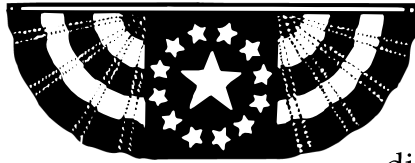


Introduction

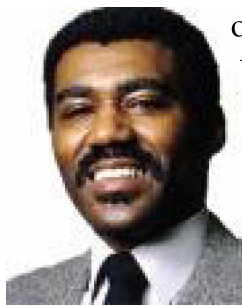
In 1976 the United States celebrated its **bicentennial**, or 200th birthday. The United States is the world's oldest republic. During the 1970s, Americans



could celebrate more than just their country's birthday. Many movements by the people led to changes in the legal system and social practices that lessened discrimination against minorities and women.

As the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union began to wind down, the people of both countries and their governments became interested in limiting the growth of nuclear weapons. This movement to reduce weapons was just one example of Americans' interest in protecting the environment and making the country and the world a safer place to live.

Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Everyone



We think of the United States as a country built on the ideal of equal opportunity for everyone. By *equal opportunity*, we mean that everyone will have an equal chance to succeed as a member of our society. Throughout the country's history, however, this has not always been the case. African Americans spent many years as slaves, living as human property who could be owned. Even after being legally freed, African Americans faced discrimination in the work place, in the courts, and in education.

Other minorities such as Asians and **Hispanics** have faced similar discrimination. And women, who made up over half of the population and nearly half of the work force in the late 1970s, experienced discrimination in much of their daily life.

Today, a large percentage of minorities, including women, live in poverty. Living in poverty is often a way of life from one generation to the next, and sometimes it is very difficult to break the cycle. Although various social movements have helped change the legal system to insure equal opportunity for everyone, some people are still victims of discrimination.



Ending Discrimination against Minorities

By 1979 the courts had ended legal segregation. Students were often bused across towns to end segregation in schools. **Affirmative action** programs gave preference to qualified African Americans when they applied for jobs or schools. Later, these programs included women and other minorities such as Native Americans and *Hispanics*—people from Spanish-speaking nations and cultures—and were designed to create more opportunity for these groups.



Equal Rights for Women

Women made up over half of the population of the United States. They were not a minority group; however, they experienced discrimination in the work place. Forty percent of American women held jobs, yet women received about half the pay of male workers. Many professions were closed to women.

Women called **feminists**—believers in equal opportunities for women, particularly in the work place—organized to advance their status, or situation. To gain fair opportunities, *Betty Friedan* organized the **National Organization for Women (NOW)**. NOW worked for an **Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)** to the Constitution. The ERA was intended to end discrimination based on sex. The ERA was never ratified, but women began to turn to the United States courts for justice. The Justice Department sued large businesses to end discrimination against women. And the Equal Opportunity Act of 1972 required businesses to pay equal wages for equal work, regardless of whether a worker was male or female. Although legislation has improved the situation, some problems do still exist.

The Environmental Movement

As early as 1962, the book *Silent Spring*, by *Rachel Carson*, had warned about damages to the environment. All over the country, air and water were becoming polluted by wastes from automobiles, industry, and pesticides. During the 1970s, Americans began to show their concern for the environment.



In 1970 President *Richard M. Nixon* created the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**. The EPA was set up to investigate practices that damaged the environment and to develop ways to protect the environment in the future. Congress passed the Clean Air Act in 1970



and the Water Pollution Control Act in 1972. By the mid-1970s, cities and states were passing laws to regulate the use of a variety of dangerous wastes. National, state, and local governments, along with citizens, were trying to clean up America's soil, water, and forests. Senator *Gaylord Nelson* helped establish a single day dedicated to environmental awareness. The first *Earth Day* was held on April 22, 1970.

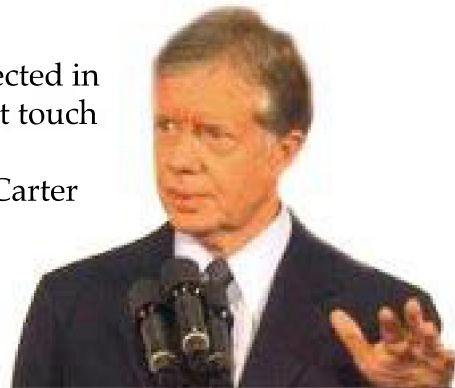
American Values

The social revolution of the 1960s resulted in changes in American values. Subjects such as nudity, sex, and abortion were openly discussed for the first time. Easy divorce laws resulted in the growth of single-parent families. Religion was still important, but religious services began showing a decline in attendance when compared to the growing population.

Many older Americans were upset by the new values in American society. They feared traditions that the United States had been built on were being lost. These Americans longed to return to simpler times. The phrase *generation gap* was often used to describe the difference in beliefs between the younger and older generations.

The Carter Administration

President *James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, Jr.*, elected in 1976, believed that the presidency had lost touch with the American people. To bring the presidency back to the people, President Carter wanted an *open administration*. That is, he wanted to keep in touch with the American people through small town meetings or by call-ins on special radio and TV programs. President Carter's plan was to restore the faith in public officials that was lost due to recent



President Jimmy Carter

scandals in the federal government. The demands of his office, however, left him little time to stay in direct contact with citizens.

Carter's administration had many ambitious goals to improve life in the United States. Carter soon found, however, that making changes in government was difficult and that world events were unpredictable.

Panama Canal Treaties

President Theodore Roosevelt had leased the Panama Canal Zone from the government of Panama in 1902. The lease granted the United States control of the Canal Zone for an unlimited time. In 1978 President Carter signed treaties to return the Canal Zone to Panama. He was sharply criticized for the treaties, but the Senate ratified them.



Panama Canal

Human Rights

President Carter emphasized protecting human rights all over the world. He protested the way some foreign governments treated their citizens. Many foreign leaders said Carter had no right to interfere in their country's affairs. Some of these leaders were dictators who had helped the United States prevent the spread of communism. Carter's critics accused him of increasing international tensions through his efforts to promote human rights.

Camp David Accords

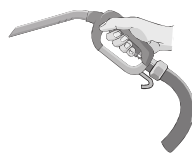

President Carter's greatest success in foreign affairs came in the Middle East. Since Israel's birth as a state in 1948, there had been a constant threat of war between Egypt and Israel. President Carter arranged for the leaders of the two countries to meet at Camp David, near Washington,

D.C. President *Anwar Sadat* of Egypt and Prime Minister *Menachem Begin* of Israel signed a formal peace treaty in 1979. The treaty was called the **Camp David Accords**. This is considered one of President Carter's greatest accomplishments.

The Economy

In 1976 the year President Carter was elected, the economy was coming out of a **recession**, or a downturn, in business. Unemployment was high. So was inflation. Carter's administration considered increasing government spending to ease unemployment. Government spending, however, would raise inflation. A sharp increase in the cost of oil also was raising inflation. Improving the economy was a constant struggle for the Carter administration.

Inflation, 1970 and 1980

	Cost of gasoline per gallon	Cost of a monthly food bill for a family of four
1970	36¢	\$42.90
		
1980	\$1.19	\$93.80

An Energy Crisis

Having to rely heavily on foreign oil for energy lessened the nation's control of its economy. President Carter saw the need for energy **conservation**, or using less energy. A federal **Department of Energy** (DOE) was created to find ways to conserve and develop new energy sources. Often, the DOE reports were published so the American public could help with the problem.

Revolution in Iran

In 1979 the pro-Western government of Iran was overthrown in a revolution. Iran, located in the **Persian Gulf region**, had been an important source of oil for the United States. The revolutionaries stopped

oil shipments. Americans soon felt the impact of the oil shortage. Oil and gas products became more expensive, and there was a gasoline shortage. Consequently, people had to wait in long lines to buy gas.

American Hostages in Iran

The revolution in Iran was led by the *Ayatollah Khomeini*, a devout **Muslim**. A *Muslim* is a person who believes in **Islam**. *Islam* is a religion that believes in Allah as the sole deity, or God. The Muslims overthrew the government of the Shah, or ruler of Iran, who then fled the country. The Iranians wanted the Shah returned to stand trial in Iran.

President Carter allowed the Shah to come to the United States to receive medical care. This angered the new leaders of Iran. In November of 1979, Iranians seized 53 American hostages in the American Embassy in Iran. A **hostage** is a person kidnapped and held until certain conditions have been met. President Carter and his advisors devised a plan to rescue the *hostages*, but the mission failed. Meanwhile, Iran went to war with its neighbor Iraq, another Persian Gulf country.



Middle East - Persian Gulf Region

The Carter Doctrine

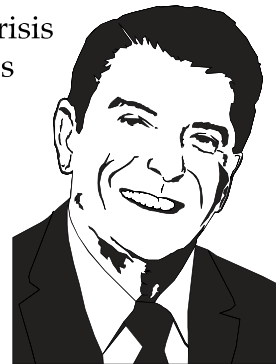
In January of 1980, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, a country near Iran. (See map on previous page.) President Carter announced that the United States would use force to protect the *Persian Gulf region*. This was called the **Carter Doctrine**.

Elections of 1980



President Jimmy Carter

Economic inflation and the hostage crisis badly hurt President Carter's chances for reelection. His Republican opponent was *Ronald Reagan*, a former movie star and governor of California. Governor Reagan won 489 electoral votes to 49 for Carter. In 1981 Ronald Reagan became the 40th President of the United States.



President Ronald Reagan

Summary

During the 1970s, minorities and women worked to gain protection under the law from discrimination. People began to focus more on the problems within the United States. In particular, Americans began conserving the environment from pollution.

President Carter wanted to improve conditions in the United States and the world. However, he had to deal with inflation, unemployment, and a major energy crisis that was made worse by problems in the Persian Gulf region. After serving only one term, he was defeated by Ronald Reagan in 1980.