

# Chapter 42 (14th)

## The American People Face a New Century

### 1. Economic Revolutions

1. In the modern era, heavy industry waned and the information age kicked into high gear.
  1. Companies like Microsoft Corp. and the internet brought about the communications revolution.
  2. Entrepreneurs led the way to making the Internet at 21st century mall, library, and shopping center.
  3. New high-tech jobs were created and other jobs were erased.
2. White-collar jobs in financial services and high tech engineering were being outsourced to other countries like Ireland and India where wages were lower.
3. Many discovered that the new high tech economy was also prone to boom or bust, just like the old economy.
  1. In the spring of 2000, the stock market began its biggest slide since WWII in the "dotcom bust." By 2003, the market had lost \$6 trillion in value.
    1. Many Americans' pension plans shrank to 1/3 their previous level.
    2. Americans were still susceptible to risk, mistakes, scandal, & the ups-and-downs of the business cycle.
4. Scientific research propelled the economy.
  1. Researchers unlocked the secrets of molecular genetics (1950s).
    1. They developed new strains of high yielding, pest/weather resistant crops.
    2. They sought to cure hereditary diseases.
    3. The movement started to fix genetic mutations.
  2. The "Human Genome Project" established the DNA sequence of the 30 thousand human genes, helping create radical new medical therapies.
    1. Breakthroughs in cloning animals raised questions about the morality of cloning humans.
    2. "Stem cell research", offered possible cures for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.
      1. The Bush administration, and many religious groups, believed that this research was killing people in the form of a human fetus.
      2. Bush said a fetus is still a human life, despite its small size, and experimenting and destroying it is therefore wrong. For this reason, he limited government funding for stem cell research.

### 2. Affluence and Inequality

1. U.S. standard of living was still very high as to most other nations. The median household income in 2002 was \$42,400,
2. The rich still got richer while the poor got poorer.
  1. The richest 20% in 2001 raked in nearly half the nation's income while the poorest 20% got a mere 4%.
  2. The widening inequality could be measured in different ways as well...
    1. In 2004, over 40 million people had no medical insurance.
    2. 34 million (12% of population) lived at or below the poverty level.
  3. Causes of the widening income gap...
    1. The tax and fiscal policies of the Reagan and both Bush presidencies tended to help the business class.
    2. Intensifying global economic competition lowered wages.
    3. There was shrinkage of high-paying manufacturing jobs for semiskilled/unskilled workers.
    4. Those who pursued higher education reaped even greater rewards.
    5. Part time/temporary work became more common and there was an increase of low-skilled immigrants.

### 3. The Feminist Revolution

1. Women were greatly affected by the large changes of the late 1900s.
2. Women steadily increased their presence in the work place.
  1. By 1990s, nearly half of all workers were women. Most surprising was the upsurge of employment in mothers.
    1. By the 1990s, a majority of women with kids as young as one were working.
  2. Many universities opened their doors to women (1960s) such as Yale, Princeton, and even West Point, The Citadel, and Virginia Military Institute (VMI).
  3. Despite gains, many feminists remained frustrated. Women still got lower wages and were concentrated in few low-prestige, low-paying occupations.
    1. For example, in 2002, only 29% of women were lawyers or judges and 25% physicians.
    2. This was likely due to women interrupting their careers to bear and raise kids or taking a less-demanding job to also fulfill the roles of mother.
    3. Discrimination and a focus on kids also helped account for the "gender-gap" in elections.
      1. Women still voted for Democrats more than men.
      2. Women were more willing to favor government support for health and child care, education, and job equality, as well as more vigilant in protecting abortion rights.
3. Men's' lives changed in the 2000's as well.
  1. Some employers gave maternity as well as *paternity* leave recognizing shared obligations of 2-worker household.
  2. More men shared the traditional female responsibilities such as cooking, laundry, and child care.
4. In 1993, congress passed the **Family Leave Bill**, mandating job protection for working fathers as well as mothers who needed to take time off from work for family reasons.

4. New Families and Old
  1. Nuclear family (Mom, Dad, & children) suffered heavy blows in modern America. By 1990s, ½ of all marriages divorced.
    1. Seven times more children were affected by divorce as compared to the beginning of the decade.
  2. Traditional families weren't just falling apart at fast, but they were also increasingly slow to form in the first place.
    1. Adults living alone tripled in 4 decades after 1950s. In the 1990s, 1/3 of women age 25 - 29 had never married.
    2. Every fourth child in the U.S. was growing up in a household that lacked two parents.
    3. Single parenthood was the #1 cause of poverty.
    4. Child-rearing, the age-old goal of family was being pawned to schools, day-cares, or Televisions.
  3. Families now assumed a variety of different forms.
    1. Kids in households raised by a single parent, stepparent, or grandparent, and even kids with homosexual parents, encountered a degree of acceptance that would have been unimaginable a century earlier.
    2. Homosexual "marriage" and teenage pregnancy was on a decline after the mid-1900s.
  4. Families weren't evaporating, but were changing into very different forms.
5. The Aging of America
  1. Old age was expected, since Americans were living longer than ever before. For someone born in 1900, the life expectancy was about 50 years. People born the year 2000 could anticipate living to an average 77 years.
  2. The longer lives were largely due to miraculous medical advances.
    1. One American in eight was over 65 years of age in 2000.
  3. This aging of population raised a slew of economic, social, and political questions.
    1. Seniors formed potent electoral bloc aggressively lobbying for government favors & achieved real gains.
    2. The share of GNP spent on health care for seniors more than doubled in the 30 years after Medicare started.
    3. However, the more money sent to health care meant less money elsewhere or an increased debt. The old are getting helped, but the young are being paying for it.
    4. These triumphs for senior citizens brought fiscal strains, especially with Social Security.
      1. At the start of the creation of Social Security, a small majority depended on it. But modern times, it has increased. And, now current workers' Social Security contributions actually funds Social Security.
      2. Due to the baby boom generation, the ratio of active workers-to-retirees is at a low-to-high level. And, health care costs have skyrocketed in recent years.
      3. The "unfunded liability" (the shortage between what the government promised to pay to the elderly and the taxes it expected to take in) was about \$7 trillion.
      4. Due to possible political repercussions, politicians are very reluctant to talk about changing Social Security. There are possible solutions are:
        1. To delay Social Security payments and persuade older Americans to work longer.
        2. To invest the current Social Security surplus in stocks and bonds to meet future obligations. This could also backfire, however, if the market drops.
        3. A portion of the Social Security money could be privatized if younger people wanted to invest some of their payroll taxes into individual retirement accounts.
  6. The New Immigration
    1. Since 1980, newcomers continued to flow into modern America, at the rate of nearly 1 million per year.
      1. Contradicting history, Europe provided few immigrants. The largest portion came from Asia and Latin America. These immigrants came for many of the same reasons all immigrants:
        1. They left countries where the population was increasing rapidly and...
        2. Where agricultural/industrial revolutions were shaking up old ways of life.
        3. Mostly, they came in search of jobs and economic opportunities—a better life for their families.
      2. Some came with skills and even professional degrees and found their way into middle-class jobs. However, most came with fewer skills/less education. They sought work as janitors, nannies, farm laborers, lawn cutters, etc.
    2. The southwest felt immigration the most, since Mexican migrants naturally arrived in that section of the U.S.
      1. By the turn of the century, Latinos made up nearly 1/3 of the population in California, Arizona, and Texas, and nearly 40% in New Mexico.
      2. Latinos succeeded in making the Southwest a bi-cultural region by holding onto to their culture and language. Most immigrants had assimilated into "American" culture. Plus, it did help to have their "mothering country" right next door, not an ocean away.
    3. Some "old-stock" Americans feared modern America's capacity to absorb all these immigrants.
      1. **The Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986)** attempted to choke off illegal entry by penalizing employers of the illegal immigrants and by granting amnesty to many of those already here.
      2. Anti-immigrant sentiment was strong in California in the wake of economic recession in the early 1990s.
        1. California voters approved a ballot initiative that attempted to deny benefits, including free public education, to illegal immigrants (it was later struck down by courts).
        2. State then passed another law in 1998 which put an end to bilingual teaching in state schools.
    4. By 2002, U.S. population was made up of 11.5% of foreign-born people. The historical high-point had been 15% in 1910.
    5. There were good sides to the immigration in that (1) immigrants took jobs that Americans didn't want and (2) the infusion of young immigrants and their offspring helped counter-balance the overwhelming rate of an aging population.
  7. Beyond the Melting Pot
    1. Due to increasing immigration and high birthrate, Latinos were becoming an increasingly important minority

1. By 2003, the US was home to about 39 million Latinos. (26 million Chicanos, Mexican American, 3 million Puerto Ricans, 1 million Cubans).
2. Latinos flexed their political powers.
  1. Hispanic mayors were elected in Miami, Denver, and San Antonio.
  2. After many years of struggle, the **United Farm Workers Organizing Committee** (UFWOC0, headed by **Cesar Chavez**, succeeded in making working conditions better for Chicano “stoop laborers” who followed the planting cycle of the American West.
3. Latinos were well organized and became the nation’s largest ethnic minority.
2. Asian Americans also made great strides.
  1. By 1980s, they were America’s fastest-growing minority and their numbers reached about 12 million by 2003.
  2. Citizens of Asian ancestry were now counted among the most prosperous Americans. In 2003, the average Asian household was 25% better off than that of the average white household.
3. American Indians, numbered some 2.4 million in the 2000 census.
  1. Unemployment and alcoholism had blighted reservation life. Half had left their reservations to live in cities.
  2. Many tribes took advantage of special legal status of independence by opening casinos on reservations.
  3. However, discrimination and poverty proved hard to break.
8. Cities and Suburbs
  1. Cities grew less safe, crime was the great scourge of urban life.
    1. The rate of violent crimes raised to its peak in the drug infested 1980s, but then it leveled out in the 90s. Violent crime dropped notably after 1995.
    2. Still, murder, robbery, & rape remained common in cities & rural areas & drove many people to the suburbs.
  2. In the mid-1990s, a swift and massive transition took place from cities to suburbs, making jobs “suburbanized.”
    1. The nation’s brief “urban age” lasted for only a little less than 7 decades.
    2. Some affluent suburban neighborhoods stayed secluded, by staying locked in “gated communities.”
    3. By the first decade of the 21st century, big suburban rings and beltways emerged around cities like New York, Chicago, Houston, and Washington D.C.
      1. Cities as a whole became more racially, ethnically diverse, but local neighborhoods were homogeneous.
  4. Suburbs grew fastest in the West and Southwest, in areas such as L.A., San Diego, Las Vegas, and Phoenix.
    1. Builders of roads, water mains, & schools barely kept up with new towns sprouting across the lands.
    2. A huge shift of US population was underway from East to West, from North to South.
    3. The Great Plains hurt from movement. The entire Plains held fewer people than the Los Angeles basin.
  5. However, some cities started to show signs of renewal in downtown areas such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, and San Francisco.
9. Minority America
  1. Racial/ethnic tensions also exacerbated the problems of American cities, specifically evident in L.A.-magnet for minority.
    1. In 1992, a mostly white jury exonerated white cops who had been videotaped ferociously beating a black suspect.
      1. The minority neighborhoods of L.A. erupted in a riot of anger. There was looting, arson, killings. Many blacks addressed their anger toward Asian shopkeepers who armed themselves in protection.
      2. The L.A. riots vividly testified to black skepticism about the U.S. system of justice.
    2. Three years later, in L.A., a televised showing of O.J. Simpson’s murder trial fed *white* disillusionment with the court system and with race relations.
      1. After months of testimony, the evidence (including Simpson's DNA) seemed overwhelmingly that O.J. Simpson was guilty. But, he was acquitted due to the fact some white officers had been shown to harbor racist sentiments.
      2. In a later civil trial, another jury unanimously found Simpson liable for the “wrongful deaths” of his former wife and another victim.
    3. The Simpson verdicts revealed the huge gap between white and black America.
  2. Blacks still felt that they were mistreated, as in 2000 election when they claimed that they weren’t allowed to vote in FL.
  3. In 2002, 52% of blacks and only 21% of whites lived in inner cities.
    1. The most desperate black ghettos were especially problematic. Blacks who'd benefited from the 60s Civil Rights Movement left to the suburbs along with whites. This left the poorest of the poor in the old city ghettos.
      1. Without a middle class to help the community, the cities became plagued by unemployment, crime, and drug addiction.
    2. Single women headed about 43% of black families in 2002, 3 times more than whites.
      1. Many single, black mothers depended on Welfare to feed their children.
      2. Social scientists made it clear that education excels if the child has warm, home environment. It seemed clear that many fatherless, impoverished black kids seemed plagued by educational handicaps which were difficult to overcome.
  4. Some segments of black communities did prosper after the Civil Rights Movement, although they still had a long way to go to reach equality.
    1. By 2002, 33% of black families had a \$50,000 income, putting them at middle class level.
    2. Blacks also gained power in politics.
      1. The number of black officials elected had risen to the 9,000 mark. This included more than 3 dozen members of Congress and mayors of some big cities.
      2. Voter tallies showed that black more blacks were going to the polls.

3. By the early 21st century, blacks had dramatically advanced into higher education. In 2002, 17% of blacks over 25 had a bachelor's degree.

1. To keep the numbers up and growing, the courts still preserved affirmative action in the university admissions.

#### 10. E Pluribus Plures

1. Ideas of race, ethnicity, and culture were changing in the late 1900s.
2. Sounding like early 20th century "cultural pluralists" like Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne, many advanced the idea of "**multiculturalism**." This stressed the need to *preserve*, rather than squash racial minorities, old ways, & ethnic traits.
  1. The old idea of a "melting pot" gave way to a "salad bowl."
3. The nation's classrooms became the heated area for debate.
  1. Multiculturalists attacked traditional the curriculum as being too white and advocated a greater focus on achievements of blacks, Latinos, Asians, Indians.
  2. In defense, critics said that studies on ethnic differences would destroy American values.
  3. Census Bureau furthered debate when, in 2000, it allowed respondents to identify themselves with more than 1 of the six categories: black, white, Latino, American Indian, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

#### 11. The Life of the Mind

1. Despite the TV, American read more in the early 21st century, listened to more music, and were better educated than ever.
  1. Colleges awarded 2.5 million degrees in 2004. 1 quarter of 25-34 age groups was college grad.
2. What Americans read said much about Americans themselves.
  1. Some authors wrote of the American western experience.
    1. Larry McMurtry wrote about the end of the cattle drive era in *Lonesome Dove* (1985).
    2. Raymond Carver wrote powerful stories about the working class in the Pacific Northwest.
    3. Annie Dillard, Ivan Doig, and Jim Harrison recreated the frontier, also in the Pacific Northwest.
    4. David Guterson wrote a moving tale of interracial anxiety and love in the WWII era in Pacific Northwest in *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1994).
    5. Wallace Stegner produced remarkable works like *Angle of Repose* ('71) & *Crossing to Safety* ('87).
    6. Norman MacLean wrote two unforgettable events about his childhood in Montana, *A River Runs Through It* (1976) and *Young Men and Fire* (1992).
  2. There were African-American authors.
    1. August Wilson retold the history of the blacks in 20th century emphasizing on the psychological cost of the northward migration.
    2. George Wolf explored sobering questions of black identity in *Jelly's Last Jam* about the life story of jazz musician "Jelly Roll" Morton.
    3. Alice Walker gave fictional voice to experiences of black women in her popular *The Color Purple*.
    4. Toni Morrison wrote a haunting story of a mother's love in *Beloved*.
    5. Edward P. Jones inventively rendered the life of a slave-owning black family in *The Known World*.
      1. Morrison, Walker, & Jones won Pulitzer Prize (fiction). Morrison also won Nobel Prize for lit.
  3. American Indians wrote or were written about.
    1. N. Scott Momaday won a Pulitzer Prize for his portrayal of Indian life in *House Made of Dawn*.
    2. James Welch wrote movingly about his Blackfoot ancestors in *Fools Crow*.
  4. Asian-American authors flourished as well.
    1. Among them was playwright David Hwang, novelist Amy Tan, and essayist Maxine Hong Kingston.
    2. Gish Jen in *Mona in the Promise Land* guided her readers into the poignant comedy of suburban family relationships that was common for 2nd-generation Asian-Americans.
  5. J. Lahiris *Interpreter of Maladies* watched relationship struggles with Indian parents & their American-born kids.
  6. There were Latino writers.
    1. Sandra Cisneros drew from her own life as a Mexican-American kid to write on Latino life in working-class Chicago in *The House on Mango Street*.

#### 12. The New Media

1. The internet was first created by the government as a tool to fight the Cold War. In the 1990's, the internet came to average households, then spread like crazy...
  1. In 1997, 18% of households had the internet, in 2007, 70% did.
2. The internet's rapid growth led to a dot-com boom, and subsequent bust. The dot-com boom peaked around the year 2000.
  1. Many dot-coms failed. Some became 'net giants: Amazon in retail, Google in searching, & E\*trade in finance.
3. There were other internet niches...
  1. Younger Americans flocked to social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook.
  2. YouTube became the standard for posting and watching online videos.
4. Traditionally, a person learned of the news either through the morning paper (yesterday's news) or the 6:00 o'clock nightly news (the day's news). This changed with the internet.
  1. Anyone with a computer & connection could write on weblogs or "blogs." Facts and research were optional.
  2. This instantaneous news and information source had been challenged by 24 hour cable news channels, but the internet now involved the average person too. The big losers were the newspapers whose subscriptions dropped sharply and increasingly turned to their own websites.

#### 13. The American Prospect

1. American spirit rolled on in the 21st century, as it always had, but problems continued.

2. There were equality issues.
  1. Women still felt they were short of first class citizenship.
  2. U.S. society also wanted to find ways to adapt back to the traditional family. But this was difficult if not impossible with the new realities of women working outside the home.
  3. Full equality still seemed to be only a dream for some races.
3. There were economic issues.
  1. Powerful foreign competitors threatened the U.S. economic status.
  2. Alarming unequal distribution of wealth & income threatened to turn America into society of haves/have-nots.
4. There were environmental issues.
  1. Coal-fired electrical energy plants produced acid rain and helped greenhouse effect.
  2. Unsolved problem of radioactive waste disposal halted the construction of nuclear power plants.
  3. The planet was being drained of oil and oil spills showed the danger behind oil exploration and transportation.
    1. The public began to look toward alternative fuel sources, such as solar power and wind mills, natural gas, electric "hybrid" cars, an affordable hydrogen fuel cell.
  4. Energy conservation and alternatives remained crucial, but elusive.
5. All-the-while, more doors were opening for the Americans, such as...
  1. Opportunities in outer space and inner-city streets.
    1. The artist's easel and the musician's concert hall.
    2. At the inventor's bench and the scientist's laboratory.
6. America is ever-changing.
  1. As Woodrow Wilson once wrote, "Democratic institutions are never done; they are like living tissue, always a-making. It is a strenuous thing, this of living life of a free people."
7. And Americans are always striving.
  1. As Teddy Roosevelt once put it, "Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat."