

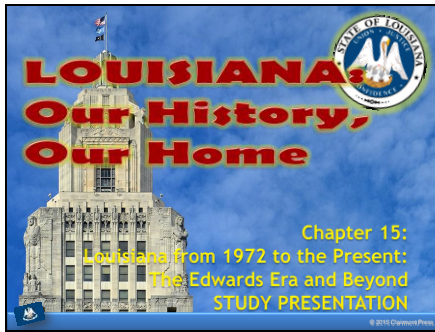
Louisiana: Our History, Our Home

Chapter 15: Louisiana from 1972 to the Present: The Edwards Era and Beyond

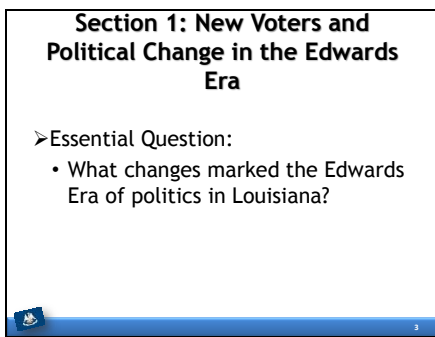


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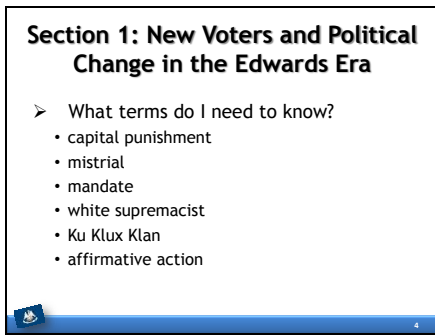
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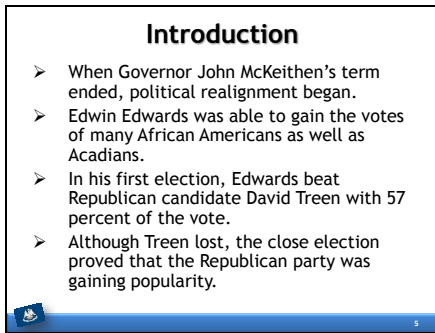
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A New Constitution

- Edwards' top priority was reforming the state Constitution of 1921, which had 536 amendments.
- In 1973, a constitutional convention was held in Baton Rouge, and in 1974, the new constitution was adopted.
- One of the main improvements was that it guaranteed equal protection under the law, regardless of race, gender, or religious ideas and prohibited discrimination.
- The new constitution also required the government to reorganize and shrink itself.
- By 1978, Edwards had reduced the number of government groups from 260 to 20.

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Edwin Edwards as Governor, 1972-1980

- Edwards reduced individual taxes and eliminated property tax.
- He raised taxes on corporations, oil, and gas.
- Edwards used excess funds to expand social programs and improve healthcare, education, and transportation.
- By the end of his first term, the state budget was \$1 billion. When his second term ended, the budget had risen to \$4 billion.
- Concerns were rising about his personal finances and how he was using his position to help his allies.
- No formal charges were filed against Edwards, but his wife and associates were accused and in some cases, convicted, of political crimes.

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The Open Primary

- The 1979 governor's race was the first to use an open primary, which allows candidates from any party to run against each other. The top two candidates advance to the run-off, regardless of party.
- In 1979, a large number of Democrats and one Republican candidate ran in an open primary for governor.
- Republican David Treen and Democrat Louis Lambert made it to the run-off election. Four other Democrats endorsed Treen, and he won by a narrow victory.
- Treen's term began in 1980 and demonstrated the rise of the Republican party since the 1960s.

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David Treen as Governor, 1980-1984

- Treen's approach was more conservative than previous governors.
- He reinstated **capital punishment**, which is the legally authorized killing of someone as punishment for a crime.
- Treen continued to increase government spending and borrowing of money, which is more typical of Democrat, and used the funds to build state facilities and infrastructure.
- He wanted to tax gas and oil transportation and spend the money on a program called the Coastal Wetlands Environmental Levy, but he was unable to get approval for the plan.

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The Return of Edwin Edwards

- In 1983, Edwards was elected governor over incumbent Treen.
- It was a very expensive victory that left him \$4 million in debt.
- He led a trip to France in early 1984 and charged \$10,000 to any person who wanted to accompany him.
- Six-hundred people went on the trip with him and most of them had paid the \$10,000 fee. He easily paid back his debts.
- This is a good example of the *bon temps* or "good times" philosophy which was very popular with many politicians in Louisiana.

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Edwin Edwards as Governor, 1984-1988

- By early 1984, oil prices had begun to decline, and Louisiana entered an economic crisis.
- To balance the budget, Edwards raised individual taxes and laid off massive amounts of government workers.
- Layoffs in both the public and private sector gave Louisiana the highest unemployment rate in the nation.

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Edwin Edwards as Governor, 1984-1988 (continued)

- Federal charges were brought against Edwards. He was accused of using his position to get state contracts for his friends.
- He had two trials. The first trial was in 1985 and resulted in a **mistrial** (a trial that is not valid because of an error or the jury cannot decide on a verdict). The second was in 1986 and he was found not guilty.
- His image was ruined and he quickly lost favor.

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The Roemer Revolution

- Charles "Buddy" Roemer's father was one of the officials who went to prison after Edwards' first two terms.
- He promised to eradicate the corruption caused by Edwards.
- In 1987, Roemer and Edwards won first and second in the open primary.
- Edwards gave up the next day, and Roemer became governor without a run-off.
- As governor, he was unable to claim a **mandate** (authorization or approval) from voters.
- In 1988, he proposed a bill to lower taxes on businesses and increase them on individuals. He hoped this would encourage businesses to come to Louisiana. This plan was rejected by voters.
- Eventually, he decided to legalize gambling in the state to increase revenue.
- He ran for reelection in 1991 after switching to the Republican Party, but lost.

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The 1991 Election

- In the 1991 run-off, both Edwin Edwards and David Duke were controversial.
- Although Edwards was never convicted, many people believed he had caused government corruption.
- Duke had been a vocal member of several **white supremacist** (people who believe the white race is better than other races) groups since his teens.
- In the 1970s, he became a national leader of the **Ku Klux Klan**, a secret white supremacist organization.
- In the early 1980s, he founded the National Association for the Advancement of White People.
- Around the same time, he ran for state office. He was eventually elected to the state House of Representatives in 1989.
- The next year he ran for U.S. Senate, but lost with 43.5 percent of the vote.
- In the open primary for governor, Duke came in second.

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The 1991 Election (continued)

- Over 68,000 went to register to prevent Duke from winning. More than half of the people were African American.
- Duke claimed he had given up racist beliefs and now supported Republican ideas, like opposition to **affirmative action**, which is the practice of improving the educational and job opportunities for groups that have been discriminated against.
- Although he had changed parties, even some Republicans were not in favor of him. They believed it would damage the state's image if a former KKK member were governor.
- Almost 79 percent of the population voted in the election!
- Edwards easily won his fourth term as governor with 61% of the votes.

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Governor Edward's Fourth Term

- In his final term, Edwards faced widespread poverty, which also meant that Louisiana received a larger share of funding from the federal health care program for the poor called Medicaid.
- Instead of helping people with the money from Medicaid, a lot of it went to businesses and specialized health service providers.
- People who were well-connected received the funds and charged high fees for services. Many businesspeople made fortunes from this money.
- Gambling in land-based casinos became legal at this time. Edwards constructed one in 1992 in New Orleans.
- Later, federal investigators accused Edwards of accepting cash payments from people who wanted him to legalize land-based casinos.

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The End of an Era

- Edwards left office in 1996 for the last time.
- In 2000, he was tried on twenty-six charges of using his influence as governor to distribute state contracts and casino licenses.
- He was convicted on seventeen of those counts and sentenced to ten years in prison. He was released two years early in 2011 at age eighty-three.
- Despite his conviction, Edwards was still drawing a large number of admirers.

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Section 2: Contemporary Governors

- Essential Question:
 - What legacies did Foster, Blanco, and Jindal leave as governor?

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Section 2: Contemporary Governors

- What terms do I need to know?
 - polling
 - privatize

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Introduction

- No Louisianan governor since Edwards has had the same electoral success or color personality.
- After 1996, many voters wanted a governor with a more dignified public image.

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Mike Foster as Governor, 1996-2004

- Foster became governor in 1996. He promised to return fair decision-making to the state.
- Foster was wealthy enough to fund his campaign in the beginning. He argued that because he was already wealthy, he would be less tempted to perpetuate corruption.
- Foster was a lifelong Democrat but switched to the Republican party to run for governor.
- In the general election, Foster won against Cleo Fields, an African American legislator.
- Foster served two terms: 1996-2000 and 2000-2004.
- He supported education by raising teachers' salaries and upgrading facilities.
- Despite critics that say he did not do enough as governor, Foster did restore dignity and calm to the governor's office after the Edwards Era.

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Kathleen Blanco as Governor, 2004-2008

- Blanco was a teacher for a short amount of time.
- She and her husband ran a successful **polling** (questioning people to obtain information or opinions) business.
- Blanco was elected to the state legislature, Public Service Commission, and lieutenant governor.
- In 2003, she ran for governor and narrowly beat Bobby Jindal, becoming the first female governor of the state.
- Blanco focused on improving educational opportunity and facilities and raised salaries for teachers.
- When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, government officials were unprepared. She disagreed with federal officials about how to deal with the crisis, and she was blamed for the delay in federal aid.
- Her final years in office were consumed with rebuilding after the storm and securing funds to help people return to the state and protect the coastal areas.

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Bobby Jindal as Governor, 2008-

- Jindal won easily in 2007, making him the nation's first Indian American governor.
- He designed a package of ethics laws to finally end Louisiana's reputation for corruption.
- In 2012, Jindal constructed education and healthcare reforms. He wanted to **privatize** (remove something from government control) some government functions.
- In 2013, he tried to reform taxation, but the state legislature refused.
- In 2014, he took a trip to Asia to attract new businesses to the state.
- A new governor will be elected in 2016 since Jindal cannot serve 3 consecutive terms as governor.

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Section 3: Continuity and Change in Contemporary Louisiana

- Essential Question:
 - What are the biggest issues facing the people of Louisiana?

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Section 3: Continuity and Change in Contemporary Louisiana

- What terms do I need to know?
 - white flight
 - incarceration
 - *laissez les bon temps rouler*

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Introduction


- While many things have changed in Louisiana since Edwin Edwards became governor in 1974, there are still many issues, including social problems, that face Louisianans.



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Population


- While many people left Louisiana during the 1980s, the state's population has grown slowly since then.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the growth rate was 5.9 percent. In the next ten years, the rate slowed to 1.4 percent.
- People began to move to the suburbs in the 1960s, mainly due to white flight, the movement of whites from cities to less integrated suburban communities.
- In 2010, New Orleans and Baton Rouge were the state's two largest cities followed by Shreveport.
- When Katrina hit in 2005, the population fell. By 2013, the population of New Orleans was almost back to pre-storm levels.
- The state's African American population was a steady 32 percent between 2000 and 2010.
- The white population shrank by 1 percent, but remained the majority at 62.6 percent.
- The Hispanic group had the most growth, representing 4.2 percent of the population.
- Asians make up the additional 1.5 percent.



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Education


- The state education system has struggled to improve opportunities and outcomes for students.
- Jindal reformed the way education is offered and funded in the state.
- His changes have been challenged in courts and by educators around the state.
- Reform efforts and funding cuts have created uncertainty for educators and students.
- In a 2013 report, Louisiana schools were near the bottom of the results.
- Despite this, test scores and graduation rates have risen significantly in the last ten years.



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Poverty and Well Being

- Louisiana's poverty rates are the highest in the nation.
- Misuse of federal Medicaid funds brought the concept of disproportionate shares to an end in the 1990s, meaning many went without needed treatment.
- The state has struggled to fund public hospitals and healthcare facilities.



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Incarceration and Crime


- Violent crime rates are very high.
- State murder rates are the highest in the nation.
- Louisiana also has the highest rate of **incarceration** (putting people in prison) in the nation.
- Many citizens have decided to move out of the cities, which have higher rates of crime and more aggressive policing.
- In cities, many live in gated communities or pay a special tax for increased police patrols.



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Change, Challenges, and the Future


- The state's head and master laws were ruled unconstitutional in 1980.
- Women in Louisiana still earn less than men for the same kinds of jobs.
- Women make up the majority of those who have finished high school and go to college.
- Women have served as state Supreme Court justices, legislators, mayors, councilwomen, and senator, but their numbers are still small.



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Economic Diversification

- Oil, gas, and petrochemicals play an important role in Louisiana's economy.
- Governor Jindal believes automobile manufacturing, industrial machinery, plastics, rubber, chemicals and software are up-and-coming industries for Louisiana.
- Tourism is a critical part of the economy. In 2012, tourism created \$10 billion in revenue.
- New Orleans is the most popular tourist destination in Louisiana.
- Television shows, like *Duck Dynasty* and *Swamp People*, have encouraged people to come to the state.



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Cultural Diversity

- The state continues to preserve cultural artifacts even as artists create new ones.
- Writers, musicians, artists, and other creative people have put their life experiences in Louisiana into their art.
- Edwin Edwards often used the slogan *laissez les bon temps rouler* ("let the good times rolls" to describe many people's approach to life in Louisiana.

