

# Edexcel iGCSE History

## Topic A8: A Divided Union: Civil Rights in the USA (1945-1974)

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- **McCarthyism and the Red Scare**
- **Civil Rights in the 1950s**
- **The impact of Martin Luther King and Black Power**
- **Protest movements: Students and Women Protests**
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McCarthyism and the Red Scare

## Reasons for the Red Scare:

Many people in America were against communism because they felt it went against the ideas of the American Dream. If it spread to the USA people felt it would threaten their way of life.

Between 1945 and 1955 events outside of the USA led people to think that communism was spreading very quickly:

- 1948 Czechoslovakia became Communist under the influence of the Soviet Union.
- The Berlin Blockade of 1948 – 49. The Russians cut off access to West Berlin, showing that Stalin was prepared to risk war with the Americans
- Russia developed their first atom bomb in 1949, putting them on a more level footing with the USA.
- China became communist in 1949.

## Key Developments under President Truman:

President Truman was worried that other countries might fall to communism. Truman tried to stop the spread of communism in **TWO** main ways:

### 1. The Marshall Plan:

- This promised aid to European countries to help rebuild their economies.
- The USA was worried that if western Europe remained weak, it might be vulnerable to communism.

### 2. The Truman Doctrine:

- The USA would support any country threatened by communist takeover.
- E.g. The USA gave 400 million dollars of aid to turkey to stop communism from spreading.

## Hiss and Rosenberg Cases:

1950: **The Alger Hiss Trial** – Alger Hiss was a government official charged with being a communist. He was sent to prison for 5 years.

1950-53: **The Rosenbergs** – Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were accused of giving atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. Eventually executed in 1953.

## The HUAC and the Hollywood Ten:

- The House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) investigated the film industry, education and the government to find out if there were any communists.
- 1947: HUAC investigated the film industry to see if films were being used to put over a communist message. Ten writers and directors were sacked and sent to prison for 1 year. They became known as "The Hollywood Ten".

## The Key Features of McCarthyism:

### Who was Senator Joe McCarthy and how was involved in the Red Scare?

- Joseph McCarthy was a very **ambitious politician**. He was Chairman of **HUAC** and had a lot of power and influence in Washington.
- McCarthy claimed he had a list of people who were communists, including **205 people** who worked in the government.
- McCarthy appeared on radio and TV – he was an extremely strong and convincing speaker. Even though he had very little evidence, he was able to play on the fear within America to convince people

that he was telling the truth. He claimed that people who didn't believe him were being "soft" on communism.

- Many ordinary people believed McCarthy and saw him as a crusader against communism. Politicians often didn't like him but were too afraid to speak out against him as they were scared of being labelled as communists themselves.

### **Why did McCarthy lose support?**

- By the end of 1954 McCarthy had lost much of his support
- McCarthy didn't actually have any hard evidence to support his claims.
- He was shown on TV to be a bully and a liar.
- He went too far in his accusations. He began accusing his own party members and, critically, he accused army officers of being spies. No-one believed this.

### **What were the effects of McCarthyism?**

- Many people lost their jobs. Just being accused of being a communist was enough in many cases to be entirely discredited.
- 400 people were sent to prison.
- Many people with left wing or liberal views were labelled as being un-American.
- America's reputation as being "the land of the free" was severely damaged.

## **Civil Rights in the 1950's**

### **Brown Vs Topeka (1954)**

#### **What were the key features of the Brown vs Topeka case?**

- Linda Brown wanted to attend her local school but was not allowed to because it was a whites only school.
- Oliver Brown and the NAACP took the case to the Supreme Court, helped by the black lawyer, Thurgood Marshall.
- In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation in schools was illegal and that all schools should be integrated.
- This was very important in the development of the Civil Rights Movement because it showed that the Supreme Court could be used to help black people gain equal rights.
- However, for a long time, many of the southern states simply ignored the ruling and schools remained segregated.

### **Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955)**

#### **What were the Key features of the Montgomery Bus Boycott?**

- In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man.
  - Martin Luther King organised a boycott of buses that lasted for 13 months until the bus company gave in.
  - In 1956 the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on buses was illegal.
- The boycott was important because;
- It showed that black Americans were able to organise themselves. o It gained a great deal of positive publicity and showed that peaceful protests could work.
  - It inspired people and led other people to think that more things could be changed using these methods.
  - It saw the emergence of Martin Luther King as the most important leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

## **Little Rock High School (1957)**

### **What were the key features of the events at Little Rock High School?**

- This was the first real test of the Brown vs Topeka ruling.
- Nine black students tried to attend their local all white school (including Elizabeth Eckford).
- Orval Faubus (the State Governor) stopped them by surrounding the school with state troops.
- Faubus was forced to remove the troops, but they were replaced by a violent mob of about 1000 white people.
- President Eisenhower sent in federal troops to protect the students.
- Governor Faubus was so against integration that he closed down all the schools in Little Rock (1958).
- However, one year later, the Supreme Court ordered him to re-open them and the federal troops stayed with the students to protect them.

Little Rock was important to the Civil Rights Movement for a number of reasons;

- It showed that the President was willing to get involved and support black Americans.
- There was world wide publicity for the Civil Rights Campaign and a lot of sympathy for the black students
- The Supreme Court got involved again and forced Faubus to re- open schools.

## **The impact of Martin Luther King & Black Power**

### **Why was Martin Luther King so important?**

- Martin Luther King believed strongly in peaceful protest.
- He used methods such as giving speeches, marches and sit-ins in order to try and change things for Black Americans.
- He was also very good at dealing with politicians and so was able to successfully raise awareness of the Civil Rights Movement within Congress.
- Because he insisted on remaining peaceful, he was better able to persuade Presidents and Congress to go along with him.

### **Key Features of the Civil Rights in the early 1960's:**

#### **The Freedom Riders**

1960s – made journeys on interstate buses to draw attention to the fact that the southern states were ignoring the laws that said interstate buses and bus stations should no longer be segregated. They faced violence and some were arrested. One bus was even bombed. Once again, they gained a lot of publicity.

#### **Sit ins**

1960 – black students "Sat in" whites only cafes. The violence often used against these peaceful protestors was seen on television and helped to increase support for Civil Rights.

#### **The Washington Peace March**

August 1963 – More than 250,000 people, including 60,000 whites marched to demand civil rights for all. They heard Martin Luther King's famous —I have a dream|| speech.

#### **Birmingham Peace March**

1963 – Birmingham decided to close all of its parks, playgrounds, swimming pools and golf courses in order to avoid de- segregating them. Many peaceful protests, such as sit-ins, were staged against these

measures. The peaceful protesters – including children – were attacked by police dogs and fire hoses. They were sent by the police chief, Bull Connor. The protest was significant because the President (Kennedy) was forced to get involved. It also led to the creation of a Civil Rights Bill.

## **The Voting Rights Act**

1965- Voting Rights Act was passed, which set up a national literacy tests for blacks & Whites registering to vote. However, due to Previous Education discrimination, Many of the Blacks failed the test and were therefore not given the full right to vote.

## **The Black Power Movement:**

### **What do we mean by Black Power?**

The slogan Black Power became popular from 1966 onwards. It is a phrase that came to mean different things to different people, but they key ideas were:

- Blacks should take more responsibility, power and control in their own communities (e.g. set up their own businesses). They should not rely on white to give them rights, but take control themselves.
- A rejection of the non-violent tactics of the main Civil Rights Movement.
- More focus on social and economic issues (e.g. poverty) rather than political issues (e.g. Jim Crow laws)
- Blacks should study their own history and culture and that they should feel proud of being black. Slogans Like "black is beautiful" formed a part of this.
- Some people believed in separatism – the idea that blacks should set up their own state without any white people. (N.B. this is very different to segregation!)

### **Why did the Black Power Movement develop in the 1960's?**

- Many blacks felt that the pace of change was too slow. Young blacks in particular were frustrated that things were not changing fast enough.
- Even though Martin Luther King's campaigns had achieved some great things, most blacks still faced poverty, discrimination and racism as part of their everyday lives.
- Many in the north saw King as irrelevant – he had focussed on ending segregation, but there had never been any segregation in the northern states. The issues there were different – e.g. poverty in the slums of the major cities.
- Many grew frustrated with the non-violent campaigns. They felt it was humiliating black people and was not bringing enough change fast enough.

### **Who was involved in the Black Power Movement?**

The Nation of Islam – a group of black Muslims. They wanted a more militant approach and a totally separate state for blacks in the USA. Eventually blacks would return to Africa. Their leader was Elijah Muhammad.

Malcolm X- He was a brilliant speaker who attracted a lot of publicity. He did a lot to encourage blacks to take responsibility for themselves and to be proud of being black. At first, he wanted nothing to do with white people but, after going on Hajj, he changed his views and then accepted that whites could play a useful role in helping blacks to achieve civil rights.

The Black Panthers had the most violent reputation. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale set it up in 1966. The Panthers never had more than around 5 000 members but they attracted a huge amount of publicity. This was because of the way they looked, their ideas and their use of violence. They wore black berets, black leather jackets, sunglasses, etc and they carried guns. They used armed patrols to protect black people from police brutality.

Stokely Carmichael – probably the first person to use the phrase "Black Power" and leader of the SNCC, which started off as a non-violent group, but later became more radical.

## In what ways did Martin Luther King's campaign change by the late 1960s?

After the great successes of 1964 and 1965, King began to change his focus:

- He began to concentrate on trying to improve living conditions, wages and jobs for the poor, focusing more on the northern cities than before.
- He opposed the Vietnam War because it cost so much money – money he thought could be spent on black people. This lost him the support of some people.
- However, people in the north thought Martin Luther King (a southerner) did not understand their problems and were reluctant to follow him.
- This focus on social and economic issues was also more difficult to solve – mainly because they would cost so much money to solve.
- As a result of all this, Martin Luther King became far less influential after 1965.

## What did the Civil Rights movement achieve for Black Americans?

The Civil Rights Movement had some major successes. For Example;

- The end of segregation in public places.
- Many more schools are now fully integrated.
- Far more blacks now vote in elections.
- The first black mayor (Carl Stokes in Cleveland, 1968) was elected.
- Many black authors and actors have become very successful.

**However:**

- At least three quarters of the black population are still worse off than whites and rates of unemployment are higher for blacks than whites Blacks still tend to have lower educational standards.
- Ghettos remain in many cities
- Although the outward signs of discrimination have been swept away, America is still a deeply divided society with racial problems.

## Protest Movements: The Student and Women Movements

### The Woman's Movement

#### What were the reasons for the Woman's Movement in the 1960's & 1970's?

- World War 2 gave women new roles and new opportunities: they wanted more of this.
- The contraceptive pill became available in the 1960s, giving women much more freedom over their lives.
- Many women began to react against 1950s ideas of women as wives and mothers. Many were influenced by the 'swinging sixties'.
- By now, women were better educated and wanted to use this education to pursue a career. They did not all want to devote their whole lives to their husband and family.
- Betty Friedan's book "The Feminine Mystique" was published in 1963; it said that married women should be able to have careers as well and that husbands and wives should have an equal partnership. This inspired many women.
- The National Organisation of Women (NOW) was started in 1966 by Betty Friedan.

#### How did women protest?

Most Women in the Women's movement wanted:

- equal pay with men
- opportunities to get top jobs
- child care for working parents
- action against male sexism

- They went on marches and organised petitions, appeals to the Supreme Court, demonstrations, etc.
- Other women were more radical and even believed that not wearing make-up was an act of protest against male supremacy. These women – often known as feminists – burned their bras because they saw them as a symbol of male domination. However, these women often did more harm than good because they caused a distraction from the key issues of equal pay and job opportunities.
- Some women wanted to make abortion legal – they believed women should have the right to choose whether or not to have a baby.

You should also remember that some women actually opposed the women's movement. They believed in the traditional role of women. The most influential of these was called Phyllis Schlafly.

### What did women achieve?

The women's movement was important and achieved a number of things. For example;

- The Equal Pay Act (1963) said that men and women should have the same pay for the same job.
- The Civil Rights Act (1964) banned discrimination on the basis of gender. NOW won lots of court cases in the late 1960s, which gave money back to women who had not been paid equally to men.
- The Education Amendment Act (1972) said that girls could follow exactly the same curriculum in schools and boys.
- In the famous case of Roe vs Wade (1973), the Supreme Court ruled that abortion was legal.

However sexist attitudes to women did not disappear and progress was often slow.

## The Student Movement

### What was the 1950s background?

- New pop and film heroes like Elvis Presley and James Dean promoted a rebellious attitude. Many parents were shocked by these role models for teenagers.
- Beatnik poets like Allen Ginsberg protested against what they saw as the smug life of middle class Americans. He suggested dropping out, taking drugs, etc.
- There was a generation gap. Older people – parents/teachers/politicians – remembered the hardships of the Depression and WW2. Teenagers had been brought up in the prosperous 1950s.
- Many students turned against their parents' comfortable lifestyles – they thought they were boring and too keen on money.
- Sex, drugs and rock and roll – this shocked the older generation.

### What were the reasons for the student protest Movement?

- The attitude of the 1950s carried over into the 1960s – often described as the 'swinging sixties'. Young people wanted more freedom in everything they did – the music they listened to, the clothes they wore, the social life they led.
- The contraceptive pill allowed women more freedom over their sexual behaviour and let them choose when to have children.
- Recreational drugs became more widely available.
- Singers like Bob Dylan became very popular, writing songs protesting against war and racism.
- More and more better off young people went to college and had time for protests.
- Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights campaigns showed students how to protest; it was often students who took part in demonstrations, sit-ins, freedom rides, etc.
- The Vietnam War angered lots of young people in America. They did not believe the war was a just war and had seen pictures in the media of American atrocities towards the Vietnamese people.

### How did the Students Protest?

It is important to remember that the student movement was a broad-ranging movement and not all students thought and did the same things. Some of the people and ideas that were involved were;

- The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was set up by Tom Hayden to give students a greater say in the ways universities were run. They also wanted to help poorer people and protested against the Vietnam War.
- Lots of students joined the civil rights campaigns.
- Anti-Vietnam War protests. These were probably the biggest and most important protests organized by students. For example, in 1969, 700,000 marched in Washington against the war. They burned draft cards (the cards sent to people ordering them to report to fight in the war) or, sometimes, the American flag.
- Often, there were clashes with the police. The worst of these took place at Kent State University in 1970, when 4 students were shot dead by police in a peaceful protest. Americans were horrified and 2 million students went on strike in protest.
- Some students became more radical in the late 1960s and began to use violence. A group called the "Weathermen" bombed army recruitment centres and government buildings.
- Others joined the 'Hippy' movement and decided to "drop out" of society all together. They grew their hair long, wore distinctive clothes, travelled round the country in buses and vans, wearing flowers in their hair as a symbol of peace. Their slogan was "make love, not war". They refused to work and many took drugs, which frightened older people.

### Why was the Student Movement so important?

- Probably the longest-lasting achievements of the student movement were the changes in youth culture. Teenagers became more aware of their individuality. For example, they became more fashion conscious and moved away from the older generation. The clearest example of this was the mini-skirt.
- The student protests helped to change government policy on Vietnam and made a withdrawal from Vietnam more likely.
- They provided lots of publicity for the racism in America and lots of white students made the civil rights movement stronger.
- They shocked the older generation – this was virtually the first time that younger people (especially middle class people) had opposed the government and their parents.

## Nixon & The Watergate Scandal

### What was the Reason for the Watergate Scandal?

The Watergate Scandal was caused by an attempt to bug the offices of the Democrat Party in the Watergate building in Washington. Five men were arrested in June 1972. The men were employed by CREEP, Committee to re-elect the President.

### What were the Key Features of the Watergate Scandal?

- President Nixon stated that the White House was not involved in any of these activities, but at the same time authorised the payment of \$460,000 to the five men. The trial took place after Nixon was re-elected and one of the five men admitted that White House had been involved.
- A Senate Committee was set up to investigate and many of Nixon's closest advisers were forced to resign. The president, however, continued to maintain his innocence. He even appointed Archibald Cox as a special investigator. He hoped that he would produce a whitewash.
- It was then revealed that all conversations in the White House since 1971 had been recorded on tape. The Senate demanded the tapes, but Nixon refused to hand them over.
- Some tapes were eventually handed over in November 1973 and the US public was shocked by the attitudes and the language of Nixon. But the tapes had been edited.
- Nixon finally handed over the unedited tapes only after a ruling from the Supreme Court and an announcement by the House of Representatives that it was about to begin impeachment proceedings.

- The tapes proved that Nixon had lied and that he had tried to prevent the investigation, but not that he had known about the original break in and bugging. Nixon resigned in August 1974 to avoid the disgrace of impeachment.

### What were the effects of the Watergate Scandal?

- It was one a series of revelations about US presidents that hit Americans very hard. The truth about Kennedy's affairs and Johnson's perversions were already beginning to come out and Nixon's own vice-president, Spiro Agnew, had been forced to resign for tax evasion.
- Thirty-one of Nixon's advisers went to prison as a result of the investigation.
- It came at the same time as the withdrawal from Vietnam, which was seen by many as a defeat for the USA.

**Congress acted to reduce the powers of the president. In future he would have to:**

1. Consult Congress before sending US troops into action.
2. Stop using federal money for personal reasons.
3. Congress also set limits on contributions to presidential campaign funds and also allowed private citizens access to any files that the federal government had about them.