



The Human Toll of
the Great Depression

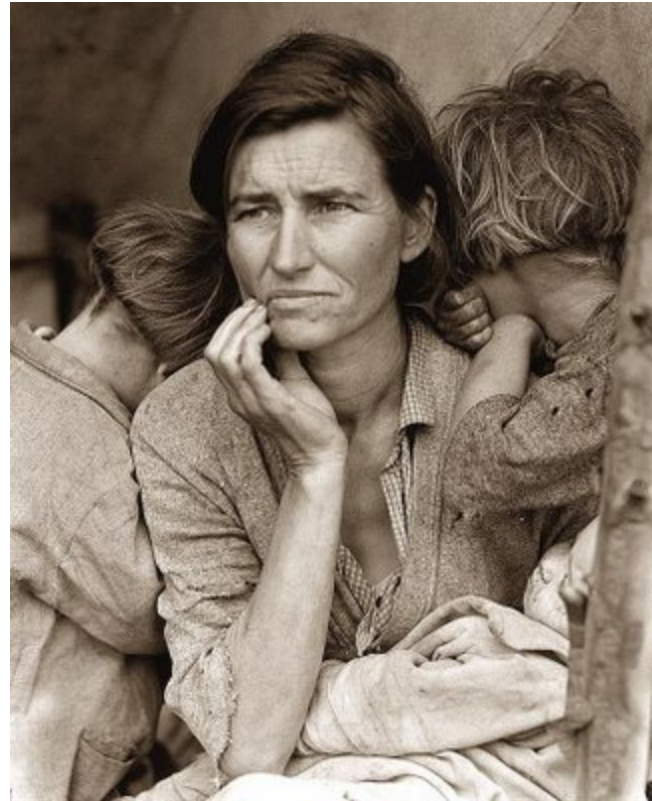
Rising Unemployment

- By 1933, 13 million Americans were out of work (25 percent of the population); to compare, only 3.1 percent of the pop. was out of work before the stock market crashed.
- Companies lay off workers, starting with young, elderly, then minority workers (the black unemployment rate rose to fifty percent; some Mexican Americans were mistakenly kicked out of the country to protect white jobs).
- Initially, men were hit hardest by layoffs; soon, many states refused to hire women if their husbands earned a living wage.



Stress on families

- Men were especially hit hard; many felt they lost authority in the family when they lost their jobs. Suicide rates reach an all-time high.
- Many teenage children were kicked out to fend for themselves (families couldn't afford them); many took to riding the railroads in search of work.
- Marriage and birthrates declined
- Desertion rates went up (men walked out on their families when they couldn't provide)



Hunger and starvation

- In 1930, the malnutrition rate for kids in New York was 30 percent; in some rural areas that rose to 90 percent.
- Illness rates amongst the unemployed rose to 66 percent (since there was no wage-earner, there was no medical care)
- Many resorted to stealing, begging, or scavenging for food. Some even had to feed their families on plants like thistle or dandelions
- Soup kitchens spring up; in NYC, they served 85,000 meals a day (Al Capone and his gang actually opened the first soup kitchen in Chicago).



Workers struggle to get by

- People did EVERYTHING to support themselves and their families, from selling all their belongings on the street to dropping out of college.
- City and State governments came together to provide public support, and charitable donations for the needy quadrupled.

