

## SSUSH 23- Describe and assess the impact of political developments between 1945 and 1970

This standard will measure your understanding of how, in the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, political actions and decisions resolved thorny issues that Americans had faced for many decades. Individual rights, civil rights, and social welfare were addressed by Americans, sometimes within the institutions of the U.S. government and sometimes by private citizens.

a. Describe the Warren Court and the expansion of individual rights as seen in the *Miranda* decision.

### Individual Rights

During most of the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court was headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren. The **Warren Court**, as it was known, became famous for issuing landmark decisions, such as declaring that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education*, that the Constitution includes the right to privacy, that the right of free speech protects students who wear armbands as an antiwar protest on school grounds, and that all states must obey all decisions of the Supreme Court. In 1963, the Warren Court issued another of its landmark decisions, *Miranda v. Arizona*: Police must inform suspects of their constitutional rights at the time of arrest. The case involved a man named Ernesto Miranda, who was convicted and imprisoned after signing a confession although, at the time of his arrest, the police questioned him without telling him he had the right to speak with an attorney and the right to stay silent. The *Miranda* decision strengthened Americans' individual rights.

b. Describe the political impact of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; include the impact on civil rights legislation.

### Murder in Dallas

The **assassination of President Kennedy** in Dallas, Texas, in November 1963, was a tragic event with a twofold political impact.

1. The assassination showed Americans just how strong their government was because, although the president could be killed, the U.S. government would live on.
2. The assassination gave the new president, Lyndon Johnson, the political capital to force his domestic legislative package through Congress. This included the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which launched Johnson's "War on Poverty," and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed segregation in American schools and other public places.

c. Explain Lyndon Johnson's Great Society; include the establishment of Medicare.

### Great Society

During a 1964 speech, President Johnson summed up his vision for America in the phrase "the **Great Society**." His programs to make the United States a great society would give all Americans a better standard of living and greater opportunities regardless of their background. The **Medicare** program is an important legacy of the Great Society, as are policies and programs that sought to improve elementary and secondary education, to protect the environment, and to reform immigration policies.

d. Describe the social and political turmoil of 1968; include the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, and the events surrounding the Democratic National Convention.

### 1968

The year 1968 was one of social and political turmoil in the United States. Review this list of key events that shocked America and made 1968 a defining moment of the modern era:

- January—Vietcong fighters launched the **Tet Offensive** during the Vietnam War, attacking over 100 South Vietnamese towns, 12 American air bases, and the U.S. embassy in South Vietnam. Many Americans turned against the war and against the Johnson administration, which had claimed the enemy was near defeat.
- April—The **assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.** caused riots in over 100 cities across America, despite pleas for calm from such prominent leaders as Senator Robert F. Kennedy, who was then running

for president. One week after King's death, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which prevented discrimination in housing.

- June—The **assassination of Robert F. Kennedy**, following soon after King's assassination, disheartened many people who shared Kennedy's desires for social reform and opposition to the Vietnam War. He was running for president and was killed on the same night he won the California and South Dakota presidential primaries.

- August—The **Democratic National Convention** in Chicago is remembered as a scene where police armed with clubs and tear gas violently beat antiwar protesters on live TV. Many Americans started wondering if the American form of government could tolerate dissent.