

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: A DECADE OF DISCORD: THE CHALLENGE OF THE SIXTIES**

### **READING AND STUDY GUIDE**

- I. The Liberal Moment
  - A. Kennedy and the New Frontier
  - B. A Liberal Court
  - C. The 1964 Election
  - D. The Great Society
  
- II. Nonviolence Triumphant: The Civil Rights Movement, 1960–1965
  - A. Kennedy and the Freedom Riders
  - B. Birmingham, 1963
  - C. March on Washington
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  - E. Selma and the Voting Rights Act of 1965
  
- III. The Fractured Left
  - A. The New Left and the Counterculture
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  - C. Watts and Chicago
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- IV. The End of an Era
  - A. The Faltering Civil Rights Movement
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  - D. Keeping Protest Alive: Mexican Americans and Native Americans

In April 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to offer his support for a black garbage men’s strike. Around 6:00 pm on April 5, 1968, as King leaned over a balcony railing outside his second-story room at the Lorraine Motel to chat with two friends in the courtyard below, shots rang out. A wounded King collapsed on the floor of the balcony, and colleagues frantically tried to stem the bleeding with towels while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Within an hour hospital doctors pronounced the thirty-eight-year-old minister dead. As news of King’s assassination spread, rioting erupted in black communities throughout the nation, and images of violence saturated the television airwaves. The crushing disappointment of dashed dreams was a sentiment shared by many Americans in the 1960s, white and black, who failed to fully realize their goals of either reforming America or ending the cultural turmoil.

America was rife with discord during the sixties. Much debate centered on liberalism and its willingness to use the government to protect civil rights and expand economic opportunity.

Throughout the decade social reformers working within the liberal tradition advanced competing visions of social justice and shared prosperity. Some visions were bold; some, truly radical. King dreamed of using nonviolence to achieve racial equality, more militant activists advocated armed self-defense. Building on the reform legacies of the Progressive Era and the New Deal, Democratic presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson launched their own wars against poverty. Their legislative agendas were too timid for young radical activists who wanted to revolutionize American capitalism. Feminists, Chicano activists, and Native American protesters all mobilized as well to demand equal rights.

These visions of reform, especially the more radical revolutionary ones, appeared like nightmares to conservative segments of the population that abhorred liberalism. Southern segregationists organized to prevent any government-mandated dismantling of Jim Crow, and white northerners increasingly resented taxpayer-supported programs for unruly minorities. The rise of a hippie counterculture that emphasized love and pleasure convinced many working- and middle-class whites that liberalism meant the end of law and order and traditional values.

If there was one point of agreement throughout the sixties, it was that the political and cultural battles that defined the decade, for good or ill, transformed the nation. By the end of the decade, frustration over unfulfilled dreams left Americans divided over whether the nation had changed too much or not enough.

### **Learning Objectives**

After a careful examination of Chapter 27, students should be able to do the following:

1. Identify and explain the historical significance of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and explain the political philosophy and approach presented by the SDS in the Port Huron Statement.
2. Distinguish between the terms *youth culture* and *counterculture* as they applied to 1960s American society.
3. Distinguish between communes and cults and discuss the impact of each on modern American society.
4. Discuss some of the ongoing controversies regarding gender roles in America that first gained widespread attention due to the feminist movement of the late-1960s and early 1970s.
5. Describe the changing image of urban centers between the 1950s and the 1970s. Identify the factors that contributed to this change in the American perception of urban centers.
6. Distinguish the northern, urban civil rights movement of the 1960s from the earlier southern, rural movement.
7. Briefly explain the significance of the terms *Black Power*, *Brown Power*, and *Red Power*.

8. Explain suburban problems with school desegregation and zoning during the last 30 years.
9. Identify the factors that led to Lyndon Johnson's withdrawal from the 1968 presidential election.

### **Key Terms & Definitions:**

**New Frontier** Kennedy's legislative program that proposed raising the minimum wage, reducing overcrowding in schools, and providing health care for the elderly. (813)

**Peace Corps** Government agency that President Kennedy established to send recent college graduates to work on humanitarian projects overseas in developing nations. (813)

**Warren Court** Supreme Court that brought about a legal revolution in the United States by permanently altering American schools, politics, the criminal justice system, and cultural norms. (813)

**Great Society** President Johnson's wide-ranging social welfare reforms intended to make the amenities of modern life—a decent standard of living, education, health care, and clean water—available to all Americans. (816)

**Freedom Rides** An interstate bus journey by black and white activists who entered segregated bus facilities together throughout the South. (819)

**Birmingham campaign** Civil rights effort to desegregate Birmingham, Alabama, where shocking images of police brutality prompted Kennedy to push for a federal civil rights act. (821)

**March on Washington, 1963** Massive demonstration in the nation's capital that demanded passage of a federal civil rights act and more economic opportunities. (824)

**Freedom Summer, 1964** Multipronged attack on white supremacy in Mississippi that included a voter registration drive and the creation of Freedom Schools. (825)

**Civil Rights Act of 1964** Legislation that banned segregation in businesses and places open to the public (such as restaurants and public schools) and prohibited racial and gender discrimination in employment. (826)

**Voting Rights Act of 1965** Legislation that prohibited literacy tests and poll taxes, plus authorized the use of federal registrars to register voters if states failed to respect the Fifteenth Amendment. (827)

**New Left** A small, but highly visible, coalition of left-leaning student-based organizations that attacked racial discrimination, poverty, and the war in Vietnam. (828)

**hippies** Youthful social rebels who renounced material acquisition and used drugs to explore their inner spiritual selves. (829)

**Nation of Islam** African American sect that rejected integration as the path to salvation for the black community and instead wanted to establish a separate black nation. (830)

**Black Power** A call for blacks to unite politically and economically in black-only organizations to protect their racial identity as they fought for equality. (832)

**Black Panthers** Militant civil rights group dedicated to armed self-defense, racial pride, and inner-city renewal. (832)

**National Organization for Women (NOW)** An organization dedicated to securing equal rights for women in employment, education, and politics. (834)

**Alcatraz Proclamation** Sardonic statement issued by Indian activists who occupied the island of Alcatraz and described it as the perfect site for an Indian reservation because it lacked running water, sanitation, schools, mineral resources, and productive soil. (839)

### **Study Questions:**

What was the larger political significance of the King family's personal tragedy? (810)

What social problems associated with poverty became visible in the early 1960s? (812)

Why did many young people find Kennedy inspiring? (813)

How did the Warren Court advance the liberal reform agenda? (814)

Why did so many Americans object to the Supreme Court's ruling against school prayer? (815)

What competing views of government emerged during the 1964 presidential election? (816)

What made Johnson such an effective politician? (817)

What social problems did Great Society laws and programs address? (818)

What was the purpose of the Freedom Rides? (819)

Who made key choices that affected the course and outcome of the Freedom Rides? (820)

What various strategies made the Birmingham campaign a success? (821)

Does knowing more about McKinstry and Moore alter this photograph's meaning? (822)

How did *Life* magazine and Moore differ over the meaning of this photo? (823)

What symbolism and rhetoric connected the 1963 March on Washington to the past and future? (824)

What interracial tensions within the Civil Rights Movement did Freedom Summer expose? (825)

What pivotal role did college-age students play in Freedom Summer? (826)

How did the media, public, and government respond to events in Selma? (827)

What impact did the New Left have on university life? (828)

How did the New Left, Civil Rights Movement, and counterculture disagree? (829)

Why did some northern blacks find Malcolm X's vision appealing? (830)

What caused many northern whites to lose sympathy for the Civil Rights Movement? (831)

Did the tactics used by the Black Panthers to publicize their militant vision help or hurt them? (832)

Why do all three writers emphasize the importance of racial pride and manhood? (833)

How did activists' competing visions and media coverage shape the women's liberation movement? (834)

Why was King's death a serious blow to the Civil Rights Movement? (835)

How did presidential choices and public attitudes undermine Johnson's Great Society agenda? (836)

How did media exposure affect the counterculture? (837)

How did the Civil Rights and labor movements influence Hispanic activists? (838)

What problems did Native Americans face in the 1960s? (839)