**Kennedy and Johnson Administration 11.2**

**SSUSH21 Analyze U.S. international and domestic policies including their influences on technological advancements and social changes during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations**

**c. Describe the impact of television on American culture; including the presidential debates (Kennedy/Nixon, 1960), news coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, and the war in Vietnam.**

**Document Analysis 1**

**“I’ll vote for Kennedy. Nixon just looked ill prepared and unstable. He kept shifting and looking down instead of looking the American people in the eye. I don’t trust him. Kennedy seems like the better choice.”**

**Source: American Voter**

**Impact of Television: Kennedy/Nixon Presidential Debate**

Television had a big impact at this time. For the first time, people could watch entertaining shows, news reports, advertisements, etc. from the comfort of their own homes without having to go out to a theater. Television stars became nationally admired figures, and weekly shows like I Love Lucy became a regular part of people's week-to week schedule. TV also impacted politics. Politicians now had to worry about how they looked on screen. One milestone that illustrated the important role TV would forever play in politics was the 1960 **Kennedy-Nixon presidential debate**. The debate between the Democratic candidate (Senator **John F. Kennedy**) and the Republican candidate (Vice President **Richard Nixon**) was the first televised presidential debate in history. Interestingly, polls at the time showed that most citizens who listened to the debate on the radio thought that Nixon won. However, most of those who watched it on television thought that Kennedy won. They felt that the young senator appeared much more presidential and confident. Kennedy ended up defeating Nixon that November in one of the closest presidential elections in history. Some historians still wonder if things might have been different had the two candidates only been heard on radio rather than watched on television.

**Impact of Television: Civil Rights Movement**

The creation of television also revolutionized media coverage. No longer would people have to listen to reporters describe events to them over the radio or simply read about them in the papers. Now they could see them as they happened. As the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s progressed, television coverage of the violence often inflicted on African Americans during the **Civil Rights Movement** played a major role in winning support for the cause.

**Impact of Television: Vietnam War**

Likewise, televised images from Vietnam made it the first war ever "fought in people's living rooms." The fact that people could actually see the death and destruction every night on their own TVs contributed to the war's controversy as it allowed people to form their own opinions about what they were witnessing. After the **Tet Offensive**, media coverage of the war became predominantly negative. Images of both civilian and military casualties were increasingly televised. The percentage of victory stories reported by journalists decreased from 62 before to 44 after the Tet Offensive. Additionally, many iconic pictures of the war such as The Execution of a Vietcong Guerilla or The Napalm Girl exerted a negative and lasting influence on the public feeling. As the war became uglier on screen, its public support also declined significantly.

**d. Investigate the growth, influence, and tactics of civil rights groups, Martin Luther King, Jr., the Letter from a Birmingham Jail, the I Have a Dream Speech, and Cesar Chavez.**

**Civil Rights Leader: Martin Luther King Jr.**

Raised in Atlanta, **Martin Luther King, Jr**. eventually returned to his home city and made it the center of the civil rights movement. He was an extremely gifted man who believed in **non-violent protest**. Even if black protestors were beaten, arrested, or killed, King believed that African Americans would win their rights the quickest by refusing to engage in violence. He was right. As people around the country saw peaceful black marchers and protestors being beaten by white mobs and policeman, the movement gained support. One of King's most famous writings during the civil rights movement was his "**Letter from Birmingham Jail**." King wrote the letter in April 1963 from the jail in Birmingham, Alabama, where he had been arrested following a peaceful civil rights protest. His letter was a response to several white ministers who wrote a statement arguing that the battle for civil rights should be waged in the courts rather than by protests. King's public response eloquently expressed the reasons he disagreed and proclaimed that civil disobedience (peaceful refusal to follow unjust laws) was a necessary and acceptable method for achieving equality. King and others also benefited from international pressure caused by the Cold War. Due to fears that communism might spread, the federal government knew it could not afford to have foreign nations view the US as unjust or a land of racial hatred. Taking advantage of such pressure, King shined in what many feel was his greatest public moment: his "**I Have a Dream Speech**," delivered before the Lincoln Memorial during the 1963 March on Washington. The "march" consisted of 200,000 civil rights activists demanding equality for all citizens.

**Civil Rights Leader: Cesar Chavez**

Not only did the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s serve to improve the social status of blacks in the US, it also helped inspire and ignite other social movements as well. Other minorities, women, and those promoting political and social causes were all influenced by the methods used during the civil rights movement. The **United Farm Workers (UFW)** was founded in 1962 by **Cesar Chavez**. It supported the rights of migrant farm workers, many of which were poor Hispanic immigrants. Chavez went to great lengths to improve the conditions under which migrant workers toiled, including personally conducting hunger strikes. Chavez and the UFW used the same type of non-violent protests proved effective by Martin Luther King, Jr. Perhaps the most famous campaign of the UFW was its boycott of California table grapes which led to a 1970 labor agreement.

**Civil Rights Groups:**

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| **Movement** | **Goal** | **Original Philosophy** | **Later Philosophy** |
| **Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)** | Lead by Martin Luther King Jr., the goal was to carry out nonviolent crusades against the evil of second-class citizenship | Nonviolent protest | Nonviolent Protest |
| **Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC)** | Led by Students, use **Sit-ins** and **Freedom rides** to speed up the civil rights movement | Nonviolent protest | Militancy and violence; “black power” and African American pride |

**e. Describe the social and political turmoil of 1968 including reactions to the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, the Tet Offensive, and the presidential election.**

**Social and Political Turmoil of 1986**

The year 1968 saw social and political revolutions take place around the world. In the United States, the anti-Vietnam War Movement increased as a result of the Tet Offensive. The anti war movement featured students and other activists calling for the US to withdraw its troops from Vietnam. Protesters filled college campuses and marchers constantly picketed the White House, accusing the president of heartlessly sending young US men to die in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the year also saw the assassinations of two beloved leaders. In April, an assassin gunned down Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee, leaving others to carry the banner of civil rights in his place. Later that summer, as Democratic presidential hopeful, **Robert Kennedy** (President John F. Kennedy's younger brother), finished his victory speech after winning the California primary, a young Palestinian named **Sirhan Sirhan** stepped forward in the crowd and shot him at close range. Kennedy died soon after. Because of his open support for civil rights, many citizens had considered Kennedy to be their greatest hope for steering the nation in a positive direction. In the midst of all the chaos and violence, the nation moved ahead with concern and a sense of uncertainty.

**Document Analysis 2**

**When the strongest nation in the world can be tied down for four years in a war in Vietnam with no end in sight; when the richest nation in the world can’t manage its own economy; when the nation with the greatest tradition of the rule of law is plagued by unprecedented lawlessness; when a nation that has been known for a century for equality of opportunity is torn by unprecedented racial violence; and when the President of the United States cannot travel abroad or to any major city at home without fear of a hostile demonstration—then it’s time for new leadership for the United States of America.**

**Source: Richard Nixon, Acceptance Speech at the Republican National Convention, August 8, 1968.**

**Presidential Election 1968**

President Johnson was not running for re-election, and many Democrats' favorite candidate, Robert Kennedy, was dead. When the Democrats Convention met in Chicago to nominate candidates for president and vice president, large numbers of radicals and protesters descended on the city and the areas surrounding the convention. Massive demonstrations got out of hand after convention delegates voted against a Vietnam peace resolution and it became clear that Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey, would be nominated for president. Police began clubbing those involved in the rally while television cameras caught most of the violence. The incident led to the arrest and trial of several protesters collectively known as the "Chicago 7" (originally there were eight, but one of the defendants ended up being tried separately). Their trial turned into a virtual circus as the defendants continually mocked the court proceedings. Although five of them were eventually found guilty, the courts overturned their convictions and they served no jail time. Meanwhile, the convention protests hurt Humphrey's candidacy and led many outraged middle-class citizens to view Republican Richard Nixon as a needed change in the White House. In 1968, Richard Nixon became president of the United States because he was the only candidate that tried to look like he was going to restore order. Nixon’s election led to a rise conservatism and the Republican Party.