

But appellant insists that the exercise of the power is inappropriate and unconstitutional because it discriminates against citizens of Japanese ancestry, in violation of the Fifth Amendment. The Fifth Amendment contains no equal protection clause and it restrains only such discriminatory legislation by Congress as amounts to a denial of due process. . . . Congress may hit a particular danger where it is seen, without providing for others which are not so evident or so urgent. . . . Distinctions between citizens solely because of their ancestry are by their very nature odious to a free people whose institutions are founded upon the doctrine of equality. For that reason, legislative classification or discrimination based on race alone has often been held to be a denial of equal protection. . . . [Yet, b]ecause racial discriminations are in most circumstances irrelevant and therefore prohibited, it by no means follows that, in dealing with the perils of war, Congress and the Executive are wholly precluded from taking into account those facts and circumstances which are relevant to measures for our national defense and for the successful prosecution of the war, and which may in fact place citizens of one ancestry in a different category from others. "We must never forget, that it is *a constitution* we are expounding," "a constitution intended to endure for ages to come, and, consequently, to be adapted to the various *crises* of human affairs."<sup>3</sup> The adoption by Government, in the crisis of war and of threatened invasion, of measures for the public safety, based upon the recognition of facts and circumstances which indicate that a group of one national extraction may menace that safety more than others, is not wholly beyond the limits of the Constitution and is not to be condemned merely because in other and in most circumstances racial distinctions are irrelevant. . . .

### 3. A Black American Ponders the War's Meaning (1942)

*Blacks had bitter memories of World War I, when they had clamored in vain to play a major role in the "war to make the world safe for democracy." Despite urgent manpower needs, in 1917–1918 African Americans had been deemed unfit for combat assignments and relegated mostly to "labor battalions" in the army. At home they won only limited access to war-related jobs and were the victims of several bloody race riots at war's end. In the light of this sorry record, it was an open question whether blacks would support the Allied cause in World War II. Japanese propagandists tried to exploit the United States' vexed history of race relations by claiming brotherhood with African Americans as another "people of color" oppressed by white rule. On what grounds did the black author of the following essay decide to support the war? Was he being realistic? Might he have been disillusioned or pleased with the course of the civil rights movement after the war?*

War had no heroic traditions for me. Wars were white folks'. All wars in historical memory. The last war, and the Spanish-American War before that, and the Civil War. I had been brought up in a way that admitted of no heroics. I think my parents were right. Life for them was a fierce, bitter, soul-searching war of spiritual and eco-

<sup>3</sup>The quotation is from John Marshall's decision in *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819). See Vol. I, p. 217.  
<sup>3</sup>J. Saunders Redding, "A Negro Looks at This War," *American Mercury* 55 (November 1942): 585–592.

conomic attrition; they fought it without heroics, but with stubborn heroism. Their heroism was screwed up to a pitch of idealism so intense that it found a safety valve in cynicism about the heroics of white folks' war. This cynicism went back at least as far as my paternal grandmother, whose fierce eyes used to lash the faces of her five grandchildren as she said, "An' he done som'pin big an' brave away down dere to Chickymorgy an' dey made a iron image of him 'cause he got his head blowed off an' his stomick blowed out fightin' to keep his slaves." I cannot convey the scorn and the cynicism she put into her picture of that hero-son of her slave-master, but I have never forgotten.

I was nearly ten when we entered the last war in 1917. The European fighting, and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, had seemed as remote, as distantly meaningless to us, as the Battle of Hastings. Then we went in and suddenly the city was flag-draped, slogan-plastered, and as riotously gay as on circus half-holidays. I remember one fine Sunday we came upon an immense new billboard with a new slogan: GIVE! TO MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY. My brother, who was the oldest of us, asked what making the world safe for democracy meant. My father frowned, but before he could answer, my mother broke in.

"It's just something to say, like . . ."—and then she was stuck until she hit upon one of the family's old jokes—"like 'Let's make a million dollars.'" We all laughed, but the bitter core of her meaning lay revealed, even for the youngest of us, like the stone in a halved peach. . . .

And so, since I have reached maturity and thought a man's thoughts and had a man's—a Negro man's—experiences, I have thought that I could never believe in war again. Yet I believe in this one.

There are many things about this war that I do not like, just as there are many things about "practical" Christianity that I do not like. But I believe in Christianity, and if I accept the shoddy and unfulfilling in the conduct of this war, I do it as voluntarily and as purposefully as I accept the trash in the workings of "practical" Christianity. I do not like the odor of political pandering that arises from some groups. I do not like these "race incidents" in the camps. I do not like the world's not knowing officially that there were Negro soldiers on Bataan with General Wainwright.\* I do not like the constant references to the Japs as "yellow bastards," "yellow bellies," and "yellow monkeys," as if color had something to do with treachery, as if color were the issue and the thing we are fighting rather than oppression, slavery, and a way of life hateful and nauseating. These and other things I do not like, yet I believe in the war. . . .

This is a war to keep men free. The struggle to broaden and lengthen the road of freedom—our own private and important war to enlarge freedom here in America—will come later. That this private, intra-American war will be carried on and won is the only real reason we Negroes have to fight. We must keep the road open. Did we not believe in a victory in that intra-American war, we could not believe in nor stomach the compulsion of this. If we could not believe in the realization of democratic freedom for ourselves, certainly no one could ask us to die for the preservation of that ideal for others. But to broaden and lengthen the road of freedom

\*Bataan was an area in the Philippines through which Jonathan Wainwright's captured American garrison was cruelly forced to march to prisoner-of-war camps in May 1942—the "Bataan Death March."

is different from preserving it. And our first duty is to keep the road of freedom open. It must be done continuously. It is the duty of the whole people to do this. Our next duty (and this, too, is the whole people's) is to broaden the road so that more people can travel it without snarling traffic. To die in these duties is to die for something. . . .

I believe in this war, finally, because I believe in the ultimate vindication of the wisdom of the brotherhood of man. This is not foggy idealism. I think that the growing manifestations of the interdependence of all men is an argument for the wisdom of brotherhood. I think that the shrunk compass of the world is an argument. I think that the talk of united nations and of planned interdependence is an argument.

More immediately, I believe in this war because I believe in America. I believe in what America professes to stand for. Nor is this, I think, whistling in the dark. There are a great many things wrong here. There are only a few men of good will. I do not lose sight of that. I know the inequalities, the outraged hopes and faith, the inbred hate; and I know that there are people who wish merely to lay these by in the closet of the national mind until the crisis is over. But it would be equally foolish for me to lose sight of the advances that are made, the barriers that are leveled, the privileges that grow. Foolish, too, to remain blind to the distinction that exists between simple race prejudice, already growing moribund under the impact of this war, and theories of racial superiority as a basic tenet of a societal system—theories that at bottom are the avowed justification for suppression, defilement and murder.

I will take this that I have here. I will take the democratic theory. The bit of road of freedom that stretches through America is worth fighting to preserve. The very fact that I, a Negro in America, can fight against the evils in America is worth fighting for. This open fighting against the wrongs one hates is the mark and the hope of democratic freedom. I do not underestimate the struggle. I know the learning that must take place, the evils that must be broken, the depths that must be climbed. But I am free to help in doing these things. I count. I am free (though only a little as yet) to pound blows at the huge body of my American world until, like a chastened mother, she gives me nurture with the rest.

#### 4. A Woman Remembers the War (1984)

*With millions of men in the armed forces and the nation's factories straining to keep them supplied, women were drawn by the millions into nontraditional jobs. For many of those women, the war represented not simply a bloody conflict of global proportions, but also an unanticipated opportunity for economic freedom and personal growth. In the following selection, one war worker looks back on her experience in a plant in California. What does she remember most and least fondly about her wartime job? What aspects of it challenged her most? What was most fulfilling about it? What were the war's principal effects on her?*

<sup>4</sup>From Mark Jonathan Harris, Franklin D. Mitchell, and Steven J. Schecter, *The Homefront: America During World War II*, pp. 126–129. Copyright © 1984. Reprinted by permission of the author.

MR. GOLDBLATT. . . . We naturally go along and concur with all the recommendations that the Government deems necessary to safeguard this territory. We feel, however, that a good deal of this problem has gotten out of hand, . . . inasmuch as both the local and State authorities, instead of becoming bastions of defense, of democracy and justice, joined the wolf pack when the cry came out "Let's get the yellow menace." As a matter of fact, we believe the present situation is a great victory for the yellow press and for the fifth column that is operating in this country, which is attempting to convert this war from a war against the Axis Powers into a war against the "yellow peril."

What we are concerned with, Mr. Chairman is this: That if this is to become the index of our dealings with the alien problem—in other words, that if we are not to deal only with aliens but also with the descendants of aliens—then there is no limit to this problem and the program, and this vitally affects our unions. . . . I am positive the military authorities know that neither Hitler nor Mussolini will hesitate a moment to sacrifice any Germans or Italians in this country if that will suit their purpose in an all-out war.

So that we can expect, I think, that if this campaign of isolating the Japanese is successful the next step will be for several incidents to occur which involves Germans or Italians; then the whole of the wolf pack will scream to the moon again and this time it will be "Evacuate all Italians, evacuate all Germans." The principle will have been set; the pattern will have been cut as it has been by the Hearst press, by the rabid, hysterical elements. . . .

We believe the efforts of the Federal Government should not be based on making distinctions by race, nationality, or citizenship. We favor a campaign that will detect sabotage no matter what its source and from which there will be no immunity by virtue of wealth, political connections, or position in society.

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## 24.5 Race Relations during the War

Carey McWilliams

To a nation at war against Nazi ideals of racial supremacy, persistent problems of race relations at home were embarrassing. Moreover, the large-scale industrial and military mobilization required by the war effort made discrimination against blacks and other minorities impractical. These factors, together with the rising self-consciousness and assertiveness of racial minorities (see Doc. 22.6), helped produce an environment in which advances in civil rights were possible. However, the road to better race relations was bumpy for the economic and demographic developments of the

war also stimulated new interracial tensions. The following excerpt from a 1946 essay by civil-rights authority Carey McWilliams discusses race relations during World War II.

*Consider:*

1. *How wartime mobilization increased interracial tensions;*
2. *Why, in World War II, "the wartime prejudices of the majority tended to be directed at our own racial minorities rather than, as in World War I, against enemy aliens";*
3. *Whether the developments McWilliams describes justify the optimism of his concluding observation.*

Outwardly "the race question" has passed through three clearly defined phases since the war began: a period of mounting tension and friction (from the outset of the defense program to January 1, 1943); a period of overt hostility and aggression (through 1943); and a period in which the democratic forces of the nation mobilized to meet the menace so clearly apparent in the shocking events of 1943 (from mid-summer, 1943, to date).

To fight a total war successfully on a global scale, America quickly realized that all available sources of manpower, including the racial minorities, must be utilized—in the services, in the defense industries, in all phases of the war effort. The attempt to make full utilization of the racial minorities, however, ran counter to long-established usages and customs. Since it involved the grafting of emergency wartime requirements upon a peacetime structure of race relations, the effort was naturally productive of considerable friction, particularly in the crowded defense areas, where sharp issues arose over housing, employment, and transportation. By rapidly shifting populations from rural to urban areas, the war heightened existing tensions and created new tension areas. . . .

. . . On February 28, 1942, a savage riot occurred at the Sojourner Truth Housing project in Detroit, in which prospective Negro tenants were attacked with clubs, knives, rifles, and shotguns, resulting in many injuries and over 104 arrests. When 14 Negro families were finally moved into the project in May, 2,000 National Guardsmen were on duty to give them protection. Two of the men arrested for fomenting this riot—which was a dress rehearsal for the Detroit riots of 1943—were members of an organization which had been disseminating pro-Axis propaganda. . . .

Also during this period enemy agents sought to foment racial discord by direct instigation. . . . The evidence would indicate, however, that these activities were not particularly successful. Even the limited effectiveness of such enemy-inspired activity was largely due to the fact that the war had momentarily created a situation which could be exploited to advantage.

Where the enemy did make effective use of racial discord in America was in their world-wide propaganda. Every racial "incident" was immediately seized upon for propaganda purposes. Not only did such incidents serve to discredit America, but they tended to support the Japanese propaganda thesis that this was a racial war. . . .

In the United States important changes began to take place, as the war progressed, in the attitude of the minorities toward each other and toward the majority; in the attitude of the majority toward the minorities; and in the conception which the minorities entertained of their own predicament. A noticeable ferment began to develop in the minority groups, in particular the Negro minority. . . .

Strangely enough, the wartime prejudices of the majority tended to be directed at our own racial minorities rather than, as in World War I, against enemy aliens and naturalized citizens of German descent. . . .

Realizing that the dynamics of the war were releasing new forces which were profoundly disturbing the racial *status quo* in America, the traditionally biased section of the white majority became increasingly provocative. Demagogues, in and out of Congress, began to indulge in rabid anti-Negro speeches which not only infuriated the Negro minority but shocked large sections of the white majority. . . .

Also during 1941 and 1942 a noticeable ferment began to develop among middle-class white elements on the racial question. . . . As the American people became more deeply involved in the war, the inconsistency between our traditional ideals and our racial practices became increasingly embarrassing and progressively indefensible. . . .

Thus, as the war developed, a triangle of forces began to form in America: better organized than ever before, the racial minorities were struggling to fight free from all restrictions of caste and color; one section of the majority, responding to the challenging issues of the war, began to rally to the defense of the minorities; while a minority of the majority redoubled its efforts in defense of the prewar racial *status quo*.

The dangers implicit in these mounting tensions were clearly apparent. . . .

The explosions came in 1943. They began with the so-called "zoot-suit" riot in Los Angeles early in June (although there had been some violence in connection with a "hate" strike in the shipyards at Mobile, Alabama, on May 29). Then came the Detroit race riot of June 20-21,

years, followed by subsequent disturbances in Beaumont and Harle . . . The rapid succession of these violent and destructive riots, com as they did in the midst of the greatest war in which America participated, profoundly shocked the American people. . . .

Out of this . . . activity came a host of conferences, institutes, p grams, and studies, constituting in the aggregate an enormous amo of energy and effort. Much of this activity was sporadic and unintegra and will doubtless lapse now that the war is over. But it was t activity which accounts for the fact that few racial disturbances w recorded in 1944 . . . or 1945. Interest in racial minorities, moreov has continued to increase.

. . . Forced to deal with the realities of the problem, if only on emergency wartime basis, the American people have begun to through some of the myths and fallacies which have long enshrou their thinking about racial issues.

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## 24.6 Women and Wartime Mobilization

Susan M. Hartmann

The war not only opened up employment opportunities for women, it v tually forced them to enter the work force. As a result, several million fe male workers took jobs for the first time, often in defense industries wh hours were long and wages relatively high. These working women had special problems. As in the past, they encountered discrimination in unions; and those who were mothers with husbands away at war had to worry about maintaining a home, obtaining enough food and other nece sities, and caring for their children—at the end of their long working da In this selection from her book *The Home Front and Beyond*, historian Susi Hartmann points out that social attitudes toward women in the work fo changed only gradually—and partially—during the war. Still, most histc ans agree that these years marked a turning point. Though attitudes abc working women were slow to change, the economic opportunities open them expanded significantly during and after the war.

### Consider:

1. How attitudes toward working women during the Depression (see Do 22.5) compare with attitudes during World War II;
2. The impact on family life of wartime employment patterns;
3. The overall impact of the war years on the status of American womer