

Section 3

Life on the Home Front

Guide to Reading

Big Ideas

Trade, War, and Migration During World War II, Americans faced demands and new challenges at home.

Content Vocabulary

- Sunbelt (p. 730)
- zoot suit (p. 732)
- victory suit (p. 732)
- rationing (p. 734)
- victory garden (p. 735)

Academic Vocabulary

- coordinate (p. 731)
- justify (p. 732)

People and Events to Identify

- A. Philip Randolph (p. 730)
- Bracero Program (p. 730)
- Great Migration (p. 731)
- Office of Price Administration (p. 734)

Reading Strategy

Organizing Complete a graphic organizer listing opportunities for women and African Americans before and after the war. Evaluate what progress was still needed after the war.

Opportunities

	Before War	After War	Still Needed
Women			
African Americans			

Although women and African Americans gained new work opportunities, Latinos and Japanese Americans faced violence in American cities. To assist with the war effort, the government controlled wages and prices, rationed goods, encouraged recycling, and sold bonds.

Women and Minorities Gain Ground

MAIN Idea With many men on active military duty, women and minorities found factory and other jobs open to them.

HISTORY AND YOU Do you remember reading about the unequal treatment of African American soldiers in World War I? Read on to learn how desegregation of the military began in World War II.

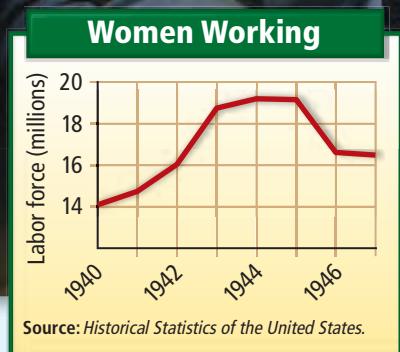
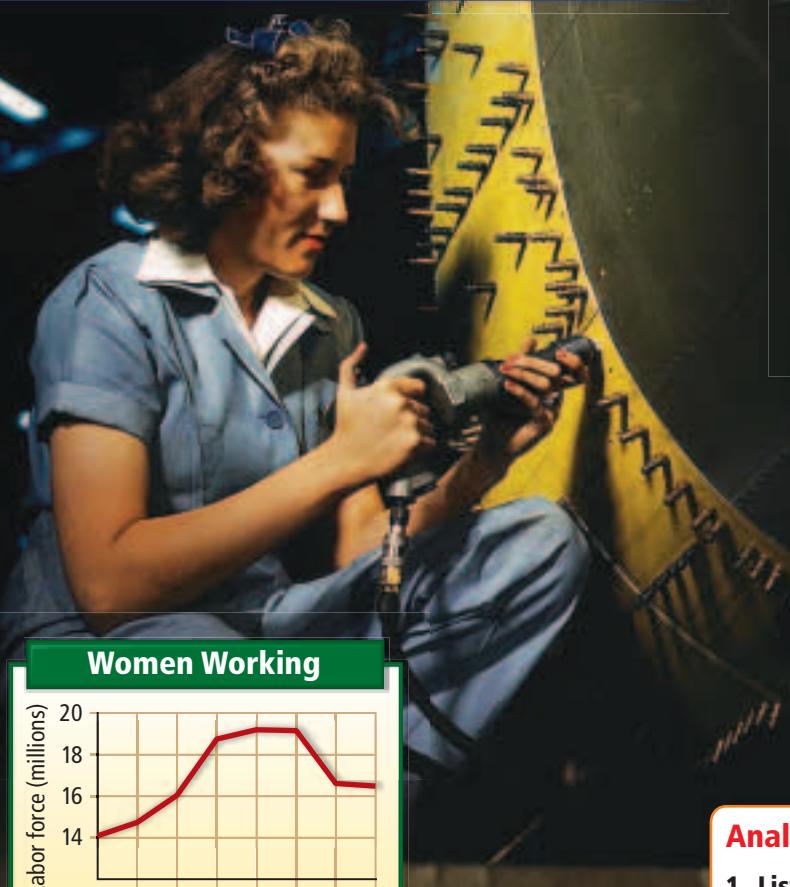
As American troops fought their first battles against the Germans and Japanese, the war began dramatically changing American society at home. In contrast to the devastation that large parts of Europe and Asia experienced, American society gained some benefits from World War II. The war finally ended the Great Depression. Mobilizing the economy created almost 19 million new jobs and nearly doubled the average family's income. For Robert Montgomery, a worker at an Ohio machine tool plant, "one of the most important things that came out of World War II was the arrival of the working class at a new status level in this society. . . . The war integrated into the mainstream a whole chunk of society that had been living on the edge."

The improvement in the economy did not come without cost. American families had to move to where the defense factories were located. Housing conditions were terrible. The pressures and prejudices of the era led to strikes, race riots, and rising juvenile delinquency. Goods were rationed and taxes were higher than ever before. Workers were earning more money, but they were also working an average of 90 hours per week. Despite the hardships, James Covert, whose mother owned a grocery store during the war, was probably right when he said that the war "changed our lifestyle and more important, our outlook. . . . There was a feeling toward the end of the war that we were moving into a new age of prosperity."

When the war began, American defense factories wanted to hire white men. With so many men in the military, however, there simply were not enough white men to fill all of the jobs. Under pressure to produce, employers began to recruit women and minorities.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Women Working in the Defense Plants



At left, a riveter works on a bomber in Fort Worth, Texas. Posters such as those above and to the right encouraged women to participate in the war effort.



Analyzing VISUALS

- Listing** During what years did women's employment outside the home hit its highest levels?
- Analyzing** How are the women portrayed in the posters?

Women in the Defense Plants

During the Great Depression, many people believed married women should not work outside the home, especially if they took jobs that could go to men trying to support their families. Most working women were young, single, and employed in traditional female jobs such as domestic work or teaching. The wartime labor shortage, however, forced factories to recruit married women for industrial jobs traditionally reserved for men.

Although the government hired nearly 4 million women, primarily for clerical jobs, the women working in the factories captured the public's imagination. The great symbol of the campaign to hire women was "Rosie the Riveter," a character from a popular song by the Four Vagabonds. The lyrics told of Rosie, who worked in a factory while her boyfriend

served in the marines. Images of Rosie appeared on posters, in newspapers, and in magazines. Eventually 2.5 million women worked in shipyards, aircraft factories, and other manufacturing plants. Working in a factory changed the perspectives of many middle-class women like Inez Sauer:

PRIMARY SOURCE

"I learned that just because you're a woman and have never worked is no reason you can't learn. The job really broadened me. . . . I had always been in a shell; I'd always been protected. But at Boeing I found a freedom and an independence I had never known. After the war I could never go back to playing bridge again, being a clubwoman. . . . when I knew there were things you could use your mind for. The war changed my life completely."

—quoted in *Eyewitness to World War II*

By the end of the war, the number of working women had increased from 12.9 million to 18.8 million. Although most women were laid off or left their jobs voluntarily after the war, their success permanently changed American attitudes about women in the workplace.

African Americans Demand War Work

Although factories were hiring women, they resisted hiring African Americans. Frustrated by the situation, **A. Philip Randolph**, the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—a major union for African American railroad workers—decided to take action. He informed President Roosevelt that he was organizing “from ten to fifty thousand [African Americans] to march on Washington in the interest of securing jobs . . . in national defense and . . . integration into the military and naval forces.”

In response, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, on June 25, 1941. The order declared, “there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin.” To enforce the order, the president created the Fair Employment Practices Commission—the first civil rights agency the federal government had established since the Reconstruction Era.

Mexican Farmworkers

American citizens were not the only ones who gained in the wartime economy. In 1942 the federal government arranged for Mexican farmworkers to help with the harvest in the Southwest. The laborers were part of the **Bracero Program**. *Bracero* is a Spanish word meaning “worker.” More than 200,000 Mexicans came to help harvest fruit and vegetables. Many also helped to build and maintain railroads. The Bracero Program continued until 1964. Migrant farmworkers thus became an important part of the Southwest’s agricultural system.

 **Reading Check** **Describing** How did mobilizing the economy help end the Depression?

A Nation on the Move

MAIN Idea Millions of Americans relocated during the war to take factory jobs or to settle in less prejudiced areas.

HISTORY AND YOU Has someone in your family moved because of a job transfer? Read on to find out about relocations that resulted from the war.

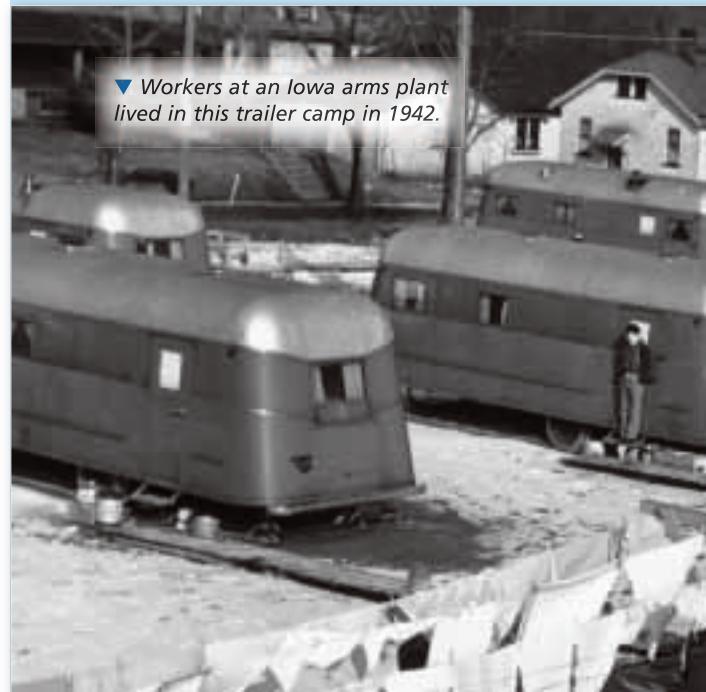
The wartime economy created millions of new jobs, but the Americans who wanted these jobs did not always live near the factories. To get to the jobs, 15 million Americans moved during the war. The Midwest assembly plants and Northeast and Northwest shipyards attracted many workers. Most Americans, however, headed west and south in search of jobs.

The growth of southern California and the expansion of cities in the Deep South created a new industrial region—the **Sunbelt**. For the first time since the Industrial Revolution began

PRIMARY SOURCE

A Nation on the Move

During the war, millions of Americans flocked to the cities to work in factories. Many immigrants stayed on after the war to become citizens. Populations of Northern cities became more mixed, permanently increasing the populations of those regions.



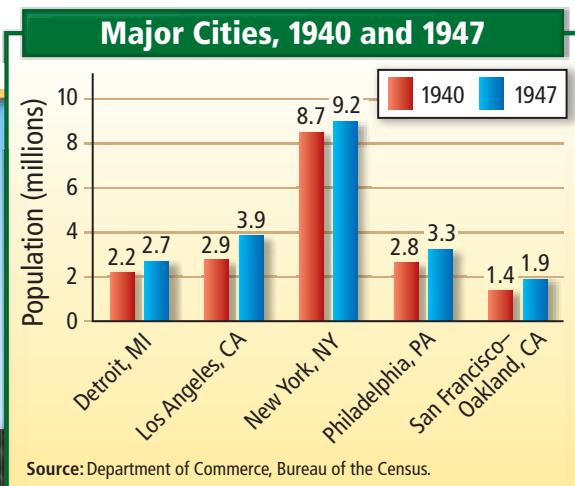
▼ Workers at an Iowa arms plant lived in this trailer camp in 1942.

in the United States, the South and West led the way in manufacturing and urbanization.

The Housing Crisis

In many ways, the most difficult task facing cities with war industries was where to put the thousands of workers arriving in their communities. Tent cities and parks filled with tiny trailers sprang up. Landlords began renting "hot beds." The worker paid 25 cents for eight hours in the bed, then went to work while the bed was rented to another worker.

Anticipating the housing crisis, Congress had passed the Lanham Act in 1940. The act provided \$150 million for housing. In 1942 President Roosevelt created the National Housing Agency (NHA) to **coordinate** all government housing programs. By 1943, those programs had been allocated over \$1.2 billion. Although prefabricated public housing had tiny rooms, thin walls, poor heating, and almost no privacy, it was better than no housing at all. Nearly 2 million people lived in government-built housing during the war.

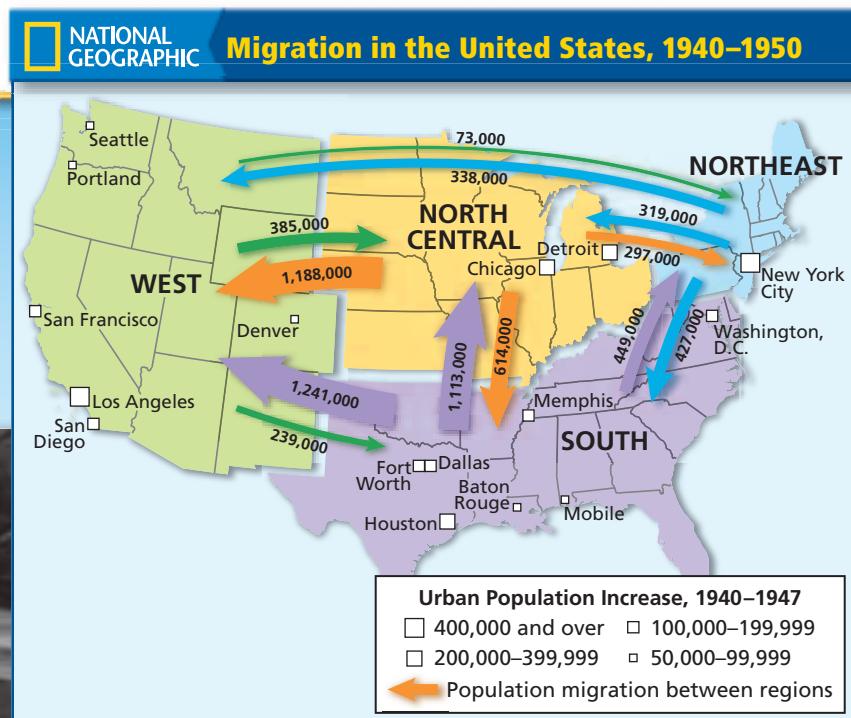


Source: Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.



African Americans left the South in large numbers during World War I, but this "Great Migration," as historians refer to it, slowed during the Great Depression. When jobs in war factories opened up for African Americans during World War II, the Great Migration resumed. In the crowded cities of the North and West, however, African Americans were often met with suspicion and intolerance. Sometimes these attitudes led to violence.

The worst racial violence of the war erupted in Detroit on Sunday, June 20, 1943. The weather that day was sweltering. To cool off, nearly 100,000 people crowded into Belle Isle, a park on the Detroit River. Gangs of white and African American teenage girls began fighting. These fights triggered others, and a full-scale riot erupted across the city. By the time the violence ended, 25 African Americans and 9 whites had been killed. Despite the appalling violence in Detroit, African American leaders remained committed to their "Double V" campaign.



Analyzing GEOGRAPHY

- 1. Movement** What region of the nation had the most total population gain?
 - 2. Regions** In what regions were the migration in and out almost perfectly balanced?

The Zoot Suit Riots

Wartime prejudice boiled over elsewhere as well. In southern California, racial tensions became entangled with juvenile delinquency. Across the nation, the number of crimes committed by young people rose dramatically. In Los Angeles, racism against Mexican Americans and the fear of juvenile crime became linked because of the “zoot suit.”

A **zoot suit** had very baggy, pleated pants and an overstuffed, knee-length jacket with wide lapels. Accessories included a wide-brimmed hat and a long key chain. Zoot-suit wearers usually wore their hair long, gathered into a ducktail. The zoot suit angered many Americans. In order to save fabric for the war, most men wore a “**victory suit**”—a suit with no vest, no cuffs, a short jacket, and narrow lapels. To many, the zoot suit was unpatriotic.

In California, Mexican American teenagers adopted the zoot suit. In June 1943, after hearing rumors that zoot-suiters had attacked several sailors, some 2,500 soldiers and sailors stormed into Mexican American neighborhoods in Los Angeles. They attacked Mexican American teenagers, cut their hair, and tore off their zoot suits. The police did not intervene, and the violence continued for several days. The city of Los Angeles responded by banning the zoot suit.

Racial hostility against Mexican Americans did not deter them from joining the war effort. Approximately 500,000 Hispanic Americans served in the armed forces during the war, fighting in Europe, North Africa, and the Pacific. Most—about 400,000—were Mexican American. Another 65,000 were from Puerto Rico. By the end of the war, 17 Mexican Americans had received the Medal of Honor.

Japanese American Relocation

When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, many Americans living on the West Coast turned their anger against Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans. Mobs attacked their businesses and homes. Banks would not cash their checks, and grocers refused to sell them food.

Newspapers printed rumors about Japanese spies in the Japanese American community.

Members of Congress, mayors, and many business and labor leaders demanded that all people of Japanese ancestry be removed from the West Coast. They did not believe that Japanese Americans would remain loyal to the United States in the war with Japan.

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed an order allowing the War Department to declare any part of the United States a military zone and to remove people from that zone. He must have felt **justified** only four days later, when a Japanese submarine surfaced north of Santa Barbara, California, and shelled an oil refinery, or in September of that year, when Japanese bombers twice dropped bombs on an Oregon forest. American fears of a Japanese attack on the West Coast must have seemed reasonable. Secretary of War Henry Stimson declared most of the West Coast a military zone and ordered all people of Japanese ancestry to evacuate to 10 internment camps further inland.

Not all Japanese Americans accepted the relocation without protest. Fred Korematsu argued that his rights had been violated and took his case to the Supreme Court. In December 1944, in *Korematsu v. United States*, the Supreme Court ruled that the relocation was constitutional because it was based not on race, but on “military urgency.” Shortly afterward, the Court did rule in *Ex parte Endo* that loyal American citizens could not be held against their will. In early 1945, therefore, the government began to release the Japanese Americans from the camps.

Despite the fears and rumors, no Japanese American was ever tried for espionage or sabotage. Japanese Americans served as translators for the army during the war in the Pacific. The all-Japanese 100th Battalion, later integrated into the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, was the most highly decorated unit in World War II.

After the war, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) tried to help Japanese Americans who had lost property during the relocation. In 1988 President Ronald Reagan apologized to Japanese Americans on behalf of the U.S. government and signed legislation granting \$20,000 to each surviving Japanese American who had been interned.

 **Reading Check Comparing** Why did millions of people relocate during the war?



ANALYZING SUPREME COURT CASES

Can the Government Limit Civil Liberties in Wartime?

Korematsu v. United States, 1944

Background to the Case

During World War II, President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 and other legislation gave the military the power to exclude people of Japanese descent from areas that were deemed important to U.S. national defense and security. In 1942, Toyosaburo Korematsu refused to leave San Leandro, California, which had been designated as a "military area," based on Executive Order 9066. Korematsu was found guilty in federal district court of violating Civilian Exclusion Order No. 34. Korematsu petitioned the Supreme Court to review the federal court's decision.

How the Court Ruled

In their decision, the majority of the Supreme Court, with three dissenting, found that, although exclusion orders based on race are constitutionally suspect, the government is justified in time of "emergency and peril" to suspend citizens' civil rights. A request for a rehearing of the case in 1945 was denied.

PRIMARY SOURCE

The Court's Opinion

"It should be noted, to begin with, that all legal restrictions which curtail the civil rights of a single racial group are immediately suspect. That is not to say that all such restrictions are unconstitutional. It is to say that courts must subject them to the most rigid scrutiny. Pressing public necessity may sometimes justify the existence of such restrictions; racial antagonism never can. . . . Korematsu was not excluded from the Military Area because of hostility to him or his race. He was excluded because . . . the properly constituted military authorities feared an invasion of our West Coast [by Japan] and felt constrained to take proper security measures, because they decided that the military urgency of the situation demanded that all citizens of Japanese ancestry be segregated from the West Coast temporarily, and finally, because Congress . . . determined that they should have the power to do just this."

—Justice Hugo Black
writing for the court in
Korematsu v. United States



▲ Japanese American women and their children talk together at the Heart Mountain Relocation Camp.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Dissenting View

"I dissent, because I think the indisputable facts exhibit a clear violation of Constitutional rights. This is not . . . a case of temporary exclusion of a citizen from an area for his own safety or that of the community, nor a case of offering him an opportunity to go temporarily out of an area where his presence might cause danger to himself or to his fellows. On the contrary, it is the case of convicting a citizen as a punishment for not submitting to imprisonment in a concentration camp, based on his ancestry, and solely because of his ancestry, without evidence or inquiry concerning his loyalty and good disposition towards the United States. If this be a correct statement of the facts disclosed by this record, and facts of which we take judicial notice, I need hardly labor the conclusion that Constitutional rights have been violated."

—Justice Owen J. Roberts, dissenting in
Korematsu v. United States



Document-Based Questions

- 1. Explaining** Why did the Supreme Court find in favor of the government in this case, even though the justices were suspicious of exclusion based on race?
- 2. Contrasting** Why did Justice Roberts disagree with the majority opinion?
- 3. Analyzing** Under what circumstances, if any, do you think the government should be able to suspend civil liberties of all or specific groups of American citizens?

Daily Life in Wartime

MAIN Idea The federal government took steps to stabilize wages and prices, as well as to prevent strikes. Americans supported the war through rationing, growing food, recycling, and buying bonds.

HISTORY AND YOU Have you ever given up something you enjoyed for a short period of time to gain something greater? Read on to learn how Americans sacrificed during the war.

Housing shortages and racial tensions were serious difficulties during the war, but mobilization strained society in other ways as well. Prices rose, materials were in short supply, and the question of how to pay for the war loomed ominously over the war effort.

Wage and Price Controls

Both wages and prices began to rise quickly during the war because of the high demand for workers and raw materials. The president worried about inflation. To stabilize both wages and prices, Roosevelt created the **Office of Price Administration** (OPA) and the Office of

Economic Stabilization (OES). The OES regulated wages and the price of farm products. The OPA regulated all other prices. Despite some problems with labor unions, the OPA and OES kept inflation under control. At the end of the war, prices had risen only about half as much as they had during World War I.

While the OPA and OES worked to control inflation, the War Labor Board (WLB) tried to prevent strikes. In support, most American unions issued a "no strike pledge." Instead of striking, unions asked the WLB to mediate wage disputes. By the end of the war, the WLB had helped to settle more than 17,000 disputes involving more than 12 million workers.

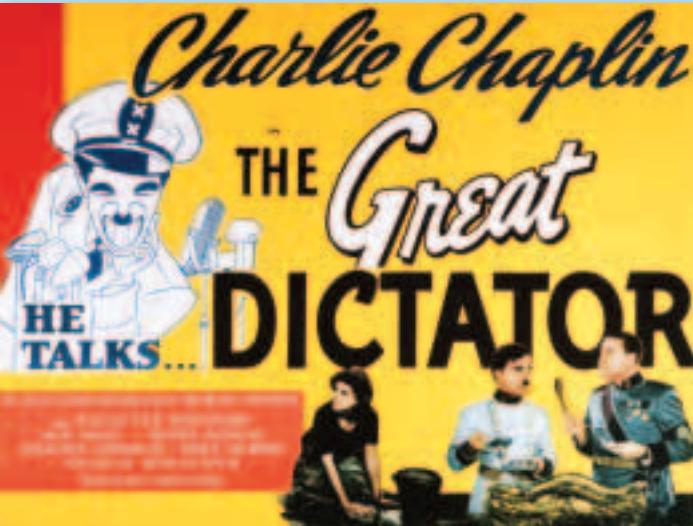
Blue Points, Red Points

The demand for raw materials and supplies created shortages. The OPA began **rationing**, or limiting the purchase of, many products to make sure enough were available for military use. Meat and sugar were rationed. Gasoline was rationed, driving distances were restricted, and the speed limit was set at 35 miles per hour to save gas and rubber.

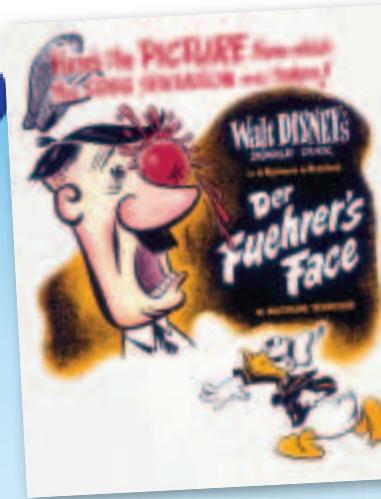
PRIMARY SOURCE

Hollywood Goes to War

In 1942 President Roosevelt created the Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI's role was to improve the public's understanding of the war and to act as a liaison office with the various media. The OWI established detailed guidelines for filmmakers, including a set of questions to be considered before making a movie, such as, "Will this picture help win the war?"



◀ Chaplin, noted as a comic and a director, made this movie in 1940, before the United States entered the war.



▲ Movies ranged from a comic Daffy Duck cartoon to a serious portrayal of a bombing raid on Germany.



Analyzing VISUALS

- Interpreting** How would heroic movies like *The Memphis Belle* help win the war?
- Analyzing** Why do you think so many movies about Hitler were comedies?

Section 3 REVIEW

A person from each household picked up a book of ration coupons every month. Blue coupons, called blue points, controlled processed foods. Red coupons, or red points, controlled meats, fats, and oils. Other coupons controlled items such as coffee, shoes, and sugar. Thirteen rationing programs were in effect at the height of the program. When people bought food, they also had to give enough coupon points to cover their purchases. Most rationing ended before the war was over. Sugar and rubber rationing continued after the war; sugar was rationed until 1947.

Victory Gardens and Scrap Drives

Americans also planted gardens to produce more food for the war effort. Any area of land might become a garden—backyards, schoolyards, city parks, and empty lots. The government encouraged **victory gardens** by praising them in film reels, pamphlets, and official statements.

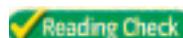
Certain raw materials were so vital to the war effort that the government organized scrap drives. Volunteers collected spare rubber, tin, aluminum, and steel. They donated pots, tires, tin cans, car bumpers, broken radiators, and rusting bicycles. Oils and fats were so important to the production of explosives that the WPB set up fat-collecting stations. Americans would exchange bacon grease and meat drippings for extra ration coupons. The scrap drives were very effective and contributed to the success of American industry during the war.

Paying for the War

The federal government spent more than \$300 billion during World War II—more money than it had spent from Washington's administration to the end of Franklin Roosevelt's second term. To raise money, the government raised taxes. Because most Americans opposed large tax increases, Congress refused to raise taxes as high as Roosevelt requested. As a result, the extra taxes collected covered only 45 percent of the war's cost.

The government issued war bonds to make up the difference between what was needed and what taxes supplied. Buying bonds is a way to lend money to the government. In exchange for the money, the government promises to repay the bonds' purchase price plus interest at some future date. The most common bonds during World War II were E bonds, which sold for \$18.75 and could be redeemed for \$25.00 after 10 years. Individuals bought nearly \$50 billion worth of war bonds. Banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions bought the rest—more than \$100 billion worth of bonds.

Despite the hardships, the overwhelming majority of Americans believed the war had to be fought. Although the war brought many changes to the United States, most Americans remained united behind one goal—winning the war.

 **Reading Check Evaluating** How did rationing affect daily life in the United States? How did it affect the economy?

Vocabulary

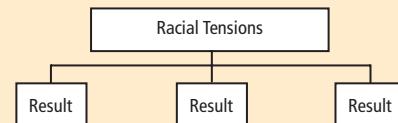
- Explain** the significance of: A. Philip Randolph, Bracero Program, Sunbelt, Great Migration, zoot suit, victory suit, Office of Price Administration, rationing, victory garden.

Main Ideas

- Assessing** Why were jobs suddenly available to women and minorities?
- Evaluating** For what reasons did Americans relocate during the war?
- Explaining** How did the federal government control the economy during the war?

Critical Thinking

- Big Ideas** What challenges did Americans at home face during the war?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to list the results of increased racial tensions during the war.



- Analyzing Visuals** Look again at the photograph on pages 730–731. How does the photographer capture the feeling of people settling into a new area?

Writing About History

- Persuasive Writing** Write a newspaper editorial urging fellow citizens to conserve resources so that those resources can be used in the war effort.

History ONLINE

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