

“The Great Society”

Lyndon Johnson's
War on Poverty

Post World War II -- Incubator for Social Change

- Postwar Prosperity – Expanding Middle Class
- Massive Growth of Urban Areas
- Rise of Suburbia
- Massive Out-Migration of Blacks from the South to the North/Midwest
- Growing Concentrations of Poverty – Urban and Rural
- Continued Racial Discrimination and Unequal Opportunity for Economic/Social Advancement
- Negative Impact of Discrimination on Social/Economic Fabric of Black Families
- Civil Rights Movement and Urban Unrest
- Kennedy Assassination – Collective Response to Grief
- 1964 Election – Kennedy grief and Goldwater Marginalized as “Extremist” Results in Democratic Landslide

Early 1960s – A Climate for “Challenge and Change”

- Post WWII Prosperity
- Experience with Government Help
- Growing Awareness of Poverty
- Assassination of President Kennedy
- Lyndon Johnson – idealist and consummate politician
- Election of Overwhelmingly Democratic House of Representatives
- In Senate – enough votes to break southern filibuster
- Civil Rights Movement – Race and Poverty

Growing Awareness

- *1960 “Harvest of Shame” CSB Documentary on Migrant Farm Workers*
- *Michael Harrington – “The Other America: Poverty in the United States”*
 - White and Black poverty “hidden” in rural and urban areas
 - 40 to 50 million poor
 - “shame” middle class into action
- Daniel Patrick Moynihan – “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (The “Moynihan Report)”
 - Poverty due to “ghetto culture” resulting from slavery and Jim Crow
 - Broken Negro family structure – loss of “nuclear family, absent males, predominance of female headed households

Black Poverty in the North

- In the North black Americans suffered humiliation, insult, embarrassment, and discrimination.
- Many neighborhoods, businesses, and unions almost totally excluded blacks.
- Just as black unemployment had increased in the South with the mechanization of cotton production, black unemployment in Northern cities soared as labor-saving technology eliminated many semiskilled and unskilled jobs that historically had provided many blacks with work.
- Black families experienced severe strain; **the proportion of black families headed by women jumped from 8 percent in 1950 to 21 percent in 1960.**

”All Our Kin”

U.S., anthropologist Carol B. Stack

- 1974 research was conducted in the culture of an impoverished community in the vicinity of Chicago, the identity and whereabouts of which is unknown and thus referred to as “Jackson Harbor”

- Findings –

- Economic Insecurity* -Jobs for black men low paying, unstable

- Unstable Families* – Men can’t earn, can’t remain in family

- Women-led Single Parent Families* – Welfare support and reinforced

“Men in Jackson Harbor were not encouraged to be loyal partners and the vast number of failed relationships set the pace for male infidelity, lack of commitment, and women’s low expectations.”

JFK and Poverty

- Saw rural white poverty in West Virginia during campaign
- Civil Rights sit-ins in 1960 linked racial discrimination and poverty
- Read and influenced by Harrington
- Feared racism and poverty as “cold war” embarrassments to U.S.
- Tells aides he wanted to “do something about poverty” 3 days before Dallas assassination

Kennedy Administration Debates Poverty

- *Fighting Racial Discrimination and Expanding AFDC*
Wilber Cohen – Assistant Secretary of HEW

- *Major Public Employment Program*
W. Willard Wirtz – Secretary of Labor

- *Youth Training and Employment*
David Hackett – President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency

- *Comprehensive Program of Services for Youth & Adults*
Walter Heller, Chairman Council of Economic Advisors

Heller lead cross-agency review and prevailed!

Lyndon Baines Johnson

- **Father -- Samuel Ealy Johnson, Jr.**

“Populist” Texas legislator and newspaper owner

Refused bribes and favors from lobbyists

Advocate for working man (8 hour workday for railroad workers)

Fought large corporate interests (franchise tax for businesses)

- **Mother – Rebekah Baines Johnson**

College educated, taught elocution and newspaper writer

Pushed learning and achievement

Nurtured LBJ, her eldest child – close bond

Maternal Influence on LBJ

- Randall B. Woods, a historian at the University of Arkansas on Johnson's mother, Rebekah Baines:

“A stern, moralistic and demanding mother, she both loved her son and constantly judged him — always questioning whether he was living up to his potential for doing good in the world. To the enormous ambition he may have inherited from his father, she added the deep — if sometimes hidden — idealism that also defined his life.”

- Other studies emphasize Samuel Ealy Johnson's role as LBJ's greatest influence. But Woods argues that Rebekah was at least as important as Sam.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

July 2, 1964

Title I

Barred unequal application of voter registration requirements.

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Title II

Outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin in hotels, motels, restaurants, theaters, and all other public accommodations engaged in interstate commerce; exempted private clubs without defining the term "private".

Title III

Prohibited state and municipal governments from denying access to public facilities on grounds of race, color, religion or national origin.

Title IV

Encouraged the desegregation of public schools and authorized the U.S. Attorney General to file suits to enforce said act.

Title V

Expanded the Civil Rights Commission established by the earlier Civil Rights Act of 1957 with additional powers, rules and procedures.

Title VI

Prevents discrimination by government agencies that receive federal funds. If an agency is found in violation of Title VI, that agency may lose its federal funding.

Economic Opportunity Act Objectives

- "First, ***to provide jobs and training***, especially for those young people now growing up in poverty, and increasingly condemned by lack of economic opportunity to repeat the cycle over again."
- "Second, to begin the process of planning and organizing that will bring the entire resources of a community to bear on the specific problem of ***breaking up the cycle of poverty*** in that community."

W. Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Labor

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964

August 20, 1964

PURPOSES --

- Eliminate poverty
- Expand educational opportunities
- Increase the safety net for the poor and unemployed
- Address health and financial needs of the elderly

Passage of Economic Opportunity Act

- **Senate (61-34)**

	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>
Republicans:	10	22
Northern Democrats	40	1
Southern Democrats	11	11

- **House (226-185)**

Republicans	221	45
Northern Democrats	144	0
Southern Democrats	60	40

Economic Opportunity Act Programs (1)

- ***The Job Corps*** provides work, basic education, and training in separate residential centers for young men and young women, from ages sixteen to twenty-one.
- ***Neighborhood Youth Corps*** provides work and training for young men and women, ages sixteen to twenty-one, from impoverished families and neighborhoods.
- ***Work Study*** provides grants to colleges and universities for part-time employment of students from low-income families who need to earn money to pursue their education.

Economic Opportunity Act Programs (2)

- ***Urban and Rural Community Action*** provides financial and technical assistance to public and private nonprofit agencies for community action programs developed with "maximum feasible participation" of the poor and giving "promise of progress toward elimination of poverty."
- ***Adult Basic Education*** provides grants to state educational agencies for programs of instruction for persons eighteen years and older whose inability to read and write English is an impediment to employment.
- ***Voluntary Assistance for Needy Children*** establishes an information and coordination center to encourage voluntary assistance for deserving and needy children.
- ***Loans to Rural Families*** provides loans not exceeding \$2,500 that assist low income rural families in permanently increasing their income.

Economic Opportunity Act Programs (3)

- ***Assistance for Migrant Agricultural Employees*** provides assistance to state and local governments, public and private nonprofit agencies or individuals in operating programs to assist migratory workers and their families with basic needs.
- ***Employment and Investment Incentives*** provides loans and guarantees, not in excess of \$25,000 to a single borrower, for the benefit of very small businesses.
- ***Work Experience*** provides payments for experimental, pilot, and demonstration projects to expand opportunities for work experience and needed training of persons who are unable to support or care for themselves or their families, including persons receiving public assistance.
- ***Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)*** recruits, selects, trains, and refers volunteers to state or local agencies or private nonprofit organizations to perform duties to combat poverty.

Food Stamp Act of 1964

August 31, 1964

Preceded by:

- Food Stamp Program (1939-1943) – 20 million on “relief”, \$262 million
- Pilot Food Stamp Program (1961-1964) – 380,000 in 22 states

Major provisions:

- State Plans define eligibility standards;
- Recipients should purchase food stamps, while paying the average money spent on food, then receiving an amount of food stamps representing an opportunity more nearly to obtain a low-cost nutritionally adequate diet;
- Purchase with food stamps all items intended for human consumption except alcoholic beverages and imported foods;
- Prohibitions against discrimination on basis of race, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs;
- Division of responsibilities between States (certification and issuance) and the Federal Government (funding of benefits and authorization of retailers and wholesalers), with shared responsibility for funding costs of administration; and
- Appropriations for the first year limited to \$75 million; for the second year, to \$100 million; and, for the third year, to \$200 million.

Other Food, Nutrition and Family Programs

In addition to Food Stamp Act of 1964:

- Meal programs for low-income senior citizens begun in 1965 – congregate and home delivered
- Child Nutrition Act of 1966 initiated School Breakfast Program

Family Planning Assistance

- Social Security Amendments of 1967 specified that at least 6% of maternal and child health funds should be spent on family planning
- In 1967, State health departments required to make contraceptives available to low-income

Rural Poverty

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 – Special Programs to Combat Rural Poverty

- Office of Economic Opportunity loans to:
 - purchase land
 - improve operation of family farms
 - participate in cooperative ventures
 - finance non-agricultural business ventures
- Grants to migrant farm worker housing, education, child care
- Youth Conservation Corps – wilderness and national parks

Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965

- Economic Development Administration – rural multi-county development assistance programs
- Planning and technical assistance

Appalachian Redevelopment Act of 1965

- Focus initiated by President Kennedy
- Road construction and other infrastructure enhancements
- Natural resource utilization and other economic development
- Job training and creation

AFDC Social Services

Public Welfare Amendments of 1962

- Array of *services* for low income children and families – safety net : and help out of poverty, including:
 - Daycare
 - Protective services
 - Special services to persons with disabilities
 - Adoption
 - Case management
 - Health related services
 - Transportation
 - Foster care
 - Substance abuse
 - Housing
 - Home-delivered meals
 - Independent/transitional living
 - Employment services
- Federal Government match increased to 75% -- no cap
- New focus on family rehabilitation, not just support to children
- Addressed controversial practices of states administering ADC program such as:
 - racial discrimination – denial of benefits to Black mothers and children
 - denial of benefits for children born out-of-wedlock
 - “man in the house” rules that discouraged marriage and intact families
- Beginning of rapid expansion in welfare “rolls” with attendant costs
 - 1961 – 2 million children, \$2.1 billion (five times more than 1946)
 - 1994 – 14 million children, \$14 billion

1964 Elections – 89th Congress

- Democrats gained enough seats to control more than ***two-thirds*** of each chamber in the Eighty-Ninth Congress with a *68-32 margin in the Senate* and a *295-140 margin in the House of Representatives*.
- The political realignment allowed House leaders to alter rules that had allowed southern Democrats to kill New Frontier and civil rights legislation in committee, which aided efforts to pass Great Society legislation.
- The Johnson Administration submitted eighty-seven bills to Congress, and Johnson signed eighty-four, or 96%.

LBJ Plans Great Society Legislative Program

1964 nine-member task forces of government experts and academics:

1. agriculture
2. anti-recession policy
3. civil rights
4. education
5. efficiency and economy
6. Health
7. income maintenance policy
8. intergovernmental fiscal cooperation
9. natural resources
10. pollution of the environment
11. preservation of natural beauty
12. transportation
13. urban problems

Task Force Reports into Legislative Proposals

- Task Force reports circulated to review panels of government experts in cabinet agencies
- Experts on relations with Congress participated in policy development, review, and legislative strategy planning
- LBJ reviews proposals in late 1964 with key aides – Bill Moyers, Richard Goodwin and Bureau of the Budget Director, Kermit Gordon.
- Johnson presents key provisions in 1965 State of the Union

Johnson credits process with legislative success.

Critics call it “elitist”

Failure to involve key constituencies leads to lack of support/sustainability

“Equal” and “Same”

- Civil Rights Movement defines “equal” as “same”—
 - same rights (voting, assembly, public assistance)
 - access to restaurants, stores, etc (public accommodations)
 - same economic opportunities (employment)
 - same educational opportunities
 - Black and white families and individuals are the same in terms of values, roles, family systems. Poverty alone accounts for differences
- Moynihan -- Family Systems of Urban Black Poor unique, affected by history political, social and economic forces
- Different = “Blame the victim”
- Conflict: Great Society vs Civil Rights Movement

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

PL 89-10

- Title I—Financial Assistance To Local Educational Agencies For The Education Of Children Of Low-Income Families
- Title II—School Library Resources, Textbooks, and other Instructional Materials
- Title III—Supplementary Educational Centers and Services
- Title IV—Educational Research And Training
- Title V—Grants To Strengthen State Departments Of Education

New Titles Created by Early Amendments to 1965 Law:

1966 amendments (Public Law 89-750)

- Title VI - Aid to Handicapped Children

1967 amendments (Public Law 90-247)

- Title VII - Bilingual Education Programs

Higher Education Act of 1965

- Increased federal money to universities
- Created scholarships and low-interest loans for students
- Established a national Teacher Corps to provide teachers to poverty-stricken areas of the United States
- Began a transition from federally funded institutional assistance to individual student aid
- Followed 1964 improvements to the National Defense Education Act that increased total funds available to educational institutions. The yearly limit on loans to graduate and professional students was raised from \$1,000 to \$2,500, and the aggregate limit was raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000. The program was extended to include geography, history, reading, English, and civics, and guidance and counseling programs were extended to elementary and public junior high schools

Voting Rights Act of 1965

- Strongest Civil Rights Act ever enacted
- Key Provisions:
 1. Prohibits state and local voting laws that discriminate against racial or language minorities
 2. Outlaws literacy tests and other devices that limit opportunity to register and vote
 3. Requires Justice Department pre-approval of voting process/requirements for “targeted” jurisdictions with election history of racial discrimination
 4. Requires bilingual election materials and ballots in jurisdictions with voting populations needing them
 5. Provides enforcement authority to U.S. Justice Department, Attorney General

Impact of Voting Rights Act

- Nearly 250,000 African Americans registered to vote in 1965, one-third of whom were registered by federal examiners.
- In “targeted” jurisdictions, less than a third (29.3%) of the African American population was registered in 1965; by 1967, this number increased to more than half (52.1%).
- Between 1965 and 1985, African Americans elected as state legislators in the 11 former Confederate states increased from 3 to 176.
- Nationwide, the number of African American elected officials increased from 1,469 in 1970 to 4,912 in 1980. By 2011, the number was approximately 10,500.
- Registration rates for language minority groups increased after Congress enacted the bilingual election requirements in 1975 and enhanced them in 1992. In 1973, the percent of Hispanics registered to vote was 34.9%; by 2006, that amount nearly doubled. The number of Asian Americans registered to vote in 1996 increased 58% by 2006.

Medicare

Title XVIII of the Social Security Act -- 1965

Before Medicare:

Approximately 65% of those over 65 had health insurance, with coverage often unavailable or unaffordable to the rest, because older adults paid more than three times as much for health insurance as younger people.

Healthcare for minorities separate and often inferior or unavailable. Medicare spurred the racial integration of thousands of waiting rooms, hospital floors, and physician practices by making payments to health care providers conditional of desegregation.

People covered if:

- 65 years or older *and* U.S. citizens or have been permanent legal residents for 5 continuous years, *and* they or their spouse (or qualifying ex-spouse) has paid Medicare taxes for at least 10 years.
 - *or*
- Under 65, disabled, and have been receiving either Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits or Railroad Retirement Board disability benefits; they must receive one of these benefits for at least 24 months from date of entitlement (eligibility for first disability payment) before becoming eligible to enroll in Medicare.
 - *or*
- Need continuing dialysis for End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) or need a kidney transplant.
 - *or*
- Eligible for SSDI and have ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease.

Medicaid

Title XIX of the Social Security Act -- 1965

- Federal health insurance program for low-income people
- Administered jointly with states
- States not required to participate
- Federal government matches state funding, varies by state
- States set eligibility requirements, service coverage, payments
- States must comply with Federal anti-discrimination laws

Two major types of Medicaid coverage –

- General population insurance – 62.9 million in 2009
- Nursing Home -- nearly 60 percent of all nursing home residents

The Federal Government pays on average 57 percent of Medicaid.

Cash Assistance/Welfare

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)

1935 ADC – Aid to Dependent Children

- Cash payments for children of poor single mothers who were not expected to work – almost all white.
- Black women mostly in workforce and not eligible
- Program administered by states
- Federal Government matched state funding
- Federal Government authorized case workers and others to determine eligibility, set payments, and monitor compliance
- Eligibility requirements included:
 - -- low-income thresholds
 - -- absence of father/wage earner from household
 - -- temporary unemployment

1962 AFDC – “families with” added as funding expanded to include support for parent(s)

War on Poverty expanded eligibility to Black recipients

Most AFDC recipients continued to be White, but rolls expanded significantly in late 1960s with many Black recipients

Key Housing Programs

Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965

- Rent subsidies for low-income families
- Rehabilitation grants to low-income urban families to forestall relocation
- Improved re-location benefits and subsidies

Demonstration Cities Act of 1966

- Comprehensive neighborhood renewal including:
 - housing renovation
 - urban services
 - neighborhood facilities
 - job creation activities

Environmental Laws

- Clear Air, Water Quality and Clean Water Restoration Acts and Amendments
- Clean Air Act of 1963
- Wilderness Act of 1964
- Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966
- National Trails Systems Act of 1968
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968
- Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965
- Solid Waste Disposal Act of 1965
- Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act of 1965
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
- Aircraft Noise Abatement Act of 1968

Civil Rights Act of 1968

“Fair Housing Act”

April 11, 1968

The Civil Rights Act of 1968 prohibited the following forms of discrimination:

- Refusal to sell or rent a dwelling to any person because of his/her race, color, religion or national origin. People with disabilities and families with children were added to the list of protected classes by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988; gender was added in 1974).
- Discrimination against a person in the terms, conditions or privilege of the sale or rental of a dwelling.
- Advertising the sale or rental of a dwelling indicating preference of discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin (amended by Congress as part of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 to include sex and, as of 1988, people with disabilities and families with children.)
- Coercing, threatening, intimidating, or interfering with a person's enjoyment or exercise of housing rights based on discriminatory reasons or retaliating against a person or organization that aids or encourages the exercise or enjoyment of [fair housing] rights.

Black Economic Gains in 1960's

- During the postwar period, many African Americans continued to be economically disadvantaged relative to other Americans. Average black income stood at 54% of that of white workers in 1947, and 55% in 1962. In 1959, median family income for whites was \$5,600, compared with \$2,900 for nonwhite families. In 1965, 43% of all black families fell into the poverty bracket, earning under \$3,000 a year.
- With the passage of Great Society and Civil Rights legislation, the later half of the 1960's saw improvements in the social and economic conditions of many black Americans.
- From 1965 to 1969, black family income rose from 54% to 60% of white family income. In 1968, 23% of black families earned under \$3,000 a year, compared with 41% in 1960. In 1965, 19% of black Americans had incomes equal to the national median, a proportion that rose to 27% by 1967. In 1960, the median level of education for blacks had been 10.8 years, and by the late Sixties the figure rose to 12.2 years, half a year behind the median for whites.

Systemic Impact of War on Poverty in Communities

- **Integration of blacks into political processes** in many cities (first black mayors came out of this era) it did change power relations in the cities, gave blacks a voice
- **Expanded welfare expenditures.** Great Society money was limited, but it allowed blacks to exercise their rights to welfare, to 'entitlements'. In major cities, AFDC caseloads grew 30-40% in inner cities, less than 10% in other areas. People who had long been denied welfare benefits were now receiving them—the Great Society 'unlocked' welfare funds whose use had been restricted, even among the poor whites or other groups.
- **Institutional changes** (largely through legal action). Legal action was more effective when it addressed blacks and welfare recipients as a class, and often times the cases that were argued were those that would push back restrictions to this class. Successful AFDC class action suits led to:
 - Repeal of residency laws
 - Repeal of man-in-the-house laws
 - 'employable mother' rules were overturned (mothers required to work when needed for planting/harvests)
 - welfare agencies' discretion to deny benefits to certain groups was severely curtailed. Some of the specific strategies addressed included:
 - arbitrary terminations
 - jailing male welfare recipients who refuse to work
 - midnight raids
 - agencies' denial of recipients' rights to representation

Black Economic Gains

The racial disparity in poverty rates has narrowed. The black middle class has grown substantially. **In 2010, 45% of African Americans owned their homes, compared to 67% of all Americans. The poverty rate among African Americans has decreased from 26.5% in 1998 to 24.7% in 2004, compared to 12.7% for all Americans.**

U.S. Census Bureau data

Joseph A. Califano – War on Poverty Architect and Defender

“From 1963 when Lyndon Johnson took office until 1970 as the impact of his Great Society programs were felt:

- The portion of Americans living below the poverty line dropped from 22.2 percent to 12.6 percent, the most dramatic decline over such a brief period in this century.
- The percentage of African Americans below the poverty line dropped from 55 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 1968.
- From 1964 through 1967, federal expenditures on education rose from \$4 billion to \$12 billion.
- Spending on health rose from \$5 billion to \$16 billion.
- By 1967, the federal government was spending \$4,000 per annum on each poor family of four, four times as much as in 1961.

By the End of the Johnson Administration

- 226 out of 252 major legislative requests over a four-year period had been met
- Federal aid to the poor had risen from \$9.9 billion in 1960 to \$30 billion by 1968
- One million Americans had been retrained under previously non-existent federal programs
- Two million children had participated in the Head Start program.