

U.S. Foreign Policy

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

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DOCUMENT SET 2

War and Society: Outsiders on the Inside

World War II resulted in revolutionary changes in American society and the national economy. Chapter 26 concentrates on this social transformation and examines the long-term consequences of total war for the future of the United States. Among the groups most directly affected by wartime changes were American women and the black community. The following documents explore their social and economic experiences, revealing the catalytic effects of war.

The first three documents focus on the black response to wartime opportunity. Beginning with black labor leader A. Philip Randolph's remarks on the March on Washington Movement's goals, these materials reflect the heightened militancy of black activists who sought to infuse the war with social meaning. Relate the urgency of his comments and Grant Reynolds's outrage to the new social mobility described in your textbook. Similarly, Walter White's reflections on the economic background of the Detroit riot in 1943 should be read in conjunction with both the textbook section on black economic advances and the "Place in Time" essay on wartime Detroit. Note the relationship between the authors' backgrounds, their forums, and the views expressed. Search the documents for evidence of war as a stimulus to social change.

No less affected by the war's unsettling influence were American women, who entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers. Seizing the opportunity to

combine patriotism and financial gain, women responded to wartime propaganda appeals that stressed common sacrifice. As you review the remaining documents, try to determine what motives propelled women into the work force.

In the first two selections, the Labor Department's Women's Bureau details the entry of women into the steel industry and the shipyards. Examine these descriptions for evidence of the government's long-term intentions with regard to the future sexual division of labor. Moreover, be aware of workplace problems unique to female workers. The Women's Bureau's Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon offers useful analysis of women's work concerns as the war drew to a close.

The final selections provide a sample of black and female recollections of the changes wrought by World War II. Drawn from Studs Terkel's *The Good War*, these oral-history accounts reflect mature judgments concerning the social meaning of war. Always be cautious about the possibility of selective memory as you compare wartime accounts and later recollections of the wartime experience.

As you analyze the documents, be aware of continuities and contrasts in the black/female historical experiences. Try to judge the long-term effects of World War II on blacks and women, relating the documents to your textbook's account of the war as a destabilizing force.

Questions for Analysis

1. How do the goals, demands, and experiences of blacks and women in the 1940s compare with the ideas expressed during World War I (see document sets for Chapter 22)? Do you find evidence that the social environment had changed?
2. What do the documents reveal about government appeals to attract women into the labor force? What was the result of these appeals? Why did women enter the work force?
3. Review the White report, textbook account, and "Place in Time" essay for clues to the causes behind the Detroit riot of 1943. What does the evidence reveal about the origins of the clash?
4. What do the documents suggest with regard to impediments to widespread female labor-force participation? How were these concerns overcome? What evidence do the documents provide concerning long-term change?
5. What was the meaning of World War II to black Americans? What do the documents reveal about their goals for the war? What problems were present for blacks in the work force and military service?
6. What problems did women encounter in the workplace? In what ways were these concerns unique to female workers? To what extent was unionism helpful in dealing with the problems of women workers?
7. How did women perceive themselves as part of the American work force? How did they regard the future of women's employment in the postwar era? In what way does the evidence clarify the reasons for the ultimate outcome?

1. A. Philip Randolph States Black Goals, 1942

... When the defense program began and billions of the taxpayers' money were appropriated for guns, ships, tanks, and bombs, Negroes presented themselves for work only to be given the cold shoulder. North as well as South, and despite their qualifications, Negroes were denied skilled employment. Not until their wrath and indignation took the form of a proposed protest march on Washington, scheduled for July 1, 1941, did things begin to move in the form of defense jobs for Negroes. The march was postponed by the timely issuance (June 25, 1941) of the famous Executive Order No. 8802 by President Roosevelt. But this order and the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, established thereunder, have as yet only scratched the surface by way of eliminating discriminations on account of race or color in war industry. Both management and labor

unions in too many places and in too many ways are still drawing the color line.

It is to meet this situation squarely with direct action that the March on Washington Movement launched its present program of protest mass meetings. Twenty thousand were in attendance at Madison Square Garden, June 16; 16,000 in the Coliseum in Chicago, June 26; 9,000 in the City Auditorium of St. Louis, August 14. Meetings of such magnitude were unprecedented among Negroes. . . .

By fighting for their rights now, American Negroes are helping to make America a moral and spiritual arsenal of democracy. Their fight against the poll tax, against lynch law, segregation, and Jim Crow, their fight for economic, political, and social equality, thus becomes part of the global war for freedom.

2. Black Doubts About the War for Democracy, 1944

For the past two years and ten months I have been a Chaplain on active duty with the United States Army. I have found Negro soldiers bitterly resentful of their lot in this war. . . .

Out on the Pacific Coast I found young Negroes holding key positions in the industries—the airplane industry to be exact—which produce the most difficult of weapons to master, the army bomber. Other young Negroes are now flying these planes. Still other young Negroes are now prepared to be their navigators. Now it is a commonly accepted fact among honest men and women that no racial group has cornered the market on either intelligence or native ability. This is what the celebrated pamphlet *The Races of Mankind* would have told a few thousand army officers had it not been banned by stupid people who refuse to recognize the obvious. All Negro soldiers are not graduate engineers. Nor are all white soldiers. All Negro soldiers were not born in that section of the nation, which because it seeks to keep the Negro in

the educational gutter, directs that white youth too must wallow in the pig sty of ignorance. But the Honorable Secretary of War has not claimed that white soldiers cannot master the techniques of modern weapons of war. His blanket statement about the Negro soldier's inability in this respect not only insults the thousands of intelligent Negro youth in our armed forces from all sections of the country, but by indirection it classifies them as morons incapable of attaining the intelligence level of the most ignorant southern cracker. What does the Negro soldier think about this? He considers it a vicious attack upon his manhood. And what is more he thinks that the Administration continues to insult him as long as such men are allowed to control his destiny in this war. The Negro soldier will not give his life for the perpetuation of this outright lynching of his ability, nor for the right of domestic nazis to make of him a military scapegoat.

3. Walter White Describes Racial Tension in Wartime Detroit, 1944

In 1916 there were 8,000 Negroes in Detroit's population of 536,650. In 1925 the number of Negroes in

Detroit had been multiplied by ten to a total of 85,000. In 1940, the total had jumped to 149,119. In

June, 1943, between 190,000 and 200,000 lived in the Motor City. . . .

Jobs

Early in July, 1943, 25,000 employees of the Packard Plant, which was making Rolls-Royce engines for American bombers and marine engines for the famous PT boats, ceased work in protest against the upgrading of three Negroes. Subsequent investigation indicated that only a relatively small percentage of the Packard workers actually wanted to go on strike. The UAW-CIO bitterly fought the strike. But a handful of agitators charged by R. J. Thomas, president of the UAW-CIO, with being members of the Ku Klux Klan, had whipped up sentiment particularly among the Southern whites employed by Packard against the promotion of Negro workers. During the short-lived strike, a thick Southern voice outside the plant harangued a crowd shouting, "I'd rather see Hitler and Hirohito win than work beside a nigger on the assembly line." The strike was broken by the resolute attitude of the union and of Col. George E. Strong of the United States Aircraft Procurement Division, who refused to yield to the demand that the three Negroes be down-graded. . . . The racial hatred created, released, and crystallized by the Packard strike played a considerable role in the race riot which was soon to follow. It also was the culmination of a long and bitter fight to prevent the employment of Negroes in wartime industry. There had been innumerable instances, unpublicized, in the Detroit area of work stoppages and slow downs by white workers, chiefly from the South, and of Polish and Italian extraction. Trivial reasons for these stoppages had been given by the workers when in reality they were in protest against unemployment or promotion of Negroes. . . .

Detroit Labor Unions and the Negro

One of the most extraordinary phenomena of the riot was the fact that while mobs attacked Negro victims outside some of the industrial plants of Detroit, there was not only no physical clash inside any plant in Detroit but not as far as could be learned even any verbal clash between white and Negro workers. This can be attributed to two factors: first, a firm stand against discrimination and segregation of Negro workers by the UAW-CIO, particularly since the Ford strike of 1941. The second factor is that when the military took over, the armed guards in the plants were ordered by the Army to maintain order at all costs and to prevent any outbreak within the plants. . . .

The Detroit riot brought into sharp focus one of the most extraordinary labor situations in the United States. Prior to the Ford strike of 1941 many Negroes in Detroit considered Ford their "great white father" because the Ford plant almost alone of Detroit industries employed Negroes. When the UAW-CIO and the UAW-AFL sought to organize Ford workers, their approach at the beginning was a surreptitious one. The unions felt that the very high percentage of Southern whites in Detroit would refuse to join the Union if Negroes were too obviously participating. But when the strike broke, far-sighted Negro leaders in Detroit took an unequivocal position in behalf of the organization of workers. A serious racial clash was averted by the intercession of thoughtful whites and Negroes. Following the winning of the NLRB election by the union, it began to take a broader and more unequivocal position that all workers and union members should share in the benefits of union agreements irrespective of race, creed, or color. . . .