

**SSUSH20 – Analyze U.S. international and domestic policies including their influences on technological advancements and social changes during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.**

- a. Connect major domestic issues to their social effects including the G.I. Bill, Truman's integration policies, McCarthyism, the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, and Brown v. Board of Education.

Once World War II ended and the Cold War period began, the United States also had domestic issues that needed to be addressed. The containment policy to stop the spread of communism was taken to the extreme within the United States. The nation also needed to address the needs of soldiers returning home and re-entering the workforce. How could the country ensure that widespread unemployment did not cripple the nation once the war production demands of World War II were no longer driving manufacturing? Segregation was another domestic issue that did not fit with the post-war emphasis on preserving freedoms for people around the world. These key issues had significant effects on social change in the United States following World War II. The **G.I. Bill of Rights** was passed by Congress to protect and reward returning servicemen. The provisions included giving low interest loans for homes and starting new businesses to former soldiers. Financial grants were also given to the returning soldiers who wanted to attend college. The stimulus of money into housing caused a housing boom characterized by the development of the first suburban housing developments, such as Levittown, New York. The financial investment in returning soldiers stemmed a potential post-war unemployment crisis. Instead, consumer spending expanded as new furniture, appliances, and other household goods were needed. Increased consumer demand became the driving force in the post-war economy and the G.I. Bill helped to foster the surge.

President Eisenhower also wanted to further secure the United States from any future attacks. A prime example of how this domestic issue had a social effect was the government-sponsored creation of infrastructure through the **National Interstate and Defense Highways Act**, which was passed in 1956. The original purpose of the Act, as envisioned by President Eisenhower, was to create a system of highways for strategic transportation of troops and supplies. As the United States' population grew, the old two lane system of roads connecting communities was proving inadequate. New, wider, more direct routes built across the United States served to link population centers across the nation. As a result, the Interstate Highway Act not only shored up the nation's ability to move military defenses more efficiently, but it also forever changed population patterns and allowed for the growth of suburbia. The fear of communism's infiltration of the United States was another domestic issue that had a significant effect on post-war society. Senator Joseph McCarthy, a Republican from Wisconsin, was looking for an issue to focus on in his re-election campaign. He embraced the post-World War II fear of communism. McCarthy accused the Truman administration of being "soft on communism" and of losing China to the communists. McCarthy further claimed that communist sympathizers had infiltrated the United States' Department of State. He went on to claim that these traitors were shaping U.S. foreign policy to favor the Soviet Union. Subsequent Senate hearings did not prove McCarthy's charges. In 1953, after Republican Dwight Eisenhower took office, McCarthy launched a wide-ranging series of investigations as the Chairman of the Internal Security Committee. Between April and June 1954, the McCarthy hearings were broadcast to a national audience, which the Senator hoped would propel his national political career. Instead, the hearings destroyed his career. McCarthy made accusations of disloyalty, subversion, and treason without proper regard for evidence. He belittled witnesses and constantly interrupted them to make points of order. "**McCarthyism**" became a derogatory term for baseless accusations that was popularized by the Senator's overbearing performance.

Another important domestic issue that had a tremendous social impact in the late 1940s and 1950s was segregation. In July 1948, President Harry **Truman signed an executive order ending the segregation of the armed forces**. Prior to that time period, Black and White soldiers served in separate units. Integration of the Black units with White units did not fully take place until the Korean War in the 1950s. In general, there were three reasons why integration took place. First, there was a growing recognition that segregation undercut the United States' moral stature during the Cold War. Second, there was a need to reduce racial tension within the military. And third, there were significant manpower needs produced by the Korean War. Later studies commissioned by the military found that both Blacks and Whites benefitted from integration. Significantly, integration helped to break down stereotypes so that, as the Civil Rights Movement intensified in the mid-1950s, there was a broad spectrum of Americans who had developed relationships with other races.

The integration of federally contracted jobs and the federal civil service was an evolutionary process. First, in response to pressure from A. Philip Randolph, President Roosevelt issued an executive order in 1941 ending discrimination on jobs that were federally contracted. This measure opened minority employment in defense plants. Next, President Truman banned racial discrimination in the hiring of federal employees and ended segregation in the armed forces in 1948. President Eisenhower issued an executive order that required enforcement of non-discrimination in federal jobs. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 finally barred discrimination in any job and reinforced powers of the Civil Rights Commission to enforce non-discrimination laws.

The evolution of integration was boosted by the **Brown v. Board of Education** decision. The Supreme Court had ruled in the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision that "separate but equal" was the law of the land concerning segregation. In practice this meant that many states had created two systems of public accommodations - one White only, one Black only. In 1951, a Topeka, Kansas parent challenged segregation by suing his local school board. His daughter had to attend the Black elementary school that required her to walk a mile, even though the closest elementary school (White only) was only seven blocks away. The NAACP took on the case but

lost on the *Plessy* precedent. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court. In 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled, "...in the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." The Supreme Court ordered that public education be de-segregated, but no timeline was issued and school systems were slow to comply. In response to the *Brown* decision, Southern states organized the "Massive Resistance" movement, which shut down state education systems rather than integrate the schools. A notable example of this type of action occurred in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957 when Governor Orval Faubus attempted to use the National Guard to block integration of Central High School. President Eisenhower responded by federalizing the Guard and moving units of the 101st Airborne into Little Rock to enforce the law. Faubus countered by closing Little Rock's schools for a year.

#### **Define**

#### **G.I. Bill**

#### **Truman's integration policies**

#### **McCarthyism**

#### **National Interstate and Defense Highways Act**

#### **Brown v. Board of Education**

1. **What were the social effects of the G.I. Bill?**
2. **What were the social effects of the Truman's integration policies?**
3. **What were the social effects of the McCarthyism?**
4. **What were the social effects of the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act?**
5. **What were the social effects of the Brown v. Board of Education?**