

**CHAPTER 25** Section 3 (pages 839–845)

# Social Concerns in the 1980s

## BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about the conservative policies of Reagan and Bush.

In this section, you will learn about the social problems that existed in the 1980s.

## AS YOU READ

Use the chart below to take notes about social issues during the 1980s and how Americans responded to them.

### TERMS AND NAMES

**AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome)** Fatal disease with no known cure, that became a U.S. and world-wide epidemic

**pay equity** Situation in which women and men receive equal pay for equal work

**L. Douglas Wilder** Nation's first African-American governor

**Jesse Jackson** Civil rights leader and presidential candidate

**Lauro Cavazos** Appointed secretary of education by President Reagan

**Dr. Antonia Coello Novello** Named Surgeon General by President Bush

<b>SOCIAL ISSUES</b>	<b>AMERICANS' RESPONSES</b>
Drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prosecute users and dealers</li> <li>• Antidrug education</li> </ul>

## Health, Education, and Cities in Crisis (pages 839–841)

### *What problems did Americans face in the 1980s?*

A scary health issue that arose in the 1980s was **AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome)**. The disease is caused by a virus that destroys the *immune system* that protects people from illness. Most of the victims of AIDS were either homosexual men or *intravenous* drug users who shared needles. Many people also contracted AIDS through contaminated blood transfusions.

AIDS began spreading throughout the world possibly as early as the 1960s. It quickly became an

epidemic in the U.S. and threatened much of the public blood supply.

Another issue that concerned Americans was abortion. In the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Supreme Court said women had the right to have an abortion. Opponents of legalized abortion described themselves as “pro-life.” Supporters of legalized abortion called themselves “pro-choice.”

Battles over abortion rights often competed for attention with concerns over rising drug abuse. The Reagan administration declared a war on drugs. Reagan supported laws to catch drug users and drug dealers.

Education remained an important issue. In 1983, a report entitled *A Nation at Risk* criticized the nation's schools. The report showed that

American students' test scores *lagged* behind those of students in other nations. Many people agreed that the nation's schools were not doing a good job. But they did not agree on solutions.

The nation's cities were also in crisis. Many poor and homeless people lived in cities. Budget cuts had eliminated earlier federal programs to aid the cities. Welfare payments to the poor had not kept up with rising prices.

1. How did Americans respond to the problems of the 1980s?
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## The Equal Rights Struggle

(pages 842–843)

***Did** women's lives improve in the 1980s?*

Women continued to try to improve their lives. Women's groups were unable to get the Equal Rights Amendment ratified. But more women were elected to Congress.

By 1992, nearly 58 percent of all women had entered the work force. But women still earned only 76 cents for every dollar a man earned. New divorce laws and social conditions increased the number of single women heading a household. Many of these women lived in poverty.

Women's organizations and unions called for **pay equity**. This was an idea to make sure that women would earn the same pay as men doing the same work.

Under the pay equity system, jobs would be rated according to the skills and responsibilities they required. Employers would set pay rates to reflect each job's requirements. Women also called for benefits to help working mothers.

2. What political losses and gains did women have in the 1980s?
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## The Fight for Rights Continues

(pages 843–845)

***How** did minority groups fight for their rights?*

Members of many minority groups achieved greater political power during the 1980s. Hundreds of communities had elected African Americans to serve in public offices. In 1990, **L. Douglas Wilder** of Virginia became the first African-American governor in the United States. The Reverend **Jesse Jackson** ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and in 1988.

But the income gap between white Americans and African Americans was larger in 1988 than it was in 1968. In addition, Supreme Court rulings further limited affirmative action.

Latinos became the fastest growing minority group during the 1980s. Like African Americans, Latinos gained political power during the 1980s.

In 1988, President Reagan appointed **Lauro Cavazos** secretary of education. In 1990, President Bush named **Dr. Antonia Coello Novello**, to the post of Surgeon General.

Native Americans faced cuts in federal aid. Some opened casinos on their reservations to earn money. Asian Americans made economic advances but did not gain much political power.

Asian Americans were the second fastest growing minority in the United States during the 1980s. In 1976, an organization called Asian Women United (AWU) was founded to help Asian American women.

During the 1970s and 1980s, homosexual men and women worked for laws to protect their rights. By 1993, seven states and 110 communities had outlawed discrimination against homosexuals.

3. What were some political and social gains made by Latinos during the 1980s?
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