CHAPTER 30

THE TURBULENT SIXTIES

SUMMARY
The 1960s was an era of angry protests, violent demonstrations, and sweeping social change. Under both Kennedy and Johnson, significant domestic reforms occurred while the continued American involvement in Vietnam led to escalation and eventually stalemate.

Kennedy Intensifies The Cold War
Despite a campaign that focused on domestic issues, foreign affairs took center stage upon John Kennedy’s election. The new administration supported containment and authorized a massive buildup of nuclear weapons in an effort to win the Cold War. Kennedy surrounded himself with the “best and brightest,” young, aggressive advisors determined to invoke a hard-line approach to the Soviet Union.

Flexible Response
Kennedy aggressively built up not only the nation’s nuclear arsenal but also the strength of the armed forces. The purpose was to create an alternative to Eisenhower’s massive resistance. Kennedy and his advisors wanted the United States to have the capability of a flexible response, meaning that America could choose to use nuclear force or employ the military should the need arise.

Crisis Over Berlin
A “superpower” stalemate that developed in Berlin left Germany physically divided between the East and the West with the construction of the Berlin Wall. Kennedy ordered further military spending for weaponry and called 150,000 reservists to active duty to demonstrate American determination to honor its international commitments.

Containment in Southeast Asia
Kennedy reacted to Soviet statements promising support for “wars of national liberation” by a combination of financial aid, technical assistance, and counterinsurgency in order to build strong, stable, Western democracies in the less-developed areas of Asia. The most obvious result of this support was the increase of American advisors to South Vietnam from less than 1,000 in 1961 to more than 16,000 in 1963.

Containing Castro: The Bay of Pigs Fiasco
Kennedy gave his approval to a CIA plan developed under Eisenhower to topple Castro by using Cuban exiles as invasion troops. The Bay of Pigs landing proved to be an utter disaster, and Kennedy took full responsibility for the failure.

Containing Castro: The Cuban Missile Crisis
In 1962, the United States faced a much more serious issue regarding the installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba. Kennedy refused to bargain on the missiles and boldly ordered
a quarantine of Cuba as the world braced for a possible nuclear showdown. Premier Khrushchev eventually backed down, but the Russians went on a crash nuclear buildup to achieve parity with the United States. Some positive results followed: a limited test ban treaty was signed in 1963; a hot line to speed communication between the nuclear antagonists was installed, and a policy of conciliation replaced that of confrontation. Those gains were offset by a dramatic escalation in the arms race.

The New Frontier At Home
John F. Kennedy took advantage of television debates and a national sense of dissatisfaction to narrowly defeat the Republican candidate Richard Nixon for the presidency in 1960. Kennedy’s election marked the arrival of a new generation of leadership. As he had with foreign affairs, Kennedy surrounded himself with the “best and the brightest” advisors on domestic issues. The new administration reflected the president’s youth and energy, but Kennedy’s greatest asset was his personality and style that endeared him to Americans.

The Congressional Obstacle
Because the conservative coalition stood firmly against education and health care proposals, much of the New Frontier languished in Congress. Kennedy did win approval of a trade-expansion program and a slight increase in the minimum wage, however.

Economic Advance
Kennedy made the sluggish American economy one of his highest priorities, but received conflicting advice on how best to stimulate it. Ultimately, the greatest stimulus to economic growth came from Kennedy’s increased appropriations for defense and space. In 1963, Kennedy, following the advice of his chief economic advisor, Walter Heller, pushed through major tax cuts to stimulate consumer spending. Personal income and corporate profits increased dramatically, and the economy did well throughout the 1960s.

Moving Slowly On Civil Rights
Having promised in his campaign to support desegregation, the president avoided congressional action, focusing instead on executive leadership. His brother and Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, continued the Eisenhower administration’s efforts to achieve Black voting rights in the South while Vice President Lyndon Johnson headed a presidential Commission on Equal Employment Opportunities. Kennedy also appointed a number of African Americans to high government positions and supported the attempt by James Meredith to gain admission to the University of Mississippi over Governor Ross Barnett’s opposition. Not satisfied with the scope of Kennedy’s support for Black equality, civil rights workers pushed the issue by initiating the first “freedom ride” in 1961 to test the Supreme Court’s order to desegregate all bus and train stations used in interstate travel.

“I Have a Dream”
Responding to Dr. King’s campaign for racial justice in Birmingham and his eloquent speech from the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, Kennedy finally decided to take the offensive and push for civil rights legislation in Congress. By the time of the president’s death, his
civil rights bills were on their way to passage. Though Kennedy’s record on civil rights was hesitant, he did throw the weight of the presidency behind the civil rights movement, something that had never been done before.

**The Supreme Court and Reform**
The Warren-led Supreme Court was the most active force for social change, making far-reaching decisions that improved the rights of accused criminals, and brought about more equitable reapportionment in legislative redistricting. The activism of the Court stirred a storm of criticism.

**“Let Us Continue”**
Vice President Lyndon Johnson moved quickly to fill the void left by Kennedy’s death, urging Congress to pass his tax and civil rights bills as a tribute to the fallen president.

**Johnson In Action**
Although lacking Kennedy’s charm and charisma, Johnson possessed far greater ability than his predecessor in dealing with Congress. He sought consensus rather than confrontation. He succeeded in achieving the passage of Kennedy’s civil rights measures, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made segregation illegal, was a landmark in the advance of American freedom and equality.

**The Election of 1964**
Convinced of the detrimental societal effects of poverty, Johnson declared an unconditional “war on poverty” and empowered the new Office of Economic Opportunity to set up a variety of programs to provide assistance to the poor in America. In 1964, Johnson and his “Great Society” program soundly defeated the hawkish Republican Barry Goldwater. The Democrats also achieved huge gains in Congress, breaking the conservative stranglehold.

**The Triumph of Reform**
Upon inauguration, Johnson began pushing his “Great Society,” making health care and educational reforms his top priority. The establishment of Medicare and Medicaid realized Truman’s 1949 goal of universal health insurance while the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provided federal monies to school districts throughout the nation. The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 encouraged massive increases in African-American voter registration. Within nine months of being elected in his own right, Johnson achieved the entire Democratic reform agenda, but difficulties abroad soon stole his attention from domestic concerns.

**Johnson Escalates The Vietnam War**
Lyndon Johnson shared Kennedy’s Cold War view and inherited his military and diplomatic problems. His forcefulness in opposing Castro and the Latin American left brought increasing criticism from many directions, as did his resolve to contain communism in Southeast Asia.
The Vietnam Dilemma
In Vietnam the United States had supported the South Vietnamese regime of Ngo Dinh Diem against communist insurgents. Kennedy had sent military advisors and substantial military and economic aid. Full-scale American involvement began under Johnson in 1965, after the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution by Congress gave the president the power to take the offensive.

Escalation
Refusing to call for an invasion of the North, Johnson opted for steady military escalation. As his “open-ended commitment” to force a diplomatic solution on Hanoi intensified, American combat missions in the South and air strikes against the North increased. Johnson refused to admit, however, that he had committed the United States to full-scale military involvement, and the situation in Southeast Asia worsened.

Stalemate
Despite massive American escalation, the war remained stalemated in 1968. Westmoreland’s wanton use of American firepower to destroy the Vietnamese countryside, wiping out villages and killing civilians, discredited the American cause and increased criticism of the war on the homefront.

Years Of Turmoil
With the growth of opposition to the war in Vietnam escalating, the 1960s became the most turbulent decade of the century as those who were dissatisfied with their position in American society—African Americans, women, Native Americans, hippies, Latinos, and students—took to the streets to protest.

The Student Revolt
Student radicals on campuses across the nation created unrest over free speech, war, racism, poverty, and a variety of other issues. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were the most active of these student groups. At first experiencing phenomenal growth and success, SDS was dead by 1970, destroyed by inner turmoil and a penchant for violence.

Protesting the Vietnam War
Opposition to the war in Vietnam was a central theme for many students. To students the war seemed to symbolize all that was wrong with America. Students held sit-ins and marches demanding an end to the war. Though they failed to end the war, they did change American life.

The Cultural Revolution
Combined with the issues of war and race, the youth of the country seemed to be rejecting all the cultural values of middle-class, middle-aged Americans. Along with opposition to the war and the draft, rock music and drug experimentation were key elements of this counterculture movement that climaxed at the legendary Woodstock concert in Bethel, New York.
“Black Power”
The civil rights movement became more militant and less concerned with racial harmony as the 1960s wore on. Despite the movement’s legislative successes, its failure to solve the economic problems of the race along with continued racial discrimination inspired a rejection of King’s non-violent tactics. When King was assassinated, urban riots erupted in 125 cities across the nation. The Black Power movement went hand in hand with a movement celebrating pride in Black culture and history and the rejection of the term Negro in favor of Afro-American or Black.

Ethnic Nationalism
The pride in ethnicity that emerged from the Black Power movement inspired other groups including Mexican Americans and Native Americans to celebrate their own heritage and history. Language classes and programs celebrating ethnic heritage began almost overnight at many colleges and Congress acknowledged the trend with the passage of the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act of 1972.

Women’s Liberation
Young women involved in the various civil rights movements of the era found to their dismay that many of their male colleagues saw them only as people to fix the food. Such sexism inspired many to join a growing movement for women’s liberation. Recognizing that the condition of women in America created a sense of grievance and discrimination, the work of such authors as Betty Friedan argued that many women were not satisfied with a life that consisted solely of housework and child rearing. The 1964 Civil Rights Act helped women combat employment inequalities while groups like the National Organization for Women emerged to push for full equality for women with the 1972 Equal Rights Amendment. Turned off by some of the more radical views of the feminist movement, the Amendment was not ratified by American voters.

The Return Of Richard Nixon
Partially as a reaction to the turmoil of the 1960s, Richard Nixon made a remarkable comeback and won the presidency in 1968.

Vietnam Undermines Lyndon Johnson
As a result of the Viet Cong’s surprise offensive during Tet, the lunar New Year, American political and popular support for the war declined rapidly. In March of 1968, President Johnson refused to authorize further military escalation, declared a peace initiative, and announced that he would not run for another term.

The Democrats Divide
Without a clear candidate, the Democratic party divided between Eugene McCarthy, Robert Kennedy, and Johnson’s Vice President Hubert Humphrey. After the assassination of Robert Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey became the heir apparent of the party, but divisions over the war deeply divided the party. These divisions became hardened at the tumultuous Democratic convention in Chicago.
The Republican Resurgence
With the wounded Democratic party foundering, and George Wallace, a third-party candidate running on White supremacy, running away with much of the Southern vote, the Republican nominee Richard Nixon easily won the presidency.

Conclusion: The End of an Era
The election of Richard Nixon was a rejection of the politics of protest and the cultural insurgency of the 1960s and a sign that the long-silent majority was fed up with the turmoil of the era. Nixon’s election signaled the end the liberal reform impulse that had been born in the midst of the Great Depression. It was also a repudiation of the burgeoning growth of federal power and interventionist foreign policy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Analyze Kennedy's attitude toward the Cold War and nuclear armaments and the possible long-term consequences vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

2. Summarize the main events and results of the Bay of Pigs landing and the Cuban missile crisis.

3. Compare and contrast the arguments for continued confrontation or conciliation with the Russians in the context of the Cuban missile crisis.

4. Understand the reasons for America's buildup of military strength in Vietnam and how this escalation undermined the Johnson administration.

5. Describe the escalation of America's involvement in the Vietnam War from 1961 to 1968.

6. Explain why and how the year 1968 seemed to mark a turning point in the Vietnam War.

7. Discuss the key elements of Kennedy’s New Frontier domestic agenda and his success or failure in enacting it.

8. Summarize the key Supreme Court decisions and their impact on reform of the early 1960s.

9. Explain the domestic successes of Lyndon Johnson.

10. Analyze the key features of the cultural rebellion of the 1960s.

11. Compare the ethnic and women’s movements of this era.
12. Summarize the historical factors that led to the return and success of Richard Nixon.

GLOSSARY

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms:

1. **recession** a downturn in the economic cycle characterized by stagnating economic growth and a usually higher rate of unemployment. “JFK was determined to recover quickly from the recession.”

2. **counterinsurgency** organized military and intelligence activity designed to prevent, control, or detect insurrection. “The president took a personal interest in counterinsurgency.”

3. **quarantine** a blockade or restraint. “He would proclaim a quarantine of Cuba to prevent the arrival of new missiles . . .”

4. **conciliation** agreement or compromise. “. . . he shifted from the rhetoric of confrontation to that of conciliation . . .”

5. **hawks** those who support war or militancy. “Hawks who had backed Kennedy's military buildup felt that events had justified a policy of nuclear superiority.”

6. **junta** a group of people, usually military, in control of a government after a military coup. “When a military junta overthrew a leftist regime in Brazil, . . .”

7. **covert** secretive, unannounced or unofficial. “. . . he expanded American support for covert actions . . .”

8. **escalation** buildup or increase. “. . . critics charged that LBJ wanted a blank check from Congress to carry out the future escalation of the Vietnam War . . .”

9. **interdiction** bombardment to hinder an enemy's progress. “Nor were the efforts at interdiction any more successful.”
IDENTIFICATION

Briefly identify the meaning and significance of the following terms:

1. Covert Actions

2. Berlin Wall

3. Bay of Pigs

4. Cuban Missile Crisis

5. Gulf of Tonkin Affair

6. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)

7. Great Society

8. Black Power

9. Tet Offensive

10. Voting Rights Act of 1965
**MATCHING**

A. Match the following Supreme Court decisions with the appropriate identification:

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<td>1</td>
<td>Brown v. Board of Education</td>
<td>a. defendants have to be provided with legal council</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Baker v. Carr</td>
<td>b. defendants cannot be interrogated or induced to confess to a crime without legal counsel present</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Gideon v. Wainwright</td>
<td>c. Tennessee had to redistribute its legislative seats to bring about equal representation or reapportionment</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Miranda v. Arizona</td>
<td>d. separate educational facilities for the races are inherently unequal</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Escobedo v. Illinois</td>
<td>e. the right of a woman to have an abortion cannot be deprived by state laws</td>
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<td>f. defendants must be informed of their constitutional rights</td>
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B. Match the following public figures with the appropriate description:

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dean Rusk</td>
<td>a. secretary of state, appointed by Kennedy, who said during the Cuban missile crisis, &quot;We're eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked&quot;</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Robert McNamara</td>
<td>b. MIT economist who became one of Kennedy's most important advisors</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>McGeorge Bundy</td>
<td>c. president of Ford Motor Company who became secretary of defense</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Robert F. Kennedy</td>
<td>d. U.S. attorney general and Kennedy's most controversial cabinet appointee</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Hubert Humphrey</td>
<td>e. one of the &quot;best and the brightest&quot; who became Kennedy's national security adviser</td>
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<td>f. vice president under Johnson</td>
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COMPLETION

Answer the question or complete the statement by filling in the blanks with the correct word or words.

1. The New Frontiersmen appointed by Kennedy were later referred to by journalist David Halberstam as ________________________________.

2. The purpose of the new military buildup was, according to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, strategically to create ___________________________.

3. The huge economic aid program called for by Kennedy for Latin America was the ____________________________________.

4. South Vietnamese rebels against the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem were known as ________________________________.

5. After the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev agreed to install a _____________________ for instant communication to prevent any emergency.

6. Senator William Fulbright criticized Johnson's foreign policy and the fallacies of containment with his publication of __________________________________.

7. Johnson complained that the Vietnam conflict, that “bitch of a war,” would destroy “the woman I really loved—the _____________________.

8. The ________________________________ made the segregation of public facilities illegal.

9. The ________________________________ was a central part of LBJ’s War on Poverty.

10. Part of the Johnson legislative program was _____________, mandated health insurance for Americans over 65 and _____________, health care for the indigent.
TRUE/FALSE

Mark the following statements either T (True) or F (False):

______1. The nuclear objective of the Kennedy administration was to concentrate primarily on defensive weapons.

______2. Regarding the Bay of Pigs debacle, Kennedy took personal responsibility for the failure.

______3. Following President Kennedy's response to the Berlin crisis America claimed complete victory as the Soviets withdrew their occupation army from Berlin.

______4. After the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviet Union recognized American nuclear superiority and concentrated primarily on conventional weapons.

______5. John Kennedy's Alliance for Progress emphasized military rather than economic means in our Latin American policy.

______6. “Strategic hamlets” were fire bases in South Vietnam from which American troops launched their operations.

______7. Despite the effect of the “I Have a Dream Speech,” President Kennedy refused to call for any additional civil rights legislation.

______8. The activism of the Supreme Court in the early 1960s was criticized, especially because of its decisions regarding the rights of the accused and reapportionment.


______10. The Tet offensive of February 1968 had virtually no impact on American public opinion.
MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the one alternative that best completes the statement or answers the question.

1. The approach of the Kennedy administration toward defense spending and the nuclear arsenal was to
   a. cut back on spending and reduce the number of nuclear weapons.
   b. construct an awesome nuclear arsenal with first-strike capability, which would put the Soviets on the defensive.
   c. hold steady on defense spending but concentrate on conventional rather than nuclear weapons.
   d. carry the Eisenhower approach forward, balancing conventional with nuclear weapons.

2. The standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States over Berlin in 1961 had the following result
   a. The Berlin Wall would at last be torn down.
   b. The two nations agreed to reduce their nuclear weapons arsenal and share in the solution of the Berlin problem.
   c. The Soviet Union agreed to abandon all of Berlin, leaving the city in the hands of the Western powers.
   d. The tension gradually eased, but Berlin and the rest of Europe remained divided with neither side claiming complete victory.

3. President Kennedy's solution to the escalating guerrilla fighting in South Vietnam was to
   a. demand the overthrow of the oppressive Diem government.
   b. send thousands of American offensive ground forces to stabilize the region.
   c. continue to support Diem while recognizing that it was ultimately South Vietnam's war to win or lose.
   d. order the first large-scale bombings of North Vietnam.

4. The result of the Cuban missile crisis was that
   a. Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles in return for the U.S. promise not to invade Cuba.
   b. the United States agreed to allow only defensive nuclear weapons in Cuba.
   c. the Communist government in Cuba collapsed and was replaced by a pro-American republic.
   d. the Soviet Union and the United States broke off all diplomatic and commercial relations.
5. Kennedy responded to Soviet missiles in Cuba by
   a. an invasion of Cuba to seize the missile sites.
   b. an air raid to destroy the missile sites.
   c. a naval occupation of the Cuban port through which Russian missiles and parts passed.
   d. a naval quarantine of Cuba to prevent the shipment of new missiles coupled with nuclear threat to force the removal of missiles already in place.

6. The Gulf of Tonkin resolution resulted in
   a. a declaration of war by Congress on North Vietnam.
   b. Congress's support of Johnson's desire to increase military activity in Vietnam.
   c. the decision to bomb Hanoi and other North Vietnamese locations.
   d. the decision to overthrow the Diem regime.

7. Johnson's failure regarding Vietnam was to
   a. refuse to acknowledge he had committed the U.S. to dangerous military involvement.
   b. begin the process of sending military specialists and equipment into Vietnam.
   c. support the Diem regime.
   d. overstep the president's authority concerning military commitment.

8. Which best describes the Viet Cong?
   a. pro-American elements of the South Vietnamese military
   b. the South Vietnamese regular army
   c. the North Vietnamese regular army
   d. communist guerrillas in South Vietnam

9. Both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations developed a foreign policy based primarily on
   a. their Cold War views.
   b. a strong commitment to the United Nations.
   c. emerging theories of détente.
   d. a strong commitment to disarmament.

10. Lyndon Johnson used 20,000 American troops to intervene in
    a. Cuba.
    b. the Dominican Republic.
    c. Mexico.
    d. Argentina.

11. Which of the following events took place during the Johnson administration?
    a. the Tet offensive
    b. the Bay of Pigs invasion
    c. the U-2 incident
    d. all of the above
12. John F. Kennedy took advantage of which of the following to gain votes in 1960?
   a. the sagging national economy and the frustration over Sputnik.
   b. his greater name recognition than Nixon.
   c. his prior reputation for being a strong civil rights leader.
   d. his reputation for being a tougher cold warrior than Nixon.

13. Johnson’s Great Society represented
   a. conservative support for corporations and wealthy Americans.
   b. an intensifying of the war effort in Vietnam.
   c. extensive tax cuts and defense spending cuts.
   d. long-awaited reforms in health care, federal aid to education, and promotion of civil rights.

14. Most of the actual stimulation of the economy during the Kennedy administration came from
   a. increased social welfare programs.
   b. tax increases to increase federal spending.
   c. the lifting of wage and price controls held over from the Eisenhower years.
   d. greatly increased appropriations for defense and space.

15. The most dramatic aspect of the youthful rebellion was
   a. opposition to poverty.
   b. civil rights.
   c. opposition to the war in Vietnam.
   d. the Berkeley free speech movement.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

To check your understanding of the key issues of this period, solve the following problems:

1. Given John Kennedy's military and foreign policy views, would he have followed the Vietnam policies pursued by Lyndon Johnson? Would he have escalated or withdrawn?

2. How do the diplomatic events of the Kennedy administration indicate his commitment to the Cold War?

3. After considering the alternatives, do you think that Kennedy responded correctly to the Cuban missile crisis? What were the long-term consequences of that showdown?

4. Did the Latin American policies of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson differ significantly? Explain your answer.
5. How do you account for the buildup of American forces in Vietnam? To what degree was Johnson responsible for the tragedy of Vietnam?

6. In what ways were Kennedy’s New Frontier and Johnson’s Great Society continuations of the New Deal? How were they different?

7. How does the Vietnam conflict connect with the various “movements” of the 1960s?


CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

After reading Betty Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name,” (1963), National Organization For Women, *Statement of Purpose,* (1966), and Frances Sugre, *Diary of a Rent Striker* (1964) answer the following:

**Betty Friedan, The Problem That Has No Name (1963)**

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—“Is this all?”

For over fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words written about women and for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and Freudian sophistication, that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and how to keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights—the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for. Some women, in their forties and fifties, still remembered painfully giving up those dreams, but most of the younger women no longer even thought about them. A thousand expert voices applauded their femininity, their adjustment, their new maturity. All they had to do was devote their lives from earliest girlhood to finding a husband and bearing children. . . .

The suburban housewife—she was the dream image of the young American women and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world. The American housewife—freed by science and labor-saving appliances from the drudgery, the dangers of childbirth and the illnesses of her grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. She had found true feminine fulfillment. As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner to man in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of.

In the fifteen years after World War II, this mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture. Millions of women lived their lives in the image of those pretty pictures of the American suburban housewife, kissing their husband goodbye in front of the picture window, depositing their station wagonsful of children at school, and smiling as they ran the new electric waxer over the spotless kitchen floor. They baked their own bread, sewed their own and their children’s clothes, kept their new washing machines and dryers running all day. They changed the sheets on the beds twice a week instead of once, took the rug-hooking classes in adult education, and pitied their poor frustrated mothers, who had dreamed of having a career. Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. They had no thought for the unfeminine problems of the world outside the home; they wanted the men to make the major decisions. They gloried in their role as women, and wrote proudly on the census blank: “Occupation: housewife.”

For over fifteen years, the words written for women, and the words women used when they talked to each other, while their husbands sat on the other side of the room and talked shop or politics or septic tanks, were about
problems with their children, or how to keep their husband happy, or improve their children’s school, or cook chicken or make slipcovers. Nobody argued whether women were inferior or superior to men; they were simply different. Words like “emancipation” and “career” sounded strange and embarrassing; no one had used them for years. When a Frenchwoman named Simone de Beauvoir wrote a book called The Second Sex, an American critic commented that she obviously “didn’t know what life was all about,” and besides, she was talking about French women. The “woman problem” in America no longer existed.

Gradually I came to realize that the problem that has no name was shared by countless women in America. As a magazine writer I often interviewed women about problems with their children, or their marriages, or their houses, or their communities. But after a while I began to recognize the telltale signs of this other problem. I saw the same signs in suburban ranch houses and split-levels on Long Island and in New Jersey and Westchester County; in colonial houses in a small Massachusetts town; on patios in Memphis; in suburban and city apartments; in living rooms in the Midwest. Sometimes I sensed the problem, not as a reporter, but as a suburban housewife, for during this time I was also bringing up my own three children in Rockland County, New York. I heard echoes of the problem in college dormitories and semi-private maternity wards, at PTA meetings and luncheons of the League of Women Voters, at suburban cocktail parties, in station wagons waiting for trains, and in snatches of conversation overhead at Schrafft’s. The groping words I heard from other women, on quiet afternoons when the children were at school, or on quiet evenings when husbands worked late, I think I understood first as a woman long before I understood their larger social and psychological implications.

Just what was this problem that has no name? What were the words women used when they tried to express it? Sometimes a woman would say “I feel empty somehow . . . incomplete.” Or she would say, “I feel as if I don’t exist.” . . .

It is no longer possible to ignore that voice, to dismiss the desperation of so many American women. This is not what being a woman means, no matter what the experts say. For human suffering there is a reason; perhaps the reason has not been found because the right questions have not been asked, or pressed far enough. I do not accept the answer that there is no problem because American women have luxuries that women in other times and lands never dreamed of; part of the strange newness of the problem is that it cannot be understood in terms of the age-old material problems of man: poverty, sickness, hunger, cold. The women who suffer this problem have a hunger that food cannot fill. It persists in women whose husbands are struggling interns and law clerks, or prosperous doctors and lawyers; in wives of workers and executives who make $5,000 a year or $50,000. It is not caused by lack of material advantages; it may not even be felt by women preoccupied with desperate problems of hunger, poverty or illness. And women who think it will be solved by more money, a bigger house, a second car, moving to a better suburb, often discover it gets worse.

It is no longer possible today to blame the problem on loss of femininity; to say that education and independence and equality with men have made American women unfeminine. I have heard so many women try to deny this dissatisfied voice within themselves because it does not fit the pretty picture of femininity the experts have given them. I think, in fact, that this is the first clue to the mystery: the problem cannot be understood in the generally accepted terms by which scientists have studied women, doctors have treated them, counselors have advised them, and writers have written about them. Women who suffer this problem, in whom this voice is stirring, have lived their whole lives in the pursuit of feminine fulfillment. They are not career women (although career women may have other problems); they are women whose greatest ambition has been marriage and children. For the oldest of these women, these daughters of the American middle-class, no other dream was possible. The ones in their forties and fifties who once had other dreams gave them up and threw themselves joyously into life as housewives. For the youngest, the new wives and mothers, this was the only dream. They are the ones who quit high school and college to marry, or marked signs in suburban ranch houses and split-levels on Long Island and in New Jersey and Westchester County; in colonial dormitories and semi-private maternity wards, at PTA meetings and luncheons of the League of Women Voters, at suburban cocktail parties, in station wagons waiting for trains, and in snatches of conversation overhead at Schrafft’s. The groping words I heard from other women, on quiet afternoons when the children were at school, or on quiet evenings when husbands worked late, I think I understood first as a woman long before I understood their larger social and psychological implications.

I am right, the problem that has no name stirring in the minds of so many American women today, is not a matter of loss of femininity or too much education, or the demands of domesticity. It is far more important than anyone recognizes. It is the key to these other new and old problems that have been torturing women and their husbands and children, and puzzling their doctors and educators for years. It may well be the key to our future as a nation and a culture. We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: “I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.”

National Organization for Women, Statement of Purpose (1966)

We, men and women who hereby constitute ourselves as the National Organization for Women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders.

The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.
We believe the time has come to move beyond the abstract argument, discussion and symposia over the status and special nature of women, which has raged in America in recent years; the time has come to confront, with concrete action, the conditions that now prevent women from enjoying the equality of opportunity and freedom of choice which is their right as individual Americans, and as human beings.

NOW is dedicated to the proposition that women first and foremost are human beings, who, like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential. We believe that women can achieve such equality only by accepting to the full the challenges and responsibilities they share with all other people in our society, as part of the decision-making mainstream of American political, economic and social life.

We organize to initiate or support action, nationally or in any part of this nation, by individuals or organizations, to break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women in government, industry, the professions, the churches, the political parties, the judiciary, the labor unions; in education, science, medicine, law, religion and every other field of importance in American society. . . .

There is no civil rights movement to speak for women, as there has been for Negroes and other victims of discrimination. The National Organization for Women must therefore begin to speak.

WE BELIEVE that the power of American law, and the protection guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to the civil rights of all individuals, must be effectively applied and enforced to isolate and remove patterns of sex discrimination, to ensure equality of opportunity in employment and education, and equality of civil and political rights and responsibilities on behalf of women, as well as for Negroes and other deprived groups.

We realize that women’s problems are linked to many broader questions of social justice; their solution will require concerted action by many groups. Therefore, convinced that human rights for all are indivisible, we expect to give active support to the common cause of equal rights for all those who suffer discrimination and deprivation, and we call upon together organizations committed to such goals to support our efforts toward equality for women.

WE DO NOT ACCEPT the token appointment of a few women to high-level positions in government and industry as a substitute for a serious continuing effort to recruit and advance women according to their individual abilities. To this end, we urge American government and industry to mobilize the same resources of ingenuity and command with which they have solved problems of far greater difficulty than those now impeding the progress of women. . . .

WE REJECT the current assumptions that a man must carry the sole burden of supporting himself, his wife, and a family, and that a woman is automatically entitled to lifelong support by a man upon her marriage; or that marriage, home and family are primarily a woman’s world and responsibility—hers, to dominate, his to support. We believe that a true partnership between the sexes demands a different concept of marriage, an equitable sharing of the responsibilities of home and children, and of the economic burdens of their support. We believe that proper recognition should be given to the economic and social value of homemaking and child care. To these ends, we will seek to open a reexamination of laws and mores governing marriage and divorce, for we believe that the current state of “half-equality” between the sexes discriminates against both men and women, and is the cause of much unnecessary hostility between the sexes.

WE BELIEVE that women must now exercise their political rights and responsibilities as American citizens. They must refuse to be segregated on the basis of sex into separate-and-not-equal ladies’ auxiliaries in the political parties, and they must demand representation according to their numbers in the regularly constituted party committees—at local, state, and national levels—and in the informal power structure, participating fully in the selection of candidates and political decision-making, and running for office themselves.

IN THE INTERESTS OF THE HUMAN DIGNITY OF WOMEN, we will protest and endeavor to change the false image of women now prevalent in the mass media, and in the texts, ceremonies, laws and practices of our social institutions. Such images perpetuate contempt for women by society and by women for themselves. We are similarly opposed to all policies and practices—in church, state, college, factory or office—which, in the guise of protectiveness, not only deny opportunities but also foster in women self-denigration, dependence, and evasion of responsibility, undermine their confidence in their own abilities and foster contempt for women. . . .

Frances Sugre, Diary of a Rent Striker (1964)

Wednesday, Feb. 5: I got up at 6:45. The first thing to do was light the oven. The boiler was broke so not getting the heat. All the tenants together bought the oil. We give $7.50 for each tenant. But the boiler is old and many things we don’t know about the pipes, so one of the men next door who used to be superintendent is trying to fix. I make the breakfast for the three children who go to school. I give then orange juice, oatmeal, scrambled eggs, and Ovaltine. They have lunch in school and sometimes they don’t like the food and won’t eat, so I say you have a good breakfast. Miss Christine Washington stick her head in at 7:30 and say she go to work. I used to live on ground floor and she was all the time trying to get me move to third floor next door to her because this place vacant and the junkies use it and she scared the junkies break the wall to get into her place and steal everything because she live alone and go to work.

I’m glad I come up here to live because the rats so big downstairs. We all say the “rats is as big as cats.” I had a baseball bat for the rats. It’s lucky me and the children never got bit. The children go to school and I clean the house and empty the pan in the bathroom that catches the water dripping from pipe into the big hole in the ceiling. You
have to carry umbrella to the bathroom sometimes. I got to the laundry place this afternoon and I wash again on Saturday because I change my kids’ clothes every day because I don’t want them dirty to attract the rats.

After I go out to a rent strike meeting at night, I come home and the women tell me that five policemen came and broke down the door of the vacant apartment of the ground floor where we have meetings for the tenants in our building. They come looking for something—maybe junkies, but we got nothing in there only paper and some chairs and tables. They knocked them all over. The women heard the policemen laughing. When I came up to my place the children already in bed and I bathe myself and then I go to bed and read the newspaper until 11:30.

Thursday, Feb. 6: I wake up at six o’clock and I went into the kitchen to heat a bottle for my baby. When I put the light on in the kitchen I yelled so loud that I don’t know if I disturbed the neighbors. There was a big rat coming out from the garbage pail.

Friday, Feb. 7: This morning I woke up a little early. The baby woke up at five o’clock. I went to the kitchen but this time I didn’t see the rat.

After the girls left for school I started washing the dishes and cleaning the kitchen. I am thinking about their school. Today they ain’t teaching enough. My oldest girl is 5.9 in reading. This is low level in reading. I go to school and English teacher tell me they ain’t got enough books to read and that’s why my daughter behind. I doesn’t care about integration like that. It doesn’t bother me. I agree with boycott for some reasons. To get better education and better teachers and better materials in school. I don’t like putting them in buses and sending them away. I like to stay here and change the system. Some teachers has to be changed. My girl take Spanish in junior high school and I say to her, “Tell your teacher I’m going to be in school one day to teach him Spanish because I don’t know where he learns to teach Spanish but it ain’t Spanish.”

I’m pretty good woman. I don’t bother anyone. But I got my rights. I fight for them. I don’t care about jail. Jail don’t scare me. If I have to go to jail, I go. I didn’t steal. I didn’t kill nobody. There’s no record for me. But if I have to go, I go.

Saturday, Feb. 8: A tenant called me and asked me what was new in the building because she works daytimes. She wanted to know about the junkies. Have they been on the top floor where the vacant apartment is? That’s why I have leaking from the ceiling. The junkies on the top floor break the pipes and take the fixtures and the sink and sell them and that’s where the water comes . . . I’m not scared of the junkies. I open the floor and I see the junkies I tell them to go or I call the police. Many people scared of them, but they scared of my face. I got a baseball bat for the rats and the junkies . . . I know my rights and I know my self-respect. After supper I played cards (casino) for two hours with the girls and later I got dressed and I went to a party for the rent strike. This party was to get funds for the cause. I had a good time.

Sunday, Feb. 9: I dressed up in an hurry to got to church. When I got to church I pray for to have better house and have a decent living. I hope He’s hearing. But I don’t get discouraged on Him. I have faith. I don’t care how cold I am I never lose my faith. When I come out of church I was feeling so good.

Monday, Feb. 10: At 9:30 a man came to fix the rat holes. He charged me only $3. Then one of the tenants came to tell me that we only had oil for today and every tenant would have to give $7.50 to send for more oil. I went to see some tenants to tell them there is no more oil. We all have to cooperate with money for the oil.

Tuesday, Feb. 11: This morning was too cold in the house that I had to light the oven and heat hot water. We had no steam, the boiler is not running good. I feel miserable. You know when the house is cold you can’t do nothing. When the girls left for school I went back to bed. I just got up at 11:30 and this house is so cold. Living in a cold apartment is terrible.

Wednesday, Feb. 12: I wake up around 5 o’clock and the first thing I did was light the oven and the heater so when the girls wake up is a little warm. I didn’t call them til 11 because they didn’t have to go to school. It is still so cold they trembling. You feel like crying looking your children in this way.

I think if I stay a little longer in this kind of living I’m going to be dead duck. I know that to get into a project you have to have somebody prominent to back you up. Many people got to the projects and they don’t even need them. I had been feeling applications I don’t know since when. This year I feel another one. This year I don’t vote for anybody. Maybe my vote don’t count, but don’t forget if you have fourteen cents you need another penny so you take the bus or the subway. At least I clean my house and you could eat on the floor. The rest of the day I didn’t do nothing. I was so mad all day long. I cooked a big pot of soup. I leave it to God to help me. I have faith in Him.

Thursday, Feb. 13: I couldn’t get up this morning. The house was so cold that I came out of bed at 7:15 . . . Later on, the inspector came. They were suppose to come to every apartment and look all violations. They knock at the door and asked if anything had been fixed. I think even the inspectors are afraid of this slum condition and that’s why they didn’t dare to come inside. I don’t blame them. They don’t want to take a rat or any bug to their houses or get dirty in this filthy houses. My little girl came from school with Valentine she made for me. Very pretty. At 8:30 I went downstairs to a meeting we had. We discuss about why there is no heat. We agreed to give $10 to fix the boiler for the oil.

Friday, Feb. 14 I didn’t write this about Friday in my book until this Saturday morning, because Friday night I sick and so cold. It is really hard to believe that this happens here in New York and richest city in the world. But such is Harlem and hope. Is this the way to live. I rather go to the Moon in the next trip.
1. Although based upon surveys of upper middle-class women, *The Feminine Mystique* express the views of many women. What exactly was the “problem that has no name”?

2. For women like Betty Friedan what are the shortcomings of required domesticity?

3. From the *Statement of Purpose* what were the goals of the National Organization for Women?

4. How radical do the goals of NOW seem to you? Do they extend beyond equal opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and shared domestic responsibilities?

5. To what extent would the problems of women like Frances Sugre be solved by achieving the NOW goals?