

# The United States and World War II: Triumphs and Trials on the Home Front

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Richmond Shipyard #4 Welders, 1942, Rosey the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park, National Park Service

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Preface	5
Chapter One: Preparing for the Coming Storm	8
Chapter Two: The Shock of War	20
Chapter Three: Fear and Loss of Freedoms	32
Chapter Four: Jobs, Jobs, Jobs Everywhere...but Not for Everyone	47
Chapter Five: Feeding the Nation, the Armed Forces, and our Allies	76
Chapter Six: Military Installations Everywhere	94
Chapter Seven: The Home Front of the Greater United States	115
Chapter Eight: Fighting the Double V	133
Chapter Nine: Secret Cities and Keeping Secrets	145
Chapter Ten: Coming Together, and Moving into a New World	170
Suggested Readings	176

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For my part, what first looked like a burden became a scholarly blessing. I grew up in a county that had both an army air field and a huge Veterans' Administration hospital during World War II. My father served in the Pacific; other family members worked at the VA. Stories of the home front experience were all around me, and some I had heard countless times. But never did I really understand what life at home during a world war meant, until I had the opportunity to do this handbook. My eyes and ears are now open—I trust yours will be too.

## Preface

When the Imperial Japanese armed forces attacked Pearl Harbor in the Territory of Hawai'i on December 7, 1941, the history of the United States forever changed. As the shock of the attack's success still reverberated across the nation, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed Congress the following day. He proclaimed December 7 as "a date which will live in infamy" and asked Congress to declare that "since the unprovoked and dastardly attack," a state of war existed between the United States and Japan.<sup>1</sup> To win the war, the United States turned to its armed forces, and over 16 million men and women fought with valor and commitment, and played significant roles in winning the Allied fight against the Axis powers. The costs were considerable. By the end of the war, over 400,000 members of the armed forces were dead with over 670,000 wounded. The **World War II Memorial** in Washington D.C. is but one of thousands of tributes to their heroism and sacrifice across the nation, and throughout the world.

The success of the armed forces, however, was not the only reason the United States emerged victorious in 1945. As you will discover in the pages to come, it took a nation at home to win the war, and by nation, I mean everyone, from all walks of life and from every place, perspective, background, persuasion, beliefs, and faith. It took all of them, with each contributing in ways large and small. To understand the World War II home front history they made together, this narrative casts as wide of a net around the American experience as possible.

What it took to win actually began years before the first bombs dropped on Pearl Harbor. Starting in the late 1930s the federal government had been preparing, quietly yet effectively, for the coming of war. Many Americans had no taste for the conflict. Scarred by the memories of World War I and fearful of economic calamity just as the nation was righting itself after the Great Depression, a majority favored neutrality; the spirit of isolationism was everywhere. That spirit evaporated after Pearl Harbor.



FDR Signs Declaration, 1941, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Over the next weeks President Roosevelt and Congress asked citizens to sacrifice and to take a warrior-like attitude on the home front. The nation needed to clothe, arm, feed, and heal its armed forces, but also provide the materials and attitudes that would guarantee victory.

Patriotism and love of country were in the hearts and minds of the vast majority, as were profits, economic advantage, and privilege in the minds of others. War as sacrifice, war as opportunity. Your perspective depended on where and who you were; after all, this was America, 1941. Citizens thus debated, at times fiercely, the amount of sacrifice, disruption, and uncertainty they were ready to endure. Others quite rightly demanded more democracy at home before sacrificing for democracy overseas. Let there be no doubt: the World War II home front in the United States was never comfortable or unquestionably unified. Division, prejudice, and even hatred lurked behind the cloak of unity and sense of purpose that covered the nation.

The costs of mobilization for war also were considerable. Profound and often lasting disruption to and destruction of neighborhoods, communities, and families happened across the country. Millions left their homes for new opportunities as they joined the armed services, while millions of others moved across the country, almost at a moment's notice, to take new jobs in factories that produced the goods and services necessary for winning the war. Suddenly announced military projects displaced thousands of others, tearing families from their very homes, farms, and ranches in the name of military necessity.

Country people unacquainted with the rhythms, sounds, and diversity of the nation's cities found themselves literally in a different world, where steam whistles and barked intercom commands ruled the day of labor, rather than the time-honored rhythms of sunrise and sunset. People of different backgrounds, beliefs, and creeds labored incessantly in huge factories, having to learn to work together, or not, for the common cause. Sometimes this clash of people, traditions, and beliefs worked; too many times, it did not, and people fighting for a common cause suddenly were fighting among themselves for a sense of fairness and civil liberties. Social discord due to displacement, discrimination, and violence shaped the World War II home front, yet men and women, children and adults found ways to work incessantly for the men and women fighting for freedom. Most accepted that the necessity of victory dwarfed their concerns; they feared the alternative of defeat or surrender.

World War II was a fight for democracy against fascist tyranny, but in the home front of the United States, the struggle for fairness and equal treatment was also never-ending. Living, working, and serving on the home front also meant regular encounters with discrimination, be it in employment, housing, or government services. Citizens were asked to sacrifice for a common cause, and the vast majority wanted to comply, but it was often tough when, at the same time, the government that asked for their loyalty and devotion treated them as second-class or even non-citizens. World War II was fought in a Jim Crow nation, and segregation ruled at too many places, whether at military camps, airplane factories, sugar beet ranches, or wartime housing. Women who sought

to serve in the armed forces faced barriers everywhere. Even after the military grudgingly created all-women units, such as the Women's Army Corps (WAC), Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), and the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR), the 350,000 women who served in the armed forces encountered sexism and discrimination on a daily basis.

Despite the trials and challenges, the people of the United States not only survived four years of stress, sacrifice, and uncertainty, they took steps toward creating a new platform for democracy that within ten years of the war's end would begin again the process that we pledge every day to ourselves and our fellow citizens: a nation devoted to "liberty and justice for all."

This handbook aims to enhance your experience when you visit the many units and other nationally significant sites of the National Park Service that share stories of the World War II home front. Where possible, we turn to the voices of the past to shape this narrative; who is better suited to tell those stories than those who lived them, or lived through them? When you walk the grounds of those national parks, keep these voices in mind. You literally are following in the footsteps of thousands who came before you. They did so much to build an arsenal for democracy, create better lives for themselves and their families, and ask penetrating questions of what democracy, equal opportunity, and justice mean in a free society.



Manzanar camp, photo by Ansel Adams, c. 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

## Chapter One: Preparing for the Coming Storm

When war erupted in Europe in 1939, many people in the United States demanded that the federal government remain neutral. With an ocean between the United States and Europe, few feared an invasion, but many estimated that a policy of isolationism would keep the country safe and the economy still on the mend toward recovery. Others frankly dreaded the very prospect of another international conflict as they attributed the recent economic depression and social disruption in the United States to the destruction and displacement caused by the earlier World War.

Some preparations had been quietly undertaken even before the great nations of Europe took up arms in September 1939. Months earlier in January, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress for a special appropriation of \$300 million for US Army airplanes--army leaders and the President were convinced that adequate airpower could keep any future European conflict from impacting North America. And, after all, new federal spending on defense preparedness could only boost an economy emerging from the economic depression.

### Neutrality and Isolationism

Once Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, President Roosevelt moved quickly to affirm the government's neutrality but also take steps to prepare the armed forces, just in case. In a radio address to the nation on September 3, Roosevelt shared his understanding of what the new European war meant: "And it seems to be clear, even at the outbreak of this great war, that the influence of America should be consistent in seeking for humanity a final peace which will eliminate, as far as it is possible to do so, the continued use of force between nations." The President added: "It is easy for you and for me to shrug our shoulders and to say that conflicts taking place thousands of miles from the continental United States, and, indeed, thousands of miles from the whole American Hemisphere, does not seriously affect the Americas--and that all the United States has to do is to ignore them and go about its own business." But an interconnected, interdependent world made that impossible. The President admitted, "we are forced to realize that every word that comes through the air, every ship that sails the sea, every battle that is fought does affect the American future." Roosevelt pledged neutrality as policy "but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral has a right to take account of facts. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or close his conscience."<sup>2</sup>

Many people in the United States had closed their minds to any federal action outside of strict neutrality. Voices for isolationism reached a fever pitch. Famed aviator Charles Lindbergh in an October 1939 speech asserted that the European war was not "a war for democracy. This is a war over the balance of power in Europe,"<sup>3</sup> and of little interest to the United States. A national poll that month indicated that the public agreed: less than one-third of respondents favored entering the European war even if that neutrality meant the defeat of the United Kingdom and France.

Officials in Washington, D.C., were not so sure and took half-measures. Congress in November approved a revised Neutrality Act which allowed the United Kingdom and France to purchase arms, airplanes, and munitions produced in the United States, but the transactions had to be for cash, only, and the belligerents had to take the items and ship their purchases with their own vessels. The policy became known as cash and carry. Industry might profit from the war as European orders began to flood factories, but in no way would the United States place its ships, its merchant marine, or armed forces in danger.



Camp builders (top and bottom) at Fort Bragg, 1941, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection



## Turning toward War Preparedness

The defeat and occupation of Belgium and France in the spring of 1940 led President Roosevelt to ask Congress for more spending for war preparedness, especially for airplanes and to build a credible two-ocean Navy. The following month, just as the Battle of Britain began with Germany's first large-scale bombardment of England, the President gave a commencement address at the University of Virginia. He directly addressed his critics who wanted the government to remain a "lone island" separated by oceans from the expanding world war. Roosevelt argued that such an island "represents to me and to the overwhelming majority of Americans today a helpless nightmare of a people without freedom—the nightmare of a people lodged in prison, handcuffed, hungry, and fed through the bars from day to day by the contemptuous, unpitying masters of other continents."<sup>4</sup> His image of a people without freedom, handcuffed and hungry, stuck in the minds of many who heard or read the speech, and stayed there for the next four years.

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### ***Experience the Parks and Heritage Areas***

As he served in office from the beginning to almost the end of the war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was pivotal to the World War II home front story. You can explore his career by visiting the **Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site** in Hyde Park, New York, along with the Presidential Library and Museum located on the same property. Roosevelt's Hyde Park home was a place where the president could relax from the burdens of wartime leadership. From January 1942, he typically spent one or two weekends there every month. The First Lady also had a significant presence on the home front during the war. You can explore her career at the **Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site**, also in Hyde Park, New York. Both properties are within the **Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area**.

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As the summer of 1940 progressed, news of the English resistance to German air power, along with Japanese aggression in China and the Pacific, began to dominate the media. Voters began to think anew about isolationism and neutrality. Could the United Kingdom withstand the nightly onslaught of the German bombing? Was Japanese expansion in the Pacific a threat to the United States? The US military pushed for new West Coast defenses, such as installing guns capable of sending one-ton projectiles some 25 miles into the ocean, at San Francisco's Golden Gate. A test firing in July 1940 from Battery Townsley in Fort Cronkite, now part of the **Golden Gate National Recreation Area**, led to civilian complaints of broken windows from the firings. The military also took steps to add new coastal defenses to strengthen its two most important international bases, Pearl Harbor on O'ahu Island in the Territory of Hawai'i and the Panama Canal Zone in Panama.

On September 2, 1940, President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, prime minister of the United Kingdom, announced an exchange of United States naval destroyers for the right to have 99-year leases for military bases at various British possessions in North America and the Caribbean. For 50 destroyers not needed by the Navy, since the nation was not at war, the United States gained the ability to have military installations in Newfoundland, Antigua, and parts of the Bahamas, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, British Guiana, and Bermuda, particularly enhancing its defensive posture in the Caribbean where protecting passage through the Panama Canal was a priority. The President used an executive order to make the deal, which outraged isolationists in Congress and in the national media. They considered the order an illegal violation of the Neutrality Act.



Hickam Field, Honolulu, 1937, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS

Two weeks later, with howls about the destroyers-for-bases deal still reverberating around the nation's capital, Congress approved the Burke-Wadsworth bill, which launched a peacetime draft of able-bodied men for military service. Within a month, officials had registered 16 million men between the ages of 21 and 35, and later Congress extended the draft to include men between the ages of 18 and 65, which increased the number of potential registrants to 43 million men. Millions of patriotic citizens flocked to have their names registered for the draft. From their applications, federal officials also gained a valuable understanding of the skills and experience of men who might be asked to fight the next war.

On September 22, 1940, Japan launched an attack on a region then identified as French Indochina (the nations of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos). Within a week, Japan

also signed an alliance with Germany and Italy. Suddenly the United States faced threats on both oceans.

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*Voices from the Past*

"Certainly, I'm registered for the draft. What do you think? Anytime Uncle Sam needs me he knows where I am. But I've got a hunch he's going to need me a lot more right where I'm at."

Edward Reynolds, from the copper mining town of Anaconda, Montana, 1940-1941.<sup>5</sup>

"Nobody is going to pick a fight with the United States once we are ready to fight. But we are not ready. We are a long way from being ready. And until we do the necessary--which includes the draft--we are not safe in the kind of world this has turned out to be." Albuquerque (New Mexico) *Tribune*, August 1, 1940.

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Expanding threats to national security from Europe and the Pacific did not sway everyone. A minority pushed back against the draft for religious reasons. As in World War I, Congress recognized the rights of conscientious objectors—who refused to serve in the military due to their faith's objections to war and killing—but they still had to serve. An estimated 25,000 conscientious objectors were posted in non-combat roles during World War II, while another 12,000 were placed in Public Service Camps stationed across the country. Most objectors belonged to three historic "peace" churches—Society of Friends (Quakers), Mennonite, and Church of the Brethren—where many members lived in rural areas or small towns. They could not only help to harvest crops but could also repair and extend irrigation ditches and improve farm roads. No one asked for one's beliefs when it was time to get crops out of the fields. Most conscientious objectors accepted their public service or alternative assignments. One group, the Jehovah's Witnesses, refused all postings and some 5,000 members served jail time for their religious beliefs.

After Congress extended the draft in August 1941, selective service became an ever-present reality for the rest of the war. The draft allowed for deferments for men to stay home and work in factories and on farms rather than join the armed services. As the war intensified, draft boards increasingly questioned deferments, but they granted most requests because the need to produce arms, munitions, equipment, and food on the home front remained critical.

Franklin Roosevelt won a third term as president in November 1940. He had kept the United States out of the war, so far, and the economy was the strongest it had been in ten years. The 1940 push for war preparedness had helped; historians have estimated that military-related spending had created some 3.5 million new jobs.<sup>6</sup>

Yet Roosevelt lacked a voters' mandate to pursue a more aggressive stance in favor of the Allied powers. National polls said that the public remained opposed to entering the war. But, with a third term secured, and his party in control of Congress, Roosevelt used his powers as commander-in-chief to identify a larger role for the United States in the worldwide conflict, not as a combatant per se but as the creator of an arsenal of democracy.

### Becoming an Arsenal of Democracy

On December 17, 1940, Roosevelt proposed at a press conference an idea soon known as Lend-Lease, which allowed the United Kingdom at first, then later France, the Republic of China, and the Soviet Union, to acquire billions of dollars in military supplies, equipment, and food from the United States. Roosevelt asserted that by supplying allies with the materials they needed, the United States would increase and improve its military production, enhancing readiness in case of attack and putting more people to work. He admitted that the United States did not "need" the military material; thus, it could be lent and then returned when the war was over. He told the reporters: "the more we increase those facilities--factories, shipbuilding ways, munition plants, et cetera, and so on--the stronger American national defense is."<sup>7</sup>

The opposition understood Lend-Lease differently and viewed the program as an unnecessary step towards involvement in the European and Pacific conflicts. Verne Marshall of New York, chair of the No Foreign War Committee, complained: "Of all the fantastic financial proposals made these last several years at Washington, none compares in any degree to President Roosevelt's plan that would bind the American people to finance England's war outright, from this point on."<sup>8</sup> Agreeing with Marshall was Robert E. Wood, a retired general who was now chair of Sears, Roebuck, and Company and acting national chair of the America First Committee. Wood worried: "The President is not asking for a blank check, he wants a blank check book with the power to write away our resources, our man-power, our laws and our liberty."<sup>9</sup>



Labor Day Parade, Detroit, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

The debate over Lend-Lease never ended, but Roosevelt addressed many concerns through a somber but pointed fireside chat to the nation on December 29, 1940. He told the millions of listeners: "The Nazi masters of Germany have made it clear that they intend not only to dominate all life and thought in their own country, but also to enslave the whole of Europe, and then to use the resources of Europe to dominate the rest of the world." He warned, "Frankly and definitely there is danger ahead--danger against which we must prepare," and added, "There can be no appeasement with ruthlessness." The President wanted to keep the peace but he understood but one course of action: we must "do all we can now to support the nations defending themselves against attack by the Axis.... We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war."<sup>10</sup> The arsenal of democracy address galvanized support but also infuriated those opposed to the involvement of the United States in the world war.

### Placing the Nation on a Wartime Footing

A little over a week later, in January 1941, President Roosevelt gave his State of the Union address to Congress. He justified the policy of Lend-Lease, in part, through powerful remarks on the four essential freedoms--freedom of speech, of worship, from want, and from fear--that would guide the nation in this time of trouble.



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Artist Posters Collection

The President also continued to place the executive branch on a wartime footing. In an attempt to streamline and control war production and procurement, Roosevelt by executive order created the Office of Production Management (OPM) and convinced William (Bill) Knudsen to leave his position as president of General Motors to take the job for a salary of \$1 a year. The task to redirect production from the private sector to military needs was formidable. Knudsen found success, first as a civilian in charge. Later, in January 1942, Roosevelt closed OPM and replaced it with the War Production

Board. Knudsen then became a commissioned lieutenant general in the army and director of production in the office of the Under Secretary of War.

In March 1941, after Congress approved the Lend-Lease program, another executive order created the Office of Lend-Lease Administration, with close Roosevelt ally Harry Hopkins as its first administrator. Later Edward Stettinius, the former head of US Steel who had chaired the War Resources Board in 1939, replaced Hopkins as Lend-Lease administrator. The steel magnate consistently defended the program, even writing the book, *Lend-Lease, Weapon for Victory* in 1944. Stettinius later served as US Secretary of State.

Washington officials knew that increased war production also meant that Treasury needed more money, and bonds were one way to accomplish that goal. The first "defense" bonds hit the market in May 1941, and the federal government spared no expense in promoting them, from using Madison Avenue advertising firms for eye-catching posters to asking Hollywood stars to travel the country to promote sales. Hollywood celebrities attended war bond rallies across the nation to encourage people to buy as many as possible. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December, when the "defense" bonds were renamed "war" bonds, the pitch to buy bonds to help the boys overseas became a much easier message to deliver, and the participation of film, radio, and music stars multiplied. The film studios, radio networks, and record companies wanted to ensure that the people of the United States knew they and their stars stood squarely behind the war effort.



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Artist Posters Collection

Hollywood walked hand-in-hand with those supporting the Allied cause in 1941. Movies such as *Sergeant York*, starring Gary Cooper, promoted wartime themes such as the necessity of service, even if morally opposed to war. Released in July 1941, the

movie fictionalized the life of World War I hero Alvin C. York of Tennessee. York initially opposed joining the army for religious reasons, but his trusted minister convinced him that fighting evil was also a Godly pursuit. York joined the Army, was recognized as a sharpshooter, and became the most decorated US soldier of World War I. The film was a commercial and critical success, as were other war films of 1941 such as the Bob Hope comedy *Caught in the Draft* (June release); *Manhunt* (June release); and *A Yank in the R.A.F.* (September release), which portrayed a US soldier helping Great Britain under Nazi attack. The messages of these 1941 movies were rarely subtle. Isolationists complained that Hollywood was attempting to drag the United States into the war.

Despite the persistence of isolationism among many Americans, Congress voted to increase military spending dramatically, from \$2.2 billion in 1940 to \$13.7 billion in 1941. War preparedness was one reason; another was to pump more money into the economic recovery from the Great Depression. Some segments of the private sector, however, pushed back against more military production. Consumer spending was recovering from the Depression, and some business leaders believed that greater profits would come from pent-up consumer demand for automobiles and appliances compared to retooling and making military equipment and supplies. Thus, without a direct threat to the United States, government and industry were often at odds.



Tennessee Valley Authority chemical plant worker, June 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

American labor, which had gained so much during the New Deal of the 1930s, also largely assumed that prosperity was around the corner, but it looked at defense spending differently. If the government wanted to increase defense appropriations, labor leaders wanted workers to get their fair share of the new funding. More than 2.3 million workers took part in over 4,200 strikes in 1941. Some were one-day or other short-term labor disputes, but from June to Pearl Harbor, 352 strikes involving about 650,000 workers targeted the defense industry.<sup>11</sup>

In early June 1941, when workers struck at the North American Aviation factory in Inglewood, California, federal officials reacted quickly. Selective Service director Lewis Hershey cancelled occupational deferments for the strikers and warned he would put them in uniforms if they stayed off the assembly lines. Then on June 9, 2,500 soldiers occupied the plant and production lines reopened. The government put labor on notice that it would support the defense industry over labor to keep the supply lines moving. Once Germany launched Operation Barbarossa--the invasion of the Soviet Union--on June 22, 1941, the federal support for defense industries became even more pronounced. When on August 7 about 15,000 workers at shipyards in Kearny, New Jersey, walked off their jobs to protest wages and to gain union recognition, federal negotiators pushed both sides to reach an agreement in a couple of weeks.



Russian and American servicemen at Ladd Field, Alaska, c. 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Keeping the factories open was a strategic imperative as the administration expanded its Lend-Lease program. Less than two months after the German invasion of

the Soviet Union, President Roosevelt ordered 100 planes sent to Russia, and in September Congress extended Lend-Lease aid to the Soviets. Ladd Field outside of Fairbanks, Territory of Alaska, became the transfer point for American aircraft bound for the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease program.

As defense production increased in the fall, labor leaders worried about the job security of union workers. United Mine Workers (UMW) leader John L. Lewis particularly objected that Pittsburgh steel companies continued to hire nonunion workers at their “captive” coal mines, meaning those operated by the steel companies. In September 1941, he led over 53,000 workers at the captive mines out on strike, which impacted not only the steel industry but coal production in five states. Despite presidential interventions, Lewis kept his miners on strike until an agreement was reached in December. The strike, while eventually successful for the union, turned the public against American labor, and several state legislatures passed laws forbidding strikes in the defense industry.

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### *Experience the Heritage Areas*

The **Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area**, headquartered in Scranton, Pennsylvania, along with the **National Coal Heritage Area**, headquartered in Oak Hill, West Virginia, allow you to explore in depth the labor issues of World War II, especially the United Mine Workers' actions in 1941 and 1943, and the importance of coal in the war industries from 1942 to 1945. Coal powered not only industries and homes but also the vast majority of railroad traffic.

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War planning also intensified in the fall of 1941. Military officers, under orders from President Roosevelt, developed a plan to fight a possible war, one that identified both the number of soldiers needed as well as the industrial capacity required for success. The numbers of men and materials, along with the estimated \$150 billion cost, were staggering but stayed under wraps until someone leaked the plan to a US Senator from Montana, Burton K. Wheeler, who provided a copy to the isolationist-leaning *Chicago Tribune*. After the *Tribune* published the plan on December 4, 1941, it immediately became front-page news across the nation. Isolationists were outraged. On December 6, the *Chicago Tribune* bragged that its story was the biggest in the nation, reporting: "The controversy continued to rage in the house of representatives today, with increasing demands that the administration repudiate the scheme."

A few hours later, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Japan attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. During that evening's already scheduled radio broadcast, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt reminded the nation that “we know what we have to face and we know that we are ready to face it.” She insisted: We must go about our daily business more determined than ever to do the ordinary things as well as we can and when we find a way to do anything more in our communities to help others, to build morale, to

give a feeling of security, we must do it. Whatever is asked of us I am sure we can accomplish it. We are the free and unconquerable people of the United States of America.<sup>12</sup>

The United States was now a nation at war. The debate about neutrality was over.

## Chapter Two: The Shock of War



*USS West Virginia and USS Tennessee at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection*

The possibility of war had been on the minds of many federal and state officials for months, if not years. Their preparation and planning did not lessen the shock of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Because of its stealth and success, decision makers, even more so the people of the United States, were left reeling from its lethal outcome.

The shock of the Japanese attack was felt most immediately and intently in Hawai'i. **The Pearl Harbor National Memorial** commemorates the loss in life, with 2,390 killed in action, 49 of whom were civilians, and 1,178 wounded, as well as 21 ships either damaged or sunk to the bottom of the bay along with 188 aircraft destroyed and another 150 planes damaged. The attack shattered both the Navy and the civilians who worked at the military installations. Forty-nine civilians, with 35 wounded, died during the O'ahu attack.

One Japanese aircraft, damaged during the attack, landed on the island of Ni'ihau. The pilot and a local Japanese-American paymaster detained local families and burned down a house. Ben Kanahele fought back. Wounded by the pilot, Kanahele managed to kill the pilot and then the paymaster died by suicide. The US government later awarded Ben Kanahele the Medal of Merit and a Purple Heart for his civilian heroism. Although few civilians on the mainland found themselves in the line of fire over the next four years, many would demonstrate truly heroic actions on the home front.

### Martial Law in Hawai'i

In the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack, officials placed Japanese Americans in the Territory of Hawai'i under suspicion, even though half of the civilians who died on O'ahu in December were of Japanese descent. Over one-third of the territory's population was of Japanese descent, with 37,000 immigrant residents (the Issei) who arrived before the cessation of Japanese immigration after the federal Immigration Act of 1924 and 121,000 Japanese American citizens (the Nisei and Sansei). The Nisei were United States-born children of the Issei, or second-generation Japanese Americans; the Sansei were United States-born citizens and children of the Nisei, also United States-born, or third-generation Japanese Americans.

Uncertain, even fearful, of the loyalty of Japanese Americans, federal officials on December 7 declared martial law, and territorial governor Joseph Poindexter transferred his powers to General Walter Short, who became the military governor. Martial law on Hawai'i remained in effect until October 1944.

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### *Experience Your Parks*

Hawai'i has several places to explore the war's impact on the home front. **Haleakala National Park** at Makawao was transformed into an aircraft-warning radar station and a supporting military base for the duration of the war. The Kilauea military camp at **Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park** became a detention camp for about 100 Japanese and Japanese Americans after the declaration of martial law in December 1941. The military camp also served as headquarters for the army's 27<sup>th</sup> Division from March to October 1942. **Honouliuli National Historic Site**, located in Honolulu, focuses on the largest and longest-in-use incarceration camp for Japanese and Japanese Americans in Hawai'i. It also explores the impact of martial law on the island.

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Martial law meant that military courts replaced civilian courts; the writ of *habeas corpus* was suspended as was the right to jury trials. (Eventually in 1942 civil courts opened with limited jurisdictions.) Everyone, outside of infants, had to be finger-printed and carry identification cards at all times. The military governor also regulated war production, labor, and price administration. Mandatory curfews and blackouts were enforced, and all forms of media faced censorship.



Japanese café, San Francisco, CA, December 8, 1941, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Under martial law, officials restricted many constitutional freedoms for Hawai'iian residents of Japanese ancestry; these restrictions were applied to residents of German and Italian ancestry in 1942. Travel restrictions were put into place; certain parts of Hawai'i were off-limits to Japanese Americans, even if they were landowners. Freedom of assembly was curtailed. Meetings of more than ten Japanese Americans in one place were forbidden. They were ordered to turn over their radios and cameras; their children were harassed in the schools as never before. Japanese American families lost their farms while fishermen could not leave port out of concerns for espionage. Officials soon held almost 2,000 people of Japanese, German, and Italian ancestry in various camps and facilities, with some staying incarcerated for the remainder of the war. The December 1941 policies aimed at Japanese Americans in Hawai'i soon appeared on the mainland.

"I saw the airplanes with the Japanese pilots. . . . I was so scared, I ran into the house. And, so, that's when our lives changed."

Grace Sugita Hawley, resident of Pearl Harbor<sup>13</sup>

"Yesterday, December 7, 1941--a date which will live in infamy--the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by the naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan."

Franklin D. Roosevelt, address to Congress, December 8, 1941

"There was no hysteria. There were no demonstrations. But there was emotion--a mounting anger born of the conditions under which the United States had been attacked, a gnawing kind of anger which found release in fervently expressed desire for full vengeance."

Earl Pomeroy, historian, Portland, Oregon<sup>14</sup>

"In reflecting back, I just felt that I wasn't a citizen in this country. And that really made me angry and sad that I was deceived, you know, I wasn't feeling like a citizen. The Bill of Rights was incidental cause I was seen as a 'Jap,' just the same as the enemy."

Tsuguo Ikeda, a child in Hawai'i at the same of the attack<sup>15</sup>

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The next shock was the news of the attacks on the US bases in the Philippine Islands, Guam, Midway Island, and Wake Island. Mere days later came formal declarations of war by Japan, Germany, and Italy. The United States faced a two-ocean war, with no effective deterrent in sight for Japan in the Pacific while Germany controlled Western Europe. A strong Allied alliance with the British and Soviets was a necessity as was an immediate transformation of the nation's economy into a war footing and the organization of millions into an effective fighting force.



Girls singing "Remember Pearl Harbor," Epping, ND, February 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

## New Executive Orders

Establishing a home front to support the war effort became yet another shock for civilian life in the United States. Government decisions and directives shifted the economy from one producing consumer goods to one focused on defense production. Three executive orders among the blizzard of new laws and rules coming from Washington were of utmost importance to the initial home front experience in the United States.

The first was Executive Order 9024 that created the all-powerful War Production Board (WPB). The President envisioned WPB as a federal super-agency that would prioritize and efficiently control industrial production so arms and supplies could be delivered in mass quantities and on time. What factories produced what goods, in what quantities, and how quickly was a large part of the board's charge. As the WPB's chief administrator, Roosevelt selected Donald Nelson, past executive vice president at Sears, Roebuck and Company, and more recently administrator of the federal Supply Priorities and Allocation Board. Roosevelt was confident that the man who ran Sears with its huge catalog service could do the job. Despite his Sears experience, Nelson proved indecisive and ineffective in balancing the demands from different sectors of the economy and government. Nelson was not solely the problem; the charge of the War Production Board did not extend to labor and manpower nor to prices. Plus, the armed forces kept control of the Office of Procurement and Material, leaving huge swaths of the economy outside the review of the WPB.



Air raid wardens' meeting, Washington, D.C. Gordon Parks, photographer, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Small business owners insisted that the new mega-agency would not and in fact could not adequately address their concerns. In June, the administration established the Smaller War Plants Corporation as a division of the WPB. The new division had scant impact, largely due to the fact that the armed forces preferred to deal with larger corporations that could meet their needs quickly and on time.

The second executive order was number 9017, which established the National War Labor Board as an independent agency that could mediate labor disputes and avoid possible strikes, serving basically as an arbitration panel to solve any labor issues. Roosevelt did not want to have a repeat of the labor disturbances of 1941. The order curtailed the power of collective bargaining and gave industry a freer reign. Even as hours increased and paychecks grew, wages struggled to keep pace with inflation. In March the Justice department announced intentions to defer antitrust lawsuits so as not to hinder war production--a hold that lasted until government investigations of the DuPont chemical company and Bendix Aviation in 1944.

The third executive order, number 9139, came in April, creating the War Manpower Commission to coordinate agriculture and agricultural labor in an attempt to ensure that farms had enough labor to produce enormous amounts of food, critical to feeding the Allied armies and the home front. The agency also addressed manpower imbalances between different industries and the armed forces, keeping the right number of men and women in the right place for the most efficient war production.

### Non-profits and Wartime Service

Many groups and communities did not wait for the government to act; they used their own non-profit organizations to serve wartime efforts. Answering President Roosevelt's call for non-profit groups to do more for war preparedness, Mary Ingraham spearheaded the effort to create the United Service Organizations (USO) in early 1941. The USO enabled six existing civilian groups--the Young Women's Christian Association, National Travelers Aid Association, Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Service, and the National Jewish Welfare Board--to work together and open clubs where servicemen could relax, attend dances, and get something to eat.

USO centers were established in private and public buildings, and in some cases purpose-built facilities. The clubs were located wherever groups of servicemen or women might be located, either at bases or passing through railroad depots. The USO posts and canteens became a primary place of social exchange between civilians and the armed forces for the remainder of the war. The first opened in Fayetteville, North Carolina, home to Fort Bragg, in October 1941. North Platte, Nebraska, is credited with establishing the first rail-side canteen at Christmas in 1941; from that day until April 1, 1946, an estimated 55,000 Nebraska women worked at the canteen and served some seven million passengers.<sup>16</sup>

The USO became renowned for its partnership with the military and Hollywood to provide star-studded entertainment in its camp shows for soldiers across the warfront in Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific. Few Hollywood actors or music performers said no when the request came to entertain the troops, at home or overseas.



Lily Pons and André Kostelanetz entertaining for the USO, 1944, Library of Congress, Music Division, André Kostelanetz Collection

Other organizations followed in the USO's footsteps. The National Council for Jewish Women, for example, had a chapter in almost every state and over 200 chapters in total, with a membership of 65,000. Founded in 1893 the organization focused on international relations during the war, creating partnerships with similar groups in Canada and Australia to assist refugees in the former and with Allied soldier recreational facilities in the latter. Local chapters of the National Council worked with the military to ensure opportunities for Jewish worship and places to celebrate Jewish holidays at training camps and installations. The council also worked closely with the War Refugee Board. A 1945 report documented that council members assisted new arrivals at the ports of New York City, Miami, San Francisco, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Seattle, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Norfolk, El Paso, and Boston.

In the spring of 1942, Roosevelt's staff worried about the many demands placed on the President and realized that he needed a place to escape the stress of war while also being able to gather safely with key advisors to address rapidly changing issues and situations. In the past, many Presidents had used brief trips to escape the

pressures of the office. With the nation at war, security staff did not want Roosevelt on trains or boats or, for that matter, very far away from the nation's capital. Newton Drury, director of the National Park Service, was ordered to find Roosevelt a safe haven, within 50 to 90 miles of the White House.

Director Drury chose a facility that the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) had built in the 1930s, named Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area, now **Catoctin Mountain Park**, in Maryland. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a precursor to the later Central Intelligence Agency, had already headquartered part of its operations at the park. Roosevelt visited Catoctin in April and approved plans; he hosted his first group in July and he came to this secret retreat 19 times during the summers of 1942 and 1943. At what the President called "Shangri-La," he met with numerous federal and military officials, and foreign leaders such as British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Shangri-La is now known as Camp David, administered by the Department of Defense. Although located within Catoctin Mountain Park, it is not open for visitation.

### Controlling the Narrative

To fight the war, Congress had granted enormous new powers and responsibilities to the executive branch and to the federal government in general. Many citizens were concerned about government overreach and interference in their everyday lives; almost everyone expressed anguish over the necessity of higher taxes and rationing. How would federal officials ensure that this anguish and uneasiness would not tip over into discontent and opposition? Washington's answer came with the June 1942 creation of a centralized, powerful agency, the Office of War Information (OWI), which replaced the earlier Office of Facts and Figures headed by poet Archibald MacLeish, then Librarian of Congress. MacLeish told Roosevelt in mid-May 1942: "A full knowledge of what we are fighting for, coupled with assurance that we can win our goals, can be a positive measure in winning the war. And this, I submit, is the key to unity in fighting this war--the keynote to our ideological offensive."<sup>17</sup>

The OWI waged an "ideological offensive" for the remainder of the war, stifling dissent and encouraging conformity in the name of winning the war and gaining a lasting peace. Its director, Elmer Davis, was a former newsman for the Columbia Broadcasting System. From 1942 to September 1945, OWI produced news reels, posters of all sorts, and radio programs, and sent some of the best photographers in the nation out on assignment to capture images of the home front in action.

The Bureau of Motion Pictures worked with Hollywood to produce morale-boosting films, with documentaries on "why we fight" by notable directors Frank Capra, John Ford, and John Huston becoming the most famous. Hollywood also delivered with several popular war-themed movies, including *Casablanca* and *Desperate Journey* in 1942 and *This is the Army* and *Bombardier* in 1943. The bureau also reviewed film scripts from all of the Hollywood majors, except for Paramount. Always wanting movies to portray the nation and its people in positive ways, the bureau asked for revisions in screenplays while rejecting some outright. This oversight ended in 1943 due to rising

opposition from Hollywood and Congress out of concerns that the bureau had become a mere campaign mouthpiece for the administration.

### Rationing and Scrap Drives

The announcement of new federal agencies for the war effort reminded older Americans of similar agencies from World War I, while younger Americans had already learned to work with the many federal “alphabet” agencies created during the New Deal. But the home front in unison cried out in anguish and frustration when they saw that the government took money directly from their paychecks to pay for the war, and that their access to consumer goods was not just shaped by the marketplace but by the rationing cards that every person had in their hands.

The Revenue Act of 1942 introduced a tax-withholding system from paychecks, almost doubled taxes, and caused more middle-class people to pay income tax. All working Americans felt the pain.

Rationing was a wholly different level of government intrusion--everyone had rationing cards. Washington undertook rationing to ensure that vital goods were always available to the armed forces, to mitigate against hoarding, and to control inflation, which by the summer of 1942 had become a major home front issue.

Executive Order 8734 had established the Office for Price Administration and Civilian Supply on April 11, 1941. About seven weeks after Pearl Harbor, Congress established the independent Office of Price Administration (OPA). Under the leadership of James Byrnes, OPA could place price ceilings on all goods, except agricultural products, and it administered the nation's rationing programs.

OPA chose the items for rationing, set ceilings for their costs, and allocated supplies, but some 5,600 local volunteer rationing boards managed the system. Every eligible man, woman, and child received rationing cards with stamps: blue stamps for processed foods while red coupons could purchase meat, fish, and dairy goods. Tires, gasoline, nylon, firewood, coal, fuel oil, and shoes soon joined the rationing lists. Several panels at the **World War II Memorial** in Washington, D.C. acknowledge the shared sacrifice represented by home front rationing.

Rationing applied to everyone, but for those with the means, they often found the goods and quantities they wanted through what was called the “black market,” meaning off-the-books illegal trading and selling. To the relief of many, they did not have to explore the black market for whiskey and cigarettes—those items escaped the rationing system. Brewers, however, were asked to allocate 15 percent of their beer production--but at only 3.2 percent alcohol by volume--for the armed forces.



Scrap metal depot, Butte, MT, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Scrap drives captured the attention of hundreds of thousands of people as the first major recycling projects swept through the United States in 1942. Targeted items included metals, all sorts of paper, rubber from old tires, kitchen fats (a source for glycerin used in explosives and as a lubricant), and even music records, made of shellac, which was in short supply. The 1942 scrap drive in Nebraska, for instance, collected some 67,000 tons of metal. Children were particularly adept at collecting scrap. Organizations targeting high-school-age children, like the Victory Corps established by the US Office of Education in September 1942, continued that work along with many other community-service projects for the war's duration.

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*Voices from the Past*

"The war pervaded every aspect of our lives. Even the Christmas parade. The tanks would go down Pine Avenue, great hulking machines, then Santa Claus would come. And we cheered for the tanks as much as we cheered for Santa Claus."  
 Sheril Jankovsky Cunning, who lived in Long Beach, California<sup>18</sup>

"This far off parcel of land contains a community of people who were 'self-starters' in joining the nationwide salvage campaign. Hoping to surmount the difficulties of transportation to the mainland, Monhegan residents were first among the islands to build a scrap pile near the wharf. Old stoves, engines, bed springs, pipes, and even shells from World War I are making up the several tons of valuable materials which Monhegan will give. Through arrangements of the Maine Salvage Committee an Army barge will go to Monhegan for the final collection."  
 A report on scrap drives in Maine, September 1942<sup>19</sup>

“In our courthouse square in Marshalltown we had four or five old Civil War cannons, and even they were sent in and melted down for the war effort. That was quite a sacrifice, but that was how strong the feeling of cooperation was for the war effort.”  
Vernon Sietmann, Marshall County, Iowa<sup>20</sup>

Rationing leveled the playing field for consumer goods, but prices remained high as demand combined with the huge amounts of government spending to keep inflation running rampant. In October, Executive Order 9250 established the Office of Economic Stabilization, and price and rent controls were put into effect.

The mind-numbing number of new federal agencies and boards, the humming, bustling economy, and the skyrocketing cost of living were a new reality for families who had persevered through years of economic depression. Historian David Kennedy later observed: "not only did the war rescue the American economy from the Depression; no less significant, the Depression had in turn poised the economy for phenomenally rapid conversion to war production."<sup>21</sup>



“High school Victory Corps. James Parsley and Bill Sabin do their clean-up chores for the day in Montgomery Blair High School, Silver Spring, Maryland. Because of labor shortage, Victory Corps members at Montgomery Blair are taking over some of the janitor, mechanical and electrical repair activities at the school,” 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

The shock of war impacted the American home front in so many different ways: the disruption in family life as service men and women left to fight in the war, the deaths of those both home and abroad from the war effort, the movement of families across the country to new job opportunities, children becoming much more active in the labor force and in war readiness programs, and the daily sacrifices represented by rationing and price controls. Many found that items they once saw as necessities were suddenly not so necessary, if doing without made winning the war possible.

Everyone was called upon for sacrifice, but then some citizens were singled out and treated differently. They experienced the biggest shock of all: the loss of their constitutional rights and freedoms in the name of winning a war for democracy.

### Chapter Three: Fear and Loss of Freedoms

"I'm for catching every Japanese in America, Alaska, and Hawaii now and putting them in concentration camps."

Rep. John E. Rankin, Mississippi<sup>22</sup>

As the nation mobilized for war in December 1941, too many Americans questioned the loyalty of their fellow citizens of Japanese, Italian, and German ancestry. Suspicions grew, and old prejudices returned with a vengeance. Respected citizens overnight became the enemy. Federal actions soon cost tens of thousands their civil liberties and freedom.

Within hours of the news of Pearl Harbor reaching the West Coast, the first steps towards removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans took place. Terminal Island, located within the port of Los Angeles, was home to an estimated 3,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans, most of whom were tied to the fishing industry. Tuna Street, named appropriately enough, was the main commercial artery of the neighborhood. Using previously drafted custodial detention lists, federal officials arrested fishermen and community leaders while searching homes and businesses for radios, cameras, and other items of perceived espionage value.

In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, Terminal Island was only the beginning of a reign of hysteria that rolled over the West Coast at all levels of government as well as among cherished community institutions. The Rose Bowl Committee, for instance, decided after Pearl Harbor to move its famed college football game on New Year's Day from Pasadena, California, to the opposite coast in North Carolina. Japanese Americans found themselves shunned by friends and neighbors; law enforcement showed little concern about vandalism to Japanese American businesses and neighborhoods. To lessen the suspicion directed their way, Japanese American families destroyed books, correspondence, and heirlooms that some official might declare as proof of their disloyalty. Others even took advantage of a short-lived federal program of volunteer relocation and moved away from the coast.

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#### *Voices from the Past*

"When the relocation of Japanese-Americans from the Pacific Coast started in early 1942, I met some of them who came to Chicago. They told me that practically none of their white fellow-passengers on the trains knew about the relocation or the 'military necessities' that were alleged to have necessitated the removal of over 110,000 residents of the Pacific Coast states from their homes."

"But, they reported, there was hardly a single Negro porter or dining-car waiter who did not know about this enormous mass expulsion. These porters and waiters understood,

long before anyone else did, that these Japanese-Americans were being driven out because of their 'race.' Consequently, many Japanese-Americans, expelled from their homes, found their first friends in the outside world among Negroes. It appears to me that this is as it should be. Not enough Negroes and not enough Japanese-Americans realize the extent to which they are in the same boat.”  
S.I. Hayakawa, December 16, 1942<sup>23</sup>

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Nothing they did made a difference. West Coast officials, supported by members of Congress and some officers of the US Army, demanded that the federal government launch a mass removal of Japanese Americans away from the West Coast, and place them in concentration camps as far away as possible. US Justice Department officials pushed back, pointing that that such removals would be unconstitutional. The Office of Naval Intelligence affirmed the loyalty of the Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans) while suggesting domestic security steps that did not require removal and incarceration.

These voices of reason were drowned out by the deafening calls for removal. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which authorized the military to define an area from which all suspect citizens could be removed. US Army Gen. John L. DeWitt, head of the western defense command based at **The Presidio of San Francisco, California**, was an advocate of removal. He established a military area that took in all of the West Coast and included the entirety of California. Throughout the spring of 1942, he issued orders to exclude all people of Japanese ancestry—US citizen or not—from this vast military area. The excluded would be incarcerated in relocation centers far from their homes.

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### *Voices from the Past*

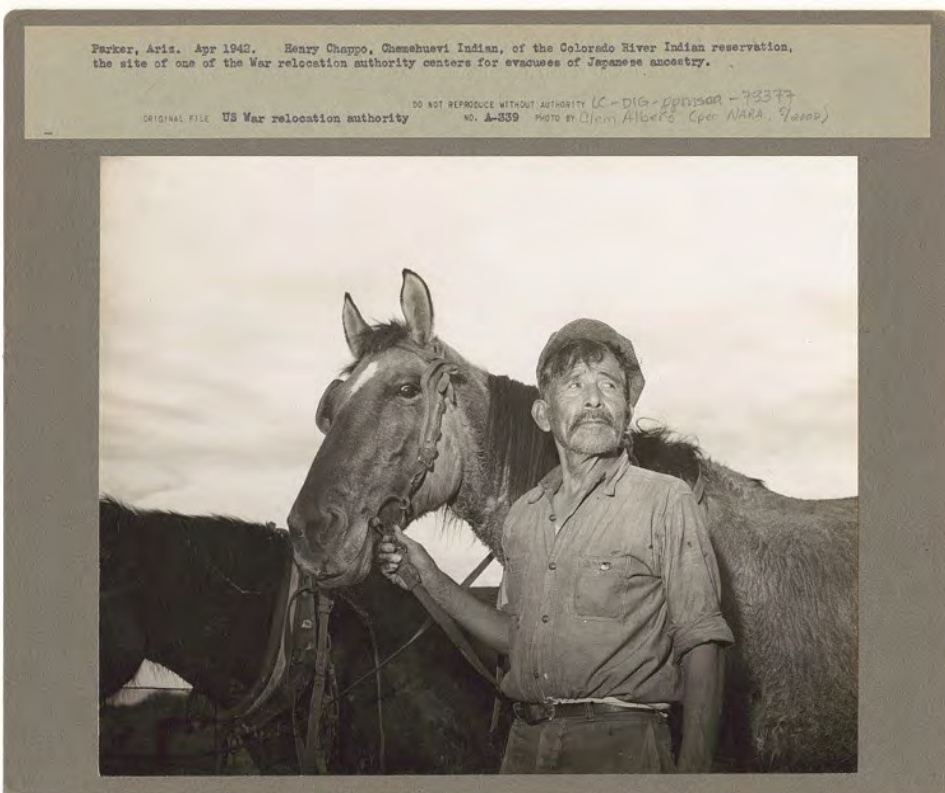
“Has the Gestapo come to America? Have we not risen in righteous anger at Hitler’s mistreatments of the Jews? Then, is it not incongruous that citizen Americans of Japanese descent should be similarly mistreated and persecuted?... Are we to be condemned merely on the basis of our racial origin? Is citizenship such a light and transient thing that that which is our inalienable right in normal times can be torn from us in times of war?”

James Omura, editor and publisher, San Francisco *Current Life*<sup>24</sup>

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On March 30, 1942, Japanese Americans in Bainbridge Island, Washington, were the first to be removed inland. In total, more than 125,000 people of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated during the war; two-thirds of that total were United States-born citizens. Most of those incarcerated were held in ten war relocation centers, under the authority of the War Relocation Authority. Eight of the ten major centers were in western states but two were located as far east as Arkansas. The government even

installed two detention facilities for Japanese Americans at the Gila River Indian Reservation and the Colorado River Indian Reservation in Arizona without consulting with the impacted Tribes.



Dispossession at Colorado River Indian Reservation by War Relocation Authority, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

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### *Experience Your Parks*

The National Park Service preserves several incarceration camps as national historic sites: **Manzanar National Historic Site** and **Tule Lake National Monument** in California, **Amache National Historic Site** in southeastern Colorado, **Minidoka National Historic Site** in southern Idaho, and **Honouliuli National Historic Site** on O'ahu in Hawai'i. All properties have extant buildings and structures that hint at the massive size of the relocation centers, while their locations often speak to the sense of isolation that the camps conveyed. The **Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II** in Washington, D.C., was dedicated in 2001. It honors the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated and those who served in the US military during World War II. The **Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial** in Washington honors those Japanese Americans who were the first to be forcibly removed and incarcerated during the war.

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Japanese Americans typically received short notice to put their affairs in order and settle their businesses. A few found trustworthy caretakers. Sam Mihara of San Francisco recalled “my father had connections. He knew a white attorney in San Francisco who with his wife took care of our home while we were gone.”<sup>25</sup> The Miharas were the exception; most lost untold millions of dollars in forced sales of furniture, goods, farms, and homes. Packing and moving was carefully planned, because families were only allowed to bring what they could carry in a suitcase. Once removal began at a nearby community, the citizens knew their time to leave would come soon.

The Japanese American Citizens League was a community organization founded in 1929. On May 16, 1942, Mary Tsukamoto addressed its chapter in Florin, California, and told the group that as removal approached, their fellow citizens had tried to keep everyday life as normal as possible: “We find busy workers picking ripe red berries for strawberry short cakes to be enjoyed in hundreds of American homes.” At the same time, families were preparing to be removed: “Quietly they are packing away their precious possessions they have accumulated in the 20 to 50 years they have been in this beautiful community.” She added that “mothers are busily sewing and packing clothing for their families. At night, after a hard day out in the strawberry patches or in the green grape vineyards, the entire family is busy crating necessities, and packing suitcases and trunks.” With those preparations complete, Tsukamoto explained what came next: “When the order comes, the Control Center will be set up. Then only one responsible person of each family (the American way of classifying families) need to come register. Then he will have two days to tag his possessions and to make arrangements to store them.” She implored her audience: “Let us plan exactly what we would do that final few days—and remember to take care of every detail that would be detrimental should we forget to tend to them.”<sup>26</sup>

### Life at the Incarceration Centers

Throughout 1942, Japanese Americans were relocated to the newly constructed incarceration camps, what the government labeled as war relocation centers. Most traveled to their destinations in crowded, uncomfortable train cars. Manzanar in California was the first relocation center to open and was close enough to the West Coast that some Japanese Americans were able to drive their own cars to the camp. John W. Abbott reported on one removal caravan on its forced departure to Manzanar on March 25, 1942:

The convoy included 140 civilian vehicles owned by the Japanese plus 41 Army vehicles. During the 230 miles journey, which required just under twelve hours to complete, the parade stretched as far as six miles from end to end... The convoy was required to keep a specified distance between vehicles with one jeep to each ten civilian cars. All railway crossings and highway intersections were adequately policed by a picked company of military police. There were rest periods every two hours. A wrecker at the rear of the convoy cared for all mechanical breakdowns.<sup>27</sup>



Tule Lake Center, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

The centers differed not only in location but size. They held populations of 7,000-to-18,000 people in a prison-like environment with the perimeter defined by barbed-wire fences, guard towers stocked with machine guns, and roving military police patrols. Most were organized into residential blocks of 12-14 wooden frame barracks, a mess hall, and a latrine. No privacy existed in the barracks or latrine and the barracks were poorly insulated, which did little to protect their occupants from extremes in temperature. Since many relocation centers stood on dry, desert-like land, the resulting dust accumulated everywhere, no matter how much families tried to keep the barracks clean.

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### *Voices of the Past*

“We all got numbers, and we became numbers. We weren’t people anymore. We were numbers. One day my father was a respectable businessman. He had a family, a wife, a car, a place in this society. He could vote. Two weeks later, he was a prisoner in a camp

surrounded by barbed wire... The damage was psychological. Here you were with people in various stages of grief. They were in anger, they were in denial, they wanted to prove their loyalty. They were grieving the loss of their lives, because their lives were stolen by the government.”

Lawrence Matsuda, survivor of Minidoka<sup>28</sup>

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Through individual and group actions, those incarcerated supported each other in so many ways, no matter the searing hot summers or the cold, snowy winters. They created crafts and art out of natural materials and what was available at the camps. They organized schools and taught their children, and established sports leagues for both recreation and camaraderie. They planted productive vegetable gardens that supplemented their meager rations but also cultivated flowers and built ornate rock gardens to enliven the “public” spaces between the barracks. Yet there is no doubt that the loss of civil liberties and sense of personal freedom, combined with the numbing routine of a confined camp life, led to anger, disillusionment, and depression for far too many who had done nothing wrong but be born of Japanese descent.

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#### *Voices from the Past*

“Everybody knows everything about everybody—when you go to the latrine, when you go to the shower room, and on and on. But hardly anyone pays any attention to what one wears. We all came with what we could carry and that’s what we wash and wear and mend. The laundry room is never empty. We look so fresh and clean in the mornings, but by mid-afternoon the desert dirt permeates our clothes and body.”

Kiyo Sato, incarcerated at the Poston Relocation Center in Arizona<sup>29</sup>

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Ansel Adams was a famous photographer of the American West, especially of the national parks. In 1943 he asked the director of the Manzanar War Relocation Center for permission to photograph there. Permission was granted, but Adams was not allowed to photograph the guard towers nor the barbed wire fences. Out of some 200 images, he mounted an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in late 1944 and published the book *Born Free and Equal: Photographs of the Loyal Japanese Americans at Manzanar Relocation Center*. But the public, having little empathy for the incarcerated Japanese Americans, showed little interest in the book or exhibit. Adams wished for his photographs to convey the injustice of the relocation camps by documenting the dignity, humanity, and resiliency of Japanese Americans. He even shared some of the exhibit images with the Manzanar incarcerated. Critics at the time found Adams’ images compelling; modern historians recognize Adams’ intent but emphasize that wartime photographs of a normalized life and culture in such a barbaric and inhumane environment were also propaganda.<sup>30</sup>



"Roy Takeno, editor, and group reading paper in front of office, Manzanar Relocation Center, California," photograph by Ansel Adams, 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division



Manzanar Relocation Center, California, photograph by Ansel Adams, 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

## Resistance and Service

The incarcerated were individuals with unique experiences. Under the strain of life and imprisonment, some consistently resisted by embracing the American tradition of protests, petitions, labor strikes and demonstrations. Others sought to prove their loyalty to the United States by serving in the military. Still others chose to protect their families by complying with rules and regulations with as little conflict as possible. Each person held different opinions on patriotism, loyalty, and survival, and they followed many different paths in their responses to government coercion at the camps.

In early 1943, the War Relocation Authority wanted to determine an incarcerated's eligibility for military service by assessing their loyalty to the United States. It used a mandatory questionnaire for that assessment, but most adults found the questionnaire confusing, if not insulting. They had always been loyal citizens, but now stripped of freedom and civil liberties, they were expected to reaffirm their loyalty by completing a questionnaire. Some questions were poorly phrased, with respondents fearful that answers risked possible deportation and family separation.



Women at Tule Lake camp, C. 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

After federal officials assessed the questionnaires, they determined that the Tule Lake incarceration camp incurred the highest rate of so-called disloyalty at 41 percent of the respondents. Officials then converted Tule Lake into a maximum-security center where they segregated most of the so-called disloyal incarcerated from the other relocation centers. Tensions at Tule Lake quickly escalated as the camp director responded to demands for improved living conditions and safety with military force and martial law.

In the summer of 1944 Congress passed legislation that allowed, even encouraged, Nisei to renounce their citizenship. Over 5,000 incarcerated formally signed away their birthright citizenship. Some made plans, along with several thousand Issei, to be expatriated to Japan. Hiroshi Kashiwagi at the Tule Lake camp renounced his citizenship to protest “the many injustices suffered—not just the incarceration but all the racist abuses I had as a child and as a young man.” He soon regretted his decision as “the dumbest thing I ever did in my life,” but the decision, he later wondered, was perhaps a result of the pressures of the times and menacing environment at Tule Lake.<sup>31</sup>



“Tsukasa Sakuma and Torao Hayno, two Washington farmers are here shown operating a tractor spray on a large farm near Chicago, where they are now employed,” photograph by Chas. E. Mace, September 1944, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Those who were deemed loyal in 1943 became eligible to leave their relocation center. An estimated 35,000 incarcerated Japanese Americans grasped this opportunity to rejoin society. They enlisted in the military, accepted a sponsorship for defense industry or farm work, or chose to attend a university. The public re-appearance of

people of Japanese descent upset many other Americans who still felt threatened by their mere presence. Japanese Americans were not allowed to return to the West Coast until 1945.

About 18,000 Nisei joined the US Army and were assigned to a newly segregated unit, the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, which trained first at Camp Shelby in Mississippi. The 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team was combined with the 100<sup>th</sup> Battalion, a mostly Nisei unit from Hawai'i, that already was serving in combat. Even as many of their families remained incarcerated, the soldiers fought with distinction in Europe in 1944 and 1945. The units were among the most decorated in US military history, with 21 members earning the Congressional Medal of Honor. The **Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II**, in Washington D.C., honors those Japanese Americans who served in the US military as well as those who were incarcerated during the war.

Initially, the Nisei volunteered for the military. Later in 1944, the army began to draft Japanese American men, which sparked protests from the incarcerated men. At Heart Mountain, Wyoming, one incarcerated man remarked:

“...we believe in fair play. Our firm conviction is that we would be useless Americans if we did not assert our constitutional rights now; for, unless our status as citizens is cleared and we are really fighting for the high ideals upon which our nation is based, how can we say to the white American buddies in the armed forces that we are fighting for the perpetuation of democracy, especially when our fathers, mothers, and families are in concentration camps, even though they are not charged with any crime?”<sup>32</sup>

Some incarcerated men at Heart Mountain formally organized their draft resistance effort and established the Fair Play Committee. Members refused to report for their induction physicals, and the federal government decided to make examples of them. Between 1944 and 1945, federal officials prosecuted 85 men at the federal district court in Cheyenne, Wyoming, for violating the Selective Service Act. The court found the men guilty, and most served two-to-three years in federal prison. The indignity of being asked to serve a nation that had denied them basic rights just two years earlier escaped federal officials and the Wyoming juries. In late 1947 President Harry S. Truman pardoned all of the Heart Mountain draft resisters, but by that time many had served their sentences either wholly or in part.

While draft resisters were tried at federal district court, two other young Nisei awaited decisions from the US Supreme Court. As the government forcibly removed his community in spring 1942, Fred Korematsu attempted to evade incarceration but was arrested and convicted of defying the exclusion orders. Korematsu filed suit in federal court contesting his arrest and imprisonment. With the assistance of the American Civil Liberties Union, the case advanced to the US Supreme Court. In the spring of 1942, Mitsuye Endo accompanied her family to the incarceration camps, but her attorneys

filed a petition of *habeas corpus* on her behalf, claiming that Endo's right to due process had been violated. Her case, *Ex parte Endo*, also advanced to the Supreme Court.

On December 18, 1944 the justices issued their decisions in both cases. They ruled against Fred Korematsu, granting the government the right to enforce a policy of exclusion due to military necessity. But the justices ruled in favor of Mitsuye Endo, finding that "concededly loyal" US citizens could not be held indefinitely without criminal charges filed against them.

### Closing the Incarceration Camps

After the ruling in *Ex parte Endo*, the government slowly began to disband incarceration camps until the last, Tule Lake, closed in 1946. Incarcerates were given \$25 and a bus or train ticket to leave. Upon their return to the West Coast, many found that their dwellings and businesses had been confiscated, sold, or demolished. Their home front experience cost them almost everything. In terms of income, they had lost an estimated \$108-\$164 million (1945 dollars) in income over the almost three years of false imprisonment. Then the loss of property totaled in the hundreds of millions of dollars, with estimates ranging from \$400 million to more than one billion dollars. Financial losses can be measured somewhat. But the loss in dignity and freedom during incarceration, the stigma of it all, and the health problems caused by imprisonment—these are not so easily measured but real nonetheless.



Manzanar camp, 1943, photograph by Ansel Adams, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

A few acknowledged the severity of the injustice. Eugene V. Rostow, a former Lead-Lease administrator and Yale University Law School professor, admitted that the United States had been wrong. In 1945 Rostow wrote: "Our war-time treatment of Japanese aliens and citizens of Japanese descent on the West Coast has been hasty, unnecessary and mistaken. The course of action which we undertook was in no way required or justified by the circumstances of the war. It was calculated to produce both individual injustice and deep-seated social maladjustment of a cumulative and sinister kind." Rostow even emphasized the hypocrisy of United States policy in fighting a war against Nazism. "We believe that the German people bear a common political responsibility for outrages secretly committed by the Gestapo and the SS. What are we to think of our own part in a program which violates every democratic social value, yet has been approved by the Congress, the President and the Supreme Court?"<sup>33</sup>

A 1946 report from the War Relocation Authority also admitted that it had not done enough to protect the property of those removed. The report noted: "Prejudice against the evacuated people ran high during the war years throughout the evacuated area, and this prejudice was reflected in the indifference of many local law enforcement agencies toward the depredation of evacuee property and in their professed inability to find or identify vandals, arsonists and thieves."<sup>34</sup>

#### Executive Order 9066 and Italian Americans and German Americans

Italian Americans and German Americans were also subjected to incarceration, although at numbers far less than Japanese Americans. President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 also authorized the military to forcibly remove 10,000 Italian Americans from their homes and families while placing restrictions on the movements of another 600,000 who had to obey an 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew. Fort Meade, Maryland, was the location of the largest incarceration camp of Italian Americans.

Pasquale DeCicco, of New Haven, Connecticut, for example, had been a US citizen for 30 years when federal authorities arrested him, later declared him an enemy alien, and kept him at Fort Meade until December 1943. Charges of any crime were never filed against him. Gen. John DeWitt at The Presidio in San Francisco even pushed to arrest Giuseppe DiMaggio, the father of New York Yankees baseball star Joe DiMaggio. Giuseppe DiMaggio had lived in the United States for two generations but never applied for citizenship. DeWitt wanted to make the elder DiMaggio an example. While never arrested, DiMaggio and his wife had to carry enemy alien identification and never travel more than five miles from their home. The government also seized his fishing boat and temporarily barred him from being at the waterfront. DeWitt's actions in the case of DiMaggio and the tens of thousands of Japanese Americans on the West Coast had nothing to do with national security but everything to do with government intimidation of select immigrant groups.

The federal government also incarcerated approximately 11,500 people of German ancestry, many of whom were US citizens, and housed them at detention and incarceration camps administered by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Locations included Fort Stanton, New Mexico; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Fort Lincoln at Mandan, North Dakota; Crystal Springs, Texas; Sand Island, Hawai'i; Camp Forrest at Tullahoma, Tennessee; and Fort Missoula, Montana. The government detention of people of German ancestry began in 1939 with over 500 German crew members from the *S.S. Columbus* who were later imprisoned at Fort Stanton. During the war years, Fort Mandan held perhaps the largest number of German detainees, with over 2,100 individuals.



A portion of the internment barracks are preserved and open to the public at the Fort Missoula Museum and Park in Missoula, MT. Photograph by the author.

Fort Missoula, in Missoula, Montana, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is now a historic site. People of Japanese, German, and Italian descent, were held there. The process began in late December 1941, when recently arrested Japanese immigrants in Salt Lake City were placed at the fort in separate quarters from a large number of Italian seamen, who had been quartered at the fort since the spring when the federal government had seized numerous Italian ships and confined their crews. By April 1942 around 2,000 Japanese and Italian incarcerated, roughly divided into equal-sized groups, were at Fort Missoula. There also was a much smaller group of German incarcerated. Camp officials kept the three groups separate but allowed some, with guards, to go into town and shop. Thus, Missoula's home front was one place where residents came face to face with the exclusion programs of the federal government. Kumari Furuya recounted his exchange with a Missoula store clerk who asked: "Are you from Japan?" Furuya said: "No, I'm from Hawai'i." The clerk replied: "But Hawai'i is not our enemy, is it? Why do the Japanese from Hawai'i have to be in an internment camp?" Furuya answered: "That's what we'd like to know."<sup>35</sup>

### Incarceration of the Unanga̋

Alaska Natives whose families had lived on the Aleutian Islands for centuries found that US exclusion programs also impacted their home front experience. The **Aleutian Islands World War II National Historic Area** helps to preserve and interpret the home front experience of the islands' residents. In 1942, concerned that the Alaska Natives were in a war zone and wanting to move civilians out of the way, the US Army announced that it planned to remove almost 900 indigenous Unanga̋ from their homes

in nine villages and place them at internment camps away from possible harm. The Alaskan territorial governor, Henry Gruening, disagreed and insisted that removing the Unanga from their homes was a far greater threat to their welfare than possible military action. The army ignored the governor's concerns and went ahead with the removal.

The Unanga detested the camps. A group complained in October 1942: "We drink impure water and then get sick.... We got no place to take a bath and no place to wash our clothes or dry them when it rains...we live in a room with our children just enough to turn around in. We use blankets for walls just to live in private."<sup>36</sup> The camps were hastily converted industrial facilities, with no plumbing, electricity, or toilets. In 1943 Dr. Berneta Block of the US Department of Health investigated the Alaska camps and was appalled at the living conditions. There were still no sewer systems, but there remained overcrowded buildings, polluted water, and little medical care. At four documented camps, 74 people died from pneumonia and tuberculosis.

By 1943-1944 the Unanga had repaired many of the old industrial buildings and installed electricity and running water. Villagers of Unalaska did their best to restore the rhythms of their life, such as establishing a church in honor of the Church of the Holy Ascension of Christ that they had been forced to abandon in 1942. Despite their removal, their patriotism remained steadfast: Twenty-five Unanga men served in the military. Three received the Bronze Star for their actions during the invasion of Attu Island in 1944.

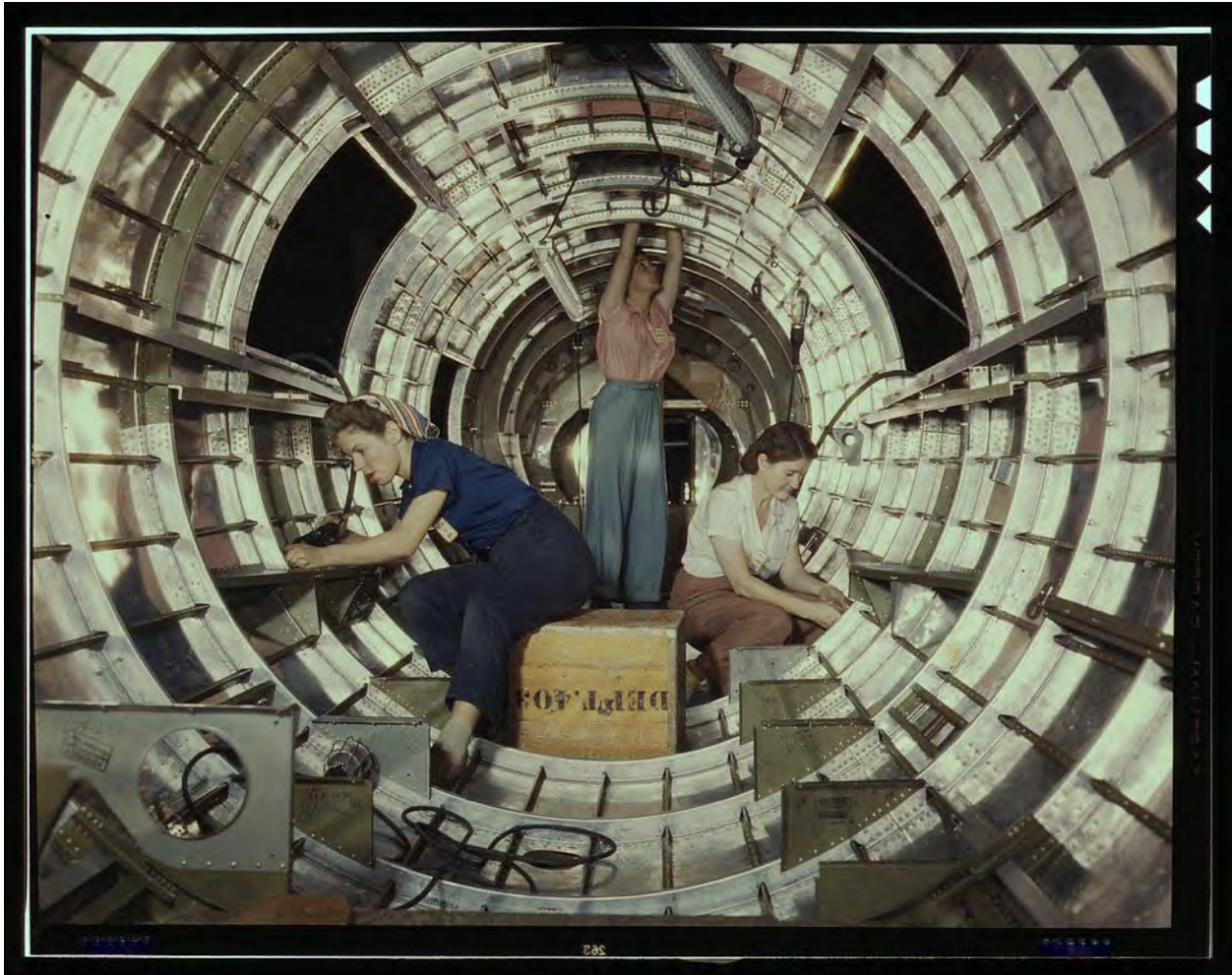
The Unanga returned to what was left of their homes in April 1945. The government even admitted that "inspections revealed extensive evidence of widespread wanton destruction of property and vandalism...contents of closed packing boxes, trunks, and cupboards had been ransacked, clothing had been scattered over the floors, trampled and fouled, dishes, furniture, stoves, radios, phonographs, books, and other items had been broken or damaged."<sup>37</sup> A federal investigation forty years later offered \$12,000 to each survivor, a paltry amount considering the physical and psychological damage of the three-year internment.

In December 1982, the federal Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians released a report titled *Personal Justice Denied*. The commission found no military or national security reasons to incarcerate Japanese Americans and Alaska Natives during World War II. The commission concluded that these injustices were the result of racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.

These acknowledgments of the wrongs inflicted upon the Alaska Natives, Italian Americans, German Americans, and Japanese Americans during World War II came decades too late. Few apologies could ever fully compensate the victims for their losses. The forced incarceration of American citizens--be they of Japanese, German or Italian descent--not only undermined the unity of the nation at a time of war, they also undermined the image of the United States on the world stage. How could the leader of the free world also jail and dispossess citizens because of their race or nationality and

treat large swaths of the population as second-class citizens? The wartime policy of exclusion had no justification and remains a national disgrace.

## Chapter Four: Jobs, Jobs, Jobs Everywhere...but Not for Everyone



“Women workers install fixtures and assemblies to a tail fuselage section of a B-17 bomber at the Douglas Aircraft Company plant, Long Beach, Calif. Better known as the “Flying Fortress,” the B-17F is a later model of the B-17, which distinguished itself in action in the south Pacific, Germany and elsewhere,”  
October 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

“This whole nation of one hundred and thirty million free men, women and children is becoming one great fighting force. Some of us are soldiers or sailors, some of us are civilians. Some of us are fighting the war in airplanes five miles above the continent of Europe or the islands of the Pacific -- and some of us are fighting it in mines deep down in the earth of Pennsylvania or Montana. A few of us are decorated with medals for heroic achievement, but all of us can have that deep and permanent inner satisfaction that comes from doing the best we know how -- each of us playing an honorable part in the great struggle to save our democratic civilization. Whatever our individual

circumstances or opportunities -we are all in it, and our spirit is good, and we Americans and our allies are going to win -- and do not let anyone tell you anything different.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fireside Chat, October 12, 1942<sup>38</sup>

Full economic mobilization for war from 1941-1945 overtook and in many ways overwhelmed American families. After the lean times of the Great Depression of the 1930s, families embraced opportunities for well-paid employment. An estimated four million people took to the road, leaving farms and small towns behind as they made their way to the billowing smokestacks of a great industrial machine. An estimated 6.5 million women entered the work force from 1941 to 1945, and once there, many stayed. World War II created an estimated 17 million new jobs in the oil fields, mines, steel mills, and factories of the United States while also creating new opportunities on the farm as outside labor replaced earlier reliance on family labor.

Leaving the farm for a place on the assembly line had a bigger impact than just a bigger paycheck. It also meant that family and community ties were torn asunder. In their place came almost instant cities across the nation, where Americans built new neighborhoods, new community institutions, and new ways of life. Manufacturing the tools to win the war also had dire consequences for the nation’s environment as few, if any, barriers were erected to mitigate the plunder of natural resources, the insatiable need for energy, and the non-stop rush of production as the nation’s citizens did their part to win the war.

As the private sector ramped up production to heights never before demanded, much less imagined, the extractive and steel industries came under enormous pressure to produce the necessary raw materials. During World War II, industry in the United States consumed a mammoth amount of metal: 827 million tons of iron, 22 million tons of copper, 9 million tons of lead, and 9 million tons of manganese.<sup>39</sup> The colossal jolt of that consumption was felt everywhere; it represents an immediate and then lasting cost of the home front that is often forgotten.

### Copper and Coal Production

A federal agency in 1942 called copper “literally the nervous system of a warring nation” with pure copper being the “*sine qua non* of communications.”<sup>40</sup> Butte, Montana, was home to one of largest and most productive copper mines in North America. The Butte mines and the adjoining smelter at Anaconda were famous for their multi-ethnic work force. As historian Matthew L. Basso has emphasized, the history of Butte and Anaconda helps to tell the story of the World War II home front men—who were always more numerous than the Rosie the Riveters or even the millions of men who joined the armed forces. These men always faced doubters: Why are you in the mines rather than on the battlefield? Despite the questions, they were confident that their labor made a huge contribution to the war effort.



Anaconda, MT, copper smelter workers, September 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

To produce the copper that helped win the war, the smelter stack in Anaconda never stopped belching pollutants, and the miners never stopped digging in Butte. What happened in Butte and Anaconda also happened at the Bingham Canyon copper mines in Utah, where workers imported from Puerto Rico kept the Kennecott mines operating at a feverish pace. The demand for copper was so high that mines long ago closed in Orange County, Vermont, reopened for production. Mines in the Copper Basin at Ducktown, Tennessee, also increased production during the war. The mined and processed copper was invaluable; yet, the environmental consequences proved monumental as wastes were dumped into the ground and waterways, leaving a toxic residue of cancer-causing ingredients which affected the health and well-being of residents then, and now.



Carr Fork open-pit copper mine, Bingham Canyon, UT, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

The coal industry boomed during the war. In 1940 coal still powered the vast majority of American industry, and miners delivered. The nation's coal mines yielded 348 million tons in 1938; by 1944 that amount had risen to 617 million tons. The steep increase also introduced lasting environmental impacts, as strip mines became more and more common. By using huge mechanical shovels to remove topsoil and “strip” away the coal deposits that lay underneath, mine companies not only increased production but they could do so without as many employees. In 1938 there were 465 coal strip mines. By 1945, 1,370 coal strip mines were in operation across the United States.<sup>41</sup>



Coal hauler for the Alaska Hufnagel Coal Company, November 1942, Gordon Parks, photographer, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Strip mining significantly impacted several states. In Pennsylvania, strip mining yielded only 2 million tons of coal in 1939. That number soared to 26 million tons in 1945. As the process of strip mining took hold across the Appalachian coal belt, Harrison County, West Virginia, held the distinction of producing the most strip-mined coal in the country. In 1938 it had no strip mines; by 1945 more than half of its coal production came from strip mining. Similar patterns were found in Hopkins and Muhlenberg counties in Kentucky, Fulton County in Illinois, Warrick County in Indiana, Walker County in Alabama, and Harrison County in Ohio, where the amount of strip-mined coal boomed from 383,000 tons in 1937-1938 to over 4 million tons in 1944-1945.<sup>42</sup>

As strip mining increased nationally, the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania declined in production, even though “hard coal,” as anthracite was known, had a higher carbon content and higher energy density. The demands for coal during World War II accelerated the growth of strip mining and a turn toward greater mechanization of the industry. Together these two changes led to a loss of employment opportunities and a period of environmental degradation that communities still address today.

## Petroleum Products

The demand for oil and refined petroleum products to lubricate and fuel all of the World War II military vehicles, battleships, submarines, and airplanes changed the oil industry as it accelerated a national reliance on ever-increasing amounts of oil and natural gas. The United States in 1940 dominated the world's oil supply—producing 60 percent of the total. Japanese military officers sorely resented the United States' dominance; indeed, to end the monopoly and to obtain a secure oil supply Japan propelled itself into war with the United States in the Pacific. The Japanese resentment took a physical form in February 1942, when a Japanese submarine attacked a shoreline oil field and refinery at Elmwood near Santa Barbara, California. The submarine inflicted little damage in its twenty-minute attack, but the assault caused quite an uproar and panic since it was the first and one of the few Japanese attacks on the US mainland during the war.



Oil derricks, California coast, 1944, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

The attack certainly did not slow down petroleum production in the United States. It increased by 30 percent from 1940-1945, and the number of petroleum refineries expanded accordingly. The demand for gasoline transformed cities like Beaumont, Texas, where refinery companies operated around the clock. Demand for oil also transformed the way the precious resource was moved from the West to the East. Before World War II, railroads and then larger tanker ships carried oil from the source to the refinery. After German U-boats sunk twelve US oil tankers in February 1942, federal officials and industry leaders quickly explored alternatives and decided on pipelines.

In June 1942 hundreds of workers along a ten-state route began to construct the War Emergency Pipeline, which was actually two lines--one, nicknamed "Big Inch," was 24-inches in diameter and was finished in 1943, while the other, "Little Inch," was 20-inches in diameter and was completed in 1944. Both lines were more than double the normal pipeline size of the time. The system connected coastal East Texas and Louisiana to New Jersey and was soon delivering hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil each day. The pipeline industry became a mainstay of the economy. Whereas in the first year of the war only 4 percent of oil moved to the East Coast in pipelines, that total reached 40 percent by 1944.



Installing Big-Inch Pipeline, 1944, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Producing high-octane aviation fuel was an issue tackled by experiment stations of the US Bureau of Mines located in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and Laramie, Wyoming. At Bartlesville, 35 to 40 chemists and engineers sought a solution for how to improve the quantity and quality of fuel for the US Army Air Force. This success was one of the home front's great technological achievements as over 400 refineries could produce the 100-octane aviation fuel by the end of the conflict.<sup>43</sup>

### Hydroelectric Power

Coal, oil, and gas produced most of the energy needed to win the war, but another important contributor, especially for the explorations in atomic energy underway at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Hanford, Washington (parts of the **Manhattan Project National Historical Park**), was hydroelectric power. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in the Southeast and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) in the Northwest were federal New Deal initiatives to generate public power, provide flood control and better navigation, and improve economic prospects in their respective regions. TVA

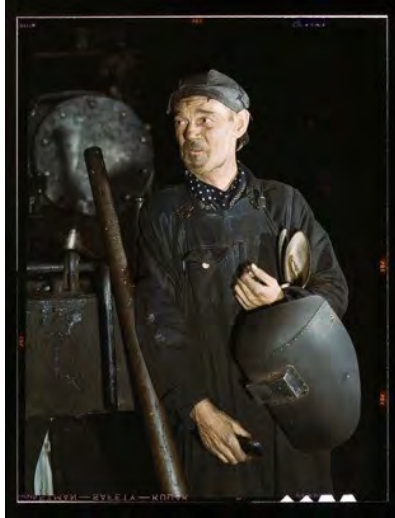
already had several of its major dams, reservoirs, and power plants built and operational by the time of Pearl Harbor. The potential of those existing power plants, along with the authority's ability to build additional hydroelectric facilities if needed, helped to convince military planners to locate what became the Oak Ridge project in the midst of the TVA system. Bonneville Power Administration played a similar role at Hanford. Be they TVA or BPA projects, the high dam, reservoir, and hydroelectric power plants fundamentally transformed the environment of both regions, taking rivers and turning them into machines of managed lakes and filling what had been valuable valley farmland with water.

Wartime projects by TVA and BPA displaced thousands of residents, but some places escaped destruction. Dandridge was one of Tennessee's oldest towns, with stately brick houses and a Greek Revival-styled courthouse. Residents there fought TVA's wartime construction of Douglas Dam and Reservoir, which would have inundated the town. In a rare act of historic preservation at a time of national emergency, President Franklin D. Roosevelt kept the dam project moving forward—Oak Ridge needed its power—but approved plans to build a high dike to shield the historic town from destruction.

Other places across the United States were not so lucky as the number and impact of federally supported hydroelectric projects intensified during World War II. The most massive was the Pick-Sloan program, which targeted the huge Missouri River Valley of the Midwest and Great Plains. With President Roosevelt's endorsement, Congress approved the Pick-Sloan plan for a projected 107 dams, 4.7 million acres of irrigation systems, and 1.6 million kilowatts of electric power. The project promised sustainable energy, flood control, improved river navigation, and irrigation water for greater food production, but it did not have a wartime impact since its approval came in late 1944. The end of the war in 1945, however, did not stop the wartime Pick-Sloan plan from becoming reality. Over the next 20 years, the various dams, power plants, and reservoirs transformed the Missouri River. In South Dakota alone, three Pick-Sloan dams built after the war flooded about 650,000 acres of land on Native American reservations, forcing the relocation of thousands of families with impacts on the environment, economy, and culture still felt today.

### The Railroads

To move the raw materials and finished products, not to mention workers and soldiers, across the country, the home front relied on the nation's railroad network. The Great Depression had been tough on the railroads. Companies lost capacity as they sold off unnecessary freight cars and engines, abandoned rail lines, and laid off skilled employees just to survive the economic hard times. Suddenly the military build-up of 1940-1941 and then the onset of defense production in 1942 threatened to overwhelm the rail system. Railroad executives did not want to lose control of their assets, as in World War I when the government placed the nation's railroads under federal control. To meet wartime demands, railroad executives adapted to rapid mobilization by expanding capacity, increasing line traffic, and adding many new employees.



Welder at Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Shops, Chicago, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection



C. & N.W. R.R., Mrs. Dorothy Lucke, employed as a wiper at the roundhouse, Clinton, Iowa  
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

The wartime numbers for railroad freight traffic are mind-boggling: In 1941 the railroads counted 405 billion ton-miles of freight moving about the country; three years later that number was 785 billion ton-miles, almost a 100% increase. Passenger traffic also soared as the military needed to move millions of soldiers around the country while millions of workers counted on the railroads to get to their next factory or farm job.

The Pennsylvania Railroad and the Great Northern Railway are two very different companies that document the war's impact on the nation's railroad system. The Pennsylvania Railroad was a primary eastern line, both for freight and passenger traffic, as it connected so many urban centers. As part of its service to military transport, the company converted hundreds of box cars into troop coaches and sleepers. It moved tens of thousands of soldiers to Camp Kilmer, near Edison, New Jersey, where the

army established its largest embarkation post in the East. An estimated 2.5 million troops left Camp Kilmer to serve in Europe. The railroad also operated the nation's largest freight classification yards at its Enola Yard facilities near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Workers went from handling about 11,000 cars per day in 1941 to almost 16,000 a day by 1942. Increasingly the workers became women as an estimated 43,000 male railroad workers left the Pennsylvania for military service; an estimated 22,000 women worked as ticket agents, telegraphers, trainmen, and brakemen.<sup>44</sup>

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### *Experience the Parks*

**Steamtown National Historic Site** in Scranton, Pennsylvania, preserves the Union Pacific Railroad's "Big Boy" No. 4012 steam engine, a massive machine that the American Locomotive Works built in 1941 to haul heavy loads unassisted during the war. Considered at the time an engineering marvel and the pinnacle of steam locomotion technology, only a handful of "Big Boy" engines remain today.

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In the northwest corridor, the Great Northern Railway struggled to meet demand from the start, as it carried 53 percent more freight tonnage in 1941 than it had two years earlier. During the war years, the company cut its amount of passenger service, even closing its famed hotels in Glacier National Park, to better meet demands for freight traffic and troop trains. Workers learned to schedule and pack freight trains more effectively, raising the average load per car from 2.5 tons in 1941 to 11 tons by June 1945. The company also began the switch to more diesel engines, but at a slower rate than it liked since federal authorities prioritized eastern lines for the powerful diesel machines. Like railroads everywhere, the company struggled to find replacement labor for the 8,775 employees who joined the armed forces. Women were part of the answer; by September 1943 over 1,500 worked for the Great Northern.<sup>45</sup>

By January 1944, the railroad also used the agreement between Mexico and the United States to provide Mexican men for limited-time employment in the United States. Known as the Bracero program, the Great Northern used it to add 200 Mexican nationals to work the lines. They stayed until the federal government furloughed soldiers to work on the railroad in 1945.

The bracero program is most commonly associated with wartime agricultural production (see Chapter Five). That focus has meant that the Mexican contribution to other parts of the home front effort has been downplayed even ignored. According to historian Erasmo Gamboa, the history of Mexican braceros in the operation of western railroads, and by companies as far east as the New York Central Railroad, is a significant chapter in the World War II home front story. Like their agricultural counterparts, railroad companies, unfortunately, did not always live up to their side of the agreement with the Mexican workers. Instead of adequate housing, sanitation, and food, too many companies provided bare minimums, or worse. Accounts from too many camps reported serious infestations of bedbugs, malnourishment, and disease.



Labor camp in Texas, 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

On top of that the braceros were often assigned work that involved the handling of toxic products and were given little to no training in how to safely meet their responsibilities. By April 1945 over 100,000 braceros had worked on the nation's railroad network. This new labor source helped the railroads meet the extraordinary traffic demands of World War II.

### The Steel Industry



Steel furnace, Allegheny Ludlum Corporation, PA, c. 1941, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

American steel, the most important industry in creating the arsenal of democracy, demanded attention from all corners of the economy. The United States produced 95 million tons of steel during the war, most of which was targeted for military needs. US Steel, with subsidies from the federal Defense Finance Corporation, expanded its output and added over 80,000 employees to its workforce. Bethlehem Steel had over 13,000 employees when the war began; it soon doubled its work force. The steel mills in Pittsburgh, which is a designated World War II Heritage City, increased production by 200 percent by 1942, and factory expansion led to the displacement of older towns and neighborhoods like at Homestead Mill. In their place came new industrial housing, as many as 16 federally supported projects across the Pittsburgh area. For workers at the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA), acclaimed Bauhaus architects Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer designed the Aluminum City Terrace in New Kensington, Pennsylvania.



Jim Crow segregation at Bethlehem-Fairfield shipyards, Baltimore, 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Pittsburgh is the Steel City, but it was not the only significant production center. In the South, large steel mill operations located through Birmingham, Alabama, defined life, race, and culture in a city sometimes called the Pittsburgh of the South. Chattanooga, Tennessee, on the Tennessee River also had large steel mills. At Orem, Utah, the federal government subsidized the creation of Geneva Steel, built by about 10,000 workers, which produced hundreds of tons of steel plate by 1944. The factory employed hundreds of workers, 25 percent of whom were women. The Kaiser Steel Company in Fontana, California, also employed hundreds of workers.

So much steel was needed, authorities launched an aggressive scrap-metal drive to find any spare sources not in current use. The scrap drive effort touched almost every community, and in many towns, local children were tasked with finding as much scrap as possible. In 1942 Florida officials launched the Junior Salvage Army program, with a target of 12 million pounds of scrap metal by October 31, 1942. The program was centered in the schools and organized by county so school boards would provide guidance, supervision, and support. Then the state gave students authority and officer titles to encourage them and remind them that the drive was for the nation; they too were serving in the Junior Salvage Army. Colin English, the “commanding general,” reported to his “troops” on October 21, 1942, that the goal of 12 million pounds had been exceeded and that the average student in the state had collected thirty pounds of scrap: “So great have been the collections that scrap yards in many parts of the state cannot get the additional labor as well as equipment to prepare and load the scrap. It is fine that we have it in such stockpiles where it can be drawn upon by American war industry.”<sup>46</sup> Howard Bishop, the “colonel” of the scrap drive in Alachua County, reported that about 375,000 pounds of scrap was collected in Gainesville in less than five hours. Bishop observed: “I have never seen a more wonderful sight in my life. All of the businessmen gave generously of their equipment and manpower. The workingmen, school children, Boy Scouts [sic], pre-school children, old people and everyone entered into the drive with unbounded enthusiasm.”<sup>47</sup> The Florida experience was repeated in countless other communities.

Those mounds of scrap, unfortunately, sometimes held treasures—especially the metal masters of music recordings and recordings of radio programs. Record companies and radio stations often donated these metal discs to World War II scrap drives because few thought in the 1940s there was a need to preserve popular music recordings and radio broadcasts.

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### *Experience the Heritage Areas*



Carrie Blast Furnaces, Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, National Park Service

**Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area**, headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, interprets and commemorates the impact that steel from the Pittsburgh district had on the Allied effort in World War II. Pittsburgh produced more iron and steel than all of the works in the Axis alliance, becoming a significant military advantage during the war. The Carrie Blast Furnaces at Homestead, a National Historic Landmark, conveys the impact

of steel production on the local environment and tells the stories of the multi-ethnic work force that toiled at the hot, bellowing towers 24 hours day throughout the war.

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### Discrimination at War Industries

As the nation rushed into a new industrial boom in the mines and factories of the United States, African American labor leaders worried that the boom would never reach their workers. A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was ready to carry out a campaign for fair employment and equal pay for equal work, especially since many potential defense contractors, not just in the South but across the nation, typically practiced discrimination. The prejudice was rarely hidden. At the Curtiss-Wright aircraft plant in Buffalo, New York, an official explained that it was against company policy to hire a Black man in a skilled position, no matter his training or qualifications. Instead, jobs as janitors would be open to African Americans. A steel company in Kansas City, Missouri, remarked that it had not had an African American employee for 25 years and had no plans to change that policy. When the US Employment Service surveyed defense industries, more than half of the respondents admitted they would not hire Black workers, except, perhaps, in very menial positions.

Thus, in January 1941, Randolph formed the March of Washington Movement, a protest march of 10,000 laborers that would highlight the discrimination faced by African Americans in the United States, and announced the date of the march as July 1, 1941. The nation was not yet at war, but war preparations and spending were reaching record levels. Randolph believed that the time to act was now: "If Negroes fail this chance for work, for freedom and training, it may never come again."<sup>48</sup> He wanted President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue an executive order to forbid discrimination in war industries supported by federal spending. The president used intermediaries, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, to tell Randolph to back off, but Randolph persisted. Finally on June 18, Randolph, Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and T. Arnold Hill of the National Urban League met with the president and members of his cabinet. Roosevelt offered a deal but only if Randolph called off the March on Washington. Randolph refused and predicted that 100,000 would march in two weeks. A week of negotiations followed, and on June 25, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802. Randolph then canceled the March on Washington.

Executive Order 8802 stated: "There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries and in Government, because of race, creed, color, or national origin." The directive also created the Fair Employment Practice Committee to investigate violations of the order. The order, however, gave little to no enforcement powers to the committee. While it forbade discrimination in the defense industries, unfair and discriminatory practices continued in many other industries.

### The Shipbuilding Industry and Rosie the Riveter

Finding how the demand of defense industries impacted the home front of the United States is easy—because the impacts were everywhere when millions of people were on the move, crisscrossing the country in search of well-paid jobs, a chance at a career, and a new start in life. Richmond, California, is a designated World War II Heritage City because of its nationally significant role in the shipbuilding industry. Richmond's stories of home front sacrifice, discrimination, and transformation are powerfully conveyed at the **Rosie the Riveter/ World War II Home Front National Historical Park**. Richmond was the location of 55 war industries. The most massive was the Kaiser Shipyards, which produced more ships than any other company in the world during the war.



Eastine Cowner works as a scaler on Liberty ship, SS George Washington Carver, Kaiser Shipyards, Richmond, CA, 1943, E.F. Joseph, photographer, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

The first shipyard dated to December 1940 when industrialist Henry J. Kaiser, who was already building a limited number of cargo ships for the US Maritime Commission, accepted a commission from Great Britain to build ships quickly. Once the United States entered the war a year later, Kaiser added three more shipyards to his Richmond works and began to recruit tens of thousands of workers, who by the end of the war had built 747 ships. At the middle of the war, photographer Dorothea Lange counted 91,000 employees, working “24 hours a day, every day in the year. Of these workers 27% are women. There are Hindus, Arabs, Hawaiians, Eskimos, American Indians, Chinese, South Americans, Filipinos, Swedes, Danes, etc. etc. They come from all over the US, and from all walks of life.”<sup>49</sup>

Kaiser brought an assembly-line strategy to the shipyards, with an estimated 250,000 prefabricated parts, produced by factories nationwide, needed for the production of a single cargo ship. “Liberty” ships were typically 441 feet in length and 56

feet in width, capable of carrying as many as 2,840 Jeeps, and cost about \$2 million each. To build the ships as quickly as possible, the company trained unskilled workers on the spot to carry out specific duties while also relying on the skill and experience of workers affiliated with the 27 unions at the shipyards, with the largest being the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders and Helpers.

The Boilermakers proved to be neither a brotherhood nor a helper when it came to African American labor. The union prior to the war had been all male and white. In violation of federal prohibitions against discrimination in the defense industries, the union and the company created a separate category for African Americans, called Auxiliary Number A-36, which provided for second-class union membership. In reaction, Black laborers formed the Shipyard Workers Committee against Discrimination to push back against segregation in the workplace and to improve their housing options.

At Richmond, women worked both in the shipyard and the office. Historian Fred Quivik counted that while about half of the women were clerical and office employees, another 13-to-17 percent were in production jobs. These employees gained new skills in welding—and became nicknamed Wendy the Welder and Rosie the Riveter. Lucille Preston later recalled: “We would have to go out in the water on the ship. The ship was floating while we were on there welding. So it was really fun. I really enjoyed it.” Selena Foster acknowledged the daily discrimination at the shipyards: “There were blacks out there but mostly the white girls were the ones who got all the training.”<sup>50</sup> White women also got most of the benefits, especially with childcare. Kaiser established Maritime Child Development Centers so children could be looked after and women could work—but the centers were only for white women. African American women adjusted by relying on a time-honored tradition of collective parenting, with every family in the community looking after the children as needed. The first black woman to apply for a job at the Kaiser shipyards was Frances Albrier, who after the war extended her community activism into voting rights and the rights of seniors, shaping the civil rights movement in Richmond for a generation.

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### *Voices from the Past*

In 1942 Helen Studer and her family moved from Kansas to Long Beach, California, where she worked at Douglas Aircraft until 1945. In 1980 she recalled:

“My education was limited, so I didn’t try to go in for any office work. I went into the industrial part of it. I really had no idea what it would be like. I had never seen anything like that, you know. But it was really exciting to see how they’d do all these things and fly in the air.

The men really resented the women very much, and in the beginning, it was a little bit rough. You had to hold your head high and bat your eyes at ‘em. You learned to swear like they did. However, I made myself stop because I don’t think it’s too ladylike. The men that you worked with, after a while, they realized that it was essential that the

women worked there, 'cause there wasn't enough men and the women were doing a pretty good job. So the resentment eased. However, I always felt that they thought it wasn't your place to be there."<sup>51</sup>

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Not all Rosies were at the Kaiser shipyards at Richmond. The company also managed two major shipyards in Portland, Oregon, and another in Vancouver, Washington, where laborers built 752 cargo ships, many of them the famous "Liberty" and then "Victory" ships. An estimated 30 percent of the shipyard workers were women. The Portland shipyards boomed the city's economy and population. The Oregon Shipbuilding Company operated the largest works, outside of Portland's St. Johns neighborhood. Jobs at the shipyards attracted 40,000 Native Americans to work in the Northwest. Employment recruiters also targeted black workers from the South, and Portland's African American population grew from 1,800 in 1940 to an estimated 15,000 by 1946.

The mobilization of southern workers to new economic opportunities in the North, Midwest, and West "changed and challenged the national identity of the United States as a multiracial society," concluded historian Charles D. Chamberlain.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, prejudice often limited the new opportunities in the West. In 1982 Fanny Christina Hall, who worked in a Los Angeles shipyard, observed that "I have found out through life, sometimes even if you're good, you just don't get the breaks if the color's not right. I could see where they made a difference in placing you in certain jobs. They had fifteen or twenty departments, but all the Negroes went to department 17 because there was nothing but shooting and bucking rivets."<sup>53</sup>

Rosie the Riveters worked across the nation. Shirley Virginia Bellemeur from Vermont joined the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). The US Navy assigned her to the Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida, where she was a metalsmith, working as a riveter to repair seaplanes damaged in combat. Pensacola is another designated World War II Heritage City, best known as the "cradle" of naval aviation. The Pensacola station trained and graduated some 28,000 pilots during World War II.

Two designated World War II Heritage Cities in the South, Savannah, Georgia, and Baltimore County, Maryland, were also shipbuilding centers. Jane Tucker was only sixteen years old when she left home in the tiny town of Lineville, Alabama, where she made \$1 a day as a store clerk, for a position as a rod welder at the Savannah shipyards. There she made \$1.25 per hour, or ten times what she made for an eight-hour day of work in Lineville. Like the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation in Portland, the Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard in Baltimore was part of the US Maritime Commission's emergency shipbuilding program that began in 1941 to replace the hundreds of cargo ships lost to German U-boat attacks. At the Baltimore shipyards, laborers, with both white and black women serving as welders and riveters, built 384 Liberty ships—including the first produced in the United States, the *S. S. Patrick Henry* launched in September 1941. By the next January 11,000 workers were at the Baltimore shipyards,

reaching 47,000 laborers by late 1943. Only two Liberty ships remained in operation by 2022, and one of these ships, the *S.S. John W. Brown*, is open for tours and cruises at Pier 13 in the Baltimore harbor, part of the historic Bethlehem-Fairfield shipyard, where it was built and launched in September 1942. The stories of the shipyards and their impact on World War II are interpreted in the programs and projects of the **Baltimore National Heritage Area**.

Building a Liberty ship, despite its name, still meant discrimination and segregation in Baltimore. The American Federation of Labor typically reserved all of the jobs it controlled for white men in southern shipyards. White women could find employment in shipyards but rarely on the production line. A few black workers had jobs in skilled positions; many others were relegated to menial, low-paid jobs while all public facilities—restrooms, water fountains, break rooms, dining areas—were segregated.



Higgins shipyards, New Orleans, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

An exception to the sorry story of workplace discrimination in a time of war is associated with Andrew Jackson Higgins and his shipyards in New Orleans, which is another designated World War II Heritage City. Higgins, a native of Nebraska, came to New Orleans in 1910 and became a successful industrialist known for his rough talk, hard drinking, and never-say-never attitude. He eventually established Higgins Industries, which manufactured PT (Patrol Torpedo) cruisers and troop landing craft that made the invasion of Normandy and many of the Pacific Islands possible. His amphibious Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel (LCVP) boats, better known as Higgins boats, could move servicemen, Jeeps, and materials from ship to shore safely and quickly, negating the need for harbors. His eight factories of close to 25,000 employees

were scattered through New Orleans; they built 12,964 of the US Navy's ships by September 1943. By the end of the war the factories had constructed over 20,000 boats, with LCVPs counting as 12,500 of the total number.

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### *Experience Your Parks*

The PT cruiser produced by Higgins Industries is also indelibly linked to the naval career of John F. Kennedy, who later served as President of the United States. Kennedy's harrowing experiences as a PT boat captain in the Solomon Islands of the Pacific are interpreted at the **John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site** in Brookline, Massachusetts.

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Due to the lack of available workers, Higgins ignored the typical patterns of discriminatory pay, hiring blacks, whites, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities—and paying them equivalent wages and providing equal opportunity to advance at the company. Higgins told the *Louisiana Weekly* newspaper: “Our company may be the means of showing that the two races can get along well together with equal respect for the other and equal rates for the same work.”<sup>54</sup> But bending the rules of segregation in the South could only go far. Blacks and whites were trained for the tasks in segregated facilities and worked segregated assembly lines at Higgins Industries.

### Workers with Disabilities

Higgins's willingness to hire people with disabilities reflected the labor shortage more so than an effort to be fair to all. By the late spring of 1942, industrialists understood that finding capable adult workers was becoming increasingly difficult. Federal officials launched a publicity campaign to emphasize that workers with disabilities represented a group of largely untapped labor. In the summer of 1942, Ann Rosener, a photographer for the US Office of War Information, documented a series of different jobs carried out by people with disabilities, from painting airplane parts at the Maryland League for Crippled Children to polio-stricken workers at White Engineering Company in Baltimore.



“A victim of infantile paralysis, Robert H. Drake, twenty-six, does a job any man would be proud of. He's an expert drill press operator in a Baltimore factory which makes airplane motor parts. Despite restricted

use of both legs and his right arm, Robert maintains high production standards both for speed and quality of work. White Engineering Company, Baltimore," 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

### The Airplane Industry

Jobs, jobs, jobs were also everywhere in the engine-building industry, especially engines for airplanes. At East Hartford, Connecticut, another designated World War II Heritage City, the existing Pratt-Whitney Aircraft Division factory was transformed, almost overnight, into a modern industrial colossus that supplied hundreds of thousands of airplane engines and propellers, powering such military aircraft as the Corsair, the Hellcat, the Thunderbolt, the Liberator, and the Skytrain. The Pratt-Whitney works at East Hartford employed 40,000 people, but the company's sway extended nationally as it licensed the production of airplane engines and parts to other industrial firms, like automobile companies that ended up producing an estimated 56 percent of the military's aircraft engines and 36 percent of its propellers. Pratt-Whitney's partners included Ford and its River Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan; Buick's factory in Melrose Park, Illinois; and the Tonawanda, New York, factory of Chevrolet. These factories also employed thousands in the effort to make durable, high-performance aircraft engines.



Vultee aircraft worker, Nashville, TN, February 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

A very significant Midwest aircraft center was Dayton, Ohio. Dayton and Montgomery County comprise another designated World War II Heritage City, with a military aviation history that began with the Army Air Corps during World War I. By the mid-1920s, the city, the Dayton Air Service Committee, and the Army negotiated a new location for the Army's air operations and established Wright Field, a section of which

was redesignated as Patterson Field in 1931. Throughout World War II, personnel and civilians at both fields worked closely together. (In 1948 the recently established US Air Force renamed the two bases as the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.)

Wright Field and Patterson Field served as a base for the Army's Materiel Division, which during the war was redesignated as the Materiel Command. At Dayton, the command distributed materials for aircraft production, served as a focus for research and development, and provided maintenance for aircraft. Wright Field also was home to the Army Air Corps' School of Engineering and its test pilot program. The school grew to over 300 buildings. The two airfields employed more than 50,000 at the peak of wartime production; 50 percent of the workers at Patterson Field were women. The Dayton workers produced almost 300,000 aircraft, over 800,000 aircraft engines, and 807,424 propellers.

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### *Experience the Parks and Heritage Areas*

Dayton and Montgomery County, Ohio, were the center of a mammoth aviation industry, which is interpreted at the various facilities associated with the **National Aviation Heritage Area**, which includes the **Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park** and the Museum of the United States Air Force. The historical park also preserves and interprets key properties associated with Orville and Wilbur Wright and the origins of flight as well as the home of African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar.

One of the most inspiring stories associated with the National Aviation Heritage Area is that of Charity Adams Earley, a Wilberforce University graduate who joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later the Women's Army Corps or WAC) and became the first African American woman to be commissioned as an officer in the Army. Maj. Earley led the 6888<sup>th</sup> Central Postal Directory Battalion, which served with distinction in England and France. After the war, in 1952, Earley and her husband moved to Dayton, where she worked with multiple community institutions and helped establish Dayton's Black Leadership Development Program in 1982.

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Another designated World War II Heritage City in the Midwest is Wichita, Kansas, which in 1941 already enjoyed a reputation as the "Air Capital of the World" as home to such notable aviation companies as Beech, Cessna, and Stearman. The Stearman Aircraft Company, which became part of the Boeing Airplane Company in 1929, was best known for making trainer aircraft, such as the Kaydet. On March 15, 1941, 38 Stearman employees dressed in their Native American dress as Cherokee, Sioux, Osage, Pottawatomie, Oneida, Seminole, and Comanche to celebrate the release of the 1000th trainer plane. In June came the news that Boeing was building a huge new industrial facility adjacent to the Stearman factory. This new facility produced the B-29 bomber, a high-tech marvel capable of long-range bombing missions of over 3,000 miles roundtrip. Boeing built 1,644 B-29 Superfortress bombers by the time the war

ended. The first B-29 left the factory in April 1943. By the end of the war, almost 26,000 planes of different types and models had been produced in Wichita factories.

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### *Voices of the Past*

Inez Sauer recalled her work as a tool clerk at Boeing Aircraft:

“My mother warned me when I took the job that I would never be the same. She said, 'You will never want to go back to being a housewife.' At that time I didn't think it would change a thing. But she was right, it definitely did. . . . At Boeing I found a freedom and an independence that I had never known. After the war I could never go back to playing bridge again, being a club woman . . . when I knew there were things you could use your mind for. The war changed my life completely. I guess you could say, at thirty-one, I finally grew up.”<sup>55</sup>

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The aircraft boom in Wichita overwhelmed the city; the population almost doubled with 30,000 workers at the Boeing factory alone. Housing was scarce; the federal government built nearly 5,500 homes to address the problem but that still left thousands of workers needing to find other places to live. The 24-hour workdays and long shifts also meant that Wichita businesses had little choice but to extend hours of operation to meet customer needs and demands. Commutes were dreadful. Connie Palacios, a young Hispanic woman, rode the bus every day from Newton, Kansas, first to receive training in riveting and drilling for 50 cents per hour, and then to work twelve-hour shifts as a riveter for 75 cents an hour on the B-29 assembly line. To do the job, she had to find a buckler, a worker who held a metal bar in place on the opposite side from where the rivets were set. That person was Jerri Warden, a black woman whom white workers at the plant had previously shunned. Palacios and Warden soon made an effective team, and could produce four B-29 nose sections every day. Many years later, in 2016, Palacios took pride that one plane that she had riveted and Warden had buckered still existed. Nicknamed “Doc,” the B-29 had been restored and took to the air again at the Eisenhower National Airport as part of a museum about Wichita’s home front experiences.

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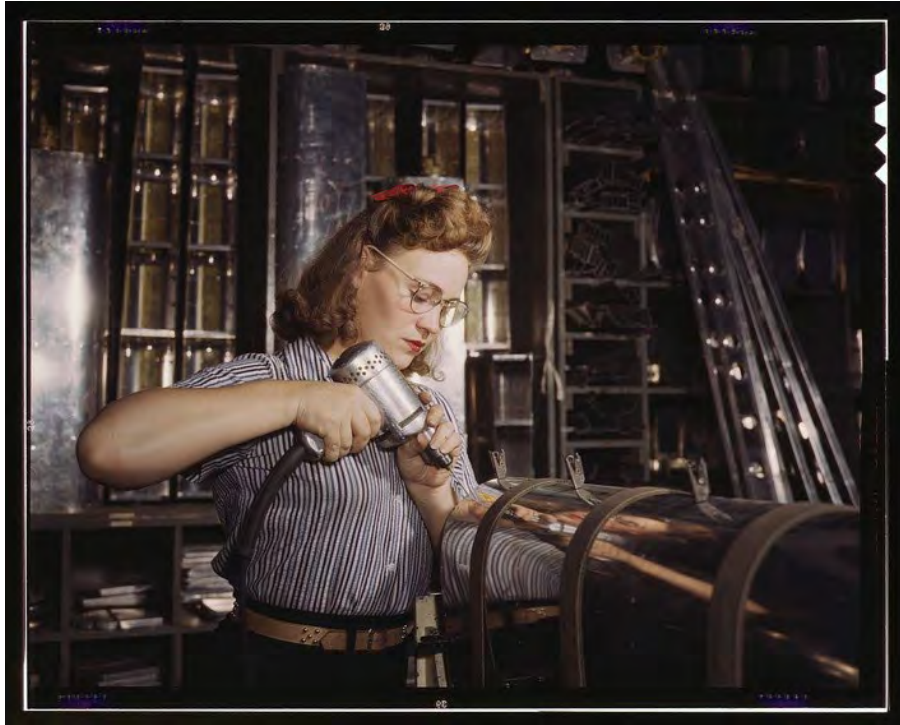
### *Voices of the Past*

Sybil Lewis, who worked as a riveter at Lockheed Aircraft in Los Angeles, explained the relationship between riveter and buckler on the airplane assembly line:

“The women worked in pairs. I was the riveter and this big, strong, white girl from a cotton farm in Arkansas worked as the buckler. The riveter used a gun to shoot rivets through the metal and fasten it together. The buckler used a bucking bar on the other

side of the metal to smooth out the rivets. Bucking was harder than shooting rivets; it required more muscle. Riveting required more skill.... You came out to California, put on your pants, and took your lunch pail to a man's job. This was the beginning of women's feeling that they could do something more."<sup>56</sup>

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Operating a hand drill at North American Aviation, Inglewood, CA, October 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection



Riveting team working on the cockpit shell at North American Aviation, Inglewood, CA, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Detroit's automobile industry also contributed to airplane production. Planning for the transformation of industry production from automobiles to military machines came early. In May 1940 President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked William S. Knudsen, president at General Motors, to leave Detroit, come to the nation's capital, and work with him to prepare the nation's industrial might for the fight against Hitler. Knudsen agreed and joined the president's National Defense Advisory Commission. By the fall, Knudsen had arranged a secret meeting between automobile company executives, the Army Air Corps, and the aviation industry that led to the creation of the Automotive Council for War Production. The companies pledged to work together to produce parts, frames, and fuselages for such Army airplanes as the B-17 Flying Fortress, the B-25 Mitchell, the B-26 Marauder, and the B-24 Liberator.

The Willow Run Factory was built outside of Ypsilanti, Michigan. Construction of the mammoth factory began in the fall of 1940 and although not finished until 1942, workers there began to produce airplane parts by June 16, 1941, which would then be shipped for final assembly at Douglas Aircraft in Tulsa, Oklahoma, or the bomber's designer, Consolidated Aircraft of San Diego, California. Executives and engineers soon learned that this two-location process was inefficient. The Ford Motor Company in October 1941 asked the Army and Consolidated Aircraft for permission to start producing complete B-24 Liberators at Ypsilanti. The Army gave approval, and the company expanded the factory, based on designs from architect Albert Kahn, to build the bombers while parts came from almost 1,000 other suppliers and Ford factories nationwide. The first Ford-produced Liberator left the assembly line on October 1, 1942. By April 1944, the factory was producing 428 Liberators a month, and it produced its 6,000<sup>th</sup> B-24 on September 9, 1944.

Willow Run's 3.5 million square feet was considered the largest factory under one roof in the world. The assembly line for the bombers was over a mile long. Such a huge factory called for an equally huge labor force, but finding enough workers proved a challenge, in part because company founder Henry Ford initially did not want to employ women. As more and more local men were either drafted into or joined the armed forces, the need for women on the assembly line became overwhelming. The Ford company relaxed its hiring policies, and soon women comprised 35 percent of the work force at Willow Run. Rose Will Monroe left Kentucky to find work at the factory and took on the job of a riveter. After a Hollywood producer decided to cast Monroe in a promotional film about women working in defense factories, others took her first name and devised the popular "Rosie the Riveter" nickname for all women working on the assembly lines during the war. Rosie the Riveters certainly contributed to the thousands of airplanes assembled at Willow Run. Eventually 42,000 employees were at Willow Run, and to serve those employees, Ford maintained 24 lunchrooms, its own small hospital, and recreational facilities.

With government support, Ford also built dormitories, apartments, trailer camps, and houses. However, the Detroit Housing Authority and the National Housing Agency demanded segregated housing. The company commissioned African American architect Hilyard Robinson to design Parkridge Homes for African American workers

and their families. Segregation was not the only divisive issue at Willow Run. While the United Auto Workers had given a no-strike pledge for the duration of the war, workers often felt otherwise as the long hours and long commutes of their jobs added up. They opted for wildcat strikes as a way of getting the attention of management and solving problems.

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### *Experience the Heritage Areas*

**Motor Cities National Heritage Area**, headquartered in Detroit, Michigan, provides multiple ways you can explore the importance of military vehicle and aircraft production during World War II in southeast and central Michigan. The Yankee Air Museum in Belleville shares the story of the Willow Run plant while the Packard Proving Ground Historic Site in Shelby Township interprets the company's pivotal role in World War II when its factories produced over 55,000 combat engines. The state's World War II home front history is collected and interpreted at the Michigan History Museum in Lansing. Plymouth Township, where women working at the Phoenix Mill made parts for B-24 Liberators, is Michigan's World War II Heritage City.

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### Tank Production

While Ford made bombers, Chrysler made tanks, tens of thousands of them at the Chrysler Tank (also known as Detroit) Arsenal, located in Warren, Michigan. In the summer of 1940, William S. Knudsen wanted to meet a request from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill for 1,000 tanks a month. It was an audacious ask: From 1919 to 1935, the United States produced a total of only 33 tanks; over the next five years, American industry produced another 1,000 tanks. Now the British wanted 1,000 a month. Knudsen contacted K.T. Keller, the head of Chrysler Corporation, and told him that his company needed to build tanks—now. Formal federal approval came on August 15, 1940. Based on Alfred Kahn-designed plans for a factory 500 feet wide and some 3,500 feet long, construction soon began on the new factory while Chrysler retooled its present factories to produce 1,000 M3 Grant tanks by the end of the year. In 1941-1942 the Army quickly moved from production of the M3 tank to the M4 Sherman tank. Within a year, the Chrysler Tank Arsenal was producing almost 900 of the more reliable and effective Sherman tanks each month. By end of the war, the Chrysler Tank Arsenal had produced 25,000 tanks—more tanks from this one factory than Germany could produce at all of its facilities combined. Military historians rank the German-built tanks as superior, but they were so outnumbered on the battlefield by United States-built tanks that technological superiority meant little. From 1941 to 1945, US workers produced 87,619 tanks, a staggering number when compared to the 1,033 tanks built in the United States from 1919 to 1940.<sup>57</sup>



Detroit Arsenal and M3 Tank, Library of Congress

The John Deere Company works at Waterloo, Iowa, was another key manufacturing site, where production switched from tractors to tank transmissions, munition casings, and aircraft parts. At the company museum in Waterloo, which is a designated World War II Heritage City, there are examples of the machines of war produced at the plant during the 1940s. The John Deere Museum also is a primary interpretive site for the **Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area**, which is headquartered in Waterloo. The city's Grout Museum District includes a museum about the five Sullivan brothers, Waterloo natives who all died on the *USS Juneau* in the Pacific battle of Guadalcanal on November 13, 1942. The heritage area includes several historic farms that share stories of World War II agriculture, and the State Historical Society of Iowa Museum in Des Moines further explores Iowa's home front experience.

No matter the type of factory, women of all ages, backgrounds, and persuasions joined the work force and were major contributors to industrial production, a fact not recognized enough. The midwestern and western industrial facilities, for instance, hired Native American women in greater numbers than commonly acknowledged. Menominee women worked in Wisconsin sawmills. Pueblo women became truck drivers, moving freight for both civilian and military needs. Native American women also joined civil defense units; an Ojibwe woman observed, "We have rifles, we have ammunition, and we know how to shoot."<sup>58</sup> As women grabbed new opportunities in industry, the new jobs often allowed for greater personal expression. A historical study of the defense industry in Buffalo, New York, found that some gay women expressed their interest in other women by wearing their work uniforms to gatherings outside of the work place: "A woman used to come in [to a tavern] who worked on the railroads. She would come in her work clothes, with her lantern, her overalls, and cap. She would look real cute. Some of the girls would go out of their way to come into the bars with their work clothes on."<sup>59</sup>

## The Labor Shortage and Jewish Immigration

American Jews discovered that the labor shortage provided an effective way to protect as many European Jews as possible, especially as the accounts of Nazi persecution and mass murder grew in such intensity that they could not be ignored, except by policymakers in Washington. Three Jewish organizations, the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, and American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, worked together to sponsor several thousand European Jews who could become workers in the nation's labor-stressed factories, thus bringing as many refugees as they could to the United States.

American Jews as sponsors had to pay for the immigration and pledge to help the immigrants find gainful employment or at least guarantee income or family support. Although the numbers rescued through sponsorships for defense industry workers would be limited, the effort was worth it. In Nashville, Tennessee, for instance, the May family sponsored over 200 Jewish refugees to work at the May Hosiery Mill, one of the city's largest factories that made socks for the war.

In 1944 the federal government established the War Refugee Board; in June President Roosevelt ordered the establishment of the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter in Oswego, New York. Known as "Safe Haven," it was the only federal refugee center established during the war years. But its impact hardly dented the number of Jews who needed to be saved from the Nazi death camps. The center's initial 982 refugees were mostly Jewish from various European countries. The number of residents grew to over a thousand before the government closed the center in February 1946, at which time some refugees returned home while others petitioned to stay with family or friends in the United States. In total, the War Refugee Board is credited with helping to save 200,000 refugees.

## New Opportunities, New Jobs

All sorts of jobs for all sorts of Americans were suddenly in demand on the World War II home front. Ministers, for instance, found new opportunities through the growth of the armed forces' chaplain service. The army established its first chaplain school in 1918 but deactivated the program in 1928. After Pearl Harbor, on February 2, 1942, the military opened a new chaplain school with a class of 75 at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana. Soon the school moved to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where 450 students were trained. Later schools were held at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. By the end of the war, over 8,000 chaplains had graduated from the program.

Workers also found themselves working with strange materials and producing entirely new products. The birth of the synthetic rubber industry, which held the promise of meeting wartime demands for rubber, came during World War II. Rubber plantations in the South Pacific had long produced most of the rubber consumed in the United States. Japan now either occupied or controlled these rubber-producing areas, and the

United States desperately searched for alternatives even as the federal government dampened rubber consumption by means of gasoline rationing, scrap-rubber collection drives, and a 35 mile-per-hour "Victory" speed limit to slow down the wear on automobile tires.



"This sheet of synthetic rubber coming off the rolling mill at the plant is now ready for drying, B.F. Goodrich Co., Akron, Ohio. Synthetic rubber made by the "ameripol" process is derived from butadiene (a petroleum derivative). In this rolling mill the crumbs of rubber are squeezed dry of excess water and pressed together into the blanket shown here," 1941, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

B.F. Goodrich successfully tested a synthetic rubber automobile tire in June 1940, but the amounts produced were minimal compared to the demand expected in a wartime economy. Firestone produced the first synthetic rubber bundle on April 26, 1942, at its purpose-built plant in Akron, Ohio, with that success matched in rapid succession by two other Akron-based companies, Goodyear and Goodrich, along with US Rubber Corporation (better known as Uniroyal), which was based in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The four factories in 1942 produced 2,241 tons of synthetic rubber. To speed production, the federal government called for the construction of 51 chemical plants located across the nation to manufacture the monomers and polymers necessary to make synthetic rubber. Three years later, tens of thousands of workers at US rubber and chemical companies produced a staggering 920,000 tons of synthetic rubber and had created a profitable new industry centered in Akron, Ohio, that would dominate rubber production in the decades to come. The history of the rubber industry and World War II is interpreted at the Akron History Center within the **Ohio and Erie Canalway National Heritage Area**.

About 1,000 men and women at the Firestone and Goodyear rubber factories were deaf. Benjamin Schowe, Jr., a labor economics specialist at Firestone, recruited these workers from vocational rehabilitation programs. Their experiences speak to the significant role played by adults with disabilities in the World War II home front. The two companies hired them for the production line, and both firms produced promotional films about their work in order to encourage other adults with disabilities to apply for jobs. The Firestone-produced film also featured images of blind and mobility impaired workers at different positions on the assembly line and within the company.

Citizens with disabilities had worked diligently for decades to have greater employment opportunities. The oldest organization to support workers with disabilities was the National Association of the Deaf, founded in 1880. World War I veterans established the Disabled American Veterans in 1920. The National Rehabilitation Association formed in 1923. Established in 1940, the American Federation of the Physically Handicapped was chartered as a non-profit in 1942. The National Federation of the Blind had formed in 1940. These organizations looked to federal and state vocational rehabilitation programs for more assistance and expected the War Manpower Commission and the US Civil Service Commission to do more to facilitate the entry of workers with disabilities into defense industries. They insisted on equal opportunity for workers with disabilities and pointed to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had been left disabled due to paralytic disease in 1921, as powerful proof that workers with disabilities could help win the war.

Policymakers both locally and nationally were listening. Workers with disabilities, as was the case at the Akron rubber plants and the Higgins shipyard in New Orleans, could fill many jobs, freeing adults without disabilities to serve in the armed forces or move to where they were most needed. Yet discrimination persisted as many potential employees worried about job-related accidents or were willing to hire workers with disabilities but at lower wages than workers without disabilities.

Concerns about workplace accidents had legitimacy. As defense industries looked everywhere for employees, their push for high production levels also put too many laborers into danger, especially when training in industrial processes was limited or even non-existent, maintenance was deferred in the rush of constant 24-hour workdays, and the use of toxic substances was common in the industrial process. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, industrial accidents that caused death or disability impacted two million workers each year of the conflict, with 1943 being the worst as 128,000 workers either died or suffered a permanent disability while 2.28 million workers suffered a temporary disability.

Thus, the ranks of workers with disabilities increased during the war, and they insisted on their opportunity to contribute and draw a paycheck. Historian Audra Jennings concluded: "People with disabilities clamored to work, serve the nation on the home front, and contribute to victory and policymakers worked to secure them space in the wartime economy." Their activism combined with government efforts reflected "a federal promise of inclusion—the promise of salvaging people."<sup>60</sup>

## The Costs of Wartime Production

Americans understood that meeting the demands of war and home front meant they had changed themselves, their communities, and their environment. The demand for war materials changed American industry from a focus on producing consumer goods to producing the weapons necessary for national defense. The number of women working in wartime production increased dramatically—as did the number of teenagers, despite programs to keep them in school. Daycare facilities mushroomed across the nation; families extended themselves even more to take care of children while the parents and older siblings worked in the factories or joined the armed forces. Government officials also opened doors to employment for those once ignored or forgotten, such as workers with disabilities.

As families changed, so did communities. Centers for defense industries boomed in population. New towns materialized, it often seemed, overnight. This rapid urbanization stressed local infrastructure and housing. To address multiple needs, Americans established new social institutions and organizations that followed the mantra of working together, despite past differences.

In this flurry of production and dislocation, few decisionmakers anywhere gave much thought to the impacts of wartime mobilization on the lands, woods, and waters of the United States. How could it be otherwise when there were hydroelectric dams to be built, factories to be erected, housing units to be multiplied, fields to be irrigated, mine shafts to be drilled, runways to be paved, and atoms to be split? As historian Peter Mansoor concludes in the book *Nature At War: American Environments and World War II* (2020), “The war created or significantly expanded a number of industries, put land to new uses, spurred urbanization, and left a legacy of pollution that would in time create a new term: superfund site.”<sup>61</sup> There had been a price to pay to meet the call for jobs, jobs, jobs.

## Chapter Five: Feeding the Nation, the Armed Forces, and our Allies



Washington, D.C., Victory garden, June 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Most narratives on building the arsenal of democracy during World War II focus on the factories and the gigantic industrial plants that yielded hundreds of thousands of tanks, planes, weapons, and ammunition for the war effort. These mega-sized factories employed millions who left families, homes, and farms across the country for a chance at a better paycheck. But jobs, jobs, jobs were also in demand across rural America. Federal policymakers reversed a decade of trying to tamp down agricultural production by urging family farmers and ranchers to grow more and more food, allowing the United States to meet its needs as well as those of its allies.

Farm and ranch families, almost seven million of them across the nation, delivered. The levels of agricultural production are astounding: Farmers and ranchers between 1940 and 1945 produced 9 percent more acres of corn, 15 percent more acres of wheat, and 22 percent more acres in oats. Agricultural exports were valued at \$517 million in 1940; in 1946, the value was \$3.2 billion.<sup>62</sup> The Lend-Lease program, launched in the spring of 1941, was the first federal initiative to provide food to allies—in that year the agricultural sector was more ready than the industrial sector to produce surpluses for export. Food for victory was a slogan; it also was a reality.

### The Farm Labor Shortage

After Pearl Harbor in December 1941, policy makers immediately understood that men and women who joined the armed forces and looked for jobs on the industrial home front also meant that the same men and women would no longer be on the farm.

There was a farm labor shortage at the same time that the nation needed more food than ever before. Congress approved an amendment to the Selective Service Act that allowed for deferments for necessary farm labor, but many men joined the armed forces anyway.

Farm and ranch families understood what needed to be done. As Tony Taylor told *McCall's* magazine in May 1942: "We're working for Victory, too; growing food for ourselves and our countrymen. While other women work at machines and in factories—we're soldiers in overalls."<sup>63</sup> As their husbands, brothers, sons, and often daughters and sisters left for war, farm and ranch women throughout the United States kept the homeplace productive, despite the gaps in labor and the strains in supplies caused by rationing. A little over a year after Pearl Harbor, the federal government launched a national media campaign, with a presidential address, posters, and documentary films, for higher levels of food production, proclaiming the motto, "Food Fights For Freedom."

Farm and ranch families embraced the challenge. In Duchesne County, in northeast Utah, the chair of the county's agricultural defense board already asked every family in the fall of 1941 to prepare a food defense plan and consider how they might contribute to the county's goals. Over the next four years, families responded enthusiastically. They increased the number of acres under cultivation from 300,000 to 536,000; the production of oats and wheat boomed from 30,000 bushels to 44,000; and cattle production jumped from 23,000 to 33,000, while sheep ranchers increased production from 35,000 to over 53,000.

Similar stories could be found across the Great Plains. In South Dakota, extension agents in early 1942 urged farm and ranch families to increase milk production, to improve chicken houses and increase production of poultry, and to place livestock, especially cattle and sheep, on the market. On July 11, 1942, Henry W. Biedermann bragged about the state's 120,000 "Fighting Farmers" in the *Nebraska Farmer*. "On every Nebraska farm there is a dramatic story of sacrifices, hard work, long hours. Farm women and children are filling the vacant spaces left by sons and brothers off at war. Lights burn early and late in farm buildings as farmers crowd any arduous tasks into an all-too-short day."

All of the western agricultural states struggled with the labor shortage caused by the Selective Service draft and the huge demand for labor in the nation's extractive industries and industrial factories. In Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho alone, federal officials identified an estimated shortage of 10,000 farm workers in May 1942. To prepare for the annual sugar beet harvest, officials in Denver in early September 1942 announced a labor emergency, and they looked to Hispanic and Indigenous people from New Mexico, recently incarcerated Japanese Americans at camps in Colorado and California, and conscientious objectors at public service camps in Fort Collins and Colorado Springs as possible beet workers.

Once the fall harvest in Kansas began in September 1942, federal officials admitted "the only way we can save these crops is for men to leave their shops and

filing stations and for boys to leave the classrooms until the harvest is completed.”<sup>64</sup> In Oklahoma, sixty members of the Oklahoma City Kiwanis Club volunteered in October 1942 to pick cotton for a day. The *Daily Oklahoman* observed: “Many of the city men never have laid a finger on a boll of cotton, never have felt the dragging weight of a seven-foot cotton sack at the end of a row, but the club’s offer to go to the county and help the rural brethren gather the staple was promptly accepted, due to the shortage of farm labor.”<sup>65</sup>

That same month in Roswell, New Mexico, cotton farmers received assistance from twenty high school boys and girls as they also announced their willingness to provide transportation for Navajo Indians who would travel from the Gallup area—about a 680-mile round trip--to pick the seasonal crop.

### Children and Farm Labor

Millions of children worked the farms in 1942-1944. About 2.5 million teenagers, largely from urban and suburban areas, joined the Victory Farm Volunteers to help out. Officials at the Kansas State Board for Vocational Education published pamphlets reminding farmers that the children from the cities and suburbs might need patience and a good bit of attention so they did not injure themselves in the work or with the machinery of farming.

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#### *Voices of the Past*

Lyle Feisel, who lived in Iowa, recalled about the summer of 1942:

“A lot of the young men in the area had gone away so the kids got put to work. At the ages of 6 and 7 and 8, I was driving tractors out in the field, you know. Can you imagine putting a 6-year-old on a tractor today? I was driving horses, haul hay up into the barn and so on. And I worked not only on our farm, but, as I said earlier, we traded labor a lot. So I would go out and work for these other farmers on loan.”<sup>66</sup>

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On April 29, 1943, Congress approved the Emergency Farm Labor Program, which gave each state’s Extension Service the authority to recruit, transport, and place agricultural workers where they were most needed. School children were a target audience for the program. The *Denver Post* explained on July 6, 1943, that a huge movement of agricultural workers was underway in the Great Plains with hundreds of children, as young as ten years old, working in Kansas and even younger kids, between eight and ten years old, driving tractors for plowing in Iowa.



“Escambia Farms, Florida. Elena, Kitty, John and George McLelland look over their Victory garden,” June 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

### Women’s Land Army

Urban and suburban women also made a huge difference. The US Extension Service estimated it placed 1.5 million non-farm women in agricultural jobs between 1942 and 1945. In early 1943, M. L. Wilson, the director of extension at the US Department of Agriculture, identified 20 organizations, led by the Woman’s National Farm and Garden Association, that were interested in re-establishing the Women’s Land Army (WLA). Initially organized during World War I, the WLA helped to train and educate urban women on how to contribute to agriculture within their local communities. A Land Army advocate asserted: “We can drive tractors. We can milk cows. We want to join up quickly in the farm production army. We are waiting to go. But we will not wait long, because there is too much to be done and we will find farms for ourselves.”<sup>67</sup>

Dr. Gulielma Fell Alsop of Barnard College and Mary F. McBride with the YMCA of New York City studied the phenomenon of city women working in the country. They gushed on what the experience meant:

“Farm work brings her a great and immediate satisfaction. She knows that food is the life of the nation, not only of the fighting forces, but of all the men and factories behind the fighting forces. She knows something about how the food she raises out in the sunshine beneath the floating white clouds of summer, with the call of the blue jays and the crows overhead, is put up and compressed and dehydrated for carrying in a small pocket box

by the soldiers. While she picks her vegetables, she wonders whether this precise lot she is harvesting today will be in the ration kit of a parachutist.

For as the girl in the factory learns the laws of the machine, the physics of its continual whirring, the power of one metal pressed upon another, so the girl working on the land learns the laws of nature, their absolute inexorableness....

The woman of the land army then has two rewards: the immediate personal reward of a great understanding and a great endurance, and the social reward of filling the mouths of the hungry."<sup>68</sup>

By April, the new Women's Land Army, headed by home economist Florence L. Hall, began working with home demonstration agents from 43 states to recruit and train urban women to work on rural farms; some 250,000 women participated from Maine to California.

In Maryland, the state extension service partnered with the Women's Land Army and the Victory Farm Volunteers to open a work camp, named Camp Mil-Bur, for white women at Gibson's Island in Anne Arundel County. According to a report from the extension service, "The women located at this camp accomplished outstanding results, particularly in snap bean harvesting. They also harvested other crops and demonstrated that women can strip tobacco. The campers picked 463,200 pounds of beans and 3,295 baskets of tomatoes, spent 2,645 hours weeding, hoeing, and on other farm work. They also stripped 47,613 pounds of tobacco."<sup>69</sup>

Parts of the Deep South, however, resisted. White male officials did not like the idea of white women becoming field workers, even at a time of national emergency. Another state official explained that the Women's Land Army could only recruit white women because if the program included black women, then white women would stop participating. At Mound Bayou, an all-Black town in the Mississippi Delta, African American women went ahead with their own efforts, in one case raising six bales of cotton for war production needs. The **Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area**, headquartered in nearby Cleveland, Mississippi, preserves and interprets several historic sites associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century cotton industry in the Delta.

### The Bracero Program

The number of imported workers also quickly expanded from 1942 to 1943. "Bahamans, Jamaicans, and Mexicans have been employed widely. Their bosses agreed they were satisfactory," reported the *Denver Post* in 1943.<sup>70</sup> Almost 230,000 farm laborers from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Canada worked seasonally in the United States during the war years. Workers from Mexico were instrumental in western agricultural production, as Henry Frauenfelder, president of the Yuma County (Arizona) Water Users Association, emphasized to US Commissioner for Immigration and Naturalization Earl G. Harrison:

“This farming area raising alfalfa flax and other vital war crops seriously short of farm labor but situation could be relieved if Mexicans from adjacent Sonora were allowed to help in harvest now commencing. Some Sonora Mexicans have drifted in during the past few months but face immediate deportation. Mexicans recruited by FSA from interior Mexico’s high altitude and cool climate cannot stand our heat and most of them have left. Border Mexicans from Sonora and lower California used to our climate are experienced farmers. This help is absolutely necessary to harvest vitally essential war crops. Can deportation be stayed temporarily or until authority for legal entry can be secured?”<sup>71</sup>



Bracero cotton picker near Corpus Christi, TX, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

As allies, Mexico and the United States negotiated a program, governed by the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement, to provide for temporary work permits for Mexican laborers in the United States, with the stipulation that states and farmers also had to meet specific requirements regarding wages, housing, and the length of the working day for the Mexicans. The agreement created a huge program. Mexico sent more men as agricultural laborers to the United States than it provided soldiers overseas. In the western United States, the agreement became known as the Bracero program; the word bracero meant “strong arms.”

And strong arms, and strong backs, it took for these thousands of men to carve out their place in the agricultural landscape of the United States. El Paso, Texas, was the program’s recruitment center. The Rio Vista Bracero Reception Center in Socorro, Texas, is a National Historic Landmark. Most Braceros worked in the fields of the Southwest and California but could be found in smaller numbers throughout the West. Tens of thousands also worked on the western railroad system since continuously operating freight trains to move agricultural and manufactured products was a transportation priority and wartime necessity.

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*Experience the Heritage Areas*

Many National Heritage Areas in the western United States preserve places and stories associated with the impact of the Braceros on agriculture and industry during World War II and beyond. These areas especially include those rich cultural landscapes where twentieth-century irrigation and irrigated crops were vital, such as **Cache La Poudre River National Heritage Area** in Colorado; **Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area** in California; **Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area** in Iowa; **Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area** in New Mexico; and the **Northern Plains National Heritage Area** in North Dakota.

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As an example of the wide distribution of Mexican laborers across the West, consider the Pacific Northwest, where more than 500 Braceros came to Yakima County, Washington, in October 1942. An estimated 20,000 Braceros were employed in Great Plains states between August 1943 and August 1945.



Sugar beet workers, CA, 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Braceros worked with different types of crops, from the sugar beet fields of Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota and North Dakota to the cotton fields of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. For a sugar beet harvest in North Dakota during the summer of 1944, the US Employment Service reminded farmers and ranchers that the Braceros would have to work at least 45-60 days and receive the prevailing wage scale.

By the end of the month, an estimated 3,000 Braceros were working in eastern North Dakota, with permanent camps outside of Devil's Lake and Jamestown and a supply depot in Fargo. Housing at either the permanent or on-the-job camps throughout the West were often just tents and makeshift shacks that provided rudimentary, temporary shelter. The Braceros also were commonly segregated from other out-of-state workers.

Many farm and ranch families respected the braceros for their hard work and invaluable contributions. Such respect was not universal. Mexican workers often faced discrimination whenever they went to town as businesses posted signs that said, "No Mexicans Allowed." Employers often turned a blind eye to the formal agreement that the Braceros receive the prevailing local wage along with decent housing and food. Braceros complained about poor quality food, infested housing, poor sanitation, and broken labor agreements. Discriminatory treatment, however, did not keep Mexican men from seeking the comparatively better-paying farm jobs that helped them support their families back home.

### Prisoners of War as Farm Labor

Prisoners of war from Axis nations were an even larger farm labor force in the United States. An estimated 425,000 prisoners of war—over 370,000 were German—were imprisoned in the United States. The prisoners were scattered in more than 500 camps across the country, near towns large and small, but typically associated with a military facility. The Third Geneva Convention of 1929, a treaty that governed the conditions and rights of prisoners of war, allowed for the use of prisoners as laborers, as long as they were paid (80 cents worth of scrip a day was normal) and treated fairly.

With an estimated two-thirds of the prisoners assigned to camps in the South, local farmers contracted with federal authorities to reserve as many prisoners as possible to work their land. Plantation and large farm owners in the Deep South viewed the POWs as a possible cheap wage substitute for African Americans who had left to serve in the military or take jobs in factories.

In the summer of 1943, for example, farmers and military officials arranged for two different sets of workers to hoe cotton on either side of the railroad at the Mullens plantation outside of Clarksdale, Mississippi, a place that is within the **Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area**. One group were Italian prisoners of war from Camp Como about 60 miles to the east; the other side were local black tenant farmers. The demonstration proved to plantation owners that the prisoners could do the work, and many owners signed up for prisoner-of-war labor throughout the Mississippi Delta. In eastern Arkansas, the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, led by H. L. Mitchell, strongly protested the move to prisoner-of-war labor, fearing that the cheap labor would undercut local wages and the prisoners of war would take agricultural jobs from southern tenant farmers. Federal officials ignored those complaints and dismissed the concerns of the farmers' union and hired POWs by the thousands.

African Americans laborers resented the reality that the prisoners of war generally were treated better and provided better housing than what they experienced. Army veteran Nathan Harris observed: "If you was a black boy here in Mississippi, when they brought those Germans over here as prisoners they got more privilege than you did as a citizen."<sup>72</sup> Historian Matthew F. Delmont concluded: "Seeing white Americans being so friendly with German POWs was perhaps the clearest evidence that Jim Crow segregation and the Nazis' master-race theory were two sides of the same coin, and that many white Americans preferred racial apartheid over actual democracy."<sup>73</sup>

### *Voices of the Past*

Incidents of racial hypocrisy with German prisoners of war happened across the country. Army officer Lloyd Brown recalled an encounter in Salina, Kansas, where a café owner told Brown and his fellow soldiers

"with urgent politeness: 'You boys know we don't serve colored here.' Of course we knew it. They didn't serve "colored" anywhere in town when our all-black outfit first came to Salina in the fall of 1942 to open up the Smoky Hill Army Air Field just out of town. The best movie house did not admit Negroes and the other one admitted them only to the balcony. There was no room at the inn for any black visitor, and there was no place in town where he could get a cup of coffee.

'You know we don't serve colored here,' the man repeated. He was still very polite, but he sounded aggrieved that we had not been polite enough to leave. We ignored him and just stood there inside the door, staring at what we had come to see—the German prisoners of war who were having lunch at the counter. There were about ten of them. They were dressed in fatigues and wore the distinctive high-peaked caps of Rommel's Afrika Korps. No guard was with them.

We had seen platoons of such prisoners brought from nearby Camp Phillips to dig drainage ditches at our air base, and we had heard that because of the manpower shortage some P.O.W.'s came by bus each day to Salina to work at the grain elevators. Then when one of our men told us that he had seen those alien commuters come to this lunchroom for their meal, it was something we had to see with our own eyes.

We continued to stare. This was really happening. It was no jive talk. It was the Gospel truth. The people of Salina would serve these enemy soldiers and turn away black American G.I.'s. The Germans now had half turned on their stools and were staring back at us, each man's cap at precisely the same cocky angle. Nothing further was said, and

when the owner edged toward the phone on the wall, we knew it was time to go. The M.P.'s he would call would not treat us with his politeness.

As we left, I began thinking about the next session of the weekly orientation program I conducted for our squadron, giving lectures on why we fight and reporting on the progress of our war for the four freedoms. After this latest incident, what could I say?"<sup>74</sup>

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Some German prisoner-of-war camps were located in isolated areas, such as Lawrence County in southern Tennessee, as documented by historian Harliana Burns. There a camp of German prisoners of war worked not in cotton but in timber, cutting cordwood for the Tennessee Products Corporation. They developed close relationships with some of the farm families they worked for and exchanged letters about their lives and families for years after the war. German prisoners of war also worked in the sugar beet fields scattered across Montana. In Yellowstone Valley there were prisoner of war work camps in Laurel, Hardin, and Bridger. In the Bitterroot Valley, historian Emily Dean explored the sugar beet work camp located on the Bailey Ranch, outside of Corvallis, Montana. Having German prisoners of war next door proved sensitive and uncomfortable for ranch co-owner Betty Bailey since her two brothers were prisoners of war in Germany at the same time.

One of the most interesting German prisoner-of-war projects was associated with Camp Clinton in Mississippi. Ever since the devastating Mississippi River floods of 1927, the US Army Corps of Engineers had wanted to build a to-scale hydraulic model of the entire river basin in order to better predict areas of possible future flooding. A 200-acre plot had been designated for the model; over 1,500 German POWs cleared the land and reshaped the grounds to handle the later concrete construction for the model, which was partially completed by 1952. The model worked and officials estimated that its tests and results brought about savings of millions of dollars in flood damage during its years of operation until it closed in 1973.

Italian prisoners of war were also at Camp Clinton and may have assisted the Mississippi River Basin Model project. But there were far fewer Italian prisoners of war imprisoned in the United States than German POWs. The vast majority of the over 50,000 Italian prisoners of war volunteered for Italian Service Units, established in February 1944, which worked within military facilities and ports of call as well as farms or at irrigation systems, such as those prisoners documented by government photographers working on the Arizona Canal outside of Phoenix. In Boston, Massachusetts, the Italian Service Units worked on local docks but also contributed to the labor needed at the large community Victory Garden on the Boston Common. That site is part of the Freedom Trail of the **National Parks of Boston**.

The labor of prisoners of war made a difference to the home front, even when the numbers were small such as the Iranian prisoners who were assigned agricultural work

in five rural Indiana counties in 1943. One study estimated that labor from prisoners of war saved the nation \$230 million as it also freed men and women to serve in the armed forces or work in other war-related jobs.

Attempts at escape from the POW camps were rare. One of the largest efforts to escape happened at Camp Papago Park, near Tempe, Arizona, a city which is a designated World War II Heritage City. In December 1944, 25 German POWs dug an underground tunnel of some 176 feet to escape, but they were quickly recaptured, and the tunnel was destroyed.

Prisoners of war were toiling in fields everywhere by the time that the agricultural labor crisis was at its most acute in 1944. The shortage of hands in the fields for harvest was compounded by a lack of farm machinery since military production had priority over farm implements. A case in point was York County, Nebraska, where extension service officials projected a corn harvest of four million bushels in 1944 but despaired on what to do because the county only had 130 mechanical corn pickers, not even close to the number needed.

Officials encouraged urban and suburban women to increase their involvement in the fields. Whereas in 1943 only nine states offered farm-training courses for urban women who wished to contribute to the Women's Land Army, 44 states offered such training in 1944. Tractor-training courses were available in Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Maine. College students from Smith College in Massachusetts worked on local farms while 200 students from Sweetbriar College in Virginia harvested the regional apple crop. The college students were just a few of the 774,000 "non-farm" women who worked agricultural jobs that year.

### Necessity for Rationing

Providing enough food from the nation's farms and ranches to feed civilians, the military, and allies proved daunting, no matter the number of adults and children who did their best. In addition to that endless work on the nation's farms and ranches, rationing and Victory Gardens were additional efforts to provide more food for the war effort, and both touched almost every family on the home front.



Meat ration poster, 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Administered nationally by the federal Office of Price Administration (OPA) but carried out locally through some 5,600 local volunteer-based rationing boards, food rationing prioritized military needs. Canned goods, a staple in many of the nation's cupboards in 1941, quickly disappeared from the consumer market since the military needed as much tin as possible just to supply food to the armed forces. Meat, coffee, cooking oil, sugar, dairy products, and processed canned, bottled, and frozen foods were also carefully rationed, not only to keep the military supplied but to keep price inflation in check. The OPA also placed price ceilings on several products to mitigate price gouging and excess profiteering.



Ration Coupons, Ration Book Four, Regional Publicity Files National Archives, Information Division, Office of Price Administration, Record Group 188, NARA's Northeast Region, Boston

Civilian consumers learned to use their ration coupons strategically to purchase what was available at local markets. The system, based on points assigned to different goods at different times, was confusing since officials often changed what was being rationed based on the ever-shifting availability of those goods, in addition to the number of ration stamps consumers used from their coupon books; families learned to plan carefully so that the ration stamps would last until the next set of ration cards arrived. In February 1943, to help such planning, the Office of Price Administration released a colorful advertisement that identified “How to Shop with War Ration Book Two,” which targeted the rationing of canned, bottled, and frozen fruits, vegetables, and juices, along with canned soups.

The impact of rationing was not the same for everyone. Those with more resources turned to a flourishing black market to buy food items that otherwise were unavailable. Other citizens reverted to the age-old system of bartering and trading ration-card stamps, their labor, or other considerations in exchange for goods and services that they needed.



“Wartime food demonstrator Alice Burtis exhibits an `extended` meat loaf at a Washington, D.C. consumer meeting,” March 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Rationing involved more than food. Aurora Estrada Orozco of Texas recalled that you could not buy leather shoes, since leather needed to be saved for the soldiers. Her family went to Mexico and bought huaraches (sandals) instead and also substituted oleomargarine for butter. Rationing ended when product supplies reached sustainable

levels. Coffee rationing ended in July 1943. Processed foods remained rationed until August 1945, while meats, canned fish, cheese, canned milk, butter, and margarine continued in the ration program until the following November. Sugar remained rationed until June 1947.

### Victory and Community Gardens

Victory Gardens revived a successful federal effort from World War I called War Gardens. When the United States entered the war in late 1941, federal agricultural officials tried to stop a similar garden movement out of the conviction that the effort in 1917-1918 had actually wasted valuable resources. Agricultural officials soon relented in face of a grassroots push from families to grow their own food, especially after rationing began to make canned goods unavailable. If people could not buy canned goods, then they would grow their own where and however possible.

By the spring of 1942, federal agricultural agencies and programs began to bombard the public with guidance for the garden movement. The government published five goals for the Victory Garden program: increase the production and consumption of fresh vegetables and fruits; encourage food preservation so it could be used both privately and for community purposes; save money on food costs so surpluses could go to purchasing items not available at a local garden; create community gardens in urban areas; and improve morale and physical well-being through the physical exertion of planting and cultivating gardens.



Trailer camp Victory Garden, Arlington, VA, April 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Victory Gardens were soon everywhere. In 1939 4.8 million home gardens were cultivated in the United States. By 1944 that number had surged to approximately 20

million, and these gardens supplied an estimated 40 percent of the nation's fresh vegetables. Among the best-known Victory Gardens was one planted as a demonstration that everyone should do it: the Victory Garden on the front yard of the **White House**, cultivated by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and her White House staff.

Many families followed a formula prepared by Ira O. Schaub, who was the Dean of Agriculture at North Carolina State College (now University). Schaub said that garden plots should be 1/10 of an acre for every member of the family and that each tenth of an acre should try to have ten or more different vegetables. Popular crops were green beans, peas of all sorts, squash, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, kale, tomatoes, Swiss chard, and lettuce.

Victory Gardens in southern California were massive efforts since the growing season was year-round. Chester F. Lancaster, a World War I veteran who had been blinded in that conflict, took great pride in his World War II Victory Garden at Redondo Beach. The Los Angeles *Times* reported that "with the exception of actual planting, Lancaster takes care of the cultivation of his entire garden, working with his sensitive fingers among the growing plants and harvesting their produce. Records of the yield of his plot show an ample supply for his family and a plentiful surplus for canning and dehydration."<sup>75</sup> The newspaper then got directly involved with the efforts for Victory Gardens. It sponsored the Times Victory Club, which published its own magazine on best practices and built a model demonstration garden on a prominent corner on Wilshire Boulevard. The club also hosted horticultural expert Gordon Baker Lloyd at its Victory Garden Center, where Baker Lloyd and others taught gardening classes, free of charge to attend. Historian Sam Greene found that residents of Los Angeles County established more than 200,000 acres of Victory Gardens in 1943. Cultivators of the community garden in the Belvedere Gardens neighborhood of East Los Angeles claimed that their 31-acre plot was the largest in the United States. Members from three local wards of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and nearby defense factory workers planted and sponsored the community garden.



Children's school victory gardens, New York City, June 1944, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Community gardens proved popular not only in Los Angeles but in large towns and cities nationwide. In the cities, due to the limited space, equipment, and generally substandard growing environments, federal officials urged citizens to band together and develop community gardens, where those of fewer means could also have access to fresh vegetables—and in some cases fresh eggs--and the economy of scale could produce large quantities of food without wasting valuable space and materials. Community gardens soon sprouted everywhere—school yards, public parks, and empty private spaces donated for the purpose. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, a Victory Garden established at the Dowling School during World War II still operated in the twenty-first century as did the Fenway Victory Garden in Boston.

In Burlington, Vermont, government officials, the chamber of commerce, and citizens used a hybrid approach of public and private involvement to create Victory Gardens in 1943. The city provided public land at parks and schools for individual Victory Gardens and assigned the street department the job of using snowplows to clear the land for cultivation while the chamber of commerce administered the city-wide program. What happened in Vermont was true in other states where companies and government agencies provided space so their employees could establish community gardens.

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### *Voices from the Past*

Linda R. recalled her childhood experience in an interview for the Smithsonian Institution's Community of Gardens program:

“The Victory Garden was a community effort and a communal space. People shared what they grew and they worked together to make it grow. They also bonded and looked out for each other.

That Victory Garden was my first memory of gardening. I loved the smell of the earth. I loved watching things grow. I loved eating what we grew. I loved kicking the dirt with my toes. I loved playing in the field, while my mom worked. I loved weeding and sampling. I was always cautious to ask permission, before tasting. I didn't want to take food away from anyone else. Things were scarce and the war effort was a serious undertaking.”<sup>76</sup>

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### Children and Victory Gardens

At most Victory Gardens, children provided the bulk of the daily labor, whether on their own family's plot or by participating in such youth groups as the Girl Scouts of the United States of America, the Boy Scouts of America, the Future Farmers of America (FFA), and 4-H, the latter of which sponsored a national “Food for Victory” program. In 1943 FFA announced that its members had planted 111,261 acres in Victory Gardens.

The Canal Winchester FFA chapter in central Ohio was particularly enterprising. Its 28 members raised enough food—including 51,000 pounds of pork and 160,440 eggs--to provide rations for an estimated 250 members of the armed forces for one year.



“Guiding hand behind the establishment of many West coast Victory Gardens, Professor Harry Nelson of San Francisco’s Junior College still finds time to give his ten-year-old daughter Pat (left) and her Girl Scout friends some pointers in transplanting young vegetables,” 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Keeping Victory Gardens, whether their own family’s plot or participating in community plots, was an important way children contributed to the war effort while parents and adults in their families served in the armed forces or took on new war-related jobs. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of photographs taken of children working in either family or community gardens in archives across the country.

Few were concerned about children being overworked in Victory Gardens or on their family farm or ranch. Child welfare advocates, however, became quite troubled about the industrial and commercial businesses taking advantage of under-age labor. As the number of teenage workers jumped from one million to almost three million, advocates worried that the demand for under-age labor would undermine recent progress combatting abusive child-labor practices. Many states amended laws to allow children to work a longer number of hours, which elevated apprehensions about overworked children. A recent account on wartime mobilization by historian Maury Klein substantiated the concerns. He estimated that as many as 900,000 children worked in violation of existing state laws and rules and noted that in many towns high school enrollment dropped as students left for full-time work.

The efforts of children, the elderly who stayed on farms, women, prisoners of war, and immigrant labor, especially Mexican men, made the difference in the United

States being able to feed its civilian and military populations while contributing significantly to the food needs of its allies. Rationing certainly helped, but without the labor of millions from large farms and ranches to Victory Gardens in New York City, wartime demands for food could have overwhelmed American agriculture. A successful home front required herculean efforts both in the factories and on the nation's farms and ranches.

## Chapter Six: Military Installations Everywhere



Football at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, November 1943, Camp Atterbury World War II photograph collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Indiana State Library

The establishment of military installations from 1940 to 1945 throughout the forty-eight states as well as the possessions and territories of the United States profoundly impacted the home front experiences of the host communities, just as the experience impacted the armed forces members who left their homes for military training and assignments at places that many had never heard of before, much less visited.<sup>77</sup> Building, staffing, and providing for military installations afforded communities with new opportunities for economic growth and cultural exchange.

Military installations like airfields, army camps, naval bases, ordnance depots, and hospitals, appeared everywhere, filling every corner of the country with reminders of the ongoing war. The construction of a military base, no matter its size, was often an economic boon for towns still struggling to recover from the Great Depression. But the installations also introduced considerable challenges, especially at locations that had yet to experience a federal presence outside of the postal service or, perhaps, more recently established government agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service and the Social Security Administration.

In Maine, for instance, the navy operated a major radio station adjacent to, and now part of, **Acadia National Park**, which is headquartered in Bar Harbor. The Army Air

Corps added another radio station in 1941. In Bangor, Maine, the Army Air Corps in 1940 took over the local airport, renamed it Godfrey Army Airfield and used it as one of the bases for Lend-Lease aircraft moving from the United States to Newfoundland before transport to England. The base brought employment for hundreds, even as its name changed a third time to Dow Army Airfield in 1942.



New River Marine Base, NC, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

### Immediate Changes, Long-Term Consequences

Militarization of the nation had both immediate and long-lasting consequences. Flagstaff, Arizona is a good example. City leaders there campaigned aggressively for the construction of a military airbase in their city; \$35,000 had been invested in the early 1940s to improve Fort Tuthill, the city's National Guard facility, and Flagstaff clamored for more funding. Eventually, Bellemont, a small town a few miles outside of Flagstaff, was chosen as the site of the Navajo Ordnance Depot. As soon as Atkinson-Kier Company began building the depot, thousands of workers rushed to Flagstaff, including many members of the Navajo Nation, contributing to an economic boon that eventual brought along cultural changes.

Employees at the Navajo Ordnance Depot, for instance, developed a lively base community, named Victory Village, which drew visitors from Flagstaff for parties at the civilian apartments. Historian John S. Westerlund has documented the number of Indigenous people involved in the work of the ordnance depot. The ammunition handlers, people who did literally the heavy lifting of the filled ammunition boxes from railroad cars to trucks, were mostly Navajo with some Hopis, who came to Bellemont hoping to earn enough money to end the years of poverty and depression on their lands. Other Bellemont workers came from tribal members of the Hualapais, Supais,

Apaches, Lagunas, Maricopas, and Tohono O'odham. Hispanics also worked at the ordnance, representing about half of the base's non-Indigenous workers.

Similar scenarios of economic and social transformation unfolded in Texas with the construction of Camp Barkeley near Abilene. Camp Barkeley soldiers were welcomed to Abilene's USOs where local volunteers provided books, magazines, stationery, musical events, and even legal advice from a local bar association. Abilene residents also billeted military officers and their families. As the camp continued to expand, residents renovated garages and chicken coops into housing while local contractors built new apartments for military personnel and civilian workers as quickly as possible.

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### *Experience Your Parks*

Several National Park Service units on the West Coast preserve significant places associated with the nation's military preparedness. **Olympic National Park** in Washington state had a large US Coast Guard station at Ozette along with two nearby Coast Guard beach patrol stations. By 1943 as many as thirteen Aircraft Warning Service posts were established within the park. **Redwood National Park** in California had a large Army radar station, which was disguised as farm buildings. A crew of 35 manned the station 24 hours a day. At **Point Reyes National Seashore** in California, the army maintained a training center for dive-bombing and for navigating a landing craft, as well as a gunnery range. Perhaps its most interesting facility was the nearby Maritime Radio Receiving Station, which was part of a system that relayed telegraph and then radio messages between the Pacific and the mainland.



Greeks of the 122<sup>nd</sup> Infantry vow revenge at Camp Carson, Colorado, c. 1943, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

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As in Texas, military camps impacted places large and small in Colorado and New Mexico. Businessmen in Colorado Springs, Colorado, lobbied for the construction

of a military post in the area, eventually winning Camp Carson as well as two air bases. The economy of Pueblo, Colorado, expanded due to wartime production of artillery shells and the construction of a nearby munitions depot. At La Junta, Colorado, another army air base used hundreds of thousands of acres of surrounding ranch land for practice bombing runs. Near Gallup, New Mexico, an estimated 2,500 Navajo helped to construct Fort Wingate Ordnance Depot, which supplied 100 tons of high explosives used in the Trinity test of the atomic bomb on the White Sands Proving Ground (now Missile Range). The **White Sands National Park** is located within the missile range.

Tiny western mountain communities, too, benefitted from the appearance of a military installation in their area; when a base for training in skiing and mountaineering was proposed in 1941, the small town of Pando, Colorado (today a ghost town) was chosen for the ski-training base, known as Camp Hale, because its mountainous terrain was accessible by railroad and highway. The same was true in Rimini, Montana, where the mountain climate, snowfall, and nearby tracks of the Northern Pacific Railway attracted the Quartermaster Corps, which established Camp Rimini at an abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps facility. The camp was used to train 263 sled dogs and 268 pack dogs for service in the war.

### Military Bases and Native Americans

In the West, Native Americans often lost land to the federal government as the government used the War Powers Act to assert that new bases were military necessities and thus took Native lands for the construction of the new facilities. For Camp Gruber in Oklahoma, the military in 1942 displaced Cherokee and forced them to move elsewhere so the base could be built. In a similar vein, the federal government condemned 2,100 acres of valuable land within the Shoshone and Bannock Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho, compensating the Indians at \$10 an acre, when others valued the property at 10 times that number.

At other western locations, huge military installations provided job opportunities for Indigenous people. The Black Hills Ordnance Depot near Edgemont, South Dakota, hired 160 Native Americans in a range of permanent positions from stenographers to electrical operators to janitors and ammunition handlers. Various accounts from the early twenty-first century emphasize that Native Americans and non-natives worked well together, and overt discrimination was rare. In the *Native Sun News* of January 11-17, 2012, editor Jesse Abernathy noted: "Such coalescence between cultures was virtually unheard of at the time, especially in South Dakota."<sup>78</sup> The depot's residential area was called Igloo, because the original munitions-storage units were reinforced concrete domes, that from a distance looked like an endless field of regularly spaced "igloos," traditional Iñupiat dwellings in Alaska Territory. The television journalist Tom Brokaw, who would later write *The Greatest Generation*, a popular and influential book about the World War II period, lived here as a boy. The depot also hired many WOWs—woman ordnance workers—to meet the ceaseless demand for labor. The population at the depot reached 4,200 by the summer of 1945.

## Military Bases and the Jim Crow South

The South experienced a federal presence that harkened back to the Civil War when US armed forces had occupied many states and built large, but temporary, military bases. Whereas white southerners bitterly deplored the federal military presence in the 1860s, most white officials in local and state governments welcomed the World War II bases with open arms, offering as many incentives as possible. At Corpus Christi, Texas, which is a designated World War II Heritage City, the Navy built a huge aircraft station and training facility. Twenty thousand enrollees in the National Youth Administration, which began as a New Deal program, were trained to repair and service airplanes at the Naval Air Station Corpus Christi. Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, was the third training center for the Women's Army Corps (WAC), where an estimated 50,000 women--including the 6888<sup>th</sup> Central Postal Directory Battalion, an African American unit that served primarily overseas--received their military training. Traces of the old base remain within the **Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park**.



Tuskegee airmen, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Perhaps the most famous southern military installation is the training grounds associated with the Tuskegee airmen in Macon County, Alabama, now preserved as the **Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site**. The origins of the base began with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's decision in 1938 to create a program where civilian pilots would receive training for possible military service. African American leaders pushed to have Black pilots included in the program. When Congress authorized the

Selective Service draft in 1940, it also banned racial discrimination in conscription, thus opening a window for African Americans to serve in the Air Corps (the Army Air Corps was renamed Army Air Forces in June 1941). Several military officers had long objected to the idea of African American pilots, due to their prejudice that African Americans would not be capable of flying a “complicated” military airplane. To prove the fallacy of that characterization, federal officials contracted with an existing pilot-training program for African Americans at Tuskegee Institute (now University), then led by Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson. The contract allowed the army to use the college’s Division of Aeronautics and its Moton Field, which was built from 1940 to 1942 with support from the Julius Rosenwald Fund and named in honor of former Tuskegee president Dr. Robert R. Moton. The Rosenwald Fund had earlier worked in partnership with the head of Tuskegee Institute, Dr. Booker T. Washington, to create the Rosenwald School Building program, which reshaped African American rural education in the South from 1914 to 1932.

The Tuskegee-Army partnership proved successful. On March 29, 1941, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt inspected the flight school, and an African American pilot, C. A. Anderson, took her on a short flight. By endorsing the school and its program and being willing to fly in a plane with a black pilot, the First Lady’s actions captured widespread media attention.

By the summer of 1941, pilot training was underway both at Moton Field and at the newly built but segregated Tuskegee Army Air Field, with about 500 personnel working in the program. A year later that number had jumped to over 3,000 people, an influx of trained, professional African Americans who had an immediate and lasting impact on the town of Tuskegee and the surrounding rural communities of Macon County. These personnel included mechanics, radio operators, meteorologists, navigators, dispatchers, cooks, and service workers. Three women specialized as parachute riggers, and they trained hundreds of cadets in how to pack and maintain their parachutes. Despite their qualifications and skills, military personnel not only encountered a serious lack of available housing but faced discrimination wherever they sought to shop, eat, drink, and relax outside of black neighborhoods.

African Americans in the armed forces faced similar challenges of discrimination throughout the United States. In 1945 a group of Tuskegee Airmen officers, for example, was assigned to Freeman Field in Seymour, Indiana. White officers in charge of the base immediately segregated the Officers Club and ordered the African American airmen to sign a statement giving their consent to the segregation. More than 100 African American officers refused; the army then court-martialed them for disobeying a direct order. The black press howled at the indignity and injustice and the Army soon released most of the officers but decided to take three Tuskegee Airmen and make examples of them in a formal court-martial trial. The trial fined two officers and found Lt. Roger Terry guilty; he received a dishonorable discharge. It took 50 years to rectify the injustice. In 1995 President Bill Clinton pardoned Lt. Terry and restored his rank.

### Military Bases and Social Change

Far to the northwest, near the Canadian border, the impact of Army air bases proved profound in Great Falls, Montana. In 1942 the Great Falls Army Air Base opened for heavy bomber training a month before Christmas 1942, when the first B-17 bombers arrived. Training continued until the fall of 1943. At the same time, the 7<sup>th</sup> Ferrying Group established its base at the local municipal airport, known as Gore Field, to create a link to Fairbanks, Alaska. Gore Field was an invaluable cog in the Lend-Lease program that supplied American aircraft and supplies to the Soviet Union. Once the bomber training ended, the Lend-Lease effort shifted to the Army Air Base. By war's end, over 1.7 million pounds of cargo had passed its way through Great Falls to Fairbanks and on to Siberia.

The presence of so many airmen and other military personnel impacted Great Falls profoundly. Along with a surge of patriotism due to the fact that Great Falls was important to the war effort, there was also a surge in the local cashbox due to military spending, and the growth of businesses and housing to serve the expanding military presence. Boosted by jobs in the city's smelter industry, along with the military base, the town's population grew by an estimated 50 percent.

Among those new arrivals were hundreds of African American soldiers. Before World War II, the black population of Great Falls had hovered in the low hundreds for decades; now it suddenly doubled. African American soldiers wanted a place to relax and unwind, thus a different type of community center for resident and soldier alike, the Ozark Club, expanded and became prominent for the next generation.

Leo Phillip LaMar, born in Chicago to an African American mother and a Chinese father, had been a boxer and then a Pullman porter before operating a small club for African Americans only in Great Falls. The Ozark Club dated to 1909 but had closed during Prohibition. LaMar reopened it in 1933, then later reorganized it once again in 1944 to be a full-fledged integrated nightclub with a swinging, jazzy band. The Ozark was the only place in the entire state to feature jazz music six nights a week and to welcome everyone, regardless of race or nationality. Such inclusion was not the norm in Great Falls. The town's major industries excluded African Americans from the best-paying jobs. Many businesses refused to serve African Americans, Hispanics, or Native Americans, whether they were associated with the military bases or not. The Ozark Club did not make those distinctions; its motto was "everyone is welcome." The night scene in Great Falls suddenly changed for the better.

### The Impact of Military Bases on the LGBTQ Community

The Ozark Club in Great Falls thrived because the owners were willing to serve all at the time of war, mixing civilians and service men and women in ways not common elsewhere. A similar willingness to serve all, on a much, much larger scale, happened in San Francisco, California, at night clubs and bars associated with or that catered to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ) community. Long before World War II, dating in fact to the gold rush era, San Francisco's "Barbary Coast" district had

gained a reputation for its night life. These three blocks along Pacific Street (now Avenue) between Montgomery and Stockton streets had many well-known bars, night clubs, cafes, music halls, dance clubs, and sex-trade businesses. In 1906, the San Francisco earthquake destroyed many of the buildings, but the neighborhood was soon rebuilt and briefly became known as Terrific Street, home to some of the best jazz clubs and dance halls in the West. City reformers closed many of the district's businesses in the 1910s, and Prohibition finished off much of what was left in 1920.

The end of Prohibition in 1933 quickly introduced a new era, and the haunts of the old Barbary Coast/Terrific Street neighborhood soon reappeared as new bars, night clubs, and cafes, attracting locals, tourists, and the transient workers and sailors associated with the nearby boat docks and military bases such as the Presidio, Fort Miley, Fort Winfield Scott, and Fort Mason. These military installations are now part of the **Golden Gate National Recreation Area**.

In 1910 the Army had established Fort Mason General Depot at lower Fort Mason, abutting the San Francisco Bay. In 1932 officials expanded the facility and renamed it the San Francisco Port of Embarkation, a designation that meant the city in the war years became the major point of departure for troops either going to or returning from combat in the Pacific. During World War II, 1.6 million passengers left San Francisco for the Pacific. The daily turnover of thousands of people going and coming, with many seeking a night on the town during their stop in San Francisco, revived the spirit of the Barbary Coast. In the 1940s, San Francisco became widely known as an open, more accepting place than most.

To guide interested tourists, locals, and soldiers, Jack Lord and Jenn Shaw published a guidebook titled *Where to Sin in San Francisco* in 1945. This booklet is an invaluable primary source about the who, what, and where of San Francisco's nightlife late in the World War II era. Among its entries are descriptions for Mona's 440 Club, later acknowledged as the first lesbian bar in the United States, and the Finocchio Club, famous for performances from female impersonators. Mona's 440 Club at 440 Broadway was described as a "Boy-Girls" place where "The Little Girl waitresses look like boys. The little-girls-who-sing-sweet-songs look like boys. And many of the little girl customers look like boys."<sup>79</sup> A featured performer was Gladys Bentley, who left a successful career on the nightclub circuit of Harlem, New York City, to join the San Francisco scene. Another favorite was Beverly Shaw, a cab driver by day and a tuxedoed lounge singer at night. Reba Hudson recalled about Mona's in this era: "So the next night we went to Mona's 440. Boy, you should have seen our faces. Here's all these women in tuxes, right? And they're entertaining and singing and working as waitresses. We continued to go there often. They made us very very welcome."<sup>80</sup>

Lord and Shaw described the nightly show at Finocchio Club at 506 Broadway: "Wigged, gowned, rouged, lip-sticked, and mascara-ed, ten beautiful boys become singing, clowning, ravishing women. In a revue of revues. It's a Rabelousy rendezvous. It's different!"<sup>81</sup>

Their guidebook also noted a known Chinatown night spot, the Forbidden City at 363 Sutter Street, which was “your only chance to get a fresh slant on an all Chinese show,” that often featured the female impersonator Jackie Mei Ling.<sup>82</sup> Ling also performed at the Shangri-La club and once observed: “It was the beginning of the war, you know, and everybody was frantic, everybody was hurting. They needed happiness, they wanted entertainment; the sons and husbands and lovers were going off to war.”<sup>83</sup> Two other clubs known to welcome a LGBTQ clientele were the Black Cat Café at 710 Montgomery Street and the Li-Po cocktail lounge at 916 Grant Avenue in Chinatown.



Jackie Mei Ling performed in San Francisco in the 1940s. National Park Service

As the 1945 guidebook documents, these clubs were thriving even as the military increasingly cooperated with local police in an attempt to close businesses that catered to the gay and lesbian community. Their combined efforts, called the San Francisco Moral Drive, regularly harassed customers at the city's gay bars and clubs in 1942-1943 under the rationale that they were actually protecting service men and women.

Historians John D'Emilio and Allan Berube have explored how military policy, the presence of military bases, and the constant movement and dislocation of military personnel contributed to the growth of the gay community in San Francisco. When service women or men were identified or determined to be gay in the Pacific theater of war, they were kicked out of the armed forces, often given “blue tickets,” meaning that their discharge papers were printed on blue paper, and discharged at San Francisco. Blue tickets were neither dishonorable nor honorable discharges, but ones where the individual had been absent from duty without leave for a long time, or under-performed in their duties, or had demonstrated undesirable character traits, such as being gay. Historians have found that many blue-ticketed discharges stayed in San Francisco because it felt safe, at least much safer than returning home and explaining why they had received a blue ticket.

Key West, Florida, was another place where the armed forces left lasting impacts during the home front era. Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Key West Naval Operating Base consisted of a mere 50 acres; by war's end it had more than 3,200 acres. More than 14,000 ships passed through its harbor, and the town's population more than doubled, in part due to the war effort but also because the recently completed Overseas Highway, a marvel of New Deal engineering, allowed a greater number of tourists began to reach the town. Besides the operating base, the Navy in 1940 also relocated its Fleet Sonar School from Connecticut to Key West. The school trained sailors in sonar technology and placed them on ships throughout the fleet. By the end of the year, three submarines were stationed at Key West, and the Key West Naval Air Station had been opened, with twelve bombers arriving on December 30, 1940.

Sailors and the increasing numbers of visitors in 1940-1941 found a city quite different than most in its mixture of races, nationalities, and persuasions, and the presence of a large red-light district of bars, brothels, and cafes. In 1942, Key West found itself at the forefront of the war in the Caribbean. Extensive U-Boat activity off the coast of Key West meant that the terrors of war were ever-present. Residents encountered traumatized sailors whose ships had been sunk by German submarines in the nearby waters, often at a great cost of life. Being so close to death and destruction unmoored not only sailors but many locals. Therefore, when authorities took steps to shutter most businesses in the red-light district, which many residents viewed as a place of escape from the presence of death, most locals strongly opposed the closings. Though diminished, the red-light district remained.

The year 1943 was as challenging as 1942. The Navy largely stopped the U-boat menace, but living conditions in Key West worsened. Housing was beyond overcrowded, crime increased, and what was deemed as acceptable behavior became questioned. A local judge complained: "Key West is running over with women who have come here from various parts of the country for the sole purpose of meeting sailors, getting them drunk and marrying them."<sup>84</sup> But not so obvious to the judge was a growing LGBTQ community, such as the writers Elizabeth Bishop in 1938 and Tennessee Williams in 1941, who had already taken up at least part-time residence in the city. The LGBTQ community was attracted to Key West by its climate, general openness to gay people, and the constant turnover of tourists and sailors. The community, too, was part of the changes brought about by war.

The changes experienced at Key West were not isolated cases, but happened to different degrees and in different ways across the nation. Historian Maia Council concluded:

"Although they faced the constant threat of harassment and discrimination, queer Americans on the U.S. home front still found ways to meet others like them and be themselves, if only surreptitiously. Many stories of queer life on the home front have probably died along with the people whose oral histories went uncollected before they passed; countless experiences that shaped the lives of queer Americans have faded, but the stories that

remain show evidence of a rich and vibrant queer home front in the wartime years. Queer Americans have always been part of our country's diverse tapestry of people, and their stories and experiences deserve to be remembered."<sup>85</sup>

Militarized cities like the ports at San Francisco and Key West had intense, long-lasting home front experiences, and the influence of the home front era extends to the present. At other places, the impact was not as lasting. At many towns and cities, residents welcomed the economic boom brought by military installations, while also viewing the bases as a community inconvenience. Many civilians did not like having to share their streets, public spaces, and commercial districts with so many service men and women, who might be from other parts of the nation, or have different faiths, or be of a different race. Too many people, too much going on, and too much change just added to home front anxiety. In these communities, military installations only temporarily reshaped their host towns, which then reverted to old ways once the armed forces left.

### WASPS, WAVES, and MCWRS

Expanded roles for women in the armed forces rubbed some citizens the wrong way. As women joined the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), for instance, they found that both male colleagues and residents in host communities resented their service, even if they were classified as civilians. Much of the public believed that women could not and/or should not be flying planes or aircraft in support of the military.

A primary center for WASP training and orientation was at Sweetwater, Texas. In May 1942, the army leased the Sweetwater municipal airport and renamed it Avenger Field. The army first used the field to train both British and United States pilots. In February 1943, the first WASP trainees arrived, and by April the entire base was reserved for training women pilots only. By the time the program closed in December 1944, 1,074 women pilots had earned their wings at Avenger Field.

At the base, WASPs as civilians lacked the same privileges, such as guaranteed lodging, as provided to male army pilots. This situation meant that many WASPs had to find housing in Sweetwater, thus intensifying their impact on the local home front as civilians and pilots struggled to find adequate space to live.

Fort Hancock at Sandy Hook, part of the **Gateway National Recreation Area** in New York and New Jersey, housed members of the Women's Army Corps (WACs). Since the beginning of the war, the garrison had grown substantially from 1,000 to over 7,000 by the time the first seven WACs arrived in June 1943. The WACs at Fort Hancock eventually counted 70 soldiers, housed in Barracks 25, which the male soldiers panned as the "WAC Palace."

The WACs were assigned duties in the 1225<sup>th</sup> Army Service Unit, Second Service Command, and worked in such areas as the post exchange, motor pool, commissary, mess hall, and headquarters. Such service assignments were typical for

WACs at the beginning, but once officers understood that the women could carry out many different assignments, the 150,000 women in the program nationally eventually served in 401 of the Army's 625 job codes. Colonel J.C. Haw, the commander at Fort Hancock, observed: "Every non-civilian job at Fort Hancock which a woman can do will be assigned to a WAC. Each job taken over is a contribution to winning the war, for each WAC will replace a man who is vitally needed for combat service."<sup>86</sup>



WACs at Camp Atterbury, June 1943, Camp Atterbury World War II photograph collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Indiana State Library

What was true at Fort Hancock was also true for **Fort Monroe National Monument** in Virginia, where the first enlisted WACs arrived in January 1944. By May there were 58 WACs assigned to the Coast Artillery School. A WAC contingent remained at Fort Monroe until the 1970s when women were integrated into the armed forces.



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Artist Posters Collection

The Navy Women's Reserve Act of July 1942 created the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) program and authorized the later creation of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR). WAVES supported onshore naval operations, and the Navy assigned a large number of WAVES to aviation duties. Initial officer training often happened at college campuses, such as Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, before the women were assigned to different stations across the nation.

The WAVES were based at a former training center for the National Cash Register company known as the Sugar Creek Cabins in Oakwood, Ohio. Their inspiring story is interpreted within the **National Aviation Heritage Area**. The women worked at Dayton's National Cash Register Building #26 that was converted to making the "Bombe," a top-secret decryption device used for military intelligence. Joseph Desch, a National Cash Register employee, had helped to design the machine. WAVES at Building #26 assembled the huge machines--seven feet tall and some two tons in weight—and built 120 Bombes in Dayton. Some WAVES were then assigned to a US Navy base in Washington, D.C., where they assisted in the operation and maintenance of the machines.



WOW Poster, 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Artist Posters Collection

More than 100,000 women served in the WAVES, but only a tiny number, including two officers, were African American. WAVES units trained and served at multiple bases, including the Naval Air Technical Training Center in Norman, Oklahoma, and the Naval Training Station in San Diego, California. Most served in clerical, hospital, and supply roles, but some 23,000 WAVES served in naval aviation operations.

After conducting initial officer training at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts and Hunter College in New York City, the Marine Corps moved MCWR officer training to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, by the summer of 1943. From that point forward, the Marines chose to train women volunteers for the MCWR at Marine posts. General Thomas Holcomb forcefully reminded a reporter for *Life Magazine* on March 27, 1944: "They are Marines. They don't have a nickname and they don't need one. They get their basic training in a Marine atmosphere at a Marine post. They inherit the traditions of Marines. They are Marines."<sup>87</sup> Almost 19,000 women served in the MCWR; the first MCWR director was Ruth Cheney Streeter, who was commissioned a major and took her command in January 1943.

### Facing Discrimination While Serving the Nation

In the host communities too many members of the armed forces faced hostility, which sometimes turned violent. Multiple instances of conflict between African Americans training at Florida's Camp Gordon Johnston and Tallahassee locals frustrated military commanders who were forced to accept that Jim Crow segregation still ruled almost all public facilities in the South. Their soldiers might be fighting for democracy, but in the South they were consistently treated as second-class citizens. A similar situation existed at MacDill Field in Tampa, where local law enforcement routinely harassed African American soldiers who merely sought opportunities to eat, drink, and relax in Tampa. This harassment also led to confrontations between the soldiers and police.

Military bases could also mean real danger for both the soldiers and civilians working there. The **Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial**, headquartered at Concord, California, shares the story of a terrible munition explosion on July 17, 1944. The explosion took 320 lives, most of whom were African American sailors working with civilians in a segregated unit at the port. The Navy had long practiced discrimination, and at Port Chicago, officers only assigned black sailors the dangerous and difficult job of loading the ships. The explosion was so powerful that only 51 of those killed could be identified. The explosion injured almost 400 others and knocked out a vital West Coast shipping port for months.

Historians believe that the accident could have been avoided. The Navy and its contractors did little to properly train the shipmen on how to load explosives in a vessel or provide adequate information on safety precautions.

Due to the importance of the port to operations in the Pacific theater, the Navy almost immediately reopened the port and again assigned only African American sailors to do the work of loading munitions. The officers in charge at the time of the accident were still in command and had not addressed the dangers of loading the ships. Nor had they taken steps to provide proper safety training. These servicemen therefore refused the assignment; they feared another explosion. The Navy placed 258 African American sailors in a temporary, and overcrowded, brig. Then on August 11, Navy commanders gave them one last chance to either load the boats or face a charge of mutiny. The

majority of sailors complied and returned to their barracks. Forty-four of the sailors refused, and along with six others, were placed in the brig. Eventually the Navy convicted the larger group of 208 sailors of disobeying orders, and once their active duty was completed, they received bad conduct discharges, costing them their veterans benefits. The fifty other sailors were charged with making a mutiny, and a military court found them guilty as charged, assigning them 15 years of hard labor and a dishonorable discharge.

Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal had asked Thurgood Marshall, an attorney with the NAACP, to witness the trial. Marshall as a civilian could not participate, but what he witnessed disturbed him, and the NAACP, joined by the national black press, howled with indignation at the verdicts. Although the Navy shortened the length of some of the sentences, Marshall and the NAACP led an appeal effort that was heard in the spring of 1945. The original naval trial court reconvened but, after hearing the case a second time, it reconfirmed the initial verdicts on June 12, 1945. Not until 1946 did most of the 50 sailors gain releases from the verdicts, whereupon they returned to active duty, and most received a general discharge under honorable conditions from the Navy.

These decisions failed to placate most African Americans who continued to call for an end of discrimination in the Navy. The Port Chicago explosion, and the way the Navy handled the case, helped decision-makers in Washington, D.C., to decide to desegregate the Navy on February 27, 1946. On the eightieth anniversary of the explosion, July 17, 2024, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro officially exonerated the Port Chicago servicemen who had been subjected to the general and summary courts-martial in 1944.

### Maneuvers and the Home Front

Hundreds of military installations during World War II shaped the home front experiences of millions of Americans in specific towns and cities throughout the United States, but military training exercises—like the Desert Training Center in the **Mojave National Preserve** in California or the Second Army Maneuvers in rural Middle Tennessee—brought the men, women, and machines of war right to the front door of people's ranches and farms. Military commanders, led by General George S. Patton, thought the Mojave desert would replicate, close enough, the conditions soldiers would face in North Africa. One million soldiers participated in the desert maneuvers from 1942-1944. General Patton also envisioned a region of 600 square miles in Tennessee as a perfect terrain to train another one million soldiers for the invasion of Europe. The Second Army maneuvers took place between September 1942 and March 1944. The headquarters of the exercise was Cumberland University, a small private college in Lebanon, Tennessee.

The maneuvers were to replicate actual combat experience, save using live ammunition of course. Officers instructed soldiers to live on their rations, and to leave the region's many farms alone. But when the officers were not looking—or perhaps

looking the other way—soldiers would seek food from farm families. Private Mitchell J. Dabrowski from Wilbraham, Massachusetts, wrote to his family about the maneuvers. On July 4, 1943, he reported that the maneuvers were “about the toughest thing I ever had in the Army,” but he and his buddies decided the day before to stop at a local farm “and ask them if they could fry us some chickens. The lady said she would. We told her to fry six. We came back at night and had the swellest feed I’ve had in a long time. Fried chicken, hot biscuits, milk, and raspberry pie. The whole works cost us \$8.00 but it was sure worth it.” A few weeks later, Dabrowski reported that this group “had a lady fix us up a short snack of milk, fried eggs, cake, and tomatoes.”<sup>88</sup> This time he did not report the cost, but the soldiers thought it was money well spent and for the farm families, it was unexpected cash that helped them cope with the rising cost of everything.



“Citizens Watch Tank Exercise,” 1941, Tennessee Maneuvers Collection, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University

Atlanta writer Rachael Maddux has explored the home front side of the Second Army Maneuvers and found that while the individual stories of families and soldiers are fascinating, that is only part of the story. By outnumbering the actual population of the region by 2 to 1, the soldiers’ impact was immense. Soldiers camped in fields, and slept in whatever shelter they could locate: barns, cribs, churches, and schools. They built and left temporary latrines by the thousands. They operated heavy trucks and tanks on local roads that were accustomed to the weight of tractors and pickups. The highest cost was that ten civilians died in accidents; everywhere were rutted, ruined roads; damaged bridges; torn-apart fields; decimated and plundered woods; and missing livestock, whether escaped through broken fences or consumed by hungry soldiers. The army did reimburse farm families, paying some \$2.6 million in private property damage claims. On top of that total came another \$2 million to local governments for repairs to roads, public buildings, and infrastructure and \$4 million to the state for damage to

highways. The amazing part—or at least amazing because it is a dominant narrative in the stories that have been told—is that some families did not want reimbursements, or for soldiers to pay them for food and services. They believed it was their duty to feed the soldiers, and help the army prepare for battle.

But what about those without so much—the tenant farmers of the region, who had their livelihood taken away when tanks made a farm's fields unsuited for planting or for harvest? The impact on African American tenants, perhaps as many as 45,000 people in the maneuver area, remains an undocumented, thus a little-told, story. The documents that do exist give one pause. In his last letter from Tennessee, dated August 26, 1943, Private Dabrowski told his family that a group of soldiers went “to a Negro church. We all laughed all through the service. They were singing a song that had a verse, “We are packing up and getting ready to go.””<sup>89</sup> Dabrowski and his colleagues never considered that perhaps the hymn was for them.



Carolina Maneuvers, 1941, U.S. Army's Center of Military History

The US Army's Center of Military History website in 2024 included a set of historic photographs of African American troops involved with the Carolina Maneuvers in North and South Carolina in 1941. One of the most interesting is an image of a group of rural children at night having Thanksgiving Dinner, November 23, 1941, just days before Pearl Harbor, with soldiers from the VI Army Corps. The children are in tattered clothes; how did the soldiers encounter them so to share whatever they had for a holiday dinner? Did similar exchanges happen in other parts of the country?

Undoubtedly, they did—as stories from the 1943 maneuvers in and around the **Monongahela National Forest of West Virginia** attest—but again the sources have not

yet come to the surface. Many questions about the maneuvers and their impact on the home front remain to be asked, and answered.

### Military and Veterans' Administration Hospitals

As the hundreds of military installations prepared men and women to fight in Europe or the Pacific, dozens of U. S. military hospitals plus existing Veterans' Administration facilities cared for those wounded in combat and returned to the United States. Hospitals, like military bases, significantly impacted the host communities, providing employment for hundreds, if not thousands, at each institution but also interjecting scores of skilled medical professionals into the local population. At the beginning of the war, there were five general military hospitals; by early 1945, there were sixty such institutions, with most having more than 1,000 beds. Some were huge facilities: Hospitals with over 4,000 beds were at El Paso, Texas; Staten Island, New York; Memphis, Tennessee; Ayer, Massachusetts; and Tacoma, Washington.

At Charleston, South Carolina, the Navy modernized its naval hospital with permanent and temporary wards able to handle 600 beds, or more. A new recreation building was under construction in September 1944, and it contained a post office, barber shop, beauty shop, library, offices for the Red Cross, and an auditorium that could seat 542 people.

At Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, the Valley Forge General Hospital opened on February 22, 1943, the birthday of George Washington. Its 182-acre campus, located about six miles northeast of **Valley Forge National Historical Park**, had more than 100 buildings and provided care for more than 3,000 patients at a time. One of its specialties was the treatment of soldiers with eye injuries that resulted in blindness. Hospital staff worked with these patients to prepare for a different life and opportunities as blind people. In the Rocky Mountains, a similarly large medical facility, Bushnell General Military Hospital, opened in Brigham City, Utah, in 1942. The hospital only operated for four years, but during that time it gained renown for its use of penicillin—still a new treatment in the 1940s—and the crafting of plastic prosthetic limbs. Both hospitals hired as many locals as possible to assist in the daily operations that involved thousands of patients.

Baxter General Military Hospital operated as a self-contained operation within the larger city of Spokane, Washington. The city donated 160 acres, knowing that the project would bring hundreds of construction and service jobs to the area. Opened in August 1942, sixty wards representing over 2,000 beds were ready by March 1943. The facility had 200 buildings, including cafeterias, post office, chapel, library, and a movie theater/auditorium. It housed most of its workers, whether physicians, nurses (many of whom were with the Women's Army Corps), Red Cross employees, or civilians. The hospital's first 187 patients arrived on June 24, 1943, and over the next year Army physicians changed the hospital's focus to rehabilitation through occupational therapy. The military wanted to get soldiers back into service and trained those disabled through combat for new responsibilities in the service and as post-war civilians.

The Naval Hospital Corona complex at Norco, California, was yet another huge facility that employed thousands during the war and transformed the surrounding towns of Norco and Corona. Two days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Navy acquired what had been Lake Norconian Club Resort, a Spanish Revival-styled marvel, and by the next month began its conversion into a naval hospital, with the first patients arriving in February 1942. Two teams of Mayo Clinic doctors, the largest contingent of Mayo Clinic physicians outside of the Minnesota clinic itself, administered treatment. As the complex grew over the course of the war, it became the Pacific theater center for the treatment of tuberculosis and poliomyelitis, in addition to being the national center for the treatment of rheumatic fever. In the summer of 1944 physicians at Corona used penicillin to treat tuberculosis lung infections, an important step in controlling the disease.

Administrators at Naval Hospital Corona also brought about social and cultural change by directly challenging the local tradition of discrimination. For instance, the public pool in Corona had banned African Americans entirely and only allowed Hispanics to use the facility on the maintenance day when its water would be drained. The private Lake Norconian Club banned all people of color and Jews, while the local newspaper in 1928 asserted that mixing of races would never take place in Corona. The Naval Hospital Corona ignored local patterns of discrimination and did not set aside segregated wards. When one Black patient, who had been wounded at Pearl Harbor, tried to take a meal in the town and was refused service, the hospital executive officer, Capt. Leslie Marshall, addressed the local Rotary Club and warned that if such discrimination continued, the hospital would declare the town of Corona off-limits. Slowly local attitudes and policies changed because local business leaders did not want to lose the economic advantages of consumer spending from the hospital's thousands of employees, patients, and service men and women.

Many residents embraced the hospital and its mission. Women formed a volunteer unit of the local Red Cross called the Gray Ladies, while other local women formed a New Mothers group. Hospital officials praised both groups for their willingness to assist staff and patients. Students at the local high school joined the Victory Corps program, carrying out various service projects at the hospital. Young women at the high school established the Coronets and arranged dances for servicemen at the local USO and the naval hospital. The towns of Corona and Narco became different places because of the naval hospital, a story repeated in dozens of towns and cities in the United States from 1941 to 1945.

Not all military medical facilities were so large as Corona. National Park Service officials at Mt. McKinley National Park (incorporated into **Denali National Park and Preserve** in 1980) offered the park's facilities, such as Mt. McKinley Hotel, to the Army as a place where soldiers could relax and recover from the traumas of war. In April 1943, the Army's Mt. McKinley Recreation Camp opened. The park's superintendent wrote Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes: "If you could see the soldiers as they enjoy the comforts of the hotel after a day's jaunt in the Park you would realize that your efforts [in

1938 to improve the hotel] have not been in vain. They have only words of praise for those who made it possible for them to enjoy a respite from the fogs of the Aleutians, the damp cold of the Pacific and the chilling winds of interior Alaska.”<sup>90</sup> In return for the special-use permit from the National Park Service, the Army agreed to improve various facilities at the park and expanded a local airplane runway to 3,400 feet, thus allowing the landing of larger commercial planes once the war was over.



Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite National Park, CA, Carol M. Highsmith, photographer, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Carol M. Highsmith Archive

A similar partnership in June 1943 between the National Park Service and the Navy established the US Naval Convalescent Hospital at the Ahwahnee Hotel in **Yosemite National Park** in California. Over the next two years, the facility evolved from a focus on neuro-psychiatric rehabilitation to a general physical rehabilitation unit. The hospital admitted 6,752 patients, of which about two-thirds returned to duty.

The Veterans' Administration (VA), established by President Herbert Hoover in 1930, had expanded its national footprint during the New Deal era by constructing several new hospitals to better serve World War I veterans. During World War II, many nurses and other medical staff left the system to serve on the war front, leaving the system short-handed, especially by 1944-1945 when more and more veterans from World War II looked to the VA for assistance. VA administrators in early 1945 launched a national effort to recruit new nurses, needing thousands to assist returning veterans. They reclassified the position from sub-professional to professional and raised salaries by 1946. Serving veterans in the aftermath of World War II would lead to substantial expansion in both facilities and programs in the late 1940s and 1950s.

The establishment of military installations across the United States shaped the home front experience of millions. The needs of the military fueled new economic opportunities, from the construction of the bases themselves to the creation of hundreds of thousands of civilian jobs. Towns and cities across the nation swelled to accommodate the military bases and their personnel—some to the breaking point, with housing shortages and an overwhelmed local infrastructure becoming consistent challenges. For many communities, the sudden influx of military spending and servicemen and servicewomen disappeared within months of the end of the war. At other places, however, the military bases of World War II remained permanent parts of the landscape and local economy, serving as building blocks not only for the post-war economic order but also for the social and cultural changes that would define the nation in the 1950s and 1960s.

## Chapter Seven: War on the Homefront in the Greater United States



Alcan highway road, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

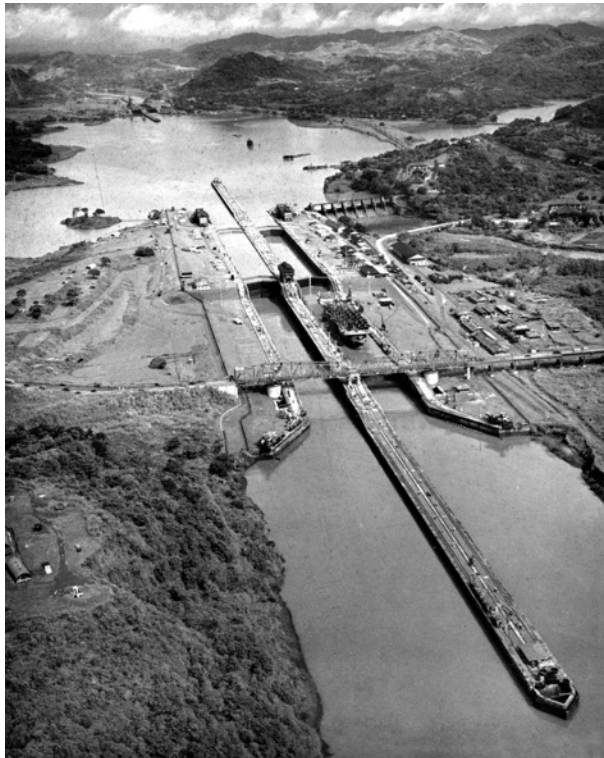
The home front of the United States during World War II extended beyond the 48 continental states, as the very bombing of Pearl Harbor in the Territory of Hawai'i proved from the outset. The National Park Service has identified a useful term, the "Greater United States," to talk about the places and people also caught up in the actual fighting of the war from 1941 to 1945.<sup>91</sup> In each of these territories or possessions, military occupation, massive construction projects, displacement, and home front sacrifice are major themes. Military bases afforded protection, but in exchange host communities of distinct nationalities gave up land, labor, and even freedoms. The contributions made within the Greater United States proved critical to ultimate victory in World War II.

### Panama Canal Zone

As war approached in 1940-1941, military planners worried about the vulnerability of the Panama Canal--the most direct way for ships to cross between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans--to possible attacks or sabotage from Axis nations. The United States had leased and operated the canal since 1903, and it totally controlled the Panama Canal Zone. Keeping the canal open was a vital strategic interest.

In 1940-1941 authorities carefully monitored the zone for spies. German spies monitoring shipping in the Panama Canal were arrested as part of the Duquesne spy ring, which the Federal Bureau of Investigation infiltrated and broke up in late 1941. Japanese access to and activities around the canal also concerned American officials. In July 1941, the United States closed the canal to Japanese ships and intensified its surveillance of Japanese citizens who lived in Panama.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, US officials, with the assistance of the Panama government, moved to arrest and detain Japanese citizens, then added to that number by arresting Japanese citizens, along with Germans and Italians, in other Central and South America countries. Hundreds were eventually incarcerated at segregated facilities within the canal zone. In April 1942, the United States shipped 184 Japanese men to the United States, where most were eventually incarcerated at Camp Livingston, outside of Alexandria, Louisiana.



“The U.S. Navy light aircraft carrier USS *Bataan* (CVL-29) in the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal,” 1945, Wikimedia.

The United States also reorganized its canal zone detention camp to incarcerate approximately 2,000 Japanese from Peru, providing them with scant rations, unsanitary lodging, and much hard physical labor. The Japanese from Peru also were eventually relocated to United States centers for the duration of the war. The largest group of Japanese from Peru were incarcerated at Crystal City, Texas. Seiichi Higashide recalled the camp as well organized, and people were adequately fed, but the housing was little more than “flimsy barracks, built with uninsulated roofs and walls. In mid-summer the barracks became a hellish oven,” even at night so families would hose “down the roof of our barracks and cooled its floor by washing it with water.”<sup>92</sup>

During the war, US military officials significantly increased the military’s presence along the canal, reaching a high of 65,000 servicemen. In exchange for over 100 new military installations within Panama, the United States in 1942 agreed to fund and build new public works that also employed thousands of local workers as well as thousands

from other Central American nations. Unfortunately, the workers who came from outside of the United States and Panama found discrimination in pay and services.

Discrimination had been federal policy in the canal zone since its construction, as recent research by historian Rebecca Herman emphasizes. To build the canal authorities designated skilled workers recruited from the United States as “gold roll” employees, who were paid competitive wages that would attract US workers to the zone. Semi-skilled workers came from the British West Indies and other Caribbean and Central American nations and were designated “silver roll” employees who were paid at local wage rates. The gold employees also had better public services in housing, recreation areas, cafeterias, and medical care than silver workers. Despite the discrimination, silver employees contributed to home front preparations through the Silver Employees Volunteer Committee and the Silver City Commissary Girls.

When the federal government announced its intention to strengthen defenses at the canal zone and to build a third lock, Panama officials wanted its skilled citizens classified as gold employees. Congress, lobbied by the American Federation of Labor, disagreed and required that all skilled positions be reserved for US citizens. To placate Panama’s outrage, President Roosevelt and the State Department re-classified a small number of Panamanians as gold employees. “To the great dismay of many,” Rebecca Herman concluded, “a white or mestizo Panamanian was still a silver Panamanian.”<sup>93</sup>

### Puerto Rico

In 1898 the United States annexed Puerto Rico, and in 1917 Puerto Ricans became U. S. citizens. As federal military officials in the late 1930s considered war preparedness, they looked to Puerto Rico as a vitally important strategic center for the Caribbean. Over the next few years, from 1939 to 1947, the federal government invested over \$700 million in new military facilities that employed thousands of residents. In 1939-1940 the army designated the Puerto Rico Department as a new command and established Borinquen Field at Punta Borinquen, basing a bomber squad there. In 1940 President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the construction of Naval Station Roosevelt Roads to serve a role in the Atlantic similar to that of Pearl Harbor in the Pacific. The Navy’s Tenth Naval District was headquartered in San Juan while other military installations dotted the countryside. In total the US government appropriated 53,484 acres for its various projects. There were new roads, air bases, bridges, tunnels, and housing projects for military personnel.

All of the projects created new jobs for residents as well as contractors brought in from other countries. Discrimination soon raised its ugly head. In building the naval base, for instance, a military contractor would not allow its local Puerto Rican employees to have cold water to quench themselves on hot, humid days—that perk was reserved for workers imported from other countries, whom they called continentals. Military contractors also paid continentals as much as three times more than they paid local labor. Thus, the US military and its contractors introduced a greater degree of

segregation and discrimination than what had been previously experienced on the island, concluded historian José L. Bolívar Fresnada.

The civilian home front experience was similar to those of other coastal areas in that constant, mandated blackouts were a necessity, but residents in Puerto Rico suffered more food and supply shortages than most communities due to the German U-boat campaign of 1942-1943. German U-boats and submarines sunk so much US shipping in the Caribbean that federal authorities stopped the shipment of food, supplies, and fuel to Puerto Rico while also stopping exports (such as sugar) from Puerto Rico. Food shortages marked the home front experience here more than any place in the continental United States; Victory Gardens were a necessity in Puerto Rico.



"Weighing and sewing bags of sugar at the South Puerto Rico Sugar Company," 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

In the spring of 1943, military officials decided to combat the U-boat threat in part by establishing Fort Brooke at what is now the **San Juan National Historic Site**. The Army located this major Caribbean base within historic Castillo San Felipe del Morro and hired local residents to work with soldiers to build officers' quarters, communication centers, barracks, and observation posts. New construction at Fort Brooke in 1943 literally bridged the past and present. While using walls and buildings from Castillo San Felipe del Morro that at some places dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Army engineers added modern concrete observation bunkers to monitor submarine activity while installing tunnels to connect the older parts of the fort to the new construction. The end result was a fascinating blend of new and old at a strategic location commanding the view of San Juan Bay.

World War II also shifted relations between Puerto Rico and Washington and led to considerable social and economic change, away from a reliance on agriculture, especially sugar production, and toward a more industrial and urban society. The crucible of war, as documented by historians Jorge Rodríguez Beruff and José L. Bolívar Fresneda, also led to “a redefined political relationship with the United States,” thus creating the foundation for a new, different post-war Puerto Rico.<sup>94</sup> Puerto Rico gained its first native-born governor in 1946, and a year later Congress granted Puerto Ricans permission to elect their own governors. In 1952 Congress approved a new constitution recognizing Puerto Rico as a US commonwealth capable of conducting its own affairs.

### US Virgin Islands

In 1917 the United States purchased what is now the US Virgin Islands from Denmark for \$25 million out of concerns that the islands would fall under German control during World War I. Residents were American nationals and not US citizens due to a series of decisions between 1901 and 1922, collectively known as the Insular Cases, where the US Supreme Court ruled that the US Constitution was not applicable to the possessions recently acquired in the Caribbean and the Pacific. The Court also ruled that incorporated territories could be eligible for potential US statehood, whereas unincorporated possessions, such as the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam, were not eligible for statehood.<sup>95</sup>



Hospital on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, December 1941, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Sugar was the primary crop of the island, and it became a very strategic resource during World War II. When the Japanese occupied the Philippines in 1942, followed by the success of German U-boats and submarines in the Caribbean hindering sugar exports from Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, federal authorities had little choice but to place sugar consumption in the 48 continental states under strict rationing from 1942 to 1947.

Considering the US Virgin Islands as a strategic Caribbean location, the US military added several new installations, starting in March 1940 with a submarine base on St. Thomas. The St. Petersburg *Times* observed: "A small force of Marine Corps planes is based now at St. Thomas but otherwise the island which the United States bought from Denmark in the World war for \$25,000,000 has figured little in the Caribbean defense scheme."<sup>96</sup> That situation was changing, rapidly. In July the Marine Corps added to the existing air base at Bourne Field in Lindbergh Bay by extending the main runway by 4,800 feet and establishing the US Marine Corps Air Station at St. Thomas (the area is now the Cyril E. King Airport and the University of the Virgin Islands). The Navy followed suit, enlarging the submarine base at Crown Bay significantly. The project included providing housing for almost 1,000 servicemen, a bombproof powerhouse, and a torpedo overhaul shop. By the spring of 1943, the Navy Operating Base at St. Thomas was in service.

In 1944 Fort Segarra was built on Water Island to help protect the naval submarine base at St. Thomas. Named in honor of Lt. Col. Rafael Angel Segarra, a decorated World War I veteran from Puerto Rico, Fort Segarra included barracks, gun emplacements, underground bunkers, and concrete observation posts.

The many wartime construction projects reoriented life on the Virgin Islands as new arrivals threatened to dwarf the native population. Tight supply margins on daily necessities meant that strict rationing remained in place until the last months of the war. **Virgin Islands National Park** encompasses land from both St. Thomas and St. John to interpret this military history within the context of the islands' deep past and natural resources.

### American Samoa

What happened at the Virgin Islands was a pattern repeated at US possessions in the Pacific, where the armed forces expanded military bases both large and small in the face of the Axis threat, challenging native populations to adapt quickly to the military crises. The small Pacific installations meant much in 1942 because Hawai'i and the Philippine Islands, home to the primary US military bases in the Pacific, were severely damaged or lost in the first months of the war. The December 7, 1941, bombing of Pearl Harbor crippled the Pacific fleet; the Japanese controlled the Philippines by May 1942.

With the loss of the Philippines, American Samoa survived as a key United States base of operations in the southern Pacific and a communications link to Australia and New Zealand. The territory was established as a US territory in 1900, and placed

under the administrative authority of the Navy. The **National Park of American Samoa** at Pago Pago encompasses some 4,000 acres, and preserves and interprets many home front places and stories.



Samoan Naval Guard Force, Samoa Naval Station, 1943, National Archives

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, military officials immediately redoubled earlier efforts to strengthen the defenses of Pago Pago harbor. These improvements in 1941 largely took place on Tutuila Island. Then on January 11, 1942, a single Japanese submarine attacked the naval station. Nine days later, a US Marine Corps force of 5,600 men arrived, along with heavy artillery, to defend against future attacks. By October 1942 over 14,000 servicemen were based on the islands of Tutuila, which was part of American Samoa, and Upolu, which was part of independent Western Samoa.

The size of the military force overwhelmed the islands, and turned Tutuila Island into a training base. The Marines recruited hundreds of Samoans into a reserve guard. The home front impacts expanded beyond the induction of adult men into the armed forces. Residents gained new skills in transportation, communication, and supply-chain management. The supply division alone employed 2,500 civilians. In March 1943 over 120 vessels passed through Pago Pago harbor; hundreds of Samoans worked as stevedores throughout the war years. Others gained trade experience as plumbers, electricians, welders, auto repair, carpentry, and secretarial work. The new job opportunities began to shift American Samoa from being a plantation-based economy into a wage-based economy, while Pago Pago expanded as the major urban center.

The Navy continued to administer American Samoa as a US territory until 1951; authority passed to the Department of the Interior in 1956. American Samoans adopted their own constitution in 1967 and held initial constitutional elections in 1977. They are

classified as US nationals, not US citizens, which meant they owe allegiance to the United States and have some political rights. US citizens have full citizenship rights and can run for federal and state offices and have the right to vote in federal and state elections.

### Hawai'i Territory

Hawai'i Territory is central to the home front story of the Pacific Islands. After the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaiians not only had to deal with the dead and injured but also a devastated harbor, roads, housing, and economy. The United States had annexed the islands in 1898, and the territory had developed considerable autonomy in the years since, but those freedoms immediately disappeared. The military imposed martial law, replacing the territorial governor with a military governor, answerable to no one but his superiors, and taking over territorial government buildings for military uses. Civil courts were closed, replaced by military courts. High school students, who had been training in JROTC units, found themselves suddenly mobilized and placed under military command.

Life was difficult for civilians. Every adult was fingerprinted and had to carry an identification card, which could be demanded at any time. Newspapers were censored. Overnight it seemed the entire chain of islands had become one massive military base. Martial law would continue until October 1944 while military-imposed curfews on nighttime movement remained in effect until July 1945.

The repair of military installations happened quickly; by December 23, 1941, 20,000 men were working on construction projects in the islands. Six months later, the armed forces had increased their presence to 106,000 ground and 16,000 air troops. Restoring military might to Hawai'i was one concern. US officials in both Hawai'i and Washington, D.C., had a second worry: what to do with the thousands of Hawaiian Japanese. About one-third were US citizens, who lived on the islands. Were these civilians a military threat? If so, how could the threat be neutralized? Over the next several months, federal officials explored different solutions, from sending 15,000 Hawaiian Japanese to the mainland for incarceration to considering designating one of the Hawaiian Islands as a massive incarceration camp. Some military officials pushed back against such a massive deportation, knowing that many of the Japanese were among the territory's most skilled workmen and that such a massive movement of people would be a drain on both military and civilian resources. Finally, almost 2,000 Hawaiian residents of Japanese ancestry were sent to mainland incarceration camps.

The largest incarceration camp in Hawai'i was near Honolulu and its stories are told through the **Honouliuli National Historic Site**. When this camp opened in March 1943, its 160 acres contained 175 buildings, 14 guard towers, and 400 tents. Within its barbed wire fences were both civilian internees—about 400—and 4,000 prisoners of war. Most of the civilians were Japanese Americans but there were also a number of German American internees at the camp. The prisoners of war came largely from the

Pacific campaign, but the camp also served as a transfer point for POWs from both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres.

Martial law ended in Hawai'i on October 24, 1944. President Roosevelt restored the writ of *habeas corpus* through Presidential Proclamation No. 2627, which also designated the former territory as a military area. Hawai'i became a state in 1959.

### Philippine Islands

The Philippine Islands, a US commonwealth scheduled for independence in 1946, were a battleground from the very beginning of the war, when Japanese aircraft attacked Clark Field within hours of the Pearl Harbor bombing as part of a coordinated air attack that also struck Wake Island and Guam. The Japanese ground forces took Manila within a month. US forces returned to the Philippines in October 1944, but Japanese occupation of portions of the Philippines did not end until Japan surrendered in September 1945. The islands achieved independence in 1946.

### Guam

The **War in the Pacific National Historical Park** in Guam interprets World War II from early December 1941 to the end of hostilities and preserves numerous military installations from the Pacific conflict. The war devastated Guam, which was the first US possession to fall to Japan on December 10, 1941, ending more than 40 years of control by the US Navy. The defeat launched what proved to be a brutal occupation by the Imperial Japanese Army that lasted until the summer of 1944.

In 1899, Guam inhabitants had been placed under naval law since in the eyes of the United States the entire island was a naval base. The naval commander at Guam also served as governor. The CHamoru (the CH is used as one letter in their alphabet), the island's indigenous people, were not considered US citizens but rather American nationals at the time of World War II.

In 1940 Guam had 20,177 CHamoru residents and 800 US military personnel and their families. Despite the second-class citizenship provided to the CHamoru, and the negative assumptions about Pacific Islanders held by many in the American military, the CHamoru remained largely loyal to the United States and worked diligently in jobs to help the Navy prepare for war. Naval operations brought low-paying jobs, so most Guam CHamoru, even if they had military-related employment, continued to practice agriculture, with copra, from coconut trees, as the primary product.

In 1941 the Navy dredged Apra harbor and installed new water systems in preparation for possible war. Congress approved additional improvements in March, but little of the work was finished by June 1941 when the base commander requested permission to remove US military dependents from Guam. In October, the dependents left for Hawai'i, leaving behind a skeleton force at the naval base of 300 that included 120 CHamoru as members of the Insular Force Guard, who were armed with 150 World

War I-era bolt-action rifles. When Japanese forces invaded Guam in December 1941, the CHamoru basically had to face them on their own.

A large number of primary sources attest to the cruelty of the Japanese occupation of Guam. Liberation did not happen until June 1944 when US armed forces bombarded Japanese positions, a series of barrages that also destroyed the villages of Agat, Asan, and Piti. Japanese officers forced thousands of CHamoru to leave their villages and march east to new confinement camps, with the largest being the Manenggon Concentration Camp, which held over 10,000 CHamoru in deplorable conditions. Many residents thought they had been gathered in the camps for execution, but Japanese military forces had put them in camps to monitor the Indigenous residents with fewer troops and to keep them from assisting the US armed forces.

In late July and early August 1944, a US invasion wrestled control of Guam from the Japanese and freed those in the incarceration camps. Almost immediately military officials turned the island into one large construction site for the building of air bases for an eventual bombing campaign against Japan. The military installed a naval base at Apra harbor, three airfields in the north, and a munitions depot in the upper Talafofo drainage. Seabees, the construction force of the US Navy, also carved out a four-lane, 12-mile-long highway to connect the different installations.



Northwest Field, Ritidian, Guam, 2006, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HAER, HAER

The Guam CHamoru and the Navy did not think highly of the CHamoru-Japanese families and Japanese civilians still on the island. They treated these people of Japanese descent harshly, and incarcerated them in camps similar to those for Japanese Americans in the United States at the outset of the war.

Tun Ignacio M Sablan, a CHamoru, recalled in 1981:

“When the Americans came, you know, they were so friendly, so nice, you tell them what you want, as opposed to under the Japanese rule whereby you [had] to be very careful in what you’re saying. Here you can say everything you want as long as it is true. And that’s the difference. We live as a free man, and this is the first time that we realize.”<sup>97</sup>

Ben Blaz, a CHamoru who was a teenager at the time of World War II but later became a Marine Corps general then a delegate to the US House of Representatives, observed that neither the Japanese nor United States occupations asked

“what we as a people wanted. Progress, whatever there was of it, moved at a pace of the administering authority. It was his choice to uncover or cover at his will what he wished to know about us, and it was our lot to remain mute to the process. The attitude developed that the foreigners' right to dominate the land was established by their finding it, and the people - like the flora and fauna - had no alternative but to acquiesce in silence.”<sup>98</sup>

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The military government also imposed martial law, lasting until May 1946, which meant curfews, continued rationing, and restrictions on travel. The fighting that summer to liberate Guam had left an estimated 19,000 CHamoru homeless. Rather than replace CHamoru housing, the military initially kept most CHamoru in tent-cities and discouraged families from traveling between the different camps under martial law. The Navy, however, took steps towards recovery by building schools and medical centers while introducing new items into local diets, such as Tabasco and Spam. But the value of such items pale in comparison to the loss of land the CHamoru experienced during the military expansion—an estimated 85,000 acres went to military bases. Not until the summer of 1946 would residents be freed from their camps.

The years of 1944 to 1946 transformed Guam’s landscape, as the land became militarized, and the United States displaced many islanders from their homes. By 1947 some 1,350 families had lost their land. In 1950 Congress created the Territory of Guam and provided the CHamoru with the rights of US citizens.

### Northern Marianas Islands

The Northern Marianas Islands of Saipan and Tinian were also battlefields for almost all of World War II. Japan took control of the islands in late 1941, and they remained important Japanese bases until the summer of 1944. Historians agree that the Japanese occupation was harsh, with the Chamorro (the preferred spelling in the Northern Marianas) being both agents and victims, as historian Keith L. Camacho points out. In the summer of 1944, US armed forces invaded, repelled the Japanese, and

occupied Saipan in July and Tinian by the first of August. Hundreds of indigenous residents died in the fighting.

Like at Guam, construction crews immediately began expanding existing Japanese runways to handle big B-29 bombers. The stories of these home front impacts are shared at the **American Memorial Park**, a 133-acre park on Saipan Island that is owned by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and managed in cooperation with the National Park Service.

Wartime construction projects had priority over providing replacement housing and public works for the native inhabitants who were interred at Camp Susupe in Saipan and Camp Churro in Tinian. At Camp Susupe, the military designated three zones: area one for the Chamorro and Refaluwasch, area two for Koreans, and area three for Japanese and Okinawans. Camp Churo, on the other hand, had mostly Japanese residents. US military officials viewed the Japanese and Okinawans at both camps as enemies and feared armed resistance. While designating the Chamorro, Refaluwasch, and Koreans as liberated peoples, military officials still cast a suspicious eye toward their camps and maintained strict military control.

The groups had limited freedoms. For instance, the camps could elect their own mayor but then that person reported to the military government and had little real independence. The military also designated Indigenous police who worked with US officials to monitor individuals and activities. Ethnic divisions marked camp life. Tensions were high at Camp Susupe, where the Japanese refused to accept Okinawans as equals and were angry over having to share their area with them. Comparatively, Camp Churo operated with fewer constraints as the Japanese civilians were given leeway to manage the camp's affairs, although always under the watchful eye of the US military.

At both camps, the military provided medical care along with water and food rations. US officials also held English instruction classes and religious services while providing some employment opportunities. In return, some Pacific Islanders enlisted as scouts to assist military personnel and to monitor Japanese activities. The Chamorro had long considered the sharing of food, labor, and medicine as acts of service and assistance that called for reciprocal responses and obligations. The Chamorro thus recognized the greater freedoms and opportunities under US military rule and became more tolerant of the reality of US occupation of their lands.

The openness of the Chamorro was not immediately reciprocated. In the Northern Mariana Islands, a return to self-government became a years-long process because the United States hesitated to grant any autonomy until its military had turned the islands into one large base. By the end of 1944, the military had finished a massive new base on Tinian, known simply as North Field, that could park almost 300 B-29 bombers. North Field had four 8,000-foot-long runways for the military's use in its planned extensive bombing campaign against the Japanese. On August 6, 1945, crews loaded the "Little Boy" atomic bomb in the "Enola Gay" B-29 bomber, which flew to

Japan and dropped the bomb over Hiroshima. Three days later the crew of the “Bockscar” (the bomber is preserved at the National Museum of the US Air Force in Dayton, Ohio) loaded an atomic bomb, named “Fat Man,” for its attack on Nagasaki. Japan declared its surrender on August 15, 1945.

From 1947 to 1978, the United States administered the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands on behalf of the United Nations. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands became a US territory in 1975, after which it adopted a constitution in 1977, and its first constitutional government assumed office in 1978. The Republic of the Marshall Islands became a sovereign country in 1979 and became a Freely Associated State in 1986. The Federated States of Micronesia left the trust territory to become an independent country in 1979, a Freely Associated State in 1986, and a member of the United Nations in 1991. The Republic of Palau became an independent state in 1944 and entered into a compact as a Freely Associated State that same year.

### Alaska Territory

The home front story of Alaska Territory spans the length of World War II but also involves a successful Japanese invasion and occupation in the Aleutian Islands. Congress established Alaska Territory in 1912. In 1939 federal authorities approved construction of naval bases at Sitka, Dutch Harbor, and Kodiak. Then came the implementation of the Lend-Lease program starting in the spring of 1941. Ladd Field, which is a National Historic Landmark in Fairbanks, became the primary point where the United States transferred military equipment, goods, and food to the Soviet Union.

At the same time that the United States had opened a supply lifeline to the Soviets, military strategists in Alaska and Washington, D.C., feared that Japan would try to take parts of Alaska to use as military bases from which they could attack the continental United States. That fear sparked the creation of the Alaska Territorial Guard in September 1941. The native population quickly mobilized as 6,300 Alaska Natives, including 27 women, from 107 different communities, joined the guard. Also known as the Eskimo Scouts, the guard had no real age limit; children as young as twelve joined, as well as adult men as old as eighty. They patrolled and looked for any enemy activity, including ships, airplanes, spies, and military balloons along Alaska’s thousands of miles of shoreline.

After Pearl Harbor, military officials strengthened naval defenses at Sitka, designating it as the Sitka Naval Operating Base and implementing a US Army coastal defense system that led to three new forts being constructed and a new 8,100-foot-long aircraft runway being added. The **Sitka National Historical Park** preserves significant resources related to the 1941-1943 military expansion, such as eight once-fortified earthworks along its Totem Trail.

Protecting seaports was a major step in protecting Alaska Territory, but officials did not want to be reliant solely on ocean-going vessels. Needing to move vast amounts of resources between Alaska and the continental United States, authorities worked with

the government of Canada in early 1942 to create the Alaska-Canada Military Highway, commonly called the ALCAN today. The road stretched from Dawson Creek, British Columbia, Canada, to Delta Junction, Alaska Territory, United States. The US Corps of Engineers, thousands of contractors, and Indigenous laborers began construction on March 11, 1942, finishing the initial route in late October and dedicating the road on November 20, 1942. Even though the roadbed was rough and the bridges rickety, ALCAN was a remarkable achievement. In nine months an approximately 1,600-mile road through the mountains, forests, and tundra in a sub-arctic region was constructed. The highway was the most expensive wartime military construction project in North America and one of the great engineering feats of the war.



Alcan highway camp, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

The Corps of Engineers used 10,607 soldiers, segregated into different regiments, with 3,695 of the total number being African American soldiers associated with the 93<sup>rd</sup>, 95<sup>th</sup>, and 97<sup>th</sup> Engineer General Service Regiments. The segregated white regiments included the 18<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>, 340<sup>th</sup>, and 341<sup>st</sup> units. White officers commanded each regiment, with General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., whose father had been a Confederate States of America general during the American Civil War, in charge of the entire operation.

General Buckner's prejudiced attitudes about African Americans and the Indigenous peoples of Alaska shaped subsequent decisions and hindered the project. Buckner did not want African American engineer regiments sent to Alaska, but if he had to accept them, he wanted them at remote assignments and not close to port cities because he feared—with no justification—that the African Americans would then stay,

establish relationships with Indigenous people, and become a threat to white Alaskans. He told General C.L. Sturtevant of the Corps of Engineers in April 1942: "The very high wages offered to unskilled labor here would attract a large number of them [African Americans] and cause them to remain and settle after the war, with the natural result that they would be interbred with the Indians and Eskimos and produce an astonishing objectionable race of mongrels which would be a problem here from now on."<sup>99</sup>

To open an overland route to Alaska, federal officials were ready to send whatever was necessary. The amount of equipment at the start of construction was immense: 174 steam shovels, 374 blade graders, 904 tractors, more than 5,000 trucks, and endless numbers of bulldozers, snowplows, and cranes. Unfortunately, quartermasters kept the white regiments better supplied than the black units, not just in equipment but also in housing and base amenities.



"Caterpillar tractor with grader widening the roadway of the Alcan Highway," 1942  
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Military officers wanted African American soldiers for the demanding physical tasks of building a road in the sub-arctic wilderness, but they did not want the units to know where their next assignment was going to be. When the 93<sup>rd</sup> Regiment left Louisiana for its new assignment, no one knew where they were headed; therefore, no one had the clothes for the job they would encounter, nor were they given time to acquire cold-weather gear. Once in Alaska, they were segregated in a camp outside of Skagway. When they arrived at the Arctic construction site, they initially only had hand tools, such as axes, picks, shovels, and saws, to do the work. They had to wait for

bulldozers and other heavy construction equipment. Campgrounds for white and black engineers were unequal: white regiments had barracks; black regiments typically only had tents to survive an Alaska winter. Poor housing, poor clothing, inadequate equipment: African American engineers, recalled Paul Francis of the 93<sup>rd</sup>, quickly sized up the “almost intolerable situation. We were treated like convict labor.”<sup>100</sup>

The 97<sup>th</sup> Regiment drew the toughest assignment in the interior of Alaska Territory, where it was bitterly cold and snowfalls were at their highest. They too faced discrimination; the most grievous case was when the army court-martialed and jailed 10 African American soldiers for refusing to ride in the unheated bed of an army truck for a 130-mile drive to Fairbanks when the temperature was -36 degrees. Yet the work got done, often to the amazement of commanding officers and then to their admiration. The determination and grit of the African American engineers were apparent to anyone willing to open their eyes and see.

The assistance of Indigenous men in Canada and Alaska came largely as guides and as laborers. Indigenous women were hired to do laundry, mend clothes, and work in the canteens and field offices of the regiments. The exchange proved unequal in a deadly way. US troops exposed Indigenous people to communicable diseases such as the flu, dysentery, mumps, and whooping cough, for which they had limited immunity. Many died from the diseases introduced, unwittingly, by the engineers and construction workers.

By 1943 the initial “Pioneer Road” was in use. It was largely a 12-foot-wide path in the ground, with corduroy (bound together trees) surfaces at muddy spots and temporary pontoon bridges over creeks and rivers. The road had extremely steep grades, as much as 10 percent at places. Even the pioneers of the nineteenth century rarely had to travel such a rough route, but the ALCAN served the immediate military need. Froelich Rainey wrote for the *National Geographic*: “The country was a wilderness and some of it was barely explored.” Now with ALCAN, the region had a passable road, even if just barely. Rainey described: “Mud so deep that even tractors were swallowed up, dust ankle high which rose in clouds like a dense fog so that a convoy of trucks could be spotted from many miles away, jellylike muskeg which had to be bridged with corduroy, cold, drizzling rain, frigid nights, vicious black flies, and ravenous gnats—all these now are part of the epic of the road.”<sup>101</sup>

In 1943 control of the road’s improvement and expansion passed from the Corps of Engineers to the US Public Roads Administration (PRA), which undertook immediate steps to upgrade ALCAN since the first waves of often-heavy military traffic had turned it into a muddy bog at places. In the next year PRA improved the road to a 24-foot-wide route that had a two-foot-thick stone-and-gravel surface with seven percent maximum grades and some permanent bridges. When the war was over, the United States passed control of the Canadian section to the government of Canada in 1946. Improvements continued, and in 1948 the highway was open to commercial traffic, quickly becoming a popular overland route for tourists wishing to travel rough.

Just as important as the highway was the construction of the Canol Pipeline and the Alaska Military Highway Telephone and Telegraph Line. Engineers in June 1942 began laying the four-inch pipeline, which sent oil to refineries at Whitehorse, Yukon Territories, Canada. There the oil was transformed into airplane fuel and transported to Ladd Field in Fairbanks to power the Lead-Lease program flights between the United States and the Soviet Union. New telephone and telegraph wires, installed by the US Army Signal Corps and hundreds of private contractors, followed the pipeline's right-of-way, improving communications between Edmonton, Alberta, and Ladd Field.

As the engineers built the highway, pipeline, and telephone line, fighting came to Alaska Territory. In April 1942 officials ordered the forced removal of Alaskans of Japanese descent to incarceration camps on the mainland. Fears of Japanese attack became reality in June when the Japanese bombed the Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base and Fort Mears near Unalaska Island, and attacked the Aleutian Islands, occupying Kiska Island and Attu Island. The occupation represented the first time a foreign power had taken territory of the United States since the War of 1812.



Group of Aleut children in front of a school, 1938, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

In response, the US military built new defense positions and bases in the Aleutian Islands and forced 881 Unangaŋ to leave their homelands, moving them to southeastern Alaska where they were typically provided substandard and unsanitary housing. One hundred Unangaŋ died in these internment camps. The stories of their harrowing home front experience are shared at the **Aleutian World War II National Historic Area**, with a visitor's center at the wartime Aerology Building at the Unalaska Airport on Amaknak Island. In May 1943 the US military ended the Japanese

occupation by retaking Attu in a horrific two-week campaign that left 549 US servicemen and an estimated 2,350 Japanese soldiers dead.

Because of its strategic significance, the coastal areas of Alaska Territory were dotted with military bases during World War II. Population booms in Anchorage and Fairbanks overwhelmed local public works and housing. Anchorage grew from a town of 3,000 to a city of 47,000 residents, while Fairbanks's population of 4,000 before the war more than doubled and then doubled again to 20,000. Army soldiers and Navy sailors were everywhere, it seemed, while the territory's tourism industry disappeared.

These vignettes of the home front experience in the Greater United States merely touch upon places, people, and stories of the larger World War II home front. It is a story of valor, heroism, and discrimination, but also one of massive construction projects and massive destruction of places and buildings important to Indigenous people. Themes of construction and destruction also mean we must consider the lasting environmental impact on places like Guam, where the charms of a Pacific Island paradise disappeared under the necessity of military victory as beautiful basins and inlets became concrete-laden airfields and naval ports. Even the engineering marvel of the Alaska Highway was an intrusion into the landscape, resources, and habitats of First Nations peoples and Alaska Natives. After the war, many policymakers identified the new roads, public works, and booming population centers of the Greater United States as progress and building blocks for the future. Rarely did anyone bother to ask the original inhabitants, as Ben Blaz said of the Chamoru, "what we as a people wanted."

## Chapter Eight: Fighting the Double V

"Let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within."

James G. Thompson, "Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half-American,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 31, 1942

We say to Mr. Roosevelt that the war on the home front has lasted long enough. He can end it. He ought to do it now. We expect him to do it."

Baltimore *Afro-American*, January 26, 1943

The United States was a Jim Crow nation when it entered World War II in 1941, and it remained one when the final surrenders of Germany and Japan were signed in 1945. Racial, ethnic, gender, and religious discrimination and hatred impacted the home front experiences of the United States. Indeed, the level of bigotry and spite was so intense at times, one wonders at how the nation stayed united in its fight against the Axis powers. While popular media, from movies to broadsides, proclaimed unity, disunity was always there too.

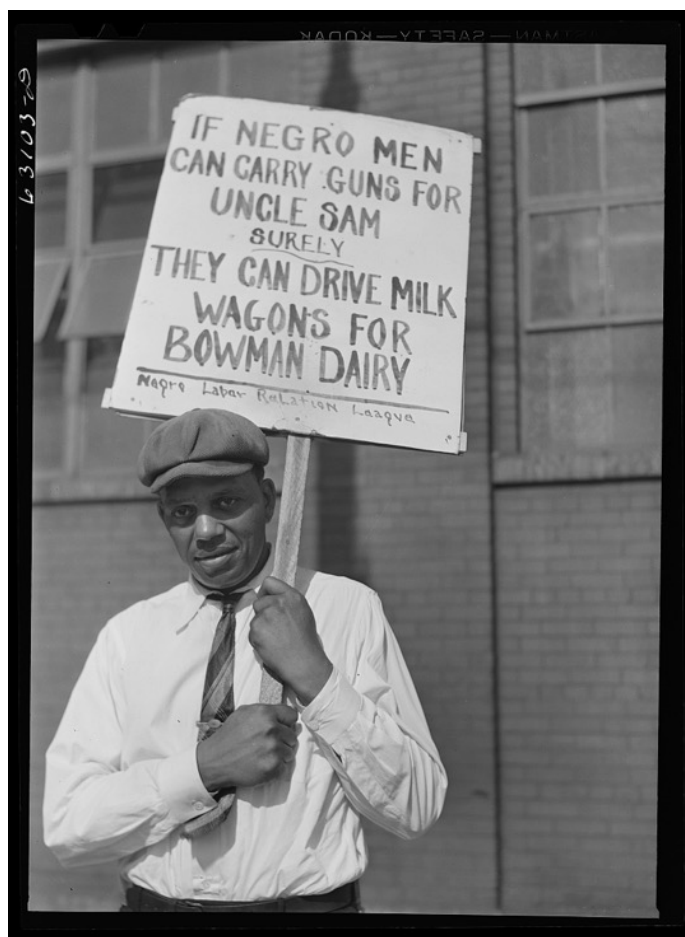
Almost a year before actually entering the world war, in his address announcing the Lend-Lease program on January 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt outlined for Americans why they should ready themselves for war: to protect the essential freedoms of speech, expression, and religious choice, but also freedom from want and freedom from fear. Every one of these essential freedoms spoke loudly to all Americans, but as events over the next four years would show, they spoke most loudly to those who daily faced the challenges of discrimination as they tried to meet their responsibilities on the home front.

Within two months of the congressional declaration of war, African American newspaper editors took Roosevelt's earlier call for freedom and translated it into a call for a "Double V" victory—against fascism abroad and Jim Crow at home. If we were fighting for democracy overseas, black leaders reasoned, why not also fight against segregation and discrimination at home. A "Vanderbilt employee" at Vanderbilt University in Nashville remarked:

"Most Negroes would be more enthusiastic about obtaining victory abroad, if America would stop terrorizing and lynching Negroes at home. The war spirit of Negroes seems somewhat below the national average. As Americans, we must go all out with other Americans to defeat the common enemy. As Negro Americans, we must redouble our efforts here at home so as to assure the race of beneficial meaning in our sacrifice abroad. Regardless of race, creed, color or national origin, only a united people can and will win this war."<sup>102</sup>

African Americans soon discovered that victory overseas, challenging as it was, would be easier than victory at home.

Roosevelt acknowledged the call for fairness. As events unfolded between 1942-1945, however, Roosevelt took only tiny steps toward erasing discrimination and segregation, leaving the Jim Crow nation intact at the war's end. In his mind, the overriding imperative was crushing the fascist threat to the free world--and if that meant that existing imperfect institutions at home had to remain unchallenged, Roosevelt was ready to stand aside and let discrimination persist.



Chicago striker, 1941, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

There was plenty of that. For instance, as contractors hired workers to build an incarceration camp for Japanese Americans in McGehee, Arkansas, in early 1942 they paid white workers a dollar per hour while offering black workers just 40 cents per hour for the same work. In July 1942 Alabama Governor Frank Dixon reminded Washington officials that "the present emergency should not be used as a pretext to bring about the abolition of the color lines in the South."<sup>103</sup> To ensure that the production of the materials for war faced as little opposition as possible, the administration caved to southern leaders, and other industrial and civic leaders nationwide, who wanted to keep

work forces, housing, and public spaces segregated, with the lowest-paid jobs reserved solely for people of color. As companies moved slowly to implement President Roosevelt's 1941 executive order banning discrimination in defense industries (or ignored it entirely), African Americans pushed back and demanded equal treatment.

### Sojourner Truth Homes in Detroit, 1941

The push for equality in the workplace came on the heels of an earlier push for equal treatment in public housing. In 1941 in Detroit, federal officials had announced the construction of Sojourner Truth Homes, named in honor of one of the most recognized nineteenth-century African Americans, as a housing project for African American defense workers. When local government and neighboring whites objected, the Federal Housing Administration caved and within days of Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, it announced that the Sojourner Truth Homes would now be for white workers and the agency would locate a black housing project someplace else. African Americans, led by the Reverend Charles A. Hill of the Hartford Avenue Baptist Church, State Senator Charles Diggs, Sr., and labor leader Coleman A. Young, protested strongly. The federal government reversed direction, again, but when 24 African American families attempted to move into the Sojourner Truth Homes in late February 1942, about 700 protestors met them and refused them entrance; fighting soon followed. To restore peace, Mayor Edward Jeffries, Jr., did not restrain the white protesters, rather he stopped the African American families from occupying the homes.



Conflict at Sojourner Truth homes, Detroit, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

Rev. Hill contacted President Roosevelt and demanded that the federal government intervene. Black leaders exerted more pressure when they organized a mass rally in Cadillac Square in downtown Detroit on April 12, 1942, and formed the Sojourner Truth Citizens Committee to continue advocating for the housing project. The federal government relented and ordered the homes opened to African Americans. Protected by local and state police, plus the Michigan National Guard, blacks began to

move into the homes on April 29, 1942. Within three weeks, 168 families were residents of Sojourner Truth Homes.



Moving into Sojourner Truth homes, Detroit, 1942, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection

### The Formation of CORE in Chicago

While the protests against unfair housing held forth in Detroit, a March 1942 meeting in Chicago of civil rights activists formed the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which included such important leaders as James Farmer, Jr., Pauli Murray, George Houser, and Elsie Fisher. Members of CORE followed a strategy of non-violent resistance through boycotts and demonstrations, an approach they took from the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, who then was leading the independence movement in India. In May 1942, for instance, James Farmer led a sit-in demonstration at Jack Spratt Coffee house, 47<sup>th</sup> and Kimbark Avenue, in Chicago. CORE members fought against segregation at public recreation, entertainment, and lodging businesses in northern cities throughout the war.

The **Bronzeville-Black Metropolis National Heritage Area** in Chicago preserves places and stories associated with the formation of CORE, the Double V campaign, and the African American home front. The influential *Chicago Defender* newspaper was headquartered here and regularly reported on the problems of discrimination across the country. Many residents pushed back—hard—on the discriminatory policies practiced by local industries, the stockyards, and railroads in wartime Chicago. And thousands of African Americans joined the armed services. The **Pullman National Historical Park** in Chicago tells the story of the Pullman porters—

African American men who worked the company's famed sleeping and passenger cars and became influential middle-class leaders in many urban communities. The Pullman porters, more so than any other means, helped to distribute the *Chicago Defender* to southerners and helped to make it a national voice for African Americans.

### Fighting Discrimination in Los Angeles

A like-minded organization to CORE, the Negro Victory Committee (NVC), had earlier formed in Los Angeles in April 1941. The Reverend Clayton Russell of People's Independent Church of Christ in south central Los Angeles joined with newspaper publisher Charlotta Bass of the *California Eagle* to form the group, with the goal of pushing back against discrimination in defense industries, labor unions, and housing. But in a Los Angeles transformed by federal spending for shipyards, aircraft factories, and agricultural production, attitudes about discrimination proved difficult to challenge, much less change.

Defense industries, saddled by prejudiced management and labor unions that barred black membership, practiced restrictive hiring policies. If African Americans were hired, they were always placed in low-paid, unskilled positions, no matter their qualifications. Many firms did not hire people of color, period. The NVC pushed back by encouraging black women to flood the US Employment Service with applications for jobs beyond domestic service, while others carried out protest demonstrations and mass meetings. These challenges amounted to little; change only came once the factory labor shortage became acute. Then, federal officials finally agreed to negotiate and enforce a non-discriminatory policy within defense-industry factories.

By 1943, the aircraft industry on the West Coast was at a different place. Two years earlier the industry would not hire African Americans and only hired a few dozen women whether white or black. Now it embraced hiring African American workers, many from southern states who moved to Los Angeles for jobs. In 1940 the city's African American population was 55,000; by 1944 it was almost 120,000 people.

This boom led to white resentment and worry, on the surface, over an increase in crime but more likely centered on the mere numbers of African Americans and Mexican Americans now jostling for space in Los Angeles. The new arrivals could find work, but not housing. Restrictive racial covenants that forbid properties being sold to, or lived in by, people of color were common in many Los Angeles neighborhoods, leaving approximately 5 percent of Los Angeles not covered by the discriminatory covenants. Overcrowding to an extreme was a result, even as African American workers were allowed to move into areas of the city where Japanese Americans had lived before their forced removal and incarceration in early 1942.

### The "Sleepy Lagoon" Case in Los Angeles

Then, in the winter of 1942-1943, fueled by incessant media coverage, Los Angeles residents became fixated on the "Sleepy Lagoon" murder case and trial, where

a grand jury had charged 24 Mexican American youths for the murder of Jose G. Diaz at the "Sleepy Lagoon" reservoir in Commerce.

The police initially interviewed over 300 youths, and then focused on a group of 24 young Mexican American men out of two prejudiced assumptions: (1) Mexican Americans were prone to violence, and since these young men allegedly associated with gangs, they were clearly the perpetrators; and (2) since most of these young men had been wearing zoot suits at the time of their arrest, the clothing itself told the police that the individuals were probably dangerous. Not for the first time in our history, those in charge decided that clothing demonstrated social, even criminal, deviance.

A zoot suit has been defined in many different ways. African Americans had first popularized the style of long suit coats with wide shoulders and lapels, baggy pants gathered at the waist, hats, and lots of color. Jazz artists Cab Calloway and Lionel Hampton wore a version of the zoot suit at their concerts. Mexican American young men and women took that look and made it their own, wearing zoot suits as a badge of ethnicity, rebellion, and pride. The fact that a zoot suit called for lots of fabric allegedly provoked many whites, who thought that such flashy clothes were not in keeping with wartime austerity and rationing.

Prosecutors jailed all 24 youths without bail and refused to let them change clothes, using the zoot suit look as a way to inflame passions against them. When the jury trial began in October 1942, prosecutors made the men keep on the same clothes for a month, so the jury would connect zoot suits to their alleged crime. Nor were the accused allowed to sit with their attorneys or confer with them at recesses. The trial judge consistently ruled against defense motions and attacked the competence of the defense attorneys, belittling them before the jury. Throughout the 13-week trial, the city's newspapers, led by the Los Angeles *Times*, kept a steady drumbeat of prejudiced accounts about the men, always emphasizing the threat of zoot suiters to the safety of the city and the success of the war effort.

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### *Voices of the Past*

In addition to filing an appeal to the verdicts, the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee also mounted its own press campaign to push back against the dominant media coverage against the accused Mexican American young men. A release from 1944 quoted Ben Margolis, the defense attorney:

"In the Sleepy Lagoon case, the prosecution can proudly claim that it secured the conviction of more defendants for a single death than has ever been obtained in the history of California. To this claim can be added the facts: first, that 12 boys so convicted averaged about 17 or 18 years of age; second, that the boys, with one exception, were all of Mexican origin; third, that there is no direct proof that any one of the boys ever touched the boy whom they were charged with murdering; and fourth, it is clear

that most of the boys were not at or near the spot where the killing allegedly occurred.

It was not just these boys who were on trial. The Mexican people were being tried. And the trial took place not only in the courtroom but in the press with its barrage of lies against the "Mexican pachucos" and "zoot suiters," and before the Grand Jury where a sheriff's report characterizing the Mexican people as bloodthirsty wildcats was submitted.

The boys were arrested as the result of a most vicious drag-net; statements were obtained from them through brutal third degree methods; a trial was had in which they were denied the right to sit with their own counsel; and prejudicial errors too numerous even to mention were committed during the course of the trial.

These are some of the explanations for the convictions. Yes, these boys were convicted. So was the Mexican community. Neither is guilty. The blot against both must be removed."<sup>104</sup>

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On January 12, 1943, the jury convicted three men of murder in the first degree, which carried a sentence of life in prison; nine were convicted of murder in the second degree and given sentences of five years to life, while five others were convicted of assault.

The unfairness of the entire affair, from the arrests, the indictments, the high-handed nature of the prosecution, the conduct of the judge, and the inflammatory media coverage outraged Mexican Americans. They joined with white supporters to establish the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee to launch an appeal, which finally proved successful in 1944 when the appellate court ruled in favor of the defendants.

### Intensifying Hate Strikes and Violence

In other areas of the country, hate strikes gained in popularity. The term refers to labor actions where white workers would strike to keep segregation and discrimination in place, either by keeping people of color out of the workforce entirely or by keeping their employment in menial, low-paid work rather than as equals on the assembly line. Hate strikes particularly increased in number and ferocity from March to May 1943.

When hate strikes failed to get attention of company officials, some white workers turned to violence to keep black workers in their segregated place. In the spring of 1943, the Alabama Gulf Coast city of Mobile was overrun and overcrowded with whites and blacks looking for work in the Gulf Coast shipyards. Alabama Dry Dock and Ship-building Company hired more than 7,000 African American men and women, but none in skilled positions, while a competitor, Gulf Shipbuilding Company, hired only a few black workers. In May, Alabama Dry Dock promoted a dozen black men to welder

jobs, once only held by whites. Even with the promotions, some 2,500 white welders still dominated the work. That number didn't matter; what mattered was that a black man had taken what was perceived to be a white man's position. On May 25, an estimated 4,000 white workers attacked black workers indiscriminately, and many African American laborers fled the shipyards for their safety, never to return. Eventually the company created four segregated shipways where African Americans could hold skilled positions, but would be supervised by white foremen.

On May 27, 1943, the Roosevelt administration reacted to the problems in Los Angeles, Mobile, and many other cities, by issuing Executive Order 9346, which reconstituted and enhanced the powers of the Fair Employment Practices Committee. It replaced the earlier Executive Order 8802, issued as a response to A. Philip Randolph's threat of a March on Washington in 1941, with a directive that established 12 regional offices for investigations of discriminatory practices.

### The Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles

Washington's reaction came too late for a place like Los Angeles, where simmering resentments from the Sleepy Lagoon case burst into flames from June 3 to June 8, when servicemen, police, and groups of white residents assaulted Mexican American, Filipino, and African American young men and women across the city in what became known as the Zoot Suit Riots. Invading the city's Mexican American neighborhoods, packs of servicemen, who had been based mostly at the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center near present-day Dodger Stadium, hunted for Zoot Suiters. They attacked them, often disrobed them, and then destroyed or burned their clothes. Los Angeles cops did little to nothing to quell the attacks, claiming that it was a matter for the military police. Encouraged by the media who praised the servicemen, the violence continued for days, eventually pushing into the African American neighborhood of Watts, where resistance stiffened. Finally, on June 8, the military declared Los Angeles off limits to servicemen, ending the violence.



Zoot suiters outside Los Angeles jail, June 9, 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection

Deep resentments remained about the unprovoked violence that had been directed at the city's Mexican American and African American neighborhoods. Both communities understood that they had to band together to stem the hatred. Rev. Clayton D. Russell asserted in the *California Eagle*, on June 10, 1943: "Because we in the Negro community are more unified and have greater political power, we must lead in the demand for FULL POLICE PROTECTION OF THE MEXICAN COMMUNITY IN LOS ANGELES ... We must say to our great United Nations neighbor, Mexico--SALUDOS AMIGOS! And, by Heaven, we must MEAN IT!"<sup>105</sup> Historian Kevin Leonard points out that Los Angeles African Americans equated the Zoot Suit Riots "to Black experiences in the South. As long as people were allowed to be scapegoated or turned into victims of violence, then no one was safe."<sup>106</sup> The Committee of American Unity, a Los Angeles-based civil rights advocacy group, pointed a finger at the city's media and local government, especially the police, for encouraging and supporting the rioting.

### Riots during the Summer of 1943

Such overt racial divisions alarmed Washington. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt on June 16, 1943, called out racial discrimination as the cause of the Los Angeles riots. She observed that race problems were expanding nationally and admitted "we must just begin to face it."<sup>107</sup> Even as the First Lady addressed the press, another race riot was taking place in Beaumont, Texas. An estimated 2,000 white shipyard workers, joined by perhaps as many as 1,000 white residents, marched to the courthouse, intent on lynching an alleged black rapist. However, the alleged victim could not, or would not, identify any of the men in jail as her attacker. The mob then broke into smaller groups and invaded the African American business district, leaving it in shambles. The mob also ransacked more than 100 residences. Two people, one white, one black, died in the two days of rioting.



Detroit Riots, June 21, 1943, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

Four days later rioting struck Detroit. Belle Isle was a large island adjacent to downtown Detroit that had a golf course, aquarium, botanical garden, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities. There on a hot summer evening, a much more deadly riot began, caused in large part by racially charged rumors and counter-rumors coming out of a fight between black and white youths on the island. The result was millions of dollars in damages to the city's neighborhoods. The violence continued for about 24 hours until an estimated 3,500 troops, called to the scene by Detroit Mayor Edward J. Jeffries and Michigan Governor Harry Kelly, took control and cleared the streets. Nine whites and 25 blacks died, with 17 of the black deaths attributed to the police while no white deaths were attributed to law enforcement. Almost 700 other people were injured.

The African American press had had enough. On June 26, 1943, John Sengstacke of the Negro Publishers Association begged President Roosevelt to "take immediate steps to end the activities of those who encourage and promote racial prejudice, and to halt the spread of racial clashes." Sengstacke emphasized, "We cannot readily throw our full resources into the fight against the enemies of democracy abroad if internal strife is constantly provoked by native fascist[s]." <sup>108</sup> In the August edition of *The Crisis* magazine, civil rights activist Pauli Murray published the poem, "Mr. Roosevelt Regrets," about the rioting in Detroit, asking:

What'd you get, black boy,  
 When they knocked you down in the gutter,  
 And they kicked your teeth out,  
 And they broke your skull with clubs  
 And they bashed your stomach in?  
 What'd you get when the police shot you in the back,  
 And they chained you to the beds  
 While they wiped the blood off?  
 What'd you get when you cried out to the Top Man? <sup>109</sup>

What was Murray's answer? The President regretted the matter but was unwilling to take new aggressive steps to quell the violence then roiling the nation. On August 1 in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, a police officer shot a black soldier, outraging residents and sparking two days of violence that left 5 dead with some 400 injured. Many of the neighborhood's white-owned stores were looted or vandalized. African Americans, both working-class and middle-class, were frustrated that their call for a Double V seemed yet so far away by the summer of 1943.

### Labor Activism on the Home Front

During the war years, the labor movement also looked for its own Double V, in an attempt to ensure that the recent gains in wages, working conditions, and worker rights were not lost in the ceaseless but necessary effort to provide the armaments of war. After Pearl Harbor, labor and industry generally agreed to a non-strike pledge to avoid disputes whenever possible in the name of unity and support for the armed forces. But by 1943, labor considered its share of the extraordinary prosperity created by massive

defense production to be far less than that of the defense industry. Machinists at San Francisco shipyards walked out in March. Rubber factory workers in Akron also struck for better wages the next month. Nationwide dozens of significant strikes occurred in industrial plants and businesses. Coal miners proved the most determined in fighting for better wages; hundreds of thousands participated in three different strikes in May and June. United Mine Workers leader John Lewis, according to opinion polls, was the most hated man in the nation. Calls for action from the American public led Congress to approve, over Roosevelt's veto, the Smith-Connally Act, also known as the War Labor Disputes Act, in late June 1943. The law empowered the President to seize and take control of any defense industry hobbled by a strike. The law also ended the ability of labor unions to make financial contributions in federal elections.

It took over a year for the Roosevelt administration to invoke the legislation in a situation where the needs of wartime production ran smack into long-standing patterns of discrimination, despite federal rules to the contrary. In August 1944, the federal Fair Employment Practices Commission ordered the Philadelphia transit system to end its policy of discrimination and hire African Americans as motormen. The transit union, representing some 10,000 members, refused and walked out for a six-day strike. The federal government reacted immediately, sending 8,000 troops to seize and operate the city's transit system while President Roosevelt threatened to immediately draft striking employees who did not return to work. The strike was soon over. African Americans now had the right to become motormen in the transit system, a fact for which William Barber, one of the black motormen, gave full credit to President Roosevelt: "If it wasn't for him sending the troops in, ordering these men to go back to work, I figure nine times out of ten, I would never have become a driver."<sup>110</sup> The dispute worried some about the future of race relations in the city. A writer for *Time* magazine concluded that "though Philadelphia had providentially survived its first major crisis in racial relations without the loss of a single life, dangerous seeds had been planted."<sup>111</sup>

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### *Voices of the Past*

William Barber was one of the first African American transit drivers in Philadelphia. He recalled the 1944 wildcat strike from those who resisted an end to discrimination:

"The white drivers said they definitely did not want blacks on the trolley cars or buses because they were inferior, they smelled, they carried a certain amount of disease, and just about anything they could possibly say about a black. As far as they were concerned, it was perfectly all right for blacks to clean the toilets, but they did not want us operating the buses or the trolleys."<sup>112</sup>

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By 1944 there were dangerous seeds of discontent at many places in the United States. For example, in the strategically critical Montana copper industry, miners in Butte and Anaconda had refused to embrace the employment of women, African

Americans and Mexicans to address the severe labor shortage. Only when the labor shortage was acute did the miners bend, a little, by agreeing to hire a few dozen white women but not people of color. W.E. Mitchell, manager of the Anaconda smelter, admitted: "We only want to employ these women because of the manpower shortage, and we prefer to employ them on jobs they can do rather than open ourselves up—you fellows and the management—to the possible influx of minority groups."<sup>113</sup>

On the third anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, discrimination remained a barrier to full production in many defense industries. In the summer of 1944, however, the military asserted more leadership, by eliminating segregation in transportation, post exchanges, cafeterias, and theaters at its installations. One of the first bases in Alabama to implement the new rules was Maxwell Army Air Base in Montgomery. There, a black seamstress named Rosa Parks, who would play a pivotal role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-1956, envisioned new worlds with the barriers of discrimination lowered: "You might just say Maxwell opened my eyes up. It was an alternative reality to the ugly policies of Jim Crow."<sup>114</sup>

Violence to maintain discrimination never disappeared during World War II. At too many places, violence actually intensified as the push for the Double V met determined opposition, whether in the South, North, or West. The goal of ending Jim Crow America while winning the war was not achieved. Yet, significant steps forward had taken place. Key institutions such as the Congress for Racial Equality had been established; civil rights leaders such as James Foreman, Pauli Murray, and Rev. Clayton D. Russell had moved to the forefront. Doors to increased federal involvement to curtail discrimination had been cracked open. In the next decade, many African American World War II veterans would take determined actions to make Rosa L. Parks's "alternative reality" an actual reality in all spheres of public life.

## Chapter Nine: Secret Cities and Keeping Secrets



Oppenheimer with Groves at the end of the war, U.S. Department of Energy, Flickr photostream, HD.4G.017

Any overview of America's World War II Home Front has to address secrecy. First, and perhaps foremost, there were the secret cities and facilities that developed the war's single biggest secret—the creation of the atomic bomb. Building the bomb involved some of the most famous scientists of the time, but it also involved hundreds of thousands of average citizens who either built the secret cities or the facilities where the bomb was created. Often, these citizens had no idea that their mundane, repetitive tasks were contributing to something much, much larger. Those who did have a clue also knew that they could share the secret with only a handful of people—and that list excluded their spouses and families.

“Mum is the word” also guided those who passed on sensitive information through codes or who actually spied on the enemy. The armed forces had several specialized units whose tools of trade centered around secrets, from how to share them effectively but confidentially to how to intercept secrets and turn them into valuable intelligence for the armed forces. Secret cities, Americans who dealt in secrecy—both were a necessity and part of the home front story.

Let's begin with the secret cities. Los Alamos, New Mexico; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and Hanford, Washington, are three places forever linked by the role that military officers, scientists, and average citizens played in the Manhattan Project, the top-secret effort to build an atomic weapon. These three places are designated World War II Heritage Cities because here the war front merged with the home front to develop the science and technology, supported by factories and universities across the nation, to build atomic bombs before the Axis nations built their own. Each project area had an enormous impact on their state's home front history as they employed tens of thousands of workers and created or expanded towns that remain today. Those workers and those towns still take great pride in their joint achievement: the creation of a

weapon that contributed significantly to the end of the war. Those same citizens acknowledge today that their achievement came with significant costs: displacement of thousands of residents and a lasting impact on the surrounding environment. There are few better places in the United States to explore the experience of the World War II home front than at these three cities, which now provide the foundation for the **Manhattan Project National Historical Park**.

### Einstein and Szilard's Letter to Roosevelt, 1939

The story of the Manhattan Project began at a home office in Peconic, Long Island, where world-famous physicist Albert Einstein signed a letter drafted by fellow physicist Leo Szilard to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on August 2, 1939, a month before the German invasion of Poland. In the letter, Einstein and Szilard warned Roosevelt that recent experiments in creating a nuclear chain reaction in uranium would open the door to the possibility that “extremely powerful bombs of a new type may thus be constructed. A single bomb of this type, carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory.” The physicists were concerned that Germany, after its earlier annexation and occupation of Czechoslovakia/Sudetenland, had halted the export of uranium from mines under its control. They worried that German scientists were carrying out experiments in nuclear chain reactions. Einstein recommended that the president “have some permanent contact maintained between the Administration and the group of physicists working on chain reactions in America.”<sup>115</sup> Alexander Sachs, a Wall Street economist and unofficial advisor to the President, made sure Roosevelt received the letter on October 11, 1939, and Sachs convinced the President that the letter was important.

Roosevelt listened, but acted cautiously. Over the next two years, the administration appointed an advisory committee on uranium and even provided some research funding for physicist Enrico Fermi and Leo Szilard's work on nuclear fission at Columbia University in New York City. Then in June 1940, as defense preparations were increasing, Roosevelt established the National Defense Research Committee and appointed Vannevar Bush, head of the Carnegie Foundation, as its director. The new committee had additional funding to explore the best path to creating an atomic bomb.

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### *Voices of the Past*

“The release of atomic energy has not created a new problem. It has merely made more urgent the necessity of solving an existing one. One could say that it has affected us quantitatively, not qualitatively. As long as there are sovereign nations possessing great power, war is inevitable. That statement is not an attempt to say when war will come, but only that it is sure to come. That fact was true before the atomic bomb was made. What has changed is the destructiveness of war.”<sup>116</sup>

Albert Einstein, 1945

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Early 1941 experiments at the Radiation Laboratory of the University of California, Berkeley, indicated that plutonium could yield the best fissionable material. In the summer came research from England that indicated that a bomb could be fueled from uranium-235 and that the weapon could be developed in time to play a decisive role in the war. By October Vannevar Bush was ready to meet with President Roosevelt and Vice-President Henry A. Wallace to urge the administration to commit to building atomic weapons. Roosevelt agreed to support continued research and development. On November 27 Bush reported progress and a consensus within the scientific community that a bomb could be built, but Roosevelt did not approve further steps until January 19, 1942, more than a month after Pearl Harbor.

### Establishing the Manhattan Project, 1942

In May 1942 officials decided that an all-out effort to build an atomic bomb was a critical national priority. By the next month, US Army Corps of Engineers officers had reached out to colleagues, like Theodore B. Parker and B.C. Money maker of the Tennessee Valley Authority, for suggestions on locations that had large amounts of land, near but not too close to a city, with natural boundaries that might help contain damage from accidental explosions, and that had adequate railroad access to move all of the necessary workers and materials.

To manage its efforts, the US Army Corps of Engineers in August established the Manhattan Engineer District, so named because the first headquarters was in Manhattan, New York City. By the next month General Leslie Groves, who had supervised the construction of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., was placed in charge. Groves chose 56,200 acres—eventually increased to 59,000 acres—for what later became known as Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Here, scientists, engineers, and tens of thousands of workers would explore the uranium path to building a nuclear weapon.

Groves also chose J. Robert Oppenheimer, a physicist at the University of California, Berkeley, to lead the research and design for the bomb at a new top-secret laboratory at the existing village of Los Alamos, New Mexico. Los Alamos also was a remote location largely isolated from large population centers but close enough to railroad transportation to make it a viable location.



Statues of Oppenheimer and Groves at the Ranch School, Los Alamos, NM, 2025, Carroll Van West, photographer

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### *Experience Your Parks*

**Manhattan Project National Historical Park** maintains units at three primary centers of operations associated with the creation of the first atomic bomb. Los Alamos, New Mexico, was where project scientists and engineers, led by J. Robert Oppenheimer, established a laboratory for the design and fabrication of the first atomic bombs. Various facilities at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, employed tens of thousands of workers who explored the best ways for enriching uranium to be used in the atomic bombs. The works at Hanford, Washington, constructed the first nuclear production reactors to produce plutonium used in the Trinity Test in the summer of 1945. All three cities have visitor centers, museums, and guided tours where you can explore the stories, places, and people of the Manhattan Project in greater depth.

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The other pathway to building a bomb was with plutonium and decisions on that location took a bit longer. Part of the challenge was to build a reactor pile to produce plutonium—and the Metallurgical Laboratory at the University of Chicago had been exploring the process since February in a space under the abandoned grandstands of Stagg Field.



Stagg Field, Chicago, U.S. Department of Energy, Flickr photostream, HD.5A.011

Then on December 2, 1942, scientists led by Enrico Fermi produced the first self-sustaining chain reaction at the Metallurgical Lab at Stagg Field. An urban university, however, was no place to locate a production facility. Groves began to search for options in the Pacific Northwest, choosing Hanford, Washington, after a December 16 visit. Hanford was in eastern Washington and not mountainous but isolated, and like Oak Ridge, it had abundant resources of hydroelectric power and lots of water from the Columbia River. President Roosevelt approved the necessary but enormous funding for the scattered production centers to work independently, yet in coordination, to manufacture the nuclear material and then build the bomb. Construction of the three operation centers began immediately in early 1943.

### Oak Ridge, Tennessee

The development of Oak Ridge began with displacement. Within weeks of the start of construction, the project had moved about 1,000 families—approximately 3,000 people--wiping the towns of Wheat, Robertsville, Elza, and Scarboro from the map. Historian Colbi Layne Hogan found that “with very few exceptions, the citizens of Wheat, Scarboro, Elza, and Robertsville were forced to vacate, sometimes in as little as fourteen days.” Hogan concluded: “Displacement was the most important part of Oak Ridge’s story to those subjected to it, but for Clinton Engineer Works, clearing the region of residents, buildings, and structures was merely step one in the arduous process of creating an atomic bomb.”<sup>117</sup> By April 1943, only a handful of families remained within the huge Oak Ridge Reservation boundaries.

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### *Voices from the Past*

Some residents displaced by the Clinton Engineer Works resented the loss, even when they learned that it was for the war effort. Barbara McCall Ely was a fifth grader when her family was forced from the Wheat community. In 1998 she bitterly denounced the federal officials who enforced the removal:

“I hate them, we never got to go back home. It’s still restricted. I never laid eyes on it. But I understand that all they did with our homes was bulldoze them off the hills. They never used them. Why they wanted to go in our homes and invade it, I don’t know. But they just bulldozed them off of the hills. So all the stuff that they said we couldn’t have just went in the ground.”<sup>118</sup>

The first facility completed at Oak Ridge—named K-25--was where gaseous diffusion produced enriched uranium. Construction of the \$500 million factory began in June 1943, and by 1944 the Carbide and Carbon Chemicals Corporation, part of Union Carbide, operated the mammoth facility, which had a length equal to eight football fields. Twelve thousand workers operated the time-consuming and expensive process of separating uranium-235 from uranium-238, although most of them had no idea of the technological process they were assisting with due to the secrecy that permeated every part of the district.



“Alpha Track Calutron at the Y-12 Plant in Oak Ridge,” U.S. Department of Energy, Oak Ridge National Laboratory

The same was true at Y-12, the electromagnetic separation plant, which was managed by the Tennessee Eastman Corporation. The employees there, a number that reached over 22,000 by the summer of 1945, worked in a complex of buildings and structures. Electromagnetic separation was a final step in enriching uranium-235. Thousands of workers began construction in February 1943 at an 825-acre site in Bear Creek Valley, where surrounding ridges would lessen the damage from any major accidents or explosions. There were 9 main process buildings as well as 200 auxiliary structures, totaling almost 80 acres of floor space.

At Y-12 approximately 10,000 “Calutron Girls” operated the arrays, or racetracks, that separated uranium-235 from the more common uranium-238. These young women monitored 1,152 calutrons that in turn monitored the racetracks, producing 140 pounds of uranium-235 by the summer of 1945. Depending on what you did and where you

worked in the facility, employees at Y-12 were exposed to radiation, sometimes at substantial levels, while those who worked in the chemical recovery facilities were exposed to and handled toxic substances daily. Historians have pointed out the new technology was inherently dangerous, and that, from the viewpoint of the present, the production processes “were an accident waiting to happen.”<sup>119</sup> Through diligence, or luck, or maybe both, an accident never happened.

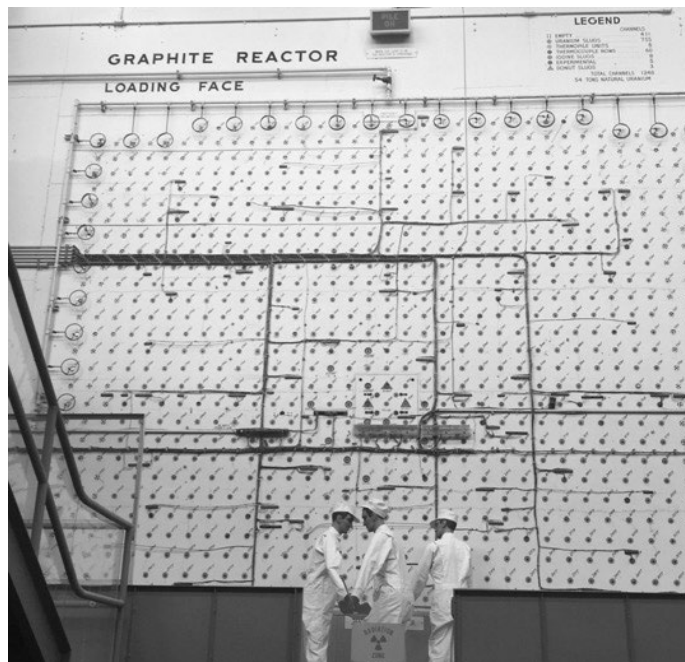


“Calutron Girl” at Y-12, U.S. Department of Energy, Manhattan Project National Historical Park

Despite the resources devoted to enriched-uranium production at Oak Ridge, the scientists at Los Alamos wanted more than what K-25 and Y-12 were expected to produce. Oppenheimer convinced General Leslie Groves to consider thermal diffusion as another method to enrich uranium. In July 1944, workers began to construct S-50, a thermal diffusion plant. By April 1945, 1,600 people worked at S-50, but efforts there were short-lived; the plant was shut down in September 1945.

Those who worked at the graphite reactor, X-10, knew they were operating some of the most advanced technology in the world. Scientist Alvin Weinberg recalled in 2018: “It is hard for us old timers to convey the wonderment of the time—and it was wonderment—that we could use uranium to produce energy. It was an unreal aspect to us.”<sup>120</sup> The Oak Ridge reactor was designed for continuous operation—to produce a steady but controlled nuclear chain reaction—that would help train personnel to work at the larger reactors and plutonium separation facilities at Hanford, Washington. Design work began in February 1943, and the reactor was operational by November 4, 1943. The reactor also produced necessary experimental amounts of plutonium that helped the scientists and engineers at Los Alamos to design the “Gadget” bomb that was

exploded at Trinity, New Mexico, and the “Fat Man” bomb that was dropped over Nagasaki, Japan, on August 9, 1945.



X-10 Reactor, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 2018, Carroll Van West, photographer

Those who worked at X-10, along with other Oak Ridge facilities, understood that they were being exposed to radiation. The dangers of that exposure worried everyone. In early 1943, General Groves recruited Dr. Stafford L. Warren, an expert in radiology, to be the Chief Medical Officer of the Manhattan Engineer District. Warren, who also was commissioned as a colonel in the Army Medical Corps, moved to Oak Ridge in June 1943. The deputy medical officer was Dr. Hymer Friedell, who held the rank of captain. Together, Warren and Friedell established the medical division at Oak Ridge, which was in place before the X-10 reactor was finished and before other major facilities were in operation. The medical division set standards for radiation exposure and handling of hazardous materials, although the division always lacked the necessary manpower to monitor all of the different contractors involved with the Manhattan Project.

Building an atomic bomb demanded an Atomic City as quickly as possible. “Not since the days of our pioneering forefathers has a group of people had within their grasp an opportunity such as is offered the residents of Oak Ridge,” claimed town manager Capt. O.E. O’Meara in 1943. “Most of us have never before or will never again be in a position to build our own community—to our own specifications. Most of us have never been confronted with such a responsibility.”<sup>121</sup> Of course the military made most of the decisions on what would, and would not, be constructed on the secret base.

The military contracted the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill to design the town. Homes were needed immediately so the architects turned to new ideas about the relationship between mass production, design, and materials. The best homes were single-family homes of varying sizes built with cemesto, a fiberboard

material that had cement and asbestos bonded to each side for insulation and fire resistance. Some people were housed in trailers while others lived in dormitories or apartments.



Trailer housing, 1944, Oak Ridge, U.S. Department of Energy, Flickr photostream, HD.4D.040

The most rudimentary dwellings were called “hutments.” These typically sixteen-foot-square buildings housed four-to-six people and were often among the few places where African Americans could find space to live. Tommy Stevens recalled living in a hutment as a youngster: “These wooden huts were square, and there was a bed in each corner. In the center of the floor was a coal heater that heated up the whole Hutment. The area had a community cafeteria and bathhouse, and in the morning, everybody made a mad dash to the bathhouse and a mad dash to the cafeteria and then a mad dash to the bus stop to go to school or work.”<sup>122</sup> Consistent with the Jim Crow attitudes and laws of Tennessee, the architects designed a segregated place, with the African American section having streets named after prominent African American colleges and universities, such as Tuskegee Drive, Wilberforce Avenue, and Fisk Avenue. African American children attended a segregated school.

At first, officials assumed Oak Ridge would have about 13,000 residents. By 1944 that number had been eclipsed several times over, reaching approximately 80,000, and housing became a number-one priority. The well-laid plans of the architects and the US Army Corps of Engineers were adjusted to meet the amount of people needed to keep Oak Ridge at peak production and that number soared from 1944 into the spring of 1945. To meet the housing demand, officials turned first to “flattops,” prefabricated housing made of plywood glued to a wooden frame with a canvas roof that the Tennessee Valley Authority had used at some of its construction camps. Next came the temporary dwelling units (TDUs) that were moved from other federal projects to Oak Ridge. Called “Victory cottages,” they were designed to last just months and

were little more than plywood shacks with roll roofing that the makers hoped would survive the elements as long as the war lasted. Housing for workers proved to be a consistent issue at all three Manhattan Project sites.

### Hanford, Washington

The Hanford Engineer Works, with over 600 square miles, was a huge land acquisition, even for the federal government in World War II. E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company began construction on March 22, 1943, and over the next 30 months it constructed 554 buildings related to the production of plutonium. The work at Hanford proceeded in a similar fashion to what had happened at Oak Ridge. In March 1943, residents received a 30-day notice that they would have to leave the area—a forced removal that impacted approximately 2,000 people along with members of the Wanapum Indians, who lived for centuries in this part of the Columbia River valley. The Wanapum were relocated to Priest Rapids, about 40 miles northwest. Also barred from the land were the Nez Perce, the Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Tribal members had used the resources of the land for centuries.



Hanford reactor, January 1945, U.S. Department of Energy, Manhattan Project National Historical Park

Wiped from the map were the towns of Hanford and White Bluffs; indeed, at the latter place, the military exhumed the graves of the White Bluffs Cemetery and moved them to a new burial site in Prosser. The DuPont company kept the smaller town of Richland and used its basic outline to create a new company town for its employees. Adding to the stress, confusion, and emotional upheaval of removal was its inconsistency: Farm families were given longer to leave so they could harvest crops since food production was another top priority for the federal government.

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*Voices of the Past*

“We lost a lot of people, lost a lot of personal things, a lot of people lost a lot of things. We lost because we didn’t get to come here, but we were very—had an opportunity to still live in that type of an atmosphere where we were told about things and we could identify with them when we got to come here. And so that’s important to us, you know. We knew about them and we were still living here, and we will still live next to the river and we never ever left so—and we always were concerned about this place. We never—broke no gap in there.”<sup>123</sup>

Rex Buck, Jr., Wanapum tribal member

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An estimated 50,000 whites and 15,000 blacks worked on the Hanford construction crews. The ratio reflected a federal requirement that DuPont hire enough African Americans to represent between 10% and 20% of the workforce. There were three separate reaction complexes, two complexes for chemical separation, and a fuel manufacturing and research center. Located about six miles apart—to lessen dangers from explosions or accidents--the three reactors each used 200 tons of uranium fuel and 1,200 tons of graphite to control the nuclear fission process. The chemical separation plants then were located about 10 miles south of the reactors, with two large natural features, Gable Mountain and Gable Butte, standing between the two processing areas.



B Reactor, Hanford, National Historic Landmark, U.S. Department of Energy

Enrico Fermi supervised the first installation of uranium at “B” Reactor on September 18, 1944, and the reactor achieved criticality, which means a sustainable nuclear chain reaction, twelve days later. To achieve and maintain criticality in all six reactors called for a large labor force, a substantial amount of nuclear fuel, and large amounts of radioactive waste. The process followed this pattern: After about four to six weeks, a small percentage of the radioactive fuel slugs would be removed into a fuel storage basin, which was filled with water, where they would “cool,” or lessen the radioactivity, for about two weeks. Then the slugs would be loaded into carefully prepared train tankers and moved to the chemical separation plants where, finally, the plutonium would be separated from the irradiated uranium. It took about two tons of uranium to produce one pound of plutonium.

That ratio helps to explain the staggering amount of environmental damage from radioactive waste at Hanford today. The federal government is carrying out a massive cleanup operation that involves a huge permanent landfill named the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility and the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant for liquid waste. At the waste-treatment plant, workers use the process of vitrification where the waste is mixed with glass-forming material, subjected to high heat, and transformed into solid matter. Federal officials have demolished contaminated buildings and all of the reactors save for “B” Reactor, which has been preserved as part of the **Manhattan Project National Historical Park**. Hanford leaders admit, however, that their plans will not address all of the waste injected into the ground and water of Washington state since some dumps were never documented.

Along with the industrial complexes at Hanford, DuPont also erected a construction camp and an employee village, which was initially called the Hanford Engineer Works Village but is now known as Richland. DuPont contracted with Gustav A. Pehrson of Spokane to design the plans and specifications for all of the village’s buildings, with an estimated population of at least 6,500, growing to perhaps as large as 12,000. While the project eventually kept 26 original Richland buildings for various uses, the project was mostly newly built. The first residences were ready by late July and construction continued until June 1945.

Richland had eight different house types, located on spacious lots, with most being duplexes, while single family homes, built for project managers and leaders, were nearer the Columbia River. The designs of most houses reflected the one-story, unadorned Minimal Traditional architectural style that was popular in 1940s suburbs. There also were dormitories for single male and female employees. Throughout the village, architect Pehrson strived for a “democratic” landscape. He explained:

“High morale cannot be achieved by crowding skilled and veteran workers into inadequate dwellings. Neither can it be predicated upon salary, position, or caste distinction. No village can eliminate such distinctions entirely for it is the American tradition to aspire to executive status, and where such men locate will undoubtedly be considered favored territory;

but insofar as the planners could arrange these matters, all types of houses were scattered throughout the project.”<sup>124</sup>

African American workers lived outside the model village. Single men and women were assigned segregated barracks while black families lived in the segregated area of East Pasco, not Richland, where they had to navigate through a dark underpass of the Northern Pacific Railway’s tracks to reach other parts of the city. In East Pasco, African Americans built their own recreational facilities, like clearing a field, adding a backstop, and laying out a baseball diamond, at a place that is now part of Kurtzman Park. During the 1944 holiday season, DuPont offered its white workers holiday events such as a dance and stage show while blacks were told to pick from a ping-pong tournament or bingo. After the height of construction had passed, many African Americans left but about 1,000 families stayed at East Pasco. Unlike Oak Ridge in Tennessee, where state law mandated segregation, Hanford developed in a state where segregation by law did not exist. However, restrictive racial covenants in housing were common, and many places in Washington State practiced housing discrimination.

### Los Alamos, New Mexico

Enriched uranium from Oak Ridge and plutonium from Hanford were the raw materials for atomic bombs—but making a bomb that worked was the responsibility of the scientists and thousands of workers assigned to the Manhattan Project’s research and development laboratories at Los Alamos, New Mexico.

The Los Alamos project, initially called Project Y, began taking shape in late 1942 when Gen. Leslie Groves and J. Robert Oppenheimer agreed that the Manhattan Project needed a central location for the necessary theoretical and experimental work to create an actual nuclear bomb. They chose Los Alamos Ranch School, an isolated male boarding school on the Pajarito Plateau northwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico, as a good place to start. Oppenheimer and his brother had a ranch in New Mexico’s Pecos Valley, and Oppenheimer loved the state. Plus, the Ranch School had several log buildings that could be converted quickly into offices, residences, and workspaces. Adjacent land from the nearby Anchor Ranch would provide more room. At that time, the US Forest Service owned much of the surrounding land—meaning that the necessary tens of thousands of acres needed for the district would be easy to acquire or access. Government attorneys soon acquired the school and its buildings for \$225 an acre and paid \$43 per acre for the land of the nearby Anchor Ranch.

But there was more to the Plateau than the Ranch School and Anchor Ranch. Thirty-six homesteads, 30 of which were owned by Hispanic families, also were there. The government wanted these homesteaders off the land and were not willing to offer much in return: usually between \$7 and \$23 an acre, far less than the offers to the owners at Ranch School and Anchor Ranch. Rosario Martinez Fiorillo, a homesteader descendant, bitterly observed that letters to the families were in English, and no one offered translations: “What else could they do? Because they were frightened by these people in uniform. They came with guns and whatnot, all of a sudden they came to them

and they told them, ‘Well, you can’t come and plant anymore over here. We’re going to take over. The government wants your land.’”<sup>125</sup>

The Los Alamos Ranch School received its notification that the government now owned the property on December 7, 1942. The school canceled the holiday break and accelerated its academic schedule so four boys could graduate by the time the school closed two months later. As that was happening, remembered Peggy Bond Church, “Bulldozers moved in, and other weird machines roared up and down digging ditches for the foundations of future buildings. Everything was conducted in an element of extreme haste and mystery.”<sup>126</sup>

In the early weeks of the project, Oppenheimer and his staff worked from 109 East Palace in Santa Fe in the mornings and often spent the afternoon inspecting the ongoing construction in Los Alamos. The laboratories at the new city did not officially open until April 15, 1943. At 109 East Palace, Oppenheimer’s trusted secretary Dorothy McKibben ran the office, provided passes, secured necessary equipment, arranged for transportation, and served as a sounding board for complaints. The Santa Fe office remained the administrative center until May 1, 1943, when Oppenheimer and the bulk of operations shifted to Los Alamos. McKibben remained at 109 East Palace as a gatekeeper where she helped newcomers reach the secret city.



Hans Berthe house, Ranch School, Los Alamos, 2025, Carroll Van West, photographer

At Los Alamos, key scientists such as Oppenheimer and Hans Berthe lived in converted former Ranch School teacher homes. These dwellings had bathtubs—the rest of the school residences did not—and as a group the homes gained the nickname of Bathtub Row. The nickname is telling as it hints at the actual stratification in housing that newcomers encountered that spring and summer. Phyllis K. Fisher, the wife of physicist Leon Fisher, observed that the construction workers “had the poorest housing of all. They lived in corrugated metal Quonset huts, which had minimal room separation and no insulation from heat or cold. There were never enough resident laborers, nor enough with the proper skills. So daily, from the world outside came a bus with Indian and Spanish-American day laborers as well as maids. In the late afternoon they vanished by bus to their homes in the valley below.”<sup>127</sup>

Indigenous people and Hispanics at Los Alamos typically worked in construction, maintenance, or domestic service and became part of the cultural context experienced by the scientists and their families. It was an unequal exchange. On their days away from work, the scientists would visit surrounding pueblos and showed little sense of restraint in how they would walk into Indigenous homes or invade sacred ceremonies at the pueblos. To adorn their homes or show to visitors, they also took valuable artifacts from the many archaeological sites near Los Alamos. Indigenous crafts changed too, as pottery and rug production, for instance, became tied to meeting the new and ever-growing Los Alamos market. Charlie Masters, who lived in the area before the Manhattan Project arrived, observed that pottery-making shifted from “bowls made as gifts of love” to “mass production resulting from the Hill’s [a nickname for Los Alamos] unprecedented demand.” She added: “A phenomenal amount of black ware was produced, for the Los Alamos folk had an insatiable appetite for these plain, rich bowls, plates, vases, plaques and candlesticks which would not shout ‘regional’ too loudly when placed next to Wedgwood or pewter back home.”<sup>128</sup>

While the townsite and laboratories were under construction in early 1943, Oppenheimer traveled the nation to recruit a set of brilliant scientists to join what he envisioned as an academic community working in the isolation of Los Alamos. Oppenheimer later remarked:

“Almost everyone realized that this was a great undertaking. Almost everyone knew if it were completed successfully and rapidly enough, it might determine the outcome of the war. Almost everyone knew that it was an unparalleled opportunity to bring to bear the basic knowledge and art of science for the benefit of his country. Almost everyone knew this job, if it were achieved, would be part of history. The sense of excitement, of devotion and of patriotism in the end prevailed. Most of those with whom I talked came to Los Alamos.”<sup>129</sup>

Los Alamos became “an ivory tower frontier boomtown.”<sup>130</sup> The scholars included Luis Alvarez, Enrico Fermi, Hans Bethe, Norris Bradbury, Isidor Rabi, Richard Feynman, George Kistiakowsky, John von Neumann, Edward Teller, Cyril Smith, Lilli Hornig, and Robert F. Bacher. Oppenheimer organized the efforts of the scientists into four divisions: theoretical, under Hans Bethe; experimental physics, under Robert Bacher; chemistry and metallurgy, under Joseph W. Kennedy; and ordinance, under Capt. Deke Parsons of the US Navy.

Of significant assistance to the scientists were the communication skills of soldiers assigned to Project Y from the Women’s Army Corps, who kept the different laboratories and the scientists in touch with each other and with project officials. Paging was common—and as the WACs moved through lab buildings calling out names for phone calls, the paging became an indirect way that scientists learned who and where their colleagues were.

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### *Voices of the Past*

[The scientists] “arrived, breathless and sleepless and haggard, tired from riding on trains that were slow, trains that were held up for troop trains, trains that were too crowded to take on the hundreds of passengers waiting on the platforms, tired from missing connections, and having nothing to eat, and losing their luggage, or sitting the dawn hours in an airport waiting for a plane.... The new members were tense with expectancy and curiosity. They had left physics laboratories, chemistry, metallurgy, engineering projects, had sold their homes or rented them, had deceived their friends, had packed their *lares et penates* [personal items], and launched into the unknown and unheard of.”<sup>131</sup>

### Dorothy McKibben, the “Gatekeeper” to Los Alamos

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The scientists were discouraged from bringing their wives or husbands, and certainly children, to Los Alamos. But dozens came anyway and were immediately shocked by the rough, rustic environment but more so by the fact that Oppenheimer’s academic community was actually a secret society, and they could learn nothing about what their spouses did on a daily basis, or even gain an idea of what the work was about or when it might end. Ruth Marshak recalled: “The Tech Area was a great pit which swallowed our scientist husbands out of sight, almost out of our lives.”<sup>132</sup> An abundance of secrecy, some might say an over-abundance, characterized every facet of life at Los Alamos.



Laundry Day at Los Alamos, c. 1944, U.S. Department of Energy

Women created whatever community existed at Los Alamos among the scientists, the military personnel, and their families. Like millions of other women in home front America, they planted Victory Gardens, planned social gatherings, organized churches, staged plays and musical performances, established a school for base children, and went to work in parts of the project—the commissary, stores, offices, and more rarely, in the technical area, if they met the necessary security clearances. In the theoretical division, the project hired a group of women to serve, basically, as human computers. They used adding machines to compute the long numbers of calculations the scientists needed. The women wore a blue badge; it meant that you could not be told any secrets. Scientists wore a white badge, which meant that secrets could be shared.

By late 1943, Oppenheimer’s original assumption about the size and population of Los Alamos was clearly wrong. There were many, many more residents than an academic village of a few hundred scientists, support staff, and day workers. Thousands of people crowded into the Los Alamos area, and the wartime population peak reached 8,200—about a tenth of the size of Oak Ridge—in 1945.

#### Trinity Test Site, New Mexico

By 1945 Los Alamos scientists and engineers had determined that an atomic bomb, which they called the “gadget,” could be built, but there was not yet a consensus on how the bomb would work. One method depended on traditional gun technology to fire one subcritical mass at high speed into another, creating a supercritical mass leading to a chain reaction. This method depended on enriched uranium from Oak Ridge. The second method was implosion, where shockwaves from explosives would be directed at a subcritical mass of plutonium, which, in turn, would cause the chain reaction. The plutonium came from the reactors at Hanford. Manhattan Project leaders decided in February that the gun method did not need to be tested. Once a final design for the implosion method had been approved in March, the scientists scheduled its test for July.

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#### *Experience Your Parks*

**White Sands National Park**, headquartered at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, is part of the White Sands Missile Range, which contains the Trinity site, where the Manhattan Project exploded the first plutonium bomb on July 16, 1945. The world’s largest gypsum dune field, from which White Sands takes its name, is thousands of years old. President Herbert Hoover first protected the property by designating it a national monument in 1933. Congress, with the approval of President Donald Trump, redesignated White Sands a national park in 2019. During World War II, the federal government began to use some of the monument’s land for training in tank maneuvers. The military established the White Sands Proving Ground in 1945 and that July scientists at Los Alamos used part of the monument for the Trinity test. The park is

periodically closed for missile testing; access to the Trinity site is possible in April and October each year.

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Oppenheimer called the test site Trinity; it was located in an isolated part of the Alamogordo Bombing Range, what is now the White Sands Missile Range, more than 200 miles south of Los Alamos. But the area was not isolated, at least not isolated enough considering the power and radioactivity of the bomb, which most at Los Alamos thought would be equal to 5 kilotons of TNT, if the bomb actually worked. Once Trinity was exploded on July 16, scientists learned their estimates were way off; the bomb had the equivalent destructive power of 21 kilotons of TNT, or four times the explosive power that many at Los Alamos had predicted.

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### *Voices of the Past*

Henry Herrera was eleven years old when he witnessed the Trinity blast:

“I heard a very Large blast and saw a very big flash of light. I got so scared I thought The World is Coming to an End. Then I saw what Looked Like a Large Big Black gray ball of Smoke it was huge and moving, going higher + higher.... This filth landed all over our town covered our village with radiation. It was on our roofs, our gardens, milk cows, rabbits, pigs, turkeys, + chickens. Our water was contaminated because all we had was Rain water from the cistern and ditch water. All the debri [sic] from the Roof was in our cistern After the first Rainfall.”<sup>133</sup>

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The impact of the much larger than expected explosion of the Trinity Test touched many people. An estimated 500,000 people, mostly Indigenous and Hispanic, lived within 150 miles of the explosion, and some lived only 13 miles away. Children treated the highly radioactive white debris of the fallout like snow that morning—because no officials had warned the surrounding communities that an atomic explosion was forthcoming or that its fallout was dangerous. Here is the double-edged sword of Los Alamos: Secrecy was of utmost concern so the Allies could develop a bomb that could end the war, without the technology falling into the hands of the Axis powers. But, that same need for secrecy meant that citizens of the United States were not aware of the dangers of the nuclear explosions and had no choice in the matter of removing themselves from the path of the bomb’s radioactive fallout. A worried Dr. Stafford Warren, the chief medical officer, told General Groves: “The dust outfall from the various portions of the cloud was potentially a very dangerous hazard over a band almost 30 miles wide extending almost 90 miles northeast.”<sup>134</sup>

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### *Experience Your Parks*

The **Harry S. Truman National Historic Site** in Independence, Missouri, preserves Truman's home and interprets his life and career during World War II, both as a US Senator from Missouri, his brief time in office as Vice-President in 1945, and his term as President from 1945 to 1953. As commander-in-chief, President Truman made the decision to use two atomic bombs from the Manhattan Project to strike Japan in August 1945. After the war in 1948, he signed Executive Order 9981 which ordered the desegregation of the armed forces.

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Dr. Warren's concerns were well founded. The radioactive fallout moved to the northeast over a huge region about 250 miles long and 200 miles wide, a much larger region than what the scientists had expected. The largest concentration fell about 30 miles away on Chupadera Mesa. Federal officials, however, maintained operational secrecy. They told residents that the test was an accidental explosion. What no one considered—or at least considered carefully enough--was the impact of the radiation on crops and livestock in the fields and the water supply. There is a small increased risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease from radiation exposure. Federal officials unfortunately did not focus on such long-term effects. Health issues later intensified for many residents who were “downwind” from the Trinity Test site. These “downwinders” helped form the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium to advocate for recognition of the test's impact on their lives and families. In 2011 the US Senate designated January 27 as the National Day of Remembrance for Downwinders. Impacted residents were able to file claims for compensation from the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 1990 until May 2024. The home front of southern New Mexico paid a high environmental and public health price for the successful Trinity test.

### Manhattan Project and Medical Experimentation

By 1945 the Manhattan Project installations were producing consistent, if still small, amounts of enriched uranium and plutonium. A group of scientists at Los Alamos decided to experiment with radioactive isotopes on unsuspecting citizens. Ebb Cade (1890-1953) was a 55-year-old black man who worked construction for the J. A. Jones Construction Company at Oak Ridge. In March 1945 he was involved in a traffic accident that broke several bones and put him in the base hospital. A Manhattan Project official later admitted to Dr. Karl Z. Morgan, director of the Health Physics Division, that the accident gave physicians an opportunity to inject Cade with plutonium.<sup>135</sup> They did not inform Cade of the procedure nor explain the possible dangers. There was no informed consent. In late March 1945, Wright Langham of the health division at Los Alamos sent 5 micrograms of plutonium to Dr. Hymer Friedell, deputy medical director at Oak Ridge. Physicians injected Cade with 4.7 micrograms of plutonium, a small amount that they thought would be safe. Dr. Friedell then reported to Dr. Louis Hempelmann, head of the medical division at Los Alamos, that “we hope to do a number of subjects.”<sup>136</sup>

To chart the course of the radioactive poison, the physicians took bone samples and extracted 15 of his teeth. When Cade had a chance to escape, he left Tennessee. He died from heart failure in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1953.

The case of Eli Cade was not isolated. In April and May, physicians at the Billings Hospital of the University of Chicago and at the University of California at Berkeley also injected plutonium into patients who had not been given an opportunity to provide informed consent. In order to monitor the impact of the plutonium, the Berkeley group paid its patient a monthly stipend for some time so he would stay nearby and be subject to medical monitoring. Plutonium remained present in the patient until he died from heart disease in 1966.

After the Trinity Test of the atomic bomb, scientists resumed medical experimentation at Chicago in late December 1945 and from 1945-1946 at the hospital of the University of Rochester, which had long been a partner with the Manhattan Project. At Rochester, medical professionals injected at least 22 patients with long-life isotopes such as plutonium, polonium, and uranium. There is no evidence that any of these patients gave informed consent or that they knew that the injections contained radioactive material. Nor did the doctors have any expectations that the injections of radioactive material would address any of the patients' medical issues.

The medical experimentation with plutonium that began at Oak Ridge in April 1945 is a little-known but important story of home front life at the Manhattan Project. In time, the use of radionuclides in the detection of diseases would be a commonly used diagnostic procedure. Dr. Karl Morgan became "an international authority on studies of the safe limits for radionuclides in the human body" and continued his work in health physics until he retired from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in 1972.<sup>137</sup>

### Environmental Costs

The long-term environmental and health consequences of tackling a new dangerous technology and building weapons of mass destruction with that technology are still being assessed. Historian Ryan H. Edgington emphasized that the war created Atomic America, "a web of nuclear testing sites, scientific laboratories, and nuclear material production facilities spanning the United States. Twenty critical sites emerged during the war to help the Manhattan Project succeed."<sup>138</sup> These sites included ordnance factories in Morgantown, West Virginia; Sylacauga, Alabama; industrial facilities in Dayton, Ohio, and Wabash, Indiana; laboratories at the University of Chicago, University of California, Berkeley, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, California Institute of Technology, University of Rochester, and Iowa State University; uranium mines in Colorado, Utah, and the Navajo nation of New Mexico; and chemical plants in St. Louis. Making the bomb touched every section of the nation.

The Navajo Nation of New Mexico paid a particularly heavy price due to extensive mining for uranium, not just during the war but in the post-war years too. An estimated 2.7 million pounds of uranium came from the Navajo Nation during World War

II. Navajo leaders had placed few barriers before the uranium mining companies. People in the nation needed better-paying jobs and residents wanted to do their part for the war effort. While the mines offered jobs for some, the mining also created an industrial landscape that historian Traci B. Voyles called wastelanding, or turning the people, their land, and their water into a polluted place, without studies of the possible health impacts being considered or even carried out. Within a generation, the impact was startling and shocking: rates of lung cancer 56 times, and stomach cancer at 82 times, above the national average.

### Keeping Secrets: The Code Talkers

Maintaining secrecy was a preoccupation at the Manhattan Project facilities across the nation. But the Manhattan Project was not the only top-secret program that impacted the World War II home front.

Dating to World War I, Native American code talkers played a vital role in military intelligence. Late in that war, the US military had experimented with code talking by using Eastern Band of Cherokee and Choctaw soldiers to pass on coded messages. The Choctaw Telephone Squad, comprised of Choctaw men fluent in both their native language and English, used their native language to pass on secret messages to United States troops in battle. Before World War I was over, the military in addition had used Cheyenne, Comanche, Ho-Chunk, Osage, and Yankton Sioux soldiers as code talkers.



Preston and Frank Toledo, Navajo code talkers, c. 1944, National Archives

In World War II, the military established specific policies to recruit, train, and use Native American code talkers, involving soldiers representing 34 tribes. The best-known was the Diné, or the Navajo. The first group of 29 Diné code talkers for the US Marine Corps finished their training at the Navajo Communication School to memorize unique military codes using their native and largely unwritten language. Roy Orville

Hawthorne was seventeen when he joined: "We were speaking Navajo and the Navajo that we were speaking wasn't conversational Navajo, but it was from the code that had been developed in sending tactical messages and receiving tactical messages."<sup>139</sup>

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*Voices from the Past*

Thomas H. Begay was a Diné code talker who began his service in 1943:

"You go by memorizing it, you don't carry a book in your hip pocket for the code, they picked up the code worksheet every day after class. It was restricted, and you don't talk about it, the newsmen were barred from interviewing us. They can take pictures, but they said 'no, you don't tell them nothing about the Navajo Code, because it's a secret project.' So we memorized 250 to 300 terms, they tested me, in no time I was out and ready for combat. I was assigned to the 5th Marine Division - it was activated in November 1943 at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California. So that's where I was, I got ready for the combat training, and we had a special training for Code Talkers in that unit. They got us a rubber boat, I guess, and they just dumped us way out in the ocean and said, 'you make it back - inflate your rubber boat, and then come to the shore. Because you're going to be going in submarines and other ways to get into combat, so you're going to have to learn all these techniques, learn how to get to the shore. And then fight with your buddies when he comes to the shore - throw him around, throw you around,' all that stuff. So this is how we were trained, and besides being Navajo Code Talkers we had to learn semaphores, flat hoist, panels, switch board, telephones - the EE-8, the blinker, and Morse code - 'da da dat da daa dat da da dat dat dat,' you know, all that stuff. So that's the way they trained us, then we qualified, and we were sent over to a combat unit."<sup>140</sup>

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Code talkers were typically assigned to work in pairs, where one soldier would operate the radio while the other took and relayed messages in their native tongue before translating them into English. They were sworn to secrecy, and like the scientists at Los Alamos they could not share their work, or admit that they were a code talker, to their wives and families. Hundreds of code talkers served in the military and were critical in many significant battles, such as the Normandy invasion of June 1944 and the successful storming of the Pacific Island of Iwo Jima in February and March 1945, where Marine signal officer Major Howard Connor admitted that the Diné code talkers made the successful invasion possible.

Keeping Secrets: P.O. Box 1142, Alexandria, Virginia

Not until the 1990s did the history of P.O. Box 1142, Alexandria, Virginia, become widely known. The mailing address referred to a top-secret domestic military

intelligence center located at Fort Hunt, a military installation that dated to the Spanish American War and that had most recently served as a Civilian Conservation Corps camp as the **George Washington Memorial Parkway** was constructed in the 1930s.

In May 1942 the Department of the Interior granted the War Department a special-use permit for the development of the Fort Hunt intelligence center, which evolved to include 87 permanent and temporary structures for three secret programs. First, there was the Strategic Interrogation Center (SIC), where the Army's Military Intelligence Service and the Navy's Office of Naval Intelligence would interrogate high-value prisoners of war about German counterintelligence, weapons, possible scientific advances, and German industrial production. Between 1942 and 1945, the SIC interrogated 3,451 prisoners.

Second, and even more secret than SIC, was the escape-and-evasion program provided to the armed forces deployed in Europe. The Eighth Army Air Force flew daylight bombing missions; the training provided servicemen with techniques and materials, such as maps, that could be used to help guide them to safety or at least not to share valuable intelligence with their German captors.

At the Military Intelligence Research program, members of the armed forces studied captured documents and current publications in preparation for the Normandy invasion in 1944.

Whichever program they were assigned to, service men and women were sworn to secrecy. Most of the camp was dismantled in 1946-1947. Only a few buildings remained in 1948 when the National Park Service resumed administration and converted Fort Hunt into a recreational space within the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

### Keeping Secrets: Catocin Mountain Park and Prince William Forest Park

In July 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed William J. Donovan, an attorney who was a Medal of Honor recipient and World War I hero known popularly as "Wild Bill" Donovan, as the first head of the Coordinator of Information, a strategic intelligence effort based at the White House. At Donovan's request, the Joint Chiefs of Staff later incorporated the office of the Coordinator of Information as a better way to share intelligence between the armed forces and the White House. On June 13, 1942, President Roosevelt established the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to replace the Coordinator of Information. Donovan was commissioned as an Army general in charge of the new agency.

The OSS mission was to gather intelligence and to sabotage the enemy's military and intelligence efforts—combining the efforts of today's Central Intelligence Agency and Special Forces. To train its agents, OSS operated numerous facilities, but the first and largest of the camps were at two different New Deal-era Recreational Demonstration Areas (RDA) located close to the District of Columbia. Catocin RDA,

now **Catoctin Mountain Park**, was in Maryland. Chopawamsic RDA, now **Prince William Forest Park**, was in northern Virginia.

In the spring of 1942, the Army negotiated with the National Park Service for special-use permits that allowed the Army to close the parks to all unauthorized personnel—indeed soldiers manned gates at both parks—and to convert park structures to new uses. What had been two rural parks became training bases for espionage, sabotage, and other secret missions to assist the war effort. At Catoctin, the OSS trained servicemen in Special Operations, Secret Intelligence, and Operational Groups. The agency renovated existing CCC-constructed buildings and added new structures where needed. It installed an obstacle course and cleared 15 acres for demolition training and weapons training. Trainees learned to operate M-1 rifles, double-edge daggers, Thompson submachine guns, automatic pistols, hand grenades, plastic explosives, and trench mortars. Capacity at Catoctin's B-2 area reached 149—20 officers and 129 enlisted men—by October 1943.

A second Catoctin area, B-5, converted an existing CCC camp into a headquarters complex, with capacity reaching 25 officers, 40 enlisted men, and 200 trainees by October 1943. Trainees received fake names and fake identification; both instructors and trainees wore black masks to further obscure their true identities.

At Prince William Forest Park, military officials used area A (mostly for training saboteurs and spies) and area C (where thousands of servicemen and citizens trained in ways to survive behind enemy lines). Jacques L. Snyder remembered: "Our training consisted mostly of sabotage operations and the conduct of guerrilla actions ranging from raids, ambushes, and assassinations. Emphasis was placed on stealth, approaching the target without raising suspicion, crawling when necessary for long distances, using maximum cover and concealment as camouflage when needed."<sup>141</sup> Communications School at Prince William Forest Park's Area C emphasized training in using a wireless telegraphy sender/receiver in the park's hilly, densely forested landscape.

Among the successful graduates of OSS training at the Recreational Demonstration Areas were William J. Casey and Richard Helms, both future Directors of Central Intelligence, and the Hollywood actor Sterling Hayden, who is most famous for roles in the movies *Dr. Strangelove* and *The Godfather*. Once the war was over, and the special-use permit ended, the two Recreational Demonstration Areas reverted to the National Park Service. Camp David remains a restricted area within Catoctin.

Secret cities, secret bases, and secret programs shaped the home front experience across the nation. New places of high-tech science emerged in remote locations; rural parks and recreation areas were closed to the public and transformed into government enclaves. Those transformations came with considerable costs. Thousands of long-time residents lost their homes forever and were displaced to new places that they never considered equivalent. Thousands more were suddenly thrust

into new secret towns that seemed to be in the middle of nowhere, where they had to create community and a semblance of normality anew.

The very landscape changed too. Parks and national forest lands became military bases. Some were recovered after the war; others are still military installations today. The environmental clean-up of the Manhattan Project still awaits its conclusion as sections now safe for occupation and exploration have become the **Manhattan Project National Historical Park**, where visitors can learn about and learn from the secrets of Oak Ridge, Hanford, and Los Alamos.

## Chapter Ten

### Coming Together, and Moving into a New World



President Truman at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, November 1945, Abbie Rowe, National Park Service, Harry S. Truman Library & Museum

“World War II radically altered the character of American society and challenged its most durable values. The war redefined the relationship of government to the individual and of individuals to each other, and it posed questions about the relationship between civilians and the military, between liberty and security, and between special interests and national purpose which continue to perplex Americans. Pearl Harbor marked more than the passing of a decade; it signified the end of an old era and the beginning of a new.”<sup>142</sup>

Historian Richard Polenberg made that observation in 1972, within a generation of the end of war, in one of the early historical studies of the home front in the United States. In the decades since, hundreds of scholars have dived deep into the home front past, exploring peoples and topics that historians of Polenberg’s time rarely considered. As we have pulled apart or added and subtracted people, places, and events, we are left with his powerful questions still to consider.

Durable values were challenged, and in reaction citizens often chose paths that we question today. The internment of Japanese Americans, Italian Americans, German Americans, and Unangan of the Aleutians come right to mind. Would we let prejudice and racism blind us to the greater duty of defending the basic rights of citizenship and the freedoms codified in the Bill of Rights? Would the US Supreme Court stand down rather than stand up and stop the exclusion of citizens from their normal lives just because of the color of their skin or the principles of their faith?

The home front and the war also directly challenged long-standing patterns of discrimination in so many aspects of American life. The success of the Tuskegee Airmen, the ingenuity and guts of African American engineers who built the most challenging part of the ALCAN Highway, and the bravery of Navajo codebreakers directly challenged demeaning and inaccurate assumptions about people of color and the roles they could play in modern society. The same was true for citizens with disabilities, as employers and co-workers discovered, perhaps to their amazement, that those with disabilities had skills and abilities that were indispensable to many jobs, that they were not a burden but an advantage. As is evident, the home front experience was not always one of unity and shared sacrifice. Those on the margins understood that the battle for equal rights, fairness, and equal opportunity had only started, that many other challenges awaited. Some witnessed quick change; others would learn to wait for decades.



V-J Day parade, Pearl Harbor, Navy Medicine, Flickr photostream, 09-5043-38

Returning veterans became activists for the right to vote and called for an end to voting discrimination. Miguel Trujillo, from Isleta Pueblo in New Mexico, had attended the Albuquerque Indian School, then the Haskell Institute in Kansas, where he joined the student officer training program. He served in the Marines during World War II,

rising to the rank of staff sergeant. When he returned home after the war, he was determined to gain Native peoples the right to vote in New Mexico. In the summer of 1948, he walked into the Valencia County Clerk's office to register but was refused since he was an "Indian not taxed" and, according to the US Constitution, a ward of the state. Trujillo and his attorney Felix Cohen sued in federal court claiming that Native peoples were native-born citizens of the United States and had the right to vote. Within weeks, a federal district court agreed and all adult Native peoples in New Mexico were granted the right to vote. A determined Marine returned home and changed the lives of tens of thousands forever.

What Miguel Trujillo accomplished in a few weeks would take years for African American veterans to accomplish in the South. Still, the push for equal democracy at home began as soon as many veterans returned home in late 1945 and early 1946. By May 1946, the editors of *Ebony* magazine warned that African American veterans were ready for that fight: "They were not the same Negroes who put on uniforms after Pearl Harbor. The war has been an education. Hungry for knowledge, they have greedily grabbed every opportunity. Travel, better health and living conditions, even higher income has made the Negro younger generation the most aware, most articulate, and the most militant in all U.S. history." Why the change? In the armed forces, the editors explained, the black soldier "discovered he was not alone in his struggle for freedom. He found other US minorities—Japanese, Mexicans, Jews—all fighting an uphill battle for equality under the law and all potential allies."<sup>143</sup>

Medgar Evers in Mississippi, John McFerren in Tennessee, Hosea Williams in Georgia, Whitney Young in New York City, and Oliver Brown in Kansas were among the many African American veterans who shaped the voting rights and civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s. However long it took, the battle against the persistence of Jim Crow America was joined during the home front of World War II. Within ten years many could and would savor the taste of victory, in the slow but steady desegregation of the armed forces, ordered by President Harry S. Truman in 1948, and the Supreme Court's ruling that separate would not, and could not, ever be equal in 1954. Jim Crow America's wall of intolerance began to crumble, one day at a time.

At the same time, formidable roadblocks against change remained. None so more than what at first looked like a godsend: the Servicemen Readjustment Bill of 1944, better known as the G.I. Bill. The law gave veterans their just due: unemployment compensation, funding for education and training, and low-interest loans from the Veterans Administration to buy a house, start a business, or launch the farm. Historians have emphasized how the G.I. Bill not only transformed higher education in the country but also created the basis for the middle-class consumerism that drove the economy to new heights in the 1950s. The United States of today is not the same place without the G.I. Bill.

Other scholars have looked closely at how the law was implemented, and found that discrimination over who could qualify for home or business loans limited the law's value to Hispanic and African American veterans. States, not the federal government,

administered the law. In parts of the nation, veterans of color had their loan requests denied, or approved only for segregated “minority neighborhoods.” Counselors of the US Employment Service directed African American veterans to jobs with little advancement and poor wages. Most states quickly showed that they had no interest whatsoever in fairly administering the program. In 1947 more than 3,200 Mississippi veterans received VA-guaranteed home loans, but only two of those loans went to black veterans. That same year, 67,000 white veterans were awarded loans for homes in the suburbs of New York City; fewer than one hundred were given to black veterans. “By funneling resources to white veterans and denying loans to Black veterans,” concluded historian Matthew F. Delmont, “the GI Bill intensified the racial wealth gap and shaped the terrain of opportunity in America for decades after the war.”<sup>144</sup>

Distorting opportunity for all, especially for those who had given their all through military service, left many African American and Hispanic veterans with a deep sense of anger at a nation that called for democracy but practiced something far different at home. Many returning white soldiers also held resentments towards those who stayed behind and served in the home front, a theme insightfully explored in the Academy Award-winning movie, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, in 1946. That brilliant William Wyler-directed movie also brought needed attention to the challenges and discrimination faced by veterans who had been disabled in the war. The film highlighted a Navy sailor played by actual veteran Harold Russell, who lost his hands in the war and now faced a future with mechanical hooks for hands. Urged by veteran groups such as the Paralyzed Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans, President Truman appointed a Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, and in 1947 a federally supported, national “employ the physically handicapped” week brought attention to the abilities and needs of not only disabled veterans, but disabled home front workers who found themselves without a job as companies retrenched or hired new employees after the war.

Resentments about opportunities lost due to one’s service in the armed services did not just disappear as time passed. One returning white veteran, Elliot Johnson, remarked in 1980: “I felt then, and still do, a sharp resentment for those men who were physically fit and able to go but by one means or another avoided going. When I came back, after being gone for four years, they were not only married, but they had purchased their homes, very nice homes. They had made a lot of money, they had started their families, and I was just starting at the beginning.”<sup>145</sup>

Sacrifice at a time of war is never equally applied. Those on the home front had their own set of sacrifices and social and cultural upheaval to contend with as the world was engulfed in war. President Roosevelt admitted as much in 1944: “These men could not have been armed and equipped as they are had it not been for the miracle of production here at home. The production which has flowed from the country to all the battlefronts of the world has been due to the efforts of American business, American labor, and American farmers, working together as a patriotic team.”<sup>146</sup>

No matter the rigors and dangers of the jobs and the chaotic uncertainty of so many work places in the American home front, veterans often had trouble acknowledging that home front civilians were part of the team that won the war. But they were, and an indispensable part at that. Veterans were right to complain about everything they missed stateside during their service. The home front years unmoored many a town, a family, or an institution. Veterans returned not to the world they had left but a world that was rapidly changing right before their eyes, one that was more urban, more industrial, and still on the move. Not only did the world remain in turmoil, but their nation was often starkly divided, even at war with itself.

How did all of that tension, division, hope, and despair sort itself out, and produce a national will to win and move forward, no matter the cost? First, either in the war front or the home front, people understood that the stakes of this world war were far larger than anything they had ever been associated with. The future of freedom and democracy hung in the balance; the cause was much bigger than anything else.

Americans paid a considerable price. Over 400,000 service men and women dead, another 670,000 wounded, and a home front that had been pulled, pushed, and distorted by the demands of war. Farms and ranches had been abandoned or scarred by over-grazing and fields worked to death. Small towns teetered on the brink of demographic disaster. Opportunity was elsewhere, and as millions rushed to the urban centers, they inadvertently stressed those places as well. Too many cities were bursting at the seams, and urban challenges came to dominate the nation's experience in the second half of the twentieth century. The mechanization of farming was well underway, and rural primacy in much of the nation had passed, leaving social and cultural dislocations that shaped the next generations. The environmental costs were mammoth, as pollutants and toxins were pumped into the air or buried in our soil or dumped in our groundwater and rivers at astonishing rates. On top of that were the places touched by the race to build atomic weapons—too many places still radioactive today, as they will be for generations to come. Technology brought about an end to war and bloodshed, but in return we live with atomic nightmares not easily dismissed.

In his 1944 State of the Union address, President Franklin D. Roosevelt reminded everyone why he was confident of victory, despite the divisions, the violence, the prejudice, and the long odds the nation faced in the wake of December 7, 1941:

“I have often said that there are no two fronts for America in this war.

There is only one front. There is one line of unity which extends from the hearts of the people at home to the men of our attacking forces in our farthest outposts. When we speak of our total effort, we speak of the factory and the field, and the mine as well as of the battleground—we speak of the soldier and the civilian, the citizen and his Government.”<sup>147</sup>

Many historic sites, parks, memorials, monuments, and heritage areas of the National Park Service preserve and interpret the stories, people, and places of the World War II home front. These properties allow citizens and visitors today, and into the future, to go to a real place of the past, a place where layers of history can be decoded

and understood in your terms, so you can assess the lessons gained and those still to be learned from this challenging time of our history.

## Suggested Readings

Worthwhile historical studies and first-person narratives, be they in print or in oral-history recordings, about the World War II home front are growing in number day by day. The footnotes list the sources that I have taken direct quotations from, but the following studies are published books that informed the entire manuscript and that are also worth a good read if you wish to dive deeper into the stories and places of the World War II home front in the United States. And I encourage you to dive deeper!

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- <sup>1</sup> "FDR's 'Day of Infamy' Speech," *Prologue Magazine* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2001).
- <sup>2</sup> "September 3, 1939, Fireside Chat 14: On the European War," Miller Center website (millercenter.org), University of Virginia.
- <sup>3</sup> "Lindbergh Urges Embargo Be Maintained," Glen Falls (NY) *Times*, October 14, 1939.
- <sup>4</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at the University of Virginia, June 10, 1940," Center for the Presidency website (presidency.ucsb.edu), University of California at Santa Barbara.
- <sup>5</sup> Quoted in Matthew L. Basso, *Meet Joe Cooper: Masculinity and Race on Montana's World War II Home Front* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 99.
- <sup>6</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 464.
- <sup>7</sup> Franklin Roosevelt's Press Conference, December 17, 1940, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library website, www.fdrlibrary.org.
- <sup>8</sup> "Lindbergh Opposes 'Lend-Lease' Plan," *Pampa (TX) Daily News*, December 18, 1940.
- <sup>9</sup> "Committee to Oppose Lend-Lease Program," *Palm Beach (FL) Post*, January 12, 1941.
- <sup>10</sup> "Fireside Chat, December 29, 1940," FDR Library, www.fdrlibrary.org.
- <sup>11</sup> *Strikes in 1941 and Strikes Affecting Defense Production* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of Labor, Division of Industrial Relations, 1942), 1-2.
- <sup>12</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, "Radio Address, December 7, 1941 (Attack on Pearl Harbor)," Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, George Washington University.
- <sup>13</sup> Grace Sugita Hawley, resident of Pearl Harbor, interview, Densho website (densho.org).
- <sup>14</sup> Earl Pomeroy, "The City Takes Firm Hold," *The Oregonian*, December 8, 1941.
- <sup>15</sup> Tsugo "Ike" Ikeda, resident of Pearl Harbor, interview, Densho website (densho.org).
- <sup>16</sup> Matthew Spencer, "North Platte Canteen," *Nebraska Life Magazine* (September/October 2012).
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- <sup>18</sup> Quoted in Mark J. Harris, et al., eds., *The Homefront: America in World War II* (New York: Putnam, 1984), 72.
- <sup>19</sup> Portland (ME) *Sunday Telegram and Sunday Press Herald*, September 6, 1942.
- <sup>20</sup> Harris, *The Homefront*, 77.
- <sup>21</sup> Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 617.
- <sup>22</sup> Quoted in *Congressional Record*, December 15, 1941.
- <sup>23</sup> S.I. Hayakawa, "Second Thoughts: Negroes and Japanese," *Chicago Defender*, December 16, 1944.
- <sup>24</sup> Quoted in Frank Abe and Floyd Cheung, eds., *The Literature of Japanese American Incarceration* (New York: Penguin, 2024), 48-49.
- <sup>25</sup> Interview of Sam Mihara by Shelly C. Lowe, "First-Person History," *Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities* (Winter 2025): 12.
- <sup>26</sup> Mary Tsukamoto, Editorial in Newsletter of Florin, California, Chapter of Japanese American Citizens League, May 1, 1942, Densho website (densho.org).
- <sup>27</sup> John W. Abbott for Tolan Committee – Evacuation from Los Angeles, report dated March 25, 1942, part of the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records, 1930-1974, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study Digital Archive, Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.
- <sup>28</sup> Lawrence Matsuda, Quotes from Survivors of Minidoka, Friends of Minidoka website (minidoka.org).
- <sup>29</sup> Abe and Cheung, eds., *Literature of Japanese American Incarceration*, 106.
- <sup>30</sup> See Jasmine Alinder, *Moving Images: Photography and the Japanese American Incarceration* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
- <sup>31</sup> Quoted in Abe and Cheung, eds., *Literature of Japanese American Incarceration*, 217.
- <sup>32</sup> "Children in the Relocation Centers," report compiled by Rosalie Hankey Wax, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study Digital Archive, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
- <sup>33</sup> Eugene V. Rostow, "The Japanese American Cases—A Disaster," *Yale Law School Journal*, 54 (June 1945): 489, 533.
- <sup>34</sup> War Relocation Authority, *The Wartime Handling of Evacuee Property* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of the Interior, 1946), 47.

- <sup>35</sup> This exchange is quoted in Carol Van Valkenburg, *An Alien Place: The Fort Missoula, Montana, Detention Camp, 1941-1944* (Missoula: Pictorial Histories Publishing, 1995), 50-51.
- <sup>36</sup> Quoted in "The Wartime Internment of Native Alaskans," June 30, 2022, National World War II Museum website (nationalww2museum.org).
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fireside Chat, October 12, 1942, Presidential Speeches, Miller Center website (millercenter.org), University of Virginia.
- <sup>39</sup> Matthew L. Basso, *World War II & the American Home Front, Volume 2* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2025), 29.
- <sup>40</sup> Quoted in Kent Curtis, "'Tanks Are Born Underground': Mining and World War II," in *Nature At War: American Environments and World War II*, ed. Thomas Robertson, et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 91.
- <sup>41</sup> Raymond E. Murphy, "Wartime Changes in the Patterns of United States Coal Production," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 37 (December 1947): 185-196.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup> Rodney P. Carisle and August W. Giebelhaus, *Bartlesville Energy Center: The Federal Government in Petroleum Research, 1918-1983* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Scientific and Technical Information, US Department of Energy, 1985), 34-47.
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- <sup>45</sup> Ralph W. Hidy, et al., *The Great Northern Railway: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1988), 216-229.
- <sup>46</sup> Colin English, "Junior Salvage Army Bulletin," October 21, 1942, p. 1, Primary Source Set, Rationing, Victory Gardens, and Scrap Drives during WWII, Florida Memory website (floridamemory.com).
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- <sup>48</sup> A. Philip Randolph, "Let the Negro Masses Speak," *The Black Worker* 7 (March 1941).
- <sup>49</sup> Quote from Capturing Unity: Building Warships in Richmond, World War II at Home, Dorothea Lange Digital Archive website (dorothealange.museumca.org).
- <sup>50</sup> Interviews with Lucille Preston and Selena Foster, Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.
- <sup>51</sup> Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, The War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 186-187.
- <sup>52</sup> Charles D. Chamberlain, *Victory At Home: Manpower and Race in the American South during World War II* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 13.
- <sup>53</sup> Quoted in Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, 37-38.
- <sup>54</sup> Quoted in Chamberlain, *Victory At Home*, 58.
- <sup>55</sup> Quoted in "Rosie the Riveter: Real Women Workers in World War II," transcript of webcast (May 14, 2003) by Sheridan Harvey, Library of Congress.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> Nelson, *V for Victory*, 102.
- <sup>58</sup> Quoted in Paul Rosier, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 89.
- <sup>59</sup> Quoted in Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1993), 39.
- <sup>60</sup> Audra Jennings, *Out of the Horrors of War: Disability Politics in World War II* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 51.
- <sup>61</sup> Quoted in Peter Mansoor, "Preface," *Nature At War*, xv.
- <sup>62</sup> Stephanie Mercier, "Agriculture during Wartime: The Ingenuity of American Farmers during World War II," *Farm Journal Ag Web* (April 7, 2021).
- <sup>63</sup> Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army During World War II," *Prologue* 25 (Winter 1993).
- <sup>64</sup> "Business Men, School Boys as Farm Workers," *Salina Journal*, September 14, 1942.
- <sup>65</sup> "60 Kiwanis to Pick Cotton; Banker to be Water Boy," *Daily Oklahoman*, October 9, 1942.

- <sup>66</sup> Interview of Lyle Feisel, October 4, 2017, National Home Front Project: Collecting Memories of World War II, Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, Washington College, Chestertown, MD.
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- <sup>68</sup> Gulielma Fell Alsop and Mary F. McBride, *Arms and the Girl: A Guide to Personal Adjustment in War Work and War Marriage* (N.Y.: Vanguard Press, 1943), as cited in Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, *American Women in a World at War: Contemporary Accounts from World War II* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1997), 168, 172-173.
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- <sup>74</sup> Lloyd L. Brown, "Brown v. Salina, Kansas," *New York Times*, February 26, 1973.
- <sup>75</sup> Quoted in Hadley Meares, "How LA's Victory Gardens Helped Win WWII," LAist website (laist.com).
- <sup>76</sup> "The Victory Garden and Community," *Community of Gardens*, Smithsonian Institution website (communityofgardens.si.edu).
- <sup>77</sup> The US military defines military installation as a base, camp, post, station, yard, center, or other activity under the jurisdiction or operational control of the military.
- <sup>78</sup> Jesse Abernathy, "Remembering Igloo and its Lakota," *Native Sun News*, 3 (January 11-17, 2012).
- <sup>79</sup> Jack Lord and Jenn Shaw, with illustrations by Lloyd Hoff, *Where to Sin in San Francisco* (San Francisco: The Book Cellar, 1945), 57.
- <sup>80</sup> Quoted in Nan A. Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 68.
- <sup>81</sup> Lord and Shaw, *Where to Sin in San Francisco*, 93.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.
- <sup>83</sup> Quoted in LGBTQ Histories from the WWII Home Front, Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front website (nps.gov/rori).
- <sup>84</sup> Abraham H. Gibson, "American Gibraltar: Key West during World War II," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (2011): 423.
- <sup>85</sup> Maia Council, "LGBTQ and U.S. Homefront," Research Report, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, 2023, unpublished typescript.
- <sup>86</sup> Quoted in "The Women's Army Corps," Fort Hancock and Sandy Hook Proving Ground National Historic Landmark, Gateway National Recreational Area website (nps.gov/gate).
- <sup>87</sup> "Women Marines," *Life Magazine* (March 27, 1944): 81.
- <sup>88</sup> "Excerpts from letter home written by Pfc. Mitchell J. Dabrowski," Tennessee Maneuvers of 1943, contributed by Durham Caldwell, Sumner County, Tennessee, TNGenWeb website (tngenweb.org).
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>90</sup> Quoted in Frank Norris, "World War II Recreation Camps at Denali," National Park Service website (nps.gov/articles/dena-wwii-recreation).
- <sup>91</sup> The Greater United States would include "in the Pacific, the Alaska Territory; American Samoa; Baker Island; Canton Island; the Commonwealth of the Philippines; Enderbury Island; Guam; Hawai'i Territory; Howland Island; Jarvis Island; Johnston Atoll; Midway Atoll; Palmyra Atoll; and Wake Island." In the Atlantic, territories and possessions would include "Puerto Rico, the Swan Islands, and the US Virgin Islands. The Panama Canal Zone, controlled by the US, connected the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans." Then during the war, new territories came under the United States, "including the Amami and Tokara Islands (Northern Ryukyu Islands), Daitō Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kazan-Retto (Volcano Islands), Marshall Islands, Minamitorishima (Marcus Island), Nansei Shoto (Ryukyu Islands), Nishinoshima (Rosario Island), Northern Mariana Islands, Ogasawara-Gunto (Bonin Islands), Okinotorishima (Parece Vela), Palau, and Water Island." Of that list, "only the Federated States of

Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, and Water Island retain their jurisdictional connections to the United States.” Megan E. Springate, “Introduction to Life on the World War II Home Front of the Greater United States,” National Park Service website ([nps.gov/articles/000/introduction-to-life-on-the-home-front-in-the-greater-united-states](https://nps.gov/articles/000/introduction-to-life-on-the-home-front-in-the-greater-united-states)).

<sup>92</sup> Seiichi Higashide, *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 17.

<sup>93</sup> Rebecca Herman, *Cooperating with the Colossus: A Social and Political History of U.S. Military Bases in World War II Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 99.

<sup>94</sup> Jorge Rodriguez Beruff and José L. Bolívar Fresneda, eds., *Island At War: Puerto Rico in the Crucible of the Second World War* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), introduction.

<sup>95</sup> The US Constitution fully applies in an incorporated territory, where Congress has passed an organic act that created an organized government. The US Constitution only partially applies to an unincorporated possession where Congress has not established an organized government by legislation.

<sup>96</sup> “Navy to Reopen Virgin Island Submarine Base,” *St. Petersburg Times*, March 8, 1940.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Keith L. Camacho, *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory, and History in the Mariana Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011), 77.

<sup>98</sup> Ben Blaz, “Chamorros yearn for freedom,” *Liberation-Guam Remembers: A Golden Salute for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of Guam* ([nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/npswapa/extcontent/lib/liberation32](https://nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/npswapa/extcontent/lib/liberation32)).

<sup>99</sup> The Sturdevant-Buckner correspondence is quoted in E. Valerie Smith, “The Black Corps of Engineers and the Construction of the Alaska (ALCAN) Highway,” *Negro History Bulletin* 51 (December 1953).

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Delmont, *Half American*, 119.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Robertson, *Nature At War*, 43.

<sup>102</sup> “A Vanderbilt employee,” Letter to the Editor, *Nashville Tennessean*, March 3, 1942.

<sup>103</sup> Quoted in Chamberlain, *Victory at Home*, 57.

<sup>104</sup> Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, News Release, Online Archives of California ([oac.cdlib.org](https://oac.cdlib.org)).

<sup>105</sup> *California Eagle*, June 10, 1943.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Gustavo Arellano, “The untold story of the Zoot Suit Riots: How Black L.A. defended Mexican Americans,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 2023.

<sup>107</sup> “Mrs. Roosevelt Says Race Discrimination Caused Zoot Suit Riot,” *Tampa Tribune*, June 17, 1943.

<sup>108</sup> “Sengestacke, Head of Negro Publ.’s Assn Asks Presidential Action to End Racial Disharmony,” *Omaha Guide*, June 26, 1943.

<sup>109</sup> Pauli Murray, “Mr. Roosevelt Regrets,” *The Crisis*, 50 (August 1943): 252.

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Harris, et al., eds., *The Homefront*, 104.

<sup>111</sup> “Trouble in Philadelphia,” *Time Magazine*, August 14, 1944.

<sup>112</sup> Quoted in Harris, et al., eds., *The Homefront*, 103.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Basso, *Meet Joe Cooper*, 243.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 50.

<sup>115</sup> Albert Einstein to F.D. Roosevelt, August 2, 1939, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum.

<sup>116</sup> Albert Einstein and Raymond Swing, “Einstein on the Atomic Bomb,” *The Atlantic* (November 1945).

<sup>117</sup> Colbi Layne Hogan, “Displaced to Save the World: Strategies for Using Historic Preservation and Education to Interpret Pre-1942 Communities in Oak Ridge, Tennessee,” Ph.D. diss., Middle Tennessee State University, 2021, pp. 116, 120-121

<sup>118</sup> Quoted in Hogan, “Displaced to Save the World,” 135.

<sup>119</sup> Russell B. Olwell, *At Work in the Atomic City: A Labor and Social History of Oak Ridge, Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 50.

<sup>120</sup> Remarks by Alvin Weinberg at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the X-10 Reactor, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, November 1993. See Bill Cabbage, “‘This wonderful old reactor,’” *ORNL Reporter Blog*, July 24, 2018.

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Charles W. Johnson and Charles O. Jackson, *City Behind a Fence: Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1942-1946* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 35.

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Thelma Present, *Dear Margaret: Letters from Oak Ridge to Margaret Mead* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1985), 37.

<sup>123</sup> Quoted in Robert Bauman and Robert Franklin, eds., *Echoes of Exclusion and Resistance: Voices from the Hanford Region* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2021), 47-48.

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- <sup>125</sup> Quoted in "Hispanic Homesteaders and the Los Alamos National Laboratory," National Park Service, Manhattan Project National Historical Park website ([nps.gov/articles/000/hispanic-homesteaders-and-the-los-alamos-national-laboratory](https://nps.gov/articles/000/hispanic-homesteaders-and-the-los-alamos-national-laboratory)).
- <sup>126</sup> Quoted in Jennet Conant, *109 East Palace: Robert Oppenheimer and the Secret City of Los Alamos* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 62.
- <sup>127</sup> Quoted in Peter Hales, *Atomic Spaces: Living on the Manhattan Project* (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 207.
- <sup>128</sup> Masters quoted in Hales, *Atomic Spaces*, 210.
- <sup>129</sup> "Oppenheimer Replies," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 10 (May 1954): 181.
- <sup>130</sup> "Establishing Los Alamos," The Manhattan Project: An Interactive History website, US Department of Energy, Office of History and Heritage Resources website ([osti.gov/opennet/manhattan-project-history/Events/1942-1945/establishing\\_los\\_alamos](https://www.osti.gov/opennet/manhattan-project-history/Events/1942-1945/establishing_los_alamos)).
- <sup>131</sup> Quoted in Conant, *109 East Palace*, 84.
- <sup>132</sup> Quoted in Hales, *Atomic Spaces*, 212.
- <sup>133</sup> Hand-written testimony by Henry Herrera attached to Cat Cardenas, "Oppenheimer's test site wasn't remote. It was populated by Hispanos and Native Americans," *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 2023.
- <sup>134</sup> Quoted in "Safety and the Trinity Test," The Manhattan Project; an Interactive History website, US Department of Energy, Office of History and Heritage Resources website ([https://www.osti.gov/opennet/manhattan-project-history/Events/1945/trinity\\_safety](https://www.osti.gov/opennet/manhattan-project-history/Events/1945/trinity_safety)).
- <sup>135</sup> Quoted in Olwell, *At Work in the Atomic City*, 56.
- <sup>136</sup> Quoted in "Chapter 5: The Manhattan District Experiments," DOE Openness: Human Radiation Experiments archived website.
- <sup>137</sup> Leland R. Johnson, "Morgan, Karl Z.," in *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West, et al. (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998), 648.
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- <sup>140</sup> Interview with Thomas H. Begay, David Talas interviewer, Navajo Code Talkers: A Guide to First-Person Narratives in the Veterans History Project, Library of Congress.
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- <sup>144</sup> Delmont, *Half American*, 268.
- <sup>145</sup> Harris, et al., eds., *The Homefront*, 222.
- <sup>146</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Navy Day Speech, Philadelphia, October 27, 1944, Miller Center website ([millercenter.org](https://millercenter.org)), University of Virginia.
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