

CHAPTER 25 Section 3 (pages 827–833)

American Society in a Conservative Age

BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about the conservative policies of Reagan and Bush.

In this section, you will learn about the social problems that existed in the 1980s.

AS YOU READ

Use the chart below to take notes about social issues during the 1980s and how Americans responded to them.

TERMS AND NAMES

AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) Disease without a cure whose victims were mostly homosexual men and drug abusers

pay equity Plan to ensure women receive equal pay for equal work

L. Douglas Wilder Nation’s first African-American governor

Jesse Jackson Civil rights leader and presidential candidate

affirmative action Efforts to overcome discrimination

Selena Quintanilla-Perez Singer

| SOCIAL ISSUES | AMERICANS’ RESPONSES |
|---------------|---|
| <i>Drugs</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prosecute users and dealers</i> • <i>Antidrug education</i> |
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Health, Education, and Cities in Crisis (pages 827–830)

What problems did Americans face in the 1980s?

A scary health issue that arose in the 1980s was **AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome)**. The disease is caused by a virus that destroys the *immune system* that protects people from illness. Most of the victims of AIDS were either homosexual men or *intravenous* drug users who shared needles.

Another issue that concerned Americans was abortion. In the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the

Supreme Court said women had the right to have an abortion. Opponents of legalized abortion described themselves as “pro-life.” Supporters of legalized abortion called themselves “pro-choice.”

Reagan and Bush declared a war on drugs. Reagan supported laws to catch drug users and drug dealers. In 1988, Congress passed a law cutting off some benefits for marijuana users. Congress also funded antidrug education in the schools.

Bush’s program stressed stopping drugs at the nation’s borders. It also called for jailing drug users and giving the death penalty to drug dealers.

Education remained an important issue. In

1983, a report entitled *A Nation at Risk* criticized the nation's schools. The report showed that American students' test scores lagged behind those of students in other nations. Many people agreed that the nation's schools were not doing a good job. But they did not agree on solutions.

The nation's cities were also in crisis. Many poor and homeless people lived in cities. Budget cuts had eliminated earlier federal programs to aid the cities. Welfare payments to the poor had not kept up with rising prices.

1. How did Americans respond to the problems of the 1980s?

The Equal Rights Struggle

(pages 830–831)

Did women's lives improve in the 1980s?

Women continued to try to improve their lives. Women's groups were unable to get the Equal Rights Amendment ratified. But more women were elected to Congress.

By 1992 nearly 58 percent of all women had entered the work force. But women still earned only 76 cents for every dollar a man earned. New divorce laws and social conditions increased the number of single women heading a household. Many of these women lived in poverty.

Women's organizations and unions called for **pay equity**. This was an idea to make sure that women would earn the same pay as men doing the same work.

Under the pay equity system, jobs would be rated according to the skills and responsibilities they required. Employers would set pay rates to reflect each job's requirements. Women also called for benefits to help working mothers.

2. What political losses and gains did women have in the 1980s?

The Fight for Rights Continues

(pages 831–833)

How did minority groups fight for their rights?

Members of many minority groups achieved greater political power during the 1980s. Hundreds of communities had elected African Americans to serve in public offices. In 1990, **L. Douglas Wilder** of Virginia became the first African-American governor in the United States. The Reverend **Jesse Jackson** ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and in 1988.

But the income gap between white Americans and African Americans was larger in 1988 than it was in 1968. In addition, Supreme Court rulings further limited **affirmative action**.

Latinos became the fastest growing minority group during the 1980s. Like African Americans, Latinos gained political power during the 1980s.

Latino culture also influenced mainstream culture. Salsa dancing and music became popular in the 1980s. So did Tejano music. The murder of the Tejano singer **Selena Quintanilla-Perez** in 1995 was even the subject of a special issue of *People* magazine.

Native Americans faced cuts in federal aid. Some opened casinos on their reservations to earn money. Asian Americans made economic advances but did not gain much political power.

During the 1970s and 1980s, homosexual men and women worked for laws to protect their rights. By 1993, seven states and 110 communities had outlawed discrimination against homosexuals.

3. What were some political and social gains made by Latinos during the 1980s?

Chapter 25: The Conservative Tide (pages 816–843)

Section 3: American Society in a Conservative Age (pages 827–833)

1. Possible responses: American fought over abortion. Reagan and Bush declared a war on drugs. People disagreed over the best way to improve education. Poor people and urban people got less help from the government to their problems.
2. Possible responses: Gains—more women were elected to Congress, more women held jobs, some people worked to achieve pay equity; losses—households headed by a single female increased, many women faced poverty, ERA failed to pass
3. Latinos were the fastest growing minority group. They gained some political power. Latino culture influenced mainstream culture.