

**CHAPTER 26** Section 4 (pages 882–887)

# The Changing Face of America

## TERMS AND NAMES

**urban flight** Movement of people away from cities

**gentrification** The rehabilitation of old neighborhoods and displacement of lower income people

**Proposition 187** California law which cut benefits to illegal immigrants

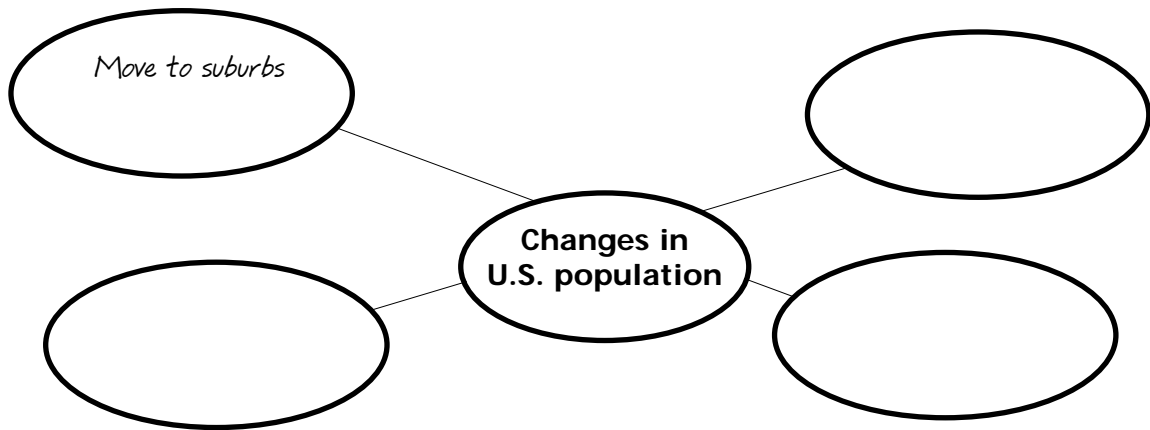
## BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you learned about the ways technology affects modern life.

In this section, you will read about the changes facing Americans at the start of the 21st century.

## AS YOU READ

Use the web below to take notes about the changes occurring in the United States.



## Urban Flight (pages 882–884)

### *Why did people move to suburbs?*

Between 1950 and 1970, America experienced a pattern of **urban flight**, where Americans left the cities and moved to the suburbs. By 2000, after years of decline, some major cities had increased their population or slowed the rate of decline.

There were several causes of urban flight. Overcrowding in cities was one. Overcrowding helped cause increased crime and decaying housing. Many city dwellers who could afford to, moved to the suburbs for better schools and safer neighborhoods. Cities lost taxes and downtown shopping districts lost business to suburban malls.

By the mid-1990s, people began to return to the city. In a process known as **gentrification**, they bought and rehabilitated old houses and neighborhoods. Neighborhoods came back, but low-income residents were *displaced* by rising housing costs.

Many suburban workers commuted to the city for work. But suburbs competed for business and industry. Suburbs offered tax breaks to get business to locate there and then saw their tax revenues decline as a result.

1. How did urban flight change the nation's cities?

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## The Aging of America (pages 884–885)

### *How will aging affect America?*

The 2000 census revealed that Americans are getting older. The median age, 35.2 years, was two years older than the median age in 1990. The cause was simple: people were living longer and the large baby boom generation was getting older. This trend put pressure on programs for the elderly. Social Security was stressed because there were fewer younger workers paying into the system and retirees were living longer.

In 1996, three workers made Social Security contributions to support every retired person. But experts expect that by 2030, there will be only two workers to support each retired person. Social Security will begin to pay out more than it takes in. As a result, some people want to reform the Social Security system.

2. How does the increase in the number of elderly people affect Social Security and Medicare?
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## The Shifting Population (pages 885–887)

### *How has immigration affected America?*

Changes in Mexico's economy have spurred illegal immigration from Mexico to the United States. The 2000 census showed how immigration was changing the face of one state, California. By 2001, California had become a majority minority state, with ethnic minorities making up more than half its population. Throughout the decade, illegal immigration grew with immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and Haiti arriving every month. By 2001, between 5 and 6 million illegal immigrants lived in the United States. In California, opposition to illegal immigration resulted in the passage of a law known as **Proposition 187**. This law cut all education and non-emergency health benefits to illegal immigrants. Proposition 187 was ruled unconstitutional. It helped inspire Hispanic immigrants, who saw themselves as targets of the law, to become more politically involved.

Native Americans continued to struggle. In 2001, about 32 percent of Native Americans lived

below the poverty line. During the 1990s, Native Americans strived to improve their lives through building casinos and using the courts to gain greater recognition for their tribal ancestry and land rights.

Between 1970 and 1995, the population of the United States increased from 204 million to more than 280 million. Much of this increase was because of immigration. Most of these immigrants came from Latin America and Asia.

Experts believed that immigration would change the ethnic and racial makeup of the United States. They predicted that by 2050, *non-Latino whites* will make up 53 percent of the population, down from 74 percent in 1996. They expect the Latino population to increase from 10 percent of the population in 1996 to 25 percent in 2050. The Asian-American population is expected to increase from 3 percent to 8 percent. The African-American population is expected to increase from 12 percent to 14 percent.

In 1994, almost two-thirds of Americans wanted to cut back immigration. Some people feared that immigrants took jobs away from Americans born in the United States.

Another problem was illegal immigration. By the early 1990s, about 3.2 million illegal immigrants came to the United States.

3. How is immigration changing the United States?
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## America in a New Millennium (page 887)

### *What challenges do Americans face in the 21st century?*

America entered the 21st century with several concerns, old and new. For example, environmental concerns have become a global issue and have gained importance. Poverty is a major concern, as is curbing acts of terrorism that threaten Americans both at home and abroad.

4. What challenges faced Americans at the turn of the 20th century?
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