing “safe houses” for them along the way. But black abolitionists were the backbone of the movement against slavery.

The North had about 130,000 free blacks in 1830. Twenty years later there were 200,000. Many of them worked to free those who remained enslaved in the South. One of them was David Walker, son of a slave, who sold old clothes in Boston. He wrote a pamphlet called *Walker's Appeal*, urging blacks to fight for their freedom:

Let our enemies go on with their butcheries, and at once fill up their cup. Never make an attempt to gain our freedom or natural right ... until you can see your way clear—when that hour arrives and you move, be not afraid or dismayed... . God has been pleased to give us two eyes, two hands, two feet and some sense in our heads as well as [the whites]. They have no more right to hold us in slavery than we have to hold them... . “Every dog must have its day,” the American’s is coming to its end.

The *Appeal* made southern slaveholders so angry that one of them offered a reward for David Walker’s murder or capture. One summer day in 1830 Walker was found dead near the doorway of his shop.



Frederick Douglass was born into slavery, learned to read and write, and escaped into the North at the age of twenty-one. He became the most famous black man of his time, speaking and writing against slavery. Douglass called “the idea of being a free man some day” a dream that “all the powers of slavery” could not destroy.

After the war with Mexico, the U.S. government brought California and other new territories into the Union as nonslave states. In return, the government had to do something for the slave states, so it passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. This law made it easy for slave owners to recapture runaway slaves even after they had fled to the Northern states. It made it easy for slave owners to just pick up free blacks they claimed had run away.

Northern abolitionists, black and white, fought against the act. The year after Congress passed the law, a runaway slave named Jerry was captured and put on trial. A crowd broke into the Syracuse, New York courthouse to set him free. On July 4, 1852, Frederick Douglass gave a speech that placed the shame of slavery on the whole nation, not just the South. He said:

Fellow Citizens: What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim... There is not a nation of the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of these United States at this very hour.

The government of the United States did not strongly enforce the law that ended the slave trade, yet it enforced runaway slave laws. The government under President Andrew Jackson worked with the South to keep abolitionist newspapers from being mailed in Southern states. The nation’s Supreme Court declared in 1857 that the slave Dred Scott, even though he had lived for some time in free territories, could not sue for his freedom because he was property, not a person.

That government would never accept an end to slavery through rebellion. Slavery would end only under conditions controlled by whites, and only when it suited the business and political needs of the North. Abraham Lincoln was the perfect figure to bring about the end of slavery.

Lincoln understood the needs of business. He shared the political ambition of the new Republican political party. Finally, he spoke the language of doing good, and he could argue with passion against slavery on moral grounds. At the same time, he acted with caution in the world of politics, and he feared that abolition would cause new problems. Although Lincoln believed that slavery was unjust, he could not see blacks as the equals of whites. The best thing to do, he thought, would be to free the slaves and send them back to Africa.

## **The Civil War and Slavery**

THE NORTHERN ELITE, THE BANKERS AND businessmen who directed the economy of the North, wanted their kind of economy to expand. They wanted free land, free labor, and taxes that favored manufacturers. Lincoln shared their ideas. Southern planters, on the other hand, felt that Lincoln and the Republicans would make their own pleasant, prosperous way of life impossible. So when Lincoln was elected president in the fall of 1860, seven Southern states seceded, or left the Union. When Lincoln tried to take back the federal base at Fort Sumter, North Carolina, by force, four more states seceded. The South formed the Confederacy, and the Civil War was on.

Abolitionists urged Lincoln to emancipate, or free, the slaves in the South. But Lincoln made it clear that he had not gone to war to free the slaves—his goal was to bring the South back into the Union. In a letter to abolitionist and newspaperman Horace Greeley, Lincoln wrote:

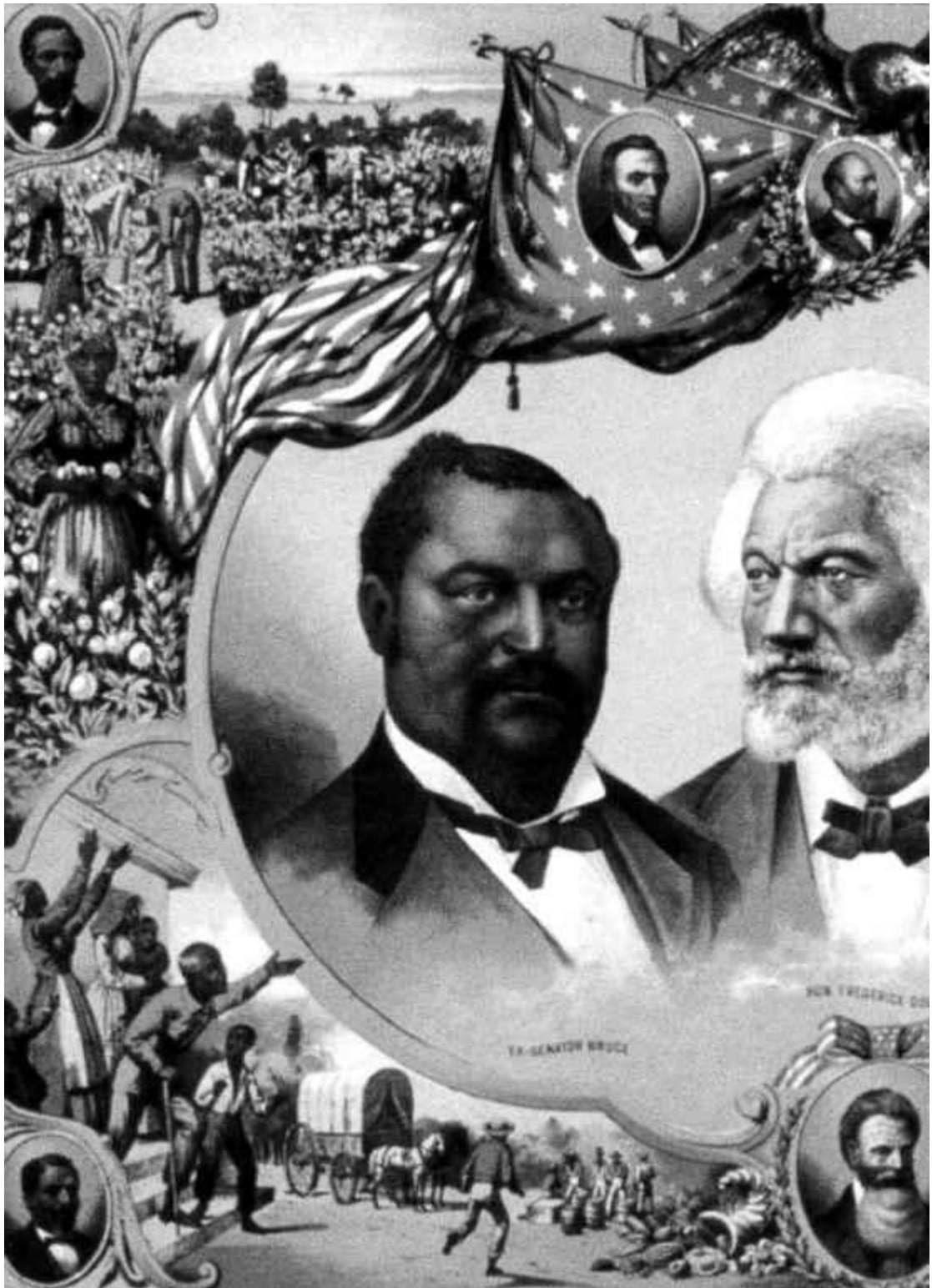
My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and it is not either to save or destroy Slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it.

But as the war grew more bitter and the North grew more desperate to win, Lincoln began to act against slavery. In September 1862 he gave the southern states four months to stop fighting, warning that he would free their slaves if they did not come over to the Union side. The fighting continued. On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in areas that were fighting against

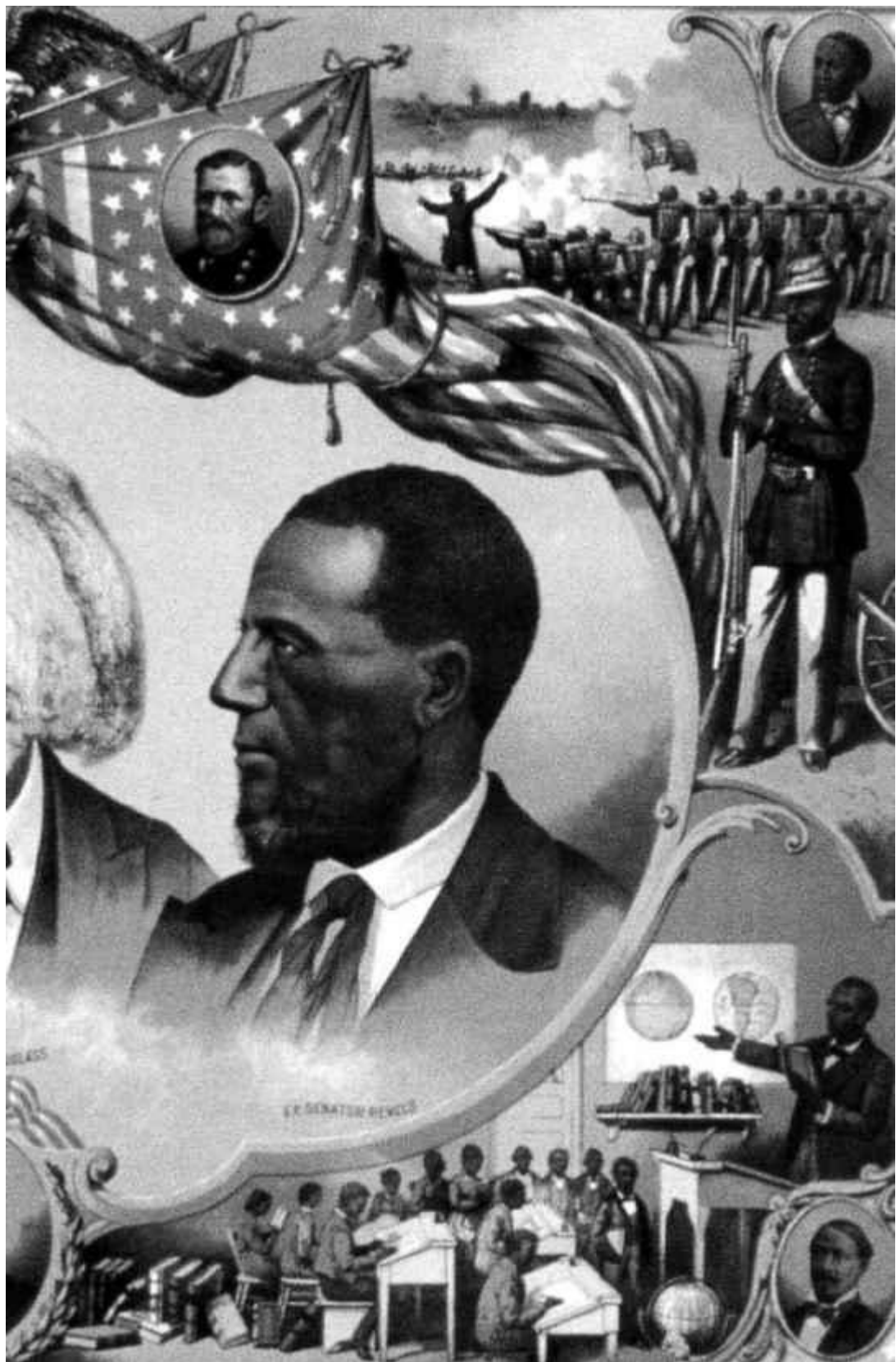
the Union. Two years later, before the war ended, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which ended all slavery in the United States.

These changes affected African Americans in many ways—not all of them good. Once blacks were free to enter the Union army, the war started to look more like a war for black liberation. The more whites suffered, the more they resented blacks. Angriest of all were poor whites who were drafted into the army. Rich people could buy their way out of the draft for \$300. That was a huge amount of money. At that time the average skilled worker (such as a carpenter) earned about two dollars a day. Unskilled workers earned less. Draft riots in 1863 in northern cities turned whites against their black neighbors in a wave of violence and death. And the treatment of black soldiers in the army and the northern cities showed that freedom might not bring acceptance or true equality. Black soldiers were given the dirtiest and hardest work, and when they were off duty whites sometimes attacked them on the street.

The Civil War was one of the bloodiest conflicts in history up to that time. It killed 600,000 people, out of a population of 30 million. By late 1864, the South was losing. Soldiers were in short supply—but there were 4 million slaves. When some Confederate leaders spoke of enlisting slaves, one shocked general wrote, “If slaves will make good soldiers, our whole theory of slavery is wrong.” In March 1865 Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, signed a law that let blacks serve in the army of the South. But before the law had any effect, the war ended. The South had lost, and its slaves learned that they were now free.



Heroes of the Colored Race Lithograph, 1881.



## **Emancipation without Freedom**

MANY YEARS AFTER THE WAR, AFRICAN Americans who had been young children in 1865 recalled the tears, songs, and hope of the slaves who heard the news of their emancipation. It was a time of great celebration, the dawn of a new day. Yet many blacks knew that their status after the war would not depend on a law that made them free. It would depend on whether they owned land or had to work for others.

Much land in the South either went back to the families of the Confederates or was bought by Northern land speculators and investors. Blacks could not afford to buy much of it. Ex-slave Thomas Hall said, "Lincoln got the praise for freeing us, but did he do it?" Hall felt that Lincoln gave the slaves freedom but did not give them the chance to support themselves. Freed slaves still had to depend on whites for work and survival.

The United States government had fought the slave states not to end slavery but to keep control of the enormous territory, resources, and market of the South. Still, the end of slavery brought new forces into politics. One force was white people concerned with racial equality. Some of them came south to teach or work for the Freedmen's Bureau that the government set up to aid the freed slaves. A second force was blacks determined to make their freedom mean something. A third force was the Republican Party. It wanted to keep control over the national government, and the votes of Southern blacks could help. Northern businessmen felt that Republican plans benefited them, so they went along for a while.

These forces created a brief period after the Civil War when blacks in the South voted, elected blacks to state legislatures

and to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and introduced free, racially mixed education. New laws protected them from discrimination and guaranteed them equal rights. But because blacks depended on whites for work, their votes could be bought or taken away by the threat of violence.

White violence against blacks erupted in the South almost as soon as the war ended. In May 1866, in Memphis, Tennessee, whites killed forty-six African Americans and burned more than a hundred homes, churches, and schools. The violence continued as white terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan organized raids, beatings, and racial murders called lynchings. The state of Kentucky alone had 116 acts of racial violence between 1867 and 1871.

As white violence rose in the 1870s, the national government grew less committed to protecting blacks. Northern politicians started to weigh the advantage of black voters' support against the advantage of a stable South controlled by whites who would accept Republican leadership. It was only a matter of time before blacks would be returned to a condition that was not far from slavery, even if they remained legally free.

In 1877 the Republican Party leaders made a deal to get their candidate, Rutherford Hayes, elected president. In return for the necessary electoral votes, they agreed to remove Union troops from the South. This took away the last military protection for southern blacks. Their legal protection was crumbling, too, as the Southern states passed laws that chipped away at equality. By the end of the nineteenth century, the U.S. Supreme Court approved laws that allowed segregation, or separation of people by race. Only one Supreme Court justice, a former slave owner named John Harlan, argued against segregation, saying, "Our Constitution is color-blind... ."

With its economy in ruins, the South needed money. A new alliance formed between the Northern bankers and investors and the Southern elites. They talked about the "New South" of coal and iron mines, business and railroads. The former slaves were swept out of the picture. By 1900, all of the southern



states had passed laws that kept African Americans from voting and from enjoying equal rights.

At this low point for black people in America, blacks knew that they had been betrayed. Some fled the South, hoping to escape violence and poverty. Those who remained organized for self-defense, in the face of more than a hundred lynchings a year. Thomas Fortune, a young black editor for the *New York Globe*, told the Senate, “The white man who shoots a negro always goes free, while the negro who steals a hog is sent to the chain-gang for ten years.”

W. E. B. Du Bois, a black man who came to teach at Atlanta University, saw the betrayal of the African Americans as part of something bigger that was happening in the United States. He said that poor whites and blacks were both being exploited, or used, by politicians and big business. Because whites could vote, they didn’t think they were exploited. Du Bois said, though, that the “dictatorship of vast capital” limited the power of their votes. He was talking about the economic system called capitalism, in which private individuals or companies, rather than the state, own the farms and factories, set prices and compete with each other in the marketplace, and accumulate wealth.

Was Du Bois right? Did the growth of American capitalism mean that whites as well as blacks were in some sense becoming slaves?

# CHAPTER TEN

## THE OTHER CIVIL WAR

THE WAR BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH was not the only conflict in the United States during the nineteenth century. There was another war going on—a struggle between classes. This struggle is often left out of textbooks. Instead, textbooks can make it seem as though the history of the time was a clash between the Republican and Democratic political parties, even though both parties represented the classes that held most of the power in the country.

## **The Myth of “Jacksonian Democracy”**

ANDREW JACKSON, WHO WAS ELECTED president in 1828, said he spoke for “the humble members of society”—for workers and farmers. He certainly did not speak for the Indians being pushed off their lands or for enslaved African Americans. But the government needed a large base of support among white people, and the myth of “Jacksonian Democracy” was designed to win that support.

That myth led ordinary people to believe that they had a voice in government and that government looked out for their interests. It was a way of speaking for the lower and middle classes to get their support when the government needed it. Giving people a choice between two political parties, and letting them choose the slightly more democratic one, was a good way to control them. The leaders of both parties understood that they could keep control of society by making reforms that gave people some of what they wanted—but not too much.

The United States was developing with enormous speed and excitement. It was turning into an urban, or city-dwelling, nation. In 1790, fewer than a million Americans lived in cities. By 1840, the figure was 11 million. New York City alone grew from 130,000 people in 1820 to a million in 1860.

Many city-dwellers lived in extreme poverty. Working-class families in Philadelphia crowded into apartment buildings called tenements, one family to a room, with no fresh water or toilets. In New York the poor lay in the streets with the garbage. The slums had no sewers. Filthy water drained into them, causing outbreaks of deadly diseases.

The very poor could not be counted on to support the government. They were like the slaves and Indians—invisible most of the time, but frightening to the elite if they started an uprising. Other citizens, though, might support the system. Farmers who owned their land, better-paid laborers, and urban office workers were paid just enough, and flattered just enough, that in a crisis they would be loyal to the system and the upper classes that dominated it.

## **Big Business**

BUSINESS WAS BOOMING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY America. The opening of the West was helped by canals, railroads, and the telegraph. New equipment such as iron plows and mechanical reapers made farming more productive. But the economy was not planned or managed to meet human needs. Instead, it was driven by the quest for private profits. It cycled between booms (times of growth and prosperity) and slumps (times of depression and unemployment).

To make business more stable and to reduce competition, companies joined together. For example, many railroads merged to form one, the New York Central line. Companies also controlled competition by agreeing among themselves on the prices they would charge the public for their goods and services. In addition, they got help from the government. During just seven years in the 1850s, the state and federal governments gave away 25 million acres to railroad companies, along with millions of dollars in loans.

On the eve of the Civil War, the men who ran the country were most concerned with money and profit, not the movement against slavery.

A preacher named Theodore Parker told his congregation, “Money is this day the strongest power of the nation.”

But the effort to keep politics and the economy under control did not quite work. From time to time, poor people showed their anger at the crowded cities, long hours in factories operating new industrial machines, high prices, lost jobs, disease, and miserable tenements. In 1827, at a meeting of mechanics (crafts and trades workers), one young man spoke of how hard it was to make a living, and of how laborers were at the mercy of their bosses:

We find ourselves oppressed on every hand—we labor hard in producing all the comforts of life for the enjoyment of others, while we ourselves obtain but a scanty portion, and even that in the present state of society depends on the will of employers.

Sometimes there were sudden, unorganized uprisings against the rich. Sometimes the anger got turned against blacks, Catholics, or immigrants. And sometimes the poor organized their anger into demonstrations and strikes against the bankers, land speculators, landlords, and merchants who controlled the economy.

*(left)* Construction crew with wood burning balloon-stack locomotive at a crossing of the Green River, 1885.



## **Workers Unite**

IN 1829, THEE WORKING PEOPLE OF Philadelphia held one of the first citywide meetings of labor groups in the United States. Frances Wright, a Scottish political thinker and women's rights activist, was invited to speak. Wright asked if the Revolutionary War had been fought "to crush down the sons and daughters of your country's industry." She wondered whether the new industrial machinery was lowering the value of human labor, making people servants to the machines, and crippling the minds and bodies of child laborers.

Trade unions began to form as workers banded together to bargain for better pay and working conditions. In 1835, workers in fifty different trades, such as bookbinding and cabinetmaking, organized labor unions in Philadelphia. They refused to work until their workday was limited to ten hours. Their strike succeeded.

The courts struck back at unions, calling them illegal conspiracies to hurt business. After a New York court ordered a "conspiracy" of tailors to pay a fine, twenty-seven thousand people gathered in front of City Hall to protest the court's decision. A handbill was seen in the city:

### **THE RICH AGAINST THE POOR!**

Mechanics and working men! A deadly blow has been struck at your liberty! ... They have established ... that workingmen have no right to regulate the price of labor, or, in other words, the rich are the only judges of the wants of the poor man.

Later, farmers and working people across New York State formed the Equal Rights Party to run their own candidates for political office.

An economic crisis in 1837 caused prices of food, fuel, and rent to soar. In New York City, a third of the working class, or about fifty thousand people, had no jobs. The Equal Rights Party organized a giant rally that turned into a riot when the crowd stormed a store full of flour and wheat.

The labor movement had started off well in Philadelphia. When religious conflict developed between American-born Protestant workers in the weaving trade and Irish immigrant Catholic weavers, however, the movement fell apart.

The Irish were fleeing starvation in their own country, where a plant disease had killed the potato crop. These new immigrants, poor and discriminated against, had little sympathy for the plight of black slaves in the United States. Most working-class activists, in fact, ignored the African Americans. Ely Moore, a New York trade union leader who was elected to Congress, argued against abolition. Racism was an easy substitute for the true frustration of the working classes against the upper classes.

In 1850 the United States had a workforce of about 8.25 million people. Most of these people, free or slave, still worked in agriculture. A half million women worked outside their homes. The majority of them worked as servants. Others worked in factories (especially mills that made textiles, or cloth). About 55,000 were teachers.

Women textile workers were very active in the labor movement. Girls and women who worked in the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, repeatedly struck for better conditions. One strike, for example, was for a workday of eleven hours rather than thirteen and a half hours. Another strike inspired an eleven-year-old protestor named Harriet Hanson to join the strikers:

[W]hen the girls in my room stood irresolute [undecided], uncertain what to do ... I, who began to think they would not go out, after all their talk, became impatient, and started on ahead, saying, with childish bravado, "I don't care what you do, I am going to turn out, whether anyone else does or not," and I marched out, and was followed by the others. As I looked back at the long line that followed me, I was more proud than I have ever been since...

*(left)* Paying children for their labor in the brickyards, 1871.





Children started the first mill strike in Paterson, New Jersey. When the company changed their meal hour from noon to 1, the children marched off the job. Their parents cheered them on. Other working people joined the strike, which became a ten-day struggle.

Shoemakers in Lynn, Massachusetts, suffered during an economic depression in 1857. Many lost their jobs. Others had their wages cut. The shoemakers started a strike that spread to twenty-five towns and lasted for several months. Eventually, the factory owners offered higher wages to bring the workers back, but they refused to recognize the unions. Workers still had to face their employers as individuals.

During the Civil War, workers in the North had to pay high prices for food and other necessities of life, while their wages were kept low. There were strikes all over the country. In 1863, a newspaper printed a list of strikes, protests, and labor actions under the headline "Revolution in New York." The hidden anger of the poor was coming out.

White workers of the North were not enthusiastic about a war that seemed to be fought for the black slave or for the capitalist. The war, they thought, was bringing profit to a new class of millionaires. Some of their strikes ended under the threat of force by troops from the Union army.

Another source of conflict was the drafting of soldiers into the Union army. Men rich enough to pay \$300 could get out of serving. The poor had no choice to but risk death on the battlefield. Draft riots broke out in New York and other cities. Poor people and workers raged against many targets: the rich, the blacks, and the Republicans. Mobs destroyed factories and the homes of wealthy people. They also burned a black orphanage and killed African Americans in the street. Troops had to be brought in to restore order.

The South had its own class conflict. Millions of Southern whites were poor farmers who did not own slaves. Some of them lived little better than slaves. Just as in the North, the poor were drafted into the army while the rich could buy their way out, and just as in the North, draft riots erupted.

## **Rule and Rebellion**

UNDER THE NOISE OF WAR, CONGRESS and Lincoln made a series of laws that gave business what it wanted. The Morrill Tariff made foreign goods more expensive. This let American manufacturers raise their own prices so that consumers had to pay more for goods. The Contract Labor Law let employers bring in foreign workers who would work in exchange for their passage to the United States. This gave business a source of cheap labor and of strikebreakers—people to take the jobs of unionized workers who went on strike. Laws gave mill owners the right to flood other people's property, and other laws gave farmers' land to railroad and canal companies.

State and federal laws did not even pretend to protect working people. There were almost no health and safety laws. The laws that did exist were not enforced. When a mill collapsed, killing eighty-eight workers, the court found the owners free of blame, even though there was evidence that they knew the building could not support the heavy machinery inside.

After the war, soldiers returned, looking for work. They found that women had joined the industrial workforce during the war. Moving beyond the textile mills and tailoring jobs, women had become cigar makers and printers. Some of them had their own unions. Black workers, too, formed unions of their own.

Another economic crisis struck the country in 1873. It was one of a string of depressions that wiped out small businesses and brought hunger, cold, and death to working people while the rich remained secure—or grew richer.

The depression continued through the 1870s. Tens of thousands of people lost their jobs, even their homes. Many roamed the countryside, looking for food. Desperate people tried to get to Europe or South America. Unemployed workers held mass meetings to demand relief from the government.

In 1877, with the country in the depths of the depression, a series of railroad strikes shook the nation. Railroad workers in Martinsburg, West Virginia, went on strike to protest wage cuts and dangerous work conditions that led to deaths and injuries. They halted train traffic. Federal troops got the trains moving again, but in Baltimore citizens who supported the strikers surrounded the National Guard armory, hurling rocks at soldiers.

The soldiers answered with bullets, killing ten men and boys. A battle raged at the train depot, where the crowd smashed up an engine.

The rebellion of the railroad workers spread to Pittsburgh. After troops there killed ten people, the whole city rose in anger. Thousands looted the freight cars. Fires and fighting enveloped the city. Strikes and riots followed in Reading, Pennsylvania, and in Chicago, St. Louis, and New York. The authorities responded swiftly and violently.

When a crowd of young people shut down Chicago's railroads, lumberyards, and mills, calling workers to strike, the police attacked. "The sound of clubs falling on skulls was sickening for the first minute, until one grew used to it," said a newspaper article. "A rioter dropped at every whack, it seemed, for the ground was covered with them." At a peaceful labor meeting in New York, the speaker declared, "Whatever we poor men may not have, we have free speech, and no one can take it from us." Then the police charged, using their clubs.

The great railroad strikes of 1877 halted more than half the freight on the nation's rail lines.

When they were over, a hundred people were dead, and a thousand had gone to jail, a hundred thousand workers had

gone on strike, and countless other unemployed people in the cities had been roused into action.

The railroads gave workers a few benefits. They also strengthened their own police forces. Nothing had really changed. Just as African Americans had learned that they did not have enough strength to make good the promises of emancipation, working people learned that they were not united or strong enough to defeat the combination of private wealth and government power. But their fight would continue.

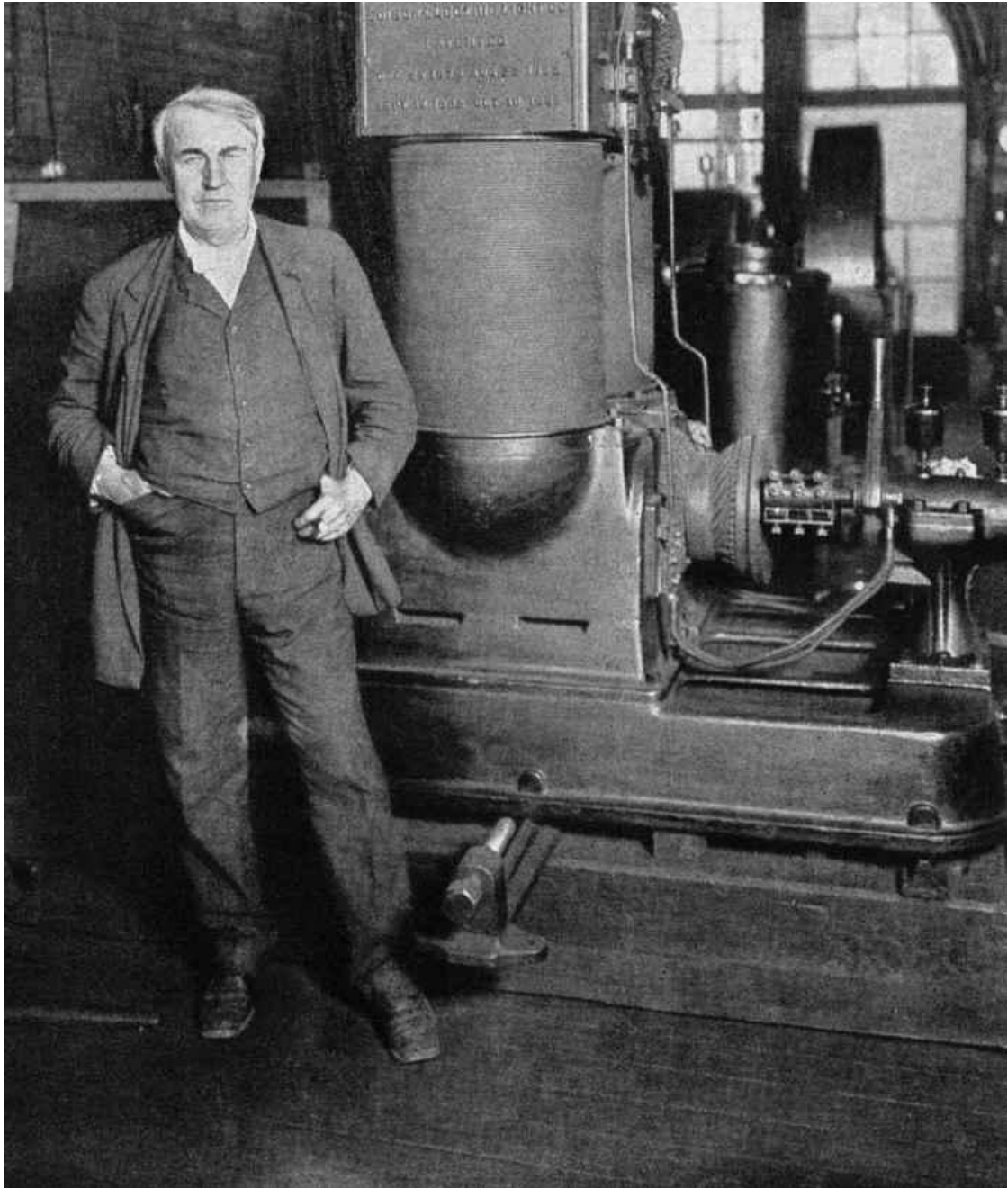
# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## **ROBBER BARONS AND REBELS**

BETWEEN THE CIVIL WAR AND 1900, STEAM and electricity replaced human muscle. The United States built 193,000 miles of railroads. New tools such as the telegraph, telephone, and typewriter speeded up the work of business. Oil and coal drove the machinery of factories and lighted the streets and homes of cities. Inventors and businesspeople made all this happen.

Some inventors were also businessmen. Thomas Edison didn't just invent electrical equipment, he marketed it as well. Other businessmen built corporations and fortunes by putting together other people's inventions. A Chicago butcher named Gustavus Swift combined the ice-cooled railway car with the ice-cooled warehouse to start the country's first meat-packing plant in 1885.

*(left)* Thomas Edison with dynamo that generated the first commercial electric light, 1890s.



Progress demanded labor. Much of the work was done by immigrants, who poured into the United States faster than ever before—5.5 million in the 1880s, 4 million in the 1890s. Many of those who came to the East Coast were from southern and eastern Europe. On the West Coast, Chinese immigrants made up one-tenth of California's population in 1880. Chinese and Jewish newcomers became the targets of racial attacks, sometimes at the hands of those who had immigrated earlier, such as the Irish.

Violence against immigrants could be murderous. In Rock Springs, Wyoming, in 1885, whites killed twenty-eight Chinese immigrants. Earlier, author Bret Harte wrote these words in memory of Wan Lee, a Chinese man killed in California:

Dead, my revered friends, dead. Stoned to death in the streets of San Francisco, in the year of grace 1869 by a mob of halfgrown boys and Christian schoolchildren.

The greatest march of economic growth in human history took place in the United States in the late nineteenth century. The wealth it produced was like a pyramid. The supporting layers, those who built the pyramid and held it up, were the workers: blacks, whites, Chinese and European immigrants, women. At the top were the new American multimillionaires.



## **The Rich Get Richer**

SOME MULTIMILLIONAIRES STARTED IN poverty. Their “rags to riches” stories were useful for making the masses of poor workers believe that they, too, could be wealthy someday. The great majority of millionaires, however, came from upper-class or middle-class families. Those who went on to become the richest men of the era—J. P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, James Mellon, and Jay Gould—could afford to escape military service in the Civil War by paying substitutes to take their places. Mellon’s father wrote to him, “There are plenty of lives less valuable [than yours].”

These men and others built huge fortunes with the help of the government and the courts. Sometimes they had to pay for that help. Thomas Edison, for example, promised New Jersey politicians \$1,000 each if they would make laws to favor his business interests.

History books often call the first transcontinental railroad a great American achievement. It was built on blood, sweat, politics, and thievery by two railway companies. The Central Pacific line started on the West Coast and went east. It spent \$200,000 on bribes in Washington, D.C. to get free land and loans, and it paid its Irish and Chinese workers one or two dollars a day. The Union Pacific line started in Nebraska and went west. To avoid being investigated, it bribed congressmen by selling them shares in the company very cheaply. Its workers died by the hundreds from heat, cold, and attacks by Indians who fought the invasion of their land.

Rockefeller built a fortune in the new oil business, partly by making secret deals with railroad companies. He promised to ship his oil with them if they would give him lower rates. This

arrangement saved him money, so he could sell his oil for less, which drove competing oil companies out of business. He bought them up and created a monopoly—a system in which one corporation controls all or most of an industry.

The efficient businessmen of the late nineteenth century are sometimes called robber barons. They were powerful, like the barons of medieval nobility, and much of their wealth was gained through greedy or dishonest methods. In industry after industry they created empires by keeping prices high and wages low, by crushing their competition, and by getting help from the government in the form of favorable laws and taxes. The government pretended to be neutral, but in reality it served the interests of the rich. Its purpose was to settle disputes among the upper classes peacefully, to keep the lower classes under control, and to keep the economic system stable.

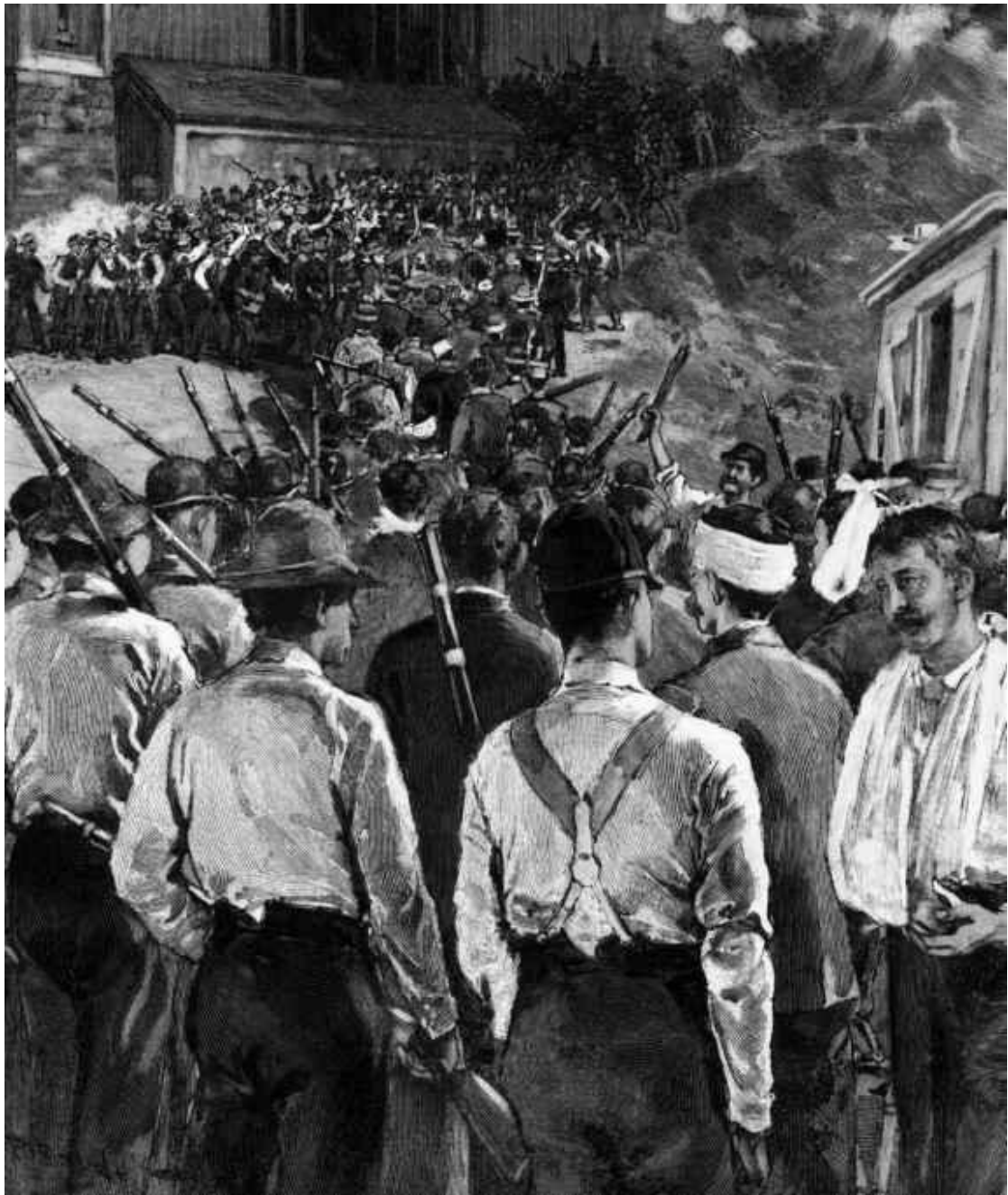
The election of Grover Cleveland in 1884 showed the way things were in the United States. Many people thought that Cleveland, a Democrat, was against the power of monopolies and corporations. But Cleveland promised the captains of industry, “No harm shall come to any business interest ... so long as I am President.” After he was elected, Cleveland showed that he cared more about the rich than the poor. He refused to give \$100,000 of federal money to help Texas farmers buy seed grain during a drought, even though the treasury was full of funds. That same year, Cleveland bought back government bonds held by wealthy people at more than their face value—a gift of \$45 million to the rich.

## Voices of Protest

A FEW POLITICIANS TRIED TO LIMIT THE power of corporations. To break up monopolies, Senator John Sherman wrote the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, which Congress voted into law in 1877. Sherman feared that without reforms, people who opposed the power of giant corporations might be drawn to dangerous new political ideas that had come out of Europe.

One idea was socialism—an economic system in which the government or the people as a whole own the means of production, such as farms, mines, and factories. These are operated for the benefit of all, not for private profit. Communism went even further, doing away with private property and with class distinctions based on wealth. In a communist society, all goods would be owned by everyone, available to anyone according to need. A third new political idea, anarchism, held that government itself was unnecessary, even wrong.

*(left)* Illustration from *Harper's Weekly* depicting the Homestead Strike of 1892.



The Sherman Anti-Trust Act was designed to reform the capitalist system just enough to prevent socialism or communism from taking hold among the workers and poor. Less than twenty years after it became law, however, the U.S. Supreme Court interpreted the act in a way that made it meaningless. At the same time, the Court was giving added protection to corporations. These decisions kept wealth at the top of the pyramid. One Supreme Court justice, David J. Brewer, said in

1893, “It is the unvarying law that the wealth of the community will be in the hands of the few...”

Churches, schools, business, and government tried to control people’s thinking, teaching them that all was right with society. Poverty was a sign of personal failure. The rich deserved to be rich. The capitalist system was right and proper.

Not everyone accepted that view of things. Some people were ready to consider harsh criticism of the system, or to imagine other ways of living. One of them was Henry George, a self-educated Philadelphia workingman who became a newspaperman and economist. People around the world read his 1879 book *Progress and Poverty*. George argued that a tax on land, which he called the basis of wealth, would raise enough money that the government could solve the problem of poverty. Another writer, a lawyer named Edward Bellamy, published *Looking Backward*, a novel about life in the year 2000. In Bellamy’s hopeful view of the future, society was socialistic. Everyone worked and lived in cooperation, not as competing individuals.

Great movements of workers and farmers swept the land in the 1880s and 1890s. These went beyond the scattered strikes of earlier years. They were national movements that threatened the ruling elites. Revolutionary societies existed in American cities, and revolutionary talk was in the air.

In 1883, an anarchist congress took place in Pittsburgh. It drew up a statement that called for “equal rights for all without distinction to sex or race.” It quoted an 1848 document called the *Communist Manifesto*, which declared, “Workmen of all lands, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to win!”

## **The Haymarket Affair**

IN 1886, THE EXISTING SYSTEM AND the new ideas clashed. The American Federation of Labor, a five-year-old association of labor unions, called for nationwide strikes wherever employers refused to shorten the workday to eight hours. About 350,000 employees of more than 11,500 businesses went out on strike.

In Chicago alone, forty thousand people struck (another 45,000 received a shorter workday to keep them from striking). Outside one factory, workers and their supporters got into a fight with *scabs*—their term for the workers who stepped in to do their jobs while they were on strike. Police fired into the crowd, killing four strikers. After that, August Spies, an anarchist and labor leader, published a sheet telling workers to take up arms against the bosses. Other anarchists spoke at a mass meeting at Haymarket Square, to an audience of about four thousand people. It was a peaceful meeting. Still, police arrived and ordered the crowd to leave. Just then, a bomb exploded, wounding sixty-six policemen. Seven of them died. The police fired, wounding two hundred people and killing several.

No evidence was found to show who had thrown the bomb. The authorities arrested Spies and seven other anarchists on the charge that they had urged murder. Under Illinois law, that was the same as committing murder. The evidence against the eight was their ideas and their literature, not their actions. Only one of them had been at Haymarket Square. But a jury found all eight guilty, and seven were sentenced to death. (Four were hanged, one killed himself before he could be executed, and the other three were eventually pardoned and released.)

People around the world demonstrated against the harsh sentences. In Chicago, twenty-five thousand marched in protest. Year after year, all over the country, memorial meetings for the Haymarket martyrs took place. Some people were shocked into political action by the Haymarket Affair.

## **The Rise and Fall of Populism**

THE HAYMARKET EXECUTIONS DID NOT crush the labor movement. The year 1886 became known as “the year of the great uprising of labor.” Unions formed in the sugar fields of the South, and workers went on strike. After two black strike leaders in Louisiana were arrested and then disappeared never to be seen again, gun battles broke out between strikers and militia. An African American newspaper in New Orleans reported on the violence in the town of Thibodaux:

Lame men and blind women shot; children and hoary-headed grandsires ruthlessly swept down! The Negroes offered no resistance; they could not, as the killing was unexpected. Those of them not killed took to the woods ... Citizens of the United States killed by a mob directed by a State judge... . Laboring men seeking an advance in wages, treated as if they were dogs!

A few years later, coal miners struck in Tennessee. When mine owners sent in convicts to do the work, the miners took over the mine by force. Workers at Andrew Carnegie’s steel plant in Homestead, Pennsylvania, also struck. The governor sent militia to control the strike, and the plant used strikebreakers to keep producing steel. After two months, the strike collapsed.

In 1893, the country entered the biggest economic crisis it had seen. The depression lasted for years and brought a wave of strikes. A railroad workers’ strike was the largest and most violent. It launched one worker, Eugene Debs, into a lifetime of activism for labor unions and socialism. Debs was arrested for supporting the strike. Two years later he wrote:



The issue is Socialism versus Capitalism. I am for Socialism because I am for humanity. We have been cursed with the reign of gold long enough. Money constitutes no proper basis for civilization. The time has come to regenerate [renew] society—we are on the eve of a universal change.

Like laborers, farmers were suffering. The cost of things like farm machinery and railroad fees for shipping grain kept going up, but the prices for farm produce went down. Many farmers could not pay their bills, and they lost their farms.

Farmers began creating union-like organizations to help each other. They bought goods together to get lower prices, and they worked to get pro-farm laws passed. One of these associations, the Farmers Alliance, gave birth to a new movement called populism (political and economic beliefs and activities “of the people”). It promoted the idea that farmers acting together could build their own institutions—such as affordable insurance against crop loss—and their own political parties.

In general, populists were against monopolies (also called trusts) and capitalism. They wanted the government to control railway rates and banks’ interest rates, to keep them from making huge profits. Populists did not agree, however, on race. Some blacks and whites argued for racial unity, feeling that all poor agricultural workers were in the same fix and needed to stand together. Yet racism was strong in other white populists, while many more simply did not think that race was as important as the economic system. Many populists were also against new immigrants. They especially opposed immigration from eastern and southern Europe and from Asia.

In the end, the populist movement failed to unite blacks and whites, farmers and urban workers. A few candidates ran for political office under the banner of the Populist or People’s party, but in city after city populists allied themselves with the Democratic party to have a better chance of winning elections. But it was political deal-makers, not revolutionary farmers,

who won most elections. Eventually, the populist movement was lost in the sea of Democratic politics.

In the 1896 election, the corporations and press threw their support behind the Republican candidate, William McKinley. It was the first campaign in which massive amounts of money were spent, and McKinley was the winner. Like many politicians, he turned to patriotism to drown out class resentment. "I am glad to know that the people in every part of this country mean to be devoted to one flag, the glorious Stars and Stripes," he said. Then McKinley showed that he thought that money was as important, as sacred, as patriotism. He added, "the people of this country mean to maintain the financial honor of this country as sacredly as they maintain the honor of the flag."

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

“I SHOULD WELCOME ALMOST ANY WAR, for I think this country needs one.” Those words were written in 1897, in a letter to a friend, by Theodore Roosevelt, who would later become president of the United States. Why would he think that the nation needed a war?

Maybe a war would take up some of the rebellious energy that people were pouring into strikes and protests. Maybe it would unite the people with the armed forces against a foreign enemy. And there was another reason—an economic one.

Before he was elected president, William McKinley had said, “We want a foreign market for our surplus goods.” Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana spelled it out in 1897. He said:

American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours.

These politicians and others believed that the United States had to open up other countries to American goods—even if those markets were not eager to buy. If factories and farms could sell their surplus production overseas, American companies would keep earning money, and the economy might avoid the crises that had sparked class war in the 1890s.

War was probably not a thought-out plan among most of the elite ruling classes. Instead, it grew naturally from two sources, capitalism and nationalism. Capitalism demanded more markets. Nationalism, the spirit of strong national pride,

made people think that the United States had a right, or even a duty, to expand itself and to shape the affairs of other countries.

## The Taste of Empire

STRETCHING THE UNITED STATES' ARM overseas was not a new idea. The war against Mexico had already carried the United States to the Pacific Ocean. Before that, in 1823, President James Monroe had produced the Monroe Doctrine. This statement made it clear that the United States claimed an interest in the politics of the entire Western Hemisphere—North, Central, and South America. It warned the nations of Europe not to meddle with countries in the Americas.

The United States, however, didn't feel that it had to stay out of other countries' affairs. Between 1798 and 1895, the United States sent troops to other countries, or took an active role in their affairs, 103 times. In the 1850s, for example, the U.S. Navy used warships to force Japan to open its ports to American shipping.

At the end of the nineteenth century, many military men, politicians, and businessmen supported the idea of still more foreign involvement. A writer for the *Washington Post* said:

A new consciousness seems to have come upon us—the consciousness of strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength... . The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people... .

(left) Cuban fighters in the war for independence from Spain roast a pig during a break in the fighting, 1896.



## The Spanish-American War

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MIGHT BE MORE willing to enter into an overseas conflict if it looked like a good deed, such as helping a nation's people overthrow foreign rule. Cuba, an island close to Florida, was in that situation. For centuries Spain had held Cuba as a colony. Then, in 1895, the Cubans rebelled against Spanish rule.

Some Americans thought that the United States should help the Cubans because they were fighting for freedom, like the colonists in the Revolutionary War. The U.S. government was more interested in who would control Cuba if the Spanish were thrown out.

Race was part of the picture, because Cuba had both black and white people. The administration of President Grover Cleveland feared that a victory by the Cuban rebels might lead to "a white and a black republic." A young British empire builder named Winston Churchill, son of an American mother, had the same thought. In 1896 he wrote a magazine article saying that even though Spanish rule in Cuba was bad, and the rebels had the support of the Cuban people, it would be better if Spain stayed in control. If the rebels won, Cuba might become "another black republic." Churchill was warning that Cuba might be like Haiti, the first country in the Americas to be run by black people.

As Americans debated about whether to join the war in Cuba, an explosion in the harbor of Havana, Cuba's capital, destroyed the U.S. battle-ship *Maine*. The ship had been sent to Cuba as a symbol of American interest in the region. No evidence was ever produced to show what caused the explosion, but the loss of the *Maine* moved President McKinley and the country in the direction of war. It was clear that the United States could not get Spain out of Cuba without

a fight. It was also clear that the United States couldn't carve out American military and economic interests in Cuba without sending troops to the island.

In April 1898 McKinley asked Congress to declare war. Soon American forces moved into Cuba. The Spanish-American War had begun.

John Hay, the U.S. secretary of state, later called it a "splendid little war." The Spanish forces were defeated in three months. Nearly 5,500 American soldiers died. Only 379 died in battle. The rest were killed by disease and other causes. One cause was certainly the tainted, rotten meat sold to the army by American meatpackers.

What about the Cuban rebels who had started the fight with Spain? The American military pretended that they did not exist. When the Spanish surrendered, no Cuban was allowed to discuss the surrender, or sign the treaty. The United States was in control. U.S. troops remained in Cuba after the surrender. Soon, U.S. money entered the island, as Americans started taking over railroads, mines, and sugar plantations.

The United States told the Cuban people that they could write their own constitution and form their own government. It also told them that the U.S. Army would not leave the island until Cuba's new constitution included a new American law called the Platt Amendment. This law gave the United States the right to involve itself in Cuba's affairs pretty much whenever it wanted. General Leonard Wood explained to Theodore Roosevelt in 1901, "There is, of course, little or no independence left Cuba under the Platt Amendment."

Many Americans felt that the Platt Amendment betrayed the idea of Cuban independence. Criticism went beyond the radicals (socialists and others with extreme or revolutionary views) to mainstream newspapers and civic groups. One group critical of the Platt Amendment was the Anti-Imperialism League. One of the League's founders was William James, a philosopher at Harvard University, who opposed the United States' trend toward empire building and meddling in other



county's affairs. In the end, though, the Cubans had no choice but to agree to the Platt Amendment if they wanted to set up their own government.

## **Revolt and Racism in the Philippines**

THE UNITED STATES DID NOT ANNEX CUBA, or make it part of U.S. territory. But the Spanish-American War did lead to annexation of some other territories that Spain had controlled. One was Puerto Rico, an island neighbor of Cuba. The United States had already taken over the Hawaiian Islands from its Hawaiian Queen, and the war gave it control of some other Pacific islands, too: Wake Island, Guam, and the large island cluster called the Philippines.

Americans hotly debated whether or not they should take over the Philippines. One story says that President McKinley told a visiting group of ministers how he had come to the decision to annex the Philippines. As he prayed for guidance, he became convinced that “there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them... . And then I went to bed and went to sleep and slept soundly.”

The Filipinos, however, did not get a message from God telling them to accept American rule. Instead, in February 1899 they rose up in revolt against the United States, just as they had revolted several times against Spain.

*(left)* A long line of African American soldiers who fought in the Spanish-American War, 1899.



The taste of empire was on the lips of politicians and businessmen throughout the United States, and they agreed that the United States must keep control of its new territory. Talk of money mingled with talk of destiny and civilization. “The Philippines are ours forever,” Senator Beveridge told the U.S. Senate. “And just beyond the Philippines are China’s illimitable markets [markets with no limits or boundaries]. We will not retreat from either.”

It took the United States three years to crush the Filipino rebellion. It was a harsh war. Americans lost many more troops than

in Cuba. For the Filipinos the death rate was enormous, from battle and from disease.

McKinley said that the fighting with the rebels started when the rebels attacked American forces. Later, American soldiers testified that the United States had fired the first shot.

The famous American author Mark Twain summed up the Philippine war with disgust, saying:

We have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields; burned their villages, and turned their widows and orphans out-of-doors... . And so, by these Providences of God—the phrase is the government’s, not mine—we are a World Power.

The Anti-Imperialist League worked to educate the American public about the horrors of the Philippine war and the evils of imperialism, or empire building. It published letters from soldiers on duty in the Philippines. There were reports of soldiers killing women, children, and prisoners of war. A black soldier named William Fulbright wrote from Manila, the capital of the Philippines, “This struggle on the islands has been naught but a gigantic scheme of robbery and oppression.”

Race was an issue in the Philippines, as it had been in Cuba. Some white American soldiers were racists who considered the Filipinos inferior. Black American soldiers in the Philippines had mixed feelings. Some felt pride, the desire to show that blacks were as courageous and patriotic as whites. Some wanted the chance to get ahead in life through the military. But others felt that they were fighting a brutal war against people of color—not too different from the violence against black people in the United States, where drunken white soldiers in Tampa, Florida, started a race riot by using a black child for target practice.

Back in the United States, many African Americans turned against the Philippine war because they saw it as a racial conflict, the white race fighting to conquer the brown. They were fighting injustice at home, too. A group of African Americans in Massachusetts sent a message to President McKinley, criticizing him for doing nothing to advance racial equality.

Throughout the nineteenth century, black Americans, along with women, workers, and the poor, had raised their voices against oppression. Many had found ways to resist the harshest effects of a political and economic system that ignored them. In the coming century, they would take their own steps toward change.

## PART TWO

### **CLASS STRUGGLE *to* THE WAR ON TERROR**



# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## CLASS STRUGGLE

ANGER WAS ON THE RISE IN AMERICA AS the twentieth century opened. The United States had just won the Spanish-American War. Emma Goldman, an anarchist and feminist of the time, later remembered how the war in Cuba and the Philippines had filled people with patriotism:

How our hearts burned with indignation against the atrocious Spaniards! ... But when the smoke was over, the dead buried, and the cost of the war came back to the people in an increase in the price of commodities [goods] and rent—that is, when we sobered up from our patriotic spree—it suddenly dawned on us that the cause of the Spanish American war was the price of sugar ... that the lives, blood and money of the American people were used to protect the interests of the American capitalists.

*(left)* Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, 1918.





Some famous American writers spoke up for socialism, with harsh words for the capitalist system. Jack London's novel *The Iron Heel*, published in 1906, offered a vision of a socialist brotherhood of man. That same year Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*, with a character who dreams of a socialist state. *The Jungle* also brought the shocking conditions in the Chicago meatpacking industry to the

nation's attention. After it was published, the government passed laws to regulate the industry.

“Muckrakers” added to the mood of dissent, or disagreement with the system. These writers raked up the mud and muck—that is, the bad conduct and unfair practices—of corporations, government, and society in general. Then they exposed it to the world in newspaper and magazine articles or in books. Ida Tarbell, for example, wrote about the Standard Oil Company's business practices. Lincoln Steffens revealed political corruption in American cities.

## **Sweatshops and Wobblies**

BUSINESSES WERE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO produce more goods and make more money. One way was to break manufacturing down into a series of simple tasks. A worker would no longer make an entire piece of furniture, for example. Instead, he or she would simply repeat only one part of the work. So the worker would do the same task over and over again—maybe drilling a hole, or squirting glue. This way, companies could hire less skilled labor. Workers became interchangeable, almost like the machines they tended, stripped of individuality and humanity.

In New York City, many immigrants went to work in garment factories called sweatshops. In sweatshops, they worked for very low wages under unhealthy working conditions. They were paid based on how many pieces of clothing they sewed, not how many hours they worked. Many others did this piecework at home.

One of New York's five hundred sweatshops was the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. Women workers there went on strike in the winter of 1909. Twenty thousand other workers joined them. One striker, Pauline Newman, later recalled the scene. "Thousands upon thousands left the factories from every side," she wrote. "It was November, the cold winter was just around the corner, we had no fur coats to keep warm, and yet there was the spirit that led us on and on... ."

The strike lasted for months, against police, scabs, and arrests. Yet although the workers won some of their demands, conditions in the factories did not change much. In March 1911 a fire broke out in the Triangle building. The fire raged too high in the building for the fire department's ladders to reach it. With workroom doors illegally locked by the employers, the workers, mostly young women, were trapped. Some fled the flames by throwing themselves out windows. Others burned. When it was over, 146 had died. A hundred thousand New Yorkers marched in their memorial parade.

The union movement was growing, but the biggest union, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), did not represent all workers. Its members were almost all white, male, skilled laborers. Blacks were kept out of the AFL. Women made up a fifth of the workforce in 1910, but only one in a hundred women workers was in a union. In addition, AFL officials had begun to seem no better than corporate bosses. They were protected by "goon" squads who beat up union members who criticized them.

Working people who wanted radical change needed a new kind of union. At a 1905 meeting of anarchists, socialists, and unionists in Chicago, that union was born. It was called the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and its goal was to organize all workers in any industry into “One Big Union,” undivided by sex, race, or skills.

The IWW came to be called the Wobblies, though it’s not clear why. The Wobblies were brave, and they were willing to meet force with force. When they struck against the U.S. Steel Company in Pennsylvania in 1909, state troopers came to control the strike. The IWW vowed to kill a trooper for every striker who was killed. Three troopers and four strikers died in one gun battle, but the strikers stayed out until they won.

The IWW was inspired by a new idea that was developing in Spain, Italy, and France. This was anarcho-syndicalism, the belief that workers could take power in a country, not by seizing control of the government in an armed rebellion, but by bringing the economic system to a halt. The way to stop the economic system was by a general strike, one in which all workers in all the trades and industries would join, united by a common purpose.

In the ten exciting years after its birth, the IWW became a threat to the capitalist class in the United States. The union never had more than five or ten thousand members at a time, but their ability to organize strikes and protests made a big impact on the country. IWW organizers traveled everywhere—many of them were unemployed, or moved around as migrant workers. They sang, spoke, and spread their message and their spirit.

The IWW organizers suffered beatings, imprisonment, and even murder. A criminal case involving organizer Joe Hill gained worldwide attention. Hill was a songwriter whose funny, biting, and inspiring songs made him a legend. For example, “The Preacher and the Slave” had a favorite IWW target—the church, which often seemed to ignore the very real sufferings of the poor and working classes:

Long-haired preachers come out every night,  
Try to tell you what’s wrong and what’s right;  
But when asked how ’bout something to eat  
They will answer with voices so sweet:

—You will eat, bye and bye,  
—In that glorious land above the sky;  
—Work and pray, live on hay,  
—You’ll get pie in the sky when you die.



Family members arrive at the New York City morgue to identify the bodies of victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire, 1911.



In 1915 Hill was accused of killing a grocer in Salt Lake City, Utah, during a robbery. There was no direct evidence that he had committed the murder, but there were enough pieces of evidence for a jury to find him guilty. Ten thousand people wrote letters to the governor of Utah, protesting

the verdict, but Joe Hill was executed by a firing squad. Before he died he wrote to Bill Haywood, another IWW leader, "Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize."

## **Socialism, Sex, and Race**

LABOR STRUGGLES WERE ON THE RISE. IN the 1890s there had been about a thousand strikes a year. By 1904 there were four thousand. Seeing the law and the military take the side of the rich again and again, hundreds of thousands of American began to think about socialism.

Socialism had gotten its start in the United States in cities in the small circles of Jewish and German immigrants. In time, though, it spread and became thoroughly American. As many as a million people across the country read socialist newspapers.

The Socialist political party formed in 1901. Eugene Debs, who had become a socialist after being jailed during a strike, became its spokesman. To Debs, the labor union meant much more than strikes and wage increases. Its goal was “to overthrow the capitalist system of private ownership of the tools of labor ... and achieve the freedom of the whole working class and, in fact of all mankind.”

Debs ran for president five times as the Socialist candidate. At one time his party had a hundred thousand members. The strongest state Socialist organization was in Oklahoma, where more than a hundred Socialists were elected to office.

Some of the feminists active in the women's rights movement in the early twentieth century were also socialists. They debated challenging questions: If the economic system changed, would women then be full equals in society? Was it better to work toward a revolutionary change in society or to fight for rights within the existing system? Many women were less concerned with social change than with suffrage, or the right to vote. At a friendly meeting with socialist leader Eugene Debs, feminist Susan B. Anthony said, “Give us



suffrage, and we'll give you socialism." Debs replied, "Give us socialism and we'll give you suffrage."

Socialists like Helen Keller did not think suffrage was enough. Blind and deaf, Keller fought for change with her spirit and her pen. In 1911 she wrote, "Our democracy is but a name. We vote? What does that mean? ... We choose between Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

Black women faced double oppression, held down because of their race as well as their sex. An African American nurse wrote to a newspaper in 1912:

We poor colored women wage-earners in the South are fighting a terrible battle... . On the one hand, we are assailed by black men, who should be our natural protectors; and, whether in the cook kitchen, at the washtub, over the sewing machine, behind the baby carriage, or at the ironing board, we are little more than pack horses, beasts of burden, slaves!

The early part of the twentieth century was a low point for African Americans, with lynchings reported every week and murderous race riots in places like Brownsville, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. The government did nothing.

Blacks began to organize. In 1905 W. E. B. Du Bois—a respected teacher and author who was sympathetic to the socialists—called black leaders to a meeting in Canada, near Niagara Falls. This was the start of the "Niagara Movement." Five years later, a race riot in Springfield, Illinois, led to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Whites dominated this new group. Du Bois was the only black officer. The NAACP focused on education and legal action to end racism, but Du Bois represented the Niagara Movement's strong spirit of activism.

## **The Progressive Movement and the Colorado Coal Strike**

BLACKS, FEMINISTS, LABOR UNIONS, AND socialists saw clearly that they could not count on the national government. And yet history books give the label “Progressive Period” to the early years of the twentieth century. True, it was a time of reforms—but the reforms were made unwillingly. They were not meant to bring about basic changes in society, only to quiet the uprisings of the people.

The period got the name “Progressive” because new laws were passed. There were laws for inspecting meat, regulating railroads, controlling the growth of monopolies, and keeping the nation’s food and medicines safe. Labor laws set standards for wages and hours. Safety inspection of workplaces and payment to employees injured on the job were introduced. The U.S. Constitution was changed so that U.S. senators were elected directly by vote of the people, not by state legislatures.

Ordinary people did benefit from these changes. Basic conditions did not change, however, for the vast majority of tenant farmers, factory workers, slum dwellers, miners, farm laborers, and working men and women, black and white.

The government was still dedicated to protecting a system that benefited the upper classes. Theodore Roosevelt, for example, made a reputation as a “trust buster,” a politician who opposed monopolies. But two men in the service of multimillionaire J. P. Morgan made private deals with Roosevelt to make sure that “trust-busting” wouldn’t go too far. Roosevelt’s advisers were industrialists and bankers, not unionists and workers.

The Progressive movement had some leaders who were honest reformers and others, like Roosevelt, who were only disguised as Progressives. In reality they were conservatives, opposed to change and concerned with preserving the balance of power and wealth. Both kinds of progressives saw their mission as fending off socialism. They felt that by improving conditions for the masses,

they could prevent what one Progressive called “the menace of socialism.”

The Socialist Party was on the rise. In 1910, Victor Berger became the first Socialist elected to the U.S. Congress. In 1911 there were seventy-three Socialist mayors and twelve hundred Socialists in other city and town offices. Newspapers talked about “The Rising Tide of Socialism.”

The Progressives’ goal was to save capitalism by repairing its worst problems. In this way, they thought, they could end the growing class war that pitted workers against the economic and political elites. But a strike of Colorado coal miners that began in September 1913 turned into one of the most bitter and violent battles in that war.

After a union organizer was murdered, eleven thousand miners went on strike. The Rockefeller family, which owned the mine, sent detectives with machine guns to raid the strikers’ camps. The strikers fought to keep out strikebreakers and to keep the mines from opening. When the governor called on National Guard troops to destroy the strike, the Rockefellers paid the National Guards’ wages.

Violent battles, betrayals, and massacres followed. In April 1914, the bodies of thirteen children and women were found in a pit, killed by a fire set by the National Guardsmen. The news spread across the country. Strikes, demonstrations, and protests broke out everywhere. President Woodrow Wilson finally sent in federal troops to crush the strike. Sixty-six men, women, and children had died. No soldier or mine guard was charged with a crime.

Colorado’s ferocious class conflict was felt all over the land. Whatever reforms had been passed, whatever new laws were on the books, the threat of class rebellion remained—and unemployment and hard times were growing.

Could patriotism and the military spirit cover up class struggle? The nation was about to find out. In four months World War I would begin in Europe.

*(left, detail)* Eugene V. Debs at a Labor Convention, 1910s.



# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## WORLD WAR I

THE NATIONS OF EUROPE WENT TO WAR IN the late summer of 1914. The conflict that we now call World War I would drag on for four years. Ten million people would die on its battlefields. Twenty million more would die of hunger and disease related to the war. And no one has ever been able to show that the war brought any gain for humanity that would be worth a single life.

At the time, socialists called it an “imperialist war”—a war fought in the service of empire building, by nations that wanted to increase their power by controlling territory or resources. The advanced capitalist nations of Europe fought over boundaries, such as the region of Alsace-Lorraine, claimed by both France and Germany. They fought over colonies in Africa. And they fought over “spheres of influence,” areas in Eastern Europe and the Middle East that were not claimed openly as colonies but still came under the “protection” and control of some European nation.

## **Blood and Money**

**MANY NATIONS JOINED THE WAR ON ONE SIDE** or the other, but the main enemies were Germany on one side and the Allies, France and Great Britain, on the other. The killing started very fast, and on a very large scale. In one early battle in France, each side had half a million casualties. Almost the entire British army from before the war was wiped out in the first three months of fighting.

The battle lines were drawn across France. For three years they barely moved. Men spent months in filthy, disease-ridden trenches. Each side would push forward, then be pushed back, then push forward again for a few yards or a few miles, while the corpses piled up. In 1916 the Germans tried to break through the lines at a place called Verdun. The British and French counterattacked and lost six hundred thousand men.

The people of France and Britain were not told the full numbers of dead and wounded. When a German attack on the Somme River caused three hundred thousand British casualties in the last year of the war, London newspapers told readers, “Be cheerful... Write encouragingly to friends at the front.”

The same thing was true in Germany—the true horror of the war was kept from the people. On days when men were being blown apart in the thousands by machine guns and artillery shells, the official war reports said, “All Quiet on the Western Front.” German writer Erich Maria Remarque later used that phrase as the title of his great novel about the war.

Into this pit of death and deception came the United States in 1917.

Earlier, President Woodrow Wilson had promised that the United States would keep out of the war. But the question of shipping in the North Atlantic Ocean drew the United States into the fight.

In 1915 a German submarine had torpedoed and sunk a British liner, the *Lusitania*, on its way from North America to Britain. Nearly 1,200 people, including 124 Americans, died. The United States claimed that the *Lusitania* was carrying civilian passengers and innocent cargo, and that the German attack was a monstrous atrocity. In truth, the *Lusitania* was heavily armed. She carried thousands of cases of ammunition for the British. False cargo records hid this fact, and the British and American governments lied about the cargo.

(left) Eugene V. Debs at a Labor Convention, 1910s.



Then, in April 1917, the Germans warned that their submarines would sink any ships that were carrying supplies to their enemies. This included the United States, which had been shipping huge amounts of war materials to Germany's enemies.

The war in Europe had been good for American business. A serious economic decline had hit the country in 1914, but things turned around when Americans began manufacturing war materials

to sell to the Allies—mainly to Britain. By the time the Germans issued their warning about shipping, the United States had sold 2 billion dollars' worth of goods to the Allies. American prosperity was now tied to England's war. President Wilson said that he must stand by the right of Americans to travel on merchant ships in the war zone, and Congress declared war on Germany.

Wilson called it a war “to end all wars” and “to make the world safe for democracy.” These rousing words did not inspire Americans to enlist in the armed forces. A million men were needed, but in the first six weeks, only 73,000 volunteered. Congress authorized a draft to compel men into service. It also set up a Committee on Public Information. That committee's job was to convince Americans that the war was right.



## **The Radical Response**

THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO DISCOURAGE dissent and criticism of the war. It passed a law called the Espionage Act. The title makes it seem like a law against spying. But one part of the law called for up to twenty years in prison for anyone who refused to serve in the armed forces or even tried to convince others not to enlist. The act was used to imprison Americans who spoke or wrote against the war.

About nine hundred people went to prison under the Espionage Act. One of them was a Philadelphia socialist named Charles Schenck. Two months after the act became law, Schenck was sentenced to jail for printing and distributing fifteen thousand leaflets against the draft and the war. He appealed the verdict, claiming that the act violated his First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The case went to the Supreme Court.

All nine justices agreed. The Court decided against Schenck. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said that even the strict protection of free speech “would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theatre and causing panic.” This was a clever comparison. Few people would think that someone should be allowed to get away with shouting “Fire!” in a crowded theater and causing a dangerous panic. But did that example fit criticism of the war?

Socialist Eugene Debs was also involved in a case before the Supreme Court. After visiting three socialists who were in prison for opposing the draft, he made a fiery antiwar speech in the street:

They tell us that we live in a great free republic; that our institutions are democratic; that we are a free and self-governing people. That is too much, even for a joke... . Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder... . And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles... .

Debs was arrested for violating the Espionage Act. At his trial he declared, "I have been accused of obstructing the war. I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war." The judge, in turn, spoke harshly about "those who would strike the sword from the hand of his nation while she is engaged in defending herself against a foreign and brutal power." He sentenced Debs to ten years in prison. (Several years later, after the war was over, President Warren Harding released Debs from prison.)

The press worked with the government to create an atmosphere of fear for anyone who dared to criticize the war. One publication asked its readers to turn in any published material they saw that seemed seditious, or disloyal, to the country. Men joined the American Vigilante Patrol to "put an end to seditious street oratory"—basically, to prevent antiwar speechmaking. The U.S. Post Office took away the mailing privileges of newspapers and magazines that published antiwar articles. The Committee on Public Information tried to turn people into spies and informers against each other. It urged citizens to "report the man who spreads pessimistic stories. Report him to the Department of Justice."

The Department of Justice sponsored the American Protective League in six hundred towns. Its members were bankers and leading businessmen. The League seized other people's mail, broke into their homes and offices, and claimed to find 3 million cases of "disloyalty." In 1918 the attorney general of the United States declared, "It is safe to say that never in its history has this country been so thoroughly policed."

Why these huge efforts? Because Americans were refusing to fight in the war. Senator Thomas Hardwick of Georgia described "general and widespread opposition on the part of many thousands ... to the enactment of the draft law." Before the war was over, more than a third of a million men were classified as draft evaders—people who refused to be drafted, or used trickery or self-mutilation to avoid the draft.

The Socialist Party had been against entering the war from the start. The day after Congress declared war, the Socialists held an emergency meeting and called the declaration "a crime against the people of the United States." Some well-known Socialists, including writers Upton Sinclair and Jack London, supported the war after the United States entered it.



Elizabeth Gurley Flynn addressing crowd, 1914.



Most Socialists, though, continued to oppose the war. Some paid a heavy price for expressing their opinions.

In Oklahoma, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) planned a march on Washington for people from across the country who objected to the draft. Before the march, union members were arrested. Four hundred and fifty people accused of rebellion were put in the state penitentiary. Across the country in Boston, eight thousand Socialists and unionists at an antiwar march were attacked by soldiers and sailors, acting on their officers' orders.

Just before the United States declared war, the IWW newspaper had said, "Capitalists of America, we will fight against you, not for you!" Now the war gave the government its chance to destroy the radical union. In September 1917, Department of Justice agents raided forty-eight IWW meeting halls across the country, seizing letters and literature.

The following April, 101 leaders of the union went on trial for opposing the draft and encouraging soldiers to desert. One of them told the court:

You ask me why the IWW is not patriotic to the United States. If you were a bum without a blanket; if you had left your wife and kids when you went west for a job, and had never located them since; if your job had never kept you long enough in a place to qualify you to vote; if every person who represented law and order and the nation beat you up ... how in hell do you expect a man to be patriotic? This war is a business man's war...

All of the IWW prisoners were found guilty. Bill Haywood and other key leaders were sentenced to twenty years in prison; the rest received shorter sentences. Haywood fled to Russia, where a socialist revolution was taking place. The IWW in the United States was shattered.

## **After the Fighting**

THE WAR ENDED IN NOVEMBER 1918. Fifty thousand American soldiers had died. But when the war was over, the Establishment—the political and capitalist elites that ran the nation—still feared socialism. The conflict between Democrats and Republicans was less important than the threat of radical change.

The government had a new tool to fight that threat. Near the end of the war, Congress had passed a law that let the government deport any alien who opposed organized government or who approved of the destruction of property. (An alien was an immigrant who was not a U.S. citizen. Deporting meant removing from the country.) In 1919 and 1920 the government rounded up more than four thousand aliens, including anarchist Emma Goldman. Eventually, they were deported to their birth countries.

An anarchist named Andrea Salsedo was held for two months in FBI offices in New York City. He wasn't allowed to contact family, friends, or lawyers. Then his crushed body was found on the pavement. The FBI said he had committed suicide by jumping from a window.

Two Boston anarchists, friends of Salsedo, learned of his death and began carrying guns. They were arrested and charged with a holdup and murder that had happened two weeks earlier. Their names were Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

Sacco and Vanzetti were found guilty. They spent seven years in jail while their cases were appealed to higher courts. All over the world, people became involved in the case. Many believed that Sacco and Vanzetti had been found guilty just

because they were anarchists and foreigners—the trial record and other circumstances make it look as though this was true. In August 1927 the two men were executed.

The Establishment had tried to silence the voices of dissent. Reforms had been made. War had been used to promote patriotism and crush criticism. The courts and jails had made it clear that certain ideas, certain kinds of resistance, were not permitted. But still, even from the prison cells, the message was going out: in the United States, a society that was supposed to be without classes, the class war was going on.

*(left, detail)* A caravan of strike pickets patrol a road south of Tulare, 1933.







# CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## HARD TIMES

IT WAS FEBRUARY 1919. THE WAR HAD ended in Europe just a few months before. The world was in the grip of an influenza epidemic that would claim half a million American lives and millions more worldwide. In the United States, the leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World were in jail—but their dream was about to become a reality in Seattle, Washington.

Strikes by a single union or a single kind of worker could get results. But the IWW felt that a general strike, with all kinds of workers walking off their jobs together, would make a stronger statement. In Seattle, after shipyard workers went on strike for higher wages, more than a hundred other unions voted to strike as well. A walkout of a hundred thousand working people brought the city to a halt.

The strikers kept vital services going. Fire fighters stayed on the job, and milk stations were set up in neighborhoods to deliver milk to families. The strike lasted for five days and was peaceful. In fact, during those five days, the city had less crime than usual. But after the strike, the authorities raided Socialist Party headquarters. Thirty-nine members of the IWW went to jail as “ring-leaders of anarchy.”

Why did the government react this way to the strike? Maybe the answer lies in a statement by Seattle’s mayor:

The general strike, as practiced in Seattle, is of itself the weapon of revolution, all the more dangerous because quiet. To succeed, it must suspend everything; stop the entire life stream of a community... . That is to say, it puts the government out of operation.

The general strike made the authorities feel powerless. It seemed to threaten the whole economic and political system of society.

Seattle's general strike was just one of many large strikes across the United States in 1919. These labor actions were part of a wave of rebellions around the world. From the Communist revolution against royal rule in Russia to a strike by railway workers in England, ordinary people were rising up, making their voices heard, and bringing about change. A writer for *The Nation* magazine said, "The common man ... losing faith in the old leadership, has experienced a new ... self-confidence... ."

## **The Truth about the Twenties**

When the 1920s started, the wave of rebellion had died down in the United States. The IWW was destroyed. The Socialist Party was falling apart. Strikes were beaten down by force. The economy was doing just well enough for just enough people to prevent mass rebellion.

The 1920s are sometimes called the Roaring Twenties, or the Jazz Age—a time of prosperity and fun. There was some truth to that picture. Unemployment was down, and the general level of workers' wages went up. People could buy new gadgets such as automobiles, radios, and refrigerators. Millions of people were not doing badly.

But most of the wealth was in the hands of a few people at the top of society's pyramid. At the bottom of the pyramid were the black and white tenant farmers living in poverty in the countryside, and the immigrant families in the cities who could not find work, or could not earn enough for basic needs. In New York City alone, 2 million people lived in tenement buildings that were known to be unsafe because of fire danger.

*(left)* A caravan of strike pickets patrol a road south of Tulare, 1933.



Fourteen million immigrants had come to the United States between 1900 and 1920. In 1924, Congress passed an immigration law that put an end to this flood. The new law favored the immigration of white people from English and German backgrounds. Immigration of Southern Europeans, Slavs, and Jews was severely limited, and only a hundred people a year could come from China or any African country.

Racial hatred and violence were everywhere. The Ku Klux Klan came back in the 1920s, and it spread into the North. By 1924 it had 4.5 million members.

After a long struggle, women had finally won the right to vote in national elections in 1920. Yet voting was still an upper-class and middle-class activity, and the new women voters favored the same old political parties as other voters.

Labor unrest may have calmed for a time, but it had not faded away. With the Socialist Party weakened, a Communist Party formed in the United States. Communists were involved in many labor

struggles, including huge textile strikes in Tennessee and the Carolinas in early 1929.

## **The Great Depression**

DURING THE 1920 S, THE AMERICAN ECONOMY seemed healthy—even booming. Prices for stocks, which are shares of ownership in corporations, rose higher than ever. Many people thought that the value of stocks would just keep going up. They invested their money by buying stocks, and they borrowed money from banks to buy still more stocks. The banks invested in stocks, too, using the money that customers had deposited.

In 1929 the boom ended with a crash. When the value of stocks started to drop, people started selling their stocks in a panic. This made the value drop even faster. Banks could not collect the loans that people had taken to buy stocks, and people could not withdraw their money from banks that had invested it and lost it. Both the stock market and the banking system spiraled swiftly downward, triggering a severe crisis in the economy. The United States had entered the Great Depression.

The economy was stunned, barely moving. More than five thousand banks closed. Thousands of businesses closed, too. Businesses that managed to stay open laid off some workers and cut the wages of other workers, again and again. By 1933 perhaps as many as 15 million people were out of work. A quarter to a third of the nation's workforce could not find jobs.

There were millions of tons of food in the country, but it was not profitable to ship it or sell it, so people went hungry. Warehouses were full of clothing and other products, but people couldn't afford to buy them. Houses stayed empty because no one had the money to buy or rent them. People who failed to pay rent were kicked out of their homes. They lived in "Hooverilles," communities of shacks built on garbage dumps. The name comes from President Herbert Hoover, who had said just before the crash, "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land."



## CHILD WORKERS

BY THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND DECADE OF the twentieth century, over 2 million American children below the age of sixteen were among America's full-time workers, many toiling twelve or thirteen hours a day. Canneries in the gulf towns of Mississippi employed children as young as three years old, shucking oysters and peeling shrimp. Small girls toiled in cotton mills in North Carolina, spinning cotton at giant, noisy machines. Only whites were hired for mill work, and entire families left their farms to work in the mills. In Pennsylvania, thousands of fourteen-and fifteen-year-old boys were employed legally in the mines—as miners, coal breakers, or slate pickers—and thousands more nine-and ten-year-olds were employed illegally, many of them suffering from chronic coughs from the coal dust.



These children weren't apprentices learning a trade, just some of the cheapest and hardest workers around.

The National Child Labor Committee was founded in 1904 to reduce and regulate childhood labor, but it wasn't until the Great



Depression of the 1930s—a period of such high unemployment that adults now competed with children for the worst paying jobs—that resistance to the committee’s effort, by those who were profiting from child labor, finally lessened. In 1938, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established a minimum wage and a maximum number of daily hours for workers, and which also restricted child labor and prohibited children from working in mines or factories. In 1949, Congress amended the law to include other types of businesses, and also restricted working hours for children under sixteen to exclude school hours.



In 1913, the National Child Labor Committee composed a “Declaration of Dependence” by and on behalf of the children of America:

### **Declaration of Dependence**

WHEREAS, We, Children of America, are declared to have been born free and equal, and WHEREAS, We are yet in bondage in this land of the free; are forced to toil the long day or the long night, with no control over the conditions of labor, as to health or safety or hours or wages, and with no right to the rewards of our service, therefore be it

RESOLVED, I—That childhood is endowed with certain inherent and inalienable rights, among which are freedom from toil for daily bread; the right to play and to dream; the right to the normal sleep of the night season; the right to an education, that we may have

equality of opportunity for developing all that there is in us of mind and heart.



RESOLVED, II—That we declare ourselves to be helpless and dependent; that we are and of right ought to be dependent, and that we hereby present the appeal of our helplessness that we may be protected in the enjoyment of the rights of childhood.

RESOLVED, III—That we demand the restoration of our rights by the abolition of child labor in America.

Source: Freedman, Russell. *Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor*. New York: Scholastic, 1994.

(left) Children carry picket signs at a demonstration for the Workers Alliance during the Great Depression, 1937.



One of the few politicians who had spoken out for the poor during the 1920s was Fiorello La Guardia, a congressman from a district of poor immigrants in East Harlem. After the Depression started, he received a letter from a tenement dweller there:

You know my condition is bad. I used to get pension from the government and they stopped it. It is now nearly seven months I am out of work. I hope you will try to do something for me... I have four children who are in need of clothes and food... My daughter who is eight is very ill and not recovering. My rent is due two months and I am afraid of being put out.

Hard times made people desperate. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel about the misery of Oklahoma farmers forced off their land, author John Steinbeck called the new homeless people “dangerous.” A spirit of rebellion was growing in the land.

In Detroit, five hundred men rioted when they were turned out of public housing because they couldn’t afford to pay for it. In Chicago, five hundred schoolchildren, “most with haggard faces and in tattered clothes,” marched through downtown to demand food from the school system. In New York City, several hundred jobless people surrounded a restaurant, demanding to be fed without charge. In Seattle, an army of the unemployed seized a public building and held it for two days.

Men who had fought in the First World War now found themselves out of work and out of money. Some held certificates from the government that were to be paid off in the future—but they needed the money now. And so war veterans began to move toward Washington, D.C., from all over the country. They came in broken-down old autos, or by stealing rides on trains, or by hitchhiking.

More than twenty thousand came. They camped across from the Capitol, in shelters made of old boxes and newspapers. President Hoover ordered the army to get rid of them. General Douglas A. MacArthur, with the help of officers such as Dwight D. Eisenhower and George S. Patton, used tanks, tear gas, and fires to break up the camp. When it was over, two veterans had been shot to death, a boy was partially blinded, two police had fractured skulls, and a thousand veterans were injured by gas.

## **Struggling to Survive**

IN THE ELECTION OF 1932, HOOVER LOST TO the Democratic candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who launched a series of reform laws that came to be called the New Deal. These reforms went far beyond earlier changes. They attempted to reorganize capitalism.

The first major law was the National Recovery Act (NRA). It took control of the economy by making government, management, and labor agree on such things as prices, wages, and competition. From the start, the NRA was controlled by big business, but it did give some benefits to working people. Two years later, though, the Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional because it gave too much power to the president.

Other reforms continued. One was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which built a government-owned system of dams and power plants. The TVA provided jobs and lower electricity rates. Its critics called it “socialistic,” and they were right in some ways.

The New Deal had two goals. The first was to overcome the Depression and make the economy more stable. The second was to give enough help to the lower classes to keep rebellion from turning into a real revolution.

The rebellion was real when Roosevelt took office. All across the country, people were not waiting for the government to help them. They were helping themselves.

In Detroit and Chicago, when police removed the furniture of people who had been evicted from their apartments for not paying rent, crowds gathered on the sidewalk to carry the furniture back inside. In Seattle, fishermen, fruit pickers, and

woodchoppers traded with each other for supplies they needed. Often labor unions helped make these self-help arrangements.

Self-help sprouted in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. Teams of unemployed miners dug small mines on company property, hauled the coal to the cities, and sold it for less than the companies charged. When the authorities tried to halt the trade in “bootleg” coal, local juries would not convict the miners, and local jailors would not imprison them. These were simple actions, but they had revolutionary possibilities. Working people were discovering a powerful truth: that they could meet their own needs. Soon, though, a wave of large-scale labor outbursts caused the government to get involved in the labor movement.

It began with strikes by West Coast longshore-men—workers who loaded and unloaded cargo ships. They struck, tying up two thousand miles of coastline. A general strike in San Francisco followed, then another in Minneapolis, and then the biggest strike of all: 325,000 textile workers in the South.

New unions formed among workers who had never been organized. Black farmers were hit very hard by the Depression. Some were attracted to the strangers who started showing up, suggesting that they unionize. Hosea Hudson, a black man from rural Georgia who had worked the land from the age of ten, joined the Communist Party and helped organize unemployed blacks in Birmingham, Alabama. Later he recalled those years of activism:

Block committees would meet every week, had a regular meeting. We talked about the welfare question, what was happening, we read the *Daily Worker* and the *Southern Worker* to see what was going on about unemployed relief... . We kept it up, we was on top, so people always wanted to come cause we had something different to tell them each time.

In many strikes, the decision to act came from the rank and file—the ordinary members—not from the union leaders. Rubber workers in Akron, Ohio, came up with a new kind of

strike called a sit-down. Instead of leaving the plant and marching outside, they remained inside and did not work.

The longest sit-down strike took place among auto workers in Michigan. Starting in December 1936, for forty days there was a community of two thousand strikers. "It was like war," one of them said. "The guys with me became my buddies." Committees organized recreation, classes, postal service, and sanitation. A restaurant owner across the street prepared three meals a day. Armed workers circled the plant outside, fighting off a police attack. Finally the strikers and management agreed to a six-month contract, and the strike ended.

To bring a halt to this type of labor unrest, the government set up the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The NLRB would recognize the legal status of unions, listen to their complaints, and settle some of their issues. At the same time, the unions themselves were trying to become more influential, even respectable. Leaders of the major associations, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), wanted to keep strikes to a minimum. They began channeling workers' rebellious energy into things like contract talks and meetings.

Some historians of the labor movement claim that workers won most during the early years of rank-and-file uprisings, before unions were recognized and well organized. While the AFL and the CIO each had more than 6 million members by 1945, their power was less than it had been before. Gains from the use of strikes kept getting whittled down. The NLRB leaned more toward the side of management than toward labor, the Supreme Court ruled that sit-down strikes were illegal, and state governments passed laws that made striking and picketing more difficult.

By the late 1930s, the worst of the Depression had passed for some people. New laws passed in 1938 limited the work week to forty hours and outlawed child labor. The Social Security Act gave retirement benefits and unemployment insurance (but not to everyone—farmers, for example, were left out). There was a new minimum wage, and the government built some housing projects. These measures

didn't help everyone who needed help, but they made people feel that something was being done.

Black people gained little from the New Deal. Many worked as tenant farmers, farm laborers, domestic workers, and migrants. They did not qualify for the minimum wage or unemployment insurance. Blacks suffered job discrimination—they were the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Lynchings continued, and so did less violent forms of racial prejudice.

In the mid-1930s a young black poet named Langston Hughes gave voice to frustration and hope in a poem called “Let America Be America Again”:

... I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,  
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.  
I am the red man driven from the land,  
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—  
And finding only the same old stupid plan.  
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak...  
O, let America be America again—  
The land that never has been yet—

The New Deal had brought an exciting flowering of the arts, such as had never happened before in American history. Federal money was used to pay thousands of writers, artists, musicians, and photographers for creative projects. Working-class audiences saw plays and heard symphonies for the first time. But by 1939, the arts programs ended. The country was more stable, and the New Deal was over.

Capitalism had not changed. The rich still controlled the nation's wealth, as well as its laws, courts, police, newspapers, churches, and colleges. Enough help had been given to make Roosevelt a hero to millions, but the system that had brought the Great Depression remained in place.

Elsewhere in the world, war was brewing. German leader Adolf Hitler was on the march in Europe. Across the Pacific,



Japan was invading China. For the United States, war was not far off.

# CHAPTER SIXTEEN

## **WORLD WAR II AND THE COLD WAR**

WORLD WAR I WAS ONLY ABOUT TWENTY YEARS in the past when another huge war began in Europe. Some call it the most popular war the United States ever fought. Eighteen million Americans served in the armed forces, and 25 million gave money from their paychecks to support the war.

It was a war against evil—the evil of Germany’s Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler. After coming to power in Germany, the Nazis began attacking Jews and members of other minorities. Hitler’s Germany became a war machine, determined to conquer other countries. For the United States to step forward to defend those helpless people and countries matched the image of the nation in American schoolbooks, but is that what really happened? Are there other ways to look at World War II, questions that did not get asked in the patriotic excitement of the time?

## **America at War**

THE WAR STARTED IN 1939 AFTER GERMANY attacked Poland. Germany had already taken over Austria and Czechoslovakia. Later the Germans would invade and occupy France. Italy had already invaded the African nation of Ethiopia. Together with some smaller powers, Germany and Italy formed one side in the conflict. They were known as the Axis. Against them stood the Allies. Britain was one of the main Allied powers. Another was Russia, which now had a Communist government and had been renamed the Soviet Union.

The other side of the world was at war, too. Japan had attacked China and was moving toward Southeast Asia, which had rich resources of tin, rubber, and oil.

What did the United States do while this was happening? Hitler's attacks on the Jews did not bring the United States into the war. Neither did Germany's invasions of other countries, although President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent American aid to Britain. Neither did Japan's attack on China.

The United States entered the war after the Japanese attacked an American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. This strike at a link in the American Pacific empire was the reason the United States joined the fight, in Europe as well as Asia.

Once the United States had joined with England and Russia in the war, what were its goals? Was America fighting for humanitarian reasons or for power and profit? Was it fighting to end the control of some nations by others—or to make sure that the controlling nations were friends of the United States?

Noble statements about the government's goals didn't always match the things that were said privately. In August of 1941, Roosevelt and the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, announced their goals for the world after the war. They said that they

respected “the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live.” But two weeks earlier, a top U.S. government official had quietly promised the French government that France would regain its empire of overseas territories after the war.

Italy had bombed cities when it invaded Ethiopia. German planes had dropped bombs on cities in the Netherlands and England. These were not attacks on military targets. They were attacks on the civilian population. Roosevelt had called them “inhuman barbarism that has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity.”

But the German bombings were very small compared with British and American bombings of German cities. Raids of a thousand planes or more targeted cities. They did not even pretend to be seeking only military targets. The climax of the Allied terror bombing was an attack on the German city Dresden. More than a hundred thousand people died in a firestorm started by the bombs.

During the war, newspaper headlines were full of battles and troop movements. Behind the headlines, American diplomats and businessmen worked hard to make sure that when the war ended American economic power would be second to none in the world. At the time, the poet Archibald MacLeish was an assistant secretary of state. He wrote:

As things are now going, the peace we will make, the peace we seem to be making, will be a peace of oil, a peace of gold, a peace of shipping, a peace, in brief ... without moral purpose or human interest... .

Many people thought that the reason for the war against the Axis was to end the terrible situation of Jews in German-occupied Europe. But that wasn't a chief concern of Roosevelt. While Jews were being put in concentration camps, and Germany was getting ready to begin exterminating 6 million Jews (and millions of other minorities and dissidents) in what has come to be called the Holocaust, Roosevelt failed to take steps to save some of those doomed lives. He left it to the U.S. State Department, which did nothing.

Hitler claimed that the white German race—he called it Aryan or Nordic—was superior to others. Was the war being fought to show that his ideas of racial superiority were wrong? American blacks

might not have thought so. The nation's armed forces were segregated by race. Even the blood banks that saved thousands of lives kept blood from white people apart from blood donated by black people. A black doctor named Charles Drew had invented the blood-bank system, but when he tried to end blood segregation, he was fired.

(left) Japanese American citizens on their way to an internment camp flash “victory” signs, 1942.



Blacks in the United States knew the reality of racial prejudice, and sometimes racial violence, in everyday life. In 1943 an African American newspaper printed a poem about the thoughts of a black man drafted into the army:

Dear Lord, today  
I go to war:  
To fight, to die,  
Tell me what for?  
Dear Lord, I'll fight,  
I do not fear,  
Germans or Japs;

My fears are here.  
America!

In the way it treated Japanese Americans during the war, the United States came close to the brutal, racist oppression that it was supposed to be fighting against. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, anti-Japanese feeling was strong in the government. One congressman said, "I'm for catching every Japanese in America, Alaska and Hawaii now and putting them in concentration camps... . Let's get rid of them!"

In 1942 Roosevelt gave the army the power to arrest every Japanese American on the West Coast—eleven thousand men, women, and children. Three-fourths of them had been born in the United States and were U.S. citizens. The others, born in Japan, could not become U.S. citizens because American law made that impossible.

The Japanese were taken from their homes and carried to camps in remote regions of the interior. There they were kept in prison conditions. They remained in those camps for more than three years.

The war in Europe ended in May 1945 when a beaten Germany surrendered to the Allies. By August of that year, Japan also was in desperate shape and ready to surrender. But there was one problem. The Japanese emperor was a holy figure to many of his people, and Japan wanted to keep him in place after a surrender. If the United States had agreed, Japan would have stopped the war. But the United States refused, and the fighting continued. (After the war, the United States allowed the emperor to remain anyway.)

Japan did give up—after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945. The bombs killed as many as 150,000 people and left countless others to die slowly of radiation poisoning. It was the first use of these deadly new weapons in war.

Why would the United States not take the small step of allowing Japan to keep its emperor if that would have ended the war without the use of atomic weapons? Was it because too much money and work had gone into the atomic bomb not to use it? Or was it because the United States wanted to end the war before the Soviet Union could enter the fight against Japan, as it planned to do? If Japan

surrendered to the Soviet Union, then the Russians, not the Americans, would control postwar Japan.

Whatever the real reasons for dropping atomic bombs on Japan, at least the war was over. Or was it?

*(left)* Ethel and Julius Rosenberg leaving New York City Federal Court after arraignment, 1950.







## **The War at Home**

THE WAR YEARS WERE A PATRIOTIC TIME IN the United States. The country seemed totally dedicated to winning the war. There was no organized antiwar movement. Only one socialist group came out firmly against the war. It was the Socialist Workers Party. In 1943 eighteen of its members went to jail under a law that made it a crime to join any group that called for “the overthrow of government by force and violence.”

Still, many people thought the war was wrong. About 350,000 of them avoided the draft. More than forty thousand flatly refused to fight.

The nation’s two biggest groups of labor unions, the AFL and the CIO, had pledged not to go out on strike during the war. Yet there were more strikes during wartime than at any other time in American history. In 1944 alone, more than a million workers walked off their jobs in mines, steel mills, and manufacturing plants. Many were angry that their wages stayed the same while the companies that made weapons and other war materials were earning huge profits.

By the end of the war, things seemed better to a lot of people. The war had brought big corporate profits, but it also had brought higher prices for farm crops, wage increases for some workers, and enough prosperity for enough people to keep them from becoming rebellious. It was an old lesson learned by governments—war solves the problem of controlling the citizens. The president of the General Electric Corporation suggested that business and the military should create “a permanent wartime economy.”

That’s just what happened. The public was tired of war, but its new president, Harry S. Truman, built a mood of crisis that

came to be called the Cold War. In the Cold War, America's enemy was the Communist country that had been its ally in World War II, the Soviet Union.

## **New Wars**

THE RIVALRY WITH THE SOVIET UNION WAS real. The former Russia was making an amazing comeback from the war. It was rebuilding its economy and regaining military strength. But the Truman administration presented the Soviet Union as something worse than a rival. The Soviet Union, and communism itself, were seen as immediate threats.

The U.S. government encouraged fear of communism. Any communism-related revolutionary movement in Europe or Asia was made to look as if the Soviets were taking over more of the world. When Communist-led revolutionaries gained control of the Chinese government in 1949, China became the world's most populous Communist nation—and added fuel to Americans' fear.

The growing fear of Soviet power and communism in general led to a big increase in U.S. military spending. It also led to new political partnerships between conservatives and liberals.

In politics, a conservative is someone who wants to preserve the existing order of society, government, and the economy. Conservatives tend to place a high value on security, stability, and established institutions. A liberal is someone who supports progress, often through change. If the changes are extreme, a liberal may be called a radical. Liberals tend to place a high value on individual rights, civil liberties, and direct participation in government. (The liberal position has come to

be called the Left, while the conservative position is the Right.)

The United States wanted to unite conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, in support of the Cold War and the fight against communism. Events in the Asian nation of Korea helped President Truman get that support.

After World War II, Korea had been freed from Japanese control and divided into two countries. North Korea was a socialist dictatorship, part of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. South Korea was a conservative dictatorship in the American sphere of influence. In 1950 North Korea invaded South Korea. The United Nations—which had been created during the war and was dominated by the United States—asked its member nations to help South Korea. Truman sent U.S. forces, and the United Nations army became the American army.

When American forces pushed all the way through North Korea to the Chinese border, China entered the fighting on the side of North Korea. In three years, the war killed as many as 2 million Koreans and reduced North and South Korea to ruins. Yet when the fighting ended in 1953, the boundary between the two Koreas was where it had been before.

If the Korean War changed little in Korea, it had an effect in the United States. It caused many liberals to join with conservatives in supporting the president, the war, and the military economy. This meant trouble for radical critics who stayed outside the circle of agreement.

The Left had become a force during the Depression and the war. The Communist Party probably never had more than about a hundred thousand members, but it had influence in the labor unions, in the arts, and among Americans who had seen the failure of capitalism in the 1930s. To make capitalism more secure, to build support for an American victory over Communist foes, the nation's established powers of government and business had to weaken the Left. They did so

by attacking communism. The hunt for Reds, as Communists were called, soon filled American life.

In 1947 Truman launched a program to search out “disloyal persons” in the U.S. government. In the next five years, more than 6.5 million government employees were investigated. In their book *The Fifties*, historians Douglas Miller and Marion Nowack described the results:

Not a single case of espionage was uncovered, though about 500 persons were dismissed in dubious cases of “questionable loyalty.” All of this was conducted with secret evidence, secret and often paid informers, and neither judge nor jury... . A conservative and fearful reaction coursed the country. Americans became convinced of the need for absolute security and the preservation of the established order.

World events built support for this anti-Communist crusade. Communist parties came to power in places like Czechoslovakia and China. Revolutionary movements flared up in Asia and Africa when colonial peoples demanded independence from European powers. These events were presented to the American public as signs of a worldwide Communist plot.

Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin began his own crusade to find Communist traitors in the country’s State Department and the military. He found nothing and eventually became an embarrassment to the government. Other political leaders, however, had their own ideas for crushing dissent. Liberal senators Hubert Humphrey and Herbert Lehman suggested that suspected Communists and traitors could be held without trial in concentration camps. The camps were set up, ready for use.

The government also made lists of hundreds of organizations it considered suspicious. Anyone who joined these groups, or even seemed sympathetic to them, could be investigated. Leaders of the Communist Party were jailed.

In 1950 the government charged Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, known to be connected with the Communist Party, with giving atomic secrets to the Soviets. Although the evidence against the Rosenbergs was weak, they were executed as spies. Later investigations proved that the case was deeply flawed. But at the time, everything from movies and comic strips to history lessons and newspapers urged Americans to fight communism.

By 1960, the Establishment seemed to have succeeded in weakening the Left. The Communist-radical upsurge of the New Deal and the wartime years had been broken up. The Cold War kept the country in a permanent war economy. There were big pockets of poverty, but enough people were making enough money to keep things quiet. Everything seemed under control. And then, in the 1960s, rebellions exploded in every area of American life.

# CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## **BLACK REVOLT AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

THE BLACK REVOLT OF THE 1950S AND 1960s surprised white America, but it shouldn't have. When people are oppressed, memory is the one thing that can't be taken away from them. For people with memories of oppression, revolt is always just an inch below the surface.

Blacks in the United States had the memory of slavery. Beyond that, they lived with the daily realities of lynching, insults, and segregation. As the twentieth century went on, they found new ways to resist.

## **Fighting Back**

In the 1920s a black poet named Claude McKay wrote these lines:

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot... .  
Like men we'll face the murderous cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

McKay's words were entered into the *Congressional Record* as an example of the dangerous new ideas of young black men. It must have seemed dangerous to the nation's leaders that blacks spoke of fighting back.

Some blacks fought the system by joining the Communist Party. The Communists had been active in the South. They had helped defend the "Scottsboro Boys," nine young black men falsely accused of rape in Alabama. Among the well-known African Americans connected to the Communist Party were the scholar W. E. B. DuBois and the actor and singer Paul Robeson.

During the 1930s the Communists organized committees to seek help for the needy. An organizer named Angelo Herndon was arrested and charged with promoting revolution. He recalled his trial:

They questioned me in great detail. Did I believe that the bosses and government ought to pay insurance to unemployed workers? That Negroes should have complete equality with white people? Did I feel that the working-class could run the mills and mines and government?

That it wasn't necessary to have bosses at all?



I told them I believed all of that—and more... .

Herndon spent five years in prison before the Supreme Court ruled that the law he had been arrested for breaking was unconstitutional. To the Establishment, men like Herndon were signs of a frightening new mood among blacks. That mood was militancy—a willingness to fight.

## Toward Civil Rights

PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN KNEW THAT THE United States had to do something about race for two reasons. One reason was to calm the frustrated black people of the United States. The other reason had to do with America's image in the world.

*(left)* Rosa Parks speaks with an interviewer as she arrives at court, 1956.



Nonwhite people around the world were accusing the United States of being a racist society. America's Cold War with the Soviet Union was on, and each side wanted to gain influence around the globe. But the poor civil rights record of the United States could hold it back in world politics.

Truman created a Committee on Civil Rights in 1946. The committee recommended laws against lynching and against racial discrimination in jobs and voting. Congress took no action. However, Truman did order the armed forces to desegregate, or end racial separation. It took ten years, but the military was finally integrated, with blacks and whites no longer separated.

The nation's public schools remained segregated until courageous southern blacks took on the Supreme Court in a series of lawsuits. In 1954, in a decision called *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Court ordered the nation's public schools to stop the "separate but equal" treatment of children separated by race. The Court's big decision sent a message around the world—the U.S. government had outlawed segregation. But change came slowly. Ten years later, more than three-fourths of the school districts in the South were still segregated.



## CLAUDETTE COLVIN

AROUND 4:00 P.M. ON MARCH 2, 1955—nine months before forty-two-year-old Rosa Parks did it—fifteen-year-old Claudette Colvin asserted her constitutional right to her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, helping to jump-start the Civil Rights Movement. Confronting jeers, shoves, and insults from the white people around her and the two policemen who arrested her, she was charged with violating the segregation law, disorderly conduct, and “assaulting” the arresting officers.

Here she tells the story in her own words:

*On March 2, 1955, I got on the bus in front of Dexter Avenue Church. I went to the middle. No white people were on the bus at that time. It was mostly schoolchildren. I wasn't thinking about anything in particular. I think I had just finished eating a candy bar. Then the bus began to fill up. White people got on and began to stare at me. The bus motorman asked me to get up. We were getting into the square where all the buses take their routes in either direction. A colored lady got on, and she was pregnant. I was sitting next to the window. The seat next to me was the only seat unoccupied. She didn't realize what was going on. She didn't know that the bus driver had asked me to get up. She just saw the empty seat and sat next to me. A white lady was sitting across the aisle from me, and it was against the law for you to sit in the same aisle with a white person.*

*The bus driver looked back through the rearview mirror and again told me to get up. I didn't. I knew he was talking to me. He said, “Hey, get up!” I didn't say anything. When I didn't get up, he didn't move the bus. He said before he'd drive on, I'd have to get up. People were saying, “Why don't you get up? Why don't you get up?” One girl said,*

*"She knows she has to get up." Then another girl said, "She doesn't have to. Only one thing you have to do is stay black and die."*



*The white people were complaining. The driver stopped the bus and said, "This can't go on." Then he got up and said, "I'm going to call the cops." First a traffic patrolman came on the bus and he asked, "Are any of you gentleman enough to get up and give this pregnant lady your seat?" There were two black men in the back of the bus who were sanitation workers. They got up, and the pregnant lady went and sat in the back. That left me still sitting by the window.*

*I remained there, and the traffic patrolman said, "Aren't you going to get up?"*

*I said, "No. I do not have to get up. I paid my fare, so I do not have to get up. It's my constitutional right to sit here just as much as that lady. It's my constitutional right!"*

Source: Levine, Ellen. *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories*. New York: Penguin Putnam / Puffin, 1993.

For blacks, progress wasn't fast enough. In the early 1960s black people rose in rebellion all over the South. By the late 1960s there were wild uprisings in a hundred northern cities, too. What triggered this angry revolt?

A forty-three-year-old black woman named Rosa Parks sat down one day in the "white" section of a city bus. She had long been active in the NAACP, which was determined to challenge segregated seating on Montgomery buses. She was arrested.

Montgomery's blacks called a mass meeting. They boycotted the city buses, refusing to ride. Instead, they walked or organized car pools. The city was losing a lot of income from bus fares. It arrested a hundred of the boycott leaders.

White segregationists turned to violence. They exploded bombs in four black churches. They fired a shotgun through the front door of the home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a minister who helped lead the boycott. But the black people of Montgomery kept up the boycott, and in November 1956 the Supreme Court made segregation on local bus lines illegal.

## **Martin Luther King Preaches Nonviolence**

AT A MEETING DURING THE BOYCOTT, MARTIN Luther King showed the gift of speech making that would soon inspire millions of people to work for racial justice. He said:

We have known humiliation, we have known abusive language, we have been plunged into the abyss of oppression. And we decided to raise up only with the weapon of protest... . We must use the weapon of love. We must have compassion and understanding for those who hate us.

King called on African Americans to practice nonviolence—to seek justice without doing harm to others. This message won him followers among whites as well as blacks. Yet some blacks thought that King's message was too simple. Some of those who oppressed them, they believed, would have to be bitterly fought.

Still, in the years after the Montgomery bus boycott, southern blacks stressed nonviolence. One nonviolent movement started in 1960, when four first-year students at an African American college in North Carolina decided to sit down at a drugstore lunch counter where only whites ate. The store wouldn't serve them, but they did not leave. They came back, joined by others, day after day, to sit at the counter.



Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. waves to participants in the Civil Rights Movement's March on Washington, 1963.





Sit-ins spread to other southern cities. The sit-inners experienced violence. But they inspired more than fifty thousand people—mostly blacks, some whites—to join demonstrations in a hundred cities. By the end of 1960, lunch counters were open to blacks in many places.

## **Freedom Riders and the Mississippi Summer**

FOR A LONG TIME, IT HAD BEEN ILLEGAL TO segregate people by race during long-distance travel. But the federal government had never enforced the law in the South, where blacks and whites were still kept apart on interstate buses. In the spring of 1961, a group of black and white protestors set out to change that.

These Freedom Riders got on a bus in Washington, D.C., bound for New Orleans. They never reached New Orleans. Riders were beaten in South Carolina. A bus was set on fire in Alabama. Segregationists attacked the Riders with fists and iron bars. The southern police did nothing. Neither did the federal government, even though FBI agents watched the violence.

Young people who had taken part in the sit-ins formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). They organized another group of Freedom Riders, who were attacked by a mob of whites and later arrested. By this time the Freedom Riders were in the news all over the world.

Young black children joined demonstrations across the South. In Albany, Georgia, a small town where the atmosphere of slavery lingered, blacks held marches and mass meetings. After arresting protestors, the police chief took their names. One protestor was a boy about nine years old. "What's your name?" the police chief asked. The boy looked straight at him and answered, "Freedom, Freedom." A new generation was learning how to demand its rights.

The SNCC and other civil rights groups worked in Mississippi to register blacks for voting and to organize protests against racial injustice. They called on young people

from other parts of the country to help, to come south for a "Mississippi Summer." Facing increasing violence and danger, in June of 1964 they asked President Lyndon B. Johnson and Attorney General Robert Kennedy for federal protection. They got no answer.

Soon afterward, three civil rights workers, one black and two white, were arrested in Philadelphia, Mississippi. After being let out of jail late at night, they were beaten with chains and shot to death. Later the sheriff, deputy sheriff, and others went to jail for the murders.

## **Black Power**

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT HAD REFUSED, again and again, to defend blacks against violence. Still, the uproar about civil rights, and the attention it drew around the world, made Congress pass some civil rights laws, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These laws promised much but were ignored or poorly enforced. Then, in 1965, a stronger Voting Rights Act made a difference in southern voting. In 1952, only 20 percent of blacks who could vote had registered to do so. But by 1968, 60 percent were registered—the same percentage as white voters.

The federal government was trying to control an explosive situation without making any basic changes. It wanted to channel black anger into traditional places, such as voting booths and quiet meetings with official support.

One meeting like that had taken place in 1963, when Martin Luther King led a huge march on Washington, D.C. The crowd thrilled to King's magnificent "I Have a Dream" speech, but the speech lacked the anger that many blacks felt. John Lewis was a young SNCC leader who had been arrested and beaten many times in the fight for racial equality. Lewis wanted the meeting to express some outrage, but its leaders wouldn't let him criticize the national government.

Two months later, a black militant named Malcolm X gave his view of the March on Washington:

The Negroes were out there in the streets. They were talking about how they were going to march on Washington... .

It was the grass roots out there in the street. It scared the white man to death, scared the white power structure in Washington, D.C. to death... .

This is what they did with the March on Washington. They joined it ... became part of it, took it over... . It became a picnic, a circus. Nothing but a circus, with clowns and all... . It was a takeover ... they told the Negroes what time to hit town, where to stop, what signs to carry, what song to sing, what speech they could make, and what speech they couldn't make, and then told them to get out of town by sundown.

People were still exploding bombs in black churches, killing children. The new "civil rights" laws weren't changing the basic conditions of life for black people.

Nonviolence had worked in the southern civil rights movement, partly by turning the country's opinion against the segregationist South. But by 1965, half of all African Americans lived in the North. There were deep problems in the ghettos, the poor black neighborhoods, of the nation's cities.

In the summer of 1965, the ghetto of Watts, Los Angeles, erupted with rioting in the streets and with looting and firebombing of stores. Thirty-four people were killed. Most of them were black.

More outbreaks took place the next year. In 1967, the biggest urban riots in American history broke out in black ghettos across the land. Eighty-three people died of gunfire, mostly in Newark, New Jersey, and Detroit, Michigan.

Martin Luther King was still respected, but new heroes were replacing him. "Black Power" was their slogan. They distrusted "progress" that was given a little at a time by whites. They rejected the idea that whites knew what was best for blacks.

Malcolm X was Black Power's chief spokesman. He was assassinated in 1965, while giving a speech. After his death, millions read the book he wrote about his life. He was more

influential in death than during his lifetime. Another spokesman was Huey Newton of the Black Panthers. This organization had guns and said that blacks should defend themselves.

King was growing concerned about problems that the civil rights laws didn't touch—problems of poverty. He also began speaking out against a war the United States was fighting in the Asian nation of Vietnam. King said, "We are spending all of this money for death and destruction, and not nearly enough money for life and constructive development."

The FBI tapped King's private phone conversations, blackmailed him, and threatened him. A U.S. Senate report of 1976 would say that the FBI "tried to destroy Dr. Martin Luther King." But destruction came when an unseen marksman shot King to death as he stood on the balcony outside his hotel room in Memphis, Tennessee.

The killing of King brought new urban violence. African Americans saw that violence and injustice against them continued. Attacks on blacks were endlessly repeated in the history of the United States, coming out of a deep well of racism in the national mind. But there was something more—now the FBI and police were targeting militant black organizers, such as the Black Panthers.

Was the government afraid that black people would turn their attention from issues such as voting to something more dangerous, such as the question of wealth and poverty? If poor whites and blacks united, large-scale class conflict could become a reality.

But if some blacks were invited into the power system, they might turn away from class conflict. So leaders of nonmilitant black groups visited the White House. White-owned banks began helping black businesses. Newspapers and televisions started showing more black faces. These changes were small,

but they got a lot of publicity. They also drew some young black leaders into the mainstream.

By 1977, more than two thousand African Americans held public office in southern cities. It was a big advance—but it was still less than 3 percent of all elective offices, although blacks made up 20 percent of the total population.

More blacks could go to universities, to law and medical school. Northern cities were busing children back and forth to integrate their schools. But none of this was helping the unemployment, poverty, crime, drug addiction, and violence that were destroying the black lower class in the ghettos. At the same time, government programs to aid African Americans seemed to favor blacks over whites. When poor whites and poor blacks competed for jobs, housing, and the miserable schools that the government provided for all the poor, new racial tension grew.

No great black movement was under way in the mid-1970s. Yet a new black pride and awareness had been born, and it was still alive. What form would it take in the future?



# CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## VIETNAM

“DEAR MOM AND DAD” AN AMERICAN SOLDIER wrote home from Vietnam, “Today we went on a mission and I am not very proud of myself, my friends, or my country.” What kind of war would make a soldier feel that way? It was a war that made many Americans angry and ashamed of their country.

For nearly a decade, the richest and most powerful nation in the history of the world tried to defeat a revolutionary movement in a tiny, peasant country—and failed. When the United States fought a war in the southeastern Asian nation of Vietnam, it was modern military technology against organized human beings. The human beings won.

Vietnam also created the biggest antiwar movement the United States had ever seen. Thousands of people marched in the streets. Students organized protests. Artists, writers, and soldiers boldly spoke out against the war. The antiwar movement was loud and long-lasting. It helped bring the fighting to an end.

## **Communism and Combat**

BEFORE WORLD WAR II, FRANCE CONTROLLED the Southeast Asian nation of Vietnam. When that war started, Japanese troops occupied the country. A revolutionary movement arose among the Vietnamese people, led by a Communist named Ho Chi Minh, to fight the Japanese. At the end of the war, the revolutionaries celebrated in Hanoi, a city in northern Vietnam. A million people filled the streets, rejoicing that their country was free of foreign control at last.

But the Western powers were already taking away that freedom. Before long, England and the United States saw to it that France regained control of Vietnam. Revolutionaries in the north resisted, and in 1946 the French started bombing them. It was the beginning of an eight-year war against the Communist movement, called the Vietminh. Before it was over, the United States gave a billion dollars in military aid, along with hundreds of thousands of weapons, to the French to use in Vietnam.

Why did the United States help France? The official reason was to stop the rise of communism in Asia. Communist governments had already come to power in China and North Korea. It was the height of the Cold War, when communism was seen as the greatest danger to America. But could there have been other reasons as well?

A secret U.S. government memo from 1952 talked about Southeast Asia's resources. Its rubber, tin, and oil were important to the United States. If a government that was hostile to the United States came to power in Vietnam, it might get in the way of the United States' influence and interests. In

1954, a memo in the U.S. State Department said, “If the French actually decided to withdraw [from Vietnam], the U.S. would have to consider most seriously whether to take over in this area.”

That same year, the French did withdraw from northern Vietnam. Under the peace agreement, the Vietminh agreed to remain in the north. The northern and southern parts of Vietnam were supposed to be unified after two years, and the people would be allowed to elect their own government. It seemed likely that they would choose Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh.

The United States moved quickly to keep North and South Vietnam from being united. To bring South Vietnam under American influence, it placed the government in charge of an official named Ngo Dinh Diem. He was friendly to the United States, but the Vietnamese people disliked him.

Diem did not hold the scheduled elections. Around 1958, guerrilla attacks on his government began in South Vietnam. The guerrillas, called Viet Cong, were aided by the Communist government of North Vietnam.

The Communist movement gained strength in the south. To the Vietnamese people, it was more than a war against Diem. It was a way of reorganizing society so that ordinary villagers would have more control over their lives. Open opposition to Diem increased. Buddhist monks set themselves on fire and burned to death to protest against the South Vietnamese government.

Under the international peace agreement, the United States could send just 685 military advisers to South Vietnam. It sent thousands more, and some of them helped fight against the guerrillas. The United States had entered into a secret, illegal war.

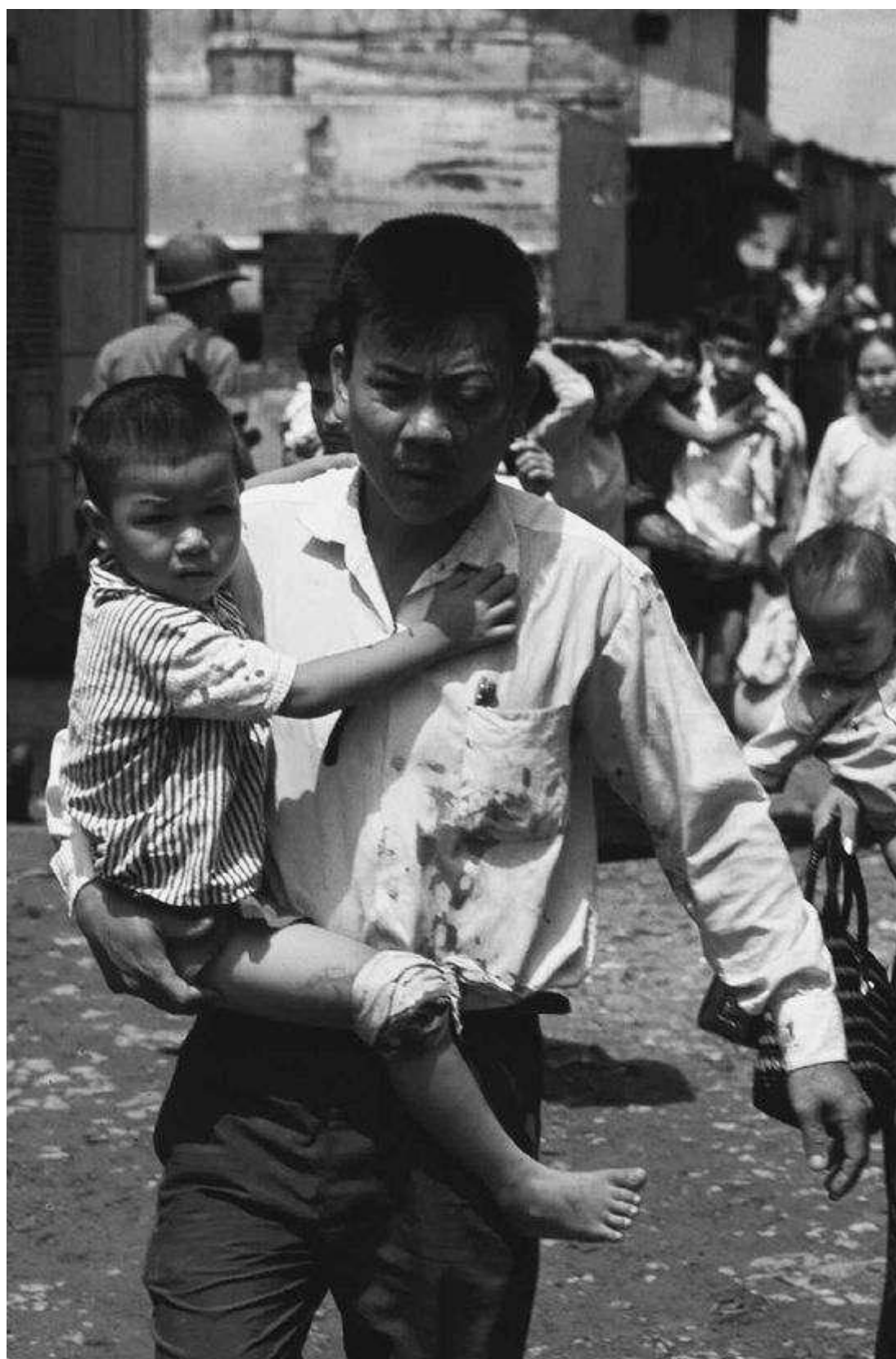
Next, the U.S. administration decided that Diem was not helping them control South Vietnam. The Central Intelligence

Agency (CIA) secretly encouraged some Vietnamese generals to overthrow him. The generals attacked Diem's seaside palace and executed him and his brother.

Three weeks later, the American president John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Texas. When his vice president, Lyndon B. Johnson, became president, he inherited the problem of Vietnam.

In August 1964, Johnson told the American public that the North Vietnamese had fired torpedos at a U.S. Navy Ship. It was a lie. The ship had been spying for the CIA in Vietnamese territorial waters, and no torpedoes were fired. But the "attack" gave the United States a reason to make war on North Vietnam. Under the U.S. Constitution, only Congress could declare war. Instead, Congress gave the president power to take military actions in Southeast Asia without a formal declaration of war.

*(left)* Civilians begin to evacuate homes in Cholon area of Saigon during an attack, 1968.



American warplanes began bombarding North Vietnam. They also bombed villages in South Vietnam where they thought Viet Cong were hiding. Sometimes they dropped a weapon called napalm, which is gasoline in jelly form, horribly destructive to human flesh. A *New York Times* article from September 1965 described the results:

In another delta province there is a woman who has both arms burned off by napalm and her eyelids so badly burned that she cannot close them. When it is time for her to sleep her family puts a blanket over her head. The woman had two of her children killed in the air strike that maimed her. Few Americans appreciate what their nation is doing to South Vietnam with airpower... . [I]nnocent civilians are dying every day in South Vietnam.

American troops also poured into South Vietnam. By early 1968 there were more than half a million of them there. As they raided villages looking for guerrillas, the difference between an enemy and a civilian seemed to disappear.

In March 1968 a company of American soldiers went into a village called My Lai. They rounded up the villagers, including old people and women carrying babies. Then they ordered the people into a ditch and shot them. The army tried to cover up what had happened at My Lai, but after word got out, several of the officers stood trial. A newspaper report of the trial described the massacre at My Lai:

Lieutenant Calley and a weeping rifleman named Paul D. Meadlo—the same soldier who had fed candy to the children before shooting them—pushed the prisoners into the ditch... . People were diving on top of each other; mothers were trying to protect their children... . Between 450 and 500 people—mostly women, children, and older men, were buried in mass graves.

Calley was sentenced to life in prison, but he served just three years of house arrest. An army officer admitted that many other tragedies like My Lai remained hidden.

As the war went on, the United States started bombing Laos, Vietnam's neighbor. This was to keep the Viet Cong from operating bases there and to destroy supply routes used by the Viet Cong. The bombing in Laos was kept from the public. But when the United States later bombed another Southeast Asian country, Cambodia, the news reached the public and caused an outcry of protest.

## **“This Madness Must Cease”**

AMERICAN FIREPOWER WAS ENORMOUS, BUT it wasn't ending the resistance in Vietnam. And in the United States, the public was turning against the war. Some were horrified by its cruelty. Others simply felt that it was a failure that had killed forty thousand U.S. soldiers and wounded a quarter of a million more by early 1968.

President Johnson had stepped up a brutal war and still failed to win it. He became so unpopular that he could not appear in public without an anti-war demonstration. Protestors shouted, “LBJ, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?”

From the start, Americans had protested against U.S. actions in Vietnam. Some of the first protests came out of the civil rights movement—maybe because black people's experience with the government made them distrust any claim that it was fighting for freedom. In 1965, young blacks in Mississippi who had just learned that a classmate was killed in Vietnam passed out a pamphlet that said: “No Mississippi Negroes should be fighting in Viet Nam for the White man's freedom, until all the Negro People are free in Mississippi.”

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a big part of the civil rights movement, said that the United States was breaking international law in Vietnam. It called for an end to the fighting. When six SNCC members invaded an Alabama induction center (an office for entering the armed forces), they were arrested and sentenced to several years in prison.

Julian Bond, an SNCC activist, was elected to the Georgia legislature. After he spoke out against the war and the draft, the others legislators refused to let him take his seat. The Supreme Court restored Bond to his seat, saying that he had the right to free expression under the First Amendment.



In 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the war at Riverside Church in New York:

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed... I speak for the poor of America, who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam... I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours.

Catholic priests and nuns joined the antiwar movement. Father Philip Berrigan, a priest who was also a veteran of World War II, was one of many people who went to jail for destroying the records at offices of the draft board, where young men were required to register for military service. His brother Daniel, also a priest, was imprisoned for a similar act.

Thousands of young American men fled to Canada or Europe. Some were avoiding the draft. Others were soldiers, deserting. Antiwar feeling was strong among servicepeople, both soldiers and veterans. Some spoke out, risking punishment. A navy nurse was court-martialed for marching in a peace demonstration while in uniform. Two black marines went to prison for talking to others against the war.

One antiwar veteran told his story in the book *Born on the Fourth of July*. Ron Kovic enlisted in the U.S. Marines when he was seventeen. He was serving in Vietnam when shellfire shattered his spine and paralyzed him from the waist down. Back in the States, in a wheelchair, Kovic demonstrated against the war. He told how he was treated after being arrested during a demonstration:

“What’s your name?” the officer behind the desk says.

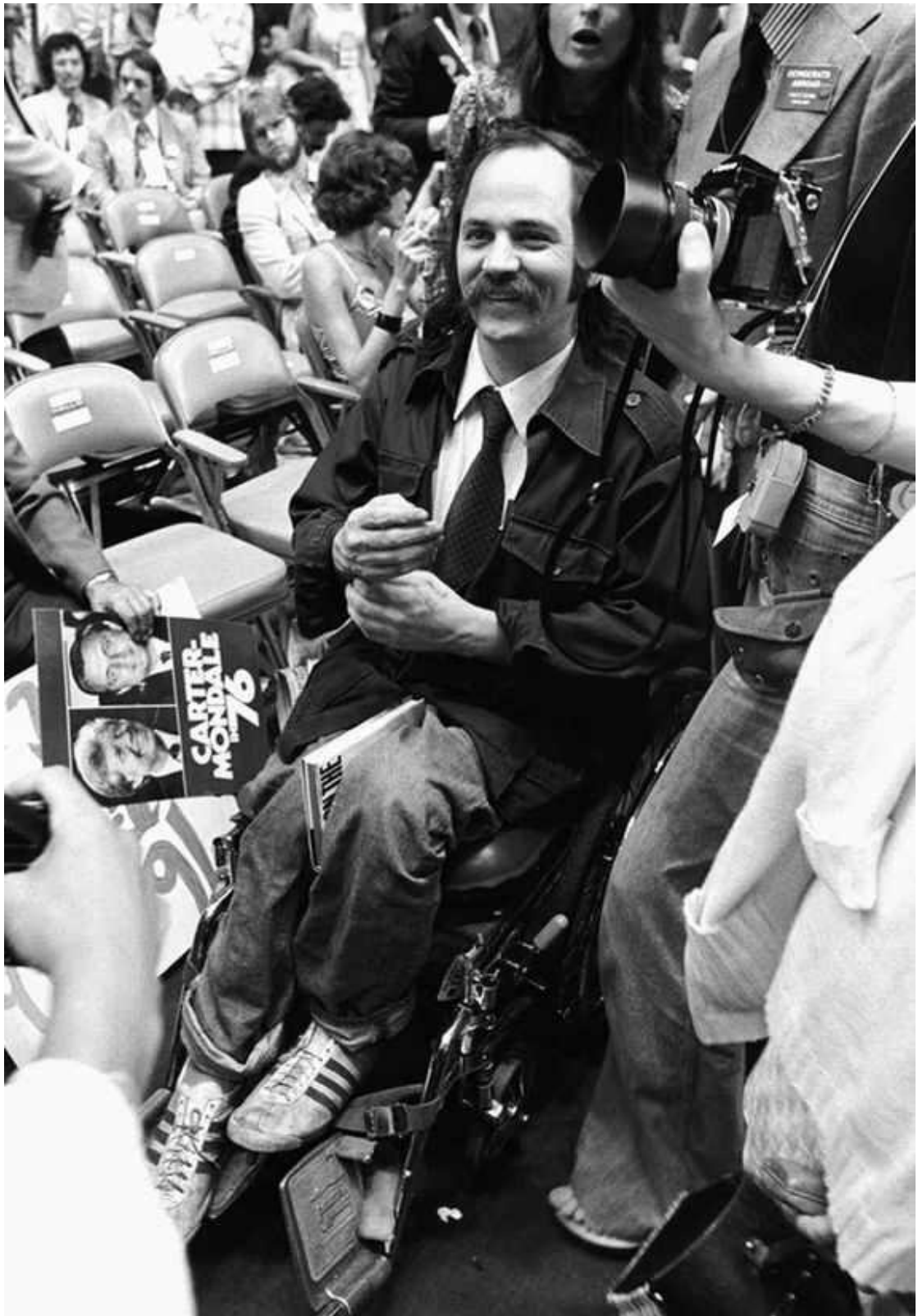
“Ron Kovic,” I say. “Occupation, Vietnam veteran against the war.”

“What?” he says sarcastically, looking down at me.

“I’m a Vietnam veteran against the war,” I almost shout back.

“You should have died over there,” he says. He turns to his assistant. “I’d like to take this guy and throw him off the roof.”

*(left)* Ron Kovic, 1976.



The growth of the antiwar movement couldn't be stopped. When the bombing of North Vietnam had started in 1965, a hundred people gathered in Boston to protest it. But on October

1, 1968, a nationwide day of antiwar activity, a hundred thousand showed up in Boston and as many as 2 million people took part across the United States.

Famous voices and ordinary voices were raised against the war. Arthur Miller, a well-known play-wright, was invited to the White House. He refused to come. Singer Eartha Kitt did accept an invitation to the White House and shocked everyone by speaking out, in front of the president's wife, against the war. A teenager who had won a prize was called to the White House to accept it. He came—and criticized the war.

Even some of those close to the government had had enough. Daniel Ellsberg, a former U.S. Marine, had helped write a top-secret history of the war for the Department of Defense. He and a friend decided to make it public. They leaked the “Pentagon Papers” to the *New York Times*, which published parts of the document.

By that time, Republican Richard Nixon had replaced Democrat Johnson as president. Nixon tried to get the Supreme Court to stop the *Times* from publishing the Pentagon Papers. He failed. The administration then put Ellsberg and his friend on trial. The trial was halted when unfair and illegal acts by Nixon's own administration—an event called the Watergate scandal—became public.

By the fall of 1973, North Vietnamese troops were established in parts of South Vietnam. The American administration could see no victory in sight. After a final, brutal wave of bombing over the north, the United States signed a peace agreement and withdrew its forces. The South Vietnamese government still received American aid, but without the American military it could not hold off an invasion from North Vietnam. In 1975 the country was united under the Communist rule of Ho Chi Minh.

Vietnam was the first defeat to the global American empire that had formed after World War II. That defeat came from a revolutionary peasant army and from an astonishing movement of protest at home. Yet the rebellion at home was spreading beyond the issue of war in Vietnam.

# CHAPTER NINETEEN

## SURPRISES

“ THE TIMES THEY ARE A - CHANGIN’ , ” sang Bob Dylan in the 1960s. Dylan wrote powerful songs of protest. In “Masters of War,” he imagined the deaths of the men who organized wars and profited from them. But Dylan also sang personal songs of freedom and self-expression. His music captured the mood of the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s.

It was a time of revolt. The civil rights movement and the movement against the Vietnam War were part of a larger movement for change. People lost faith in the Establishment—the big powers like business, government, the schools, and the medical industry. They questioned what they were told. They believed that they should be free to think for themselves, and they experimented with new ways of living, teaching, working, and making art.

Unexpected new currents began to flow through American society, moving in surprising directions. Two of the biggest surprises came from women and Indians.

## **Women's Liberation**

By 1960, more than a third of all women age sixteen and older were working outside their homes for wages. Yet only 2 percent of working mothers had nurseries for their children, and women earned a lot less than men. Society saw women as wives, mothers, housekeepers. Many men viewed women as emotional and impractical, not able to do difficult jobs.

Even in the civil rights movement, where women played an important role and stood up to danger, some women knew that men did not regard them as equals. Ella Barker, who had worked for civil rights in Harlem before going to the South to help organize protests, said:

I knew from the beginning that as a woman, an older woman in a group of ministers who are accustomed to having women largely as supporters, there was no place for me to have come into a leadership role.

But women resisted. In 1964, civil rights workers were living in a Freedom House in Mississippi. The women went on strike against the men, who expected them to cook and make beds while the men drove around organizing the movement.

The times *were* a-changing. The National Organization for Women formed in 1966. The following year, women's groups convinced President Johnson to ban discrimination against women in jobs related to the federal government.

By that time, women in the civil rights and anti-war movements were organizing their own meetings and taking action on women's issues. In early 1968, a women's antiwar meeting in Washington, D.C., marched to the Arlington National Cemetery and declared "The Burial of Traditional Womanhood." That same year a group called Radical Women made headlines when they protested the Miss America contest and threw bras, false eyelashes, and wigs into a Freedom Trash Can.



## STUDENT RIGHTS

**A “SHY,” “SHY,” “ETHEREAL,” PEACEFUL FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD** boy named John Tinker won a crucial legal battle on behalf of civil rights during the height of the Vietnam War, the period between 1965 and 1968, when the country was in an uproar. John, his thirteen-year-old sister Mary Beth, and their fifteen-year-old friend Chris Eckhardt were all expelled from school after they wore armbands in school to protest the war. “When people are getting killed, it’s important to me,” John Tinker later said. But school district board president Ora Niffenegger disagreed, saying, “We must have law and order. If we don’t we have chaos.”

John, Mary Beth, and Chris eventually decided to stop wearing the armbands so that they wouldn’t be thrown out of school. But they sued the Des Moines school system to protect the right to protest as a form of expression. The judge ruled against them in favor of the school’s right to ban armbands.



John, Mary Beth, and Chris appealed, and when the appellate court ruling ended in a 4-4 tie, they appealed right up to the US

Supreme Court. By the time the Supreme Court ruled, on February 24, 1969, John was a freshman at the University of Iowa. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of John, Mary Beth, and Chris, by a 7-2 majority. They had won their case! That ruling still protects freedom of expression today. It means that school officials can't just stop students from expressing their thoughts and opinions because they may disagree with them.



Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas wrote the opinion for the majority. Here are some of the things he wrote in his eleven-page opinion, short for a constitutional case:

*School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students.*

*Students in school as well as out of school are persons under our Constitution.*

*[Neither] students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.*

*State-operated schools may not be enclaves of totalitarianism.*

*[Education works best when practiced with] a robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth out of a multitude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection.*





Source: Johnson, John W. *The Struggle for Student Rights: Tinker v. Des Moines and the 1960s*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1997.

(left) Former New York Congresswoman Bella Abzug (2nd from right) joins marchers celebrating the 60th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, 1980.



Hoping to change the U.S. Constitution to ensure full equality of the sexes, many women worked to get an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) passed by the states. Yet it seemed clear that even if they succeeded, the law alone would not be enough to change people's ideas about women's place in society. Shirley Chisholm, a black congresswoman, said:

The law cannot do it for us. We must do it for ourselves. Women in this country must become revolutionaries. We must refuse to accept the old, the traditional roles and stereotypes... . We must replace the old, negative thoughts about our femininity with positive thoughts and positive action... .

The women's movement of the 1960s was called Women's Liberation, or sometimes feminism. Its deepest effect might have been what was called "consciousness raising." Women read or talked about issues that affected them. This led them to rethink old roles, to reject the idea that

women were inferior, and to feel a new confidence and sense of sisterhood with other women.

One of the first and most influential books of the women's movement was *The Feminine Mystique*, by a middle-class housewife named Betty Friedan. The "mystique" was society's image of women finding complete satisfaction as mothers and wives, giving up their own dreams. In trying to live up to that image, many women felt empty and lost. Friedan wrote, "The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own."

Poor women had urgent concerns. Some of them wanted to eliminate hunger, suffering, and inequality right away. Johnnie Tillmon worked with other mothers on welfare to form the National Welfare Rights Organization. It wanted women to be paid for work such as housekeeping and child-rearing, saying, "No woman can be liberated, until all women get off their knees." Tillmon explained:

Welfare's like a traffic accident. It can happen to anybody, but especially it happens to women. And that is why welfare is a women's issue. For a lot of middle-class women in this country, Women's Liberation is a matter of concern. For women on welfare it's a matter of survival.

The control of women in society was not done by the state. Instead, it happened inside the family. Men controlled women, women controlled children, and sometimes they did violence to each other when things weren't going right. But what if it all turned around?

If women liberated themselves, and men and women began to understand each other, would they find that both of them were being kept down by something outside themselves? Maybe families and relationships would become pockets of strength and rebellion against the larger system, and men and women—and children, too—would work together to change society.

## **An Indian Uprising**

**THE INDIANS WERE ONCE THE ONLY INHABITANTS** of America. Then the white invaders pushed them back. The last massacre of the Indians took place in 1890 at Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota. When it was over, between two and three hundred Indian men, women, and children were dead.

*(left)* Fear Forgets leads other Sioux in “Liberation Day” ceremonies on Alcatraz Island, 1970.



The Indian tribes had been attacked, beaten, and starved. The federal government divided them up by putting them on reservations where they lived in poverty. An 1887 law tried to turn the Indians into American-type small farmers by breaking up the reservations into individually owned plots of land. White real-estate speculators got hold of most of the land, and the reservations remained, although young Indians often left them.

For a time, it seemed that the Indians would disappear or blend away into the larger society. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only three hundred thousand of them were left. But then, like a plant that is left to die but refuses to do so, the population started to grow again. By 1960 there were eight hundred thousand Indians. Half of them lived on reservations. The other half lived in cities and towns all over the country.

As the civil rights and antiwar movements took shape in the 1960s, the Indians were also thinking about how to change their situation. They began to organize.

Indians started approaching the U.S. government on an embarrassing topic: treaties. The government had signed more than four hundred treaties with the Indians. It had broken every single one. Back when George Washington was president, the government signed a treaty with the Iroquois tribes of New York that gave certain property to the Seneca nation. But in the early 1960s, under President Kennedy, the government ignored that treaty and built a dam on this land, flooding most of the Seneca reservation.

But Indians in all parts of the country were starting to resist. In the state of Washington, an old treaty had taken land from the Indians but left them fishing rights. As the white population grew, whites wanted the fishing to themselves. After state courts closed river areas to Indians, the Indians held “fish-ins” there. They went to jail, hoping to get publicity for their protest.

Some Indians at the fish-ins were Vietnam veterans. One of them was Sid Mills. In 1968, Mills was arrested on the Nisqually River. He said, “I am a Yakima and a Cherokee Indian, and a man. For two years and four months, I’ve been a soldier in the United States Army. I served in combat in Vietnam—until critically wounded... I hereby renounce further obligation in service or duty to the United States Army.”

A dramatic event in 1969 drew more attention to the Indians' complaints than anything else had done. Alcatraz was an abandoned federal prison on an island in San Francisco Bay. It had been a hated place nicknamed "The Rock." One night seventy-eight Indians landed on Alcatraz and took it over.

Among the group's leaders were Richard Oakes, a Mohawk who directed Indian studies at San Francisco State College, and Grace Thorpe, a Sac and Fox Indian who was the daughter of Jim Thorpe, a famous football star and Olympic athlete. Their plan was to turn the island into a center for Native American environmental studies.

Other Indians came to join them. By the end of November there were more than six hundred people from fifty tribes. The government cut off telephone, electric, and water service to the island. Although many Indians had to leave, others insisted on staying. They were still there a year later, when they sent out this message:

We are still holding the Island of Alcatraz in the true names of Freedom, Justice and Equality, because you, our brothers and sisters of this earth, have lent support to our just cause.

We have learned that violence breeds only more violence and we have therefore carried on our occupation of Alcatraz in a peaceful manner, hoping that the government of these United States will also act accordingly... We are Indians of All Tribes! we hold the rock!

Six months later, federal forces invaded the island and physically removed the Indians.

Other Indian demonstrations took place—to protest strip mining on Navajo land in New Mexico, to reclaim land taken by the Forest Service in California. At the same time, Indians were doing something about the destruction of their culture. An Oklahoma Indian named Evan Haney recalled that though half the kids in his school had been Indians, "nothing in school ... taught anything about Indian culture. There were no books on Indian history, not even in the library... ." Haney knew something was wrong. He found books and started learning his own culture.

As more books about Indian history came into being, teachers started to rethink the way they taught the subject. They avoided old

stereotypes and looked for new sources of information for their students. Students became activists, too. An elementary school student named Raymond Miranda wrote to the publisher of one of his books:

Dear Editor,

I don't like your book called *The Cruise of Christopher Columbus*. I didn't like it because you said some things about Indians that weren't true... . Another thing I didn't like was on page 69, it says that Christopher Columbus invited the Indians to Spain, but what really happened was that he stole them!

In March of 1973, the Indians of North America made a powerful statement on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Hundreds of American Indian Movement members occupied Wounded Knee village at the site of the 1890 massacre. The occupation was a symbol of their demand for Indian rights and Indian land.

Within hours, federal agents, marshals, and police surrounded the town. They began firing with automatic weapons. The protestors inside the town were under siege. When Indians in Michigan sent them a small planeload of food, the authorities arrested the pilot and a doctor who had hired the plane. A few weeks later other planes dropped food for the protestors. When the Indians ran to gather it, a federal helicopter fired down on them. A stray bullet hit a man inside a church. He died.

After more gun battles and another death, the Indians and the authorities agreed to end the siege. A hundred and twenty Indians were arrested. But they had held out for seventy-one days, creating a community inside Wounded Knee and receiving messages of support from all over the world.

The 1960s and early 1970s brought many changes to American society, some large and some small but significant. People felt free to be themselves. Gays and lesbians felt less need to hide the truth about themselves, and they started organizing to fight discrimination. Men and women alike dressed less formally. Comfortable clothes such as jeans became normal for young people of both sexes. Students, parents, and teachers questioned traditional

education, which had taught whole generations the values of patriotism and obeying authority while ignoring or even disrespecting women and people of color. Disabled people became a force, campaigning for legislation that would protect them from discrimination.

In those years, as part of what became known as a “cultural revolution,” people became more conscious of what was happening to the environment. In 1962 Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a book that shocked people into realizing that chemicals used in modern technology were poisoning the air, the water, and the earth. The book became a bestseller and sparked a movement for environmental cleanliness. In 1978, a woman named Lois Gibbs, whose children had become ill in the neighborhood of Love Canal, New York, and who saw other people suffering, became a leader in the struggle against corporations that were endangering people’s lives in their pursuit of maximum profit.

Hundreds of thousands of people joined organizations like the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and EarthFirst! On Earth Day in 1970, 100,000 people marched down Fifth Avenue in New York, and students at 1,500 colleges and 10,000 schools throughout the country demanded protection of the environment. Soon after, Congress passed a number of laws: the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act. They also created the Environmental Protection Agency. Enforcement of these acts was not a priority of the national government, and in the presidency of Ronald Reagan, funds were cut for the E.P.A. Nevertheless, the environmental movement continued its campaigns.

America had never had more movements for change in such a short time. But the Establishment had learned a lot about controlling people in its two hundred years of existence. In the mid-1970s, it went to work.



# CHAPTER TWENTY

## UNDER CONTROL?

“IS THE GOVERNMENT RUN BY A FEW BIG interests looking out for themselves?”

In 1972 a research center asked Americans that question. More than half the people who were asked said, “Yes.” Just eight years before, only about a quarter of them had answered yes. What had happened?

America was changing in the early 1970s. The system was out of control. People had lost faith in the government. A lot of them were hostile to big business, too.

The Vietnam War created a lot of distrust and anger. It killed fifty-eight thousand Americans, and the people had discovered that their government had lied to them and had done terrible deeds. Americans also lost faith in the system because of Watergate, a political disgrace that made a U.S. president step down from office for the first time in history. Many were also deeply concerned about how the United States was acting toward other nations of the world.

*(left)* Newspaper headlines being read by tourists in front of the White House, 1974.



## **Watergate**

**THE STORY OF WATERGATE BEGAN IN THE** White House. Richard M. Nixon, a Republican, was president. To help him win a second term in the White House when voters went to the polls in November, his supporters formed the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP).

Five burglars were caught in Washington, D.C., in June 1972. They were breaking into an office in the Watergate apartment that happened to be the headquarters of the Democratic Party's national committee. Police discovered that the burglars had equipment for taking photographs and wire-tapping telephones. One of them was James McCord Jr., an officer of CREEP. Another burglar carried an address book. It contained the name E. Howard Hunt and gave Hunt's address as the White House. Hunt, it turned out, worked for Nixon's lawyer.

The burglars weren't just linked to important officials in Nixon's campaign committee and his administration. They also had ties to the country's Central Intelligence Agency. News of the arrests and the burglars' high-level connections got out to the public before anyone could stop it.

Everyone was asking: Did the president have anything to do with the burglary? Did he know about it? Five days after the arrests, Nixon told reporters that "the White House has had no involvement whatever in this particular incident."

But over the next year, a different picture became clear. One after the other, people in the Nixon administration began to talk, sometimes to protect themselves from facing charges. They gave information in court, in meetings of the Senate committee that investigated the Watergate case, and to

reporters. They revealed misdeeds by John Mitchell—the attorney general, who is supposed to be the U.S. government’s senior lawyer. Also guilty were two of Nixon’s top assistants, Robert Haldeman and John Ehrlichman. Nixon himself was deeply involved.

The Watergate burglary wasn’t the Nixon administration’s only crime. A long list of facts came to light. Here are just some of them:

- Attorney General Mitchell had controlled a secret fund of hundreds of thousands of dollars to use against the Democratic Party. Ways to hurt the Democrats included forging letters, stealing campaign files, and leaking false news stories to the press.
- Gulf Oil Corporation and other big American businesses had given millions of dollars in illegal contributions to Nixon’s campaign.
- In September 1971, after the *New York Times* started printing the Pentagon Papers, which told of U.S. actions in Vietnam, the administration targeted Daniel Ellsberg, who had given the Pentagon Papers to the *Times*. Hunt and another Nixon supporter had burglarized the office of Ellsberg’s psychiatrist, looking for information to use against Ellsberg.
- Henry Kissinger, Nixon’s secretary of state, had broken the law by having the telephone calls of journalists and government officials recorded. Material from this spying was kept in a safe in the White House.
- Nixon had taken an illegal tax deduction of more than half a million dollars.

The list went on and on. Then, while the administration’s wrongs were coming to light, the vice president, Spiro Agnew, got into trouble. Agnew was accused of taking bribes in return for political favors. He resigned from his post as vice president in October 1973. Nixon chose a Republican congressman named Gerald Ford to replace him.

But soon Nixon fell from power, too. The House of Representatives was ready to vote on whether or not to impeach, that is, to officially charge him for official misconduct. If that had happened, Nixon would then face a trial in the U.S. Senate. If the Senate convicted Nixon, he would be removed from office. Nixon knew that the House would vote for impeachment and that the Senate would convict him.

Nixon did not wait to be impeached by the House of Representatives. He resigned voluntarily on August 8, 1974. "Our long national nightmare is over," said Gerald Ford, who took Nixon's place as president.

How did the Watergate scandal and the president's resignation affect the government? One businessman said, "What we will have is the same play with different players." A political adviser named Theodore Sorensen said something similar: "All the rotten apples should be thrown out. But save the barrel."

The barrel—the system—was saved. Big business and powerful corporations still had great influence in Washington under President Ford. Whether Nixon or Ford or any Republican or Democrat was president, the system would work pretty much the same way. The power of corporations on the White House is a fact of the American political system, and that didn't change after Watergate. The companies that had made illegal contributions to Nixon's campaigns got very light punishment—tiny fines, much smaller than the millions they had given.

## America Overseas

**MANY SECRETS CAME TO LIGHT DURING** the Watergate investigation. One of them involved Cambodia, a Southeast Asian country next to Vietnam. In 1969-1970, the United States had dropped thousands of bombs on Cambodia. The bombing of Cambodia was part of the Vietnam War, but it was concealed from the American public and even from Congress. When it was revealed, it fed people's doubts about the government's foreign policy.

Foreign policy is how a country's government acts toward other nations. For a long time, U.S. foreign policy was focused on fighting in Vietnam. But that war became unpopular with the American people, and after it ended, some government and business leaders feared that the public might not support other military actions overseas.

Henry Kissinger worried about that very thing. Kissinger continued to serve as U.S. secretary of state under President Ford. In April 1975 he was supposed to give a speech at the University of Michigan. Many students were unhappy about this because of Kissinger's role in the Vietnam War. They protested so strongly that he decided not to come. It was a low time for the administration. How could the government improve its image?

"The U.S. must carry out some act somewhere in the world which shows its determination to continue to be a world power," Kissinger said. The next month, the United States seized a chance to make that statement of power.

An American cargo ship called the *Mayaguez* was sailing near Tang Island. The island is part of Cambodia, where a revolutionary government had just taken power. Cambodians stopped the ship and took its crew to the mainland. The crew later said that they were treated with courtesy.

President Ford sent a message to Cambodia to release the ship and crew. After thirty-six hours, U.S. planes started bombing Cambodian ships—even the boat that was carrying the American sailors. Soon Cambodia released the Americans, but Ford had already ordered an

attack on Tang Island, even though he knew the soldiers weren't there.

Forty-one Americans were killed in the attack on Tang Island. Why the rush to bomb? And why did Ford order the Cambodian mainland bombed, even after the *Mayaguez* and the crew were recovered?

(left) Part of a Cambodian task force attempting to clear Route 7 east of Skoun watches as American air support bombs Communist positions nearby, 1970.



Why? To show the world that the giant America, defeated by tiny Vietnam, was still powerful. But many journalists and television reporters called the *Mayaguez* operation “successful” and

“efficient.” The Establishment, it seemed, stood behind the idea that America should shown its authority everywhere in the world. This was true of both liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans.

Congress acted in the *Mayaguez* affair just as it had acted in the early years of the Vietnam War—like a flock of sheep. In 1973, disgusted with Vietnam, Congress had passed a law called the War Powers Act. This law said that the president must consult with Congress before taking military action. But in the *Mayaguez* affair, Ford ignored the law. His assistants called eighteen members of Congress to tell them about the military action. Only a few protested.

Watergate had made both the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) look bad. Those agencies had broken the laws they were sworn to uphold, and they had helped Nixon with illegal acts. When Congress set up committees to study the CIA and the FBI after Watergate, it found even more dirty secrets.

The CIA had been plotted to assassinate the leaders of foreign nations, such as Cuba’s Fidel Castro. It had smuggled a livestock disease into Cuba that destroyed half a million pigs belonging to people on the island. The CIA had also worked to upset the government of Chile. That government was headed by Salvador Allende, a Marxist. He had been freely elected by the people of Chile—but the United States disagreed with his politics.

As for the FBI, it had spent years trying to break up and destroy left-wing and radical groups. It sent forged letters, it opened mail illegally, and it performed more than ninety burglaries in just six years alone. The FBI even seems to have taken part in the murder of Fred Hampton, an African American activist in the Black Panthers.

All of this information reached the public in thick, hard-to-read reports. Television reporters did not say much about it, and the newspapers did not give full coverage. The Senate even let the CIA review its report *about* the CIA, in case the report had information that the CIA did not want people to read! So that while the investigations made it look as if an honest society was fixing its problems, the mass media and the government did nothing to encourage an open, public discussion of those problems.



Nixon stepping down as president ... Congress looking into bad deeds by the CIA and the FBI ... these things were supposed to win back the confidence of the American people in their government. Did they work?

A poll in 1975 found that people's confidence in the military, in business, and in government had plunged since 1966. Only 13 percent of people said that they had confidence in the president and Congress.

Maybe people's lack of satisfaction had something to do with the economy. Unemployment was rising. People were losing their jobs and running out of unemployment benefits. More and more Americans were feeling worse about the future.

In the year 1976, with a presidential election on the way, the Establishment worried about the public's faith in the system. That year was also the bicentennial, or two-hundredth anniversary, of the Declaration of Independence. A great celebration was planned. Organizers might have thought that it would bring back American patriotism and end the mood of protest that had developed since the 1960s.

But there didn't seem to be much enthusiasm for the Bicentennial. In Boston, a 200th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party was planned. But a huge crowd turned out at an unofficial "counter-celebration," where people dumped boxes into Boston Harbor. Marked "Gulf Oil" and "Exxon," those boxes were symbols of corporate power in America. The mood of protest had not gone away.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

## POLITICS AS USUAL

TEN MILLION CHILDREN WHO LIVED IN THE United States in 1979 might not have been able to go to the doctor or get medicine when they were sick. That's because they had no known source of regular health care. Eighteen million kids under the age of seventeen had never been to a dentist.

Marian Wright Edelman pointed out these facts. She was the head of the Children's Defense Fund, working to make life better for America's children, especially those who lived in poverty. She wanted people to know about the holes in the safety net that was supposed to protect kids, because the U.S. Congress had just taken \$88 million away from a children's health program.

The United States was in the grip of serious problems. The Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal had made many people distrust the government. A lot of them also worried about money: Would they have enough to support them and their families in the future? Would they slide into poverty? The environment was another concern, as people became aware of dangers such as air and water pollution.

Only bold changes in the social and economic structure could solve these problems. But none of the politicians from the two major parties, Republican or Democrat, suggested big changes. Instead, both parties stayed true to what historian Richard Hofstadter has called "the American political tradition."

Two big parts of that tradition are capitalism and nationalism. The economic system of capitalism encourages the growth of great fortunes alongside desperate poverty. Nationalism, the belief that the interests of the United States

must always come first around the world, encourages war and preparations for war. Toward the end of the twentieth century, government power swung back and forth between Democrats and Republicans, but neither party offered a new vision of how things could be.

## **A Little Bit to the Left**

JIMMY CARTER A DEMOCRAT WAS PRESIDENT from 1977 to 1980. He moved America toward the left, toward liberalism—but only a little. In spite of some gestures toward black people and the poor, and talk about human rights in the rest of the world, the Carter presidency stayed within the limits of traditional American politics.

Carter named Andrew Young, a black man who had worked in the civil-rights movement, as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. In the black nations of Africa, Young built up goodwill for the United States. The Carter administration also urged the white-ruled nation of South Africa to end apartheid, a system of laws that kept blacks from gaining economic or political equality.

The black fight against apartheid had plunged South Africa into disorder. If that disorder turned into all-out civil war, American interests could be threatened. Radar systems in South Africa helped track the planes and satellites of many nations, and the country was a source of important raw materials, especially diamonds, which are used in industry as well as in jewelry. If the United States took a stand against apartheid because it was morally wrong, America also had practical reasons for wanting a stable, peaceful South Africa.

*(left)* Jimmy Carter, the thirty-ninth president of the United States, 1976.



During the Vietnam War, Carter had presented himself as a friend of the antiwar movement. But Carter had not opposed President Nixon's bombing attacks, and when the war ended, he refused to give aid to help Vietnam rebuild itself. As president, Carter continued U.S. support for oppressive governments in Iran, Nicaragua, the Philippines, and Indonesia. These governments allowed the use of harsh and undemocratic methods—such as torture and mass murder—against political dissidents. Still, they received American aid, including military aid.

If Carter's job was to restore public faith in the system, his greatest failure was that he did not solve people's economic problems. While the military budget remained enormous, the government saved money in other ways. The Department of Agriculture, for example, said that it would save \$25 million a year

by no longer giving free second helpings of milk to needy schoolchildren.

The price of food and other necessary goods was rising faster than people's wages. Many people didn't even earn wages. Among young people, especially young black people, 20 to 30 percent could not find jobs.

## **Wealth and Poverty in America**

IN 1980, CARTER LOST THE PRESIDENTIAL election to Republican Ronald Reagan. The faint liberalism of the Carter years was gone. After two terms as president, Reagan would be followed by another Republican, George Bush.

The Reagan and Bush administrations followed similar policies. These included cutting benefits to poor people, lowering taxes for the rich, and raising the military budget. The two administrations also filled the federal court system with conservative judges who would interpret the law in ways that favored right-wing, Establishment interests. For example, the Reagan-Bush Supreme Court brought back the death penalty. It also said that poor people could be forced to pay for public education.

During Reagan's first four years as president, the U.S. military was given more than a trillion dollars. Reagan tried to pay for this by cutting benefits to the poor. The human costs of these cuts went deep. More than a million children lost free school lunches, even though some of those kids depended on school lunches for more than half of their daily nutrition. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a welfare program that provided money for single mothers, came under attack, too. Soon a quarter of the nation's children—twelve million kids—were living in poverty.

One mother wrote to her local newspaper:

I am on Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and both my children are in school... .

It appears we have employment offices that can't employ, governments that can't govern and an economic system that can't produce jobs for people ready to work... .

Last week I sold my bed to pay for the insurance on my car, which, in the absence of mass transportation, I need to go job hunting. I sleep on a piece of rubber foam somebody gave me.

So this is the great American Dream my parents came to this country for: Work hard, get a good education, follow the rules, and you will be rich. I don't want to be rich. I just want to be able to feed my children and live with some semblance of dignity... .

With strong ties to wealthy corporations, both the Democratic and Republican political parties criticized welfare programs. But how did the general public feel about helping those less fortunate?

A poll in early 1992 showed that when questioned about “welfare,” 44 percent of people said that too much money was being spent on it. But when questioned about “assistance to the poor,” only 13 percent thought too much was being spent, and 64 percent thought not enough was being spent. Americans, it seemed, still felt generous to those in need, but “welfare” had become a political term, so people’s answers depended upon how the question was worded.

During the Reagan years, the gap between rich and poor in the United States grew dramatically. In 1980, the top officers of corporations made forty times as much in salary as the average factory worker. By 1989 they were making ninety-three times as much.

On the lower levels of society, everyone was doing worse than they had been. Blacks, Hispanics, women, and the young suffered especially severe economic hurts. At the end of the 1980s, at least a third of African American families fell below the official poverty level. Unemployment among blacks was much higher than among whites, and life expectancy was lower. The victories of the civil rights movement had made it possible for some African Americans to move ahead, but left others far behind.



## **Desert Storm**

THE MOST DRAMATIC TURN IN INTERNATIONAL affairs since the end of World War II happened early in the presidency of George Bush. In 1989, protests against dictatorship broke out in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European nations controlled by the Soviet Union.

Almost overnight, it seemed, the old Communist governments fell apart. New non-Communist ones came into being. The wall that had divided democratic West Germany from Communist East Germany was torn down in front of wildly cheering citizens. Most remarkable of all, these things happened without civil war, in response to overwhelming demand from the people.

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union left U.S. political leaders unprepared. Several trillion dollars had been taken from American taxpayers to pay for a huge military buildup all over the world to defend the United States from the "Soviet threat." Now the threat was gone. It was a chance for the United States to create a new foreign policy. Hundreds of billions of dollars could be freed from the military budget to pay for constructive, healthful projects.

But that didn't happen. There was a kind of panic, as leaders wondered what they could do to keep up the military establishment that had cost so many dollars over so many years. As if to prove that the gigantic military force was still needed, the Bush administration started two wars in four years.

The first war was in Panama, in Central America, where General Manuel Noriega ruled as dictator. For years the United States had overlooked Noriega's corrupt and brutal ways because he went along with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in many ways. But once Noriega was openly known as a drug trafficker, his usefulness was over.

The United States invaded Panama in December 1989, saying that it wanted Noriega to stand trial for drug crimes. American troops quickly captured Noriega, who went to trial and then to prison in the United States. But the U.S. bombing of Panamanian neighborhoods

killed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of civilians and left fourteen thousand homeless.

If Panama was a “small” war, Bush’s second war was massive. In August 1990, the Middle Eastern nation of Iraq invaded its smaller neighbor, oil-rich Kuwait. On October 30, the Bush administration made a secret decision to make war on Iraq.

The American people were told that the war was being fought to free Kuwait from the Iraqis and to keep Iraq from developing a nuclear bomb. In reality, the two main reasons for going to war were to give the United States a greater voice in the control of Middle East oil and to boost Bush’s chances of reelection by showing that he could win a war on foreign soil.

For months, the government and the major media lectured the public about the danger from Saddam Hussein, the brutal dictator of Iraq. Even so, less than half the American public favored the idea of war. That did not prevent the administration from sending half a million men to the Persian Gulf, next to Iraq.

*(left)* U.S. troops stationed in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, 1991.



In January 1991, Congress gave Bush the authority to make war. Air attacks on Iraqi forces began. Bush called the war Desert Storm. News about the fighting was tightly controlled by the military and the government. The big story of the war was “smart bombs,” weapons guided by lasers. These bombs were supposedly so accurate that military targets could be pinpointed, saving civilian lives.

The public was deceived about how “smart” these bombs really were. Thousands of Iraqi civilians, including women and children, died in the bombings, especially after the U.S. Air Force went back to using ordinary bombs. One Egyptian witness described the attack on a hotel south of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad this way: “They hit the hotel, full of families, and then they came back to hit it again.”

The war lasted barely six weeks. Afterward, it was clear that the bombings of Iraq had caused starvation, disease, and the deaths of thousands of children. And although the U.S. government had painted Saddam Hussein as a grave danger in the months leading up to the war, at the end of the war he remained in power. The United States had wanted to weaken him, but not get rid of him, it seemed. Hussein had been useful in the past, keeping the neighboring nation of Iran from becoming too powerful in the region, and he might be useful again.

President Bush and the major media cheered the U.S. victory in Desert Storm. They claimed that the lingering ghost of Vietnam and the bitter failure to win the war there were finally laid to rest. The United States had showed the rest of the world what it could do.

But June Jordan, a black poet in California, had a different view. She compared the joy of victory in war to the effect of a deadly drug, saying, “I suggest to you it’s a hit the same way that crack is, and it doesn’t last long.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### RESISTANCE

A YOUNG ACTIVIST NAMED KEITH MCHENDRY was arrested time and time again in the early 1990s. So were hundreds of other people. What was their crime? Giving free food to poor people—without a license to distribute food.

McHenry and others like him were part of a program called Food Not Bombs. Their acts of courage and defiance helped keep alive a spirit of resistance at a time when the power of corporate wealth and government authority seemed overwhelming.

In the 1960s, the surge of protest against race segregation and against war had become a powerful national force. The resistance of the late 1970s, the 1980s, and the early 1990s was different. Activists struggled uphill against uncaring political leaders. They tried hard to reach their fellow Americans, even though many people saw little hope in either voting or protest.

Politicians mostly ignored this resistance. The major media didn't mention it very often. But thousands of local groups were busy around the country. Activists in these groups worked for the environment, women's rights, housing for the homeless, and an end to military spending.

## **No More Nukes!**

THE MOVEMENT AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS started in the late 1970s, when Jimmy Carter was president. It was small but determined. Christian activists who had protested the Vietnam War were the pioneers of the movement. They were arrested for nonviolent but dramatic acts at the White House and the Pentagon, the nation's military headquarters. They trespassed on forbidden areas and poured their own blood on symbols of the war machine.

More people joined the antinuclear movement in the 1980s as a protest against President Ronald Reagan's huge military budget. Women took a leading role. Shortly after Reagan was elected, two thousand women gathered in Washington, D.C. They marched on the Pentagon and surrounded it. A hundred and forty of them were arrested for blocking the entrance.

A few doctors started teaching the public about the medical harm that nuclear war would bring. They formed Physicians for Social Responsibility. The group's leader, Dr. Helen Caldicott, became one of the movement's most powerful spokespeople.

Scientists who had worked on the atomic bomb added their voices to the antinuclear movement. Just before he died of cancer, one scientist urged people to organize "a mass movement for peace such as there has not been before."

A mass meeting such as there had not been before took place in New York City's Central Park on June 12, 1982. Close to a million people gathered to call for an end to the arms race, which had the United States and the Soviet Union racing to build up stockpiles of deadly weapons. It was the largest political demonstration in American history.

*(left)* Marion Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, 1985.



## Social Issues

THE ARMS RACE WASN'T THE ONLY THING THAT sparked protest. People reacted angrily to Reagan's cuts in social services. In 1981, people who lived in East Boston took to the streets to protest the loss of government money to pay for teachers, police, and firefighters in their community. For fifty-five days they blocked major streets during rush hour. The *Boston Globe* reported that the protestors were "mostly middle-aged, middle- or working-class people who said they had never protested anything before." Said Boston's chief of police, "Maybe these people are starting to take lessons from the protests of the sixties and seventies."

Many people saw a link between the nation's military policy and its failing system of social welfare. Money was being spent on guns instead of on children. In 1983 Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund made a speech to a graduating class of students. She said:

You are graduating into a nation and world teetering on the brink of moral and economic bankruptcy. Since 1980, our President and Congress have been ... bringing good news to the rich at the expense of the poor... . Children are the major victims.

In the South, there was no great movement like the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Still, hundreds of local groups organized poor people, black and white. In North Carolina, a woman named Linda Stout, whose father had been killed by industrial poisons, started the Piedmont Peace Project. Its members were hundreds of textile workers, maids, and farmers. Many of them were low-income women of color who found a voice through the group.



Latinos (Americans of Mexican or Latin American descent) also raised their voices against injustice. Back in the 1960s, Mexican American farmworkers led by César Chávez had taken action against unfair and oppressive working conditions. They went on strike and organized a national boycott, urging customers not to buy California grapes until the workers received better treatment.

Latinos' struggles against poverty and discrimination continued in the 1970s and 1980s. Copper miners in Arizona, mostly Latinos, went on strike after the company that owned the mines cut their wages, benefits, and safety protection. The striking miners were attacked by state troopers, tear gas, and helicopters, but they held out for three years. Finally a combination of government and corporate power defeated them and ended the strike.

But there were victories, too. Latino farmworkers, janitors, and factory workers gained pay raises and better working conditions through labor strikes. In New Mexico, Latinos fought real-estate developers to keep the land they had lived on for decades—and won. By this time 12 percent of Americans were Latino, the same percentage as for African Americans. The Latino population would keep growing, and it would begin to make its mark on American music, art, language, and culture.

## War and Antiwar

THE VIETNAM WAR HAD ENDED IN 1975. Sometimes, though, it came back into public attention in the 1980s and 1990s. This could happen when someone announced a change in thinking about the war.

One person whose ideas turned completely around was Charles Hutto, a soldier who had been part of the massacre at the Vietnamese village of My Lai, where U.S. troops shot hundreds of women and children. Looking back, Hutto told a reporter:

I was nineteen years old, and I'd always been told to do what the grown-ups told me to do... . But now I'll tell my sons, if the government calls, to go, to serve their country, but to use their own judgment at times ... to forget about authority ... to use their own conscience. I wish somebody had told me that before I went to Vietnam. I didn't know. Now I don't even think there should be a thing called war ... cause it messes up a person's mind.

(*left*) Protest against the Gulf War, 1991.



Many Americans felt that Vietnam had been a terrible tragedy, a war that should not have been fought. After that hard lesson, people would not automatically support a new war just because the Establishment wanted to fight it. That's why President George Bush launched the air war against Iraq in 1991 with overwhelming force. He wanted the war to be over before a national anti-war movement could form.

But resistance and protest started in the months leading up to the war. Six hundred students marched through Missoula, Montana, shouting antiwar slogans. In Boston, a group called Veterans for Peace joined the annual Veterans Day parade. Onlookers applauded

when they walked past carrying signs that read “No More Vietnams.”

As Bush moved toward war, Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic, author of *Born on the Fourth of July*, made a speech that was broadcast on two hundred television stations. Kovic urged citizens to “stand up and speak out” against war. He said, “How many more Americans coming home in wheelchairs—like me—will it take before we learn?”

On the night the war began, five thousand protestors gathered in San Francisco and formed a human chain around the Federal Building. Police broke the chain by swinging clubs at the protestors’ hands. On the other side of the country, in Boston, a seven-year-old girl made her voice heard, too. She wrote a letter:

Dear President Bush. I don’t like the way you are behaving. If you would make up your mind there won’t be a war we won’t have to have peace vigils. If you were in a war you wouldn’t want to get hurt. What I’m saying is: I don’t want any fighting to happen.

Once the fighting started, and patriotic messages filled the media, the majority of Americans said they supported the war. Still, some people courageously spoke out against it.

In the 1960s, Julian Bond had been kicked out of the seat he had been elected to fill in the Georgia Legislature for daring to criticize the Vietnam War. In that same room, Representative Cynthia McKinnon made a speech attacking the bombing of Iraq. Many of her fellow lawmakers walked out, refusing to listen, but she held her ground.

Patricia Biggs was a student at East Central Oklahoma State University. She and another young woman sat quietly on top of the school’s entrance gate with signs that read, “Teach Peace ... Not War.” Biggs explained:

I don’t think we should be over there [in Iraq]. I don’t think it’s about justice and liberty, I think it’s about economics. The big oil corporations have a lot to do with what is going on over there... . We are risking people’s lives for money.

Nine days after the war started, more than 150,000 people marched through the streets of Washington, D.C., and listened to

antiwar speeches. A woman from Oakland, California, held up the folded American flag that had been given to her when her husband was killed in Vietnam. She told the crowd, "I learned the hard way that there is no glory in a folded flag."

The Iraq War lasted just six weeks. Right after it ended, patriotic fever was high. In one poll, only 17 percent of people said that the war had not been worth its huge cost. But four months later, 30 percent felt the war had not been worth it. The war had not won Bush the lasting support of the people. He ran for reelection in 1992, after the war spirit had faded away, and lost.

## **Remembering Columbus**

THE YEAR 1992 WAS THE QUINCENTENNIAL, or five-hundredth anniversary, of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Columbus and his fellow conquerors had wiped out the Native American peoples of Hispaniola. Later, the United States government had destroyed Indian tribes as it marched across North America. As the quincentennial approached, the surviving Indians were determined to have their say.

In 1990 Indians from all over the Americas met in Ecuador, South America, to organize against the celebrations that were being planned to honor Columbus' conquest. Two years later, during the quincentennial, other Americans joined them in speaking out against Columbus.

For the first time in all the years that the United States had celebrated Columbus Day, there were nationwide protests against honoring a man who had kidnapped, enslaved, and murdered the Native people who had greeted him with gifts and friendship. All over the country, people held counter-Columbus events.

The Columbus controversy sparked a burst of activity in universities and schools. Traditional or mainstream thinkers saw American history as the progress of European culture into a wilderness. They were upset by the movement to look at history in new ways, to tell the stories of the Indians Columbus had murdered, the blacks who had been denied freedom, and the women who had had to fight for equality. But they could not stop the tide of new thinking.

Socially conscious teachers created books and workshops for other teachers. They encouraged educators to tell their

students the truths about Columbus that were left out of traditional textbooks. One student, a girl named Rebecca, had this to say about the traditional teachings:

Of course, the writers of the books probably think it's harmless enough—what does it matter who discovered America, really... . But the thought that I have been lied to all my life about this, and who knows what else, really makes me angry.

Rebecca was not the only angry American. As the United States entered the 1990s, the political system was in the control of the very rich. Corporations owned the major media. The country was divided into extreme wealth and extreme poverty, separated by a middle class that felt troubled and insecure. Yet a culture of protest and resistance survived. Some people refused to give up the vision of a more equal, more human society. If there was hope for the future of America, it lay with them.

# CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

## THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

EACH YEAR SOMEONE WINS THE NOBEL PEACE Prize for seeking a peaceful solution to one of the world's problems. In 1996 the prize went to two men who were working to find a fair way to end a war in East Timor, an Asian country that was fighting for independence from Indonesia.

Before receiving the prize, one of those men, Jose Ramos-Horta, spoke at a church in Brooklyn, New York. He recalled a visit to America almost twenty years earlier:

In the summer of 1977, I was here in New York when I received a message telling me that one of my sisters,

Maria, twenty-one years old, had been killed in an aircraft bombing. The aircraft, named Bronco, was supplied by the United States... Within months, a report about a brother, Guy, seventeen years old, killed along with many other people in his village by Bell helicopters supplied by the United States. Same year, another brother, Nunu, captured and executed with an [American-made] M-16.

Why were American weapons killing people in East Timor, a country on the far side of the world, when the United States was not at war there? Because the United States gave military aid to Indonesia. Toward the end of the twentieth century, the United States became the world's leading provider of weapons to other nations. At the same time, it continued to build up its own military machine.

Military spending took money away from social programs. Dwight Eisenhower, who was president in the middle of the twentieth century, had known that. In one of his best moments,



Eisenhower said, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, [means] a theft from those who are hungry and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

During the 1990s, under the eight-year presidency of Bill Clinton, the United States continued to be a place where some people were hungry and cold. It remained a nation where one-fourth of all children lived in poverty and homeless people huddled in the streets of every major city. The country’s leaders did not look for bold solutions to the problems of health care, education, child care, unemployment, housing, and the environment.

## **Moving Toward the Middle**

CLINTON WAS A SMART YOUNG DEMOCRAT in 1992, when Americans elected him to his first term as president. He promised to bring change to the country, and his presidency began with that hope. Upon his reelection in 1996, Clinton declared, “We need a new government for a new century.”

But during eight years in office, Clinton failed to live up to his promise of change. Instead, he delivered more of what the country had gotten from the presidents before him.

Like other politicians, Clinton seemed to be more interested in getting votes than in bringing about social change. To win votes, he decided to move the Democratic Party closer to the center— in other words, to make the party less liberal and more conservative, so that it would not be too different from the Republican Party. To do this, he had to do just enough for the blacks, women, and working people who had traditionally been Democrats to keep their support. At the same time, he tried to win over white conservative voters by coming out in favor of welfare cuts and a strong military.

Even before he was elected, Clinton was eager to show that he took a tough position on matters of “law and order.” As governor of Arkansas, he flew back to his home state for the execution of a mentally retarded man on death row.

Soon after he became president, Clinton approved an attack by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on a group of religious extremists who had sealed themselves up, with weapons, inside a group of buildings in Waco, Texas. Instead of waiting to see if the crisis could be solved through talking, the FBI attacked with rifle fire, tanks, and tear gas, killing at least eighty-six men, women, and children.

In 1996, Republicans and Democrats in Congress voted in favor of a new law called a "Crime Bill." Clinton supported the bill, which made more crimes punishable by death. It also set aside \$8 billion of federal money to build new prisons. Throughout his presidency Clinton chose federal judges whose liberalism was of the mild, middling kind. Often their decisions were just like those of more conservative judges.

Clinton was no different from other people in power, whether Democrats or Republicans. To keep themselves in power, they turned the public's anger toward groups that could not defend themselves. The target could be criminals, immigrants, people on welfare, or certain governments hostile to the United States, such as Iraq or Communist Cuba. By urging people to focus on these sources of possible danger, political leaders drew attention away from the failures of the American system.

## Choices

THE UNITED STATES WAS THE RICHEST COUNTRY in the world. With 5 percent of the world's population, it used or ate or bought 30 percent of everything that was produced worldwide. But only a tiny fraction of Americans benefited from the country's great wealth.

Starting in the late 1970s, the richest 1 percent of people in the country saw their wealth grow enormously. Changes in the tax laws meant that by 1995, that richest 1 percent had gained more than a trillion dollars. It owned 40 percent of the country's wealth. Between 1982 and 1995, the wealth of the four hundred richest families in the country had jumped from \$92 billion to \$480 billion. In the same time period, the cost of living rose faster than the average wage of ordinary working people. People earning an average wage could buy about 15 percent *less* in 1995 than in 1982.

If you looked just at the richest part of the American population, you could say the economy was healthy. Meanwhile, 40 million people had no health insurance. Babies and young children in the United States died of sickness and malnutrition at a higher rate than in any other industrial country. Jobs weren't always the answer. In 1998, a third of all working people in the country didn't earn enough to lift them above the government's official poverty level. Many people who worked in factories, stores, or restaurants couldn't afford housing, health care, or even enough food.

Two sources of money were available to pay for social programs to attack poverty, joblessness, and other national problems.

The first source was the military budget. One expert on military spending suggested that gradually lowering the

country's military budget to \$60 billion a year would fit the country's needs, now that the Soviet Union had collapsed and the Cold War had ended.

A big drop in the military budget would have meant closing U.S. military bases around the world. It would have meant that the nation would turn its back on war. The basic human desire of people to live in peace with one another would guide its foreign policy. That was a choice that did-n't get made. The military budget kept rising. By the end of Clinton's presidency, military spending was about \$300 billion a year.

The second source of money for social programs was the wealth of the superrich. A "wealth tax" could have added \$100 billion a year to the nation's treasury. Clinton did raise the tax rate on the superrich and on corporations, but only slightly. It was a pitifully small step compared with the nation's needs.

Together, cuts in the military budget and higher taxes on the superrich could have given the government as much as \$500 billion each year to pay for dramatic changes. This money could have paid for health care for everyone and for programs to create jobs for all. Instead of giving out contracts for companies to build bombers and nuclear submarines, the government could have given contracts to nonprofit agencies to hire people to build homes, clean up rivers, and construct public transportation systems.

Instead, things continued as before. Cities kept falling into disrepair. Farmers were forced off their land by debts. Young people without jobs or hope turned to drugs and crime. The response of the government was to build more jails and lock up more people. By the end of the Clinton years, the United States had more than 2 million people in prison—a higher percentage of the population than any other country in the world, except maybe Communist China.

## **Visions of Change**

CLINTON CLAIMED THAT HIS DECISIONS WERE based on the opinion of the American people. But opinion surveys in the 1980s and 1990s showed that Americans favored health care for everyone. They also were in favor of guaranteed jobs, government help for the poor and homeless, military budget cuts, and taxes on the rich. Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats were willing to take these bold steps.

What if the American people acted on the feelings they showed in those surveys? What if citizens organized to demand what the Declaration of Independence promised: a government that protected the equal rights of all to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? This would call for an economic system that distributed wealth in a thoughtful and humane way. It would mean a culture where young people were not taught to seek success as a mask for greed.

Throughout the Clinton years, many Americans did protest government policy. They demanded a more fair and peaceful society. They did not get much attention in the media, though. Even a gathering of half a million children and adults, of all colors, who came to the nation's capital to "Stand for the Children" was mostly ignored by television and newspapers. Still, activists for peace, women's rights, and racial equality continued their struggle—and won some victories.

*(left)* The police confront the anti-WTO demonstrators, 1999.



The labor movement was alive, too. A protest at Harvard University in Massachusetts showed how different groups could work together to reach a goal.

Many of Harvard's janitors and other campus workers did not earn enough to support themselves and their families. Some had to work two jobs, as much as eighty hours a week. So students organized to demand that the workers be paid a "living wage."

The students staged rallies to win support for their cause. Local city council members and union leaders took part. Two young movie stars, Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, also showed up to speak in favor of a living wage. Damon had attended Harvard before going to Hollywood. Affleck told how his father had worked at a poorly paid service job at Harvard.

When university administrators refused to talk with the campus workers, students took over an administration building and stayed in it day and night for several weeks, supported by hundreds of people outside and by donations from all over the country. Finally the university agreed to raise workers' pay and give them health benefits. Soon students and workers were organizing living wage movements at other schools.

In 1999 a great gathering of demonstrators met in Seattle, Washington. They wanted to show the people of America and the world how the power of giant multinational corporations controls the lives of ordinary people.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) was meeting in Seattle. Representatives of the world's richest and most powerful companies and countries were there to make plans to maintain their wealth and power. Their goal was to bring the principles of capitalism to work everywhere, through free-trade agreements between nations.

Protestors claimed that free-trade agreements would let corporations roam the globe looking for cheap labor and places where they could operate without strict environmental laws. The issues of free trade are complicated, but protestors asked a simple question: Should the health and freedom of ordinary people all over the world be sacrificed so that corporations can make a profit?

Tens of thousands of demonstrators showed up to march, make speeches, and carry signs. They were labor unionists, women's rights activists, farmers, environmentalists, consumers, religious groups, and more. The media focused on the small number of demonstrators who broke windows and created trouble, but the overwhelming majority of demonstrators were nonviolent.

Hundreds were jailed, but the protests continued. News of them traveled all over the world. The WTO talks collapsed, showing that organized citizens can challenge the most powerful corporations of the world. Mike Brannan, writing for a union newspaper, captured the protestors' mood:

The kind of solidarity that all of us dream of was in the air as people sang, chanted, played music, and stood up to the cops and the WTO. The people owned the streets that day and it was as much a lesson for us as it was for corporate America.



Protestors started showing up wherever meetings of the rich and powerful took place. Large international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund could not ignore the movement. They started talking about concern for the environment and for working conditions. Would this lead to real change? It was too soon to tell, but at least the voices of protest had been heard.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### THE “WAR ON TERRORISM”

“I DON’T THINK THEY CARE ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE us,” the woman said. She was a cashier at a filling station. Her husband was a construction worker. She added, “Maybe if they lived in a two-bedroom trailer, it would be different.”

Who was she talking about? “They” were the two candidates for president in 2000. The Republican candidate was George W. Bush, son of the man who had been president before Bill Clinton. The Democratic candidate was Al Gore, who had been vice president for eight years.

That cashier wasn’t the only person who thought that neither of the two candidates really cared about her and people like her. Many others felt the same way. An African American woman who managed a McDonald’s, earning barely more than the minimum wage, said, “I don’t even pay attention to those two, and all my friends say the same. My life won’t change.”

Almost half the voters in the country would not even go to the polls on Election Day 2000. Many saw no real difference in the candidates. They had no way to know that the candidate who became president would soon have to deal with a national crisis—a terrorist attack on the United States that would start a new cycle of war.

## A Close Election

BUSH, THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE, WAS known for his close ties to the oil industry. Both candidates, though, had support from big business. Bush and Gore had other things in common, too.

Both candidates favored a large military and the continued use of land mines (even though other nations in the world had banned these deadly devices, which can kill or injure civilians many years after combat ends). Both supported the death penalty and the growth of prisons. Neither of them had a plan for free national health care, or for a big increase in low-cost housing, or for a dramatic change in environmental controls.

There was a third candidate. His name was Ralph Nader, and he was nationally known as a critic of the way large corporations control the American economy. Nader's plan for the nation focused on health care, education, and the environment. But Nader was shut out of the debates between presidential candidates that were broadcast on national television. Without the support of big business, he had to raise money from the small contributions of people who believed in his program.

When Election Day came, it turned out to be the strangest election in American history. Gore received hundreds of thousands more votes than Bush. Under the Constitution, though, presidents aren't elected by the direct vote of the people, sometimes called the popular vote. Instead, each state has a certain number of electors. The electors' votes determine who becomes president.

Twice in American history, in 1876 and 1888, a president had been elected who *wasn't* chosen by the majority of voters. That's because the electors' votes don't always match the

popular vote. For example, if 45 percent of the voters in a state voted for candidate A, and 55 percent voted for candidate B, the electoral votes might not be divided between the two candidates. Candidate B might get all the electoral votes.

That's how things work in the state of Florida—and that's what caused a raging argument about the presidential election of 2000. Across the nation, the electoral vote between Gore and Bush was extremely close. It was so close that Florida's electoral votes would decide the election.

But it was not clear whether Gore or Bush had received more votes in Florida. It seemed that many votes had not been counted, especially in districts where a lot of black voters lived. Also, ballots were disqualified on technical grounds, and marks made on ballots by voting machines were not clear.

In short, Florida's popular vote was in doubt. Florida's electoral vote hung in the balance, and so did the presidency. But Bush, the Republican candidate, had an advantage. His brother was governor of Florida, and Florida's secretary of state, Katherine Harris, was also a Republican. Her job gave her the power to certify, or officially declare, who had more votes. She rushed through a recount of some of the ballots and announced that Bush had won the Florida vote. This made Bush the new president.

Democrats appealed to the Florida Supreme Court. The court, which was dominated by Democrats, ordered Harris not to certify a winner until the recount of the popular vote was complete. Harris set a deadline for recounting, and although thousands of votes were still disputed, she declared Bush the winner by 537 votes.

Gore prepared to challenge her decision. He wanted the recount to continue, as the Florida Supreme Court had ordered. To keep this from happening, the Republican Party took the case to the nation's highest court, the U.S. Supreme Court.

Four Supreme Court justices felt that the Florida recount should continue. They argued that the Court did not have the right to interfere with the way the Florida Supreme Court had

interpreted its state's electoral law. But the five conservative judges on the court overruled the Florida Supreme Court and halted the recount. In the end, the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling let Harris's certification stand. Bush got Florida's electoral votes.

John Paul Stevens was one of the liberal justices who had voted not to interfere with the Florida Supreme Court. With some bitterness, he summed up the results of the Court's decision:

Although we may never know with complete certainty the identity of the winner of this year's presidential decision, the identity of the loser is perfectly clear. It is the nation's confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law.

## **The Terrorist Attack and the Response**

NINE MONTHS AFTER BUSG TOOK OFFICE, on September 11, 2001, a terrible event pushed all other issues into the background. Hijackers on three planes flew the huge jets, loaded with fuel, into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, and into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

Americans all over the country watched, horrified, as the towers collapsed in an inferno of

*(right)* The World Trade Center south tower bursts into flames, New York City, September 11, 2001.



concrete and metal. Thousands of people who worked in the towers were buried in the wreckage. So were hundreds of firefighters and police officers who had gone to their rescue.

Nineteen men from the Middle East, most from Saudi Arabia, had made this attack against huge symbols of American wealth and power.

They were willing to die to strike a deadly blow against the superpower that they saw as their enemy.

President Bush immediately declared a “war on terrorism.” Congress rushed to give the president the power to take military action without the formal declaration of war that the U.S. Constitution requires. Only one member of Congress disagreed—Barbara Lee, an African American representative from California.

The administration believed that the attack was ordered by Osama bin Laden, a Saudi Arabian who supported a militant form of Islam, the Muslim religion. He was thought to be hiding somewhere in the Asian nation of Afghanistan, so Bush ordered the bombing of Afghanistan.

The president set out to capture or kill Osama bin Laden and to destroy his militant Islamic organization, called Al-Qaeda. But after five months of bombing, Osama bin Laden remained free. Bush had to admit to Congress that “tens of thousands of trained terrorists are still at large” in “dozens of countries.”

Bush and his advisers should have known that terrorism could not be defeated by force. Evidence from many countries and time periods shows that when countries respond to terrorist acts with military force, the result is more terrorism.

The bombing of Afghanistan was devastating to the country, which had already suffered a 1979 invasion by the Soviet Union, followed by a civil war. Although the Pentagon claimed that the United States was bombing only military targets, human rights groups and the press reported at least a thousand civilians killed. But the mainstream press and major television networks did not show Americans the full extent of the human suffering in Afghanistan. Instead, the media encouraged a mood of revenge.

Congress passed a law called the Patriot Act. It gave the Department of Justice the power to hold noncitizens on nothing more than suspicion, without charging them with a crime, and without the protections guaranteed in the Constitution.

*(left)* Demonstrators holding signs gather at an anti-war rally in Washington, 2001.





And although President Bush cautioned Americans not to take out their anger on Arab Americans, the government rounded up people for questioning. Most were Muslims. A thousand or more were held without charges.

In the wartime atmosphere, it became hard for citizens to criticize the government's actions. A retired telephone worker was at his health club when he made a remark critical of President Bush. Later he was questioned by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). A young woman found two FBI agents at her door. They said they had gotten reports of posters on her wall, criticizing the president.

Still, some people spoke out against the war. At peace rallies all over the country, they carried signs with slogans such as "Our Grief Is Not a Cry for Revenge" and "Justice, Not War."

Family members of people who had died in the September 11 attacks wrote to the president. They urged him not to match violence with violence, not to bomb the people of Afghanistan. Amber Amundsen's

husband, an Army Specialist, had been killed in the attack on the Pentagon. She wrote:

I have heard angry rhetoric [speech] by some Americans, including many of our nation's leaders, who advise a heavy dose of revenge and punishment. To those leaders, I would like to make clear that my family and I take no comfort in your words of rage. If you choose to respond to this incomprehensible brutality by perpetuating [continuing] violence against other innocent human beings, you may not do so in the name of my husband.

Some families of September 11 victims traveled to Afghanistan to meet Afghan families who had lost loved ones in the American bombing. One of the Americans was Rita Lasar, whose brother had died in the attack. Lasar said that she would devote the rest of her life to working for peace.

Critics of the bombing felt that terrorism was rooted in deep complaints against the United States. The way to stop terrorism was to respond to these complaints.

Some of the Islamic world's complaints were easy to identify. The United States had stationed troops in Saudi Arabia, where Islam's holiest shrines are located. For ten years the United States had kept Iraq from trading with other countries—a move that was supposed to be political, but one that had caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of children by keeping food and medicine out of the country, according to the United Nations. The United States also supported the nation of Israel in its occupation of land claimed by Palestinian Muslims.

To change its position on these matters, the United States would have to withdraw military forces around the world. It would have to give up political and economic power over other countries. In short, America would have to stop being a superpower. This was something that the military-industrial interests of both political parties could not accept.

Three years before September 11, 2001, a former U.S. Air Force officer named Robert Bowman had written about terrorist attacks on American embassies in Africa. He described the roots of terrorism:

We are not hated because we practice democracy, value freedom, or uphold human rights. We are hated because our government denies these things to people in Third World countries whose resources are coveted [desired] by our multinational corporations. That hatred we have sown has come back to haunt us in the form

of terrorism... . Instead of sending our sons and daughters around the world to kill Arabs so we can have the oil under their sand, we should send them to rebuild their infrastructure, supply clean water, and feed starving children... . In short, we should do good instead of evil. Who would try to stop us? Who would hate us? Who would want to bomb us? That is the truth the American people need to hear.

Voices such as Bowman's were mostly shut out of the American media after the September 11 attacks. But there was a chance that their powerful message might spread among the American people, once they saw that meeting violence with violence did not solve the problem of terrorism.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### **WAR IN IRAQ, CONFLICT AT HOME**

THE UNITED STATES MADE “WAR ON TERROR” its mission after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. Soon that mission would lead American troops into war in the Middle Eastern nation of Iraq. As voices at home spoke out against the war, the administration of President George W. Bush faced other troubles. A deadly hurricane made people around the world question the U.S. government’s commitment to social justice, and debates about immigration made people ask what it means to be an American. In an election in 2006, voters in the United States showed that they were ready for change.

## **Afghanistan after the U.S. Invasion**

WHEN UNITED STATES FORCES BOMBED AND invaded Afghanistan, they failed to capture Osama bin Laden or to destroy the Al-Qaeda organization. Yet the military operation killed thousands of Afghan civilians and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes.

U.S. leaders justified this terrible toll on the grounds that the invasion had removed the Taliban from power.

The Taliban was a fundamentalist Islamic group that had been ruling Afghanistan with an iron hand. Among other things, the Taliban insisted on strict interpretations of Islam that denied rights to women. The defeat of the Taliban brought a group called the Northern Alliance into power. Its record was far from spotless. In the mid-1990s, the Northern Alliance had committed many acts of violence against the people of Kabul and other Afghan cities.

In his 2002 State of the Union Address, Bush claimed that getting rid of the Taliban meant that “women are free” in Afghanistan. This was a false claim, according to an organization of Afghan women. And two years after the U.S. invasion, the *New York Times* gave a discouraging account of things in Afghanistan. Women were not free, bandits roamed the land, warlords controlled huge areas, and the Taliban was making a comeback.

Sixteen months into the war, a Scotsman who took medical aid to Afghan villages was distressed at what he saw. He wrote, “The country is on its knees... . It is one of the most heavily land-mined countries in the world ... 25 percent of all children are dead by the age of five.” Sadly he concluded, “Surely, at the start of our 21st century, we should have

evolved beyond the point where we reduce a country and a people to dust, for the flimsiest of excuses.” But as of August 2006, air strikes were still killing Afghan civilians, and the *New York Times* reported widespread “corruption, violence and poverty.”

The attack on Afghanistan had not brought democracy or security, and it had not weakened terrorism. If anything, the violence unleashed by the United States had angered people in the Middle East and created more terrorists.

## **Weapons of Mass Destruction?**

WITH AFGHANISTAN STILL TURMOIL, the Bush administration began to set the stage for a war against Iraq. Richard Clarke, adviser to the president on terrorism, later said that immediately after the September 11 attacks the White House looked for reasons to attack Iraq—even though no evidence linked Iraq to the attacks.

Bush and the government officials close to him wanted the American public to think that Iraq and its dictator, Saddam Hussein, threatened the United States and the world. They accused Iraq of concealing “weapons of mass destruction,” including plans to build a nuclear bomb.

A United Nations team made hundreds of inspections all over Iraq. It found no weapons of mass destruction, or any evidence that Iraq was working on a nuclear weapon. U.S. vice president Richard Cheney, though, insisted the weapons were real. Condoleezza Rice, the secretary of state, spoke menacingly of “a mushroom cloud,” like the cloud caused by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. The government also pointed to Hussein’s cruel and illegal acts, such as the use of chemical poisons to massacre five thousand Iraqis from the Kurdish ethnic minority. But Hussein had killed those Kurds in 1988, and at the time the United States had not objected loudly. Back then, Iraq and the United States had been on the same side against Iran, another nation in the Middle East.

What was the real reason for building up the idea of war against Iraq in 2002? Maybe the reason lay underground. Iraq had the world’s second largest oil reserves, after Saudi Arabia. Ever since the end of World War II in 1945, the United States had been determined to control the oil of the Middle East. Oil

shaped U.S. decisions about the Middle East during both Democratic and Republican presidencies. The administration of President Jimmy Carter, a liberal Democrat, had produced the “Carter Doctrine.” Under this doctrine, the United States claimed the right to defend its interest in Middle Eastern oil “by any means necessary, including military force.”

In September 2002, the Bush administration said that it would take military action on Iraq on its own, without the support of other countries. This violated the charter of the United Nations, which allows military action only in self-defense, and only when approved by the U.N. Security Council. Nevertheless, the United States prepared to make war on Iraq. Protests took place all over the world. On February 15, 2003, ten to fifteen million people across the globe demonstrated against the coming war at the same time.



## **The Iraq War Begins**

DESPITE THE PROTESTS, THE UNITED STATES government launched a massive attack on Iraq on March 20, 2003. “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” as it was called, dropped thousands of bombs on Iraq and sent more than a hundred thousand soldiers into the country. Hundreds of U.S. soldiers were killed. Thousands of Iraqis died, many of them civilians.

After three weeks, U.S. forces occupied Iraq’s capital, Baghdad. After six weeks, major military operations were declared over. President Bush stood triumphantly on a U.S. aircraft carrier, in front of a huge banner that said, “Mission Accomplished.”

But the mission to control Iraq wasn’t accomplished. Violence grew as Iraqi insurgents attacked the U.S. army. The capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003 did nothing to stop the attacks.

Iraqis grew more and more resentful of the U.S. occupation of their country. American troops rounded up Iraqis suspected of being insurgents. Thousands of Iraqis were held prisoner. When photos appeared showing U.S. troops torturing Iraqi prisoners, there was evidence that this behavior had the approval of the U.S. secretary of defense. All of these things fed the fire of Iraqi hostility toward the United States. Polls showed that a vast majority of the Iraqis wanted U.S. troops out of Iraq.

The Bush administration refused to consider withdrawing from Iraq. Meanwhile, U.S. casualties were mounting. By the middle of 2006, more than 2,500 Americans had died.

Thousands more were wounded, often quite severely. The administration went to great lengths to keep the American public from seeing the coffins, and to keep the armless and legless veterans out of sight.

As bad as American casualties were, Iraqi casualties were much greater. By mid-2006, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis had died. The country was a shambles. People lacked clean water and electricity and lived amid violence and chaos.

At the beginning of the war, a large majority of the American people had accepted the Bush administration's argument that Saddam Hussein had "weapons of mass destruction," and that the invasion of Iraq was part of the "war on terror." The major media did not question this, and the Democratic Party largely supported the war.

But as the war went on, the situation became clearer. Operation Iraqi Freedom had brought neither democracy, nor freedom, nor security to Iraq. The U.S. government had deceived the American people about "weapons of mass destruction" that did not exist. It had claimed that the attacks of September 11, 2001, were linked to Iraq, when there was no evidence to show this. It had supported torture and imprisonment without trial for thousands of people in Iraq and in the United States.

The administration was also using the war as an excuse for violating Americans' constitutional rights. Under the Patriot Act, the United States could pick up people in Afghanistan and other places and accuse them of terrorism. Instead of treating them as prisoners of war, who have rights under international law, the government created a new label for them: "unlawful enemy combatants." They were locked up in Guantánamo Bay, a U.S. military installation in Cuba. Rumors of torture came out of this prison, and some prisoners committed suicide.

In the fall of 2006, the U.S. Congress passed a bill that allowed the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to continue the harsh interrogation of suspected terrorists in secret prisons around the world. The bill also did away with the right of

habeas corpus for an “unlawful enemy combatant,” even a U.S. citizen. The loss of this right, which is guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution’s Bill of Rights, meant that prisoners would not be brought before a court to challenge their arrest.

*(left)* Anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan speaks to the news media at the White House, 2005.



## **The Anti-War Movement**

PROTESTS AGAINST THE WAR IN IRAQ TOOK place all over the United States. They were smaller than the huge anti-war demonstrations of the Vietnam era, but they showed that the Bush administration's policies were losing support.

Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey died in Iraq, spoke out powerfully against the war. When she camped near Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, she drew support from all over the country. In a speech to a Veterans for Peace gathering in Dallas, Sheehan addressed President Bush: "You tell me the truth. You tell me that my son died for oil."

As the war in Iraq continued, young people who had joined the military began to reconsider. Diedra Cobb of Illinois declared herself a conscientious objector, someone whose moral beliefs prevent her from fighting. Cobb wrote, "I joined the Army thinking that I was, quite possibly, upholding some of the mightiest of ideals for the greatest, most powerful country on this earth... . There had to be some good that would come out of the carnage, in the end. But this is where I made my mistake, because in war there is no end."

Between the beginning of the war and the end of 2004, according to CBS news, 5,500 soldiers deserted. Many went to Canada. One of them was a former staff sergeant in the Marine Corps. He told a hearing in Toronto that he and his fellow marines shot and killed more than thirty unarmed men, women, and children, including a young Iraqi who got out of his car with his arms in the air.

An English newspaper, *The Independent*, reported on U.S. deserters. It said, "Sergeant Kevin Benderman cannot shake the images from his head. There are bombed villages and desperate people. There are dogs eating corpses thrown into a mass grave. And most unremitting of all, there is the image of a young Iraqi girl, no more than eight or nine, one arm severely burnt and blistered, and the sound of her screams."

It was getting harder to get young Americans to join the armed forces, so the military stepped up its recruiting efforts. Recruiters targeted teenagers. They visited high schools, approaching students at football games and in school cafeterias. Anti-war groups took up the challenge. They visited schools to tell young people the other side of the story.

By 2006, polls showed that a majority of Americans were against the war and lacked confidence in President Bush. Some journalists began to speak out boldly, even in media that earlier had supported the administration or remained quiet. On Memorial Day, May 30, Andy Rooney told viewers of the television show *60 Minutes* that he was a veteran of World War II. Then he said, “We use the phrase ‘gave their lives,’ but they didn’t give their lives. Their lives were taken from them... . I wish we could dedicate Memorial Day, not to the memory of those who have died at war, but to the idea of saving the lives of the young people who are going to die in the future if we don’t find some new way—some new religion maybe—that takes war out of our lives.”

Salt Lake City, Utah, is generally considered a conservative place, one that would support the administration’s war in Iraq. But thousands of people cheered Mayor “Rocky” Anderson when he called President Bush a “dishonest, war-mongering, human-rights violating president.” Bush’s time in office, declared Anderson, would “rank as the worst presidency our nation has ever had to endure.”

(left) Protesters holding a massive American flag during the immigration rally in downtown Dallas, 2006.



## Two Storms

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION TRIED HARD TO keep the country in a fiercely nationalistic mood—a mood of “us versus them” that would whip up support for the Iraq war and other administration policies. One result of this strong nationalist feeling was a wave of resentment against millions of immigrants, especially Mexicans, who had come to the United States without legal status. These immigrants were seen as taking jobs from people in the United States, even though various studies showed that they did not hurt the economy, but helped it.

Congress approved plans to build a 750-mile fence along the southern borders of California and Arizona. It was supposed to keep out Mexicans who were trying to escape the poverty in their home country. The U.S. government did not seem to see the irony in the idea of a fence to keep poor Mexicans from coming *into* territory that the United States had seized from Mexico in the 1840s.

In the spring of 2005, Congress discussed laws to punish people who were in the United States illegally. Huge demonstrations took place around the country, especially in California and the Southwest, as hundreds of thousands of people demanded equal rights for immigrants. The protestors included both immigrants and Americans who supported them. One of their slogans was “No Human Being Is Illegal.”

The Bush administration faced growing disapproval of the war in Iraq and criticism of its immigration policy at home. Then a natural disaster struck. In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast states of Mississippi and Louisiana. The levees that protected the city of New Orleans from the Mississippi River gave way. Together, the storm and flood

destroyed much of the city, killed or injured thousands of people, and left hundreds of thousands homeless.

Americans and the world were shocked when the federal government was slow and inefficient in helping survivors in the stricken city. "People around the world cannot believe what they're seeing," said an article in the *Washington Post*. "From Argentina to Zimbabwe, front-page photos of the dead and desperate in New Orleans, almost all of them poor and black, have sickened them, and shaken assumptions about American might. How can this be happening, they ask, in a nation whose wealth and power seem almost supernatural in so many struggling corners of the world... International reaction has shifted in many cases from shock, sympathy and generosity to a growing criticism of the Bush administration's response to the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina."

The Katrina experience also reminded people that while millions in Africa, in Asia, and even in the United States were dying of malnutrition and sickness, and while natural disasters were taking huge tolls of life all over the world, the United States government was pouring its enormous wealth into war and the building of empire.

In November of 2006, Americans went to the polls to elect members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The voters had many issues on their minds. One of the most important must have been the disastrous war in Iraq, and the way it was draining the nation's wealth.

When the votes were counted, the Democratic Party had taken control from the Republicans in both the House of Representatives and the Senate by a narrow margin. This didn't mean that Americans were filled with enthusiasm for the Democrats, but it did mean that they were saying "no" to the administration of George W. Bush, the Republican president. The voters had taken the power of government away from the president's party, and they had given politicians a chance to lead the country in a new direction. It was a rare democratic moment in the recent history of the nation.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### **“RISE LIKE LIONS”**

I AM OFTEN ASKED HOW I CAME TO WRITE this book. One reason is that after twenty years of teaching history and political science, I wanted to write a different kind of history book—one that was different from the ones I had had in school, and the ones given to students across the country.

By that time, I knew that there is no such thing as a pure fact. Behind every fact that a teacher or writer presents to the world is a judgment. The judgment says, “This fact is important, and other facts, which I am leaving out, are not important.” I thought that some of the things that had been left out of most history books were important.

The beginning of the Declaration of Independence says that “We the people” wrote the document. But the authors of the Declaration were really fifty-five privileged white men. They belonged to a class that wanted a strong central government to protect their interests. Right down to this day, government has been used to serve the needs of the wealthy and powerful. This fact is hidden by language that suggests that all of us—rich and poor and middle class—want the same thing.

Race is another issue. I did not realize, when I first started to study history, how badly twisted the teaching and writing of history had become by ignoring nonwhite people. Yes, the Indians were there, and then they were gone. Black people were visible when they were slaves, then they were freed, and they became invisible. It was a white man’s history. Massacres of Indians and of black people got little attention, if they were mentioned at all.

Other themes and issues were also overlooked in the standard, mainstream telling of history. The suffering of the poor did not get much attention. Wars were plentiful, but

histories did not tell us much about the men and women and children on all sides who were killed or crippled when leaders made the decision to go to war. The struggles for justice by Latino people in California and the Southwest were often ignored. So were the claims of gay and lesbian people for their rights, and the change in the national culture that they brought about.

The title of this book is not quite accurate. A “people’s history” promises more than any one person can deliver, and it is the hardest kind of history to recapture. I call it that anyway because, with all its limits, it is a history that is disrespectful of governments and respectful of people’s movements of resistance.

Most history books suggest that in times of crisis we must look to someone to save us. In the Revolutionary crisis, the Founding Fathers saved us. In the Civil War, Lincoln saved us. In the Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt saved us. Our role is just to go to voting booths every four years. But from time to time, Americans reject the idea of a savior. They feel their own strength, and they rebel.

So far, their rebellions have been contained. The Establishment—the club of business leaders, generals, and politicians—has always managed to keep up the pretense of national unity, with a government that claims to represent all the people. But the Establishment would like Americans to forget the times when people who seemed helpless were able to resist, and people who seemed content demanded change. Blacks, women, Indians, young people, working people—all have found ways to make their voices heard, and to bring about change.

Most histories say little about revolt. They place the emphasis on the acts of leaders, not the actions of ordinary citizens. But history that keeps alive the memory of people’s resistance suggests new kinds of power.

Imagine the American people united for the first time in a movement for fundamental change. Imagine society’s power

taken away from the giant corporations, the military, and the politicians who answer to corporate and military interests.

We would need to rebuild the economy for efficiency and justice. We would start on our neighborhoods, cities, and workplaces. Work would be found for everyone. Society would benefit from the enormous energy, skill, and talent that is now unused. The basics—food, housing, health care, education, transportation—would be available to all.

The great problem would be to bring about all this change through cooperation, not through systems of reward and punishment. Social movements of the past give hints of how people might behave if they were working together to build a new society. Decisions would be made by small groups of people, working as equals. Perhaps a new, diverse, nonviolent culture would develop over time. The values of cooperation and freedom would shape people's relationships with one another and the raising of their children.

All of this takes us far from history, into the realm of imagination. But it is not totally removed from history. There are glimpses of such possibilities in the past—in the labor movement, for example, or the Freedom Rides, or the cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s.

Two forces are now rushing toward the future. One wears a splendid uniform. It is the “official” past, with all its violence, war, prejudices against those who are different, hoarding of the good earth's wealth by the few, and political power in the hands of liars and murderers.

The other force is ragged but inspired. It is the “people's” past, with its history of resistance, civil disobedience against the military machine, protests against racism, multiculturalism, and growing anger against endless wars.

Which of these forces will win the future? It is a race we can all choose to join, or just to watch. But we should know that our choice will help determine the outcome.

Women garment workers in New York City, at the start of the twentieth century, gained inspiration for their own movement of resistance from the words of the poet Shelley:

Rise like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number!  
Shake your chains to earth, like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you—  
Ye are many, they are few!

## *Glossary*

**Abolitionism** Movement to abolish, or end, something, such as slavery

**Anarchism** A belief that governments are by nature oppressive, and that people should live free from the authority of the state, the church, and corporate power, and share the wealth of the earth

**Annex** To take control of a territory and add it to a country

**Capitalism** Economic system in which income-producing property (such as farms and factories) is owned by individuals or corporations and competition in a free marketplace determines how goods and services will be distributed and priced

**Communism** The idea that capitalism has outlived its usefulness, that it must be replaced by a system in which the economy is collectively managed, and its wealth distributed according to people's needs

**Conservative** Tending to support established institutions and traditional values and to be wary of social change

**Democracy** Government that is ruled by the people, who usually elect representatives to form the government

**Depression** A period of low economic activity and high unemployment

**Elite** A group that is powerful within a society, often because of having money, or hereditary authority, or noble status

**Emigrant** Someone who leaves his or her home country to live in a different country

**Federalist** Supporter of a strong central, or federal, authority; supporter of national interests over states' rights

**Feminism** The belief that women are equal to men and deserve equal rights

**Immigrant** Someone who comes into a country to live there

**Imperialism** Empire building

**Indenture** A contract that binds a person to work for someone else for a certain length of time

**Left-wing Liberal** or radical

**Liberal** Tending to support strong civil liberties and to be open to social change

**Massacre** Killing a number of people, usually in a brutal or violent way

**Militia** Citizens who are armed and can act as soldiers in an emergency

**Monopoly** An economic situation in which an entire industry is controlled by a single corporation, or just a few of them

**Nationalism** Strong loyalty to one's country or ethnic group, with the feeling that that country or group is more important than others, or has higher standing, and that its interests should always be supported

**Racism** The belief that racial differences make some people better or worse than others; also, treating people differently because of race

**Radical** Extremely critical of the existing social system

**Ratification** The process by which something is voted on, accepted, and made into law

**Right-wing** Politically **conservative**

**Socialism** A society of equality, in which not profit but usefulness determines what is produced

**Speculator** Someone who buys large amounts of land, not to use it but to resell it at a profit

**Strike** An action by people in a **union** who refuse to work until their demands are met

**Suffrage** The right to vote

**Terrorism** Acts of violence, possibly against civilians, carried out for political reasons by people who do not formally represent a state or its armed forces

**Union** Association of workers who bargain for wages and benefits together instead of one by one

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claims to represent all  
cuts children's health program funding  
cuts Environmental Protection Agency funding  
deploys strikebreaking troops  
does nothing about lynchings  
evicts Native Americans from Alcatraz  
exhibits fear of poetry  
fails to outlaw racial discrimination  
fires on Native Americans from helicopter  
ignores civil rights workers' pleas  
investigates employees for loyalty  
lies about *Lusitania*  
responds slowly to New Orleans disaster  
secretly bombs Cambodia  
serves the wealthy and powerful  
takes military action without declaring war  
warrants loss of people's faith *See also* CIA; FBI; federal arts  
programs; Watergate scandal

Grantham, Thomas

grape boycott

*Grapes of Wrath, The* (Steinbeck)

Great Britain

colonies

first military clash with colonists

and Native Americans

slave trade

soldiers in Boston

taxation of colonies

wars of

Great Depression

and legislation

Greeley, Horace

Greene, Nathaniel

Grimké, Angelina

Guantánamo Bay

guerrillas

Vietnam

Gulf Oil Corporation

illegal campaign contributions

Gulf War

protests

public opinion

habeas corpus

denied “unlawful enemy combatants”

Haiti

Hamilton, Alexander

Haney, Fred

Harding, Warren

Hardwick, Thomas

Harlan, John

Harris, Katherine

Harvard University

Hawaii

Hay, John

Haymarket Affair

Haywood, Bill

health care

funding

insurance

public opinion

Henry, Patrick

as land speculator

Herndon, Angelo

hijackings

Hill, Joe

Hiroshima

Hispaniola

History of the Indies (Las Casas)

history writing

Hitchcock, Ethan Allen

Hitler, Adolf

Ho Chi Minh

Holland

and slavery

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Jr.

Holocaust, Jewish

homelessness

during Great Depression

Homestead Strike of 1892,

homosexuals

Hoover, Herbert

House of Burgesses

Houston, Sam

Hughes, Langston

Humphrey, Hubert

suggests concentration camps for suspected communists

Hunt, E. Howard

Hurricane Katrina

Hussein, Saddam

captured

Hutchinson, Anne

Hutchinson, Thomas

house destroyed

Hutto, Charles

IWW. *See* Industrial Workers of the World

immigrants and immigration

racism in laws relating to

impeachment

imperialism

American

French

German

Japanese

impressment

Incas

income gap

indentured servitude

Indians. *See* Native Americans

“Indian removal”

Indonesia

Industrial Workers of the World

infanticide

integration

of southern lunch counters

*See also* busing (desegregation)

International Monetary Fund

interracial solidarity

plantation owners' fear of

racism as a tool against

interventionism. *See also* imperialism

inventors

Iraq

bombed by U.S., 1991

bombed by U.S., 2003

falsely accused of concealing "weapons of mass destruction"

trade embargo

U.S. occupation

Iraq War

cost

public opinion

Iran

Irish-Americans

*Iron Heel, The* (London)

Iroquois



Islam

Israel

Italy

Jackson, Andrew, x

    elected president

    self-proclaimed voice of workers and farmers

James, William

Jamestown, Virginia

    burning of

janitors

Japan

Japanese Americans

Jefferson, Thomas

Jews

    attacked in Germany

    Holocaust

    immigrants

Jogger, Plough

Johnson, Lyndon B.

    lies about “attack” on U.S. ship

Jordan, June

*Jungle, The* (Sinclair)



Keller, Helen

Kemble, Fanny

Kennedy, John F.

Kennedy, Robert

King, Martin Luther, Jr.

Kissinger, Henry

Kitt, Eartha

Korea

- partition into North and South

- communist government comes to power

Korean War

Kovic, Ron

Ku Klux Klan

Kurds

- massacred in Iraq

Kuwait

La Guardia, Fiorello

labor movement

during Great Depression

Harvard University

labor exploitation

by Central Pacific

laborers. *See* workers

land mines

Laos

Latinos

laws

against escaped slaves

against Native Americans

against poor people

against women

anti-Japanese

and blacks

and business

environmental

immigration

imperialism-aiding

international trade

labor

limiting slavery

meatpacking

and Native Americans

Samuel Adams advises people to follow

tax

Thoreau's distinction between law and justice

workers' health and safety *See also* Civil Rights Act of 1964; Contract Labor Law; Espionage Act; National Recovery Act; Patriot Act; Platt Amendment; Sedition Act of 1798; Sherman Anti-Trust Act; Social Security Act; Stamp Act of 1765; Voting Rights Act

Lee, Barbara

sole congressional dissenter

Lehman, Herbert

for suggests concentration camps for suspected communists

"Let America Be America Again" (Hughes)

Lewis, John

liberalism

Lincoln, Abraham

ex-slave's opinion of  
living wage  
London, Jack  
Looking Backward (Bellamy)  
Louisiana Purchase  
love as a weapon  
Love Canal, New York  
Lowell, James Russell on Mexican War  
Lowell, Massachusetts  
textile mills  
lower class  
appeal to by politicians  
and military service  
and Revolutionary War  
urban poor *See also* class struggle; poor people  
Loyal Nine, The  
Loyalists  
*Lusitania*  
lynchings

Madison, James

Maine (ship)

“manifest destiny”

March on Washington, 1963

Malcolm X opinion of

Massachusetts

and slavery

*See also* Boston; Lowell, Massachusetts

Massachusetts Bay Colony

massacres

Colorado

My Lai

Wounded Knee

rarely mentioned in history books

Mayaguez affair

Mayflower

McCord, James, Jr.

McHenry, Keith

McKay, Claude



McKinley, William

determined to “Christianize”

Filipinos

McKinnon, Cynthia

meatpacking

Mellon, James

Memorial Day

Mexican War

Mexico

middle class

appeal to by politicians

military

attacks on civilians

desegregation

draft

draft resisters

enticement of Mexican War recruits

racism

recruiting

segregation

spending

used to break up demonstration *See also* draft; impressments; mutinies; soldiers; war

militias

Miller, Arthur

minimum wage

Miss America contest

Mississippi River flood, New Orleans, 2005

Mississippi Summer

Mitchell, John

monopolies

Monroe Doctrine

Montgomery bus boycott

Morgan, J. P.

Morison, Samuel Eliot

Morrill Tariff

Mott, Lucretia

“muckrakers”

multinational corporations

Muslims

Palestinian

rounded up and held without charge

mutinies

My Lai massacre

Nader, Ralph

Nagasaki

napalm

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

National Guard as strikebreakers

National Labor Relations Board

National Organization for Women

National Recovery Act

National Welfare Rights Organization

nationalism

and war

Native Americans

and Bacon's Rebellion

and blacks

exclusion from Declaration of Independence

fishing rights

government relations

and history writing

holocaust

and Mexican War

occupy Alcatraz Island

protests

and Revolutionary War

resistance and revolts

theft of land from

treaties *See also* “Indian removal”

Nazi Party

Netherlands and slavery

New Deal

New England

New Orleans, Flood, 2005

New York City

during Great Depression

economic crisis in 1837

9/11 terrorist attacks

population growth

riots

unsafe tenements

*New York Times*

news media

cheer victory in Iraq

controlled by government

encourage a mood of revenge

lecture about the danger of Saddam Hussein

Newton, Huey

Niagara Movement

9/11 terrorist attacks, 2001

families of victims

used as excuse to attack Iraq

Nixon, Richard

resigns presidency

Nobel Peace Prize

nonviolence

Noriega, Manuel

nuclear weapons. *See also* antinuclear movement; atomic bombs

oil

and George W. Bush

and Jimmy Carter

motivation for war

oil industry

“Operation Iraqi Freedom”

Osceola

O’Sullivan, John

Otis, James

Pacific islands

Paine, Thomas

Panama

U.S. invasion

Parker, Theodore

Parks, Rosa

Patriot Act

Patriotism, vii-viii

used to appeal to voters

an IWW member's view

and war

peace

without moral purpose

peace movement

attacked by soldiers

criminalized

lack of, during World War II

mail denied and seized

veterans in



Vietnam War era

women in

Pentagon

9/11 terrorist attack

“Pentagon Papers”

Pequots

Persian Gulf War

protests

public opinion

Philadelphia

Philippine-American War

Physicians for Social Responsibility

piecework

Piedmont Peace Project

Pilgrims

attack Pequots, xii

Pine Ridge Reservation

Pizarro, Francisco

plantations. *See also* sugar

plantations

Platt Amendment

poetry

exemplifying dangerous ideas, to Congress

police

attack strikers

confront anti-WTO demonstrators

evict tenants

fail to protect demonstrators

have skulls fractured

target militant black organizers

political parties

Polk, James

poor people

appeal to by politicians

and military service

and Revolutionary War

urban poor *See also* class struggle

poor people's organizations

poorhouses

populist movement

Post Office

denies mailing privileges to antiwar papers

poverty

gap between rich and poor

Hoover wrongly says is nearly defeated

Martin Luther King concerned about

public opinion

and race relations

Powhatan

“Preacher and the Slave, The” (Hill)

presidential election, 2000

prisons

Guantánamo Bay *See also* concentration camps

profit and profiteering

during World War II

and environmental health

and WTO

Progress and Poverty (George)

Progressive movement

property

blacks as

destruction

ownership

seizure

women as

protests and demonstrations

antinuclear

anti-WTO, 1999

antiwar, 1991

antiwar, 2001

antiwar, 2003

and arrest of Vietnam veteran

Boston, 1981

Boston Tea Party 200th anniversary

Central Park, New York City, 1982

children

civil rights movement

Columbus Quincentennial

and court-martial of navy nurse

Great Depression

immigrants

Lowell, Massachusetts

Native Americans

women

*See also* Boston Massacre; Boston Tea Party

Puerto Rico

race relations .

and poverty *See also* desegregation; interracial solidarity; lynchings, segregation

racism

antebellum (after Civil War)

and blood banks

criminal justice

foreign policy

Hitler's

military

in U.S., seen from abroad

working-class

racial violence. *See* violence against blacks; violence against immigrants

radical priests

Radical Women (group)

radicalism. *See also* anarcho-syndicalism; communism, socialism

railroads

grain shipping fees

strikes

Ramos, Jose-Ramos

Reagan, Ronald

rebellion and revolts

black

Filipino

Jefferson says are good

Madison says less likely in large nation

and Mexican War

Native American

slave *See also* Bacon's Rebellion; mutinies; Shays' Rebellion, revolution

recounts (election)

Florida, 2000

Regulator Movement

religion

and "manifest destiny" *See also* Christian church

religious conflict

Remarque, Erich Maria

Republican Party

revolution

Africa

Asia

China

Russia

cultural revolution

revolutionaries

Cuba

Revolutionary War

causes

Rice, Condoleezza

rich people

aided by government *See also* class struggle

riots

“robber barons”

Robeson, Paul

Rockefeller, John D.

Rockefeller family

Rooney, Andy

Roosevelt, Franklin D.

savior, say history books

and World War II

Roosevelt, Theodore, ix-x



Rosenberg, Et-el

Rosenberg, Julius

runaway slave laws

Russia

Sacco, Nicola

salary gap

Salseda, Andrea

Saudi Arabia

U.S. troops stationed in

Schenck, Charles

schools

segregation

integration

Scott, Dred

Scott, Winfield

“Scottsboro Boys” case

Seattle

anti-WTO protest, 1999

during Great Depression

general strike (1919)

secession of southern states

Sedition Act of 1798

segregation

Seminoles

Seneca Falls convention (1848)

Sequoyah

servants. *See also* indentured servitude

Seven Years' War

funding

sexism

segregation

buses

military

public opinion changes

schools

September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks

families of victims

used as excuse to attack Iraq

Shawnees

Shays' Rebellion

Sheehan, Cindy

Sherman Anti-Trust Act

shoemakers

Shy, John

*Silent Spring* (Carson)

Sinclair, Upton

sit-down strikes

ruled illegal

sit-ins

slaves and slavery

and Civil War

ended in U.S.

and indentured servitude

Jackson gives advice on slave-buying

laws

Lincoln's opinion of

Native American

northern states

resistance and revolts

statistics

women slaves *See also* Underground Railroad

smallpox

“smart bombs”

kill civilians in Iraq

Smith, John

social class struggle . *See also* class struggle

Social Security Act

socialism

fear of

seen as “menace”

Socialist Party

falling apart

headquarters raided in Seattle

Socialist Workers Party

soldiers

attack antiwar marchers

black

break strikes

break up veterans’ demonstration

declare themselves conscientious objectors

desert

Iraq War

Vietnam War

die from eating spoiled meat

dig trenches in Saudi Arabia

go unpaid

kill strikers

kill women, children, and POWs

loot and rape

march against their consciences

mutiny

write home from Vietnam

songwriters

Sorensen, Theodore

South, The

desegregation of schools

public opinion of segregation

rebellion of blacks

secession of states

sit-ins

theft of Indian lands

South Africa

Soviet Union

arms race

collapse

Spain

colonies

Spanish-American War

Speckled Snake

Spies, August

spy ships

Stamp Act of 1765

protests against

Stand for the Children

Standard Oil Company

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady

state troopers as strikebreakers

steelworkers

Steffens, Lincoln

Stevens, John Paul

stock market crash, 1929

strikes

coal miners

communist involvement

copper miners

for 11-hour workday

for 10-hour workday

for 8-hour workday

factory workers

garment workers

Homestead Strike of 1892

Latinos and

railroad workers

statistics

steelworkers

strikebreaking

during World War II *See also* general strikes; sit-down strikes

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

students

protest misinformation in school books

protest Persian Gulf War

protest scheduled Kissinger speech

rally for living wage for janitors

sugar plantations

strikes

suicide

African slaves

alleged, of anarchist in FBI custody

Arawaks



9/11 terrorists

of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay

Supreme Court

effectively decides 2000 election winner

ends school segregation

okays death penalty

rules local bus segregation illegal

rules sit-down strikes illegal

sweatshops

Swift, Gustavus

Taliban

Tarbell, Ida

taxation

- land tax

- protests

- public opinion

Taylor, Zachary

technological innovation

Tecumseh

television

- excludes Nader from broadcast debates

tenant farmers

Tennessee Valley Authority

terrorism

- “war on terrorism” declared *See also* September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks

- terrorist suspects seized without charge

Texas

Texas Rangers

textile mills

Thirteenth Amendment

Thoreau, Henry David

Tillmon, Johnie

tobacco

torture

- employed by U.S. military

- trade union movement. *See* labor movement

trade union movement

Trail of Tears

trans-Atlantic voyages

- slaves

- women

treaties

- and Native Americans

Triangle Shirtwaist Company 1909 strike

- 1911 fire

Truman, Harry S.

- launches search for “disloyal persons”

- and race relations

“trust-busting”

Truth, Sojourner

Tubman, Harriet

Turner, Nat

Twain, Mark, x

U.S. Constitution

contravened by Patriot Act

First Amendment

ratification by states

Thirteenth Amendment

U.S. Department of Agriculture suggests no free second helpings of milk

U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. government. *See* government

U.S. Post Office

denies mailing privileges to antiwar papers

USS Maine (ship)

U.S. Steel Company

Underground Railroad

unemployment

insurance

survived by bootlegging coal miners

union movement. *See also* labor movement

United Nations

notes ill effects of embargo on Iraq

upper class

aided by government *See also* class struggle; rich people

uprisings. *See* rebellions and revolts

urbanization

Van Buren, Martin

Vanzetti, Bartolomeo

Vesey, Denmark

veterans

advocate draftees to “use their own conscience”

protest in Washington

speak of lives taken

Viet Cong

Vietnam

Japanese occupation

French control and bombing

partition into North and South

U.S. intervention and secret war

Vietnam War

blacks and

effect on public opinion of government

Martin Luther King speaks out against

My Lai massacre

U.S. bombing of Laos and Cambodia

violence against blacks . *See also* lynchings

violence against civil rights demonstrators and workers

violence against immigrants

Virginia. *See also* Bacon's Rebellion; Jamestown

voting

black registration

blacks request suffrage

choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee

constitutional limits on

reform

southern blacks and

women gain right to vote

Voting Rights Act



WTO. *See* World Trade Organization

Waco, Texas

Walker, David

war

- boosts economy

- controls citizens

- makes citizens evacuate homes

- protects interests of capitalists

- starts under pretext

- supplies victors with brief euphoria *See also* biological warfare; Civil War; Iraq War; Korean War; Mexican War; Persian Gulf War; Philippine-American War; Revolutionary War; Seven Years' War; Spanish-American War; Vietnam War; War of 1812; World War I; World War II

War of 1812

Washington, George

- as land speculator

Watergate scandal

Watts, Los Angeles riots, 1965

wealth

- division of

wealth inequality

“weapons of mass destruction”

Iraq falsely accused of concealing

welfare

public opinion

Whiskey Rebellion

whistleblowers

white-black solidarity

plantation owners’ fear of

racism as a tool against

white servants

Whitman, Walt

on Mexican War

Willard, Emma

Wilson, Woodrow

Winthrop, John

witch hunts (repression)

Cold War era

Wobblies

women

Afghanistan

black

excluded from Declaration of Independence

excluded from history books

first in American colonies

invisible citizens

literacy

oppressed by law

rebels

roles

slaves

strikers

teachers

voting

workers

women's movement

women's rights convention, Seneca Falls (1848)

Wood, Leonard

workers

child

immigrant

as machines

meet their own needs

and poverty

and presidential election of 2000

salary gap

women workers

*See also* strikes; union movement

working class and arts

working-class racism

Workers Alliance

World Bank

World Trade Center, New York City 9/11 terrorist attack

World Trade Organization

protest against, 1999

World War I

aids U.S. economy

casualties

World War II

draft resisters

World's Anti-Slavery Convention (1840)

Wounded Knee, South Dakota

massacre, 1890

American Indian Movement

occupation

Wright, Frances

X, Malcolm

assassination

Young, Andrew

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