

Baillie's Brief Guide to America

A divided union, 1941-1980



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Using This Guide

Please note that this guide is NOT an official textbook. It has been written with input from my history notes, the actual textbook, and a variety of Internet sources. I don't think I disagree with the textbook anywhere but if I do, trust the textbook not me. That said, I hope you find all this guff I've written useful. Happy revising!

Guide To Colours

Throughout the guide, and particularly on the timeline, different colours refer to different sections of the US history;

Blue for the Civil Rights Movement

Dark Red for Communism and the Red Scare

Purple for US Political events and Watergate

Dark Green for the student movement

Pink for the New Frontier and Great Society

Olive for the Black Power movement

Teal for the Women's Rights movement

Important Facts and Concepts

THE NEW FRONTIER

America, since the 19th century, has had a cultural interest in the idea of a “frontier” spirit, coupled with the idea of moving west across the USA. This idea was re-used by JFK in his idea of a New Frontier, moving the USA in the fields of equality, civil rights, and economic prosperity. The New Frontier involved many programs to improve these areas, but faced stiff opposition.

THE GREAT SOCIETY

The Great Society was LBJ’s successor idea to JFK’s New Frontier. He managed to pass a lot of legislation to improve voting rights, medical care, and make improvements in the cities. However, the rising costs of the Vietnam war prevented a lot of his programs being properly funded and he lost popularity as the war dragged on.

JIM CROW LAWS AND SEGREGATION

“Jim Crow” was the classic cartoonish figure lampooning African-Americans. The laws passed that segregated ‘white’ (Caucasian) and ‘coloured’ (Black, Native, and Asian) Americans were known as “Jim Crow Laws” for this reason. Segregation laws included separate schools (with the coloured schools being poorer) different seats on buses (with priority given to whites), not allowing coloured people to attend University, and segregated shops, services, and eating places. Voting was also impossible for most black people, who were forced to do impossible “tests” to prove that they were sufficiently intelligent to vote. These tests included questions such as “How many bubbles are there in a bar of soap?”.

SOUTHERN/NORTHERN DIVIDE

The divide between Southern and Northern states was very prominent at this time. The Southern states (Examples being Mississippi, Alabama, Indiana, and Arkansas) were generally segregated, poorer, less city-based, and more right wing. The Northern states tended to be desegregated, more city-based, and more left wing. Southerners tended to deeply distrust northerners such as JFK.

HOUSE, SENATE, PRESIDENT

The government of the USA is divided into three; the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the President. The President is elected along with a vice-president, and appoints an un-elected cabinet. The Senate and the House of Representatives have the real law-making power and can overrule and even impeach the president, although usually the President is required to sign any new bill into law. The President can and does create new bills, although these need to be passed by both houses to become law. This means that it is very difficult for Presidents to achieve radical agendas such as JFK’s New Frontier if Capitol Hill is controlled by the opposing party or if there are significant elements of their own party that oppose them.

THE SUPREME COURT

Unlike in the UK, the US Constitution is a single written document. It can and has been occasionally amended, but in general is considered to be the single document

that defines all other US law. The Supreme Court's job is to interpret the constitution; any law or activity that is found to be unconstitutional cannot continue to be enforced.

Important Places

Birmingham, Alabama

Birmingham was the site of many famous Civil Rights marches and repressions by police; it was where "Bull" Connor made his stands against desegregation. Destination of three major marches in 1965 from Selma.

Dallas, Texas

The city in Texas where JFK was shot.

Greensboro, North Carolina

Site of the first sit-in protest, at a Woolworths lunch counter.

Kent, Ohio

City in which the University played host to violent student riots.

Little Rock, Arkansas

Is the city where at the Central High School nine black students attempted to enrol. They faced angry and abusive mobs preventing them getting there, until Federal troops were sent in. See "Little Rock Crisis".

Memphis, Tennessee

Site of MLK's assassination.

Montgomery, Alabama

Site of the famous Bus Boycott led by Martin Luther King.

Selma, Alabama

Start point of three civil rights marches in 1965 headed for Birmingham, Alabama.

Washington, District of Columbia (Washington DC)

Capital of the USA. Site of the March on Washington, location of the Watergate building, and seat of presidential administration.

Woodstock, New York

Town near to which the famous 3-day Woodstock Festival occurred.

Groups and People

Democrats

The Democrats are one of the two main parties in American politics. They are, in general, the more left-wing party – although certainly not socialist in the European sense of the word, they generally have a belief in more rights for workers in the system. The Democrats were in power for most of the period 1945-1969, with only one intermission in their control of the White House from 1953 to 1969. However, though the Democrats reached a broad voting base their party had several internal splits, between the socially progressive northerners, the Dixiecrats, and so on. These splits, coupled with the unpopularity of President Johnson due to the Vietnam War, led to the Democrats losing the 1969 presidential election to Richard Nixon.

Lyndon Baines Johnson

36th President, originally JFK's vice-president. He oversaw a lot of the later legal changes, including the Civil Rights Bill.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

One of the most famous presidents the USA has ever had. He was the 35th president, and had important ideas for "getting America moving". His most famous idea was that of a "New Frontier" where America would try and move, not in a geographical sense, but on the fields of civil rights and discrepancies between rich and poor.

JFK faced stiff opposition to his ideas; he was young, catholic, and in favour of desegregation. He appointed young and/or African-American advisors, which annoyed and worried Republicans and Democrats from Southern states. The legacy of JFK has always been much analysed, as has the manner of his death – assassinated while driving through Dallas, Texas.

Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy

Brother of John, even more outspokenly in favour of more universal changes for workers. He served as attorney general under JFK, and later was assassinated while running for president.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, or FDR, was one of the longest incumbent to the US presidency ever, winning four terms (since then a two-term limit has been given). He created the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunities Commission) in the Second World War, and desegregated the armed forces.

Harry Truman

FDR's Vice President, president on his death. He took a staunch anti-communist stance, taking the USA into Korea, and began the work of rebuilding after the Second World War. He famously won a presidential election where the press were so certain he would lose that he, victorious, was able to hold up a newspaper with the headline "Dewey defeats Truman" the next morning. His popularity was greatly damaged as the Korean War dragged on, and he decided not to stand for re-election in 1952-53.

Dixiecrats

The Democrat party in this period was very much divided. On the one hand, there were the newer Democrats from Northern states such as the Kennedys or FDR. These people supported the ideas of a socially progressive stance to Civil Rights and other issues. However, the Southern Democrats (or "Dixiecrats") were, while having some agreements, generally opposed to many new agendas. Only in the late 1940s did the Dixiecrats attempt to form a separate party; Harry Truman won the election for the mainstream Democrats anyway. The Southern Democrats were nevertheless responsible for most of the struggle against segregation, even as the Northern Democrats backed it. They continued to be a force into the 1960s and were a thorn in JFK's side as he tried to get his "New Frontier" legislation passed.

Ross Barnett

Ross Barnett was the governor of Mississippi in 1960, a committed segregationist who bitterly opposed the idea of black student James Meredith entering his alma mater, the University of Mississippi. Barnett actively campaigned against Meredith,

and eventually received a court conviction for his actions. He never served his sentence or paid a fine, however. Unlike some dixiecrats who later regretted their actions or changed their position he always said that he “would have done the same again”.

“Bull” Connor

Bull Connor was the public safety commissioner for the city of Birmingham, Alabama, in the era of the Civil Rights Movement. His brutal handling of the protests there, including using power hoses and dogs on protesters, helped turn many people against the segregationist cause.

Orval Faubus

Governor of Arkansas 1955-1967. Originally a relatively leftwing and moderate Democrat, he was most famous for a very strong stance against desegregation, battling with President Eisenhower to prevent schools opening for blacks in Little Rock and openly flouting Supreme Court rulings to keep segregation in place. It is probable that the strength of his segregationist stance was a mix of personal racism and political motivation; to keep his gubernatorial seat he needed the votes of the sizeable segregationist sector of the Arkansas electorate. Later in his political career he moderated his positions and broke with most segregationist organisations in 1962; in the 1964 gubernatorial election, despite his previous record, he won over 80% of the black vote, and he later supported black candidate Jesse Jackson for the Democratic presidential nomination.

George Wallace

Alabama Governor George Wallace was probably the most prominent anti-segregationist in the Kennedy years. Winning a landslide victory with a steadfast agenda of preventing change, he famously said that he stood for “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever”. Events in his career include his famous “stand in the schoolhouse door” where he personally attempted to block two black students entering a university auditorium until asked to move by national guard general Henry Graham. He was also responsible for the handling of the Selma to Montgomery marches which included the famous “Bloody Sunday” attacks on demonstrators.

In 1968 he ran as a third-party segregationist candidate against Nixon and Humphrey, with strong rhetoric against segregation and also the counter-culture movement. He became the last third-party candidate to win any electoral votes, successfully carrying five states in the Deep South. In later life he apologised for his earlier actions and views, becoming extremely religious.

Republicans

The Republicans (shortened often to GOP for Grand Old Party) are the other major political party in America, along with the Democrats. They tend to be to the right, in favour of more freedom for businesses. In this period, the Republicans were quite weak; only under the popular war hero Eisenhower did they break the Democrat party’s hold on power between 1933 and 1969. However, they were nevertheless an important force – particularly in the anti-communist movement. After the 1960s, many of the “Dixiecrats” joined the Republican party.

John Dean

A senior White House aide under Richard Nixon, Dean was fired in the midst of the Watergate scandal. He later repaid the president by revealing the truth of Nixon's involvement, though his claims were not substantiated until the release of the White House tapes.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

The only Republican president between FDR's first term in the 1930s and the end of LBJ's presidency in 1969, Eisenhower was a popular war general who took a tough stand against communism, and upheld supreme court rulings on many civil right issues.

Gerald Ford

Nixon's Vice President in 1972, and his successor upon the former's resignation. He later lost the Presidency to Democrat Jimmy Carter.

Joe McCarthy

McCarthy, the namesake of McCarthyism, was an ambitious and unscrupulous Republican senator who claimed to have information on hundreds of Communists working in the US State Department. His accusations led to the unjust firing of many officials in 1953 and 1954. However, he was eventually found out when he attempted to accuse a number of senior military figures of communism, and the televised hearing showed him to be a bully and liar. He died in 1957, a broken man.

Richard Nixon

The victor of the 1969 presidential election, Nixon was at first a very popular president and won the 1972 election. Later, he lost popularity and all credibility over the Watergate scandal; he became the only President in modern times to have impeachment proceedings against him, and resigned in 1974 having done huge damage to Americans' trust in the presidency.

Civil Rights Activists

Oliver Brown

The named one of the thirteen plaintiffs in the Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education rulings at the supreme court.

Elizabeth Eckford

One of the most famous of the Little Rock Nine; a photo of her being screamed at and abused has become one of the most famous pictures of the crisis.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King, or MLK, was a Christian preacher from the south of America who became the outspoken figurehead of the civil rights movement. He advocated non-violence at all costs, and was influenced a lot by the Indian leader Mahatma Ghandi. He was a Christian with a vision of a fully integrated and equal society; he supported left-wing causes and battling poverty as well as simply being a civil rights leader.

He first came to prominence as an organiser of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955; he continued to be a figurehead for Civil Rights up to his most famous

moment, the “I Have A Dream” speech at the March on Washington in 1963. He lost some credibility after being seen as reluctant to push for change through the 1960s, but shifted his focus too onto poor people of all races; that and his opposition to the war in Vietnam made him a more controversial figure. He was assassinated in 1968.

Thurgood Marshall

The legal advisor to the NAACP at the time of the Montgomery Bus Boycott; later, he became the first black Supreme Court justice in the USA under Lyndon Johnson.

Rosa Parks

A seamstress (though well educated) from Montgomery in Alabama, Rosa Parks was most famous for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. Her subsequent arrest sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

A.P. Randolph

Asa Philip Randolph was a major organiser of the Civil Rights movement. His threat of a major march on Washington during the war was called off after FDR began to order the desegregation of industry. He continued to be a central figure in the campaign movement through the 1950s and 1960s, helping organise the March on Washington in 1963.

Emmett Till

A young black boy from the north of America, he visited some southern cousins and was there dared to wolf-whistle a young white woman. Enraged, the girl’s father kidnapped and lynched Till, killing him with extreme brutality. His horrifically mutilated body was buried in an open casket to show what he had suffered.

Black Power Movement

Stokely Carmichael

Carmichael was a prominent leader of the Black Power movement in the mid 1960s. He coined the term “Black Power”, and was against working with whites. In 1966 he was among those involved in expelling white members from organisations such as SNCC and CORE.

Elijah Muhammad

Elijah Muhammad was the leader of the Nation of Islam, an extremist group who believed that white men were a twisted creation of black scientists and were fundamentally inferior beings. They preached that blacks would never be free and equal while they were living in a society along with whites. Famous members of the NOI included Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali.

Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver

Newton, Seale, and Cleaver were the founders of the militant Black Panthers, a small and violent black power group in the late 1960s.

Malcolm X

Malcolm X was a supporter and leader of the “Nation of Islam” movement. He was a Muslim who advocated violence if necessary for self-defence. The Nation of Islam became popular as Islam was seen as a “black” religion whereas Christianity was a

“white” religion. He took the surname X, as it was the name given to black slaves before their masters gave them new surnames (his birth name was Malcolm Little). While in the Nation of Islam he subscribed to its view that whites were morally ignorant and inferior. However, he later broke with the NOI and moved to a much more moderate philosophical position which allowed for the equality of whites while still advocating black nationalism, social equality, and the right to self-defence. He did claim that he had been “awakened” to the dangers of racism in both directions by the international travel he undertook after leaving the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X believed that whites and blacks should be separate and equal, not in the same culture and place unlike Martin Luther King. Members of the nation of Islam assassinated him in 1965.

Other Notable Figures

These are people notable in this period of history but who did not belong to one of the major groups described above; several of them were aligned with a particular group by actions but rejected the ideology, or vice versa

Joan Baez

An icon of counter-culture, folk singer Joan Baez was very famous for championing civil rights throughout the 1960s. She sang at the March on Washington in 1963 and often appeared at different events in the southern USA supporting civil rights activists. She later sang at Woodstock and protested against the War in Vietnam.

Carl Bernstein, Bob Woodward

Journalists, Bernstein and Woodward first uncovered the existence of Nixon’s shady organisation known as CREEP after the burglary on the Watergate building in 1972.

Archibald Cox

Cox was the first special investigator into the Watergate scandal. He was fired after the “Saturday Night Massacre”, but not before managing to discover the existence of the tapes that would later prove Nixon’s guilt.

Bob Dylan

The greatest singer of the counter-culture movement, Dylan was famous for writing songs that stood against the mainstream culture of America at the time. He was very popular among protesters and hippies, and also sang at the March on Washington in 1963.

Henry V. Graham

Graham was a general in the National Guard in the late 1950s and 1960s. He is most famous for being assigned several times to protect Civil Rights marchers due to his non-confrontational nature and cool headedness. His most visible moment was being the man who asked Alabama Governor George Wallace to step down and out of the way at the “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door” incident. He also protected the third Selma-Montgomery march and was responsible for escorting Freedom Riders out of Alabama and away from mob violence.

Alger Hiss

A state department official, Hiss was convicted of perjury for lying under oath in a case investigating claims that he was a spy. His conviction, for 5 years, heightened fear of Communism.

Leon Jaworski

The second special investigator into the Watergate scandal; he managed to get the Supreme Court to force Nixon to hand over the tapes that proved his guilt.

James Meredith

The first Black student at the University of Mississippi despite violent opposition, James Meredith was in a very prominent position and can be considered to have achieved quite a lot for the civil rights movement. However, Meredith was (and is) a very conservative person who refused to identify himself with the movement in any way. He tried more than once to become a Republican congressman, and has spoken out against many of the tenets of the Civil Rights movement.

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg

Nuclear scientists, the Rosenbergs were arrested for having given information on Nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union. They were executed amongst widespread criticism and condemnation in 1953.

General Zwicker

Zwicker was a field hero of World War Two who, after stalling when interviewed by Joe McCarthy, was severely criticized by the senator. The appalling verbal treatment he received helped turn the public against McCarthy.

Timeline

1896

- Plessy vs Ferguson ruling on education for blacks; “Separate but equal” ruling

1909

- NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) founded to challenge segregation in the courts and pressurise the public and government

1911

- NUL (National Urban League) founded to help black who had migrated from the south

1940-45

- Second World War. Forces desegregate due to lack of manpower

1942

- CORE (Congress Of Racial Equality) founded

1945

- End of Second World War. Cold War begins
- Death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Harry Truman new president

1947

- Hollywood Ten Blacklisted

1948

- Alger Hiss accused of being a soviet spy
- Berlin blockade begins

1949

- Chinese Communist Party win civil war
- Berlin blockade ends
- USSR tests atomic bomb

1950

- Korean war begins
- Alger Hiss convicted on charges of perjury
- Julius and Ethel Rosenberg arrested for supplying nuclear secrets to the USSR
- McCarran act allows greater investigation/suppression of communism

1952

- Charlie Chaplin forced to leave USA

1953

- Electric Chairing of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg
- Korean war ends
- McCarthy begins investigation into the military
- Eisenhower wins presidential election

1954

- Brown vs Topeka board of Education (Brown I); schools ordered to desegregate.
- McCarthy Censured by US Senate
- Communist Control Act makes communist part membership illegal in the USA

1955

- Brown vs Topeka board of Education (Brown II); ordered desegregation “with all deliberate speed”
- Murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi

- December 4; Arrest of Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Alabama
- 1956**
- Montgomery Bus Boycott; bus segregation ruled unconstitutional
- 1957**
- Eisenhower's Civil Rights Bill
- Little Rock; 9 black students enrol at Little Rock high school, Arkansas, and face stiff opposition
- Death of Joe McCarthy
- 1959**
- Cuban Revolution
- 1960**
- Freedom Rides begin; black students take inter-state buses through the south to force authorities to uphold the new laws.
- First sit-in protest in Greensboro, North Carolina
- James Meredith enrolls at University of Mississippi
- JFK elected President
- 1961**
- JFK's inaugural speech; "A New Frontier"
- Peace Corps established
- Minimum wage increases
- US Troop levels in Vietnam begin to increase
- Failed "Bay of Pigs" invasion of Cuba
- Eleanor Roosevelt appointed head of PCSW
- 1962**
- Manpower and Training Act; jobless workers retrained.
- Cuban Missile Crisis
- 1963**
- Alabama Governor George Wallace's "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door" attempting to prevent a black student entering university. He is forced to back down.
- June; JFK's Civil Rights Bill proposed.
- August 28; March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, under MLK and A.P. Randolph. "I have a dream" speech.
- 22 November; Death of JFK in Dallas, Texas. LBJ new president.
- Equal Pay Act ensures equal pay for women
- 1964**
- Civil Rights Act passed; segregation in public places becomes illegal, voting regulations standardised, gender discrimination outlawed.
- Economic Opportunity Act aims to reduce poverty
- Split between Malcolm X and Nation of Islam
- 1965**
- Voting Rights Act; universal suffrage established for southern Blacks
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- Social Security Act - Medicare
- Malcolm X killed by member of Nation of Islam
- First of the long, hot summers; rioting among Blacks in cities until 1968
- US Combat units deployed to Vietnam
- SDS founded
- 1966**
- White members of CORE expelled

- Stokely Carmichael coins term “Black Power”
 - Black Panthers founded
 - NOW founded
- 1967**
- State laws preventing interracial marriage ruled unconstitutional
 - Thurgood Marshall becomes first African-American Supreme Court Delegate
- 1968**
- Fair housing act; racial discrimination in housing illegal
 - MLK assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. His death sparks riots
 - Death of Bobby Kennedy
 - Last of the long, hot summers; rioting among Blacks in cities
- 1969**
- Nixon becomes president
 - Woodstock Festival
 - 700 Black Panthers arrested by police, movement ends
- 1970**
- Kent University shootings
- 1972**
- Four men arrested for breaking into the Watergate Building
 - Feminist Magazine *Ms.* Published
 - Educational Amendment Act, gender discrimination in education banned
- 1974**
- Nixon resigns as President of the United States
- 1976**
- Women allowed to enrol at military academies

Important Topics

The Second World War

At the start of the Second World War, blacks were shut out from the majority of jobs related to the war effort. The Army refused to train black officers, the air force refused black pilots, and the navy only allowed blacks to work as kitchen staff. No black women were accepted into the force, military units of blacks were fully segregated, and it was even the case that blacks' blood was not used in military medicine.

However, as the pressure on manpower in the USA increased so did the willingness to find manpower in any way possible. Coupled with this was the work of campaigners such as A.P. Randolph, who threatened to organise a 100,000 strong march on Washington DC in favour of desegregation; it never happened, averted by FDR's creation of the Fair Employment Act. After the act, the Fair Practice Employment Committee helped with desegregation by threatening to stop giving government contracts to segregated companies. Boeing, for example, had no black employees prior to 1942. The military began to desegregate for manpower; by the end of the war it had 600 black pilots, and all services had black officers including some women.

Another important factor for ethnic minorities in the war was the treatment of Japanese Americans, or "Issei" (their US-born children were known as "Nissei"). California and other western states had not insignificant Japanese-American populations. After Pearl Harbour the Issei were seen as a threat to the state due to the possibility of them sending information to Japan. 10 camps were set up for Japanese Americans, who lost their freedom and also their homes, which were often wrecked whilst they were away.

The Red Scare

The Red Scare was a period of very heightened tension and fear of Communism in the USA. This was caused by the global power balance between the two "superpowers" of the United States of America (USA), which was capitalist and democratic, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which was communist and dictatorial.

A variety of factors made people in the USA more scared of communism. Firstly, there were international events. From 1945 more and more countries became Communist, most notably China in 1949 and North Korea in the early 1950s. Later Cuba (1959) and Vietnam (1975) joined them. Many were worried of a "Domino Effect" whereby one country fell and this led to another and another. To prevent this it was reasoned that the US should make sure to fight Communism wherever it appeared. The Communist states also gained strength in the late 40s and early 50s. The Communists blockaded Berlin - the city whose capture finally ended Fascism in Europe - in 1948, which led to a very tense standoff with the USA for a year. Then the USSR tested its first atomic bomb - before then a technology only available to America - in 1949. That year, China fell to the Communists. A year later, the Korean War, a bloody and brutal affair that saved the South only at the cost of huge numbers of lives (and, arguably, Harry Truman's presidency).

Internal affairs also heightened tensions. In 1947 the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) published its first blacklist of suspected subversive communists, naming ten Hollywood directors and producers (famous as the "Hollywood Ten") who it suspected of having implanted communist imagery into

their films. Hollywood was continually considered suspect through the Red Scare, as were any groups of artists, producers, intellectuals or scientists – people considered to be naturally leaning towards Communism. It was in 1948 that the real scare of infiltration struck, though, as Alger Hiss was accused of being a Communist spy in the state department. Despite the fact that no charges of spying were ever successfully brought against him, he was incarcerated in 1950 for five years for related perjury offences in his trial. In 1950, too, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were arrested. They were nuclear scientists, and were accused of giving nuclear information to Russia. Both were condemned to death by the electric chair in 1953.

The central figure on this scene of drama and fear was a Republican senator from Wisconsin. Joseph McCarthy was ruthless, unscrupulous, and keen to turn the situation to his own advantage; he began in 1950 by producing at a speech a sheet of paper that he claimed had the names of 205 State Department officials who were Communists. The number he gave later changed to 57 and 81 at different times. To the Senate, he gave 81 case reviews of people in the department who he claimed were security risks; he never gave a source for his claims or produced genuine evidence. When later a committee investigated his claims he produced just nine definite names, which the committee decided were bogus. However, in deciding whether to accept the report although Democrats unanimously voted in its favour the Republicans backed McCarthy, who was already seen as standing up to Communism. This public perception gave him a lot of power and popularity, which was crucial in gaining the Republicans a Senate majority in 1952.

In 1953, under the new President Eisenhower (who despite being a Republican was highly critical of McCarthy's methods), McCarthy gained control of the Senate Permanent Sub-Committee on Investigations. He used this to "witch-hunt" further among public bodies such as the Voice of America (VOA). His luck eventually began to turn, however, when he began investigating the army. His scathing attacks on General Zwicker, a popular World War hero, hugely damaged his popularity and set the military firmly against him. They later conducted their own hearing against McCarthy for influencing the military promotion of a former aide unfairly; McCarthy was shown up as a bully and liar in the hearings. The Senate voted by a large majority to censure McCarthy in 1954, and in 1957 he died a broken and alcoholic man (though still in office as senator).

Civil Rights up to 1963

Brown I and II

Oliver Brown was a black man from Topeka, Kansas. The NAACP backed him and several other parents in 1954 in suing the local education board when they could not enrol their children in the (vastly better funded) whites-only schools in Topeka, even though the coloured schools were far further away.

The ensuing case – Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education – was a daring attempt to overturn 1896's Plessy vs. Ferguson ruling. Plessy vs. Ferguson was a ruling that schooling should be "separate but equal" for blacks and whites in the USA. This decision, influenced by the "scientific" racism of the time and the widespread belief that blacks were intellectually inferior, essentially allowed education to remain segregated for the entire first half of the twentieth century.

Brown and the other plaintiffs won their case, and the Supreme Court made the historic ruling that school segregation was unconstitutional and therefore had to be stopped in all states. The next year, frustrated by slow progress, the Court made a

second ruling, Brown II. This ordered schools to desegregate “with all deliberate speed.”

Little Rock Crisis

The legal groundwork for desegregation having been laid down by Brown I and II, it was in the city of Little Rock – the capital of Arkansas – that it was put to the test. At the city’s central high school in 1957, nine black students attempted to enrol. Many local councils threatened to protest and even make demonstrations to block the students from entering. In support of them, Governor Orval Faubus placed Arkansas state troops at the school to prevent the nine from entering. Despite the President, Eisenhower, warning him not to defy the court’s ruling, Faubus left the troops in place. When the students attempted to enter a large crowd abused them, hurled missiles and spat at them.

President Eisenhower was eventually asked by Little Rock’s Mayor to uphold the constitution; the President federalised the entire Alabama National Guard (thus removing it from Faubus’ control) and ordered the 101st Airborne Division of the US army into the city. The pupils were able to attend school thenceforth, although they and many other black pupils attending newly integrated schools still faced racism and difficulties.

James Meredith

The university equivalent of Little Rock was the case of James Meredith, a black student who attempted to enrol at the University of Mississippi in 1960 in an attempt to force president Kennedy to uphold his rights. His presence had to be enforced by several different military groups including the (federalised) state guard, military police, and the US border patrol. The state governor, Ross Barnett, was very opposed to Meredith’s enrolment. Riots across the campus occurred, in which two people died including a journalist.

The Stand in the Schoolhouse Door

A final attempt to stand against integration of Universities was made by Governor George Wallace of Alabama in 1963. In an attempt to honour his viciously segregationist electoral manifesto, he personally stood in a schoolhouse doorway at the University of Mississippi to block two black students from entering. He refused to move when asked to by the Deputy Attorney General, only standing aside some time later when asked to do so by a national guard commander, Henry V. Graham.

Montgomery Bus Boycott

Transport, as well as education, was a segregated fact of life for most southerners in the 1950s. In 1955, a 42-year-old black woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man; she was arrested. The NAACP, in which she was involved, had been looking for some time for a case on which they could stage a protest, and Parks’ grievances were the perfect opportunity for them.

Soon after her arrest, the black community in Montgomery, organised by local preacher Martin Luther King, staged a boycott of the local bus company, simultaneously taking several complaints to the Supreme Court. Over the 381 days of the boycott African-Americans shared cars, walked, and did whatever they could to avoid using the buses; 65% of the bus company’s income was lost. The white community fought back using intimidation (King’s house was bombed), the law (King was prosecuted under an old law banning boycotts) and of course battling in the

Supreme Court to stop the bus boycott. However, after 381 days of boycotting the buses the Supreme Court ruled that Alabama's segregated transport laws were unconstitutional.

The boycott was a major success and precipitated the desegregation of all public transport in the USA. It also allowed Martin Luther King and his methods of peaceful and non-violent protest to rise to prominence, beginning a career that would see him spend the rest of his life organising and fighting for civil and social rights.

Freedom Rides

After public transport was desegregated (inter-state buses had already been desegregated prior to Montgomery), the real question with the new laws was whether they could or would actually be enforced in the segregationist states in the south. To try and force the federal government to uphold the Constitution, groups of "Freedom Riders" took buses across the southern states to try and antagonise racists into attacking and thus the government into intervening. At times they were successful; at others they were forced to turn back, often under escort. The violence directed against them was extreme, and local police often did little to nothing to help them.

Sit-Ins

The first sit-in was organised by students in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960. They sat at a whites-only lunch counter and simply refused to move unless they were served. This method of protest, in line with the peaceful non-violence advocated by Martin Luther King, became very popular in many areas. Protesters had food thrown at them, were thrown out of buildings again, but still peacefully resisted. The sit-ins were a good method of protest; it was clear that the protesters were harming nobody and yet the whites were very harsh to them, thus shifting public opinion in favour of civil rights.

March on Washington

In 1963, the Civil Rights movement came to perhaps its most memorable moment with Martin Luther King and A.P. Randolph organising the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The March was organised by almost all the groups in favour of civil rights, from CORE and the SNCC who were very critical of the government to the NAACP who were very in favour of the Kennedy administration.

Around 80% of the 2-300,000 marchers were black, but there were still many white marchers. These included singers Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, as well as many others from all parts of the USA. President Kennedy refused to appear at the march.

The march, due to its size and location (below the Lincoln memorial in Washington, DC) was televised nationwide. Martin Luther King's speech – the famous "I have a dream" speech for which he is best remembered – happened here, caught on camera and broadcast. The huge scale of the march helped put pressure on the Kennedy administration over the issue of civil rights, and showed the huge scale of support that the Civil Rights movement could now call upon.

Civil Rights Post-1963

After 1963 Civil Rights continued to advance across the USA with a range of legislation under LBJ's "Great Society" program. Firstly, JFK's Civil Rights act represented the legal if not actual end of segregation in public places in the USA. The bill, specifically written so it had the teeth to deal with opposition and provided for the desegregation of all public places and standardisation of voting rights to prevent

unfair “testing” (see “Jim Crow Laws”). It was a year after that that a comprehensive Voting Rights bill was introduced, finally fully ensuring suffrage in the southern states.

The battle for civil rights continued, however; 1965 saw the three famous marches from Selma to Birmingham (both in Alabama). On the first march – famously known as “Bloody Sunday” police under the orders of Governor George Wallace stopped the march by first halting it then attacking protesters with tear gas, batons, and a cavalry charge. The images of the march were a major factor in turning popular opinion against the segregationists for their brutality to peaceful marchers. However, the second march was turned back by Martin Luther King (who was not present on the first) as he feared marchers would die. Eventually a third march went ahead after the Supreme Court declared that Wallace would be acting against the constitution to stop it. Under the protection of National Guard general Henry Graham, they successfully completed their march.

Most of the basic aims of ensuring voting rights and ending segregation had been achieved in law if not in practice by this point. However, barriers continued to fall through the rest of the 1960s. In 1967 the Supreme Court ruled that state laws against interracial marriage were unconstitutional, and Thurgood Marshall became the first black justice in the Supreme Court. Just the year after that, the Fair Housing act made race discrimination illegal in housing.

However, that year – 1968, last of the long hot summers – in one way marked the end of the main thrust of the Civil Rights movement with the death of its greatest leader. Martin Luther King had been focusing a lot on the rights of the poor of all races, and was an outspoken critic of the war in Vietnam. Organising protests for the poor had brought him to Memphis in Tennessee; here he was assassinated, shot in his hotel. His death caused rioting across the USA.

Black Power

The Black Power movement was a very different set of ideas and beliefs to the Civil Rights movement that preceded it. The Civil Rights movement focused on desegregation and trying to integrate black Americans into US society as full and equal citizens. It was particularly based around MLK’s non-violent campaigns in the southern states; Black Power was more based in the cities, where angry young blacks did not feel that MLK really spoke about the things that directly faced them. The mid-1960s saw this turn into a movement of its own, where black people lashed back against a white dominated society often seen as morally bankrupt.

Malcolm X was the first real leader for the Black power movement. A preacher for the radical Nation of Islam – a group that considered white people to be morally and genetically inferior creations of ancient black scientists – he spoke out against the white dominated society and said that blacks should leave and return to Africa where they could have a culturally separate black state. This pro-equality but anti-integration stance was one of the main features of Black Power, as was the link to Islam (seen as a black religion, as opposed to white dominated Christianity).

It was after Malcolm X’s split, moderation and death, though (See “Malcolm X”), that Black Power entered its most prominent phase. The Civil Rights movement found itself split as organisations such as the Congress for Racial Equality voted to remove all white members (1966), and indeed the phrase “Black Power” began to be used (Stokely Carmichael, also 1966). The SNCC was another group that switched to become blacks-only; eventually Martin Luther King’s wholly peaceful movement was

mostly left with the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) and the NAACP supporting its aims out of the several original civil rights groups.

In 1966, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver founded the Black Panthers. This small, high profile, violent group had 5000 members at its greatest extent. They were communist sympathisers who put armed patrols in black communities. These patrols, with visible black berets, leather jackets and sunglasses, clashed with police several times between 1966 and 1969. Their raised fist salutes and open gun carrying were publicly symbolic of their antagonistic stance to police, too. In the three years of the Panthers' existence, 27 of their members and 9 police died in armed struggles. The group was broken up in 1969 by police, with 700 members arrested. The Black Power movement decreased in strength and visibility over time, but through to the present day racial equality is an issue in parts of the United States.

JFK and The New Frontier

The New Frontier was President John F Kennedy's wide-ranging agenda for reform. President Kennedy was a Catholic of Irish descent; unlike the traditional white Anglo-Saxon class of politicians he was young, popular, and had wide-reaching ideas for change across America. He became President having been senator for Massachusetts (his seat was taken up later by his brother Ted, remaining in Kennedy hands until 2009 and Ted Kennedy's death).

Kennedy's plan was for a "New Frontier" – instead of pushing America forward geographically, he wanted to move it towards being a fairer, more democratic, more equal society. His plans mainly involved worker's rights and civil rights across the country.

His attempts to make things better for Americans economically were quite well received. He kept prices and wages low to control inflation, reduced taxes in some areas, and increased spending. He increased the minimum wage, too, and for the first time allowed the Federal government to loan money to poorer states. Finally, the Jobs and Manpower act in 1961 provided for retraining for jobless workers.

For most of his single (and unfinished) term he took a pragmatic but anti-segregation stance to civil rights, for example pressurising the government of Mississippi to allow student James Meredith to enrol in 1960. His civil rights bill was not introduced until 1963; this was the bill that effectively ended most segregation in the USA. Segregation of public places was to no longer be allowed, and voting standards were to be made uniform. The attorney general was given new powers to deal with states disobeying the new laws, which gave the bill more clout.

Despite his positive reform attempts, JFK faced stiff opposition that made it very hard for him to pursue his reform agenda. While the republicans (who were unanimously opposed to him) were not in control of Congress, there was also a large proportion of the Democrat party who held stiffly conservative and segregationist views. These Southern Democrats were deeply distrustful of the President who was young, desegregationist and Catholic, and this led them to battle many of his reforms, hampering him for all the three years of his presidency.

JFK never saw his Civil Rights bill passed; he died in late 1963 in Dallas, Texas, to an assassin's bullet. He is consistently remembered for his very famous death, which is surrounded by many conspiracy theories.

The Great Society

Lydon Baines Johnson was in many ways the antithesis of President Kennedy. A southerner prone to racist language, he was tall and imposing, as well as a viciously

effective negotiator on a personal level. When he came to power on JFK's death, however, he took his predecessor's visions and began to push them forwards with a huge new legislative agenda. His expertise at negotiation allowed him to push through more reforms than almost any other modern president.

The Great Society, firstly, dealt with Civil Rights reform. Kennedy's agenda for reform remained wholly incomplete upon his death, and so it fell to Johnson to complete his work. He managed to get the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964, and this along with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 are perhaps the crowning achievements of the Great Society.

The Great Society's other aim was the alleviation of poverty in the USA. The Economic Opportunity Act was his achievement towards this. It gave new measures for supporting the poor across the USA, including measures for social security and education. This was followed by acts to further improve education in the following years, as well as the introduction of Medical programs such as Medicare and Medicaid to allow the elderly and the poor to gain access to basic medical care. Previously, it had been difficult for many old or poor Americans to get healthcare at all; now it was possible.

However, LBJ was determined that the US should still stand strong against communism – particularly as this helped prevent the republicans criticising his new spending programmes as communist – and so he decided to escalate US involvement in the civil war in Vietnam. As he began pouring men (and thus money) into SE Asia and the death toll mounted, his popularity fell. His later projects such as improving America's city centres often fell on stony ground due to Vietnam starving them of funds. The conflict also set LBJ against some who had previously supported the progressive Democrat agenda.

Eventually LBJ's popularity had got so low that he decided not to contest the 1968 Presidential Election. With no other Democrat candidate forthcoming after Bobby Kennedy's assassination Johnson's Vice-President, Hubert Humphrey, was left to take up the fight against Nixon. It was a realigning election; from 1933 to 1969 the Democrats won 7 of 9 presidential elections. The Republicans won six of the next ten.

The Student Movement

The culture of the USA through the 1950s was a very rigidly structured one socially. Children were very much expected to grow up and aim for a stable job in the mould of their parents; it was only in the 1960s that this changed.

In the 1960s, a period of much social unrest already with the Civil Rights movement, many young people and students became involved in protests and became much more politically active and adopted radically different lifestyles. This "counter-culture" movement had many central features and ideas.

Firstly, there was student activism. Major demonstrations, organised by groups including the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) protested against the Vietnam War and racial discrimination. The terrible casualty figures from Vietnam were a continual factor in protests. The optimism from the early 1960s was in many cases destroyed after JFK's death and the war accelerating. Student activism at this time was in evidence across the globe; in France the government nearly fell under student pressure in 1968. The demonstrations in the US could often muster thousands of students, mostly from middle-class families usually expected to support the government in times of war. The protests even led to tragedy; at Kent State University, Ohio, in 1970 a group of 700 or so protesters refused to disperse and were

fired on by national guardsmen. Four people were killed and 11 injured, shocking the nation.

The counter-culture movement went beyond protest, however; new music, cultural ideas, and lifestyles permeated it. Singers such as Bob Dylan or Joan Baez rallied young people to causes and against the established way of doing things. Students and “hippies” experimented with drugs freely, turned to eastern religions such as Buddhism, and looked at radical political philosophies such as communism as a way of rebelling against a culture they saw as old-fashioned and corrupt. Important points in the movement include Woodstock in 1969, a huge music festival that was a central moment for the hippie movement.

Women’s Rights

Women in the 1950s were expected to be mothers only; there were few to no job opportunities open to most women, and education too was often limited. At the start of JFK’s presidency only 35% of undergraduates were women and just 5% of managers and administrators were female.

JFK appointed Eleanor Roosevelt as head of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, with a task to report on women’s status in society. Several states also set up their own commissions. In 1963 women’s rights were improved by the introduction of the Equal Pay Act, which made it illegal to pay a man more than a woman for the same job. The 1964 Civil Rights Act included measures for women as well as racial minorities, too; it made all gender discrimination illegal.

These changes made it easier for women to challenge their positions in a still male-dominated society. The National Organisation for Women (NOW) was founded in 1966. NOW inspired many other groups and helped put pressure on the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunities Commission) to take women’s case seriously. By the early 1970s NOW had 40,000 members.

Feminism began to be expressed in various ways; on the one hand came legislative or rules changes that allowed women to train for the army (1976) or banned discrimination in education (1972), whereas on the other hand the first feminist magazine was published in 1972 and, famously, feminists railed against society by burning bras and other “symbols of female oppression” though it is debatable whether or not these measures contributed significantly to their cause. Women managed to gain most of the rights they had been denied by 1980, though it is worth noting that they still do not comprise half the US congress or half the key management positions in business.

Watergate

The Watergate scandal began in 1972 with a burglary; the Democratic National Party Committee’s offices in the Watergate Building were broken into by five burglars, who were then caught and arrested by police. Two newspaper journalists, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, investigated the unusual burglary and discovered that the burglars were employed by an organisation called CREEP (Committee to RE-Elect the President) and that this organisation had a fund controlled by the white house; it seemed that this burglary might have been a dirty trick used by President Nixon to find information about opponents before the presidential election that year. However, Nixon said that no-one at the White House was involved in the “bizarre incident”, the news died down, and the Republicans won the election.

In fact, the burglary had most definitely been done with white house involvement. CREEP was an organisation founded by Nixon to ensure a 1972 election

win by fair means or foul; its workers, known as “plumbers”, were those who had broken in to the Watergate building in the hope of placing microphones to record what Democrats were saying. This process is known as “bugging”. CREEP had \$60 million of funds, a good deal of which was presidential money not permitted to be used for political campaigning. Of this, \$350,000 was reserved for dirty tricks such as the Watergate burglary.

None of this even began to come out until the trial of the burglars, when one (fearing a long prison sentence) spoke up and admitted that the White House had lied about its involvement. After the burglars were convicted the Senate began its own investigation into the burglary and summoned many advisors and officials to give evidence. Under mounting pressure several of Nixon’s advisors (John Dean, Bob Haldeman, and John Ehrlichman) resigned, but the President remained defiant and no evidence against him could be found.

In April 1973 Nixon told the nation that “there can be no whitewash at the white house” and appointed Archibald Cox as a special prosecutor for the case. Although John Dean now attempted to incriminate Nixon, the President still denied his involvement. Finally, a White House official revealed to the Senate committee that Nixon taped all his conversations onto a recording system; if the Senate could get the tapes it would be easy to find what he had actually said.

Nixon refused to release the tapes, claiming they represented a security risk. When Cox demanded them he ordered the attorney general to sack him; the attorney general simply resigned rather than sack Cox. Although this event – known as the “Saturday Night Massacre” – meant that Nixon could remove Cox, his successor Leon Jaworski demanded the tapes just the same. Nixon released edited versions of the tapes, which themselves were a shock; the President was revealed as petty, vindictive, and racist in his dealings.

Jaworski went to the Supreme Court, who ordered Nixon to hand the tapes over. At the same time, the Senate decided to recommend to the House of Representatives that they vote to impeach (remove) Nixon from the presidency for his obstinacy in the matter. It soon became clear when Nixon did hand over the tapes that he was deeply involved in CREEP. To avoid the shame of impeachment, Richard Nixon resigned in favour of Vice-President Gerald Ford on 7 August 1974.

After Watergate

The USA, at the end of WWII, had won crushing victories over enemies commonly seen as little more or less than ultimate evil. The struggles of the 1950s and 60s greatly changed the national mood, however. The witch-hunts of McCarthyism were a real blow to American culture and science, and the Civil Rights movement highlighted deep divisions in US Society. Through the 1960s, the optimism of JFK’s presidency turned into the dark and worrying issues of the murky war in Vietnam, and the counter-culture movement that broke up a lot of the traditional fabric of society. Finally, there was Watergate. The scandal broke the trust of ordinary Americans in the Presidency, and coming alongside the depressing failure of the war in Vietnam crushed the national mood. America’s economy went into recession not long afterwards, and the boldness of post-war America had, progressively and definitely, disappeared.