

The Great Society Packet

Excerpt from LBJ's "Great Society" speech May 22, 1964

...The purpose of protecting the life of our Nation and preserving the liberty of our citizens is to pursue the happiness of our people. Our success in that pursuit is the test of our success as a Nation.

For a century we labored to settle and to subdue a continent. For half a century we called upon unbounded invention and untiring industry to create an order of plenty for all of our people. The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use that wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization.

Your imagination and your initiative and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs, or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth. For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society.

The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning.

The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community. It is a place where man can renew contact with nature. It is a place which honors creation for its own sake and for what is adds to the understanding of the race. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.

But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.

So I want to talk to you today about three places where we begin to build the Great Society -- in our cities, in our countryside, and in our classrooms.

Many of you will live to see the day, perhaps 50 years from now, when there will be 400 million Americans -- four-fifths of them in urban areas. In the remainder of this century urban population will double, city land will double, and we will have to build homes and highways and facilities equal to all those built since this country was first settled. So in the next 40 years we must re-build the entire urban United States.

Aristotle said: "Men come together in cities in order to live, but they remain together in order to live the good life." It is harder and harder to live the good life in American cities today. The catalog of ills is long: there is the decay of the centers and the despoiling of the suburbs. There is not enough housing for our people or transportation for our traffic. Open land is vanishing and old landmarks are violated. Worst of all expansion is eroding these precious and time honored values of community with neighbors and communion with nature. The loss of these values breeds loneliness and boredom and indifference.

And our society will never be great until our cities are great. Today the frontier of imagination and innovation is inside those cities and not beyond their borders. New experiments are already going on. It will be the task of your generation to make the American city a place where future generations will

come, not only to live, but to live the good life. And I understand that if I stayed here tonight I would see that Michigan students are really doing their best to live the good life.

This is the place where the Peace Corps was started.

It is inspiring to see how all of you, while you are in this country, are trying so hard to live at the level of the people.

A second place where we begin to build the Great Society is in our countryside. We have always prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful. Today that beauty is in danger. The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing.

A few years ago we were greatly concerned about the "Ugly American." Today we must act to prevent an ugly America.

For once the battle is lost, once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.

A third place to build the Great Society is in the classrooms of America. There your children's lives will be shaped. Our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination. We are still far from that goal. Today, 8 million adult Americans, more than the entire population of Michigan, have not finished 5 years of school. Nearly 20 million have not finished 8 years of school. Nearly 54 million -- more than one quarter of all America -- have not even finished high school.

Each year more than 100,000 high school graduates, with proved ability, do not enter college because they cannot afford it. And if we cannot educate today's youth, what will we do in 1970 when elementary school enrollment will be 5 million greater than 1960? And high school enrollment will rise by 5 million. And college enrollment will increase by more than 3 million.

In many places, classrooms are overcrowded and curricula are outdated. Most of our qualified teachers are underpaid and many of our paid teachers are unqualified. So we must give every child a place to sit and a teacher to learn from. Poverty must not be a bar to learning, and learning must offer an escape from poverty.

But more classrooms and more teachers are not enough. We must seek an educational system which grows in excellence as it grows in size. This means better training for our teachers. It means preparing youth to enjoy their hours of leisure as well as their hours of labor. It means exploring new techniques of teaching, to find new ways to stimulate the love of learning and the capacity for creation.

These are three of the central issues of the Great Society. While our Government has many programs directed at those issues, I do not pretend that we have the full answer to those problems. But I do promise this: We are going to assemble the best thought and the broadest knowledge from all over the world to find those answers for America.

I intend to establish working groups to prepare a series of White House conferences and meetings -- on the cities, on natural beauty, on the quality of education, and on other emerging challenges. And from these meetings and from this inspiration and from these studies we will begin to set our course toward the Great Society.

The solution to these problems does not rest on a massive program in Washington, nor can it rely solely on the strained resources of local authority. They require us to create new concepts of cooperation, a creative federalism, between the National Capital and the leaders of local communities.

Woodrow Wilson once wrote: "Every man sent out from his university should be a man of his Nation as well as a man of his time."

Within your lifetime powerful forces, already loosed, will take us toward a way of life beyond the realm of our experience, almost beyond the bounds of our imagination.

For better or for worse, your generation has been appointed by history to deal with those problems and to lead America toward a new age. You have the chance never before afforded to any people in any age. You can help build a society where the demands of morality, and the needs of the spirit, can be realized in the life of the Nation.

So, will you join in the battle to give every citizen the full equality which God enjoins and the law requires, whatever his belief, or race, or the color of his skin?

Will you join in the battle to give every citizen an escape from the crushing weight of poverty?

Will you join in the battle to make it possible for all nations to live in enduring peace -- as neighbors and not as mortal enemies?

Will you join in the battle to build the Great Society, to prove that our material progress is only the foundation on which we will build a richer life of mind and spirit?

There are those timid souls that say this battle cannot be won; that we are condemned to a soulless wealth. I do not agree. We have the power to shape the civilization that we want. But we need your will and your labor and your hearts, if we are to build that kind of society.

Those who came to this land sought to build more than just a new country. They sought a new world. So I have come here today to your campus to say that you can make their vision our reality. So let us from this moment begin our work so that in the future men will look back and say: It was then, after a long and weary way, that man turned the exploits of his genius to the full enrichment of his life.

Thank you. Good-bye.

Questions

1. What major challenge does Johnson believe lies ahead?
2. Describe LBJ's vision of the Great Society.
3. Describe what Johnson means by, "It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods".
4. Where are the three places that the Great Society will exist?
5. What kinds of improvements are needed in the cities, according to Johnson?
6. What sorts of problems plague the countryside, according to Johnson?
7. How does Johnson view the state of education at that time?
8. What solutions does Johnson propose for education?
9. What will be Johnson's first steps in finding ways to make the Great Society happen?
10. How does Johnson view this particular generation?
11. Describe what Johnson means when he says, "It was then, after a long and weary way, that man turned the exploits of his genius to the full enrichment of his life".

LBJ's Great Society Chart

After the Democrats won the victory in the Presidential and Congressional elections of 1964, President Johnson immediately introduced his vision of the "Great Society." He believed the country was ready to (1) **Eliminate Poverty**, (2) **Eliminate Racism**, (3) **End Ignorance**, (4) **Overcome Disease**, (5) **Revitalize the Cities**, (6) **Share the Abundance**, (use tax money for the good of all) and in general- (7) permit mankind to enjoy a **life of freedom and prosperity** (by having laws that protected them).

Great Society Programs 1964-1967

Use each goal listed above in the appropriate place provided below. (Place in the Roman Numeral Location.

I.	
1964 Tax Reduction Act-	1965 Medicare Act-
1964 Economic Opportunity Act-	1965 Appalachian Regional Development Act-
II.	
1965 Omnibus Housing Act-	1966 Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Area Redevelopment Act-
1965 HUD- Department of Housing and Urban Development-	
III.	
1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act-	1965 National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities-
1965 Higher Education Act-	1967 Corporation for National Broadcasting-
IV.	
1964 Civil Rights Act-	1965 Voting Rights Act-
1964 24 th Amendment-	1965 Immigration Act-
V.	
1965 Wilderness Preservation Act-	1965 Clean Air Act Amendment-
1965 Water Quality Act-	1967 Air Quality Act-
VI.	
1966 Truth in Packaging Act-	1966 Highway Safety Act-
1968 National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act-	1966 Department of Transportation-
VII.	
1965 Medicare-	
1965 Medicaid-	

Major Great Society Programs

War on Poverty: forty programs that were intended to eliminate poverty by improving living conditions and enabling people to lift themselves out of the cycle of poverty.

Education: sixty separate bills that provided for new and better-equipped classrooms, minority scholarships, and low-interest student loans.

Medicare & Medicaid: guaranteed health care to every American over sixty-five and to low-income families.

The Environment: introduced measures to protect clean air and water.

National Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities: government funding for artists, writers and performers.

Head Start: program for four- and five-year-old children from low-income families.

Sampling of the laws passed during the Johnson administration to promote the Great Society.

- PREVENTION & ABATEMENT OF AIR POLLUTION (THE CLEAN AIR ACT) DEC. 17, 1963
- VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT DEC. 18, 1963
- CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 JULY 2, 1964
- URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION JULY 9, 1964
- FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY ACT OF 1964 AUG. 13, 1964
- CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT OF 1964 AUG. 20, 1964
- FOOD STAMP ACT OF 1964 AUG. 31, 1964
- NATIONAL ARTS CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1964 SEPT. 3, 1964
- SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENTS JULY 30, 1965
- VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965 AUG. 6, 1965
- HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT AUG. 10, 1965
- PUBLIC WORKS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACT AUG. 26, 1965
- DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT SEPT. 9, 1965
- NATIONAL FOUNDATION ON THE ARTS & THE HUMANITIES ACT SEPT. 29, 1965
- HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965 NOV. 8, 1965
- CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966 OCT. 11, 1966
- CHILD PROTECTION ACT OF 1966 NOV. 3, 1966
- NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH ACT MAY 8, 1968

PRO: What Was Really Great About The Great Society (Modified)

By Joseph A. Califano Jr.

The Washington Monthly (online), October 1999

If there is a prize for the political scam of the 20th century, it should go to the conservatives for [claiming that the] Great Society programs of the 1960s were a misguided and failed social experiment that wasted taxpayers' money.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, from 1963 when Lyndon Johnson took office until 1970 as the impact of his Great Society programs were felt, the portion of Americans living below the poverty line dropped from 22.2 percent to

12.6 percent, the most dramatic decline over such a brief period in this century. .

. If the Great Society had not achieved that dramatic reduction in poverty, and the nation had not maintained it, 24 million more Americans would today be living below the poverty level. . .

Since 1965 the federal government has provided more than a quarter of a trillion dollars in 86 million college loans to 29 million students, and more than \$14 billion in work-study awards to 6 million students. Today nearly 60 percent of full-time undergraduate students receive federal financial aid under Great Society programs. . .

Head Start has served more than 16 million preschoolers in just about every city and county in the nation and today serves 800,000 children a year. . . Lyndon Johnson knew that the rich had kindergartens and nursery schools; and he asked, why not the same benefits for the poor?

Is revolution too strong a word? Since 1965, 79 million Americans have signed up for Medicare. In 1966, 19 million were enrolled; in 1998, 39 million. Since 1966, Medicaid has served more than 200 million needy Americans. In 1967, it served 10 million poor citizens; in 1997, 39 million. . . Closely related to these health programs were efforts to reduce malnutrition and hunger. Today, the Great Society's food stamp program helps feed more than 20 million men, women, and children in more than 8 million households. Since it was launched in 1967, the school breakfast program has provided a daily breakfast to nearly 100 million schoolchildren.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965. . . opened the way for black Americans to strengthen their voice at every level of government. In 1964 there were 79 black elected officials in the South and 300 in the entire nation. By 1998, there were some 9,000 elected black officials across the nation, including 6,000 in the South. . . .

Source: Joseph Califano, Jr., became a special assistant to President Johnson in July 1965, and served as President Johnson's senior domestic policy aide for the remainder of Johnson's term.

CON: War on Poverty Revisited (Modified)

By Thomas Sowell

Capitalism Magazine (online), August 17, 2004

The War on Poverty represented the crowning triumph of the liberal vision of society -- and of government programs as the solution to social problems. . .

In the liberal vision, slums bred crime. But brand-new government housing projects almost immediately became new centers of crime and quickly degenerated (declined) into new slums. . .

Rates of teenage pregnancy and venereal disease had been going down for years before the new 1960s attitudes toward sex spread rapidly through the schools, helped by War on Poverty money. These downward trends suddenly reversed and skyrocketed.

The murder rate had also been going down, for decades, and in 1960 was just under half of what it had been in 1934. Then the new 1960s policies toward curing the "root causes" of crime and creating new "rights" for criminals began. Rates of violent crime, including murder, skyrocketed.

The black family, which had survived centuries of slavery and discrimination, began rapidly disintegrating in the liberal welfare state that subsidized (paid for) unwed pregnancy and changed welfare from an emergency rescue to a way of life. . .

The economic rise of blacks began decades earlier, before any of the legislation and policies that are credited with producing that rise. The continuation of the rise of blacks out of poverty did not -- repeat, did not -- accelerate during the 1960s.

The poverty rate among black families fell from 87 percent in 1940 to 47 percent in 1960, during an era of virtually no major civil rights legislation or anti-poverty programs. . . . In various skilled trades, the incomes of blacks relative to whites more than doubled between 1936 and 1959 -- that is, before the magic 1960s decade when supposedly all progress began. The rise of blacks in professional and other high-level occupations was greater in the five years preceding the Civil Rights Act of 1964 than in the five years afterwards.

Source: Thomas Sowell is a conservative economist, author, and social commentator. He is currently a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

Great Society Graphic Organizer

	What is the author's main argument?	What are three pieces of evidence that the author uses to support his claims?
<p>PRO</p> <p>Great Society/ War on Poverty</p>		
<p>CON</p> <p>Great Society/ War on Poverty</p>		

Which author do you find more convincing and why?



Explain the meaning of the cartoon.