

Chapter 25

World War II: Americans at War (1941–1945)

Mobilizing the Armed Forces

Chapter 25, Section 1

- President Roosevelt realized that he had to strengthen the armed forces if the United States were to enter World War II on the side of the Allies.
- Congress authorized the first peacetime draft in the nation's history. **The Selective Training and Service Act required all males aged 21 to 36 to register for military service.**
- The United States also raised defense spending from \$2 billion to more than \$10 billion in the course of a year.
- More than 16 million Americans served as soldiers, sailors, and aviators in the war. They called themselves **GIs, an abbreviation of "Government Issue."**
- Americans from all ethnic and racial backgrounds fought during World War II. **A group of Navajos known as the "code talkers" developed a secret code based on their language that the enemy could not break.** This code proved valuable in several key battles of the war.
- **About 350,000 American women volunteered for military service by the war's end. Military officials allowed them to work in almost all areas, except combat.**



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Preparing the Economy for War

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- **The United States entered the war when the production levels of the other Allies had dropped sharply.** President Roosevelt pushed industries to move quickly into the production of war equipment.
- As the war continued, the government established dozens of agencies to deal with war production, labor questions, and scarce resources. The President appointed **James F. Byrnes** to head the **Office of War Mobilization**. Byrnes had such broad authority some people said that Byrnes ran the country while FDR ran the war.
- **As the production of consumer goods stopped, factories converted to war production.**
 - **Ford Motor Company built B-24 bombers** with the same assembly-line techniques used to manufacture cars.
 - **Henry J. Kaiser introduced mass-production techniques into ship building and cut the time needed to build one type of ship from 200 days to 40 days.** The ships that made Kaiser famous were called **Liberty ships**. They were large, sturdy merchant ships that carried supplies or troops.



The Wartime Work Force and Financing the War

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The Work Force

- **War production ended the massive unemployment of the 1930s.** Average weekly wages rose significantly.
- Union membership increased also, but after the attack on Pearl Harbor, labor and management agreed to refrain from strikes and lockouts.
- As the cost of living rose and wages stayed the same, unions found the no-strike agreement hard to honor. The number of strikes rose sharply in 1943.
- Finally, in June 1943, Congress passed the Smith-Connally Act, which limited future strike activity.

Financing the War

- The United States government vowed to spend whatever was necessary to sustain the war effort.
- Federal spending increased from \$8.9 billion in 1939 to \$95.2 billion in 1945 and the GNP more than doubled.
- **Higher taxes paid for about 41 percent of the war. The government borrowed the rest.**
- **High levels of deficit spending helped pull the United States out of the Depression. It also boosted the national debt from \$43 billion in 1940 to \$259 billion in 1945.**



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Daily Life on the Home Front

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- **Wartime jobs gave many people their first extra cash since the Depression. Still, shortages and rationing limited the goods that people could buy.**
- **The supply of food also fell short of demand. The Office of Price Administration (OPA) was established to control inflation by limiting prices and rents. The OPA also oversaw rationing, or the fair distribution of scarce items, during the war.**
- **With many goods unavailable, Americans looked for other ways to spend their money. Civilians bought and read more books and magazines. They also went to baseball games and the movies.**
- **The government understood the need to maintain morale. It encouraged citizens to participate in the war effort. The Office of War Information worked with the media to create posters and ads that stirred patriotism.**
- **One popular idea was the victory garden, a home vegetable garden planted to add to the home food supply and replace farm produce sent to feed the soldiers. By 1943, victory gardens produced about one third of the country's fresh vegetables.**



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Americans Join the Struggle

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- In 1941, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt met in secret to discuss American involvement in the war. They created a declaration of principles to guide them in the years ahead called the Atlantic Charter. After the war, this charter would form the basis for the United Nations.
- The United States entered the war in December 1941, a critical time for the Allies.
- **The Battle of the Atlantic:** At sea, Britain and the United States struggled to control the Atlantic trade routes. German U-boats, or submarines, sailed out from ports in France and attacked and destroyed Allied merchant ships.
- **The North Africa campaign:** From 1940 to 1943, the Allies and Axis battled in North Africa, with neither side gaining much of an advantage, until Allied armies finally trapped the Axis forces. About 240,000 Germans and Italians surrendered.
- **The invasion of Italy:** In 1943, U.S. troops under General George S. Patton invaded the island of Sicily with British forces. Italians lost faith in Mussolini's leadership, and he was overthrown. Italy's new government surrendered to the Allies and declared war on Germany in October 1943. The Allied advance was stalled by fierce German resistance, but Germans in northern Italy finally surrendered in April 1945.



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War in the Soviet Union

Chapter 25, Section 2

- **Hitler, in an effort to make Germany self-sufficient, planned to seize the farm lands of the Ukraine. He broke his pact with Stalin and attacked the Soviet Union.**
- **The German advance (1941–1942):** In June 1941, more than 3 million Axis troops crossed the Soviet border. Stalin asked for and received American aid through the Lend-Lease program. But, by autumn 1941, German armies threatened the capital, Moscow, and the historic city of Leningrad (now known as St. Petersburg).
- **The Battle of Stalingrad (1942–1943):** By October 1941, the cold Russian winter put a stop to the German advance, which did not resume until the summer of 1942. The Red Army made its stand at Stalingrad, a major rail and industrial center on the Volga River.
- The Germans began a two-month firebombing campaign.
- In November, the Soviets took advantage of the harsh winter to launch a counterattack. The German army was soon surrounded in the ruined city with no supplies and no hope of escape.
- On January 31, 1943, more than 90,000 surviving Germans surrendered.
- **Germany's seemingly unstoppable offensive was over and this proved to be the turning point of the war in the East.**



The Allied Air War

- The British Royal Air Force (RAF) had been fending off attacks from the German Air Force, the Luftwaffe, and carrying out long-range attacks on German cities.
- However, the RAF abandoned attempts to pinpoint targets and began to scatter large numbers of bombs over a large area, a technique called carpet bombing. As a result, German cities suffered heavy damage.
- Allied bombing of Germany intensified after the United States entered the war. More than 40,000 civilians died in four attacks on Hamburg, Germany, in the summer of 1943.
- By 1944, British and American commanders were conducting coordinated raids—American planes bombing by day and RAF planes bombing at night.
- At its height, some 3,000 planes took part in this campaign.



The Invasion of Western Europe

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- **General George Marshall**, FDR's Chief of Staff, wanted to invade Western Europe—specifically German forces occupying France. The invasion, code-named **Operation Overlord**, would be launched from Great Britain. **General Eisenhower would be the supreme commander of the invasion forces.**
- **D-Day: On June 6, 1944**, the invasion of Western Europe began. Heavy casualties were suffered, but by late July, nearly 2 million Allied troops were in France. On August 25, 1944, Paris was liberated from German occupation.
- **Battle of the Bulge:** In December 1944, Germany launched a counterattack in Belgium and Luxembourg. They pushed back the U.S. First Army, forming a bulge in the Allied Line. The resulting clash came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge.
- **The Battle of the Bulge was the largest battle in Western Europe during World War II and the largest battle ever fought by the United States Army. In the end the casualties were staggering on both sides, and most Nazi leaders realized that the war was lost.**



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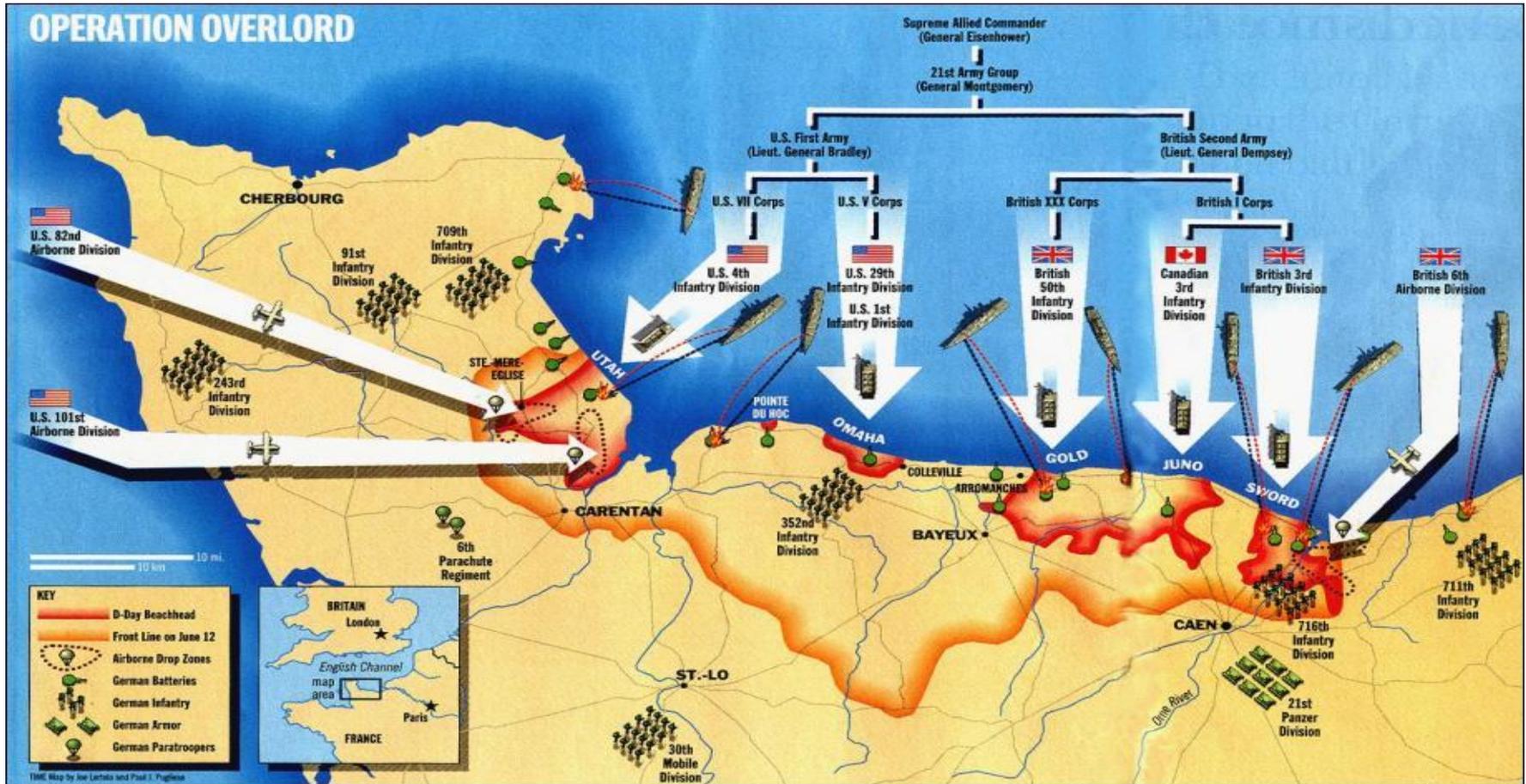
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D-Day Invasion, June 6, 1944

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The War in Europe Ends

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- In March 1945, American ground forces crossed the Rhine River and moved toward the German capital of Berlin from the west.
- Soviet troops continued to fight their way to Berlin from the east. This fighting resulted in the deaths of some 11 million Soviet and 3 million German soldiers—more than two thirds of the soldiers killed in the entire war. The Soviets finally reached Berlin in late April 1945.
- Hitler committed suicide in Berlin on April 30, 1945, refusing to flee the city. **On May 8, Germany's remaining troops surrendered. Americans at home celebrated V-E Day (Victory in Europe Day).**
- **The Yalta Conference:** In February, 1945, months before the fall of Berlin, **Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin** met at Yalta in the Soviet Union, to discuss the shape of the postwar world. The leaders agreed:
 - (1) **To split Germany into four zones, each under the control of a major Ally, including France.**
 - (2) **They planned a similar division of Berlin.**
 - (3) **Stalin "promised" to allow free elections in the nations of Eastern Europe that his army had liberated from the Germans.**
 - (4) **Stalin also promised to enter the war against Japan. Stalin did not fulfill any of these promises.**



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Persecution in Germany

- **Jews in Europe faced persecution for their religious beliefs for centuries. In the 1800s, some thinkers developed the theory that European peoples, whom they called “Aryans” were superior to Middle Eastern peoples, called Semites. Europeans began to use the term **anti-Semitism** to describe discrimination or hostility, often violent, directed at Jews.**
- **When Hitler became Germany’s leader in 1933, he made anti-Semitism the official policy of the nation. No other persecution of Jews in modern history equals the extent and brutality of the **Holocaust**, Nazi Germany’s systematic murder of European Jews. In all, some 6 million Jews would lose their lives.**
- **Repressive policies against Jews escalated during the 1930s. In 1935, for example, the Nuremberg laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship. Some other policies included: exclusion from public schools, forced sale of Jewish businesses, and marked identity cards. Jews were also forced to sew yellow stars marked “Jew” on their clothing.**



Further Persecution in Germany

- When Hitler came to power he formed the SS, or the Schutzstaffel, an elite guard that became the private army of the Nazi Party. The SS guarded the **concentration camps**, or places where political prisoners are confined under harsh conditions. **Nazi camps held people whom they considered undesirables—mainly Jews, but also Communists, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Gypsies, and the homeless.**
- Any hopes among Jews that they could survive German persecution under Hitler were dashed when, on the night of November 9, 1938, Nazi thugs throughout Germany and Austria looted and destroyed Jewish stores, houses, and synagogues. This incident became known as **Kristallnacht**, or **“Night of the Broken Glass.”** Nearly every synagogue was destroyed and thousands of Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps. After Kristallnacht many Jews sought any possible means to leave the country.
- Jewish refugees were not welcomed in many nations, in part because of the Depression. To deal with this problem, FDR called the Evian Conference in 1938. But still, most nations, including the United States, refused to open their doors to more immigrants.



From Murder to Genocide

- As German armies invaded other European countries, more and more Jews (even those who had escaped) came under German control. Nazis dealt with these Jews by confining them in ghettos, areas in which minority groups are concentrated. Nazis confined more than 400,000 Jews in the **Warsaw ghetto** in Poland. Thousands of Jews died in the ghetto as a result of disease.
- In 1942, Nazi officials met at the **Wannsee Conference** outside Berlin. They developed their plan to commit **genocide**, or the deliberate destruction of an entire ethnic or cultural group, against the Jewish people.
- To carry out their plan, the Nazis outfitted six camps in Poland with gas chambers. Unlike concentration camps, these death camps existed primarily for mass murder.
- The U.S. government knew about the mass murder of Jews for two years before President Roosevelt created the **War Refugee Board (WRB)** in January 1944. Despite its late start, the WRB's programs helped save some lives.
- Horrified by the German death camps, the Allies conducted the **Nuremburg Trials** in November 1945. They charged a number of Nazi leaders with crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.



The Japanese Advance, 1941–1942

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- The Japanese struck Pearl Harbor and Clark Field, in the Philippines, in an attempt to gain military control in the Western Pacific. By March 1942, they had swept aside British, American, and Dutch naval power in Southeast Asia and brought a wide band of colonies into the Japanese empire.
- On May 6, 1942, the Philippines fell to Japanese forces. The Japanese then captured some 76,000 Filipinos and Americans as prisoners of war. They were taken on a brutal 6- to 12-day journey that became known as the **Bataan Death March**, in which they were denied water and rest. Those who became too weak were executed. At least 10,000 prisoners died. Those who survived were sent to primitive prison camps where 15,000 or more died.
- The brutality of the Japanese soldiers defied accepted international standards for humane treatment of prisoners spelled out in 1929 at the third **Geneva Convention**.
- China joined the Allies to fight against Japan, but was quickly defeated.
- In May 1942, Japanese and American naval forces engaged in the **Battle of the Coral Sea**. This battle caused enormous damage on both sides. In the end, it was a draw, but it prevented the Japanese from invading Australia.



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Allied Victories Turn the Tide

The Battle of Midway

- On June 4, 1942, the Japanese hoped to destroy the United States Pacific Fleet by luring them into a battle near Midway Island.
- The Americans, who appeared to be losing at first, surprised the Japanese as they were refueling planes. The Americans sank four Japanese carriers.
- The Japanese lost some 250 planes and most of their skilled pilots. They were unable to launch any more offensive operations in the Pacific.
- This victory for the Allies allowed them to take the offensive in the Pacific.

The Battle of Guadalcanal

- A major goal for the Allies was to capture Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, where the Japanese were building an airfield.
- When more than 11,000 marines landed on the island in August 1942, the Japanese soldiers fled into the jungle.
- The Battle of Guadalcanal provided the marines with their first taste of jungle warfare. After five months, the Japanese were finally defeated.



Struggle for the Islands

- From Guadalcanal, American forces began **island-hopping**, a military strategy of selectively attacking specific enemy-held islands and bypassing others. This strategy allowed the Americans to move more quickly toward their ultimate goal—Japan itself.
- In October 1944, American troops invaded the Philippine island of Leyte. As the ground troops battled inland, the greatest naval battle in world history developed off the coast. More than 280 warships took part in the three-day **Battle of Leyte Gulf**.
- The **Battle of Leyte Gulf** was the first battle in which Japanese pilots loaded their aircraft with bombs and then deliberately crashed them into enemy ships. These were called **kamikazes**, or **suicide planes**. Despite this tactic, the American force virtually destroyed the Japanese navy and emerged victorious.
- Japanese land forces in the Philippines continued to resist, however. It took two months for the American troops to liberate Leyte. The battle for the Philippines' capital, Manila, was equally difficult, leaving some 100,000 Filipino civilians dead. Not until June 1945 did the Allies control the Philippines.



Iwo Jima and Okinawa

The Battle of Iwo Jima

- In February 1945, American marines stormed the beaches of Iwo Jima.
- In the Battle of Iwo Jima, American forces suffered an estimated 25,000 casualties. The United States awarded 27 Medals of Honor, more than for any other operation of the war.
- It took more than 100,000 American troops almost a month to defeat fewer than 25,000 Japanese, who fought almost to the last defender.
- Admiral Nimitz described the island as a place in which “uncommon valor was common virtue.”

The Battle of Okinawa

- The Battle of Okinawa was fought from April to June 1945. The island of Okinawa was the last obstacle to an Allied invasion of the Japanese home islands.
- The Japanese flew nearly 2,000 kamikaze attacks against the 1,300 warships of the American fleet.
- For the American forces, nearly 50,000 casualties made the Battle of Okinawa the costliest engagement of the Pacific war.
- At the end, the American forces were victorious, and the Allies had a clear path to Japan.



The Manhattan Project

- In August 1939, Roosevelt received a letter from Albert Einstein, a brilliant Jewish physicist who had fled from Europe. In his letter, Einstein suggested that an incredibly powerful new type of bomb could be built by the Germans.
- Roosevelt organized the top-secret **Manhattan Project** to develop the atomic bomb before the Germans.
- **On July 16, 1945, Manhattan Project scientists field-tested the world's first atomic bomb in the desert of New Mexico.** With a blinding flash of light, the explosion blew a huge crater in the earth and shattered windows some 125 miles away.
- **Once the bomb was ready, President Harry S Truman, who took office after Roosevelt's sudden death, made the ultimate decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan.**
- **On August 6, 1945, an American plane, the Enola Gay, dropped a single atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. A blast of intense heat annihilated the city's center and its residents in an instant—leading to as many as 80,000 deaths. Three days later, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.**
- **On August 14, the government of Japan surrendered. On September 2, 1945, the formal surrender agreement was signed. The long and destructive war had finally come to an end.**



Estimated World War II Deaths

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Country	Military Deaths	Civilian Deaths	Total Deaths
Axis			
Germany	3,250,000	2,350,000	5,600,000
Italy	226,900	60,000	286,900
Japan	1,740,000	393,400	2,133,400
Allies			
France	122,000	470,000	592,000
Great Britain	305,800	60,600	366,400
United States	405,400	-----	405,400
Soviet Union	11,000,000	6,700,000	17,700,000
China	1,400,000	8,000,000	9,400,000

SOURCE: *World War II: A Statistical Survey*



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African Americans

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- In 1941, industries searched for millions of new workers to meet the demands of the Lend-Lease program. Still, one out of five potential African American workers remained jobless.
- Finally, on June 25, 1941, the President signed Executive Order 8802, opening jobs and job training programs in defense plants to all Americans “without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin.”
- As a result, during the 1940s, more than 2 million African Americans migrated from the South to cities in the North.
- African American and white soldiers risked their lives equally in the war. Yet African Americans were segregated on the war front and discriminated against at home.
- In 1942, the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)** was founded in Chicago. CORE believed in using nonviolent techniques to end racism.



Mexican Americans

- **Mexican American citizens also served in the armed forces, contributed to the wartime economy, and faced discrimination in the United States during the war.**
- **A shortage of farm laborers led the United States to seek help from Mexico. In 1942, an agreement between the two nations provided for transportation, food, shelter, and medical attention for thousands of **braceros**, Mexican farm laborers brought to work in the United States.**
- **The program brought a rise in the Latino population of southern California. Many lived in Spanish-speaking neighborhoods called **barrios**.**



Native Americans

- **The war also changed the lives of Native Americans. In addition to the 25,000 Native Americans who joined the armed forces, many others migrated to urban centers to work in defense plants.**
- **Life in the military or in the cities was a new experience for many Native Americans who had lived only on reservations.**
- **For some, the cultural transition brought a sense of having lost their roots.**



Japanese Americans

Chapter 25, Section 5

- Japanese Americans suffered official discrimination during the war. Hostility toward Japanese Americans grew into hatred and hysteria after Pearl Harbor.
- In 1942, the War Relocation Authority removed all people of Japanese ancestry, both citizens and non-citizens, from the West Coast. They were to be **interned**, or confined, in camps in remote areas far from the coast. Many Japanese Americans lost their homes, possessions, and businesses during the period of internment.
- Some people were uncomfortable with the similarities between the internment camps and the German concentration camps. The Supreme Court, however, upheld their constitutionality. As time passed, many Americans came to view internment as a great injustice. In 1988, Congress awarded \$20,000 to each surviving Japanese American internee, and issued an official apology.
- After 1943, Japanese Americans were accepted into the armed forces. Most were **Nisei, or citizens born in the United States to Japanese immigrant parents**. Many all-Nisei units won recognition for their courage in Europe. **In fact, the soldiers of the all-Japanese 442nd Regimental Combat Team won more medals for bravery than any other unit in United States history.**



Working Women

- **Women of all ages as well as ethnic and economic backgrounds went to work in the wartime economy. Many joined the work force out a sense of patriotism; others realized that the war increased their employment opportunities.**
- **As the war left many factory jobs vacant, women were either entering the work force for the first time, or leaving the low-paying jobs traditionally held by women. *Rosie the Riveter* (a fictional character from a song in 1942) became the popular name for all women who worked in war-production jobs.**
- **Many women found that employment outside the home made a big difference in their lives, giving them self-confidence as well as economic independence.**
- **In spite of the benefits of working, women, especially African American women, faced discrimination in the workplace.** They often encountered hostile reactions from other workers, they received less pay for the same work, and many had to make arrangements for child care.
- **After the war, the government encouraged women to leave their jobs and return home. As the economy returned to peacetime status, twice as many women as men lost factory jobs.**

