

The Postwar Boom**Section 4**

The Other America

Terms and Names

urban renewal Plan to tear down decaying neighborhoods and build low-cost housing

bracero Farm workers entering the United States from Mexico

termination policy Federal government decision to end federal responsibility for Native American tribes

Before You Read

In the last section, you read about mainstream American society in the 1950s. In this section, you will read about Americans who were not part of the American mainstream.

As You Read

Use a diagram to take notes on the problems faced by African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans in the 1950s.

THE URBAN POOR (Pages 660–661)**What was the plight of the inner cities?**

Prosperity reached many Americans in the 1950s. But it did not reach all Americans. In 1962, one out of every four Americans was poor. Many of these poor people were members of minority groups.

In the 1950s, millions of middle-class white people left the cities for the suburbs. This was called “white flight.” Meanwhile, many poor African Americans moved from the rural South to Northern cities. Businesses—and jobs—followed whites out of the cities. Cities also lost the taxes these people and businesses had paid. City governments could no longer afford to keep up the quality of schools, public transportation, or other services. The urban poor suffered as their neighborhoods decayed.

Many suburban, middle-class Americans could not believe that a

country as rich as the United States had such poverty in its cities. However, Michael Harrington’s 1962 book, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, made many Americans aware of the problem.

One way the government tried to solve the problem of the inner cities was called **urban renewal**. Minorities could not afford the new homes that had been built in the suburbs during the 1950s. Also, minorities were not welcome in the white suburbs. As a result, inner-city neighborhoods became very overcrowded.

Urban renewal was designed to tear down decaying neighborhoods and build low-cost housing. However, sometimes highways and shopping centers were built instead. The people who had lived in the old slums ended up moving to other slums—rather than into better housing.

Section 4, *continued*

1. What were some reasons for the decay of America’s inner cities?

forced Native Americans to give up their own culture. In 1934, the Indian Reorganization Act changed that policy. The government now wanted Native Americans to have more control over their own affairs.

In 1944, Native Americans formed an organization to work for their civil rights and for the right to keep their own customs. After World War II, Native Americans got less financial help from the government. Outsiders grabbed tribal lands for mining and development.

In 1953, the federal government decided to end its responsibility for Native American tribes. This **termination policy** stopped federal economic support. It also ended the reservation system and distributed tribal land among individual Native Americans. One result of this policy was that many acres of tribal lands were sold to developers.

As part of the termination policy, the Bureau of Indian Affairs also moved thousands of Native Americans to the cities. It helped them find jobs and housing. This program was a failure. Native Americans did not have the skills to succeed in the cities. They were cut off from medical care. And they suffered job discrimination. The termination policy was ended in 1963.

2. How did Mexican Americans and Native Americans work for equal rights after World War II?

POVERTY LEADS TO ACTIVISM

(Pages 662–663)

How were Mexican Americans and Native Americans treated?

During World War II, there was a shortage of laborers to harvest crops. The federal government allowed **braceros**, or hired hands, to enter the United States from Mexico. They were supposed to work on American farms during the war, and then go back to Mexico. However, when the war ended, many braceros stayed illegally. Many other Mexicans entered the United States illegally to find jobs.

Mexican Americans suffered prejudice and discrimination, too, even though they were citizens. When Mexican-American veterans came home from the war, they wanted to be treated fairly. They formed an organization to protest injustices. Other groups worked to help Mexican Americans register to vote. Pressure from these groups forced California to stop placing Mexican-American children in segregated classes. Mexican Americans began to have a nationwide political voice.

Native Americans also struggled for equal rights. This struggle was complicated by federal involvement in Native American affairs. At first, the government had supported assimilation, or absorbing Native Americans into mainstream American culture. That

Section 4, *continued*

As you read about problems faced by the “other” America of the 1950s, note some causes of each problem, solutions that were offered, and some effects of those solutions. (Notice that two answers have been provided for you.)

Problem: Decaying Cities		
1. Causes:	Solution Offered: <i>Urban renewal</i>	2. Effects of solution:
Problem: Discrimination Against Mexican Americans		
Causes: <i>Prejudice against Hispanics; hard feelings toward braceros who stayed to work in the U.S. after World War II; illegal aliens escaping poor conditions in Mexico</i>	3. Solutions offered:	
Problem: Economic Hardship for Native Americans		
4. Causes:	5. Solutions offered:	6. Effects of solutions: