

# GIRLS SAY YES

# 29

# to boys who say NO

## A Time of Upheaval 1961–1980



**DOROTHY BURLAGE** (Courtesy of Dorothy Dawson Burlage)

**DOROTHY BURLAGE** grew up in southeast Texas, a proper southern belle as well as a self-reliant “frontier woman.” Her conservative Southern Baptist parents taught her to believe in the brotherhood of man and to conform to the conservative values of her old slaveholding community. At the University of Texas, she watched with awe as black students her age engaged in a civil-rights struggle she likened to a holy crusade.

She left her sorority, moved into the university’s only desegregated dormitory, and joined the Christian Faith-and-Life Community, where she imbibed a heady brew of liberal Christian existentialism. Its commitment to nonviolent radical change propelled Burlage into the civil-rights movement’s quest for the “beloved community.” The young activists in SNCC became her political model, their ethos her moral beacon.

Burlage attended the founding conference of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1962. It exhilarated her to be with like-minded idealists from different backgrounds, eager to create a better world: “It was a rare moment in history and we were blessed to be given that opportunity.” She gloried in peers who shared her values, reaffirmed her world view, and validated her activism. Burlage remained involved in SDS for the rest of the decade until, disillusioned by both the constant need to be “more radical and more willing to take risks to *prove* yourself” and the powerful conservative backlash, she ceased her activism and went back to school.

Commitment and then disengagement would characterize many of Dorothy’s peers. The baby boomers in college spawned a tumultuous student movement and convulsive counterculture that gave the sixties its distinctive aura of upheaval. They exploded the well-kept world of the 1950s, when “nice” girls did not have sex or pursue careers, when African-Americans feared to vote or assert themselves. They revived both the Left and Right. Then came 1968, the pivotal year. It had, *Time* magazine would later write, “the vibrations of earthquake about it. America shuddered. History cracked open.... It reverberates still in the American mind.”

Like an earthquake, for many Americans, the events of 1968 brought commitments and optimism crashing down. The decade that had begun with high hopes ended in deep disillusionment. One consequence was a widespread turning inward. Many in Dorothy’s generation now became preoccupied with themselves—which again transformed the nation. Both an agent in and beneficiary of the era’s transformation, Republican Richard Nixon would win the presidency in 1968 and then gain an overwhelming reelection victory in 1972. Presiding over the most radical changes in American foreign policy since the start of the Cold War, Nixon ended U.S.

**THE JOAN BAEZ SISTERS AND DRAFT RESISTANCE** By 1966, opposition to the draft had become a prominent aspect of the antiwar movement. Slogans such as “Girls say yes to boys who say no” popularized the protests against both the Vietnam War and universal military service for men. (*National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of William Mears*)

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involvement in Vietnam and inaugurated a period of détente, or reduced tensions, with China and the Soviet Union. In 1974, however, having flouted the very laws he had pledged to uphold, Nixon resigned in disgrace to avoid impeachment. His legacy was a public disrespect for politics seldom matched in U.S. history.

Despite the Watergate revelations, however, conservatism gained strength in the Ford and Carter administrations. As Americans tired of calls for equality and justice, and as jobs in the industrial sector withered, social activism declined and liberalism languished. Dorothy's and most of her peers' vibrant sense of American exceptionalism, innocence, and virtue perished, crushed by the disastrous war in Vietnam, unbridled dissent and disorder, the assassination of popular leaders, presidential lies and crimes, and the destruction—by rapidly rising energy costs and runaway inflation—of the long post-World War II economic boom.

## FOCUS Questions

- In what ways did the student movement and counterculture shape the 1960s and 1970s?
- What were the major successes and failures of the Women's Liberation Movement?
- How did Richard Nixon's political strategy reflect the racial upheavals and radicalism of this era?
- What were the main causes and consequences of the Watergate scandal?
- What were the major failures of the Ford and Carter presidencies?

## Coming Apart

By the 1960s, the number of American students pursuing higher education had risen from 1 million in 1940 to 8 million. More than half the U.S. population was then under age thirty. Breaking with its forty-year tradition, *Time* magazine in 1967 selected the entire baby-boom generation as its "Man of the Year." Their sheer numbers gave the young a collective identity and guaranteed that their actions would have impact. And not just in the United States. Major student demonstrations shook the governments of Japan, Korea, Turkey, and Venezuela in 1960, and many, many more would follow.

Most baby boomers followed conventional paths. They sought a secure place in the system, not its overthrow. They preferred beer to drugs, and football to political demonstrations. They joined fraternities and sororities and majored in subjects that would equip them for the job market. Whether or not they went to college—and fewer than half did—the vast majority had their eyes fixed on a good salary, and a new car with a bumper sticker proclaiming "My Country—Right or Wrong."

Many politically engaged young people mobilized on the right, joining organizations like Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), which by 1970 boasted fifty thousand members—far more than any other student group. Rather than John Kennedy, these youths idolized Barry Goldwater, who embodied the traditional values and muscular anticommunism they cherished. YAF would be the seedbed of a new generation of conservatives who later gained control of the GOP, yet it was overshadowed in the 1960s by young activists in the New Left.

## Toward a New Left

Although a tiny minority of youth, an insurgent band of leftist students got the lion's share of attention. Initially hopeful, they welcomed the idealism of the civil-rights movement, supported the campaign against nuclear testing, answered the rousing call of President Kennedy for service to the nation, and admired the mavericks and outsiders of the fifties.

In June 1962, some sixty students adopted the Port Huron Statement, a broad critique of American society and a call for more genuine human relationships. Proclaiming themselves "a new left," they organized the **Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)**, which envisioned a nonviolent youth movement transforming the United States into a "participatory democracy" in which individuals would control the decisions that affected their lives. SDS assumed this could lead to the end of consumerism, militarism, and racism.

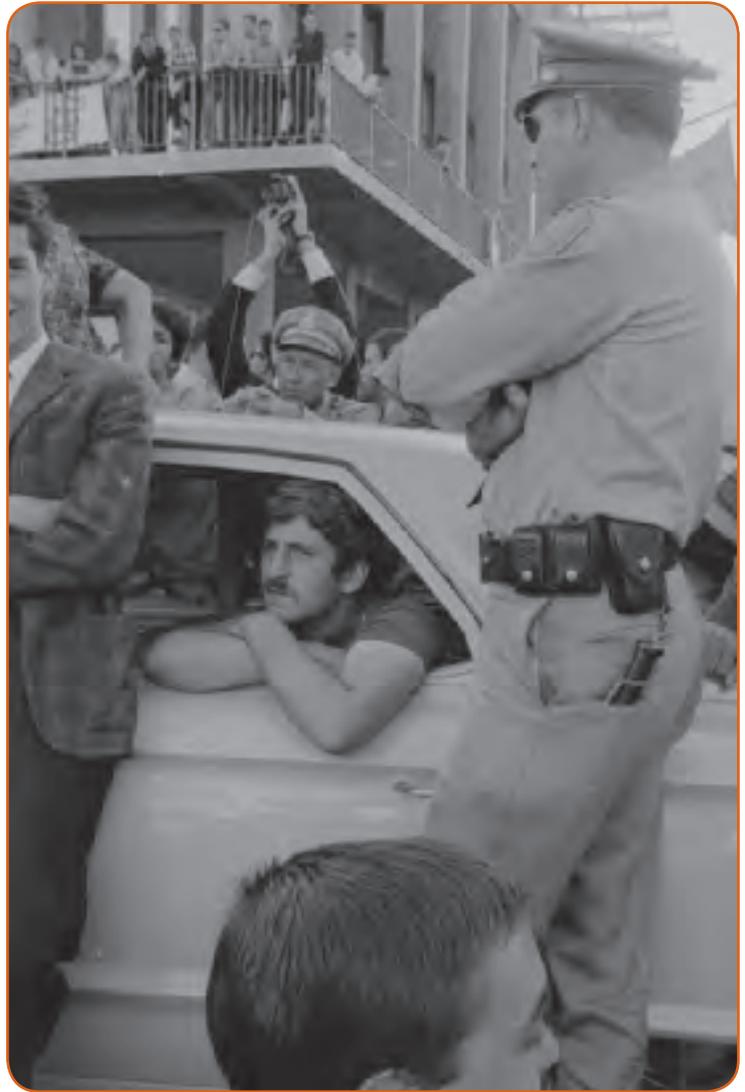
The generation of activists who found their agenda in the Port Huron Statement had their eyes opened by the police dogs in Birmingham, the assassination of President Kennedy, and the escalating war in Vietnam. Most never joined SDS but associated with what they vaguely called "the Movement" or "the New Left." Unlike the Leftists of the 1930s, they rejected Marxist ideology and emulated SNCC's style. Many became radicalized by the rigidity of campus administrators and mainstream liberalism's inability to achieve swift, fundamental change. Only a radical rejection of the liberal consensus, they presumed, could restructure society and create a genuinely democratic nation.

## From Protest to Resistance

Returning from the Mississippi Freedom Summer to the Berkeley campus of the University of California in fall 1964, Mario Savio and other student activists tried to solicit funds and recruit volunteers near the campus gate, a spot traditionally open to political activities. Prodded by local conservatives, university administrators suddenly banned such practices; but when police arrested one of the activists, students surrounded the police car and kept it from moving. Savio then founded the **Berkeley Free Speech Movement (FSM)**, a coalition of student groups insisting on the right to campus political activity. Likening the university to an impersonal machine, and its students to interchangeable machine parts, Savio insisted that “when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick to heart, you’ve got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels . . . and you’ve got to make the machine stop until we’re free.” More than a thousand students then sat-in on the administrative “gears.” Their arrests led to more demonstrations and a strike by nearly 70 percent of the student body.

The conservative former movie star Ronald Reagan, running for governor in 1966, vowed to “clean up the mess at Berkeley,” with its “Beatniks, radicals and filthy speech advocates” and its “sexual orgies so vile I cannot describe them.” But the demands and tactics of the FSM reverberated on campuses nationwide. Students disenchanted with filing into impersonal buildings to endure lectures from remote professors initiated a wave of protests seeking greater involvement in university affairs. Their objectives changed the character of American higher education: curricular reform, the end of rules regulating dormitory life, and the admission of more minority students.

The escalation of the war in Vietnam, and the abolition of automatic student deferments from the draft in January 1966, transformed the protests into a *mass* social movement. Popularizing the slogan “Make Love—Not War,” SDS organized some 200 new chapters and harassed campus recruiters for the Dow Chemical Company, the chief producer of flesh-burning napalm and the defoliant Agent Orange, used on Vietnam forests. In 1967, urging a shift “From Protest to Resistance,” SDS supported draft resistance and civil disobedience in selective service centers. By 1968, it claimed one hundred thousand members on three hundred campuses and attracted a half-million antiwar protesters to its spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, remembered for the chants of “Burn cards, not people” (meaning draft cards) and “Hell no, we won’t go!”



**JACK WEINBERG IN SURROUNDED BERKLEY POLICE CAR** When the police tried to arrest Weinberg for setting up a table in an area that the Berkeley administration had recently banned from all political activity, several hundred students “sat-in” for thirty-two hours, sparking the Free Speech Movement, which gave voice to the anger and alienation many students felt. (*University of California at Berkeley, Bancroft Library*)

That spring, at least forty thousand students on a hundred campuses demonstrated against war and racism. In April, the SDS chapter at Columbia University demanded the university end all its military research projects, and the Students’ Afro-American Society insisted it stop the construction of a new gymnasium, claiming that it encroached on the Harlem community. Shouting “Gym Crow must go,” a thousand students barricaded themselves inside five campus buildings, declaring them “revolutionary communes” and holding them for six days. “Up against the wall, motherfucker,” SDS’s leader told the Columbia president. “This is a stickup.”

Outraged by the brutality of the police who retook the buildings by storm, the moderate majority of Columbia students joined a sympathy boycott of classes that shut down the university. Elsewhere, students in Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, and South Korea expressed their own revolutionary bombast. Their protests far exceeded in size and ferocity anything that occurred in the United States. In part, the turbulence of the young reflected the sheer numbers of the postwar baby boom in many nations, which produced a heightened sense of the power of youth, higher levels of expectations and impatience, and a huge number of university students attracted to nonconformity and even rebellion. Satellite technology and new portable video cameras now made it easy to instantly transmit student uprisings in one nation to students around the globe.

The year 1969 saw the high point of the Movement with the New Mobilization, a series of huge antiwar demonstrations culminating in mid-November with a March Against Death. Three hundred thousand protestors descended on Washington to march in a candle-lit parade, carrying signs with the names of soldiers killed or villages destroyed in Vietnam. By 1972, antiwar sentiment would be

nationwide. In contrast to the apolitical students of the 1950s, youth in the 1960s proved themselves able to challenge the authorities and inequities of American society.

## Kent State and Jackson State

Although revulsion against the war continued to grow after Richard Nixon assumed office in 1969, his periodic announcements of troop withdrawals from Vietnam brought a lull in campus demonstrations. On April 30, 1970, however, the U.S. invasion of Cambodia jolted a war-weary nation and reawakened student protest.

At Kent State University in Ohio, as elsewhere, antiwar students broke windows and torched the ROTC building. Nixon branded them “bums,” his vice president compared them to Nazi storm troopers, and the Ohio governor slapped martial law on the university. Three thousand National Guardsmen in full battle gear rolled onto the campus in armored personnel carriers. The next day, as six hundred Kent State students demonstrated, Guardsmen in Troop G, poorly trained in crowd control, fired on students retreating from tear gas, leaving four dead and eleven wounded. None was a campus radical.



**FLOWER POWER AT THE MARCH ON THE PENTAGON** The year 1967 brought the start of truly significant nationwide protest against the Vietnam War. In October, an estimated 100,000 people attended an antiwar rally in Washington, and many sought to “invade” the Pentagon, the nerve center of the American war effort. (© *Bernie Boston*)



**“MY GOD, THEY’RE KILLING US”** Following President Nixon’s announcement of the military incursion into Cambodia, a formally neutral nation, many colleges exploded in anger. To quell the protests at Kent State University, where more than a thousand students clashed with local police, Ohio National Guardsmen fired on students, killing four. News of the shootings outraged many students nationwide, touching off yet another round of campus protests, which led hundreds of colleges to cancel final exams and shut down for the semester. (*John Filo*)

Ten days later, Mississippi state patrolmen, responding to a campus protest, fired into a women’s dormitory at a black college, **Jackson State**, killing two students and wounding a dozen. Nationwide, students exploded in anger against the violence, the war, and the president. More than four hundred colleges and universities, many of which had seen no previous unrest, shut down as students boycotted classes. The war had come home.

The nation was polarized. Most students blamed Nixon for widening the war, yet more Americans blamed the victims for the campus violence and criticized students for undermining U.S. foreign policy. Patriotism, class resentment against privileged college students, and a fear of social chaos underlay the condemnation of protesters. Many Kent townspeople shared the view of a local merchant that the guard had “made only one mistake—they should have fired sooner and longer.” A local ditty promised, “The score is four, and next time more.”

## Legacy of Student Frenzy

The campus disorders after the invasion of Cambodia were the final spasm of a tumultuous, now fragmenting, movement. When a bomb planted by antiwar radicals destroyed a science building at the University of Wisconsin in summer 1970, killing a graduate student, most deplored the tactic. With the resumption of classes in the fall, the fad of “streaking”—racing across campus in the nude—more reminiscent of the 1920s than the 1960s, heralded a change in the student mood. By then, Nixon had significantly reduced the draft calls and the entire conscription system was soon to be ended, decreasing student opposition to the war. Some antiwar activists turned to other causes, or to

The guard had “made only one mistake—they should have fired sooner and longer.”



**THE STUDENT MOOD AFTER KENT STATE** While many older Americans supported the actions of the Ohio National Guard, students across the country boycotted classes and forced hundreds of campuses to shut down. Some continued to protest during graduation at the University of Massachusetts. (© Bettmann/Corbis)

communes, careers, and parenthood. A handful of radicals went underground, committing terrorist acts that justified the government's repression of the remnants of the antiwar movement. The New Left fell victim to government harassment, to its own internal contradictions, and to Nixon's winding down the Vietnam War.

The consequences of campus upheavals outlived the New Left. Student radicalism spurred the resentment of millions of Americans, helping shatter the liberal consensus. It gave religious evangelicals, southern segregationists, and blue-collar workers yet another reason to vote conservative, and propelled Republicans like Ronald Reagan to prominence. "If it takes a bloodbath, let's get it over with," he declared of militants in 1966. "No more appeasement!"

At the same time, the New Left helped mobilize campuses into a force that the government could not ignore, and it made continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam difficult. The Movement also liberalized many facets of campus life and made university governance less authoritarian: virtually

ending dress codes and curfews; making ROTC an elective rather than a requirement; and forcing the increased recruitment of minority students and the proliferation of Black Studies programs. Such changes, however, fell short of the New Left vision of remaking society and politics. While masses of students could be mobilized in the short run for a particular cause, only a few made long-term commitments to Movement activism. The generation that the New Left had hoped would be the vanguard of radical change preferred pot to politics, and rock to revolution.

## The Countercultural Rebellion

The alienation and hunger for change that drew some youths into radical politics led others to cultural rebellion, to personal rather than political change, to discarding middle-class conformity, careerism, and sexual repression. A San Francisco journalist termed these young people "hippies."

Hippies disdained consumerism. Preferring to make what they needed and share it with others, they tried not to want what they did not have. They donned simple garments and let their hair grow long. Love, cooperation, and immediate gratification became their mantra.

Many hippies joined communes and tribes that glorified liberation, helped bring ecology and alternative medicine into the mainstream, and disdained decorum. In urban areas such as San Francisco's Haight Ashbury or Chicago's Old Town—"places where you could take a trip without a ticket"—communards experimented with drugs, mysticism, and uninhibited sexuality. Historian Theodore Roszack called them "a **'counter culture'** . . . a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbarian intrusion."

## Hippies and Drugs

Illustrative of the gap between the two cultures, one saw marijuana as a "killer weed," a menace to health and life, and the other thought it a harmless social relaxant. At least half the college students in the late sixties tried marijuana, and a minority used mind-altering drugs, particularly LSD. The high priest of LSD, Timothy Leary, preached "Tune in, turn on, drop out." On the West Coast, novelist Ken Kesey and his followers, the Merry Pranksters, conducted "acid tests" (distributing free tablets of LSD in orange juice), and created the "psychedelic" craze of Day-Glo-painted bodies gyrating to electrified rock music under flashing strobe lights.

Many youths distanced themselves from middle-class respectability, flaunting outrageous personal styles ("do your own thing") and shaggy beards; expressing contempt for consumerism by wearing surplus military clothing or torn jeans; and expanding the language to include *bummer*, *far-out*, and *groovy*. Typical of the generation that had been schooled in the deprivation and duty of the 1930s and 1940s, newly elected Governor Ronald Reagan of California responded by defining a hippie as one "who looked like Tarzan, walked like Jane, and smelled like Cheetah."

## Musical Revolution

"This the dawning of the age of Aquarius," sang the cast of 1968's *Hair*, and the nation pulsed with music that both echoed and developed a separate generational identity, a distinct youth culture. In the early 1960s, the revived popularity of folk music mirrored youth's search for an "authentic" alternative to



**CHICANO MORATORIUM** This march to protest the Vietnam War, held in East Los Angeles in 1970, brought together the Brown Power, Women's Liberation, and antiwar movements—all three of which drew ideological and tactical inspiration from the civil rights campaign of African-Americans. (Devra Weber)

what they considered an artificial consumer culture. Expressing their idealism in protesting war and racism, Bob Dylan sang hopefully of changes "blowin' in the wind" and indignantly of changes that would "shake your windows and rattle your walls."

"Beatlemania" swept the country in 1964 (see Beyond America). The Beatles would soon be joined by Motown rhythm-and-blues black performers and eardrum-shattering acid rockers—extolling "sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll" for a generation at war.

In August 1969, 400,000 young people gathered for

"Sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll."



# Beyond America

# GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

## The British Invasion

Although American culture remained popular around the globe in the 1960s, England's new spirit of cultural and social rebellion increasingly influenced trends in the United States, Canada, and Europe. As the image of a bowler-hatted, umbrella-carrying banker on his way to a stuffy men's club gave way to long-haired youth dressed in multicolored fashions on their way to a basement club to smoke dope or take acid to heighten the sounds of the rock group's guitars, Britain became the symbol of the "permissive society," and of everything "cool"—of a revolution in attitudes and tastes epitomized by the Beatles and the miniskirt.

Because of television and jet travel, ideas and values swiftly crossed borders and oceans. The resulting cross-pollination of cultures often made it hard to know who initiated what and who followed whom. Undoubtedly, however, while Britannia no longer ruled the waves, it waived the rules. In the 1960s, Britain ended censorship of the theater and decriminalized homosexual activity between consenting adults. British lawmakers legalized abortions, reduced the voting age and age of legal majority from twenty-one to eighteen, and instituted no-fault divorce. In British novels, the theater, "New Wave" films, and, to some extent, even television, sexual explicitness was "in." What an earlier generation defined as obscene became commonplace; and the ideal of premarital chastity, even marital fidelity, came to be dismissed as "Victorian." *L'Express* in France declared England the country "where the wind of today blows most strongly," and *Le Monde* added, "If one flag deserves to fly over the hot-pot of the sixties, no doubt that it should be the Union Jack." In Italy, *Epoca* similarly described London as "the happiest and the most electric city in Europe, and the most nonconformist." *Time* magazine hailed "swinging London" as the "city of the decade." It was *the* place to be for actors, artists, writers, the young.

And, it was *the* place to be for those in the fashion world; along with music, clothes expressed the distinctiveness of youth in the 1960s. In place of the military-like khaki slacks and crewcuts popular with young men in the 1950s, British youth adopted an androgynous style of long hair and the "mod" look—irreverent, adventurous clothes like suede jackets and gaucho trousers. Young women abandoned their bobby-sox and Capri pants for sexiness, especially the miniskirt—the paramount symbol of sexual liberation. Launched by the British designer Mary Quant in 1965, the miniskirt, and then hot pants

(very short shorts), worn with outrageously colorful, boldly patterned tights or fishnet stockings, swept the Western world. So too did "Twiggy," the skinny, doll-like model in mid-calf go-go boots who personified London's hip look and symbolized the "generation gap" between youth and their elders still in thrall to the fashion salons of Paris and New York.

Most of all, British rock groups defined the culture (and counterculture) of the 1960s. Vibrant early rock-n-roll in the United States had faltered in the late fifties—with Elvis in the army, Chuck Berry in jail, and Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens dead. In their place came homogenized teenage crooners whose looks counted more than their music, now scrubbed of all its sexual allusions and raucous sounds. Then came 1964: the first Beatles tour of the United States brought back rock-n-roll's initial exuberance. With their shaggy hair and "mod" clothes, their youthful irreverence toward authority and custom, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr swept the country as nothing before or since in popular culture. Their first U.S. single, "I Want to Hold Your Hand," sold an incredible 1.5 million copies in five days. In three months, they had twelve singles on the *Billboard* Top 100 and would soon release their first film, *A Hard Day's Night*, which youth loved because, as a student wrote, "all the dreary old adults are mocked and brushed aside."

By continually innovating in the music they wrote and with the instruments they played, even changing their appearance, the Beatles remained the most popular music group until they disbanded in 1970. Each of their albums simultaneously shaped and reflected the culture of the sixties, embodying the hedonistic, playful, utopian sensibilities central to the youth revolt. From the whimsical images of love and pleasure in their first album, *Meet the Beatles*, they went on to a marijuana-influenced compilation of personal introspection in a variety of textures and moods in 1965's *Rubber Soul*, inviting its audience, not to dance, but to listen—thoughtfully. In 1966, they released the path-breaking *Revolver* album, a tableau of backward guitar and voice lines, variable tape speeds, distorted timbres, and chants inspired by the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*. 1967 brought LSD's mind-altering *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, featuring adolescent runaways, carnival acrobatics, Indian sitars, Scottish farm animals, and a British meter maid. It was music to get lost in, and, like no other rock album, its euphoric vibes captured



**THE BEATLES IN ENGLAND, 1964** Many Americans, disenchanted with conformity and convention, embraced the Fab Four as much for their mod style and frisky personalities as for their music. (© Michael Ochs Archives/Corbis)

the essence of the Summer of Love with tangerine trees and marmalade skies. Then, in the midst of 1968's riots and assassinations, the Beatles sang "Revolution" and released *The Beatles* or *The White Album*, signaling the end of the magical Lennon-McCartney collaborative writing: each was now going his own way, Lennon increasingly returning to his primitive rockabilly roots and McCartney becoming evermore the jaunty, popular entertainer.

Meanwhile, other British groups, like the Who, the Moody Blues, and Eric Clapton and Cream produced even more sexually graphic, politically subversive, and drug-induced music. None challenged the Beatles' popularity more than the Rolling Stones, who exuded rebelliousness and unashamed sexual lust. Unlike the "Fab Four," there was nothing cute about Mick Jagger and his group. Their street-fighting persona was as hard as their name. Billing himself as "his satanic majesty," the snarling, sneering, thick-lipped Mick strutted on stage, prancing and twitching to the music, while alternately mocking, scorning, and flirting with his screaming fans. The Stones' music and image, much as their ode

to a "Street Fighting Man" and pledge of "Sympathy for the Devil," reveled in chaos, defiance, and revolt.

Like the broader counterculture, much of the British Invasion was self-indulgent, self-righteous, and self-destructive. Its trinity of sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll brought more anguish than salvation. Yet in its message of youth triumphant, young Americans heard both an inspiration for and an acknowledgment of their power to shape the culture to their own aspirations and values. By emphasizing creative experimentation, by questioning authority and convention, and by rejecting a life of repression dedicated to the pursuit of wealth, the British Invasion enhanced a sense of liberation in the United States that would make lifestyle choices possible for post-baby-boom generations that their parents had not even contemplated.

## QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

- What was the impact of the British Invasion on the American counterculture?
- Why were the Beatles so extraordinarily popular in the United States?

the **Woodstock festival** in New York's Catskill Mountains to celebrate their vision of freedom and harmony. For one long weekend, they reveled in rock music and openly shared drugs and sexual partners. One magazine claimed it “the model of how good we will all feel after the revolution.” Many heralded Woodstock as the dawning of an era of love and peace—the Age of Aquarius.

Its luster had already dimmed. “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose,” sang Janis Joplin, one of a number of rock stars who would soon die of drug addiction. The pilgrimage of “flower children” to the Haight and to New York’s East Village in the mid-sixties had brought in their wake a train of rapists and organized-crime dope peddlers. In late 1969, hippie Charles Manson and his “family” of runaways ritually murdered a pregnant movie actress and four of her friends, and the Rolling Stones hired the Hell’s Angels motorcycle gang to guard them at their rock concert at the Altamont Raceway near San Francisco. While the Stones snarled “Street Fighting Man,” the Hell’s Angels terrorized spectators and stabbed and stomped a young black man to death. In 1970, the Beatles disbanded. John Lennon sang, “The dream is over.”

“The dream is over.”

Advertisers awoke to the economic potential of the youth culture, using “revolution” to sell cars and jeans. Rock groups, commanding huge fees, became big business.

Yogurt and granola appeared in supermarkets. Although cynics concluded that counterculture values were not deeply held, the culture’s attitudes and beliefs continued to influence American society long after the 1960s. Self-fulfillment remained a popular goal, the questioning of conventional values and authority became commonplace, and the repressive sexual standards of the 1950s did not return.

## The Sexual Revolution

The counterculture’s “if it feels good, do it” approach fit the hedonistic and permissive ethic of the 1960s, leading to a revolution in sexual norms. Although the AIDS epidemic and the graying of the baby boomers in the late 1980s chilled the ardor of promiscuity, liberalized sexual mores were more publicly accepted than ever before, making full gender equality and gay liberation realizable goals.

Many commentators linked the increase in sexual permissiveness to “the Pill”—an oral contraceptive that freed women from the threat of pregnancy. It became available in 1960, and by 1970, ten million women were taking it. Still other women used the intrauterine device (IUD, later banned as unsafe) or

the diaphragm. Many universities ended their rules on dormitory visits and living off campus, allowing more women to explore and enjoy their sexuality, but also increasing pressures from men for women to have sex lest they be labeled “frigid” and unliberated. Some states legalized abortion. In New York, one fetus was legally aborted for every two babies born in 1970. The Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* (1973) decision struck down all remaining state laws infringing on a woman’s constitutional right to abortion during the first trimester (three months) of pregnancy.

The Supreme Court also threw out most laws restricting any “sexually explicit” art with “redeeming social importance.” Mass culture exploited the new permissiveness. *Playboy* featured ever-more-explicit erotica, and women’s periodicals encouraged readers to enjoy recreational sex. *The Joy of Sex* (1972)—a “Gourmet Guide to Love Making”—became a fixture in middle-class bedrooms. Hollywood filled movie screens with scenes of couples having sex; Broadway presented plays featuring full-frontal nudity and mock orgies; and even television presented dramas about, and frank discussions of, once-forbidden topics. Attitudinal changes brought behavioral changes, and vice versa. Cohabitation—living together without marriage—became thinkable to average middle-class Americans. Some marital counselors even touted “open marriage” (in which spouses are free to have sex with other partners) and “swinging” (sexual sharing with other couples) as cures for stale relationships. Some Americans’ tolerance for unconventional, unrestrained sexuality had changed dramatically by the mid-1970s.

Overall, the baby boomers transformed sexual relations as much as racial relations. The institutions of marriage and family would be fundamentally altered. Freer social norms and language spread throughout much of American society. But what some hailed as liberation others bemoaned as moral decay. Offended by open sexuality and its preferences, and by “topless” bars and X-rated theaters, many Americans applauded politicians who promised a war on immorality. The public association of the counterculture and the sexual revolution with student radicalism and ghetto riots swelled the tide of conservatism in the 1970s.

## Feminism and a Values Revolution

The rising tempo of social activism also stirred a new spirit of self-awareness and dissatisfaction among educated women. Although one of the last of the

major social movements to emerge in the 1960s, the Second wave of Feminism outlasted the others and profoundly altered the economic and legal status of women, as well as attitudes about gender roles and sexual relationships.

## A Second Feminist Wave

Several events fanned the embers of women's discontent into flames. Unprecedented numbers of women were going to college and employed outside the home. In 1963, the report of John Kennedy's Presidential Commission on the Status of Women documented occupational inequities similar to those endured by minorities. Women received less pay than men for comparable work; and they made up only 7 percent of the nation's doctors and less than 4 percent of its lawyers. The women who served on the presidential commission successfully urged that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibit gender-based as well as racial discrimination in employment.

Dismayed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's reluctance to enforce the ban on sex discrimination in employment, these women formed the **National Organization for Women (NOW)** in 1966. A civil-rights group for women, NOW labored "to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society." It lobbied for equal opportunity, filed lawsuits against gender discrimination, and mobilized public opinion against sexism.

NOW's prominence owed much to the publication of journalist Betty Friedan's critique of domesticity, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which posed what Friedan called "the problem that has no name"—the frustration of educated, middle-class wives and mothers who had subordinated their own aspirations to the needs of men. Friedan urged women to pursue careers that would establish their own independent identity and would "fulfill their potentialities as human beings."

Still another catalyst for feminism came from the involvement of younger women in the civil-rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. These activists had gained confidence in their own potential, an ideology to understand oppression, and experience in the strategy and tactics of organized protest. They also became conscious of their own second-class status, as they were sexually exploited and relegated to menial jobs by male activists. In the words of the civil rights movement's Casey Hayden: the "assumptions of male superiority are as widespread and deep-rooted and every much as crippling to the woman as the assumptions of white supremacy are to the Negro."

Although small in number, young women who shared such thoughts would soon create a women's liberation movement more critical of sexual inequality than NOW.

## Women's Liberation

In 1968, militant feminists adopted "consciousness-raising" as a recruitment device and a means of transforming women's perceptions of themselves and society. Tens of thousands of women assembled in small groups to share experiences and air grievances. They learned that others felt dissatisfaction similar to their own: "When I saw that what I always felt were my own personal hangups was as true for every other woman in that room as it was for me! Well, that's when my consciousness was raised." Women came to understand that their personal, individual problems were in fact shared problems with social causes and political solutions—"the personal is political." This new consciousness opened eyes and minds and begot a sense that "sisterhood is powerful."

Women's liberation groups employed a variety of publicity-generating, confrontational tactics. In 1968, radical feminists crowned a sheep Miss America to dramatize their belief that beauty pageants enslaved women "in high-heeled, low-status roles" and set up "freedom trash cans" in which women could discard girdles, make-up, and other "women-garbage." They demanded inclusion in the Boston Marathon, no longer accepting the excuse that "it is unhealthy for women to run long distances." Overcoming male condescension, they established health collectives and shelters for abused women, created day-care centers and rape crisis centers, founded abortion-counseling services and women's studies programs. Publishing nearly five hundred new feminist publications, they fought negative portrayals of women in the media and advertising. Terms like *male chauvinist pig* entered the vocabulary and those like *chicks* exited.

In August 1970, feminists joined in the largest women's rights demonstration ever. Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of woman suffrage, the Women's Strike for Equality brought out tens of thousands of women to parade for the right to equal employment and safe, legal abortions. By then, the women's movement had already ended newspapers' practice of listing

The "assumptions of male superiority are as widespread and deep-rooted and every much as crippling to the woman as the assumptions of white supremacy are to the Negro."

employment opportunities under separate “Male” and “Female” headings, and pressured banks to issue credit to women in their own name.

In the 1970s, feminists focused especially on three issues: equal treatment in education and employment, access to abortion, and passage of the **Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)** barring discrimination on the basis of sex. In 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act prohibited educational institutions that received federal funds from discriminating on the basis of sex. Women gained entry to the U.S. military academies in 1976; and at the state and local levels they won laws expanding what constituted rape as well as greater protection for victims of domestic violence and more effective prosecution of abusers. Many single-sex colleges became coeducational. The percentage of female students in medical schools rose from 8 to 24 percent and in law schools from 5 percent to

40 percent in the 1970s. By century’s end, women would constitute about 20 percent of all state and federal legislators.

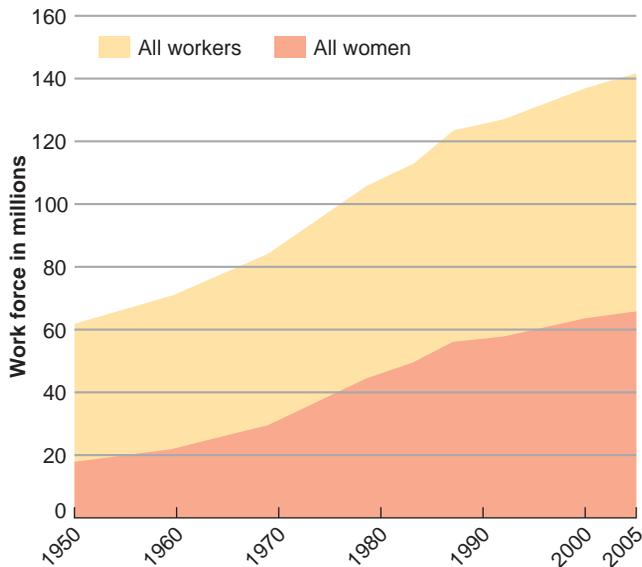
The right to control their own sexuality and to make the decisions regarding having children became feminist rallying cries. In addition to using “the Pill,” some women challenged demeaning obstetrical practices. Others explored alternatives to hospital births and popularized alternatives to radical mastectomy for breast cancer. And many, aware of the dangers of illegal abortions, pushed for their legalization, achieved in *Roe v. Wade*. Perhaps the most controversial ruling of the century, *Roe v. Wade* and the subsequent doubling of abortions, to 1.5 million by 1980, triggered an enormous backlash from social conservatives and from Catholics and Protestants, many of whom felt abortion the moral equivalent of murder. Abortion opponents would seek a “right to life” amendment to the Constitution and simultaneously energize Phyllis Schlafly’s “STOP ERA” campaign.

In 1972, both houses of Congress passed the ERA with little opposition and, within a year, twenty-eight of the necessary thirty-eight states approved the proposed amendment. Its ultimate adoption seemed self-evident. Then Schlafly, a Republican organizer and working-woman herself, took up the fight. Her monthly newsletter, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, added antifeminism to its traditional attacks on communism and on federal social programs. Her accusation that feminism was just self-centeredness, and her affirmation of traditional gender roles, struck a responsive chord with many men as well as with working-class women who felt estranged from the largely upper-middle-class feminist movement. Schlafly charged that the ERA would force women into combat roles in the military, necessitate “unisex toilets,” promote lesbianism, and “deprive women of a right, benefit, or exemption that they now enjoy.” Her relentless assault eroded support and helped kill the amendment. Selling millions of records, country artist Tammy Wynette sang “Don’t Liberate Me, Love Me.”

While the number of women working outside the home leaped from under 20 million in 1960 to nearly 60 million by 1990 (see Figure 29.1), women’s wages still lagged behind those of men, the workplace remained gender-segregated, and the “glass ceiling” that limited their ability to rise beyond a certain corporate level remained in place. As divorce and out-of-wedlock births became more common, the number of women heading families increased; by 1980, only 15 percent of American families with children had a father who worked and a mother who stayed at home. Children now constituted the bulk of the poor, and sociologists wrote about the “feminization of poverty.”



**THE “BRITISH INVASION”** More than just a host of new rock bands from England, the so-called “British Invasion” liberated American fashion styles with miniskirts, hot pants, fishnet stockings, and then maxiskirts and pantsuits. With them came Vidal Sassoon haircuts and a new wave of filmmaking about uninhibited, permissive Britain. (© Corbis. All Rights Reserved.)



**FIGURE 29.1 WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE, 1950–2005** After 1960, the numbers of American women who were wage earners surged upward. Both the women’s movement and economic pressures encouraged this trend.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov).

Evidenced by the rising divorce rate in the 1970s, from one-third to one-half of the marriages occurring annually, complex issues of role-sharing befuddled middle-class families too. Women who worked still bore primary responsibility for their homes and family. Yet day-care centers for working women became commonplace; grown women were no longer “girls”; gender-neutral terms (for example firefighter in place of firemen), came into vogue; and the ideal male changed from swashbuckler to one more “in touch with his feelings.” Few pined for the era when child care, housework, and volunteerism had defined “women’s sphere.” American women had learned, according to historian Gerda Lerner:

*that they belong to a subordinate group; that they have suffered wrongs as a group; that their condition of subordination is not natural, but societally determined; that they must join with other women to remedy these wrongs; and finally, that they must and can provide an alternative vision of societal organization in which women as well as men will enjoy autonomy and self-determination.*

## Gay Liberation

Like feminists, gay men and women were emboldened by the new sexual openness to assert their values, and stimulated by the other protest movements

in the sixties, **gay liberation** emerged publicly in 1969. During a routine raid by New York City police, the homosexual patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, unexpectedly fought back fiercely. The furor triggered a surge of “gay pride,” a new sense of identity and self-acceptance, and widespread activism. “We reject society’s attempt to impose sexual roles and definitions of our nature,” asserted the Gay Liberation Front. “We are going to be who we are.”

By 1973, approximately eight hundred openly gay groups campaigned for equal rights, for incorporating lesbianism into the women’s movement, and for removing the stigma of immorality and depravity attached to being gay. That year, the American Psychiatric Association officially ended its classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder. More and more gay men and women “came out of the closet,” proudly acknowledging their sexual orientation.

In 1977, “Gay Pride” parades drew seventy-five thousand marchers in New York City and three hundred thousand in San Francisco. More taboos fell as Elaine Noble, an avowed lesbian, won a seat in the Massachusetts legislature in 1974, and Harvey Milk, an openly gay candidate, was elected to the San Francisco board of supervisors in 1977. In 1987, Massachusetts congressman Barney Frank publicly acknowledged his homosexuality.

As gay activism spread from big cities on the coasts to small communities in Middle America, organizations like the National Gay Task Force, founded in 1973 (and later renamed the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force), demanded the repeal of anti-gay laws and passage of legislation protecting homosexuals’ civil rights. Responding to the pressure, many states and cities repealed laws against same-sex relations between consenting adults and, like the U.S. Civil Service Commission in 1975, barred job discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Like feminism, the gay liberation movement came under attack from conservatives, who feared that protecting gay rights encouraged immoral behavior. In 1977, singer Anita Bryant led a successful campaign to repeal a Miami law banning discrimination against homosexuals, prompting similar antigay campaigns in other cities.

## Environmental Activism

Building on the concerns raised in the early sixties, environmentalists also carried the tide of reform into the 1970s. Following the first Earth Day in

“We are going to be who we are.”

April 1970, which attracted some 20 million participants, large numbers of Americans began to focus on ecology and the interaction of humans with their environment. For the first time, the media began to highlight acid rain, global warming, nuclear waste disposal, and other human-caused environmental hazards. Well-publicized disasters greatly furthered concern. Cleveland's Cuyahoga River burst into flames, and Lake Erie "died," both contaminated by decades of toxic chemical dumping. A huge oil spill fouled the coast of Santa Barbara, and many Americans choked on the air they breathed while dead fish floated in local rivers and beaches closed owing to sewage contamination.

"If You're Hungry and Out of Work, Eat An Environmentalist."

Environmental advocacy groups gained many fresh recruits. Older organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society continued their efforts to preserve natural areas for habitat protection and the recreational and aesthetic pleasures of future generations. Newer groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth worked against threats to ecological balance. Founded in 1971 when Canadian activists protested a planned U.S. nuclear test on an island in the Bering Sea, Greenpeace established its U.S. branch a year later, working to preserve old-growth forests and protect the world's oceans. By 2000, it had 250,000 U.S. members. The Save the Whales campaign, launched by the Animal Welfare Institute in 1971, opposed the slaughter of the world's largest mammals by fleets of floating processing factories that made dog-and-cat food.

President Nixon responded to popular pressures by signing bills for cleaner air and water, for reducing toxic wastes, and for the further protection of endangered species and wilderness. He also signed bills creating the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), to enforce health and safety standards in the workplace, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which required federal agencies to prepare an environmental-impact analysis for all proposed projects.

Environmentalists also targeted the nuclear-power industry, adopting techniques from the civil-rights and antiwar campaigns to protest at planned nuclear facilities. The movement crested in 1979 when a partial meltdown crippled the **Three Mile Island** nuclear-power plant in Pennsylvania. A Jane Fonda movie released at the same time, *China Syndrome*, portrayed a fictitious but plausible nuclear-power disaster caused by a California earthquake. Deepening public concerns about nuclear power encouraged citizen groups like the

Clamshell Alliance in New England to stop new atomic power plants from going online.

However, at a time of concern over an energy crisis, and of rising unemployment, Americans divided over environmental issues like construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline in 1973 and whether or not to abandon atomic power, offshore oil drilling, and restrictions on logging. A popular bumper stick read: "If You're Hungry and Out of Work, Eat An Environmentalist." Yet other Americans sought a healthy lifestyle that promoted less consumption. Cigarette smoking declined. Organic food consumption increased. A jogging craze swept the middle-class.

## The "Me Decade"

Whatever political views Americans held, personal pursuits and self-fulfillment largely shaped 1970s American society. Journalist Tom Wolfe dubbed this turn from the public sphere the "Me Decade," and many citizens—reacting to defeat in Vietnam, an economic downturn, and the corruption of public officials—retreated inward, following the advice of Robert Ringer's best-seller *Looking Out for Number One*.

Highly individualistic pet causes flourished, as did new faiths. Some young people practiced Transcendental Meditation or joined the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church. Others embraced the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, whose shaved-head, saffron-robed followers added an exotic note in airports and on college campuses. Several thousand rural communes arose as some counterculture veterans sought to escape the urban-corporate world, practice organic farming, revive old technologies, and live in harmony with nature. Most communes proved short-lived.

Journalists discovered the "Yuppie" (young urban professional), preoccupied—often obsessed—with physical fitness and consumer goods. Yuppies jogged and bicycled, ate pesticide-free natural foods, and in a process known as gentrification, purchased and restored rundown inner-city apartments, often displacing poor and elderly residents in the process. Self-indulgence appeared to be their hallmark, and many identified with conservatism's priority on, above all, individual rights.

As baby boomers continued to sing "We want the world, and we want it now!" the 1970s saw the rise of punk rock, an aggressively anti-establishment genre promoted by groups like the Sex Pistols. Tejano music spread from Texas to win national popularity thanks to performers such as Selena Quintanilla. Rap or hip-hop, whose free-form improvised recitations

had roots in Jamaican reggae music and West African storytelling traditions, emerged from poor black New York City neighborhoods. And disco music spotlighted the desire to dance on one's own and to pursue individual rather than societal goals.

In the cultural arena, much but not all reflected the era's malaise. Along with films featuring the madness of the war in Vietnam and corruption in high places, blockbuster movies like *Jaws* (1975), *Rocky* (1976), and *Star Wars* (1977) offered escapist fare. *Happy Days*, the top TV show of 1976–1977, evoked nostalgia for the 1950s. The TV series *Dallas*, chronicling the steamy affairs of a Texas oil family, captivated millions, as did numerous other hit programs featuring characters that defied traditional morality. And beginning in 1971 and gaining popularity throughout the decade, *All in the Family* featured a blue-collar working stiff, Archie Bunker, raging against “girls with skirts up to here” and “men with hair down to there,” as well as just about everything else associated with the 1960s. Whether those who laughed were rejecting Archie's bigoted politics or endorsing his tirades against big government and social disorder may never be known. But the character his creator meant to be a cultural and political dinosaur actually forecast a shift to the right, a backlash against “the sixties.”

## A Divided Nation

By 1968, the combined stresses and strains in American society had produced the most tumultuous era in the United States since the Civil War. The tensions that year resulted in riots, fiery demonstrations, two stunning assassinations, Lyndon Johnson's retreat in Vietnam and from politics, and an election that marked the demise of liberalism.

### Assassinations and Turmoil

Three days after the Wisconsin primary, a bullet from a sniper's high-powered rifle killed Martin Luther King, Jr., as he stood on a motel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee. Because of his increasing concern about poverty in America and his plans for an upcoming Poor People's Campaign, King had gone there to support striking black sanitation workers. The presumed assassin, James Earl Ray, an escaped convict and white racist, would confess, be found guilty, and then recant, leaving aspects of the killing unclear. As in the assassination of John F. Kennedy, it seemed unworthy that one misfit was alone responsible. What was clear in 1968: the civil rights movement had lost its preeminent leader, and its way. As the news spread, black ghettos in more than a hundred cities burst into violence. Twenty blocks

of Chicago's West Side went up in flames, and Mayor Richard Daley ordered police to shoot to kill arsonists. In Washington, D.C., under night skies illuminated by seven hundred fires, army units in combat gear set up machine-gun nests outside the Capitol and White House. It would take seventy-five thousand troops to quell the riots, which left 46 dead, three thousand injured, and nearly twenty-seven thousand in jail.

Entering the race as the favorite of the party bosses and labor chieftains, LBJ's vice president, **Hubert Humphrey**, turned the contest for the nomination into a three-cornered scramble. **Eugene McCarthy** remained the candidate of the “new politics”—a moral crusade against war and injustice directed to affluent, educated liberals. **Robert Kennedy** campaigned as the tribune of the less privileged, the sole candidate who appealed to both the white ethnic working class and the minority poor. In early June, after his victory in the California primary, the brother of the murdered president was himself assassinated by a troubled Palestinian, Sirhan Sirhan.

The deaths of King and Kennedy frustrated untold Americans. The murders denied them a fundamental democratic right, the right to choose their own leaders. “I won't vote,” a youth said. “Every good man we get, they kill.” “People just dropped out,” the civil rights movement's John Lewis observed, “I think some people were afraid to hope again, afraid to get involved.” “Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?” sang a wistful Paul Simon. Although Kennedy's death cleared the way for Humphrey's nomination, increasing numbers of Democrats turned to third-party candidate George Wallace's thinly veiled appeal for white supremacy or to the GOP nominee Richard M. Nixon. The Republican appealed to those disgusted with inner-city riots and antiwar demonstrations. He claimed to have a “secret plan” to end the war, lambasted the liberal decisions of the Warren Court, and derided hippies and protestors. Nixon also said he would heed “the voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans, the non-shouters, the non-demonstrators, those who do not break the law, people who pay their taxes and go to work, who send their children to school, who go to their churches, . . . who love this country.” Tapping the same wellsprings of anger and frustration, Wallace pitched a fiery message to southern segregationists and working-class northerners, denouncing welfare mothers, antiwar demonstrators, and black militants. If elected, Wallace vowed to throw

“I won't vote. Every good man we get they kill.”

“over-educated, ivory-tower” federal bureaucrats “into the Potomac,” and to crack down on “long-hair, pot-smoking, draft-card-burning youth.”

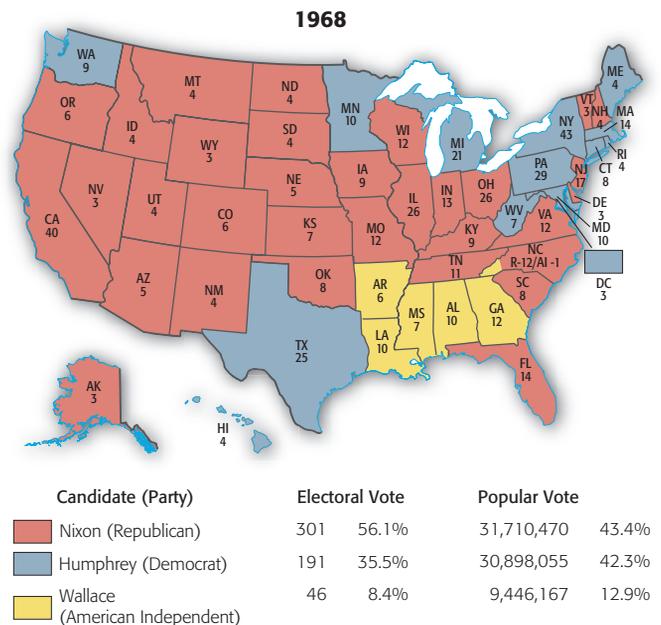
In August 1968, violence outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago reinforced the appeal of both Wallace and Nixon. Determined to avoid the rioting that wracked Chicago after King’s assassination, Mayor Richard Daley had denied demonstrators permits to march or engage in meaningful protest and given police a green light to attack “the hippies, the yippies, and the flippies.” On August 28, as a huge national television audience looked on and protesters chanted “The whole world is watching,” Daley’s bluecoats took off their badges and clubbed demonstrators, tossed tear gas at bystanders, and bloodied reporters and photographers. The police’s brutal response to the protestors’ taunting obscenities and rage tore the Democrats apart and created an image of them as the party of dissent and disorder. Although a federal commission later described the melee as a “police riot,” 70 percent of Americans supported the police violence against the protestors. Hubert Humphrey, who for years had dreamed of becoming president, had received a nomination that appeared worthless.

## Conservative Resurgence

Nixon capitalized on the televised turmoil to attract the support of voters desperate for “law and order.” Portraying himself as the candidate of the Silent Majority, he criticized the Supreme Court for safeguarding criminals and radicals, vowed to get people off welfare rolls and on payrolls, promised to crack down on “pot, pornography, protest, and permissiveness,” and asserted that “our schools are for education—not integration.”

Reaching out even more bluntly to working-class whites, George Wallace stoked their fury against “bearded anarchists, smart-aleck editorial writers, and pointy-headed professors looking down their noses at us.” Promising to keep peace in the streets, he vowed that “if any demonstrator ever lays down in front of my car, it’ll be the last car he’ll ever lie down in front of.” Although many shared his views, few believed he had any chance of winning, and either did not vote or switched to his opponents. Still, 14 percent of the electorate—primarily young, lower-middle-class, small-town workers—cast their votes for Wallace.

In a narrow outcome with large consequences, Nixon and Humphrey split the rest of the vote almost evenly (see Map 29.1). But with Humphrey receiving just 38 percent of the white vote and not even close to half the labor vote, the long-dominant New Deal coalition was shattered. The buoyant



**MAP 29.1 THE ELECTION OF 1968**

sense of liberalism that all was possible had evaporated. The electorate clearly sought stability, not further social change.

The 57 percent of the electorate who chose Nixon or Wallace would dominate American politics for the rest of the century. While the Democratic Party fractured into a welter of contending groups, the Republicans attracted a new majority, many of whom lived in the Sunbelt—the metropolitan South, the sun country of Florida, the desert Southwest and Texas, and populous southern California. Kevin Phillips, whose advice to Nixon to focus on Sunbelt voters was published in 1969 as *The Emerging Republican Majority*, described its residents as “the pleasure-seekers, the bored, the ambitious, the space-age technicians and the retired—a super-slice of the rootless, socially mobile group known as the American middle class.” Phillips also recognized the attraction of Sunbelt attitudes—on government spending, defense, race, and taxes—to residents in the suburbs and ethnic working-class neighborhoods of the North. So did the authors of *The Real Majority*, who deeply impressed Nixon with their assertion that the new key to a winning coalition was the “47 year old Catholic housewife in Dayton, Ohio whose husband is a machinist.” Although she and her blue-collar husband had always voted Democratic, they would defect to the Republicans because of the couple’s conservative views on black rioters, antiwar protesters, pornography, and drugs. Wooing these voters—who he named the Silent Majority in a 1969 speech—became the centerpiece of Nixon’s political strategy.



**“THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING”** Photographs and televised pictures of Chicago police beating and gassing antiwar protesters and innocent bystanders at the Democratic convention in 1968 linked Democrats in the public mind with violence and mayhem. The scenes made Republican Richard Nixon a reassuring presence to those he would term “the silent majority.” (© Bettmann/Corbis)

## A Matter of Character

A Californian of Quaker roots, Richard Milhous Nixon was elected to Congress as a navy veteran in 1946. He won prominence for his role in the HUAC investigation of Alger Hiss (see Chapter 26) and advanced to the Senate in 1950 by accusing his Democratic opponent of disloyalty. He served two terms as Eisenhower’s vice president, but lost the presidential race to Kennedy in 1960 and a run for the California governorship in 1962. Ignoring what seemed a political death sentence, Nixon campaigned vigorously for GOP candidates in 1966 and won his party’s nomination and the presidency in 1968.

Nixon yearned to be remembered as an international statesman, but domestic affairs kept intruding. He tried to reform the welfare system and solve complex economic problems. But the underside of Nixon’s personality appealed to the darker recesses of the nation and intensified the fears and divisions among Americans.

Although highly intelligent, he displayed the rigid self-control of a man monitoring his own every move. When the private Nixon emerged, he was suspicious, insecure, seeking vengeance. His

conviction that enemies lurked everywhere, waiting to destroy him, verged on paranoia. He sought to annihilate his Democratic opponents, to “get them on the ground...stick our heels in, step on them hard...crush them, show them no mercy.”

The classic outsider, reared in pinched surroundings, physically awkward, unable to relate easily to others, Nixon remained fearful, even at the height of his power, that he would never be accepted. At the beginning of his administration, however, his strengths stood out. He spoke of national reconciliation, took bold initiatives internationally, and dealt with domestic problems responsibly.

Symbolic of his positive start, the nation celebrated the first successful manned mission to the moon. On July 21, 1969, the Apollo 11 lunar module, named *Eagle*, descended to the Sea of Tranquility. As millions watched on television, astronaut **Neil Armstrong** walked on the moon’s surface and proclaimed, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Five more lunar expeditions followed,

“Get them on the ground...stick our heels in, step on them hard...crush them, show them no mercy.”



**A WALK ON THE MOON, 1969** Ten years after John F. Kennedy challenged America to put a person on the moon, astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped down from his module onto the lunar surface. From the White House, President Nixon told the astronauts and the nation, “This has to be the proudest day of our lives.” (NASA/Johnson Space Center)

and in 1975 the space race essentially ended with the United States and the Soviet Union engaging in cooperative efforts to explore the rest of the universe.

The first newly elected president since 1849 whose party controlled neither house of Congress, Nixon cooperated with the Democrats to increase social-security benefits, build subsidized housing, expand the Job Corps, and grant the vote to eighteen-year-olds. As noted earlier, the president also approved new laws to protect the environment and worker safety.

Conservatives grumbled as government grew larger and more intrusive and as race-conscious employment policies, including affirmative-action quotas, were mandated for all federal contractors. Conservatives grew still angrier when Nixon unveiled the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) in 1969. A bold effort to overhaul the welfare system, FAP proposed a guaranteed minimum annual income for all Americans. Caught between liberals who thought the income inadequate and conservatives who disliked it on principle, FAP died in the Senate.

## A Troubled Economy

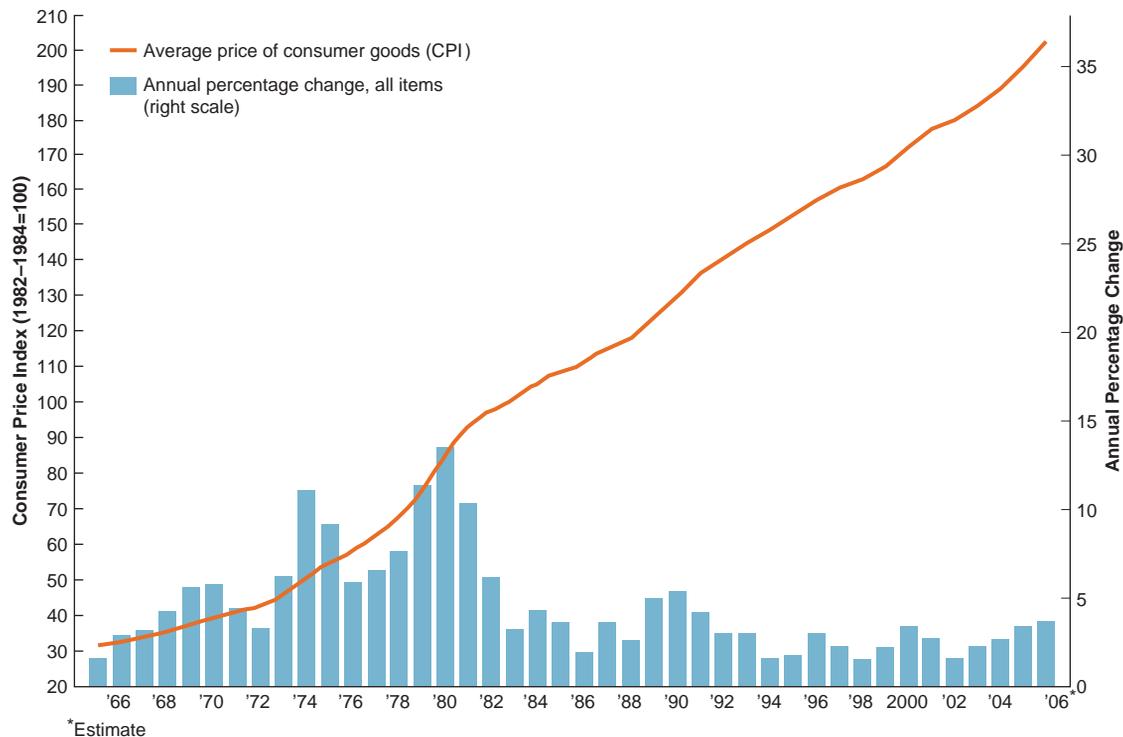
Nixon inherited the fiscal consequences of President Johnson’s effort to wage the Vietnam War and finance the Great Society by deficit financing—to have both “guns and butter.” Facing a “whopping” budget deficit of \$25 billion in 1969 and an inflation rate of 5 percent (see Figure 29.2), Nixon cut government spending and encouraged the Federal Reserve Board to raise interest rates. The result was a combination of inflation and recession that economists called “stagflation” and Democrats termed “Nixonomics.”

Accelerating inflation lowered the standard of living of many families and sparked a wave of strikes as workers sought wage hikes to keep up with the cost of living. It encouraged the wealthy to invest in art and real estate rather than technology and factories. Hence, more plants shut down, industrial jobs dwindled, and many displaced workers lost their savings, their health and pension benefits, and their homes.

Throughout 1971, Nixon lurched from policy to policy. Declaring “I am now a Keynesian,” he increased deficit spending to stimulate the private sector, which resulted in the largest budget deficit since World War II. Then, Nixon devalued the dollar to correct the balance-of-payment deficit. Finally, he imposed a freeze on wages, prices, and rents, a short-term fix that gave the economy a shot in the arm until after the 1972 election. Then Nixon again reversed course, replacing controls with voluntary—and ineffective—guidelines. Inflation zoomed as the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**, a group of Third World nations that had joined together to set production levels and prices, launched an embargo that raised the price of crude oil, and sluggish growth dogged the economy throughout the decade.

## Law and Order

Despite his public appeals for unity, Nixon hoped to divide the American people in ways that would bring about a realignment in politics and create a new Republican majority coalition. His “southern strategy” sought to attract Dixie’s white Democrats into the GOP fold, while his stands on crime, drugs, antiwar protestors, and black militants wooed blue-collar laborers and suburbanites—voters whom political strategist Kevin Phillips described as “in motion between a Democratic past and a Republican future.” To outflank George Wallace, Nixon opposed court-ordered busing and took a tough stand against campus unrest and black radicalism.



**FIGURE 29.2 INFLATION, 1965–2006** Inflation, which had been moderate during the two decades following the Second World War, began to soar with the escalation of the war in Vietnam in the mid-1960s. In 1979 and 1980, the nation experienced double-digit inflation in two consecutive years for the first time since World War I.

To combat the militants he despised, Nixon had the IRS audit their tax returns, the Small Business Administration deny them loans, and the National Security Agency illegally wiretap them. The FBI worked with local law officials to disrupt and immobilize the Black Panthers, the CIA illegally investigated and compiled dossiers on thousands of American citizens, and the Justice Department prosecuted antiwar activists and black radicals in highly publicized trials. Nixon himself drew up an “enemies list” of adversaries to be harassed by the government.

In 1970, Nixon widened his offensive against the antiwar movement by approving the Huston Plan, which would use the CIA and FBI in various illegal activities, such as wiretapping and break-ins to gather or plant evidence. But FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover opposed the plan as a threat to the bureau’s independence. Blocked, Nixon secretly created his own White House unit to discredit his opposition and ensure executive secrecy. Nicknamed “**the plumbers**” because of their assignment to plug government leaks, and to undermine opposition to the president, the team was headed by former FBI agent G. Gordon Liddy and former CIA operative E. Howard Hunt.

The plumbers first targeted Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense Department analyst who had given

the press the **Pentagon Papers**, a secret chronicle of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. On June 13, the *New York Times* began publishing the Pentagon Papers, revealing a long history of White House lies to Congress, foreign leaders, and the American people. Although the papers contained nothing about his administration, Nixon, fearing that they would undermine trust in government and establish a precedent for publishing classified material, sought to bar their publication. The Supreme Court, however, ruled that publication of the Pentagon Papers was protected by the First Amendment. Livid, Nixon directed the Justice Department to indict Ellsberg for theft and ordered the plumbers to break into the office of Ellsberg’s psychiatrist in search of information to discredit the man who had become a hero to the antiwar movement.

## The Southern Strategy

Nixon especially courted whites upset by the drive for racial equality. The administration opposed extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, sought to cripple enforcement of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, pleaded for the postponement of desegregation in Mississippi’s schools, and filed suits to prohibit the busing of children as a means of desegregating public schools. In 1971, when the

Supreme Court upheld “forced” busing as a constitutional and necessary tactic in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*. Nixon, the new champion of the white South, asked Congress to enact a moratorium on busing. By so doing, Nixon also appealed to northern whites, in such cities as Boston and Denver, who opposed court-ordered busing plans.

The strategy of wooing angry and fearful whites also dictated Nixon’s Supreme Court nominations. To reverse the Warren court’s liberalism, he sought strict constructionists, judges who would not “meddle” in social issues or be “soft” on criminals. In 1969 he appointed Warren Burger as chief justice. Although the Senate then twice rejected southern conservatives nominated by Nixon, the president succeeded in appointing Harry Blackmun of Minnesota, Lewis Powell of Virginia, and William Rehnquist of Arizona. Along with Burger, they steered the Court in a centrist direction, ruling liberally in most cases involving abortion, desegregation, and the death penalty, while shifting to the right on civil liberties, community censorship, and police power.

As the 1970 congressional elections neared, Nixon encouraged his vice president, Spiro T. Agnew, to step up attacks on “hooligans, hippies, and radical liberals.” Agnew assailed the Democrats as “sniveling hand-wringers” and the news media as “nattering nabobs of negativism.” Liberals deplored Agnew’s alarming alliterative allegations, but many others found them on target. The 1970 elections were a draw, with the GOP losing nine House seats and winning two Senate seats.

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## Successes Abroad, Crises at Home

Above all else, Nixon focused on foreign affairs. Considering himself a master of *realpolitik*—a pragmatic approach stressing national interest rather than ethical goals—he sought to check Soviet expansionism and to limit the nuclear-arms race and reduce superpower conflict. To achieve a new era of **détente**—reduced tensions—with the communist world, Nixon chose **Henry Kissinger**, a refugee from Hitler’s Germany and professor of international relations, who shared Nixon’s penchant for secrecy and for the concentration of decision-making power in the White House.

In his second inaugural, Nixon pledged “to make the next four years the best four years in America’s history.” Ironically, they would rank among its sorriest. His vice president would resign in disgrace; his closest aides would go to jail; and he would serve barely a year and a half of his second term before resigning to avoid impeachment.

## Détente

Having entered into negotiations to end the war in Vietnam (see Chapter 28), Nixon pursued **détente** with the Soviet Union and a turnabout in Chinese-American affairs. These developments, the most significant shift in U.S. foreign policy since the start of the Cold War, created a new relationship among the United States, the Soviet Union, and China.

Presidents from Truman to Johnson had refused to recognize the People’s Republic of China, to allow its admission to the United Nations, and to permit American allies to trade with it. But by 1969, a widening Sino-Soviet split made the prospect of improved relations with both nations attractive to Nixon, who hoped to have “closer relations with each side than they did with each other.” In June 1971, Kissinger began secret negotiations with Beijing, laying the groundwork for Nixon’s historic February 1972 trip to China “to seek the normalization of relations.” The first visit ever by a sitting American president to the largest nation in the world, it ended more than twenty years of Chinese-American hostility. Full diplomatic recognition followed in 1979.

Equally significant, Nixon went to Moscow in May 1972 to sign agreements with the Soviets on trade, technological cooperation, and the limitation of nuclear weapons. Fear of a Sino-American alliance and a desire to slow the incredibly expensive arms race made the Soviet Union eager for better relations with the U.S. The **Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I)** froze each side’s offensive nuclear missiles for five years, and committed both countries to strategic equality rather than nuclear superiority; and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty restricted the deployment by both sides of nationwide missile-defense systems. Although they did not end the arms race, the treaties symbolized a first step toward that goal, reduced Soviet-American tensions and, in an election year, enhanced Nixon’s stature.

## Shuttle Diplomacy

Not even better relations with China and the Soviet Union ensured global stability. In the Middle East, Israel, fearing an imminent Arab attack, launched

a preemptive strike on its neighbors in 1967, routing them in six days, and seizing Sinai and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and Syria's Golan Heights. Israel promised to give up the occupied lands in exchange for a negotiated peace, but the Arab states refused to negotiate with Israel or to recognize its right to exist. Palestinians, many of them refugees since the creation of Israel in 1948, turned to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which demanded Israel's destruction.

War exploded again in 1973 when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel on the Jewish high holy day of Yom Kippur. Only massive shipments of military supplies from the United States enabled a reeling Israel to stop the assault. In retaliation, the Arab states embargoed shipments of crude oil to the United States and its allies. As the five-month embargo and following spike in oil prices sharply intensified inflation, it dramatized U.S. dependence on foreign energy sources.

The dual shocks of the energy crisis at home and rising Soviet influence in the Arab world spurred Kissinger to engage in "shuttle diplomacy." Flying from one Middle East capital to another for two years, he negotiated a cease-fire, pressed Israel to cede some captured territory, and persuaded the Arabs to end the oil embargo. Although Kissinger's diplomacy left the Palestinian issue festering, it successfully excluded the Soviets from a major role in Middle Eastern affairs.

Nixon-Kissinger *realpolitik* based American aid on a nation's willingness to oppose communism, not on the nature of its government. Thus, the Nixon administration liberally supplied arms and assistance to the shah of Iran, the white supremacist regime of South Africa, and President Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. It also furnished aid to antidemocratic regimes in Argentina, Brazil, and South Korea, as well as to Portuguese colonial authorities in Angola.

When Chileans elected a Marxist, Salvador Allende, president in 1970, the CIA secretly funded opponents of the leftist regime. The United States also cut off economic aid to Chile. In 1973, a military junta overthrew the Chilean government and killed Allende. Nixon quickly recognized the new dictatorship, and economic aid and investment again flowed to Chile.

## The Election of 1972

Nixon's reelection appeared certain. He faced a deeply divided Democratic Party and counted on his diplomatic successes and the winding down of the Vietnam War to win over moderate voters. He



**NIXON AND MAO** In February 1972, after a secret foray by Kissinger to Beijing, President Nixon stunned the world by going to the People's Republic of China, toasting his counterpart Mao Zedong, strolling through the Forbidden City, and walking along the Great Wall. (© Bettmann/Corbis)

expected his southern strategy and law-and-order posture to attract Wallace voters. Nixon's only possible worry, another third-party candidacy by Wallace, vanished on May 15, 1972, when Wallace was shot during a campaign stop. Paralyzed from the waist down, Wallace withdrew from the race, leaving Nixon a monopoly on the white backlash.

The Senate's most outspoken dove, **George McGovern** of South Dakota, capitalizing on antiwar sentiment, blitzed the Democratic primaries. He gained additional support from new party rules requiring state delegations to include minority, female, and youthful delegates in approximate proportion to their numbers. Actress Shirley MacLaine approvingly described California's delegation as "looking like a couple of high schools, a grape boycott, a Black Panther rally, and four or five politicians who walked in the wrong door." A disapproving labor leader complained about "too much hair and not enough cigars at this convention," but McGovern won the nomination on the first ballot.

California's delegation looked "like a couple of high schools, a grape boycott, a Black Panther rally, and four or five politicians who walked in the wrong door."

Perceptions of McGovern as inept and radical drove away all but the most committed supporters. McGovern had to drop his vice-presidential running mate, Thomas Eagleton, when it became known that Eagleton had received electric-shock therapy for depression. Subsequently, McGovern suffered the embarrassment of having several prominent Democrats publicly decline to run with him. McGovern's endorsement of decriminalization of marijuana, immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, and pardons for those who had fled the United States to avoid the draft exposed him to GOP ridicule as the candidate of the radical fringe.

Remembering his narrow loss to Kennedy in 1960 and too-slim victory in 1968, Nixon left no stone unturned. To do whatever was necessary to win, he appointed his attorney general, John Mitchell, to head the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP). Millions of dollars in campaign contributions financed "dirty tricks" to create dissension in Democratic ranks and paid for an espionage unit, led by Liddy and Hunt, to spy on the opposition. In 1972, it received Mitchell's approval to wiretap telephones at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington's Watergate apartment and office complex. However, a security guard foiled the break-in to install bugs in June 1972. Arrested were James McCord, the security coordinator of CREEP, and several other Liddy and Hunt associates.

Dirty tricks went from a scandal to a constitutional crisis when Nixon abused the power of his office to cover up wrongdoing and hinder criminal investigations. Asserting that "no one in the White House staff, no one in this administration, presently employed, was involved in this bizarre incident," Nixon coached associates on what they should tell investigators, authorized the payment of hush money and hints of a presidential pardon to buy the silence of those arrested, and directed the CIA to halt the FBI's investigation on the pretext that it would damage national security.

With the McGovern campaign a shambles and Watergate seemingly contained, Nixon amassed nearly 61 percent of the popular vote and an over-

whelming 520 electoral votes. Supported primarily by minorities and low-income voters, McGovern carried only Massachusetts and the District of Columbia. The election solidified the 1968 realignment. Nevertheless, the GOP gained only twelve seats in the House and lost two in the Senate, demonstrating the growing difficulty of unseating

incumbents, the rise in ticket-splitting, and the decline of both party loyalty and voter turnout. Only 55.7 percent of eligible voters went to the polls (down from 63.8 percent in 1960).

## The Watergate Upheaval

The scheme to conceal links between the White House and the accused Watergate burglars had succeeded during the 1972 campaign. But after the election, federal judge "Maximum John" Sirica, known for his tough treatment of criminals, used the threat of heavy sentences to pressure one burglar into confessing that the White House knew in advance of the break-in and that the defendants had committed perjury during the trial. Two *Washington Post* reporters, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, were investigating, following clues furnished by a secret informant named "**Deep Throat**"—identified in 2005 as FBI Deputy Director Mark Felt. Woodward and Bernstein wrote a succession of front-page stories tying the break-in to illegal contributions and "dirty tricks" by CREEP.

In February 1973, the Senate established the Special Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities to investigate, and one stunning revelation after another poured forth. The hearings revealed the existence of a White House "enemies list," the president's use of government agencies to harass opponents, and administration favoritism in return for illegal campaign donations. Both the president's special counsel and the acting head of the FBI testified to the involvement of the White House in the Watergate break-in, forcing Nixon to announce the resignation of his principal aides and the appointment of a special Watergate prosecutor with broad powers of investigation and subpoena. Then the most dramatic bombshell, the disclosure that Nixon taped every conversation in the Oval Office, meant there was an incontrovertible record of "what the president knew and when he knew it."

When the special prosecutor insisted on access to the tapes, Nixon ordered the Attorney General to fire him. The Attorney General and the number two man in the Justice Department refused and were dismissed in what became known as the "Saturday night massacre." More than 150,000 telegrams poured into the White House, and eighty-four members of Congress sponsored sixteen different bills of impeachment. The House Judiciary Committee began impeachment proceedings, and Congress went to the Supreme Court to demand access to the original tapes.

Adding to Nixon's woes, Vice President Agnew pleaded no contest—"the full equivalent to a plea of guilty," according to the trial judge—to charges of income tax evasion and solicitation of bribes,

Nixon asserted that "no one in the White House staff, no one in this administration, presently employed, was involved in this bizarre incident."



**HONK FOR IMPEACHMENT** Although Richard Nixon continued to fight back, appealing to the majority that had reelected him that the Watergate investigation was a conspiracy of the liberal Eastern establishment, in 1974 an increasing number of Americans no longer believed the President. On August 8, acknowledging only a “few mistakes of judgment,” Nixon resigned his presidency to avoid certain impeachment. (*AP Images*)

both as governor of Maryland and as vice president. Agnew left office in October 1973 with a fine and suspended sentence, and was replaced, under provisions of the Twenty-fifth Amendment, by House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan.

## A President Disgraced

In late July 1974, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *United States v. Nixon* that the unedited tapes must be turned over to Congress, and the House Judiciary Committee adopted three articles of impeachment. They charged Nixon with obstruction of justice for impeding the Watergate investigation; abusing the powers of the presidency by using federal agencies to harass citizens and deprive them of their rights; and contempt of Congress for refusing to obey a congressional subpoena for the tapes. Checkmated, Nixon surrendered the subpoenaed tapes.

The tapes produced the “smoking gun” proving that Nixon had ordered the cover-up, obstructed justice by hindering the criminal investigation of the break-in, and lied about his role for more than two years. The revelations confirmed many Americans’ distrust of government and cynicism about politics, hastening their disengagement from public affairs.

In trying to explain Watergate, some historians point to the increasing expansion of presidential power, “the imperial presidency,” stretching back several decades. Others argue that Nixon simply got caught and that his liberal foes forced him to pay a higher price for his misdeeds than had other presidents. Most focus on Nixon himself and his obsession to destroy his hated adversaries. Whatever the cause of America’s most dramatic political scandal, Richard Nixon, certain the Senate would vote to convict him once impeached, became the first president to resign—and Gerald Ford took office as the nation’s first chief executive who had not been elected either president or vice president.

## A Troubled Nation and Presidency

In the aftermath of the Vietnam debacle and Richard Nixon’s disgrace, Presidents **Gerald Ford** and **Jimmy Carter** grappled with inflation, recession, and industrial stagnation as well as humiliations abroad and, for Carter, a maddening hostage crisis. The confident 1950s and early 1960s, when prosperous America had savored its role as the Free World’s leader, ready to “pay any price, bear any

“You are going to give me gas or I will kill you.”

burden, meet any hardship,” now seemed remote, even foolhardy. A nation convinced that it was immune to the historical forces that constrained other societies now confronted sobering new realities—particularly significant foreign competition and an energy crisis—beyond its control.

### Panic at the Pump

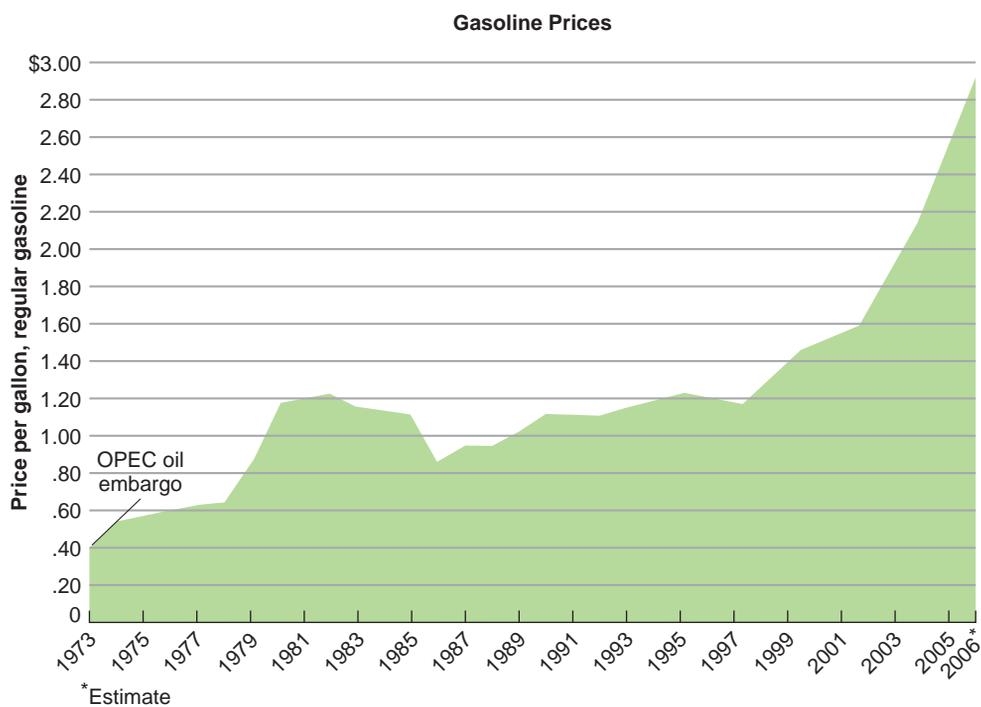
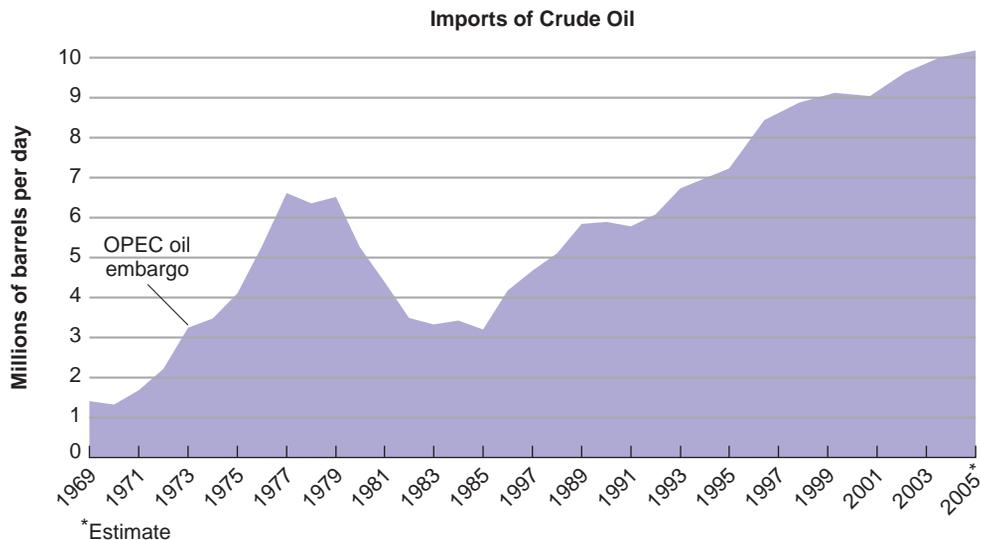
In 1973–1974, Americans sat in their cars and waited in long lines to buy gasoline at skyrocketing prices. Angry and frustrated, motorists fought each other and battled with police. At one service station with no gas to sell, a driver threatened the attendant, “You are going to give me gas or I will kill you.” The nation had long taken cheap, abundant energy for granted, yet remained heavily dependent on the third of its oil it imported. This vulnerability became apparent when Arab nations, angered by Nixon’s support of Israel during the 1973 war,

cut off the supply of oil to the West. Then the seven Arab members of OPEC, quadrupled the cost of a barrel of oil from \$3 to \$12 in 1976. OPEC would almost triple it again, to \$34 in 1979, pushing the price of a gallon of gas over \$1 for the first time, a price barrier many had thought unreachable (see Figure 29.3). Overall, consumer prices would more than double in the 1970s, with inflation soaring to 14 percent. It battered American families and turned hard-pressed taxpayers against the welfare programs adopted during past Democratic administrations.

Disturbing economic developments forced millions of Americans in the 1970s to, according to a magazine, “Learn to Live with Less,” less energy and jobs, less possibilities and power. Unemployment ranged between 6 and 10 percent, nearly twice the usual postwar level, and the federal deficit soared from \$8.7 billion in 1970 to \$72.7 billion in 1980. Federal borrowing to cover the deficit increased the costs of all businesses that had to borrow, which worsened the rising price spiral and the galloping



**THE ENERGY CRISIS** The Arab embargo on oil shipments to the United States, begun in 1973, revealed America’s dependence on Middle Eastern oil reserves and the end of its unchallenged economic dominance in the world. In the wake of energy shortages and dramatic increases in heating oil and gas prices, both unemployment and inflation increased dramatically, underlining the extent to which Americans no longer could shape their economic future alone. (AP Images)



**FIGURE 29.3 THE ENERGY CRISIS: CRUDE-OIL IMPORTS AND GASOLINE PRICES, 1969–2006** After surging in the 1970s, U.S. oil imports dipped in the early 1980s owing to a deep recession and fuel conservation, only to rise to unprecedented levels in the mid-1990s (top). Similarly, gasoline prices spiked in the 1970s and early 1980s, dipped a bit, leveled off in the 1990s, and then in 2000 began a steep upward climb that would continue through the decade.

inflation rate that had resulted from President Johnson’s attempt to fund both the Vietnam War and the Great Society without raising taxes. Moreover, in 1971 the dollar, long the strongest currency in the world, fell to its lowest level since 1949, and the U.S. posted its first trade deficit—importing more than it exported—in almost a century.

Most acutely, higher costs and greater foreign competition ravaged the manufacturing regions of the Midwest and Northeast, soon to be called the “Rust Belt.” The automobile industry was especially

hard hit by soaring gasoline prices that boosted sales of more fuel-efficient foreign imports, mainly from Japan. U.S. purchases of foreign cars grew from 2 million in 1970 to 4 million in 1989. Chrysler, the third largest automaker, was saved from bankruptcy only by a \$1.2 billion federal loan guarantee. Facing severe production cutbacks, the Big Three carmakers eliminated the jobs of one in three autoworkers between 1978 and 1982.

Several factors contributed to industrial decline in the United States: aging machinery, inefficient

production methods, complacent management, and fierce competition from foreign companies paying lower wages, especially in the countries of the Pacific Rim. American-based manufacturers moved their high-wage jobs overseas. In one five-year period, 1979–1983, 11.5 million U.S. workers lost jobs because of plant closings and cutbacks. Although new employment opportunities opened in the so-called “knowledge-based” industries (and would lead to an uneven economic revival later in the century), many industrial workers lacked the skills to fill these jobs. They joined a growing pool of the unemployed and underemployed in communities dependent on manufacturing.

With the loss of industrial jobs, the union movement weakened. In 1960, 31 percent of U.S. workers belonged to unions; thirty years later, that figure had been virtually halved to 16 percent, with further declines ahead. Some workers did join unions in

these years, mainly teachers, public employees, and service workers, many of whom were female. Service-sector unionization, however, only slowed, but did not reverse, the overall decline of union membership. A union official lamented “a nation of hamburger stands...a country stripped of industrial capacity and meaningful work...a service economy.”

A union official lamented “a nation of hamburger stands...a country stripped of industrial capacity and meaningful work...a service economy.”

## Gerald Ford, Caretaker

Former Michigan congressman Gerald Ford became vice president after Agnew resigned in disgrace, and then president after Nixon resigned to avoid impeachment. Conveying a likable decency and acknowledging he was “a Ford not a Lincoln,” he urged Americans to move beyond the “long national nightmare” of Watergate rather than look backward in recrimination. But the honeymoon quickly ended as many Americans reacted with outrage when Ford pardoned Nixon for “any and all crimes” committed while in office, meaning that Nixon would neither have to assume responsibility nor face prosecution for his actions.

Economic problems, particularly inflation, dogged Ford’s presidency. To curtail the worsening inflationary spiral, in October 1974, Ford unveiled a program of voluntary price restraint dubbed “Whip Inflation Now” (WIN), but prices continued upward. When the Federal Reserve Board tried to cool the economy by raising interest rates, a severe recession resulted. Unemployment approached 11 percent by

1975, more than twice the postwar average. Then Ford tried tax cuts to stimulate business activity. They made inflation worse and did little to promote employment. As oil and gas prices soared, Americans for the first time since World War II struggled to curb energy consumption. Congress set fuel-efficiency standards for automobiles in 1975 and imposed a national speed limit of fifty-five miles per hour.

National morale sank further in late April 1975 when the South Vietnamese government fell, and television chronicled desperate helicopter evacuations from the U.S. embassy in Saigon (soon renamed Ho Chi Minh City). A few weeks later, Cambodia seized a U.S. merchant ship, the *Mayagüez*. Ford ordered a military rescue, which freed the thirty-nine *Mayagüez* crew members but cost the lives of forty-one U.S. servicemen. As the nation entered the election year 1976—also the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence—Americans found little reason for optimism.

## Jimmy Carter, Outsider

Gerald Ford won the 1976 Republican nomination, turning back a strong challenge from former California governor Ronald Reagan, who opposed détente. Jimmy Carter, a Georgia peanut grower and former governor, effectively used the media to bypass party machines and sweep the Democratic primaries by stressing his honesty, his status as a Washington outsider, and his evangelical Christian faith.

With his running mate, Minnesota senator Walter Mondale, Carter won a narrow victory, 50 to 48 percent in the popular vote and 297 to 240 in the Electoral College. He garnered the votes of the less well-off, African-Americans, southerners, and those disgusted by Watergate. Underscoring his rejection of Nixon’s “imperial presidency,” Carter walked with his wife Rosalyn in the inaugural parade from the Capitol to the White House; enrolled his daughter, Amy, in a largely black, Washington, D.C. public school; and held a two-hour “call-in,” answering questions phoned in by people from every part of the country. In an echo of Roosevelt’s fireside radio chats, he delivered some TV speeches wearing a sweater and seated by a fireplace.

Despite the populist symbolism and gestures of inclusiveness, Carter never shaped a clearly liberal agenda. Reflecting his training as an engineer, he proved better at analyzing details than at defining broad goals. Lacking both the Washington experience and the inclination to deal with the capitol’s key political players, he distanced himself from reformist Democrats and could not break legislative gridlock. At heart a fiscal conservative, he favored

cutting federal spending. “Government cannot solve our problems,” he asserted in his second State of the Union address. “It cannot eliminate poverty, or provide a bountiful economy, or reduce inflation, or save our cities, or cure illiteracy, or provide energy.” Accordingly, Carter left unresolved the major economic and social problems of the 1970s, especially, “**stagflation**”—the anomaly of economic stagnation combined with price inflation—which topped 20 percent in 1979.

Carter further disappointed liberals by beginning deregulation—the removal of government controls on the airline, railroad, and trucking industries, as well as on oil and natural gas prices—and by failing to adopt an effective energy policy. Angered by rising gasoline prices and increasing dependence on foreign oil—over 40 percent by 1980—Americans demanded energy self-sufficiency (see *Going to the Source*). Carter proposed a program that barely reduced oil consumption, grandiosely calling it the “moral equivalent of war”; most Americans sneered at it as MEOW. His failures contributed immensely to the destruction of what remained of the liberal coalition and enormously boosted the fortunes of political conservatism.

In Niagara Falls, New York, where for years the Hooker Chemical and Plastics Corporation had dumped tons of waste in a district known as Love Canal, Carter confronted a major environmental crisis. In 1953, Hooker had covered the landfill with earth and sold it to the city. Homes and schools sprang up, but residents complained of odors and strange substances oozing from the soil. In the late 1970s, tests confirmed that toxic chemicals, including deadly dioxin, were seeping into buildings, polluting the air, and discharging into the Niagara River. Medical researchers found elevated levels of cancer, miscarriages, and birth defects among Love Canal residents.

In 1978, President Carter authorized federal funds to relocate Love Canal families, and in 1980 he declared the situation a national emergency, freeing more federal money for relocation and clean-up. As his presidency ended, Carter signed legislation creating a federal “Superfund” to clean up the nation’s most polluted sites. In addition, the **Alaska Lands Act** set aside more than 100 million acres of public land for parks, wildlife refuges, and national forests and added twenty-six rivers to the nation’s Wild and Scenic River System. These two bills proved to be Carter’s rare successes. As a consequence of his own ineptness and the sharp conservative turn in the political climate, Carter, groused one legislator, “couldn’t get the Pledge of Allegiance through Congress.”

Carter’s foreign-policy record proved only somewhat better. As a candidate, he had urged

more emphasis on protecting human rights worldwide, in contrast to Henry Kissinger’s dominant focus on U.S. national interests.

His secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, worked to combat human rights abuses by some, but not all, American allies who committed them, and Carter did raise public awareness of human rights issues.

The president particularly sought resolution of the lingering dispute over control of the Panama Canal. Since 1964, when anti-American riots had rocked Panama, U.S. diplomats had been working on a new canal treaty that would address Panama’s grievances. The Carter administration completed negotiations on treaties transferring full control over the canal to Panama by 2000. The Senate ratified the treaties over the objections of conservatives; Ronald Reagan had earlier said of the canal, “we bought it, we paid for it, it’s ours and we’re going to keep it.”

Toward the Soviet Union, Carter first showed conciliation, but toughness ultimately won out. In 1979, Carter and the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev signed a new Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), limiting each side’s nuclear arsenals. Senate ratification stalled, however, when Cold Warriors who had never accepted détente attacked the treaty for allegedly favoring the Soviets. Support dissolved entirely in late December 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Many Americans saw the invasion as proof of Moscow’s expansionist designs. Carter revived registration for the military draft, boycotted the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, and embargoed grain shipments to Russia.

## The Middle East and Iran

Carter’s best and worst moments came in the Middle East. Following Egyptian leader Anwar el-Sadat’s unexpected trip to Israel in 1977 to negotiate with Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, Carter hosted both leaders for two weeks at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland. The resulting **Camp David Accords**, and the formal peace treaty that followed, led to Israel’s withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, captured in the 1967 war; for its part, Egypt recognized Israel as a nation, the first Arab country to do so.

Carter’s efforts for a broader Middle Eastern peace failed, however. The other Arab states rejected the Camp David Accords, Israel continued to build Jewish settlements in territories it occupied, and Islamic fundamentalists assassinated Sadat in 1981. Peace remained as elusive as ever.

“Government cannot solve our problems.”

## Carter and Stockman on Energy

In his first presidential speech on energy, Jimmy Carter sought to win the support of the American people for conservation and for governmental solutions. In response,

Congressman David Stockman (R-Mich.) argued against federal intervention and for allowing unfettered global markets to provide abundant energy.

**Carter on energy:** Our national energy plan is based on 10 fundamental principles. The first principle is that we can have an effective and comprehensive energy policy only if the Government takes responsibility for it and if the people understand the seriousness of the challenge and are willing to make sacrifices. . . .

The third principle is that we must reduce our vulnerability to potentially devastating embargoes. We can protect ourselves from uncertain supplies by reducing our demand for oil, by making the most of our abundant resources such as coal, and by developing a strategic petroleum reserve. . . .

The fifth principle is that we must be fair. Our solutions must ask equal sacrifices from every region, every class of people, and every interest group. Industry will have to do its part to conserve just as consumers will. The energy producers deserve fair treatment, but we will not let the oil companies profiteer.

The sixth principle, and the cornerstone of our policy, is to reduce demand through conservation. . . . Conservation is the quickest, cheapest, most practical source of energy. Conservation is the only way we can buy a barrel of oil for about \$2. It costs about \$13 to waste it.

The seventh principle is that prices should generally reflect the true replacement cost of energy. We are only cheating ourselves if we make energy artificially cheap and use more than we can really afford. . . .

The ninth principle is that we must conserve the fuels that are scarcest and make the most of those that are plentiful. We can't continue to use oil and gas for 75 percent of our consumption, as we do now, when they only make up 7 percent of our domestic reserves. We need to shift to plentiful coal, while taking care to protect the environment, and to apply stricter safety standards to nuclear energy.

The tenth and last principle is that we must start now to develop the new, unconventional sources of energy that we will rely on in the next century.

**Stockman's response:** At bottom, the notion that "home grown energy is better" implies a radical rejection of the global trading system and the law of comparative advantage [that some nations can more efficiently produce certain commodities, such as oil] on which it is premised. . . . The result would be substantial, unnecessary loss in national output, and an artificially high domestic-energy-cost structure which would reduce the competitiveness of our exports and increase the cost-advantage of imports. . . .

Overall, the planet's accessible natural hydrocarbon reserves readily exceed 20 trillion barrels. This is the equivalent of five centuries of consumption at current rates. . . . The case for fossil-fuel exhaustion simply cannot rest on physical scarcity or the stinginess of the planet.

. . . It is time to discard our medieval energy maps. There is no region filled with lurking dragons and other perils on the far side of the ocean. So rather than institute a politically imposed and bureaucratically managed and enforced regime of domestic-energy autarky [a policy based on authoritarian power], we need do little more than decontrol domestic energy prices, dismantle the energy bureaucracy, and allow the U.S. economy to equilibrate at the world level. Energy supply and demand will take care of itself. . . and by thus encouraging full integration of the U.S. economy into the world marketplace's search for the least-cost-development sequence of our planet's prodigious remaining energy resources, we will produce the highest possible level of domestic economic growth and welfare.

**Source:** Jimmy Carter, "The Energy Problem," April 18, 1977, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977-1981; and David Stockman, "The Wrong War? The Case Against a National Energy Policy," Public Interest, 53 (Fall 1978).

### QUESTIONS

1. How do the two men differ on the causes and solution of the energy crisis?
2. Explain how the goals of Carter's energy proposals might conflict with his economic and environmental goals?



Go to the website at [www.cengage.com/history/boyerenduring7e](http://www.cengage.com/history/boyerenduring7e) for additional primary sources on this period.

Still less successful was Carter's policy toward Iran. For years, Iran had been ruled by Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who had come to power in 1953 with CIA help (see Chapter 26). Washington viewed the shah's repressive, pro-U.S. regime as a bulwark against Soviet expansion and a source of abundant oil reserves. Iran's Shiite Muslims, however, inspired by their exiled spiritual head, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, overthrew the shah's government early in 1979. The shah fled Iran and Khomeini returned in triumph, imposing strict Islamic rule.

On November 4, 1979, after Carter admitted the shah to the United States for cancer treatment, Khomeini supporters stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and seized 66 American hostages, demanding the return of the shah in exchange for the captured Americans. Thus began a 444-day ordeal that virtually paralyzed the Carter administration. Night after night, TV images of blindfolded hostages, anti-American mobs, and U.S. flags being burned rubbed American nerves raw. A botched rescue attempt in April 1980, in which several U.S. helicopters malfunctioned and eight GIs died, added to the nation's humiliation, and to the public's view of Carter as an

ineffective bumbler. Not until January 20, 1981, the day Ronald Reagan took office as the new president, did the Iranian authorities release the hostages.

As with Herbert Hoover in the early 1930s, Americans turned against the remote figure in the White House. When Carter's approval rating sagged to 26 percent in mid-1979 (lower than Nixon's when he resigned as a result of Watergate), he retreated to Camp David and emerged to deliver a TV address that blamed the American people's "crisis of confidence" for leading them to doubt the meaning of their own lives, the future, and the nation's purpose and abilities. He also castigated them for worshipping "self-indulgence and consumption," so that a person "is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns." But when a cabinet reshuffle was all that followed, most Americans thought the helpless Carter was the problem. The 1980 Democratic convention glumly renominated Carter, but defeat in November loomed. A successful post-presidential career of public service would do much to restore Carter's reputation and bring him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. But in 1980, most Americans hungered for a new president and changed policies.

## CHRONOLOGY

## 1964–1974

- |             |  |             |  |
|-------------|--|-------------|--|
| <b>1964</b> | Berkeley Free Speech Movement (FSM).<br>The Beatles arrive in the United States.   | <b>1971</b> | <i>Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education</i> .<br><i>New York Times</i> publishes Pentagon Papers.<br>Nixon institutes wage-and-price freeze.<br>South Vietnam invades Laos with the help of U.S. air support.   |
| <b>1965</b> | Ken Kesey and Merry Pranksters stage first "acid test."  | <b>1972</b> | Nixon visits China and the Soviet Union.<br>SALT I agreement approved.<br>Break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters in Watergate complex.<br>Nixon reelected president.   |
| <b>1966</b> | Abolition of automatic student deferments from the draft.  | <b>1973</b> | Vietnam cease-fire agreement signed.<br>Senate establishes special committee to investigate Watergate.<br>President Salvador Allende ousted and murdered in Chile.<br>Vice President Spiro Agnew resigns; Gerald Ford appointed vice president.<br><i>Roe v. Wade</i> .<br>Yom Kippur War; OPEC begins embargo of oil to the West.<br>Saturday Night Massacre. |
| <b>1967</b> | March on the Pentagon.<br>Israeli-Arab Six-Day War.  | <b>1974</b> | House Judiciary Committee votes to impeach Nixon.<br>Nixon resigns; Ford becomes president.  |
| <b>1968</b> | Tet offensive.<br>Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated; race riots sweep nation.<br>Students take over buildings at Columbia University.<br>Robert F. Kennedy assassinated.<br>Violence mars Democratic convention in Chicago.<br>Vietnam peace talks open in Paris. Richard Nixon elected president. |             |  |
| <b>1969</b> | Apollo 11 lands first Americans on the moon.<br>Nixon begins withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.<br>Woodstock festival.  |             |  |
| <b>1970</b> | United States invades Cambodia.<br>Students killed at Kent State and Jackson State Universities.<br>Beatles disband.<br>Earth Day first celebrated.  |             |  |

## CONCLUSION

Baby boomers took material comfort and their own importance for granted. Longing for meaning in their lives, as well as personal liberty, they sought a more humane democracy, a less racist and consumerist society, and an end to the war in Vietnam. Failing to get what they wanted quickly, the New Left became increasingly radical and violent. Most of the young, however, were more interested in “sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll.” Ultimately, the student movement and counterculture helped prod the United States into becoming a more tolerant, diverse, and permissive society. They helped pave the way for the environmental movement and spurred an end to America’s longest war—which had cost the nation dearly in lives and dollars, in turning Americans against one another and in diverting society from pressing needs.

The youth rebellion, racial rioting, and the Tet offensive in Vietnam brought politics to a boil in 1968. The year of assassinations and turmoil cost Democrats the White House and triggered a conservative resurgence and major political realignment. Pursuing the national interest by *realpolitik*, President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger undertook secret negotiations with North Vietnam to end hostilities. At the same time, they opened the way for reduced tensions with China and the Soviet Union, enhancing the world outlook for peace, while also giving economic and military assistance to anticommunist dictatorships.

Equally vital to his political success, Nixon wooed whites upset by civil strife and by hippies and

radicals. He emphasized law and order to attract the silent majority concerned with the upsurge of criminality and breakdown of traditional values, and he played upon middle-class resentment of rising taxes to pay for the federal largess going to minorities and the poor. Following a “southern strategy,” he nominated conservatives for the Supreme Court, opposed extension of the Voting Rights Act and school busing for racial integration, and cracked down on militant blacks and young radicals.

In 1972, the secret schemes Nixon had put in place to spy upon and destroy those who opposed his Vietnam policies began to unravel. His obsession for secrecy and his paranoia about opponents brought his downfall. The arrest of the Watergate burglars and the subsequent attempted cover-up of White House involvement led to revelations of a host of “dirty tricks” and criminal acts, the indictment of nearly fifty Nixon administration officials and the jailing of a score of his associates, and a House Judiciary Committee vote to impeach the president. To avoid certain conviction, a disgraced Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974. Neither his successor, Gerald Ford, nor Jimmy Carter restored confidence in the White House. The national government seemed helpless as the plague of inflation, energy crisis, recession, and deindustrialization swept the land. The deepening public disenchantment with politicians and disillusionment with government, which had led Dorothy Burlage and millions of others to turn inward, would last throughout the 1970s and into the next century.

## KEY TERMS

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) (p. 886)

Berkeley Free Speech Movement (FSM) (p. 887)

Jackson State College (p. 889)  
“hippies” (p. 890)

counter culture (p. 891)

Woodstock festival (p. 894)

*Roe v. Wade* (p. 894)

National Organization for Women (NOW) (p. 895)

Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) (p. 896)

gay liberation (p. 897)

Three Mile Island (p. 898)

Hubert Humphrey (p. 899)

Eugene McCarthy (p. 899)

Robert Kennedy (p. 899)

yippies (p. 900)

Neil Armstrong (p. 901)

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (p. 902)

“the plumbers” (p. 903)

Pentagon Papers (p. 903)

détente (p. 904)

Henry Kissinger (p. 904)

Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) (p. 904)

George McGovern (p. 905)

“Deep Throat” (p. 906)

Gerald Ford (p. 907)

Jimmy Carter (p. 907)

“stagflation” (p. 911)

Alaska Lands Act (p. 911)

Camp David Accords (p. 911)

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