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Smithsonian

Established in 1846, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex, dedicated to public education, national service, and scholarship in the arts, sciences, and history. It includes 21 museums and galleries and the National Zoological Park. The total number of artifacts, works of art, and specimens in the Smithsonian's collection is estimated at 155.5 million.



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◀ V-E DAY celebrated on Wall Street in New York City the day after Germany surrendered.

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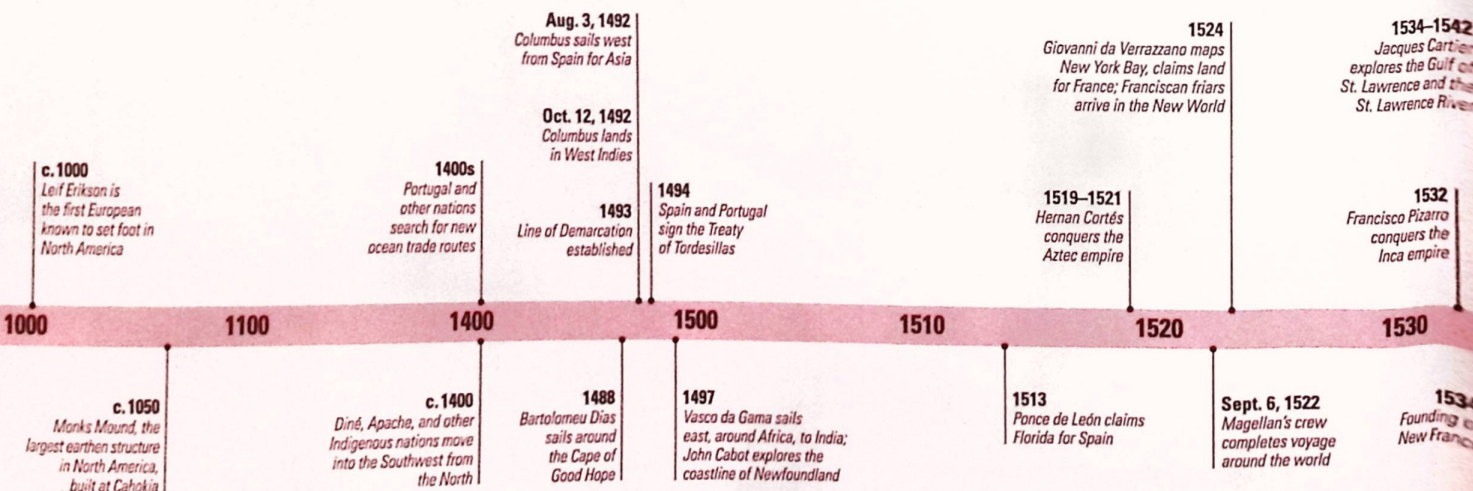
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INDIGENOUS PEOPLE meet English explorer Henry Hudson. These people, whom Christopher Columbus mistakenly called the "Indians," lived in the Americas, and had developed complex and diverse cultures throughout North and South America. These cultures were disrupted by the arrival of European explorers and settlers, who began colonizing their lands. As more explorers arrived to claim land, the two groups grew wary of each other. Some Europeans, such as Hudson, were friendly with the Indigenous nations. Many of the better relationships were based on the fur trade.

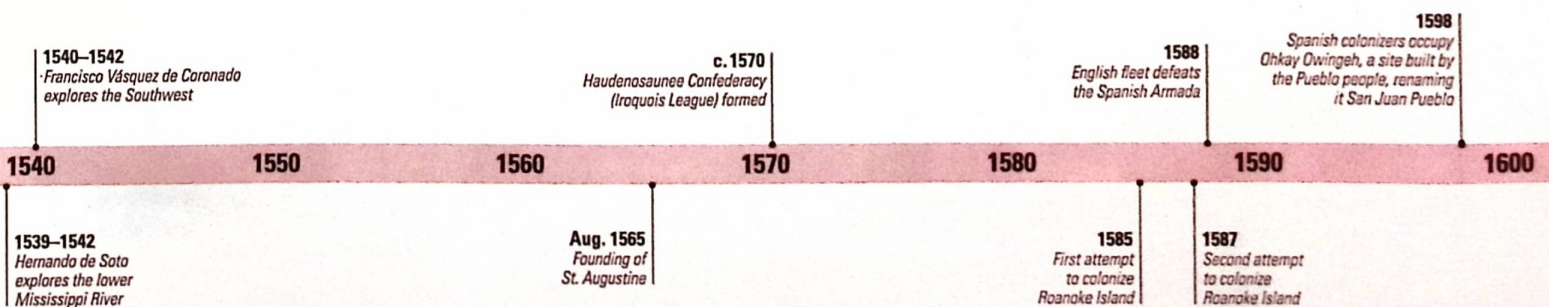




TWO WORLDS MEET

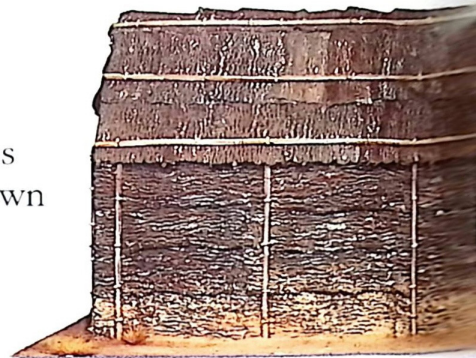
1000–1607

The first Europeans traveled to North America in about 1000 CE, when Leif Erikson and his Viking crew encountered a land they called Vinland, after the grapes that grew there. The Vikings eventually abandoned their settlements in eastern Canada and returned to their homes in Greenland. No more Europeans arrived for nearly 500 years. In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed west from Spain, searching for a new trade route to China and the Spice Islands, where he could buy the spices and silks Europeans desired. Instead of Asia, he landed on the outer edges of the vast landmass of North and South America. Soon, other European explorers headed west in search of glory, riches, and land. Indigenous peoples had lived on these continents for centuries, and the Europeans' arrival changed their way of life—they not only had their lands taken, but were also afflicted by new diseases brought by the Europeans. Within a century, European countries were planning permanent colonies on North America's Atlantic coast.



The First Americans

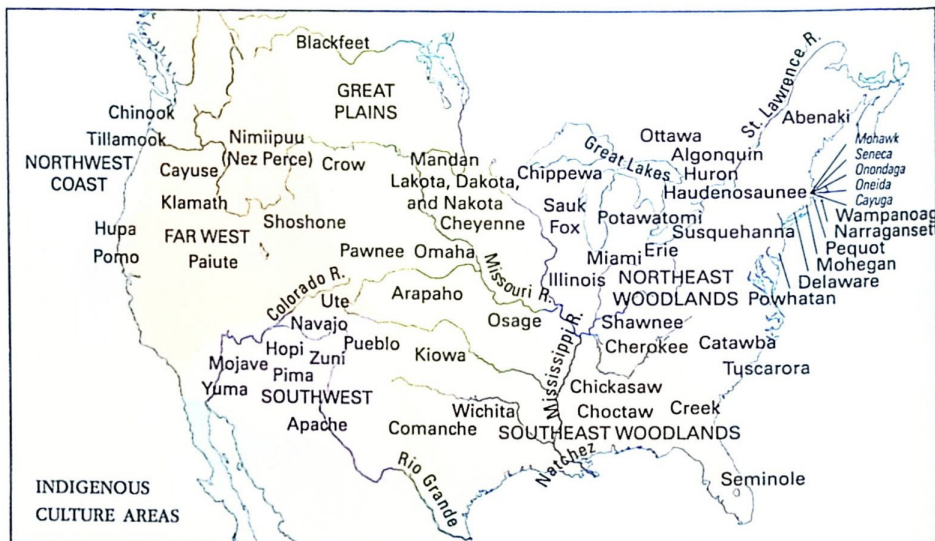
The first inhabitants of North America are an integral part of the continent. At the time of their first contact with Europeans, millions lived throughout the continent in hundreds of social groups, now known as nations, or earlier as tribes. They spoke more than 1,000 different languages and dialects. In each geographical region, these Indigenous peoples made the most of their environment to survive—and thrive.



1000-1607 TWO WORLDS MEET

Culture areas

Although each Indigenous nation had its own unique customs and beliefs, the geography of their homelands—whether baking-hot desert, dense forest, grassy plain, or fertile river valley—meant that groups living near each other shared similar ways of life. Anthropologists who study the Indigenous peoples of North America have divided the nations into culture areas, as shown on the map. The nations themselves have their own way of defining their borders and areas.





▲ SOME INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE NORTHEAST lived in longhouses: sturdy, wood-framed structures built for several families. The dense forests in the area provided plenty of wood for houses and stockades.



Northeast woodlands

Most Indigenous peoples of this culture area, made up of New England and the lands surrounding the Great Lakes, lived by both hunting and farming. The nations of this region were split into two groups by their languages. The Algonquian-language nations include the Huron, the Narragansett, and the Powhatan of what is now called Virginia. The Haudenosaunee group, a powerful union of nations based in what is now New York, include the Mohawk, Oneida, and Seneca.



◀ FALSE FACE MASKS like this one were carved from the wood of a living tree; the masks' features were inspired by dreams. The False Face Society was a group of powerful Haudenosaunee healers.

THE HAUDENOSAUNEE CONFEDERACY

The five nations of the Haudenosaunee—the Seneca, Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, and Onondaga—were frequently at war, battling one another as well as the Algonquins. According to legend, a Mohawk leader named Hiawatha proposed a treaty of unity among the Haudenosaunee nations. This union, or confederacy, not only ended the fighting but also helped the Haudenosaunee become strong and influential, which became especially important in their later dealings with European settlers. Women played an important part in the way the new league was organized—and ruled. A “fireside,” made up of a woman and her children, was the smallest tribal unit. Several firesides together made up a clan; all the clans of a people made up the nation. Women picked men to represent the clan, and they named the 50 chiefs, or sachems, who made up the ruling council.



GEORGE CATLIN'S PAINTINGS from the early 1800s captured Indigenous life before the full impact of European settlement was understood. This painting shows how horses, brought to the New World by Spanish explorers, made it much easier for Indigenous people to hunt buffalo, a major source of food and leather.



Southeast woodlands

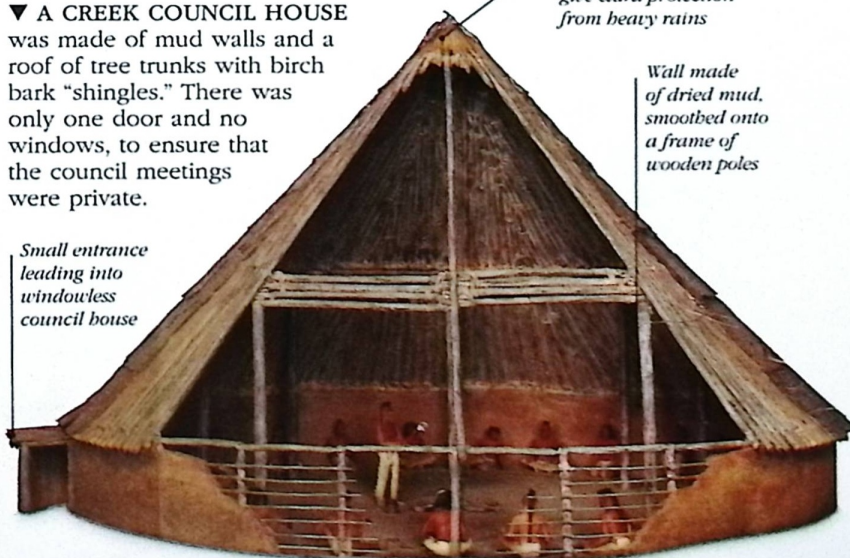
Most of the nations that lived around the Gulf of Mexico spoke the Muskogean family of languages. Some groups—such as the Creek, Choctaw, and Seminole—farmed, but all relied on hunting and the gathering of wild foods. To obtain what they could not grow, kill, or catch, they traded with other peoples, sometimes traveling as far as the Great Lakes region.

▼ A CREEK COUNCIL HOUSE was made of mud walls and a roof of tree trunks with birch bark “shingles.” There was only one door and no windows, to ensure that the council meetings were private.

Small entrance leading into windowless council house

Strips of birch bark laid in sheets on the roof, to give extra protection from heavy rains

Wall made of dried mud, smoothed onto a frame of wooden poles





Southwest

The rocky mesas and desert plains of the Southwest made a beautiful, but dry, home.

Because there were few trees to use for building, the Pueblo nations who lived there (including the Hopi, Zuni, and Acoma) built villages of stone or of a sun-dried mixture of mud and water called adobe. The kiva—an underground room for special ceremonies—was the center of town life. These people grew corn, beans, squash, and cotton, using irrigation to bring water to the desert. Their pottery and weaving were among the finest in North America. Other nations, including the Navajo and Apache, moved to the region from the north around 1400.

► **NAVAJO SERAPES** like this one feature intricate geometric designs. The Navajo originally learned weaving techniques from the Pueblos in the late 1600s, shortly after Spanish settlers introduced sheep to the Southwest.



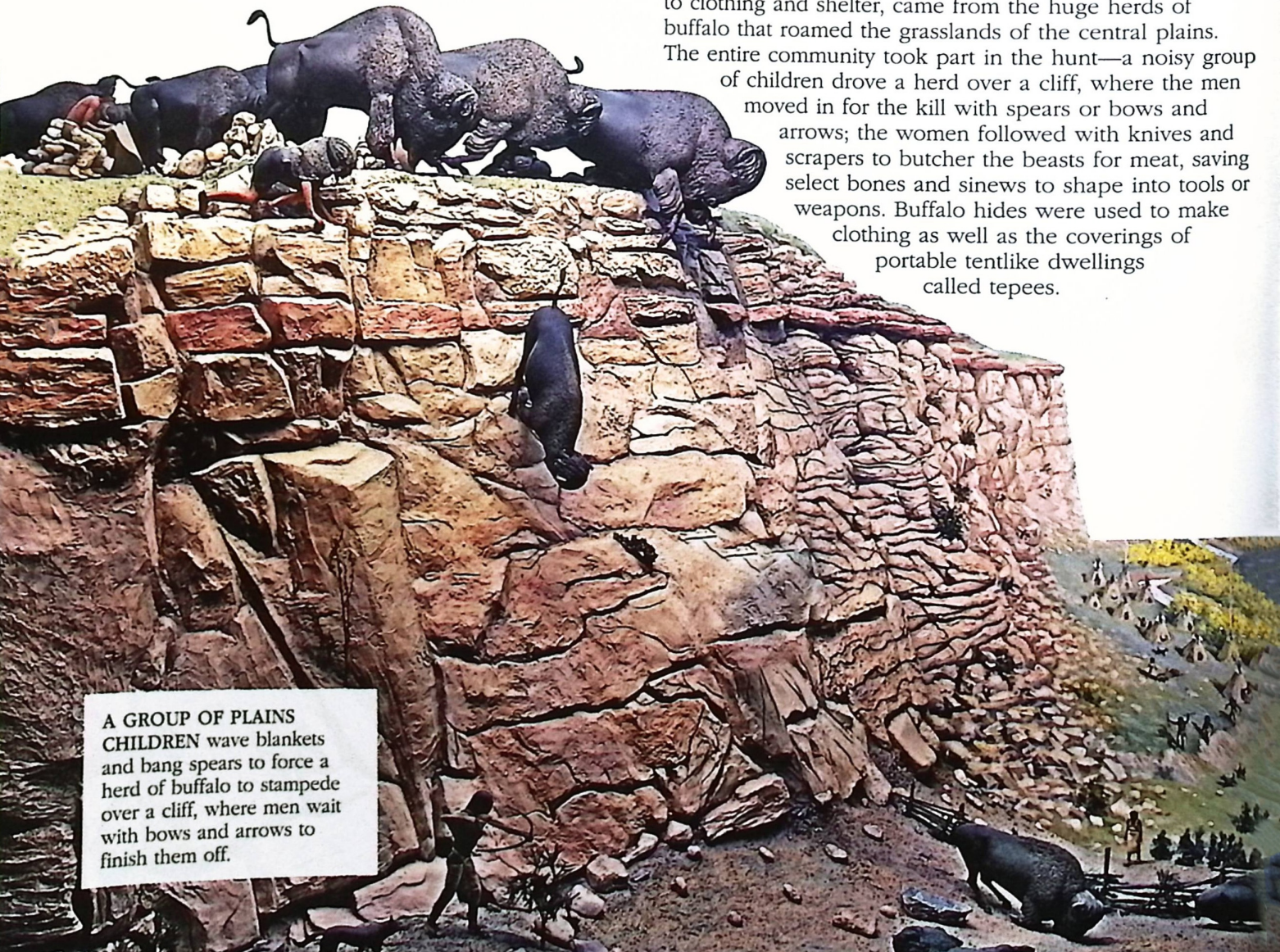
◀ **THIS ZUNI POT** is decorated with images of white-tailed deer.



Great Plains

The nations of the Great Plains lived in an area west of the Mississippi River, from Canada to present-day Texas—the Lakota and Cheyenne in the north, the Comanche in the south, and the Pawnee and Arapaho in between. Everything they needed to survive, from food to clothing and shelter, came from the huge herds of buffalo that roamed the grasslands of the central plains.

The entire community took part in the hunt—a noisy group of children drove a herd over a cliff, where the men moved in for the kill with spears or bows and arrows; the women followed with knives and scrapers to butcher the beasts for meat, saving select bones and sinews to shape into tools or weapons. Buffalo hides were used to make clothing as well as the coverings of portable tentlike dwellings called tepees.



A GROUP OF PLAINS CHILDREN wave blankets and bang spears to force a herd of buffalo to stampede over a cliff, where men wait with bows and arrows to finish them off.



Far West

The Great Basin, a vast desert located between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada, was home to the Shoshone, Ute, and other nations. There were few crops or large game animals, but the people survived by roaming the Basin in small groups, gathering wild food and small animals, such as rabbits, squirrels, and snakes. The women wove some of the most durable and decorative baskets in all of North America—perfect for people on the move. Across the mountains in California, the Hupa, Pomo, Chumash, and other nations also made baskets, which they used to gather acorns and other food.



◀ BASKETS woven with willow and sedge root are used to carry and store objects.



▲ A WASHOE BASKET WEAVER at work. Basket weavers from this Nevada and California nation are famous for their skilled handiwork.



Northwest Coast

The nations of the Pacific Coast lived among towering trees and great fishing waters. The people here—Tlingit, Kwakiutl, Chinook, and others—didn't farm. Instead, they lived off large game animals, such as deer and caribou, and fished in streams full of spawning salmon. They used the abundant trees to build large, wood-plank houses; carve totem poles showing the symbols of the family, from ancestors to guardian animal spirits; and make wooden canoes sturdy enough for hunting whales. Their cloth and blankets were made of pounded bark, which they decorated beautifully.



◀ EACH RING ON THIS CARVED WOODEN HAT represents one potlatch—a lavish feast in which the host gave away hundreds of gifts. A man who wore a hat with many rings would be given great respect in Tlingit society.



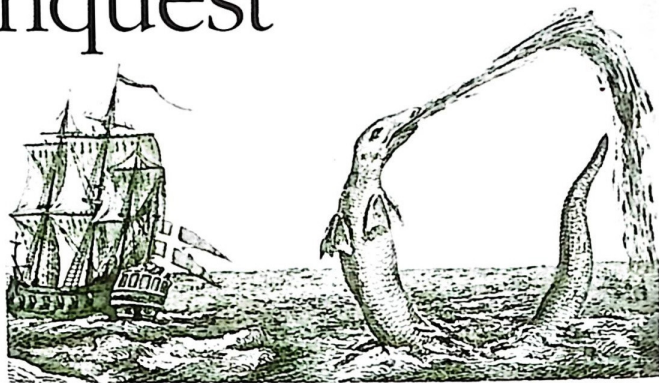
◀ A TLINGIT FIGHTING KNIFE, with an iron blade and intricately carved ivory handle inlaid with bits of shell, was tied to the wrist with a leather strap.

► TOTEM POLE VILLAGES like this one included carved totems recording family history and each family's relationship to powerful animal spirits.



Exploration and Conquest

In the 1400s, Europeans in search of new trade routes began a great age of sea exploration. Improved ship designs and better instruments helped captains sail far from their home shores. Portugal led the way, its ships sailing east to reach Asia. Christopher Columbus, daring to sail west for Asia, instead found the Americas, where Spain would eventually conquer three empires—the Aztec, the Inca, and the Maya.



▲ TERRIFYING TALES of sea monsters, such as the serpent in this later engraving, kept many would-be explorers from sailing far from land.

Portugal's pioneering voyages

In the mid-1400s, Portugal led the rest of Europe in its search for sea routes to Asia and other lands unknown to Europeans. Portugal's Prince Henry founded a navigation school, where captains and crew learned how to sail ships expertly and plot voyages with the latest equipment. Henry sent expeditions down the African coast, trading for gold, ivory, and enslaved people.

In 1488, Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias sailed all the way around the southern tip of Africa, called the Cape of Good Hope, before his terrified crew—fearing sea monsters, or worse—forced him to turn back. Ten years later, Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape, crossed the Indian Ocean to India, and returned with a ship full of valuables. Portugal later set up trading posts in India, China, and the East Indies, bringing back silk, tea, ivory, gold, and spices to sell in Europe.



◀ THE MARINER'S ASTROLABE was a Portuguese invention, modified from an Islamic navigating tool of the Mediterranean. It measured the altitude of stars in the night sky to help calculate a ship's distance from the equator.

The voyages of Columbus

Italian sea captain Christopher Columbus believed he could find a shorter, safer passage to the trading centers of Asia by sailing west, instead of using da Gama's eastern route. Columbus persuaded Spain's Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand to pay for an expedition; in 1492, he set out with 90 crew and three ships—the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*—on his first voyage across the Atlantic.

After more than two perilous months at sea, a lookout spotted land—what would later be named the Caribbean Islands. Columbus was so sure he had reached the Indies that he called the islanders he met there "Indians." Columbus made three more voyages. Although he never reached Asia, he did pave the way for later European colonization of the Americas.

DEFINITION

Colonization is when one country takes over another, establishes settlements there, and tries to control its resources.

▶ THE PORTUGUESE CARAVEL, seen in this model, combined both triangular and square sails, enabling ships to sail into the wind as well as with the wind. The caravel's innovative design helped Portugal rule the waves in the 1400s.



Spain's conquests

Many Spanish adventurers followed Columbus's route west, hungry for gold, silver, and land. These soldiers, known as *conquistadors*, or conquerors, eventually defeated and seized two mighty empires, finding treasures far greater than Columbus had envisioned.

In 1519, the Spanish soldier Hernan Cortés led the conquest of the Aztecs in Mexico. After looting valuable items made of gold, silver, and precious stones and loading them onto Spanish ships, Cortés destroyed the Aztec capital city, and—after a fierce fight—wiped out its people, too. He declared it a colony for New Spain and laid claim to its resources.

In the Andes mountains of South America, *conquistador* Francisco Pizarro seized the Inca empire in 1532. After plundering the cities, he enslaved the Indigenous people to work in gold and silver mines. Ships laden with treasure sailed back to Spain, making its empire the envy of all of Europe.

DIVIDING THE WORLD

To prevent disputes over land claims between Spain and Portugal, the two countries signed the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, which was approved by Pope Julius II in 1506. The treaty set up an imaginary north-south line through the Atlantic Ocean; Spain had the right to claim lands west of the line, and Portugal could claim lands to the east. Brazil became a Portuguese colony in 1500 because it was east of the line, while Spain claimed the rest of South America. The millions of people who already lived in these "new" lands were unaware their homes were now claimed by European powers.

▼ COLUMBUS AND HIS CREW claim lands for Spain, where he was hailed as a hero.

But his conquests had terrible consequences for Indigenous populations, who were subjected to cruelty and enslavement. As governor of the Indies, Columbus imposed brutal and violent punishments even for petty crimes.



Donald Trump

Prior to the 2016 presidential election, Republican candidate Donald Trump was best known as the host of reality TV show *The Apprentice*. His opponent Hillary Clinton won the popular vote, but in a shocking result Trump took the Electoral College, and with it the presidency. He promised to fix the “American carnage” of unemployment and crime, but under him, the divisions in US politics widened. After losing the 2020 presidential election to Joe Biden, he refused to cede power without a fight. The attack on the Capitol by his supporters on January 6, 2021, resulted in death and destruction, ending Trump’s presidency under a cloud of violence and falsehoods.

Winning the US

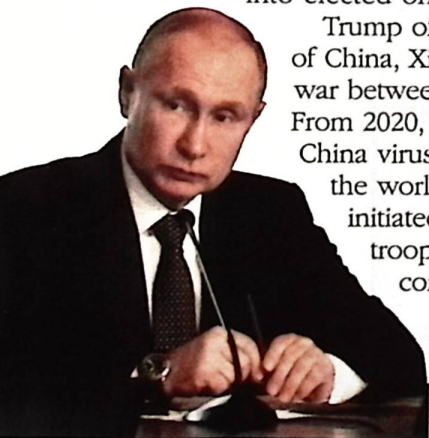
Trump’s presidential campaign was largely aimed at white, working-class voters. He promised to revive fading industries, such as the coal, steel, and auto industries, as well as reduce the number of immigrants in the country. Those who wanted to ensure that a Republican president chose the next Supreme Court justices also came out in his support. His criticism of Hillary Clinton’s use of private email servers while serving in the government bolstered his campaign.

Foreign relations

Relationships between the US and other countries varied throughout Trump’s presidency. Relations with Russia were warm at first, but suffered after US intelligence agencies confirmed that Russia had interfered in the 2016 elections. They found that Russia had attempted to destabilize democracy in the US by various means, which included hacking into elected officials’ emails.

Trump often praised the president of China, Xi Jinping, but started a trade war between the two powers in 2018. From 2020, he called COVID-19 “the China virus,” blaming the country for the worldwide pandemic. Trump also initiated a chaotic withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, which was completed under President Biden.

◀ RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN has said that his country did not interfere in the US elections.



TRUMP AND MEDIA

Trump often clashed with the media over their reporting of his actions. Reminiscent of President Nixon’s conflicts with the press, Trump and his press secretaries called critical reports “fake news” and even referred to journalists as “the enemy of the American people.” He took to Twitter to voice his side of the story without the filter of the press, often bypassing traditional briefings. According to the *Washington Post*, Trump made over 30,000 false or misleading claims during his presidency, or 21 per day.

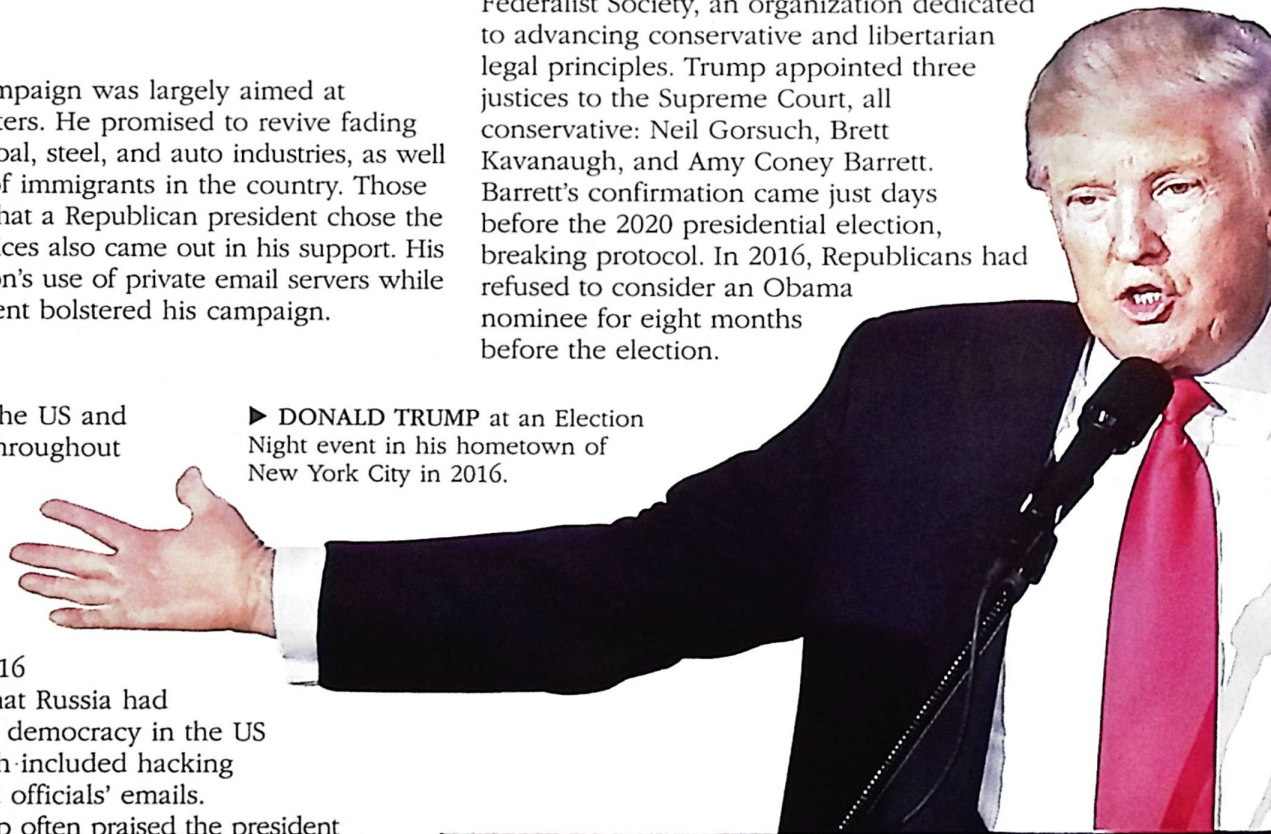
▶ SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS was Trump’s second press secretary.



Packing the courts

Keeping his promise to the conservatives who supported him, Trump packed the lower and higher courts of the US with conservative judges. Many of them were backed by the Federalist Society, an organization dedicated to advancing conservative and libertarian legal principles. Trump appointed three justices to the Supreme Court, all conservative: Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett. Barrett’s confirmation came just days before the 2020 presidential election, breaking protocol. In 2016, Republicans had refused to consider an Obama nominee for eight months before the election.

▶ DONALD TRUMP at an Election Night event in his hometown of New York City in 2016.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★
TRUMP
PENCE
 New York, New York
 MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

THOUSANDS PROTESTED against Trump's anti-immigration policies on May 1, 2017. The same year, protesters staged a "Day Without Immigrants" strike to demonstrate their importance to the US.

IMMIGRANTS
! MAKE!
! GREAT!
AMERICANS



▲ TRUMP SUPPORTERS climb a wall on the US Capitol facade during the January 6, 2021 post-election riot.

People take to the streets

Trump's victory stimulated a variety of new protests. Beginning with the historic Women's March in January 2017—which drew up to 1 million people to Washington and up to 5 million people to local marches—Americans took to the streets to call attention to many human rights issues. New demonstrations were also organized by the far-right movement, often directed against immigrants and minorities. One incident at the "Unite the Right" rally turned tragic when a white supremacist drove his car into a crowd of counterprotesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, killing a woman and injuring 35 other people.

DEFINITION

An **insurrection** is a violent uprising or act of revolt against an authority or government.

Capitol insurrection

On January 6, 2021, roughly 2,500 Trump supporters gathered near the White House for the "Save America" rally. Trump gave a speech repeating his false claims that the election had been stolen and telling the crowd to fight the result. Shortly after this, his supporters marched to the US Capitol, where Congress was certifying the election results to make Joe Biden's victory official.

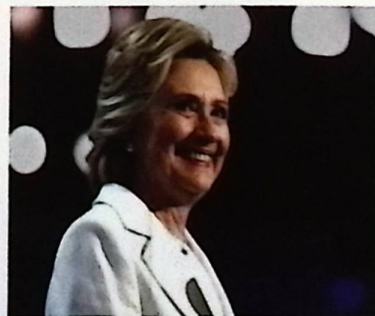
The rioters demanded that Vice President Mike Pence overturn the election results and declare Trump the winner. When Pence refused, some in the crowd chanted for him to be hanged, along with other politicians, such as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. They forced their way into the building, beat Capitol police, and almost breached the House Chamber, where lawmakers feared for their lives.

Five police officers died as a result of the attack and 140 were injured. Congressional hearings in 2022 revealed the planning, scale, and violence of the insurrection, and how Trump refused to help restore order. More than 400 people have been convicted of crimes committed that day, and a House Select Committee recommended that President Trump be prosecuted for his role in the attack. A major factor in this was his claim that voting machines had been rigged to "steal" the election. In 2023, Fox News TV Network agreed to pay Dominion Voter Systems, who made some of these machines, \$787.5 million for repeatedly airing this claim on TV while knowing it to be false.

HILLARY CLINTON

Trump's opponent, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, made history as the first female candidate to be nominated for president in the US by a major political party. Clinton wore white to accept the nomination, in honor of the suffragists who chose to wear the color as they fought for women's right to vote. However, her bid to become president was ultimately unsuccessful due to many complex factors, including social media campaigns, as well as narrow but strategic defeats in key states that tipped the Electoral College in her opponent's favor.

► HILLARY CLINTON was formerly the First Lady. She is married to the 42nd president, Bill Clinton.



The COVID-19 Pandemic

A new virus called COVID-19 first appeared in China in December 2019 and quickly spread around the world. On March 13, 2020, the US declared a national emergency and soon much of the country shut down to slow the spread of the disease. Health authorities recommended social distancing and face masks as proven preventive measures to save lives, but these precautions became controversial political issues. In May 2022, the US passed the grim milestone of one million deaths from the disease.

The virus spreads

In the early days of the pandemic, the medical community was overwhelmed with patients suffering from COVID-19 (short for “coronavirus disease 2019”). The new virus was easily passed on and it took time to find effective treatments, so the fatality rate was high. At first, lockdowns were used to buy time by slowing transmission—schools and businesses closed, travel was restricted, and Congress passed a \$2 trillion rescue package to help companies and individuals who had lost their income.

Eventually, more measures to curb COVID-19’s spread were widely used, such as wearing face masks, frequent rapid testing, and quarantining when exposed to the virus.

These helped to reduce lockdowns, which had severe downsides—the economy suffered and those without work struggled to support themselves, while families and friends were separated and mental health was badly affected. Better ways to stop the virus were urgently needed.

The race for a vaccine

Medical researchers and pharmaceutical companies worked around the clock to develop a safe, effective vaccine to save lives and end lockdowns. Pharmaceutical companies brought these to market at record speed—most notably Moderna and Pfizer, who developed pioneering mRNA vaccines that taught the immune system how to identify



THE “IN AMERICA: REMEMBER” art installation was displayed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in 2021. More than 650,000 white flags were laid out to remember those who had died due to the pandemic.

and destroy the COVID-19 virus. Two doses, spaced several weeks apart, reduced infection rates, had few side effects, and were highly effective in preventing serious illness or death.

The first doses were released in December 2020, with older and more vulnerable people given priority. Many states and businesses issued vaccine mandates in order to protect citizens, employees, and customers. By October 2022, 631 million doses had been given in the US, including regular booster shots to keep the COVID-19 vaccine effective for vulnerable Americans. On April 10, 2023, the national emergency was declared to be over, three years after it began.

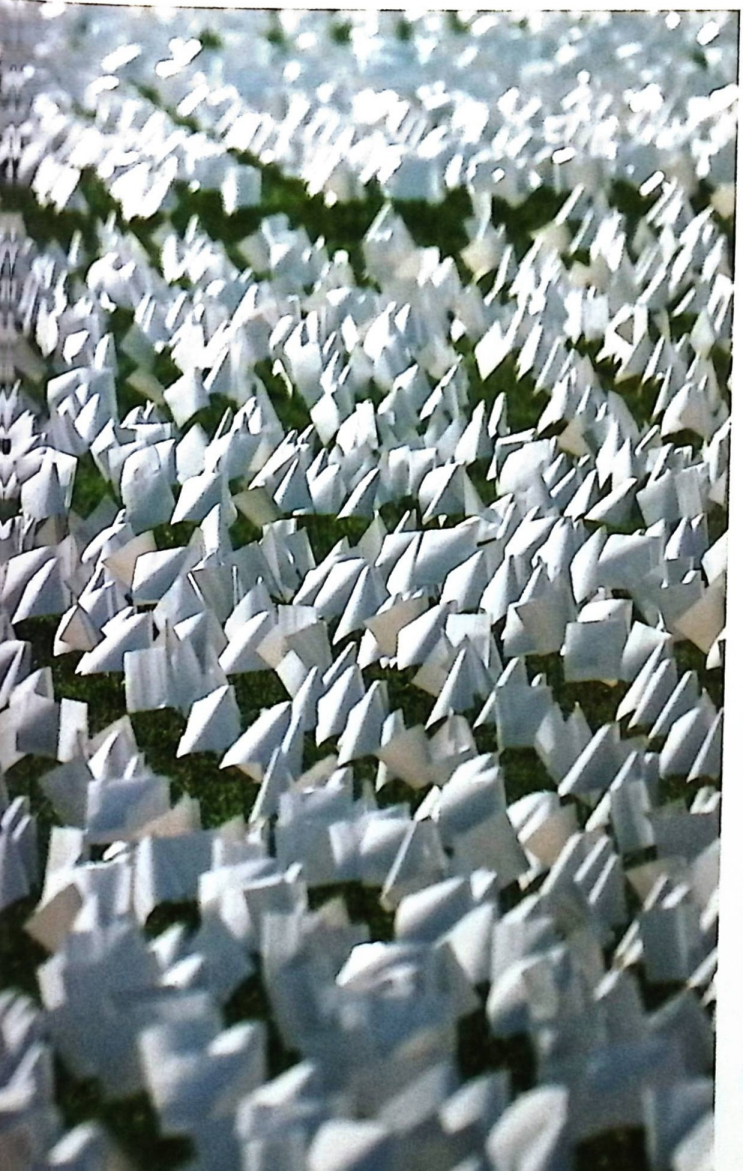
COVID-19 controversies

Face masks and vaccines became political issues in the United States. On the one hand, most Americans felt that wearing a mask and having the vaccine was not only a sensible way to protect themselves from a dangerous disease, but a citizen's duty to save lives and reduce the strain on health-care workers. They were willing to accept doctors' advice and felt that neither measure seemed especially intrusive or unsafe. The country's leading public health expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said in 2020 that this "should not be a political issue. It is purely a public health issue."



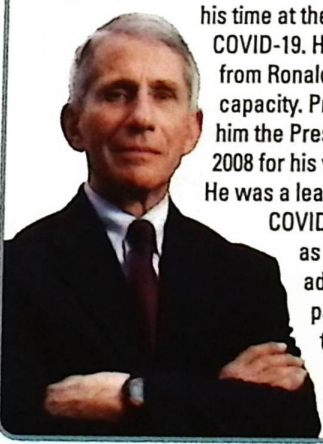
▲ ANTI-VACCINATION PROTESTERS attend a Texas Freedom Rally, carrying signs that are factually incorrect; the COVID-19 vaccines are scientifically proven to be safe and effective.

2000-2023 A NEW MILLENNIUM



In contrast, many people claimed these measures infringed their freedom to choose for themselves, arguing that the government should not force anyone to wear a mask or get a vaccine. Some claimed the pro-choice slogan of abortion rights activists: "my body, my choice" (see p.225 and p.278)—including many who opposed abortion. Others were influenced by false rumors circulating on social media, local news networks, and Fox News, or said that vaccines were against their religious beliefs. These people came to be known as "anti-vaxxers", and sometimes included prominent celebrities and public figures. Meanwhile, some Republican politicians were vaccinated but did not publicize this for fear of angering their supporters.

DR. ANTHONY FAUCI



Dr. Anthony Fauci is a physician who was director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Throughout his career he has worked on fighting diseases such as HIV/AIDS, SARS, and Ebola, ending his time at the NIH by leading the fight against COVID-19. He has advised every US President from Ronald Reagan to Joe Biden in some capacity. President George W. Bush awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2008 for his work combating the AIDS virus. He was a leading member of the White House COVID-19 Response Team and served as President Biden's chief medical advisor from 2021 to 2022. During the pandemic, many Americans looked to Dr. Fauci for trusted advice and educated predictions on how the pandemic would end.

Joe Biden

Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election with over 81 million votes, the most cast for a single candidate in US history, and 12 million more than the previous record, set by Barack Obama in 2008. It was only the fifth time in the previous 100 years that the sitting president had run for a second term and lost: a major defeat for Donald Trump and the Republican Party. Biden arrived with a plan to revive the economy for middle-class Americans, overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, and repair the damage from Trump's divisive term.

Georgia

Georgia became a key state in the presidential race, and also a battleground for the Senate. Biden's victory was confirmed when Georgia finished counting votes—with a razor-slim margin of 11,779, he became the first Democrat to win Georgia since Bill Clinton in 1992. In the Senate race, neither Democrat Jon Ossoff nor Republican candidate David Purdue earned the minimum 50 percent of the vote to take the seat. Ossoff went on to beat Purdue in a runoff election on January 5, 2021. This win gave the Democrats control of Congress by a single seat. Such unexpected Democrat victories marked a severe setback for the Republican Party.

Build Back Better

President Biden's Build Back Better framework was a key part of his program. It aimed to revive the American economy and create well-paid jobs for the middle classes, with COVID-19 relief funds, upgrades to crumbling infrastructure, steps to combat climate change, and new reforms such as paid family leave. The American



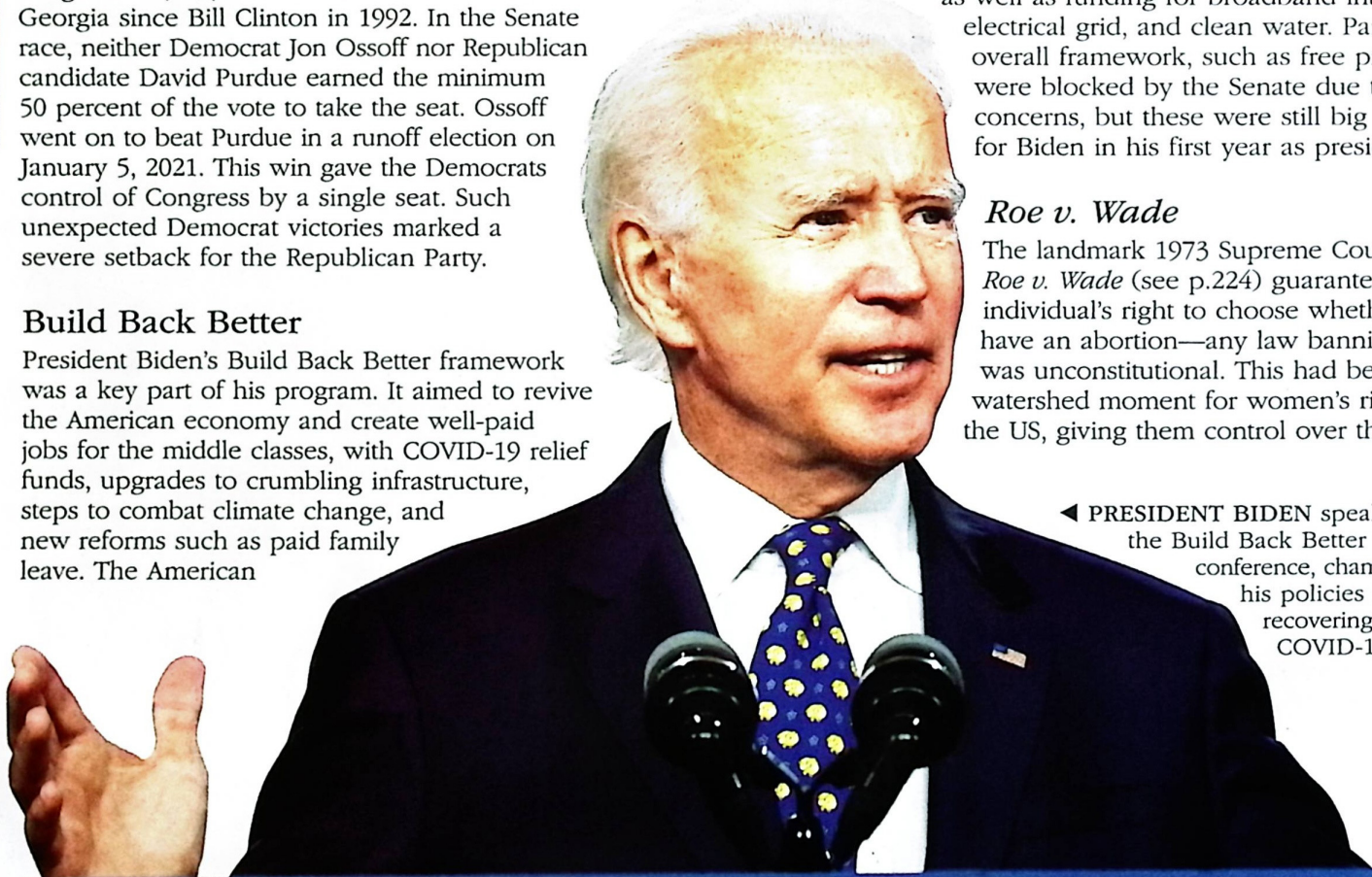
▲ KAMALA HARRIS, a lawyer and former senator, became the first female, Black, and Asian American vice president in 2021.

Rescue Plan, signed in March 2021, gave the US economy a \$1.9 trillion boost to recover from COVID-19. In November, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act supplied \$715 billion to improve highways, bridges, and more, as well as funding for broadband internet, the electrical grid, and clean water. Parts of the overall framework, such as free preschool, were blocked by the Senate due to cost concerns, but these were still big successes for Biden in his first year as president.

Roe v. Wade

The landmark 1973 Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* (see p.224) guaranteed an individual's right to choose whether to have an abortion—any law banning it was unconstitutional. This had been a watershed moment for women's rights in the US, giving them control over their own

◀ PRESIDENT BIDEN speaks at the Build Back Better press conference, championing his policies for recovering from COVID-19.



Text UNITED to 30330

**BUILD BACK
BETTER**



▲ PROTESTERS DEMONSTRATE against the Supreme Court's decision in 2022 to overturn its own ruling on *Roe v. Wade*, which had protected abortion rights since 1973.

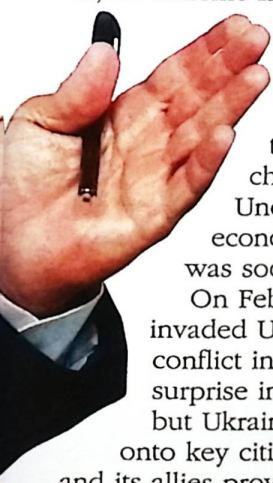
boodies, but in 2022 it was overturned. The new ruling by the conservative majority in the Supreme Court left it up to individual states to decide whether to allow abortion and under what circumstances.

By the start of 2023, 24 out of 50 states, all Republican controlled, had either banned abortion completely or passed restrictions limiting access to abortion. Polls indicated that most Americans supported a citizen's right to safe, legal abortion, and there were mass protests against the decision. In addition to the impact on human rights, overturning 50 years of legal precedent was extraordinary because the US Supreme Court does not usually revisit a previous ruling.

Conflict abroad

In the early years of his presidency, Biden's foreign policy was defined by three key conflicts—in Afghanistan, Ukraine, and China. On August 31, 2021, the US completed the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, a process begun under Donald Trump. The Afghan army had been trained and equipped by the US, but was quickly beaten by the Taliban, an extreme Islamist group that had ruled the country before the American invasion in 2001 (see p.265). Afghans who had worked with US forces were now in severe danger—76,000 civilians were taken to the US, but final evacuations were chaotic and many were left behind. Under the Taliban, every social and economic gain of the previous 21 years was soon reversed.

On February 24, 2022, Russian forces invaded Ukraine, beginning the largest conflict in Europe since World War II. The surprise invasion almost overran the country, but Ukraine surprised experts by holding onto key cities and mounting a fightback. The US and its allies provided vital military and financial aid to Ukraine, but began to resent the cost—Biden pledged over



► US SOLDIERS from the Minnesota-based 34th Infantry Division prepare to enter a military aircraft in Kabul, Afghanistan.

KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Ketanji Brown Jackson was nominated to the Supreme Court by President Biden to replace retiring Justice Stephen Breyer. Jackson earned her law degree from Harvard University. She practiced as a lawyer, served on the US Sentencing Commission, and sat as a judge for the US District Court for the District of Columbia. Brown was subject to a highly debated confirmation hearing in the Senate, during which Republicans stated that her

experience as a public defender was a liability. She was confirmed by a 53–47 vote in the Senate on April 7, 2022, becoming the first Black woman to serve as a US Supreme Court Justice.



◀ JUSTICE KETANJI BROWN JACKSON signs the Oath of Office at the Supreme Court as an associate justice.

\$70 billion in the first year alone. Russia, too, was feeling the strain, with over 60,000 dead and supplies running low, but war looked set to drag on for years.

Meanwhile, China grew increasingly aggressive over Taiwan, an island near the mainland that had operated as a separate country since 1949. The US had always promised to defend Taiwan, but by the 2020s China seemed ready to test this resolve.

Inflation

Inflation soared in 2022, partly due to the war in Ukraine and economic sanctions placed on Russia for its invasion. This created a new headache for the Biden administration. A healthy inflation rate is around 2 percent, but by the end of March 2022, the cost of living had risen by 8.5 percent compared to March 2021. Wages had not grown as fast as inflation, so Americans were effectively poorer. The Federal Reserve raised interest rates by almost 5 percent in 12 months, making it more expensive to borrow money in order to slow consumer spending. By 2023, inflation began to fall, but the economy remained fragile.



Guns in America

The US continues to have the world's highest rate of civilian gun ownership, but this has come at a price. In 2022, more than 44,000 people were killed by guns in the US. Since 2000, high-profile shootings, including those at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut; at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida; and at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, saw the US divided over the rights and wrongs of gun control. A majority of voters supported increased measures, but opposition was fierce.

Mass shootings

There were 647 mass shootings in the US in 2022 alone—by some counts this has tripled between 2011 and 2021. Previous mass shootings also kept haunting the public consciousness. On July 20, 2012, a gunman wearing protective tactical gear killed 12 people and wounded 58 at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado. Forty-nine people were shot dead with a legally bought rifle and handgun at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, on September 19, 2016. The deadliest mass shooting by an individual in the US saw 58 people killed at a concert in Las Vegas on October 1, 2017.



▲ MOURNERS GATHER at a memorial service for 19 children and two adults killed in a shooting on May 24, 2022, at Robb Elementary School, Uvalde, Texas. The shooting led to the first major gun control laws since 1994.

Firearms ownership

Although the US had just over 4 percent of the world's population in 2017, it had roughly 45 percent of the world's civilian-owned guns, with 120 firearms per 100 people. That amounted to 393 million guns. The number of guns per person has soared—as has the number of gun deaths in the United States.

Gun control and the law

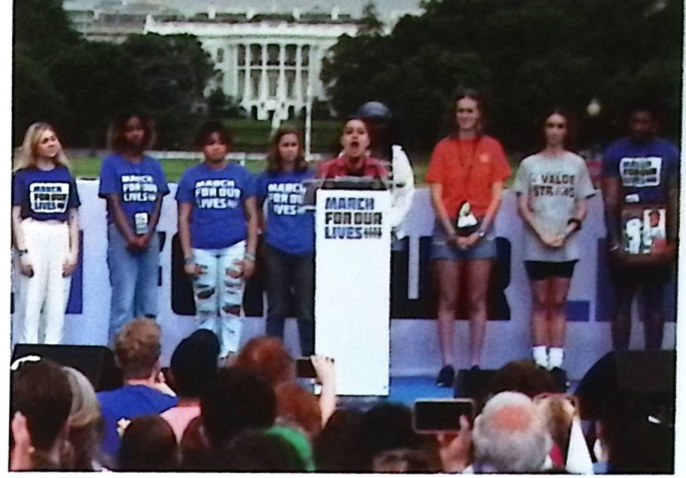
Despite the public outcry that followed each of these tragedies, the federal government failed to pass any significant nationwide gun control laws between 1994 and 2023. In Congress, voting tended to divide along party lines: most Democrats in favor of controls, almost all Republicans against them. During this time



ON DECEMBER 14, 2012, at Sandy Hook Elementary School, in Newtown, Connecticut, 20 children aged 6 and 7 years old and six adults were killed.

GUN VIOLENCE STATISTICS (2020)

Gun-related deaths	43,425
Gun-related injuries	39,371
Teenage deaths and injuries	4,115
Child deaths and injuries	987
Mass shootings	612
Unintentional shooting	2,254



▲ **MARCH FOR OUR LIVES** is a student-led movement that has held multiple protests since 2018, including this one outside the White House in 2022. Activist X González (the speaker, above) survived a shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018, and has been campaigning for stronger gun control laws in the US.

Lives Matter (BLM) movement against systemic racism and violence against Black people. The issue will not go away: in 2023, a white homeowner shot a Black schoolboy who came to his door; another killed a Black woman, Kaylin Gillis, who pulled into their driveway.

Campaign groups

The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, a leading advocate of gun control, argued that as well as the incalculable, tragic human cost of gun violence, there were other costs, such as medical treatment for gunshot wounds and providing rehabilitation, as well as the cost to emergency services. Some estimates put these economic costs at \$100 billion a year. However, groups such as the NRA and the Gun Owners of America argued that the right to bear arms was guaranteed by the Bill of Rights and could not be taken away. Young people who survived the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas shooting in 2018 formed the Never Again MSD group to push back against the idea that sensible gun legislation would restrict anyone's rights.



▲ **THE JURY'S** decision in the Trayvon Martin case split public opinion, with almost 90 percent of Black people calling the shooting unjustified, compared to a third of white people.



▲ **CONGRESSWOMAN GABRIELLE GIFFORDS** (above, left), was badly wounded in an assassination attempt in Tucson, Arizona, in 2011. Six people were killed and 13 injured in the attack.

many of the measures enacted in 1994 lapsed, and regulation was left almost entirely to individual states. A little over a month after the Sandy Hook massacre, President Obama unveiled a new plan for gun control, including enhanced background checks on people buying guns, and bans on military-style assault weapons. Due to the resistance of pro-gun interest groups, such as the National Rifle Association (NRA), and politicians, not one law passed. However, after the high school shooting at Parkland, states took up the cause of gun control and passed 50 new laws. These laws ranged from banning certain types of guns to making it harder for people in mental distress to purchase guns. In 2022, after the Uvalde shooting, two Democrat and two Republican senators led negotiations for a limited set of controls, mostly around limiting access to firearms for people. At the federal level, the Supreme Court is yet to rule on whether automatic weapons can be banned.

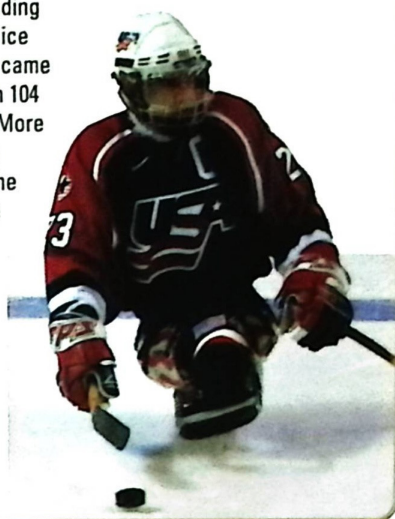
Self-defense and racial violence

A common argument made by pro-gun groups was that of self-defense, and the belief that guns, in the hands of law-abiding citizens, could help reduce crime. The killing of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old Black high school student in February, 2012, exposed the divide on this issue. The shooter, George Zimmerman, who was the neighborhood watch coordinator for a gated community in Sanford, Florida, shot Martin, who was unarmed, after a verbal argument. He claimed to have acted in self-defense, and was later found not guilty of murder. The outcry over this decision in the Black community spurred activists Alicia Garza, Ayọ Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors to start the Black

PARALYMPICS

The Paralympic Games, which celebrate the accomplishments of athletes with disabilities, have grown in popularity since their US debut in 2002 at Salt Lake City, Utah. At the 2020 games (held in 2021) in Tokyo, 4,403 athletes representing 163 countries participated in 80 medal events in total, including snowboarding, skiing, and ice hockey. The United States came third in the medal tally with 104 medals—37 of them gold. More than one million people on average watched part of the television broadcast of the Games in the US.

▶ AT THE SLED HOCKEY FINAL IN 2002, the US beat Norway 4-3 to take Olympic gold in front of 8,315 excited fans.



sponsors, and, when his contract ended. Kaepernick found himself without a team. In 2019 he accepted a large settlement after suing the NFL and alleging that team owners had conspired to exclude him from the league.

Renaming sports teams

Many teams previously known by culturally insensitive or racist names, such as offensive terms for Indigenous people, changed their names and mascots. The Washington NFL team is now called the Commanders, and the Cleveland MLB team is the Guardians. Others, such as the Atlanta MLB team, have refused to change their names, mascots, songs, and dances. The name changes have been controversial, with some conservatives attributing them to “cancel culture” and a lack of respect for tradition. However, many fans are relieved not to feel conflicted about supporting their teams and welcome the changes. Soon these new names will have their own histories.

▶ A CLEVELAND GUARDIANS CAP features the team's new logo. The team's change of name indicated a new approach to social issues in the world of sports.



Playing lacrosse

Lacrosse is one of the fastest-growing sports in the US, with 2.8 million participants and matches shown on national television. It is based on “The Medicine Game” played by many Indigenous groups since at least the year 1200 and involves one team using sticks with netted hoops on top to throw a ball into the other team's net. Haudenosaunee lacrosse players such as the Thompson Brothers—four siblings and cousins who are all famous league players—lead the sport.



▲ THE WINTER OLYMPICS came to Salt Lake City in February of 2002. Watched by a global audience of two billion people, it was a healing moment for the US after the terror attacks of 2001.



◀ SIMONE BILES has given her name to four new skills based on her signature moves.

Star athlete

Ohio athlete Simone Biles has achieved record-breaking successes in gymnastics, including four Olympic gold medals in 2016. Her medal-winning, gravity-defying feats forced the judging rules to be rewritten. Biles also joined teammates in testifying to the US Senate about abuse by their former team doctor, Larry Nassar, becoming a leader of the #MeToo movement. At the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (held in 2021), stress and the trauma of testifying caused her to develop the “twisties”—a dangerous condition in which gymnasts lose control of their bodies while in mid-air. Biles withdrew from most of her events, but became an even bigger hero by cheering on her teammates from the stands.

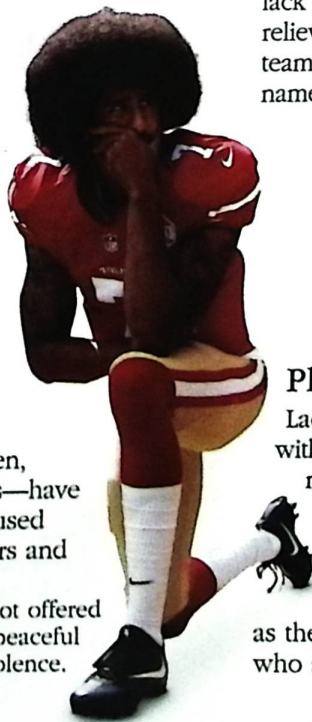
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Sports and protest

Colin Kaepernick is a Black American quarterback who had a successful run in the National Football League (NFL). During the 2016 NFL preseason, Kaepernick refused to stand while the Star-Spangled Banner played, as a way of drawing attention to the racial discrimination and violence against Black people in the US. He could not salute the flag while racial injustice endured, and after speaking to military veterans, he chose to take a knee as a respectful but emphatic gesture. Since then, 200 NFL players—sometimes entire teams—have taken the knee in protest. The protest caused fierce arguments among fans, team owners and

▶ COLIN KAEPERNICK was not offered another NFL contract after his peaceful protest against racial violence.



The New Activists

Starting in the 2010s, smartphones and social media helped foster a new sense of urgency in activism. Being able to watch and share protests around the world empowered liberal activists in the US to speak out. Videos and social-media posts fueled new civil movements against racism, gender inequality, and the climate crisis on the progressive left. On the right, conservatives also protested over social issues and perceived attacks on their traditional values.



#MeToo movement

In 2017, the hashtag #MeToo went viral on social media as women shared their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse. Allegations against famous men shocked American society. More than 60 women accused television star Bill Cosby of sexual assault, while news anchor Matt Lauer was fired over alleged sexual misconduct. The powerful film producer Harvey Weinstein was accused by more than 80 women, and he was eventually convicted and jailed on three charges of rape and sexual assault.

Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter (BLM; see also p.281) is both a slogan for racial equality and a movement for social change. It gained mass appeal in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin, which was filmed by bystanders and spread on social media. Across the country, protesters drew attention to the violent deaths of unarmed Black people and their unequal treatment by the justice system. Officers who killed Black people would often escape severe punishment. Some cities promised police reform, but much remained to be done. BLM has received support from high-profile athletes, including many NBA and WNBA players, and tennis star Naomi Osaka—at the 2020 US Open, she wore a new face mask for each round, each bearing the name of a Black victim of racial injustice or police brutality.

◀ “WE CAN’T BREATHE” echoed the last words of George Floyd, a Black man killed by a white police officer named Derek Chauvin, who pressed a knee to his neck and suffocated him.

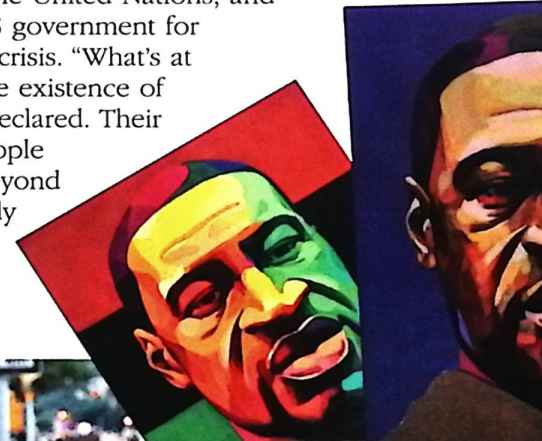
◀ #METOO SUPPORTERS and survivors of sexual harassment and abuse march down Hollywood’s Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, California, during a rally in November 2017.

▶ XIUHTEZCATL MARTINEZ, environmental activist and hip-hop artist, addresses a crowd at a youth empowerment event in California in 2016.

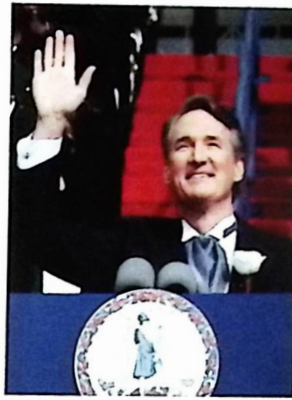


Climate activists

Teenagers and young adults led the way in climate activism, many inspired by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. American leaders included Haven Coleman, who led weekly youth climate strikes, and Xiye Bastida, who moved to the US after flooding forced her family from its home in Mexico. Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, who has Indigenous Mexica roots, became a campaigner at the age of six. He organized protests, addressed the United Nations, and helped to sue the US government for ignoring the climate crisis. “What’s at stake right now is the existence of my generation,” he declared. Their example inspired people across the US and beyond to believe that nobody is too small to make a stand.



► **GLENN YOUNGKIN** gives his inaugural address after being sworn in as the 74th Governor of Virginia.



Rights and the Right

Republican politics have long been associated with conservative economics, backing business interests and small government. In the 2010s, influenced by right-wing activists, the party began to campaign harder on conservative social issues—cutting abortion rights, opposing LGBTQIA+ groups, protecting the right to buy guns, and casting Latine immigration as a danger to society.

Some Republican politicians have used these issues selectively to win votes—Glenn Youngkin became governor of Virginia, a Democrat-leaning state, partly by condemning transgender rights and race-conscious education, but also by keeping quiet about abortion and gun rights in order to appeal to moderate voters. Balancing right-wing rhetoric with broader appeal would be key to future elections.



GEORGE FLOYD banners are raised at a protest rally on Juneteenth (June 19) in 2019, three weeks after his death in police custody.

The New Democrats

Four young Democrats of color elected to the House of Representatives for the first time in 2018 became known as “the Squad.” Coming from diverse backgrounds, with an average age of 38 and a commitment to progressive politics, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib connected with many Americans who felt they were not represented in Congress.

By 2022, the Squad had grown to nine, but Ayanna Pressley said it went beyond a few young Congresspeople of color: “Our squad includes any person committed to building a more equitable and just world.” The group has drawn fire from conservative Republican opponents, including Donald Trump, who told them to “go back” where they came from for criticizing immigration laws.



▲ **THE SQUAD MEMBERS**—(from left to right) Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—speak at a press conference in Washington, D.C., in July 2019.

POWER OF CONNECTIVITY

When smartphones started to take off in 2007, few realized their political potential. Once smartphones and internet access were widely available, it became easy to share photos and videos of events, and to organize action through social media. For example, George Floyd’s killing in Minnesota was recorded live and shared widely in minutes, sparking immediate horror and mass protests. Black Lives Matter had been campaigning against such brutality since 2013, but it took direct evidence to spark action. Alongside some high-profile cases, the #MeToo movement gained power from ordinary women who shared their experiences online. The sheer number of people speaking out made the scale of harassment and violence against women impossible to ignore.

► **THE 2017 WOMEN’S MARCH** on Washington, D.C., a protest against Donald Trump’s election, was helped by smartphone technology.

