

**America's Political Parties:
The Democrats
1960-1976
(Revised Edition)**

Hosted by nationally syndicated columnist Ben J. Wattenberg.

Synopsis

Opening with the swearing in of John F. Kennedy, this program shows how the Democratic Party was affected by the volatile social change that took place during the '60s and '70s. Kennedy, a moderate Democrat with a "we can do better" attitude, waged a war on poverty and introduced civil rights legislation which would profoundly affect the direction of the country. Kennedy was pro-family, pro-traditional values, pro-middle class, and tough in foreign affairs. When Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon Johnson became president and expanded Kennedy's efforts.

Johnson promised a "Great Society" and fought for civil rights, Medicare, community clinics, environmental controls and Head Start-a program for disadvantaged children. But the escalation of the Vietnam War prompted Johnson to send more and more troops overseas. Many people who were against the war felt betrayed and started the anti-war movement. The subsequent years became filled with facial tension, civil dissatisfaction and violence. Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated. George Wallace and Gerald Ford were shot.

During this tumultuous time a wide variety of special interest groups including women, anti-war

demonstrators, gays, and ethnic groups all struggled to gain a voice in the Democratic Party. The party was re-defined and while some said it had been expanded and others said it had been fragmented, the new diversity did portray an image of uncertainty. This uncertainty contributed to the chaos during the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Anti-war demonstrators clashed violently with police and the brutality that ensued was televised nationwide. Viewers began to associate the Democratic Party with an unwanted war, demonstrations and violence. By the time the elections rolled around voters had lost confidence in Democratic leadership.

The Republican Party could only benefit from these events. When Republicans put Nixon in the White House, the Democratic Party rallied to find a candidate who could gain back the confidence of middle America, reflect its new diversity-and win the next election. It found one in Jimmy Carter, who won the presidency in 1976.

The program includes dramatic news footage and revealing analysis by such Democratic leaders as Paul Kirk, Jeanne Kirpatric and Jesse Jackson.

Questions to ask before viewing

- Which groups of people have traditionally voted on the Democratic ticket?
- What issues do Democrats traditionally support?
- Does today's Democratic Party stand for the same values it stood for when Kennedy was in office?

Questions to ask after viewing

1. What Democratic candidate won the 1960 presidential election? (John F. Kennedy.)
2. Who did Kennedy narrowly defeat? (Richard Nixon.)
3. Do analysts see Kennedy as moderate or liberal? (Kennedy is usually characterized as being not too liberal for moderates and not too moderate for liberals. His platform established a middle ground.)
4. What were some of Kennedy's accomplishments? (He made great strides in foreign policy, formed the Peace Corps, waged a war on poverty, and introduced profound civil rights legislation.)
5. How did the Kennedy administration end? (Kennedy was assassinated in 1963.)
6. When Kennedy was assassinated who became president? (Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson.)
7. What great promise is Johnson known for? (That he would make the United States a "Great Society.")
8. In 1964 who was Johnson's running mate? (Hubert Humphrey.)
9. Who was the Republican nominee that Johnson ran against? (Barry Goldwater.)
10. In 1964 Johnson won the presidency. What was unusual about his victory? (He won the biggest margin in history.)
11. What were some of the accomplishments of the Johnson administration? (He toughened the Civil Rights Bill and fought for Medicare, community clinics, environmental controls and Head Start.)
12. What caused many voters to lose faith in Johnson? (They felt betrayed when he sent troops to Vietnam.)
13. Why did the Democrats begin to lose southern voters? (Southern Democrats were opposed to the Civil Rights Bill.)
14. What was this southern opposition called? (The White Southern Backlash.)
15. The Southern Backlash lent credence to a presidential hopeful who ran on a third party ticket. Who was he and what was his platform? (Alabama Governor George Wallace, who ran with a "protecting safety and property" platform.)
16. The program highlights some of the candidates in the '68 presidential race. Who were they? (Eugene McCarthy, Hubert Humphrey and Robert Kennedy.)
17. Eugene McCarthy, popular with young anti-war voters, ran against Johnson in '68 and nearly won the election. What was one of his campaign slogans? ("Get Clean for Gene.")
18. What surprising announcement did Johnson make during the primaries? (That he did not seek, nor would he accept, his party's nomination to run for re-election.)
19. How did Johnson's announcement affect the presidential race? (It opened candidacy to Robert Kennedy.)
20. What happened to Kennedy during the campaign? (He was assassinated.)
21. Who eventually won the '68 Democratic nomination and what was unusual about the way he won? (Hubert Humphrey won the nomination and he did it without winning a single primary.)
22. The 1968 Democratic Convention erupted into chaos and violence-and it was televised. How did this event affect the image of the Democratic

- Party? (Voters didn't like what they say. They began to associate the negative images of an unwanted war, violent protests and civil unrest with the Democratic Party.)
23. When the 1972 primaries arrived who were some of the Democratic presidential hopefuls? (Jesse Jackson, George Wallace, and George McGovern.)
 24. What happened to Jackson and Wallace? (Jesse Jackson couldn't take control of the party and Wallace was shot.)
 25. Who won the Democratic nomination in '72? (George McGovern.)
 26. What factors may have ruined McGovern's chances for election? (He had to give his acceptance speech at 2:30 a.m. and he was seen as part of the counterculture.)
 27. Why were moderate Democrats opposed to McGovern? (He was against the war.)
 28. What was the Democratic strategy for winning the 1976 election? (To find a candidate who could win back the southern Democrats.) Who received the nomination? (Jimmy Carter.)

Additional Activities

- What are special interests groups? Give three examples of some groups that were active during the '60s and '70s and three examples of some that are active now.
- Discuss how the Democratic Party could have mitigated the negative image it had taken on during the '60s.

Essay Questions

- How do you think the course of the Democratic Party, and of the nation, would have been changed if John F. Kennedy hadn't been assassinated? If Robert Kennedy hadn't been assassinated?
- The program shows just a small amount of the harassment that Democratic nominee Hubert Humphrey endured during his presidential campaign. In being interviewed about the Humphrey situation, Walter Mondale said, "they just wouldn't give him his dignity." In your opinion, why were hecklers and critics so hard on Humphrey and what could he have done to improve the situation?

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- 8337 America's Political Parties: The Republicans 1976-1992

Length

- 26 minutes

Subject Area

- Social Studies, Political Science

Audience Levels

- Junior High-Adult

Catalog Number

- 8333

Annotation

Exploring the forces that influenced Democratic presidential politics from 1960-1976, this program illustrates how the violent images of anti-war demonstrations and social upheaval became images of anti-war demonstrations and social upheaval became images of the Democratic party itself. Viewers will journey through Democratic campaigns, conventions and primaries as well as through the administrations of Kennedy and Johnson. The program traces events up to the nomination of Jimmy Carter.

Discussion Guide

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Objectives

- To demonstrate the changes that have occurred within the Democratic Party since the early 1960's.
- To explain why Democrats lost the '68 and '72 presidential elections.
- To examine how the party lost the southern Democratic vote.
- To explore the ways that philosophical foundations and charismatic personalities can change the direction of a political party and a nation.

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