

## Lecture 2.14: 1950s and Korean War

### The Fair Deal:

- Once WWII is over, Truman takes steps to preserve and expand FDR's New Deal with the Fair Deal
- Things that he proposes
  - Expanding/creating national health insurance
  - Creating housing program
  - Raising minimum wage
  - Greater civil rights for black people
  - Expanding education
  - Social security
  - What he accomplished: in 1948, orders desegregation of the military
  - Despite his best efforts, there is actually a dip in economy right after the war
- End up with veterans coming home and now everyone is struggling to find jobs, houses, scarcity of goods, high prices bc of inflation, etc
- Lots of competition (bc people want their jobs back, people don't wanna give them back)
- Fair Deal mostly blocked by Republicans in Congress who don't want to expand the new deal (but don't necessarily want to get rid of it)

### 1948 Election:

- People are mixed about Truman's policies
- He isn't the guaranteed choice for the Democratic party → Dems split over whether to support him or not
  - Dems who don't like his cold war stuff vote for Progressive party candidate
  - Dems who don't like convos about civil rights elected States' Rights Democratic candidate → "Dixiecrats"
- So close that people did not think Truman was going to win, to the point where newspapers printed the wrong thing
- But he did actually win

### Economic Boom:

- After initial dip, economy experiences largest period of sustained economic growth ever that lasted into the 1970s
- 1945-1960:
- Big growth in GDP
- Per Capita income increased by 35% → people have more money, can buy more things
- Poverty decreases by 10% in the same 15 year span
- 60% of families achieve middle class quality of life in this time period
- All of this increase in wealth + 1944 GI Bill means college education increases by 100% in this era

### Baby Boom:

- Became an era of Record number of children born
- Baby boomers!

- Atheism vs Christianity
  - One of the convos of communism vs the US in Cold War
  - Communism representing Godless/atheism
  - Gov officials and media said lets encourage the nuclear family as a way to combat threat of atheism → mom, dad, children
  - Part of this is pushing traditional gender roles → pushing them back into homes
- Couples marry at younger ages → avg age for women 19, men 23
- More children per family
- By the 1950s, there are massive developments in vaccination tech, so children are surviving childhood at much higher rates than before

Larger families + larger income leads to larger housing demands which leads to shift to Suburbs and White Flight:

- Partially enabled by rise of mass production methods, but applied to homes
- Construction of single family homes → Levittown (first suburb model)
- At a lower cost, because houses aren't custom → everybody just has the same house
  - More homes for cheaper
  - More housing available for less money
- Federal Housing Admin → continuing to insure loans for qualified buyers at lower interest rates
- Veterans Admin → guaranteeing loans for veterans even more than before to ensure more and more people are getting access to housing
- These things kind of ease access to suburbs
- By 1960, around 1/3 of US population is using suburbs, mainly White families who are also trying to stay away from Black and Puerto Rican migrations

Consumerism as Anti-Communism:

- Another aspect of the cold war was Proving that US way of life is better. → capitalism, free market, liberty
- Part of this is by buying stuff → prove you're a good American by spending money
- Focus that US has on making better consumer goods more available to consumers
- And people can buy them! Cuz they have money!
- Emphasis on anti-communism is freedom of choice → you can choose which products to buy, part of liberty of Americans, unlike Soviet Union
- Sign of cultural superiority → also helps economy
- Also supported by expansion of consumer credit → first credit cards
- Easier to spend money
- One of the biggest things outside appliances is cars
  - People purchasing in greater numbers, people are competing to do so
  - 75% of households have a car by 1960
- One of the things that links to that: when you have cars, more travel, rise of motel chains and fast food and more tourism
  - Bc more people can go travel, it's not a luxury anymore

Television:

- By 1960, 87% of homes had a TV when none owned a TV before the war
- Tv was very limited → CBS, NBC, ABC only 3 broadcast networks
- One of things they are broadcasting → political coverage, but also television shows, entertainment, etc
  - Stressing and reinforcing cold war values
- Tv shows emphasize moral absolutes: good triumphing over evil
  - Like superman
- But also focus on suburban families
  - Ideal nuclear family in the suburbs
  - That's what shows are showing
  - Tv shows very few people of color, if they are shown, they are playing up racial stereotypes
  - One exception → silent film star anna may wong → comes back and becomes first Asian American lead in a tv show in 1951

#### Teenagers:

- 1950s sees massive increase in high school attendance, especially working class students
- Before 1950s only 50% of working class kids went to hs, but after 90% went
- Increase of working class families having access to education that they didn't have anymore
- Also creating more enclosed spaces where teenagers are separate from adults
  - Facilitates development of separate youth culture
  - Likes to push against ideals
  - Being rebellious
- Economic boom means they also have more disposable income
  - Teenagers have their own money
  - 50s is first time we see separate teenage consumer class → business say we can market things to teenagers rather than adults
- Things like comic books, movies, music records see a big boom in this time
  - Newer, geared towards teenagers
- Hollywood films are also geared towards teens and show a more rebellious version of things
  - Glorifying edginess of teenagerdom

#### Rock and Roll:

- Biggest aspect of distinguishing youth culture from older generations
- Rock and roll is most unique
- Rooted in black artists
- Pioneering new sounds, new rhythms, edgier lyrics
  - Representing edginess of being teenagers
  - As it gets more popular, it shifts towards centering white audiences rather than black audiences
  - Where we get people like Elvis Presley
  - Pushed social boundaries and norms: white boy singing typically black music
  - Again align with edgy and rebellious teenage culture

- Teenagers willing to spend money on it too, ensuring it becomes mainstream
  - Scandalousness a little overstressed, parents were scandalized but mainly bc they were afraid it would expose their children to adult life too early
  - Cultural moment that is occurring alongside the cold war, red scare, lavender scare, etc
- Also environment where we get first major proxy war...

#### Korean War Causes:

- 1910-45: Korea was a Japanese colony  
both US and USSR in Korea
- At the end of WWII, soviet union and US agree they don't want to cause war between them, decide to put a line at 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and north of that soviets can hang out, south of that US can hang out
- Split Korea in half
- Push by UN in 19 to hold elections in Korea
- But, soviet union doesn't like elections, they don't have elections, so in 1947 Soviet help establish soviet aligned communist gov under Kim Il Sung in north Korea
- Meanwhile in south Korea → US helps Syngman Rhee get elected to the leadership (nationalistic, right-wing kind of gov)
- Neither of these guys are happy with Korea being divided
- Both promise their people that they would reunify Korea under their control
- Both waiting for permission from allies to do so
- Kim convinces Stalin first, and in 1950 Stalin gives him the green light and then Kim invades South Korea
- Stages of war:
  - Kim able to take most of south Korea pretty quickly
  - Truman goes to the UN, says we can't let this happen, I want UN police action to protect south Korea from invasion
  - UN agrees, US led "peacekeeping force" (UN) lands in Inchon and bc they attack behind the lines, they are able to push north Korea back out
  - Instead of stopping at 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, he pushes across 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and almost goes until border with China
  - China doesn't like US at the border, don't want to be invaded as well, says yeah no
  - PRC sends reinforcement to north Koreans and pushes to US and UN all the way back to almost 38<sup>th</sup> parallel
  - March 1951 → back to 38<sup>th</sup> parallel
  - Truman fires MacArthur

#### In the middle of this: Election of 1952:

- Truman decides not to run in 1952 after Korean War
- When R puts another WWII war hero Eisenhower, he wins by pretty safe margin in 1952
- D have runs the white house since 1933 → Eisenhower is ending that
- First thing he does is push for immediate ceasefire in Korean war, happens in 1953
- But there's never been a Peace Treaty signed

- Demilitarized zone → created by ceasefire
  - Can't put soldiers in the middle area
  - Don't want them standing exactly at the border
- Facilitates prisoner exchanges → about 21k Chinese and north Korean prisoners of war went to south Korea or Taiwan bc they didn't want to go back
- In 3 years of active conflict, there are 4 mil casualties

#### Impacts of Korean War:

- Truman chose not to use atomic bombs in the war → set a precedent that we're not going to just use them bc we have them
- Huge increase in military spending → jumps from 1/3 of US budget to 2/3 of US budget after war
- Fully racially integrated military first time

#### Modern Republicanism:

- R party being supply side, small gov, etc → Dwight helps transform party from that by pushing to reconcile traditional R gov with ND, big gov, etc
- Said yes individualism, yes fiscal restraint, but ND
- Able to do this bc he works with D to expand social security benefits,
- Ensuring that some ND protections stay in place
  - Bipartisanship working across party lines, causing shift in R party
- Creates 3 whole new departments in gov → health, education, and welfare
- National Interstate and Defense Highway Act, 1956
  - Sets aside money to create interstate system
  - Easier to move military equipment and people across the country + easier access to suburbs
- All of these things are really popular, wins reelection in 1956
- But, he can't run for reelection in 1960 bc in 1951 states ratified 22<sup>nd</sup> amendment which establishes term limits for presidents
  - Says presidents can only serve 2 terms
  - Also caveat that if you are VP that becomes president → if you serve more than 2 years, you can only be elected 1 more time