

CHAPTER
21

Civil Rights: Equal Justice Under Law

SECTION 1

DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

TEXT SUMMARY

The United States is a **heterogeneous** society—it is composed of people from different backgrounds. Since the 1960s, the ethnic makeup of the country has changed. Near-record numbers of **immigrants**, or people legally admitted as permanent residents, have helped increase the numbers of African, Asian, and Hispanic Americans. Many recent Hispanic immigrants have come from Central and South America as **refugees**, or people who leave their homes to seek protection from danger.

Assimilation is the process by which people of one culture merge

into and become part of another culture. In our history, white Americans have not been very good at giving an equal place to nonwhite Americans.

African, Native, Hispanic, and Asian Americans are four large minority groups that have suffered discrimination from the government and private individuals. Today, more than one-third of the nation's Native American population lives on **reservations**—public lands set aside for use by Native American tribes.

Women experience discrimination in much the same way that minorities do. They have been treated as less than equal in property rights, education, and employment opportunities.

THE BIG IDEA

While the United States has struggled to meet the constitutional ideal of equality for all, members of ethnic minorities and women have faced discrimination.

Although the United States is home to people of many backgrounds, women and ethnic minorities have experienced discrimination.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *Heterogeneous American Society*

Heterogeneous Society:	<i>A society made up of people from different backgrounds</i> The United States is a heterogeneous society, composed of whites, Native Americans, and many other ethnic groups.
Immigrants:	<i>People legally admitted to a country as permanent residents</i> Many African, Asian, and Hispanic immigrants reside in the United States.
Refugees:	<i>People who leave their homes to seek protection from war, persecution, or some other danger</i> Many refugees from Central and South America reside in the United States.
Assimilation:	<i>The process by which people of one culture merge into and become part of another culture</i> The white population in the United States has tried to assimilate all nonwhite groups into it.
Discrimination:	<i>The mistreatment of one group of people by another</i> Ethnic minorities and women face discrimination in the United States.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In what ways have women been discriminated against in the United States?

2. Chart Skills What defines a heterogeneous society?