



MR. POGREBA, PARKER SCHOOL

**UNIT 8: ENVIRONMENTALISM
AND AMERICAN DECLINE**



ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

THINGS WERE BAD

- ▶ After 150 years of largely unchecked and unregulated industrialism, the environment of the US was in rough shape.
- ▶ In Cleveland, the Cuyahoga River **caught on fire** in 1948, 1952, and 1969.
- ▶ Cities like Los Angeles were covered in smog and air pollution, causing respiratory diseases for inhabitants.



THE MIGHTY CUYAHOGA

CRITICS

- ▶ In 1962, biologist **Rachel Carson** published her book ***Silent Spring***, which galvanized the nation to act.
- ▶ Carson's critique exposed the dangers of **DDT** and argued that "The central problem of our age has ... become the contamination of man's total environment with ... substances of incredible potential for harm."
- ▶ Environmentalism becomes a mass movement, with membership in the **Sierra Club** from 123,000 in 1960 to 819,000 in 1970.
- ▶ In 1964, Johnson passes the **Wilderness Act** and a series of Clean Air and Water acts.



RACHEL CARSON

As crude a weapon as the cave man's club, the chemical barrage has been hurled against the fabric of life - a fabric on the one hand delicate and destructible, on the other miraculously tough and resilient, and capable of striking back in unexpected ways. These extraordinary capacities of life have been ignored by the practitioners of chemical control who have brought to their task no "high-minded orientation," no humility before the vast forces with which they tamper.

Rachel Carson, Silent Spring

FEDERAL ACTION

- ▶ Nixon establishes the **Environmental Protection Agency** in 1970, the year of the first **Earth Day** celebration. 20 million celebrated the first Earth Day.
- ▶ **The Clean Air Act of 1970** set standards to reduce air pollution in cars and factories.
- ▶ **The Clean Water Act of 1972** was the first major effort to regulate water pollution since 1948.
- ▶ **The Endangered Species Act of 1973** was created to protect threatened and endangered species in the US.
- ▶ The **Superfund** program was established in 1980 to remediate environmental waste.



NIXON SIGNING THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

BACKLASH TO ENVIRONMENTALISM

- ▶ In the late 1970s and 1980s, there was a significant conservative backlash to the environmental movement.
- ▶ The **Sagebrush Rebellion** in the West sought to transfer federal lands to states/private owners to prevent regulation.
- ▶ Conservatives like Ronald Reagan argued that **environmental regulation** harmed American industry.
- ▶ In 1981, Reagan claimed that "trees cause more pollution than automobiles do."



SAGEBRUSH REBELS AT THE BUNDY RANCH, 2014



THE TROUBLED 1970S

THE 1973 OIL EMBARGO

- ▶ In 1973, another war broke out in the Middle East, with Egypt and Syria attacking Israel.
- ▶ **OPEC placed an embargo** on oil sales to countries—like the US—who had backed Israel.
- ▶ This kicks off a disaster in the American economy: **runaway inflation, loss of manufacturing jobs**, and a declining standard of living for blue collar workers.
- ▶ American consumers start buying more efficient Japanese cars, a trend that has not really abated.
- ▶ The enduring image of the oil embargo was **long lines at gas stations** and the American economy entered **stagflation** through the Ford and Carter Administrations.



GAS SHORTAGES OF THE 1970S

NIXON AND WATERGATE

- ▶ Despite the struggles of the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon remained a heavy favorite to win the 1972 election.
- ▶ In June '72, people hired by his campaign broke into the **Watergate** building to bug the Democrats, part of a campaign of dirty tricks and illegal donations.
- ▶ Reporters **Carl Bernstein** and **Bob Woodward** exposed the cover-up at the White House to the nation.



WOODWARD AND BERNSTEIN

CONSEQUENCES OF WATERGATE

- ▶ Nixon's Vice President **Spiro Agnew** was forced to resign for unrelated corruption charges.
- ▶ In October 1973, Nixon fired special prosecutor **Archibald Cox** after both the Attorney General and the his replacement refused to and resigned, an event known as the **Saturday Night Massacre**.
- ▶ The House began impeachment hearings for the second time in history, and when Nixon released **White House tapes**, there was an 18 minute gap.
- ▶ Nixon resigned in Aug, 1974, when Senate Republicans signaled they would convict.



I have written of the rise, between the years 1965 and 1972, of a nation that had believed itself to be at consensus instead becoming one of incommensurate visions of apocalypse: two loosely defined congeries of Americans, each convinced that should the other triumph, everything decent and true and worth preserving would end. That was the 1960s. We Americans are not killing or trying to kill one another anymore for reasons of ideology, or at least for now. Remember this: this war has ratcheted down considerably. But it still simmers on.

Rick Perlstein, Nixonland: The Rise of a Presidency and the Fracturing of America, 2010

UNDERMINING BROWN V. BOARD

- ▶ Desegregation efforts—particularly **busing students**—caused outrage and protests across the US through the 1960s and early 1970s.
- ▶ Two Supreme Court decisions in the 1970s drastically undermine the promise of Brown v. Board.
 - ▶ **Milliken v. Bradley** (1974) incentivized **white flight** by letting communities create new suburban districts.
 - ▶ **San Antonio v. Rodriguez** (1973) held that states did not need to fund districts **equally**, just **adequately**.
- ▶ Today, Black students are **twice as likely to attend high-poverty schools** and **five times as likely to attend schools that are highly segregated** as white students.



THE SOILING OF OLD GLORY, 1976

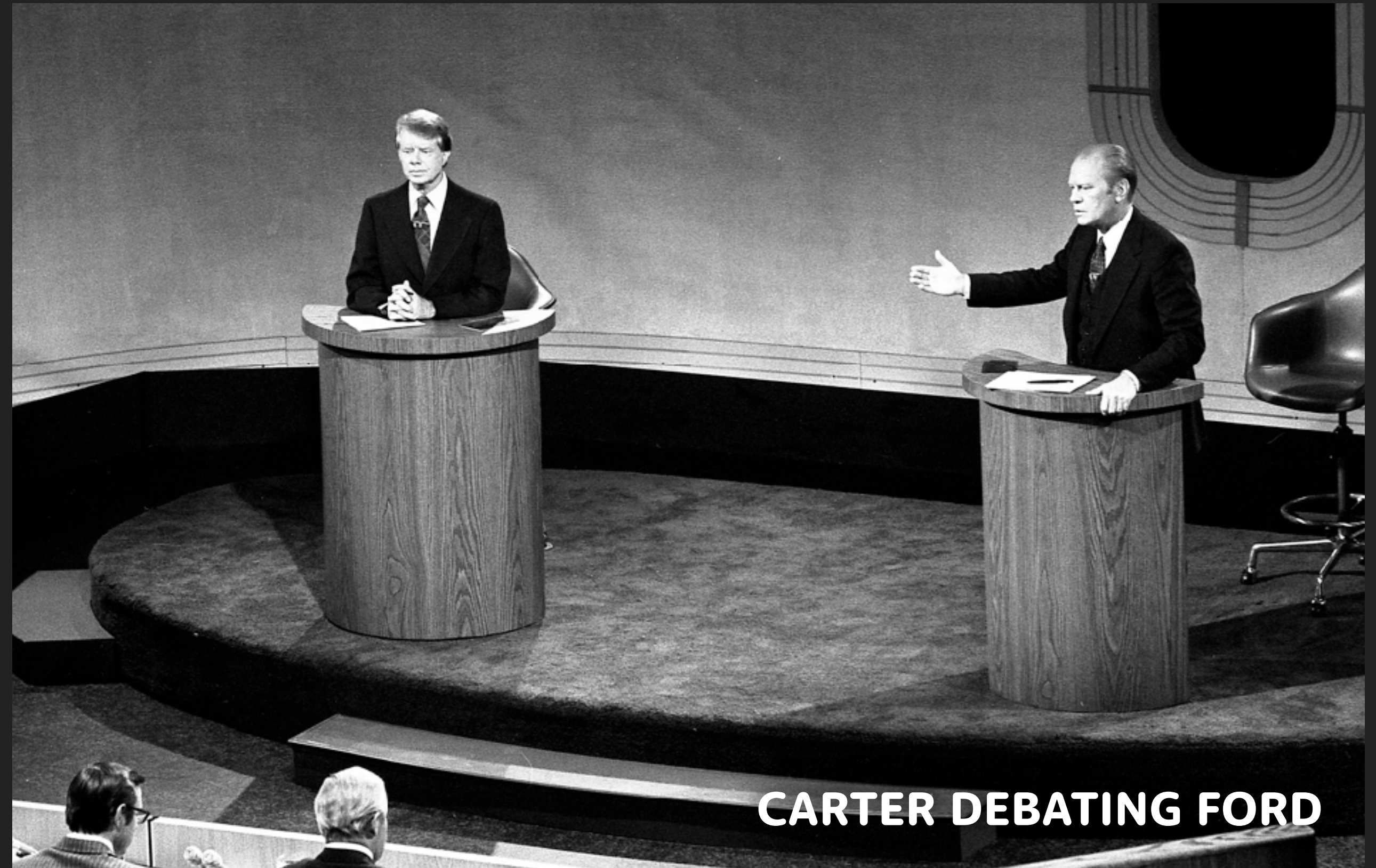
Roughly 9 million children — nearly 1 in 5 public school students in the U.S. — attend schools that are racially isolated and receive far less money than schools just a few miles away. That's according to a sweeping new review of the nation's most divisive school district borders from EdBuild, a nonprofit that investigates school funding inequities.

"Inequality is endemic" in America's public schools, the report says, identifying nearly 1,000 school district borders where schools on one side receive at least 10% less money per student than schools on the other side and where the racial makeup of the two sides' students varies by 25 percentage points or more. It is the story of segregation, in 2019.

NPR Report, July 25 2019

CARTER ADMINISTRATION

- ▶ Promising a new outsider government, Jimmy Carter from GA was elected in 1976.
- ▶ His policies—both those that demanded sacrifice from Americans and constrained economic growth to control the inflation of the Nixon and Ford Administrations—failed to inspire the nation or address unemployment.
- ▶ In 1979, he gave a speech about the “**crisis of confidence**” in America.
- ▶ By the election of 1980, 1/3 of voters said they were not excited about Carter or his rival, Ronald Reagan.



**The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways.
It is a crisis of confidence.
It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation.
The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America.**

President Carter, The Crisis of Confidence Speech

EVANGELICALS ON THE RISE

- ▶ As religion declined in the 1960s, there was a revival of **evangelical (“born again”) Christianity**. By the late 1970s, 70 million Americans described themselves as **evangelicals**.
- ▶ While some were politically liberal, **the vast majority**—troubled by acceptance of the LGBTQ community, ending prayer in schools, the ERA and most of all, abortion, **began to emerge as a political force on the right**.
- ▶ They built on the success of early evangelicals from the radio and TV era, and stars like **Billy Graham** and **Oral Roberts** used TV to massively expand their influence.



JERRY FALWELL

Symbols of middle American normalcy kept rearing up and strangling America's sense of itself as decent, prosperous, and safe. The Kool-Aid that Jim Jones used to poison his followers. The Twinkies that supposedly turned Dan White into a homicidal maniac. Family farmers invading Washington, D.C. A necrophile birthday clown. The year 1979 was when the pure products of America went crazy.

Rick Perlstein, Reaganland: America's Right Turn 1976-1980

THE MORAL MAJORITY

- ▶ By the late 1970s, the Christian Right becomes a powerful political force. **Jerry Falwell** launches the **Moral Majority**, and **Pat Robertson** launches the **Christian Coalition**.
- ▶ Joined by many **Catholics** on abortion and prayer issues and newly-political figures in the **LDS Church**, the religious right becomes a key base of power in the Republican Party.
- ▶ The **New Right** of the Republican Party fused the power of big business and big faith to reshape American politics.
- ▶ And **Ronald Reagan** was their first big success in 1980...

