SECTION 2

◀ Workers in an aircraft plant

◀ "Rosie the Riveter" poster

**WITNESS HISTORY** AUDIO

### Rosie the Riveter

Who was Rosie the Riveter? The image of a muscular, determined worker, hair tucked under a kerchief, graced countless magazines and posters. And several real-life Rosies won nationwide publicity, including Rose Hicker, a worker in a Tarrytown, New York, aircraft plant, who set a record for driving rivets into the wing of a bomber. But, in fact, Rosie was not based on one woman. The name was first used in a 1942 song:

"All the day long, whether rain or shine,
She's a part of the assembly line.
She's making history,
Working for victory,
Rosie the Riveter."

—Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb, "Rosie the Riveter"

# The Home Front

### Objectives

- Explain how World War II increased opportunities for women and minorities.
- Analyze the effects of the war on civil liberties for Japanese Americans and others.
- Examine how the need to support the war effort changed American lives.

### Terms and People

A. Philip Randolph
Executive Order 8802
bracero program
internment
442nd Regimental Combat Team
rationing
OWI

### NoteTaking

**Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas** As you read, identify the major effects of World War II on the home front.

| The Home Front, World War II | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Economy** | **Effects on Women** | **Effects on Minorities** |
| • War bonds<br>• Wage controls | •<br>• | •<br>• |

**Why It Matters** World War II engaged the peoples and resources of the countries involved. The war effort stirred patriotism and promoted economic recovery. And, while wartime fears and tensions tested civil liberties, new opportunities for women and minorities would spur stronger efforts to ensure equal rights after the war was over. **Section Focus Question: How did the war change America at home?**

## New Economic Opportunities

American industry quickly converted to war production to meet the nation's military needs. Once industry exhausted the available men, women found more jobs for the taking. Government and industry launched an all-out publicity campaign urging women to do their part to meet wartime production quotas. In time, women made up one third of the wartime workforce.

**Women Work for Victory** A woman working outside the home was nothing new, but wartime pressures created two sharp breaks from the past. Many women found jobs, especially in heavy industry, that fell outside the traditional realm of women's work. The need for labor also weakened the common practice that a woman quit her job once she married. Three fourths of women working in war industries were married, and 60 percent were older than 35 years.

The image of Rosie the Riveter's rolled up sleeves, red kerchief, and rivet gun gave Americans an enduring image of women in wartime production. Still, women labored in both blue-collar and white-collar jobs. Most factory owners expected women to step aside

once men returned home at war's end. In white-collar settings, however, the war accelerated long-term trends toward increased employment. During the 1940s, the number of women employed in secretarial and clerical work increased fivefold.

The benefits that women gained from wartime work cannot be underestimated. They earned paychecks, formed new and different relationships, and gained organizational experience. "I decided that if I could learn to weld like a man," noted one laborer, "I could do anything it took to make a living." The confidence and knowledge women developed enriched their postwar experiences and helped create opportunities for their daughters in the years ahead.

With fathers in the military and mothers in the workplace, children's lives began to change. The federal government spent $50 million building day-care centers for children of working mothers. Still, only about 130,000 kids ended up in day-care centers. Many women preferred to leave their children in the care of neighbors or relatives.

**African Americans Demand Fair Employment** Many African American leaders hoped the war might provide jobs and alleviate their dismal economic situations. However, few found meaningful employment with national defense employers. Out of 100,000 Americans working in the aircraft industry in 1940, for example, only 240 were African Americans. Even jobs provided by the government and military remained segregated.

African American leaders stressed the need for a "Double V" campaign—victory against fascism abroad and victory against discrimination at home. The charismatic and savvy labor leader **A. Philip Randolph** asserted that African Americans would no longer accept second-class citizenship. "We loyal Negro American citizens demand the right to work and fight for our country," he proclaimed. Randolph presented President Roosevelt a list of demands, including the end of discriminatory practices in government-funded training, employment, and the armed services. He also took steps to organize a massive protest march on Washington, D.C.

FDR had hoped to put civil rights reform on the back burner while fighting the Axis Powers. But Randolph persisted in his plans. Roosevelt feared that the sight of a huge protest march on the nation's capital would undermine wartime unity and provide ammunition for enemy propaganda. So, under pressure, he issued **Executive Order 8802.** This measure assured fair hiring practices in any job funded with government money and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to enforce these requirements.

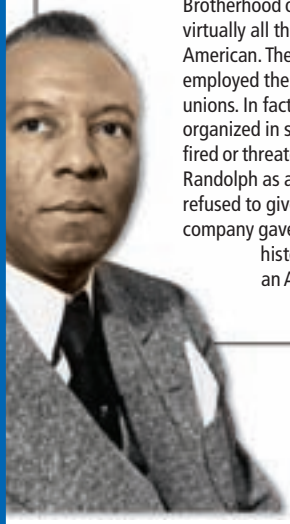
Such victories encouraged African Americans to join organizations dedicated to promoting equal rights. The NAACP grew to 500,000 members. In 1942, civil rights leaders founded the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), an organization that sought to apply nonviolent protest as a means of fighting segregation. Although segregation still prevailed in the military, the South, and other parts of the nation, wartime developments helped set the agenda for the civil rights struggles of the coming decades.

**Checkpoint** **How did the war create new opportunities for African Americans?**

HISTORY MAKERS

**A. Philip Randolph (1889–1979)**

In 1925, A. Philip Randolph became head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. At the time, virtually all the nation's porters were African American. The Pullman Corporation, which employed them, refused to deal with labor unions. In fact, the Brotherhood had to be organized in secret. For 12 years, the company fired or threatened union members and attacked Randolph as a dangerous radical. But Randolph refused to give up. Finally, in 1937, the Pullman company gave in and signed the first contract in history between a major company and an African American labor union.



## Workers on the Move

Wartime needs encouraged migration as people moved in search of work. California alone gained 2 million new residents seeking work in the state's many shipyards and other wartime industries. Although the South lost residents in its rural areas, it grew by a million new people as a whole. Older industrial cities in the North, such as Detroit, Gary, Chicago, and Cleveland, also boomed.

**The Population Starts to Shift** The ebb and flow of people fostered long-term changes. After receiving billions of dollars to fund industry, the South and Southwest became a growing cultural, social, economic, and political force. This trend continues to this day.

To alleviate the rural population drain, especially in the West, the United States partnered with Mexico to operate the **bracero program,** bringing laborers from Mexico to work on American farms. During the war years, several hundred thousand braceros migrated to the United States. Although they often faced discrimination, they contributed greatly to the war effort. In the long term, the bracero program initiated decades of migratory labor in the West.

**Vocabulary Builder**
initiate–(ih NIHSH ee ayt) *v.* to begin or originate

**Migration Triggers Conflict** In the summer of 1943, wartime migration led to racial violence in a number of cities. The worst occurred in Detroit, Michigan, where conflict erupted over the construction of housing for black workers drawn north to defense plants. Finally, some 100,000 whites and blacks broke into scattered fights at a city park. By the next morning, full-scale riots erupted in which 34 people were killed. Federal troops ended the violence, but nobody found a real resolution to the city's problems.

Mexican Americans had long dealt with similar tensions. Few had mastered the English language, and many languished in slums while struggling to find work. A violent incident highlighted the problems. In the Los Angeles area, many Mexican and Mexican American youths dressed in stylish "zoot suits" with baggy pants and long jackets. In June 1943, mobs of off-duty sailors roamed through the Mexican sections of Los Angeles, attacking "zooters." Once the fighting ended, police arrested the zoot-suited victims, not their attackers.

**After the Zoot Suit Riots**
Los Angeles police arrest a group of young Mexican Americans after a spate of violence in June 1943. Some, like the second prisoner from the right, wear the flashy, baggy zoot suits that gave the incident its name.

**Manzanar Internment Camp**
At the Manzanar internment camp in California's Owens Valley (above, right), Japanese Americans lived in bleak barracks, subject to heat and dust storms. Above, a mother and her children await relocation. *Which western states housed internment camps?*

After the riots, an indignant Governor Earl Warren formed a committee to investigate the causes of the outbreak and demanded that the guilty parties be punished. Although the committee blamed the lack of sufficient recreation for the violence, long-brewing racial tensions acted as the true spark.

**Checkpoint** **How did the war affect the location of industries and workers in the United States?**

## A Challenge to Civil Liberties

The attack on Pearl Harbor spread fear across America. The federal government began drafting policies toward immigrants and aliens from the Axis nations. All resident "enemy aliens" were required to register with the government, submit to fingerprinting, and list their organizational affiliations.

**Aliens Face Restrictions** Originally, laws made no distinction among nationalities. German, Italian, and Japanese aliens were subject to arrest or deportation if deemed dangerous to national security. Some 11,000 German immigrants and hundreds of Italian immigrants were held in camps; others faced curfews or travel restrictions. Federal orders also forced all three groups to vacate the West Coast temporarily in the winter of 1942. Once public fears subsided, FDR removed Germans and Italians from the enemy aliens list.

Japanese aliens and Japanese American citizens received no such respite. Believing Japanese Americans to be inherently disloyal, West Coast leaders pressed FDR to address the "threat." In February 1942, the President issued Executive Order 9066, designating certain areas as war zones from which anyone might be removed for any reason. By September, the government evacuated more than 100,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Evacuees—including both Issei, Japanese immigrants, and Nisei, native-born American citizens of Japanese descent—were forced to sell their property at a loss and allowed to take only necessary items.

Why did Japanese Americans generally face harsher treatment than Italian or German Americans? Several factors help explain the difference: racism, the smaller numbers of Japanese Americans, their lack of political clout, and their

relative isolation from other Americans. In Hawaii, where Japanese Americans comprised one third of a multiracial society, they escaped a similar fate.

**Vocabulary Builder**
comprise–(kuhm PRĪZ) *v.* to include; to make up

**Japanese Americans Are Interned** The first orders stipulated only that Japanese Americans must leave designated military zones, but leaders in interior states objected. The governor of Arizona insisted his state did not want to become a "dumping ground for enemy aliens." The War Department then initiated a policy of **internment,** or temporary imprisonment of members of a specific group. Japanese American men, women, and children were transported to camps in isolated locations such as Poston, Arizona, and the Gila River Indian Reservation. With few exceptions, Nisei and Issei remained in the camps for the duration of the war.

Families huddled into stark one-room shacks, while single people were herded into drafty bunkhouses. Camp schools were hopelessly underfunded. Internees often suffered from food shortages and substandard medical care. The psychological effects could be just as severe. One internee reported:

> **Primary Source** "The resettlement center is actually a jail—armed guards in towers with spotlights and deadly tommy guns, fifteen feet of barbed-wire fences, everyone confined to quarters at nine. . . . What really hurts [is being called] 'Japs.' 'Japs' are the guys we are fighting."
>
> —Ted Nakashima, *The New Republic,* June 5, 1942

Some Japanese Americans went to court to seek their rights. In the 1944 case of Korematsu v. United States, the Supreme Court upheld the government's wartime internment policy. (See Landmark Decisions of the Supreme Court at the end of this section.) Not until 1988 did the government offer an apology and $20,000 payments to surviving internees.

Japanese Americans also faced another form of discrimination. At first, they were not accepted into the armed forces. But after the government lifted the ban in early 1943, many eagerly enlisted. The all-Nisei **442nd Regimental Combat Team** fought in the Italian campaign and became the most decorated military unit in American history. The 442nd helped counter the notion that Japanese Americans were not loyal citizens.

**Checkpoint** **Why were Japanese Americans interned during World War II?**

## Supporting the War Effort

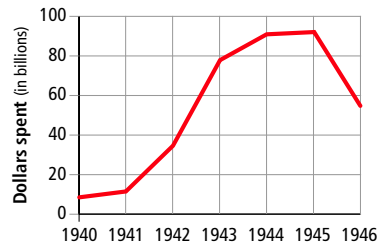
The war eventually cost Americans $330 billion, which was double the total amount of federal expenditures since the founding of the nation. In six years, the national debt skyrocketed from $42 billion to $269 billion. To help raise funds, Congress levied a 5 percent tax on all working Americans. In addition, millions of Americans bought war bonds to save income and invest in the war effort. The government reminded Americans that every dollar spent on war bonds meant another bullet or bomb and another step closer to victory. (See the American Experience feature at the end of this section.)

**The Government Manages the Economy** Increased production of war goods created a scarcity of consumer products. As shortages led to price increases, many feared that inflation

### The Cost of Waging War

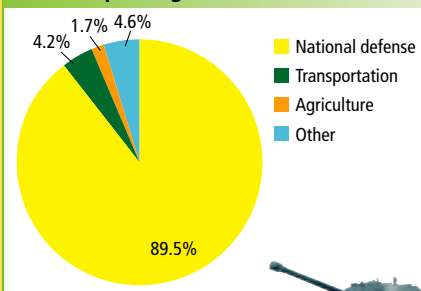
The cost of building arms and paying and equipping military personnel caused the federal budget to skyrocket. *Based on the combined information on the two graphs, approximately how much was spent on national defense in 1945?*

**Federal Spending, 1940–1946**




SOURCE: *Budget of the United States Government, Historical Tables*

**Federal Spending, 1945**




SOURCE: *Budget of the United States Government, Historical Tables*

Sherman tank ▶

**Hollywood Goes to War**
The two films above dealt with the fall of the Philippines. *Back to Bataan* (1945) told the story of anti-Japanese guerrilla fighters. *So Proudly We Hail* (1943) paid tribute to the courage of army nurses.

would run wild. To manage this problem, FDR created the Office of Price Administration, which had the authority to control wages and set maximum prices. Another form of economic control was **rationing.** Americans were issued coupon books that limited the amount of certain goods, such as butter and tires, that they could buy. Rationing ensured that raw materials such as rubber and oil found their way into war production.

Although most Americans accepted the need for wartime controls, others resented the restrictions. Unscrupulous profiteers manipulated the ration coupon system to create a "black market," an illegal underground network for the sale of restricted goods. Because the government restricted job mobility to ensure constant production and because wages lagged behind rising prices and profits, some workers accused their employers of unfair practices. Still, Americans created a powerful industrial network that contributed to victory and carried long-term consequences.

**Media Boosts Morale** Sacrifices on the home front took a toll on morale. The federal **Office of War Information (OWI)** worked closely with the media to encourage support of the war effort. The OWI tried to spotlight common needs, minimize racial and economic divisions, and downplay problems of poverty and crime. The radio, print, and film industries reminded Americans that they were in a struggle between dictatorship and democracy.

Hollywood proved a capable and willing ally in this cause. Documentaries like Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series highlighted the need to defeat fascism. Fiction films showed patriotic Americans pitching in overseas or on the home front and stirred hatred of the enemy with stereotypical portrayals of treacherous Japanese and brutal Germans. Movie stars and popular singers volunteered their time to sell war bonds and entertain the troops.

Encouraged by government and media, Americans voluntarily contributed to the war effort in dozens of large and small ways. They planted victory gardens and collected paper, scrap metal, and fat. Instead of buying new, many people followed the motto "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, and do without."

✓ **Checkpoint How did the federal government control resources needed for the war effort?**

## SECTION 2 Assessment

**Progress Monitoring *Online***
**For:** Self-test with vocabulary practice
**Web Code:** nea-1103

### Comprehension

1. **Terms and People** Write a sentence explaining how each of the following was connected with the American home front during World War II.
   - A. Philip Randolph
   - Executive Order 8802
   - bracero program
   - internment
   - 442nd Regimental Combat Team
   - rationing
   - Office of War Information

2. **NoteTaking Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas** Use your table to answer the Section Focus Question: How did the war change America at home?

### Writing About History

3. **Quick Write: Describe a Scene** Review the text relating to Japanese American internment during World War II. Write a two-sentence factual description of what you might witness as a family is being sent to a camp. Use at least one descriptive adjective and one action verb.

### Critical Thinking

4. **Predict Consequences** Predict two possible consequences for wartime women factory workers when men began to return from overseas after the war.
5. **Compare** How were the causes of the Detroit race riots and the Los Angeles Zoot Suit Riots similar?
6. **Draw Conclusions** Do you think the federal government was justified in limiting individual freedom by imposing wage and price controls and by rationing during wartime? Why or why not?