



- ▲ This man expresses the flagging spirit of many Americans during the late 1970s.

**WITNESS HISTORY** AUDIO

**A Crisis of Confidence**

On July 4, 1976, the United States celebrated its bicentennial, or two hundredth anniversary. By the end of the decade, however, the celebratory mood had evaporated in the face of a series of crises that tested the nation's spirit. President Jimmy Carter took note of what he called the nation's crisis of confidence.

“The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two thirds of the people do not even vote. The productivity of workers is actually dropping. . . . There is a growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools. . . . This is not a message of happiness or reassurance, but it is the truth and it is a warning.”

—President Jimmy Carter, “Crisis of Confidence” speech, 1979

# The Ford and Carter Years

**Objectives**

- Evaluate the presidency of Gerald Ford.
- Assess the domestic policies of Jimmy Carter.
- Analyze how American society changed in the 1970s.

**Terms and People**

Gerald Ford  
pardon  
Jimmy Carter

Christian fundamentalist  
amnesty  
televangelist

**NoteTaking**

**Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas** Create an outline like the one below to record the political, economic, and social problems of the era and their impact on American society.

- I. Gerald Ford's Presidency  
A. Major Domestic Issues  
1.  
2.  
B.

**Why It Matters** In 1982, historian Peter Carroll published a history of the 1970s entitled *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*. Compared to the turbulent 1960s, indeed, the 1970s appeared mostly uneventful. Yet, the decade witnessed significant social, economic, and cultural changes. These changes contributed to a growing sense among Americans that something had gone wrong, that the nation had gotten off the right track. This sense of disquiet is even now a part of the nation's political dialogue. **Section Focus Question:** What accounted for the changes in American attitudes during the 1970s?

## Ford Faces Political and Economic Woes

**Gerald Ford** brought a long record of public service to the presidency. A star football player at the University of Michigan, Ford enlisted in the United States Navy and fought in World War II. Following the war, Ford successfully ran for a seat in the U.S. Congress, where he served for 25 years, rising to the position of House Minority Leader in 1965. Democrats as well as Republicans supported Ford's nomination for Vice President because he had a stellar reputation for hard work, integrity, and dependability.

Ford stepped into a delicate situation when he became President after Richard Nixon's resignation. Watergate had scarred the public's faith in government. Furthermore, the nation struggled with the



### WIN Fails

Despite enthusiastic campaigning by Ford, his WIN plan failed to tame inflation.



most severe economic problems it had faced since the depression. Ford wrestled with these problems but not very successfully. He left office with the economy still suffering and the public's distrust of government still high.

**Ford Pardons Nixon** Ford moved quickly to try to restore confidence in government. He selected Nelson Rockefeller, a former governor of New York State, to serve as his Vice President. He also promised to continue the foreign policy approaches of the Nixon administration.

Whatever support he gained from these steps was lost when Ford announced that he had **pardoned**, or officially forgiven, Richard Nixon for any crimes he may have committed as President. Though the pardon was meant to heal the nation's wounds, in some ways it achieved just the opposite effect. Ford's critics accused him of having made a secret deal, promising Nixon the pardon in exchange for the vice presidential nomination. Though Ford strongly denied this, his popularity declined dramatically.

The congressional election results of 1974 indicated the public's disapproval of the pardon and the impact of Watergate in general. The Republicans lost 48 seats in the House of Representatives, including Ford's longtime district in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**Stagflation Plagues the Nation** President Ford might have overcome this backlash if not for the troubled economy. Inflation hit double digits in 1974 and early 1975. To fight skyrocketing prices, Ford promoted a mostly voluntary plan known as WIN, or Whip Inflation Now. Unfortunately, WIN was a clear failure. Instead of improving, the economy took a turn for the worse. Factories closed down, consumer demand for goods dropped sharply, and the rate of unemployment rose steadily. Ford's popularity plummeted.



**Checkpoint** How did President Ford's WIN program try to address inflation, and how successful was it?

## A Washington "Outsider" Becomes President

Prior to the mid-1970s, few Americans outside Georgia had ever heard of **Jimmy Carter**, a one-time governor of that state. But on election day 1976, Americans elected Carter President of the United States. He won a slim popular majority, receiving slightly more than 50 percent of the vote to Ford's 48 percent. In the electoral college, Carter won 297 votes compared to 240 for Ford.

Carter's rise was the result of several factors. Most important was the turmoil of the 1960s and Watergate, which created a backlash against professional politicians. Carter seized this opportunity by casting himself as a fresh face, with no ties to Washington, D.C. A born-again Christian who taught Sunday school, Carter won the support of many **Christian fundamentalists**, people who believe in a strict, literal interpretation of the Bible as the foundation of the Christian faith. This group became increasingly involved in politics in the 1970s.

**Carter Pays a Price for Inexperience** From the beginning of his presidency, Jimmy Carter sought to portray himself as a "citizens' President." He became the first President since William Henry Harrison to walk all the way from the Capitol to the White House during the inaugural parade. He held town meetings, wore casual clothes, and carried his own suitcase.

However, Carter's inexperience, which helped him get elected, hurt him during the early days of his presidency. As an outsider, he did not have close ties with the Democratic leadership in Congress. He submitted numerous bills to Congress, but few of them passed without major changes by his own party.

Just one day after his inauguration, Carter fulfilled one of his campaign pledges by granting **amnesty**, or political pardons, to Americans who had evaded the draft during the Vietnam War. Carter hoped this act would help the nation move beyond the divisions caused by that war. Yet the war remained an emotional issue, and many Americans criticized the President for forgiving those who had refused to fight. Republican senator Barry Goldwater called the amnesty "the most disgraceful thing that a President has ever done."

**Problems Sap the Nation's Confidence** Like Ford, Carter contended with the energy crisis and severe inflation. Inflation ate away at people's savings, raised the prices of necessities, and made American goods more costly abroad. The U.S. automobile industry, long a symbol of the nation's economic power, became a symbol of its ills. Japanese car companies vastly expanded their sales in the United States by selling better-built and more fuel-efficient cars at reasonable prices. The situation grew so bad that Chrysler, one of the three major American automobile companies, needed a federal loan to survive.

At the center of the nation's economic ills lay the ongoing energy crisis. In 1973, a gallon of gas cost about 40 cents. By the end of the decade, it cost close to \$1.20. To make matters worse, the winter of 1976 to 1977 was an especially bitter one in parts of the United States, increasing the need for heating oil. Fuel shortages caused factory closings and business losses.

### Vocabulary Builder

contend—(kuhn TEHND) *v.* to fight

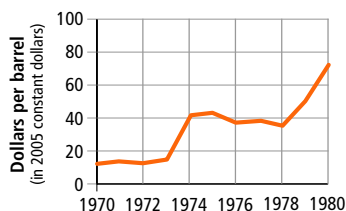
In 1974, gas stations all over the country ran out of gas to sell motorists.



RUNNING OUT OF GAS

The energy crisis of the 1970s rocked the American economy and stumped the best efforts of three Presidents to stop it. It made Americans feel powerless and angry, and added to the general crisis of confidence. **Why did the scarcity of oil in the 1970s have such a strong impact on the United States?**

Price of Imported Crude Oil, 1970–1980



SOURCE: U.S. Energy Information Administration

The price of gas continued to increase in leaps and bounds throughout the 1970s.

WAIT HERE  
ODD NUMBER LICENSE  
PLATE 10 GALS ONLY  
HALF TANK OR LESS

At gas stations that had gas, people waited for hours in long lines that snaked for blocks.



### Immigration to the United States, 1971–1980

Country of Origin	Number of Immigrants
Mexico	640,294
Philippines	354,987
Korea	267,638
Cuba	264,863
Vietnam	172,820
India	164,134
Dominican Republic	148,135
Jamaica	137,577
United Kingdom	137,374
Italy	129,368
China	124,326
Hong Kong	113,467

SOURCE: U.S. Office of Immigration Statistics

## Immigration Changes America

In the 1970s, immigration continued from Southeast Asia and Latin America. Girls from families of Cuban refugees (above) attend a Catholic school in Miami, Florida. *From which region did more people emigrate in the 1970s—Southeast Asia or Latin America?*

Carter responded to the oil crisis by calling on Americans to conserve and by asking Congress to raise taxes on crude oil, which he hoped would encourage conservation. However, the bill that finally passed in the Senate had few of the President's ideas in it. Critics saw this as one more example of Carter's poor leadership skills.

Carter did implement several domestic policies that his successors would build on during the 1980s. To fight inflation, Carter nominated Paul Volcker to head the Federal Reserve Board. Under Volcker's lead, the Federal Reserve began raising interest rates. In the long term, this policy helped to bring an end to the inflation that had plagued the nation for so long.



**Checkpoint** What challenges did President Carter face?

## Changing Values Stir Unease

Social and cultural changes that had begun in the 1950s and 1960s continued unabated in the 1970s. As a result, by the end of the decade, the United States was a very different society from the one it had been a generation earlier. These differences gave rise to an ongoing debate about the nation's values.

**Demography Affects Politics** The migration of Americans to the Sunbelt and the continued growth of the suburbs, both of which had begun in the post–World War II years, continued during the 1970s. As northern industries suffered, many blue-collar workers and their families moved from the Rust Belt states of the Northeast and Midwest to the Sunbelt of the South and West. They sought work in the oil fields of Texas and Oklahoma and in the defense plants of southern California, the Southwest, and the Northwest. These trends changed the face of the United States.

The elections of Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter demonstrated the growing political power of the Sunbelt. Earlier in the century, Presidents tended to come from the large northern industrial states, such as New York and Ohio. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, Presidents tended to come from the Sunbelt.

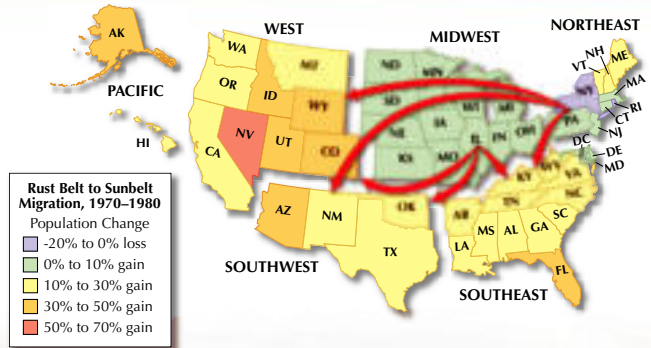
The influx of immigrants from Latin America and Asia represented a different kind of demographic change. Even before the 1970s, hundreds of thousands of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans had migrated to the United States. This migration, especially from Mexico and other Latin American countries, continued to be strong in the 1970s. The growing power of the Latino vote did not escape the notice of politicians. Richard Nixon was the first presidential candidate to seriously court the Spanish-speaking vote.

**The “Me Generation” Comes of Age** During the 1960s, radicals had challenged many of society's traditional values. They questioned restrictions on premarital sex and drug use. They sported casual clothing and long hairstyles that many of their parents' generation found improper. Yet the counterculture remained a relatively isolated phenomenon during the 1960s. By the end of the 1970s, in contrast, these behaviors had become more common. Nationwide, the



## Focus On Geography

**Sunbelt Migration** During the 1970s, large numbers of Americans began to migrate from the North to the South. Manufacturers relocated because they could produce goods more cheaply in the South and West, or Sunbelt. Businesses and individuals were also drawn south and west because of the warm climate and lower cost of living. The northern states, known both as the Rust Belt and the Frostbelt, lost people, jobs, and political influence. The Sunbelt, on the other hand, was soon faced with the need for more roads, water, and other services for its growing population.



▲ A closed steel plant in Illinois

### Congressional Reapportionment, 1960–1980

Seats Gained	Seats Lost
CA, FL	NY
TX	PA
	OH
AZ, CO	IL
NM, NV, OR, UT, WA	AL, IA, IN, MA, MI, MO, NJ, ND, SD, WI, WV



▼ A new housing development in California

**Geography and History** Seats in the House of Representatives are distributed based on population. Use the map and table to describe how political power shifted in the 1970s.

divorce rate had more than doubled between 1965 and 1979, and twice as many children were born out of wedlock. To some Americans, the new ways were a sign of troubled times.

Some critics called the 1970s the “me decade” because many Americans appeared to be absorbed with improving themselves. This trend was reflected in the rise of movements like Transcendental Meditation (TM), a practice based in Eastern religious ideas. Those who practiced TM sought to find inner relaxation and vitality by chanting their personal mantras for about half an hour twice a day.

The seventies also witnessed an increasing interest in personal fitness and health. Millions began to jog for exercise and to eat natural, or less processed, foods. In 1970, just over 100 men and women ran in the New York City Marathon. Ten years later, more than 14,000 ran in the race. Body building took off, too, largely due to the influence of Arnold Schwarzenegger. A charismatic personality, Schwarzenegger went on to become one of Hollywood’s most popular actors and, later, governor of California.

# TV Breaks New Ground

In the early 1970s, the face of television began to change. Shows based on escapist fantasy or nostalgia gave way to shows that focused on current, hot-button issues and featured more minorities. The show that most typified this trend was the situation comedy, or sitcom, *All in the Family*, which remained the number one television show from 1971 through 1976. Conflicts between the central character—blue-collar bigot Archie Bunker—and his liberal, hippie son-in-law Michael (below left) brought debates over national issues onto the TV screen.

Toward the end of the decade, perhaps as a result of Watergate and the defeat in Vietnam, escapist television made a comeback with 1950s nostalgia shows like *Happy Days* and *Laverne & Shirley*. The rising popularity of the newsmagazine *60 Minutes*, however, showed that Americans were still interested in tuning in to learn about relevant issues.

*M\*A\*S\*H* ①, a comedy about a mobile hospital unit during the Korean War, resonated with viewers who were used to watching news reports on the Vietnam War. Shows like *Sanford and Son* ② and *Chico and the Man* ③ proved that viewers would tune in to shows featuring minority characters. *60 Minutes* ④ was the first television newsmagazine. *Roots* ⑤, a graphic historical miniseries that followed the life of a slave and his descendants, fascinated more than 100 million viewers.



*Happy Days* (top) was about a teenager growing up in the 1950s, while its spin-off, *Laverne & Shirley* (bottom), followed two lifelong friends living and working together in Milwaukee.

## Thinking Critically

- 1. Identify Central Issues** How did television change in the 1970s?
- 2. Determine Relevance** How did these changes reflect broader changes taking place in American culture?

**Conservatives Reassert Traditional Values** The 1970s witnessed a resurgence of fundamental Christianity, partly as a response to the shift in values. To some commentators, it seemed as if the nation was experiencing another Great Awakening, like the great religious movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although the total number of Americans who attended church on a regular basis did not change much, the number of men and women who belonged to evangelical churches rose rapidly. One in five Americans considered himself or herself a religious fundamentalist by 1980.


Evangelical ministers used the media to gain a broader audience. Those who preached on television—known as **televangelists**—such as Jerry Falwell, Oral Roberts, and Marion “Pat” Robertson, reached millions of viewers. Falwell’s daily radio broadcasts were carried by 280 radio stations, and his weekly television show was broadcast to 1.5 million viewers.

Religious conservatives firmly opposed many of the social changes begun in the 1960s that had gone mainstream in the 1970s. They opposed the Supreme Court’s rulings that legalized abortion and restricted prayer in school. Falwell formed a prominent Christian conservative organization known as the Moral Majority in 1979. He voiced the concerns of many fundamentalists:

**Primary Source** “We must reverse the trend America finds herself in today. Young people . . . have been born and reared in a different world than Americans of past worlds. . . . They have learned to disrespect the family as God has established it. . . . They have been taught that the Bible is just another book of literature. . . . They have been introduced to the drug culture.”

—Reverend Jerry Falwell, *Listen America*, 1980

During the 1970s, religious conservatives began forming alliances with other conservatives. They worked with economic conservatives, who sought to cut taxes and government spending, as well as with supporters of a stronger foreign policy, who favored increasing defense spending. Together, they began forging a new political majority. By 1980, Ronald Reagan, another political outsider, would use this alliance to win election to the White House.

 **Checkpoint** In what ways did the United States change socially and culturally during the 1970s?

## SECTION

# 2 Assessment

## Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice  
Web Code: nea-1806

### Comprehension

**1. Terms and People** For each item below, write a sentence explaining its effect on social and economic conditions in the 1970s.

- Gerald Ford
- pardon
- Jimmy Carter
- Christian fundamentalist
- amnesty
- televangelist

### 2. NoteTaking Reading Skill:

**Identify Main Ideas** Use your outline to answer the Section Focus Question: What accounted for the changes in American attitudes during the 1970s?

### Writing About History

#### 3. Quick Write: List Qualifications

Suppose that you are Gerald Ford applying for the position of Vice President in the mid-1970s. Research Ford’s background and skills. Then, list the qualifications that you would highlight to try to get the position.

### Critical Thinking

#### 4. Demonstrate Reasoned Judgment

Should Gerald Ford have pardoned Richard Nixon?

**5. Identify Point of View** What arguments would you expect people to give for and against President Carter’s decision to grant amnesty to Americans who had evaded the draft?

**6. Draw Inferences** How do you think Watergate affected social trends in the 1970s?



### Are Affirmative Action Programs Fair?

In the 1970s, the government urged employers and schools to adopt affirmative action programs. These programs aimed to increase the number of women and minority group members in college, postgraduate schools, and higher-paying jobs. The goal was to make up for past discrimination against these groups. Did those programs now discriminate against white males?

#### *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (1978)*

The Facts	The Issue	The Decision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allan Bakke, a white man, was twice denied admission to a University of California medical school.</li><li>• Bakke had a stronger academic record than 16 minority group applicants that the school had accepted under a special program.</li></ul>	<p>Bakke claimed that his rights under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment had been violated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Five Justices agreed that racial quotas violated Bakke's rights.</li><li>• One of those Justices and four others agreed that race could be a factor in admissions decisions.</li></ul>

#### Why It Matters

Some people predicted that *Bakke* would end affirmative action. That did not happen, however. Justice Lewis Powell was the key figure in the Court's complex statements on the issue. He agreed with four Justices that quotas were not acceptable, but he also agreed with the other four that using race as a factor in admissions was acceptable. Powell favored using race as a "plus factor," just like artistic or musical ability, athletic talent, or other factors.

After the Court's decision, universities dropped quota systems. Many also followed Powell's opinion by setting up programs that consider a person's race as one factor among many.



▲ Protesters in Michigan support the University of California.

#### Connect to Your World

In 2003, the Court revisited the issue again. In *Grutter v. Bollinger*, a 5-to-4 majority ruled that a law school's admissions policy met the standards of *Bakke* by using race as part of the process but not as a deciding factor. Read more about the case, then take the role of a newspaper editor and write an editorial agreeing or disagreeing with the Court's decision.

For: Supreme Court cases

Web Code: nee-1807

◀ Today's college classrooms reflect a greater gender and ethnic diversity in part because of affirmative action policies.

