Information About African Americans in the 1950s

As the 1950s began, segregationist policies in many sections of the United States still denied equal rights to most African Americans. The "separate but equal" doctrine, which had been the law since the 1890s, forced blacks throughout the South to use separate public bathrooms, water fountains, restaurants, hotels, and schools. These separate facilities were generally much inferior to facilities for whites. African Americans attended run-down schools; lived in poor, decaying neighborhoods; and worked at low-skill, low-paying jobs. Even in the North, where segregation was illegal, many schools were not integrated, and blacks suffered from discrimination in housing and job opportunities. These circumstances led to the civil rights movement that burgeoned in the 1950s and came to full force in the 1960s.

In 1954, partly as the result of black activism, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt a severe blow to segregation. The court unanimously struck down the law that had permitted segregation in schools and other facilities. In its landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education,* the court ruled that the separation of schoolchildren "generates a feeling of inferiority that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." However, even after the court ordered that school segregation be dismantled, many city and state officials ignored the ruling and refused to integrate their schools. The federal government tried to enforce the court's ruling, but some communities put up stiff resistance. Battles over school desegregation raged across the South throughout the 1950s.

- **What conditions did African Americans face in the 1950s?**
- **How did segregated facilities for blacks compare to those for whites?**
- **What historic decision was made in the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*?**

In the face of widespread segregation and discrimination, the role of the church in African-American communities began to change. Around the country—and particularly in the South—many black ministers and preachers became the leaders and "social consciences" of their communities. As the civil rights movement began to gain momentum during the late 1950s, black clergymen such as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. began to work in conjunction with black civil rights organizations to spearhead a movement for racial equality. In the past, African-American churches had fulfilled the more traditional religious role in uniting their communities. Now, many of these same churches became the central headquarters and meeting places for black clergyman, community leaders, and social activists to work side by side to plan demonstrations, boycotts, and other strategies in their efforts to bring about an end to racial discrimination.

- **What role had black churches traditionally played in African-American communities?**
- **How did this role change during the 1950s?**

While discrimination was obvious and even legal in many places in the South, it was more subtle but still quite effective in the North. By the 1950s, large concentrations of African Americans were living in such major cities as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. Most of them had left the rural South in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s to escape poverty and discrimination and to secure better jobs. Yet to their dismay, many people found that conditions in the North were not much better. Harlem, the largest African-American community in New York City, was a typical black, urban ghetto. While the black community provided support for Harlem residents, and the cultural accomplishments of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance in jazz and literature continued to influence African Americans' lives, living conditions were poor. The schools that black youths attended were often poorly run and dilapidated. The health care Harlem residents received was often way below the standard offered in white areas of the city. For example, the infant mortality rate in central Harlem was three times higher than that of white areas. A full 50 percent of all African Americans living in New York City during the mid 1950s had incomes of less than $4,000 a year; only 20 percent of whites had that income. Black unemployment was more than double that of whites, and when they could find jobs, blacks earned half of what white workers earned. Life for many African Americans in places like Harlem was a vicious cycle of poor education, little or no job opportunities, and crowded and run-down housing—an environment that helped breed crime and poverty.

- **Describe the living conditions of African Americans in urban ghettos.**
- **What economic conditions did many African Americans face?**
- **How do you think economic obstacles affected their lifestyles?**

After World War II, some black families in the North benefited from general postwar prosperity. They tried to break out of their ghetto surroundings and find housing in better, all-white urban neighborhoods. However, most of these families found this to be a nearly impossible task. Most banks and mortgage companies would only issue loans to blacks to purchase homes in all-black neighborhoods. In addition, many white home owners banded together and signed agreements in which they stipulated that if they ever moved, they would never sell their homes to black families. Occasionally a white home owner would refuse to go along with the agreement, and a black family would "invade" an all-white neighborhood. When this happened, the black homeowner would often be harassed and insulted, and in some cases, violently attacked. Before long, the black family usually gave up and moved, restoring the neighborhood to its previous all-white status. This discrimination restricted many black families to less-desirable neighborhoods, even when they had the financial capability to relocate to better surroundings.

- **How did banks and home owners discriminate against blacks?**
- **What obstacles did African Americans face in obtaining better living conditions?**

Information About Chinese Americans in the 1950s

During the 1950s, upper-income, well-educated Chinese joined the predominantly working-class Chinese-American communities. The new wave of immigrants were Chinese-born students enrolled in U.S. universities and professionals who were living in the United States when Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists seized control of mainland China. Many of these people had ties to the defeated Chinese government and feared they would be persecuted if they returned home. More than 4,000 students and about 1,000 others thus sought refuge in the United States. The government viewed some Chinese immigrants with suspicion. America was in the midst of the "red scare" led by Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy, and many foreign nationals—particularly those from countries not allied with the United States—were subject to government harassment. However, the large majority of Chinese were granted refuge and went on to build successful new lives as permanent U.S. residents.

Stop Here & Discuss

- **What new group joined the Chinese-American communities in the 1950s?**
- **Why did they want to stay in the United States?**
- **How did the U.S. government treat the new immigrants?**

Most older Chinese immigrants—generally men who had come to the United States before World War II—lived in urban, homogeneous Chinese communities such as San Francisco's Chinatown. Restricted from owning land, they lived and worked within Chinatown ghettos, where they operated small businesses such as groceries, laundries, and restaurants, or worked in factories and sweatshops. The population was predominantly male because laws since 1882 had severely restricted Chinese immigration, prohibiting wives of immigrants from coming and allowing only professionals and students, most of whom were male. The Chinese who remained in the United States after the Communist revolution introduced a new element into Chinese-American communities. Most came from the Chinese upper class and had become well educated, either in China or since coming to the United States. They moved fairly quickly into the mainstream of American life, many settling in high-income mixed communities rather than in ethnic communities in lower-income urban areas. These Chinese immigrants became part of the intellectual and professional class—they took jobs as scientists, doctors, architects, educators, engineers, and other positions near the top of the economic ladder. In addition, they were able to take advantage of the abolition of anti-immigration laws that some states had instituted decades earlier. For example, in 1952 the California Supreme Court tossed out an old state law prohibiting Asians from owning land. Gradually, during the 1950s a solid Chinese-American middle class became established.

- **How did the new Chinese residents differ from older Chinese immigrants?**
- **What kinds of jobs did each group have?**
- **Where did each group settle?**

The U.S. government's gradual lifting of restrictions on Chinese immigration also changed the 1950s Chinese-American communities. Chinese women who had married U.S. soldiers, sailors, and marines during World War II began arriving in a steady flow—many with their children. In 1952, the government changed the laws to make it much easier for Chinese women to join their Chinese-American husbands. Soon, the old Chinese communities began to change. Tightly-knit Chinese-American families began to replace the "bachelor society" made up of single men that marked early Chinatowns. The traditional Chinese-American family also changed. The old traditions of arranged marriages, complete male authority over the household, and the unquestioned authority of the old over the young began to lessen. Over the years, the next generation of Chinese Americans began to adopt more American marriage customs—such as marrying for love and limiting the size of the family.

- **How did the lifting of immigration restrictions change Chinese-American communities?**
- **How did Chinese-American families change?**

Most Chinese immigrants were intent on making sure their families assimilated into American society, while at the same time maintaining a sense of Chinese tradition and culture. They worked hard to pay for their children's education through university. At the same time, many Chinese families sent their children to Chinese schools as a way of ensuring that the children learned the Chinese language, heritage, and customs. While many Chinese-American teenagers were interested in American movies and American popular music, their parents made sure they were also exposed to Chinese culture, including Chinese movies and opera. Chinese-American youth also learned the basic Confucian family tradition of total respect for family elders, and they learned to subordinate their individual interests to the welfare of the family unit. Still, Chinese-American youth often felt caught between two cultures: a traditional Chinese one that emphasized the family, and the American one that emphasized independence and self-interest.

- **What did Chinese Americans do to make sure their children learned both American and Chinese culture?**
- **What values were Chinese-American youth taught?**
- **What Chinese emphasis was at odds with American culture?**

Information About Japanese Americans in the 1950s

During World War II, the lives of many people of Japanese descent living in the United States were thrown into chaos. In 1942, the U.S. government relocated more than 110,000 Japanese to internment camps because it believed they might be a security risk. Japanese were forced to sell their homes and businesses for a fraction of what they were worth and take only those belongings that they could carry to the camps, where they lived in squalid conditions. Ironically, at the same time more than 25,000 Japanese Americans were fighting in the U.S. armed forces, either in segregated combat units in Europe or in military intelligence work with front-line units in the Pacific. By the closing days of the war, the government had allowed more than half of those who had been in the camps to leave. These people either joined the U.S. armed forces or settled somewhere other than the West Coast. In January 1945, the U.S. government closed down the internment camps, and the remaining Japanese Americans returned to where their homes were before the war. From the end of World War II through the 1960s, the former occupants of the camps tried their best to recover from their losses.

- **Why were Japanese interned during World War II?**
- **What happened to their homes and belongings?**
- **When did the camps close?**

Nearly all of the returnees went home to circumstances quite different from those they had left behind. Most Japanese Americans had little or no money, and they essentially had to start their lives all over again. The majority of Japanese immigrants who settled on the West Coast had become agricultural workers—just before the war, nearly half of the agricultural labor force on the West Coast was Japanese—and some had established successful businesses. After the war, however, they knew it would not be easy to find farming work again. For some, just finding a place to live was a challenge. In places such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, African Americans and Mexican Americans had moved into the neighborhoods where Japanese Americans had formerly lived. Returnees often had to stay in churches and public buildings until they could find housing. Japanese Americans also knew they would not be welcome in many places because of the continuing hostility toward Japan. Some Japanese-American business owners who maintained control of their businesses came back to find them vandalized and much of the merchandise stolen. Some merchants refused to sell to them, and some produce dealers refused to buy from Japanese farmers. In some instances, city officials even delayed or denied issuing them business licenses. Still, there were also cases where neighbors and business associates welcomed the returnees back and helped them reestablish their former lives and reenter their communities.

- **What industry had Japanese been part of before World War II?**
- **What obstacles did returnees face in reestablishing themselves?**

Of those returning from the internment camps, the ones who faced the most difficult time reestablishing their lives were the *Issei,* or first generation Japanese Americans born in Japan who had come to the United States in the early twentieth century. Many Issei spoke little or no English. They often faced open hostility from Americans who still thought of Japanese as enemies after the war. In addition, many Issei were in their fifties and sixties, making it more difficult to start over again in a business or a new job. Still, many Issei did reestablish themselves after the war by working very hard—sometimes at two jobs. Families pulled together to support each other, and many family members took multiple jobs. Gardening was one popular field; professionals and businessmen mowed lawns on a part-time basis to make the money they needed to buy homes, start their own enterprises, and finance their children's education. Many women also worked. Some took jobs in clerical fields, where they became very much in demand; others worked in whatever jobs they could find, including domestic service for white families. Many families managed to open small businesses, such as dry cleaners, laundries, grocery stores, and barbershops.

- **Why did the Issei have particular trouble resettling?**
- **What did Japanese-American families do to support themselves?**

Both before and after the war, Japanese Americans faced racial prejudice. Many Issei accepted this prejudice as a fact of life. At home, they tried to instill in their children a strong belief in their Japanese heritage, its morals and values. At the same time, they pushed their children to get the best education possible so they could succeed in the United States despite discrimination. However, the Nisei—second-generation Japanese Americans—felt they were part of two cultures. At home they spoke to their parents in Japanese, ate Japanese food, and grew up listening to Japanese folk stories. Outside, they spoke English to their American friends, ate hot dogs and hamburgers, and listened to American popular music. This created a conflict for many Nisei—on the one hand, pressure at home to retain their Japanese heritage and cultural identity, and on the other, a strong desire to "culturally assimilate" into their native land. This situation sometimes led to generational conflict between Japanese parents and their children. One Japanese-American woman remembers how her sibling felt torn by the cultural divide in their household. "My sister believed that 'instilling of Japanese culture and language only brought out the glaring differences between ourselves and Americans,' and these differences often made her feel like she did not belong. Conflicts would multiply when Papa would say to his children that Japanese were superior in their morals, values, and intelligence, yet they [the children] could see for themselves, in their schools, and community, that America had relegated the Japanese Americans to second-class status."

- **What values did Issei strive to instill in their children?**
- **What cultural conflict did Nisei face?**

Information About Mexican Americans in the 1950s

Since the Spanish-American War in 1898 in which Mexico ceded parts of the southwest to the United States, most Mexican Americans were treated as foreigners or second-class citizens in the United States. The thousands of Mexicans who refused to leave the land their ancestors had settled became Americans, and with new Mexican immigrants, formed close-knit communities called *barrios*. In barrios, people could easily find and enjoy the foods, entertainment, styles of dress, customs, and religion they had brought with them from their native land. Because many Mexican Americans earned low wages, barrio housing was often dilapidated. However, the barrios offered familiar markets, churches, newspapers, and entertainment, creating cohesive, protective communities. The people living there took care of the community's orphans, the old and the needy from within. During the 1950s and 1960s, barrio populations surged with *braceros,* Mexicans temporarily working in the United States.

- **How did Mexicans become Mexican Americans?**
- **What is a *barrio*?**
- **What services did barrios provide to Mexican Americans?**

The bracero program, instituted by the U.S. government in cooperation with the Mexican government, was first created during World War II. This program was designed to overcome the U.S. labor shortage caused by the war. Under the program, Mexican workers were invited to work temporarily in the United States. For more than 20 years, Mexican immigrant workers flocked across the border in great numbers. More than 275,000 came during the 1950s, and more than 400,000 in the early 1960s. Braceros mostly moved to cities in the southwest and in California, where they found jobs as migrant farmworkers, or as part of the ever-growing service sector. While some workers came to send money back to their families in Mexico, others stayed. By the time the government discontinued the bracero program in 1964, approximately 350,000 braceros had settled permanently in the United States.

- **What was the bracero program?**
- **What was it intended to do?**
- **How did it affect Mexican immigration to the United States?**

Braceros joined many long-standing Mexican Americans as migrant workers in the agricultural sector. Seasonal migrant workers traveled from place to place throughout the summer and fall seasons. They worked their way north, and did much of the planting, hoeing, thinning of crops in the summer, before they worked their way south again to harvest the crops in the fall. Although the bracero agreement contained stipulations with regard to health, housing, food, wages, and working hours, employers disregarded most of them. Thus, workers often lived and worked in terrible conditions. Many families, which often included several members, lived in one-room shacks. Others slept wherever they could, even out in the open. The competition for jobs was so high that workers would line up at three o'clock in

the morning. They worked 10- to 12-hour days, often in temperatures over 100 degrees. Sometimes even drinking water was not available. The work could be dangerous, too. Women and children worked on ladders, and often had to use hazardous machinery. Since the bracero migrant workers could not join a union, they often had to work for the lowest wages. During the 1950s, for example, women and children fruit pickers were paid as little as 50¢ an hour. Even after the labor shortage ended, agricultural growers lobbied Congress to extend the bracero program because it enabled them to use the cheapest labor, which in turn allowed them to gain the maximum profit on their fruits and vegetables.

- **What did migrant workers do?**
- **Describe their living and working conditions.**
- **Why do you think braceros were willing to work in the United States under such conditions?**

While the U.S. government welcomed this supply of cheap labor, it had a harsh policy toward those who entered the country illegally. In the mid 1950s, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) deported nearly four million Mexicans under a program called "Operation Wetback." This massive roundup of workers, either undocumented or simply suspected of being illegal, deeply affected Mexican-American communities. Mexican-American barrios became refuges for illegal immigrants looking to avoid deportation. INS agents would often sweep into these communities demanding proof of legal residence from everyone, deporting those who could not produce proof on demand. Many deportees were longtime residents and had children in the United States, and some were U.S. citizens. The government deported males heads of households, leaving their wives and children to fend for themselves. While some of the wives and many of the children were U.S. citizens, the overwhelming majority of them chose to leave the country to keep the family unit together.

- **What was "Operation Wetback"?**
- **How did it affect Mexican-American barrios and families?**

Some Mexican Americans were more fortunate. Mexican Americans who served in World War II returned home to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the postwar period. Thousands of Mexican-American GIs enrolled in trade schools, and some attended colleges and universities. Many also purchased homes with GI loans. Still, despite their service to the U.S. government, they continued to face discrimination in education, housing, and employment. Certain housing developers openly advertised that they would not sell to Mexican Americans, and the majority of Mexican Americans continued to work in the low-status, low-paying jobs they had held before the war. As a result, during the 1950s, Mexican Americans began to consider taking action to claim their stake in American society.

- **What advantages did Mexican-American GIs have?**
- **What types of discrimination did they continue to face?**

Information About Native Americans in the 1950s

In 1934, Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act, which gave Native Americans greater control of their own affairs and allowed them to manage their own lands. The act also provided federal funds to help Native Americans build tribal economies, restored freedom of religion for Native Americans, and encouraged tribes to revive their own cultural traditions. Although the Indian Reorganization Act ignored many Native-American customs of governance and tried to force all tribes to govern themselves according to the "white man's system," the Indians made great progress during the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1950s, however, the federal government turned hostile toward Native Americans. In 1953, Congress passed a "termination" resolution that said the U.S. government would no longer support Indian tribes and that all Indian affairs would be turned over to the states in which the tribes resided. The policy was intended to encourage the Native Americans to leave their lands, move to cities, and be assimilated into the population as immigrants had. This resolution broke all former treaties between the U.S. government and Native Americans, and denied the rights that the government had once guaranteed.

- **What rights did the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 give Native Americans?**
- **How did the U.S. government change its approach to Indians in the 1950s?**
- **What was the termination resolution intended to do?**

The government's termination policy dramatically impacted Native Americans. The federal government withdrew most aid, and the states had little interest or money to help Native Americans survive on their reservations. States were authorized to extend their laws and court systems over the Indian reservations—with or without the approval of Indian tribes. Indian tribes were forced to convert their holdings into cash, and to divide common tribal assets among all tribal members. To encourage them to move, the government subsidized moving costs and established relocation centers in such cities as San Francisco, Denver, and Chicago. Many Indians from wealthier tribes chose to remain on their reservations; most smaller, poorer tribes, however, had little money and assets to survive on their own. Tribal members often took the small money the government offered them to relocate and left their lands to head for urban areas. However, few Indians made a smooth adjustment to the urban environment and culture. Since they had been educated in reservation schools, they lacked many of the skills required to find jobs in the newer automated factories. In addition, rather than assimilate, most Native Americans settled together in poor urban communities alongside other nonwhite groups.

- **Why did many Native Americans move off their reservations?**
- **What did the government do to encourage Native Americans to move?**
- **How did those who moved to urban areas fare?**

Even some of the more prosperous tribes suffered financial hardships as a result of the termination policy. The Menominees, an Algonquian tribe from Wisconsin, owned more than 200,000 acres of the best timber land in the state. They operated a small sawmill, and many of their members earned decent wages there and in nearby logging camps. Until the 1950s, the Menominees controlled their own finances and managed their own affairs. They earned more than $400,000 annually from their timber and lumber sales. They maintained law and order on the reservation, and used their revenues to construct a hospital, schools, plants, and roads. The government's policy forced the Menominees to make drastic changes to hold onto their property. The Wisconsin state legislature created a new county consisting of the former reservation lands. They stipulated that all social services had to be part of the state system and be supported by taxes. This meant that the way the Menominees governed their land and tribe had to be changed dramatically. The long period of transition needed to create new systems wreaked havoc on the Menominees. Their social services were disrupted, and their logging and lumbering industry came to a virtual standstill. As a result, unemployment rose, along with bitter frustration and dissatisfaction among tribal members.

- **What did the Menominees do to successfully manage their reservation?**
- **In what ways did the termination policy affect this?**

Other Indian tribes became dependent on tourism beginning in the 1950s. For example, the Eastern Cherokee of western North Carolina held 57,000 acres of land adjacent to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Until the twentieth century, the Cherokee lived by farming their land. However, by the 1920s, the Cherokee had used most of their land for cultivation, and their population had increased. They were drawn into the country's cash economy when the state and federal governments built an ever-expanding network of roads. After World War II, tourists discovered the region. By the end of the 1950s, nearly 2,000,000 automobiles were passing through East Cherokee, North Carolina, each summer. The tribe monopolized on tourists' eagerness to see "real live Cherokee Indians." An official Cherokee greeter in a feather headdress welcomed tourists, and the reservation offered photo opportunities next to totem poles or a teepee for a fee, and Indian articles at souvenir shops. Soon, motels, gas stations, and restaurants sprang up, many with Cherokee employees. Still, the standard of living on the reservation remained low. Most houses were very simple lumber dwellings with tar-paper roofs; they had electricity, but rarely had plumbing. The residents still cultivated most of the food they ate, and depended upon the money earned during the summer tourist season for living expenses. Some families relied on welfare during at least part of the winter.

- **How did the tourist industry affect Native Americans?**

Information About Women in the 1950s

During World War II, unprecedented numbers of women entered the paid workforce. They took jobs in wartime industries and office and managerial positions that men left behind when they joined the military service. Along with women already working outside the home, new women workers found job opportunities as welders, factory workers, carpenters, construction workers, and other jobs traditionally held by men. Wartime propaganda encouraged women to contribute to the war effort, and many women found enjoyment, as well as greater independence, in their jobs. However, when men returned to the civilian workforce at the end of the war, women were encouraged to leave or were forced from their jobs. The popular media now emphasized women's return to the home and traditional roles as housewives and mothers. Some commentators argued that women could not compete with men in the business world. Television programs, magazine articles, and movies assured women that if they chose any course other than being suburban housewives, they would end up terribly unhappy.

- **How did World War II affect women?**
- **Why were women encouraged to leave or forced from their jobs at the end of the war?**
- **What were women encouraged to do rather than work outside the home?**

During the 1950s, women were constantly told—in magazines, newspapers, television, movies, and books written by "experts"—that the most significant contribution they could make to society was to get married and raise a family. The supposedly successful and happy woman knew how to catch a man and keep him; how to bake and cook delicious meals to satisfy her husband; and of course, how to handle every aspect of child rearing, from breast-feeding to toilet training, from coping with sibling rivalry to dealing with adolescent rebellion. Couples often married in their late teens and early twenties, and immediately started families. The birth rate rose almost 20 percent between 1950 and 1960. Many young women chose to forego attending college and pursuing careers to start families. The percentage of women in college during the 1950s dropped to 35 percent from 40 percent during the years before World War II. By the late 1950s, nearly two thirds of young women in college dropped out before graduation. Many young women felt as the student who refused a science fellowship at Johns Hopkins University: "All she wanted, she said, was what every other American girl wanted—to get married, have four children and live in a nice house in a nice suburb."

- **What message did the media send women in the 1950s?**
- **At what age did couples start families?**
- **What was the effect on female college students?**

In contrast to the happiness promised by mainstream society, many women began to question their traditional roles and yearn for something else. A significant number of women discovered that their choices left them unfulfilled, and in many cases, severely depressed. Many women felt their roles as only their husband's wife and their children's mother left them with little identity of their own. One mother of four who left college at 19 to get married summed up her feelings: "I love the kids and Bob and my home. There's no problem that you can even put a name to. But I'm desperate. I begin to feel I have no personality. I'm a server of food and a putter-on of pants and a bedmaker, somebody who can be called on when you want something. But who am I?" Many women who found themselves in this predicament sought professional help. During the 1950s, wives and mothers were the most frequent visitors to therapists, and the most likely to be admitted to mental institutions. Many others, however, suffered in silence. They went through their daily routines—doing housework, shopping for groceries, driving the kids to Cub Scouts and Little League, cooking dinner for the family at night—all the while afraid to ask themselves the overwhelming question: "Is this all there is?" These women would be the leaders of the next decade's fight for equal rights for women.

- **Why did some women not feel fulfilled in traditional roles?**
- **Why did many women visit therapists?**

Despite the large number of women who chose marriage and motherhood in the 1950s, the number of women in the labor force actually increased from what it had been in the 1940s. There were a few reasons for this. Many women who had lost their jobs when the World War II veterans returned home only left the workforce temporarily. By the early 1950s, many of them were working again, albeit often lower-paying, lower-status jobs. In addition, young women who had gotten married and quickly started a family in the late 1940s and early 1950s found themselves bored and lonely once their children entered school 5 or 6 years later. By the end of the decade, these women—many of whom had college degrees or had given up promising careers to get married—were beginning to enter the workforce. So, while the number of single working women declined from 1940 to 1960, the number of married working mothers increased dramatically—from 1.5 million to 6.6 million. The median age of women workers had risen to 41; 39 percent of women with children ages 6 to 17 had jobs. A significant number of these women only worked part-time, while their children were in school. Many suburban mothers worked in their local schools, small offices, or other commercial establishments in their own communities. This allowed them to be just a few minutes from home and still take care of their children's needs. Still, as the 1960s began, both husbands and wives in more than 10 million homes each held jobs—a trend that would grow substantially over the next three decades.

- **Why did the number of women in the labor force increase in the 1950s?**
- **Which group of women in the workforce increased more, single women or married women? Why?**