

## American Home Front During World War II

### Document #1: New Roles for Women

With over 16 million American men fighting overseas, the demand for labor rose. In 1940, before the United States got involved in WWII, about 14 million women worked – about 25% of the nation's labor force. By 1945, that number had climbed to more than 19 million – roughly 30% of the nation's labor force.

Women worked in munitions factories, shipyards, and offices. Much of the nation welcomed the growing numbers of women into the workplace. The country promoted "Rosie the Riveter" – an image of a strong woman hard at work at an arms factory – as its cherished symbol for its new group of wage earners.



#### Rosie The Riveter

All day long,  
Whether rain or shine,  
She's a part of the assembly line.  
She's making history,  
Working for victory,  
Rosie the Riveter.  
Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage,  
Sitting up there on the fuselage,  
That little girl will do more than a male will do.  
Rosie's got a friend, Charlie.  
Charlie, he's a Marine.  
Rosie is protecting Charlie,  
Working overtime on the riveting machine.  
When they gave her a production "E",  
She was proud as she could be.  
There's something true about  
Red, white, and blue about,  
Rosie the Riveter.

Song by: Redd Evans & John Jacob Loeh (1942)

### Document #1 Questions

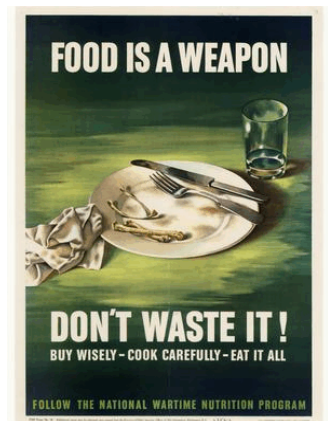
1. Why was there a sharp increase in the number of women in the workplace in 1945?
2. What types of job did women have during WWII?
3. Who was "Rosie?"
4. Looking at the picture above, describe what type of woman "Rosie the Riveter" seems to be.
5. In your own words, describe the image that the song lyrics paint about "Rosie the Riveter."

### Document #2 Questions

1. What is the system of rationing?
2. Why was rationing necessary?
3. What type of goods were rationed during World War II?

### Document #2: Rationing

Because the armed forces needed many materials, some of the items Americans took for granted became scarce. For example, American auto-makers did not produce any cars from 1942 to 1945. Instead, they built tanks, jeeps, & airplanes. Items such as gas, tires, shoes, meat & sugar were also in short supply. To divide these scarce goods among citizens, the government established a system of rationing. Under this system, families received a fixed amount of certain item.



### Document #3: The War Production Board (WPB)

The effort to defeat the Axis powers took more than just soldiers. American forces needed planes, tanks, weapons, parachutes, and other supplies. Under the guidance of the War Production Board, factories churned out materials around the clock. By 1945, the country had built about 300,000 aircraft and 75,000 ships. The United States was producing 60% of the Allied ammunition. The War Production Board put up posters expressing the urgency of the war on the factory floor. Tacked up on bulletin boards, next to time clocks, on factory walls, and in break rooms, posters such as the one that follows served as constant reminders of the war and the need to increase production. Slogans such as "Every Minute Counts" were posted as well as instructions for effectiveness.



#### Document #3 Questions

1. What was the WPB?
2. What was the purpose of the WPB?
3. How did the WPB encourage workers to produce more?



### Document #4: Victory Gardens

During WWII there was a campaign to encourage the use of homegrown foods. Because commercially canned goods were rationed, the Victory Garden became an indispensable source of food for the home front. The Victory Garden was household activity during the war and one of the most well received of all home front chores. At its peak it is estimated that nearly 20 million gardens were grown and about 40% of all vegetable produced in the U.S. came from Victory Gardens. Across the nation, home canning and preserving of farm produce flourished so that more supplies would be made available for our troops. The idea was simple in conception and inexpensive for the individual American at home to carry out. Of all the advertising techniques used to make Americans feel a part of the war effort, propaganda posters were perhaps the most successful.

#### Document #4 Questions

1. What was a Victory Garden?
2. Why did people grow them during WWII?
3. How much of the nation's vegetables were produced by Victory Gardens?
4. How did the government encourage people to grow these gardens?





## Document #5: New Roles for Minorities during WWII

World War II created new job opportunities for minorities on the home front. More than one million African Americans worked in the defense industry during the war. Many of these jobs were along the West Coast and in the North. As a result, more than one million African Americans migrated from the South during the war. On paper, African Americans enjoyed equal rights in some workplaces. Besides Blacks, other minority groups also lent support to war production effort. Some 46,000 Native Americans left their reservations to work in the nation's war industries. Tens of thousands of Hispanics also joined the ranks of the country's war-related laborers and lent support to the farm industry. Both African Americans and Mexican Americans faced a great deal of prejudice in the United States as they attempted to aid in the war effort.

### Document #5 Questions

1. How did minorities' role change during WWII?
2. Name three minority groups who aided in the war effort?
3. How were these minority groups treated?



## Document #6: Japanese Internment Camps

In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, a growing number of Americans began to direct their anger toward people of Japanese ancestry. In the days and weeks after Pearl Harbor, several newspapers declared Japanese Americans to be a security threat. President Roosevelt eventually responded to the growing anti-Japanese hysteria. In February 1942, he signed an order that allowed for the removal of all Japanese Americans from the Pacific Coast. This action came to be known as the Japanese-American internment. More than 110,000 men, women and children were rounded up. They had to sell their homes and possessions and leave their job. These citizens were placed in camps, areas

where they were kept under guard. In these camps families lived in single rooms with limited privacy. About two-thirds of the people sent to live in internment camps were Nisei, Japanese Americans born in the United States. Many Japanese Americans argued that internment for racial reasons was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court, however, upheld internment throughout the war. However, in 1988, Congress apologized for the treatment of Japanese Americans during WWII and voted to pay survivors of the camps \$20,000 in reparations.

### Document #6 Questions

1. Why were Japanese Americans relocated into these camps?
2. What are Nisei?
3. Why was this unconstitutional?

