CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE:
MODERN BLACK AMERICA, 1980 TO PRESENT

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Gains made by African Americans from the 1950s to the 1970s failed to produce a consensus for goals and tactics for the end of the millennium. During the 1980s, the black middle class grew in strength, with some African Americans even achieving fame and great wealth. Clinton’s economic boom caused many blacks to find jobs and go off poverty rolls. Despite economic progress on average, the 1980s also saw several problems for African Americans with the ascendancy of the conservative Ronald Reagan and the New Right. Reagan proved willing to dismantle or render ineffective key elements of the civil rights program of the Great Society. Although he appointed some African Americans in his administration, they were generally token blacks, whose views differed greatly from the majority of blacks. Affirmative action, especially on college campuses, proved a viable target, as whites reacted against what they saw as preferential policies for minorities and women. Yet blacks continued to have political influence during the Reagan, and especially the Clinton, years. They pressed for additional legislation, a national holiday commemorating Martin Luther King, and fought successfully against apartheid in South Africa and for fairer treatment by police and representation in police departments. The 1980s also saw the serious political presidential candidacy of Jesse Jackson, in both 1984 and 1988. African Americans also continued their achievements in the arts and intellectual endeavors. Black women strode to the forefront in literary works, gaining far more acceptance then in the earlier black arts movement. Blacks also continued to argue a variety of responses to continued problems, including the diverse ideas of Afrocentricity, reparations, Louis Farrakhan’s self help and anti-Semitic rhetoric, and even the political lyrics and sound of rap music. Despite these great differences, the tragedy of September 11, 2001, seemed to bring all Americans, black and white, rich and poor together in an outburst of patriotism and sympathy for those who lost their lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Understand the origins, depth and limitations of the fragmentation of the black community during the 1980s to the present.

Understand the overall economic conditions of blacks during this period, as well as the effects of both the Reagan, Bush and Clinton presidencies on their situation.

Understand the varieties of black activism during the 1980s to the present, as well as the backlash against previous gains.

Understand the origins, goals, and development of a serious black president candidate, as well as the results of the candidacy of Jesse Jackson.

Understand some of the basic political, social and cultural developments among blacks in the last two decades of the twentieth century, including black art and literature, black feminism, relationships with police, Afrocentricity, the Nation of Islam movement, and the controversy over reparations.
CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction

II. Progress and Poverty
   A. Fame and Fortune
   B. Growth of the Black Middle Class
      1. Income Statistics
      2. Benefits of Economic Boom
      3. Reasons for increasing affluence
   C. The Persistence of Black Poverty
      1. Statistics
      2. Effect on children

III. Ronald Reagan and the Conservative Reaction
   A. Reagan’s Policies/Support
   B. Dismantling the Great Society
      1. Inner Cities
      2. Trickle Down Economics
      3. Appointment of black conservatives
   C. Black Conservatives
      1. Role Within Republican Party
      2. Power compared to black Democrats
   D. The Thomas/Hill Controversy
      1. Background
      2. Problems with Hill nomination
      3. Gender conflict revealed
   E. Debating the “Old” and the “New” Civil Rights
      1. Definitions
      2. Affirmative Action
         a. Debate
         b. Development
      3. The Backlash
         a. Educational institutions
         b. Regents of the Univ. of California v. Bakke
         c. Proposition 209
         d. Effect on Nation

IV. Black Political Activism in the Age of Conservative Reaction
   A. Black Political Power within the Democratic Party
   B. Legislation Passed By Congress
   C. The King Holiday
   D. Trans Africa and the Anti-Apartheid Movement
      1. Facets of apartheid
      2. Origins of Trans Africa
      3. Anti-apartheid movement
      4. Results

V. Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition
   A. Shirley Chisolm’s 1972 Campaign
B. Jackson’s Background
C. Response to Reagan Presidency
D. Plans/Support
E. Results at Convention
F. Defeat in 1984
G. 1988 Attempt at Presidency

VI. Policing the Black Community
A. Rodney King
   1. Incident
   2. Verdict and results
B. Human Rights in America
   1. Amnesty International Report
   2. Issue of brutality
   3. Crime and African Americans
   4. Effect of crime on black neighborhoods
C. Police Director Hubert Williams of Newark

VII. The Election of 1992
A. Reaction of blacks to Clinton
B. General Policies/Views
C. “It’s the Economy, Stupid!”
   1. General objectives
   2. Specific policies
D. Clinton Signs the Welfare Reform Act
   1. Terms of Act
   2. Limitations
   3. Reasons for Clinton’s support

VIII. African-American Cultural and Intellectual Movements at the End of the Millennium
A. General Developments
B. Black Painters/Music/Film
C. Differences from Earlier Movements
D. Black Feminism
   1. Gains of women’s rights movement
   2. Involvement of black women in feminism
   3. Black women’s achievements
E. Black Intellectuals
   1. Members
   2. Achievements
F. Afro-centricity
   1. Definition
   2. Criticism from blacks and whites
G. Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam
   1. Background
   2. Changes in the Nation of Islam
   3. Farrakhan assumes leadership
   4. Anti-Semitic rhetoric
H. The Million Man March
   1. Purpose
2. Goodwill dissipates
3. Criticism
I. The Million Woman March
J. Black Christianity on the Front Lines
K. The Hip-Hop Nation
   1. Description
   2. Early Hits
   3. Influences
   4. Critics

IX. 2000 and Beyond
A. The 2000 Election
   1. Gaps in American Society
   2. Black Efforts in the Election
   3. Outcome
   4. Reports of discrimination against black voters
B. The 2000 Census and Black America
   1. Results of Census
   2. Loss of largest minority group status by African Americans
C. Reparations
   1. Origins of idea
   2. Resurrection and attention
   3. Criticism by blacks
D. September 11, 2001

X. Conclusion

TEST MATERIALS

MAP QUESTIONS
(Locate the following regions, geographical features or political entities on a map)
Philadelphia
California
South Africa
Iraq
Kuwait
Nigeria
Florida

IDENTIFICATIONS
(For each of the following, identify by answering the questions – who? what? when? where? And describe the significance by answering the question – why is this important? Why do we study this?)
Oprah Winfrey
Ronald Brown
Colin Powell
Michael Jordan
Reginald Lewis
William Jefferson Clinton
Ronald Reagan