

Mobilizing for Defense and the Home Front

Americans Join the War Effort

Selective Service Act

- first peacetime draft in American history
- All men b/w the ages of 21 – 35 had to register (later 18 – 37)
- Of the 15 million members of the armed service during WWII, 2/3 were draftees and rest were volunteers
- The volunteers and draftees received only eight weeks of basic training

Expanding the Military

- General **George Marshall**—Army Chief of Staff—calls for women's corps
- **Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC)**—women in noncombat positions. Women serve as nurses, operators, and ambulance drivers.
- Thousands enlist; “auxiliary” dropped, get full U. S. army benefits

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Recruiting and Discrimination

- Minority groups are denied basic citizenship rights
- Question whether they should fight for democracy in other countries

Dramatic Contributions

- 300,000 Mexican Americans join armed forces
- 1 million African Americans serve; lived, worked in segregated units
- 13,000 Chinese Americans and 33,000 Japanese Americans serve – thousands served as spies and interpreters in the Pacific war
- 25,000 Native Americans enlist - the Navajo Code Talkers use their language to communicate secretly
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A Production Miracle

The Industrial Response

- Factories convert from civilian to war production
- Shipyards, defense plants expand, new ones built
- Produce ships, arms rapidly
 - use prefabricated parts
 - people work at record speeds – ships could be built in 4 days

Labor's Contribution

- Nearly 18 million workers in war industries; 6 million are women
- Women earned 60% of what men earned
- Over 2 million minorities hired; face strong discrimination at first
- 75% of defense contractors refused to hire African-Americans and another 15% would only African-Americans for menial jobs.

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- **A. Philip Randolph**, head of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
- Organizes 100,000 march on D.C.; FDR feared that march could cause white resentment and violence
- In return for Randolph ending the strike FDR promised to issue an executive order calling on employers to not discriminate when hiring (**Executive Order 8802**)
- **Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC)** – investigated complaints from employees against employers
- **Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD)** – worked on improving radar and sonar
- Encouraged the use of pesticides like DDT to fight insects like lice
- Created penicillin which is an antibiotic
- Responsible for creating the atomic bomb through the **Manhattan Project** (1942)

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The Federal Government Takes Control

Economic Controls

- **Office of Price Administration (OPA)** freezes prices, fights inflation
- Higher taxes
- Government encourages Americans to buy war bonds – over half of the American population bought war bonds
- purchase of war bonds lower demand for scarce goods
- **War Production Board (WPB)** says which companies convert production
 - allocates raw materials
 - organizes collection of recyclable materials like tin, aluminum, and oil.

Rationing

- **Rationing**—fixed allotments of goods needed by military
- Each family member received a ration book with coupons to be used for buying scarce goods such as meat, shoes, sugar, coffee, and gasoline.
- American families planted victory gardens.

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American Support for the War

- Roosevelt called on the nation to protect the “four freedoms” – freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

- The **Office of War Information** spread propaganda, or information and ideas designed to promote a cause. Examples included posters encouraging people to join the armed forces or to save gasoline. The OWI also warned the public about the dangers they faced.

- Hollywood made a series of patriotic films that featured soldiers and workers on the home front.

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Opportunity and Adjustment

Economic Gains

- Defense industries boom, unemployment falls to 1.2% in 1944
 - average pay rises 10% during war
- Farmers prosper from rising crop prices, production increased by 50% and income tripled
 - many pay off mortgages
- Percentage of women in work force rises to 35%

Population Shifts

- War triggers mass migrations to towns with defense industries
- Over 1 million people migrated to California
- African-Americans left the South for the North

Rosie the Riveter

- Was a symbol of patriotic women doing their part to help with the war.
- Factories reported that the work done by women was equal to that of men but women were still paid less than men

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Social Adjustments

- Families adjust to fathers in military; mothers rear children alone
- Families must get to know each other again after fathers return
- Many couples rush to marry before husband goes overseas – Seattle marriage licenses go up by 300%
- 1944 **GI Bill of Rights** or Servicemen's Readjustment Act:
 - pays education; loan guarantees for homes, new businesses

Discrimination and Reaction

- Between 1940 and 1944 the percentage of African-Americans working in skilled and semiskilled jobs rose from 16% to 30%
- **Congress of Racial Equality** – founded by James Farmer to confront urban segregation in the North. Held the first sit-in at a segregated Chicago restaurant.
- In 1943 a riot broke out in Detroit because of a rumor that white men had murdered a black woman and her children. FDR sent troops to restore order.
- **Zoot Suit Riots** (1943) in Los Angeles – ZS is a style of dress adopted by Mexican-American youth as a symbol of their rebellion against tradition.
- The riots started when 11 sailors falsely reported that zoot-suit-wearing Mexican-Americans attacked them.
- Hundreds of Mexican-Americans were beaten. Police was partly blamed for arresting innocent Mexican-Americans.

Japanese American Internment

Executive Order 9066

- After Pearl Harbor, military officials began to investigate the Japanese American community for signs of spying or other illegal activity.
- It was recommended that all people of Japanese background be removed from the West Coast.
- **Order 9066** established military zones and could force people to leave these zones.
- Japanese Americans in California, Washington, Oregon, and Arizona were forced into **internment** camps.
- Many lost their homes and businesses.

Japanese American Loyalty

- While interned, Japanese Americans were forced to answer questions about their loyalty to the United States.
- German and Italian Americans also faced restrictions.
- Many young people from the camps joined the armed forces to prove their loyalty.
- Not all Japanese Americans accepted their internment peacefully.
- Some mounted legal challenges such as *Korematsu v. United States*.

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Korematsu v. United States (1944)

- The Supreme Court tried to find the right balance between the rights of Japanese Americans and wartime needs.
- Fred Korematsu refused the executive order that relocated 110,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps.
 - Korematsu was born in Oakland, California, and was an American citizen.
 - He was arrested and then appealed his case to the Supreme Court.
- The Supreme Court ruled against Korematsu stating that the relocation order was justified as a temporary wartime measure.
 - He continued to work for civil rights and had his conviction overturned in 1983.
 - In 1985 Congress authorized the spending of \$38 million to compensate those interned, which amounted to less than a/10th of their actual losses.
 - President Reagan signed a bill that promised **\$20,000** to every Japanese-American sent to relocation camps.