

## Lyndon B. Johnson & the Great Society

Focus: What extent is the federal government responsible for the welfare and security of the people?

- *How has it changed over the time?*
- *What has been the impact on our country's social landscape?*

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## G.I Bill & Truman Extends New Deal into Fair Deal

- GI Bill, 1944
  - A.k.a - Servicemen's Readjustment Act 1944)
    - Provided WWII vets with:
      - College or vocational education
      - One year of unemployment compensation
      - Loans to buy a home
        - » In Levittown, Houses could be bought for \$7,990 (\$78,800) or \$60 month (\$32) with no down payment.
      - Loans to start a business
    - MAJOR economic opportunity for whites!
- 1949, President Truman outlines "Fair Deal".
  - Continuation of New deal programs: Social Security, Minimum Wage Laws, building of housing.
    - Social Security Act of 1950 expanded benefits & coverage to include the blind and older people who had earned "income security", retirement funding went up.
  - But did this all work?

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## Economy of the 1950s

- Tremendous Economic Prosperity
- Why?
  - Massive 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of consumerism
    - TVs, Cars, Appliances, homes.
      - Levittown & the FHA (Federal Housing Admin); provided loans especially for G.I.s
      - Emblematic of "new possibilities" for future.
  - "Made in America" came to symbolize time.
    - International trade & funding expands.
    - "Affluence" of American society, not wealth.
      - Affluence could connote the ability to buy, the amount of existed without making a statement about wealth (and the poverty).
  - Knowledge Economy Emerges
    - Cold-War scientific developments
  - Opportunities closed to women and non-whites




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## Economy of the 1950s

- Knowledge Economy Emerges
  - Cold-War scientific developments
  - Opportunities closed to women and non-whites
- Highway system provided for greater increase for
  - Cars, oil, concrete and tire industries as well as construction.
  - This also impacted the labor industry since many of the industries that benefited from highway building learned to live with labor unions.

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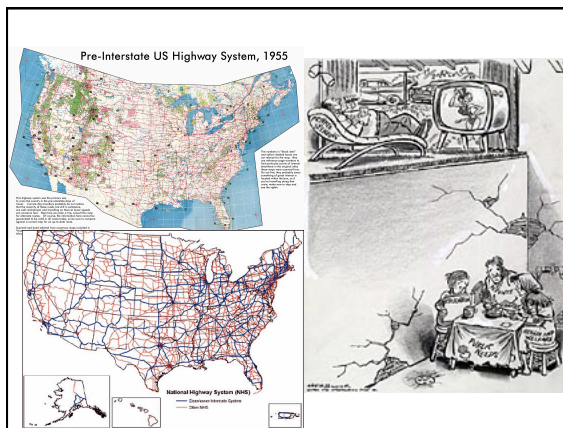
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## Poverty In America 1950-1964

- While most Americans had been celebrating their rising affluence during the post war era, more than 40 million out of 186 million Americans were mired in poverty.
- Going into the 1960s, the national poverty rate was around 20%
- In 1962, Michael Harrington wrote *The Other America* and issues of poverty in America began getting attention.




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### Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society

- Into this context Johnson becomes President in 1963 and makes the center point of his presidency the promotion of the "Great Society"
- "The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time."
- An aspect of the Great Society, is his plan to end poverty in America: The War on Poverty

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### Johnson's State of the Union Address 1964

- "Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty and some because of their color; and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity. This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America. I urge this Congress and all Americans to join with me in that effort...Let me make one principle of this administration abundantly clear: All of these increased opportunities—in employment, in education, in housing, and in every field—must be open to Americans of every color."




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### LBJ Video take notes on...

- Describe the War on Poverty as a concept and list some of its programs.
- How is the War on Poverty and extension of the New Deal (and the Great Society programs)? What new variable does it add to society's potential understanding of economic security?
- Does Johnson reject individual action?

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## Economic Opportunity Act

- Created the Office of Economic Opportunity to carry out the “war on poverty”
- Specific Programs:
  - [http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/lbjforkids/pov\\_weapons.shtm](http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/lbjforkids/pov_weapons.shtm)

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## Effects

- In the decades following the war on poverty, poverty rates in the U.S. dropped to their lowest level since 1958 (when they began recording such information).
  - From 17.3% in 1964 to 11.1% in 1973
- Since 1973, the poverty rate has remained between 11% and 15.2%

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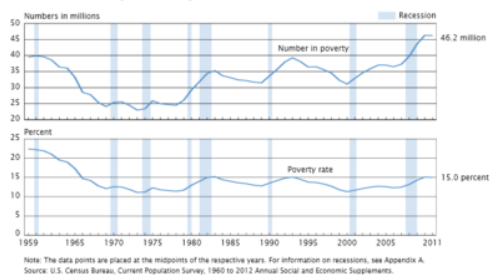
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Figure 4.  
Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2011




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### War on Poverty Discussion

- What does LBJ believe is the cause of poverty? How is this different from how people thought of poverty in the past?
- How was the War on Poverty (and the Great Society more broadly) an extension of the New Deal? What new variable did it add to liberal Americans' understanding of what was required to provide economic security?
- Does Johnson reject individualism?

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