

# Understand USA

## **USA TODAY .....1118**

The legalization of gay marriage, health care for all, affordable housing, mass shootings and a widening income gap.

## **HISTORY .....1121**

Shaped by Native Americans, colonists, revolutionaries, reconstructionists, New Dealers and civil rights fighters.

## **THE WAY OF LIFE ..... 1133**

Lifestyles, immigration, religion, sports and politics.

## **NATIVE AMERICANS ..... 1138**

Overview of some Native American tribes, plus the lowdown on crafts and iconic texts.

## **AMERICAN CUISINE ..... 1140**

Top tips on feasting à la Americana, from Maryland crabs to Texas BBQ, and Southern biscuits 'n' gravy to California fusion.

## **WINE, BEER & BEYOND. .... 1144**

Venerable vineyards, magnificent microbreweries and top tipples, plus the ever-enduring coffee craze.

## **ARTS & ARCHITECTURE..... 1147**

Providing a window into the American identity – literature, painting, theater and architecture.

## **THE MUSIC SCENE ..... 1156**

The great American sound in all its beauty and dissonance, from blues and jazz to country, folk, rock and hip-hop.

## **THE LAND & WILDLIFE ..... 1159**

Geology, natural disasters, environmentalism and the iconic creatures of the American landscape.

# USA Today

A historic ruling by the Supreme Court heralded a new era of equality for the world's largest democracy – this on the heels of another high court ruling on health care, a pivotal legacy of President Obama. Other hot topics of the day are the hopeless regularity of mass shootings, greener lifestyles and the ever-increasing allure of city life – resulting in a lack of affordable housing, among other things.

## Best in Print

**On the Road** (1957) Jack Kerouac on post-WWII America.

**The Great Gatsby** (1925) F Scott Fitzgerald's powerful Jazz Age novel.

**Beloved** (1987) Toni Morrison's searing Pulitzer Prize-winning novel set during the post-Civil War years.

**Huckleberry Finn** (1884) Mark Twain's moving tale of journey and self-discovery.

## Best on Film

**Singin' in the Rain** (1952) Among the best in the era of musicals, with an exuberant Gene Kelly and a timeless score.

**Annie Hall** (1977) Woody Allen's brilliant romantic comedy, with New York City playing a starring role.

**North by Northwest** (1959) Alfred Hitchcock thriller with Cary Grant on the run across America.

**Godfather** (1972–90) Famed trilogy that looks at American society through immigrants and organized crime.

## A Rainbow Nation

No one who witnessed the Stonewall Riots – which sparked the gay liberation movement in 1969 – could have imagined that he or she would live to see the day when gay marriage would become legal in the USA. Yet on June 26, 2015, that's exactly what happened when the US Supreme Court ruled that all states must recognize same-sex marriage licenses. The historic ruling was the culmination of a long, legal battle by gay rights advocates, and there was much euphoria on the streets – especially since the ruling coincided with Pride events happening across the nation. Major sites like the Empire State Building, Cinderella's Castle at Disney World – and even the White House – lit up their facades in rainbow colors, in proud support of the ruling. A Gallup poll after the verdict found that nearly 60% of Americans supported same-sex marriage, with some eight in 10 young adults favoring gay marriage – clearly a sign that the winds of change are sweeping across the US.

## Health Care for All

The ruling on same-sex marriages came just days after another important ruling. This one related to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), President Obama's program to extend health care through subsidies to millions of uninsured Americans. The court upheld key provisions of the law (the second time the Supreme Court had ruled on Obamacare), though the future of the ACA remains far from certain. Since the law's implementation the House and Senate had tried (unsuccessfully) to repeal Obamacare more than 50 times.

Despite congressional obstructionism, the program has been a success, allowing over 16 million uninsured Americans to obtain coverage. Republican critics of the program claim Obamacare would kill jobs and cripple the US economy – a claim Obama refuted, saying that