

# The Home Front

## BEFORE YOU READ

In this section, you will see how the war changed the United States.

## AS YOU READ

Use the chart below to take notes on the advances and problems in the economy and in civil rights during the war.

### TERMS AND NAMES

**GI Bill of Rights** Law passed by Congress to help servicemen readjust to civilian life

**James Farmer** Civil rights leader who founded the Congress of Racial Equality

**Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)** Interracial organization formed to fight discrimination

**internment** Confinement under guard, especially during wartime

**Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)** Civil rights group formed by Japanese Americans

	ADVANCES	PROBLEMS
<b>Economy</b>	<i>More jobs Better pay</i>	<i>Housing shortage</i>
<b>Civil Rights:</b> • <i>African Americans</i>		
• <i>Mexican Americans</i>		
• <i>Japanese Americans</i>		

## Opportunity and Adjustment

### *How did the war create opportunities at home?*

World War II was a time of opportunity for many Americans. The economy boomed. There were plenty of jobs. Wages rose. Farmers also did well.

Women had many job opportunities during the war. The share of women in the work force rose to 35 percent. (They lost some of these jobs when the men returned from military service.) Women also did a wide range of jobs and entered professions that had not been open to them before the war.

Many Americans relocated—picked up and moved. They moved to where there were defense jobs. States with military bases or defense plants saw huge gains in population. Some city populations grew by one third. The result was a housing shortage. Even though workers had the money to pay, there was no housing to rent. There were also food shortages in some areas.

People had to adjust to new family situations. Many fathers were in the armed forces, so women had to work and raise children on their own.

The war also caused a boom in marriages. Many couples married before the men went overseas.

But when the men returned after years of military service, many of these marriages failed. The divorce rate increased.

In 1944, Congress passed the **GI Bill of Rights** which was designed to help servicemen readjust to civilian life. This bill paid for veterans to attend college or technical school. Over half the returning soldiers took advantage of this opportunity. It also gave federal loan guarantees to veterans buying homes or farms or starting businesses. The GI Bill gave many people opportunities they otherwise would never have had.

### 1. What opportunities did the war create at home?

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## Discrimination and Reaction

### *How did the war affect African Americans and Mexican Americans?*

On the *home front*, many African Americans left the South and moved to the West Coast. There they found skilled jobs that paid well. But they also found prejudice. In 1942, civil rights leader **James Farmer** formed a new interracial organization to fight discrimination. It was called the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)**.

African Americans also moved into the crowded cities of the North. Tension among the races grew. In 1943 it led to *race riots*. The worst one was in Detroit, where over 30 people were killed. President Roosevelt had to send federal troops to restore order. In response, many communities formed committees to improve race relations.

Mexican Americans experienced prejudice during the war years as well. In 1942, there were anti-Mexican riots in Los Angeles. In the “zoot-suit” riots, Mexican Americans were beaten by white service men and civilians.

### 2. How did World War II affect African Americans and Mexican Americans?

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## Internment of Japanese Americans

### *What happened to Japanese Americans during the war?*

Japanese Americans endured terrible treatment during the war. After Pearl Harbor, panic-stricken Americans believed Japanese Americans living in the U.S. were disloyal to the United States. In Hawaii, the commanding general ordered the **internment**, or confinement of about 1 percent of Japanese-American residents.

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt ordered the internment of all Japanese Americans living in California, and parts of other western states. More than 100,000 people were rounded up and shipped to *internment camps*.

No charges were ever filed against Japanese Americans. No evidence of subversion was ever found. In 1944, in the case of *Korematsu v. United States*, the Supreme Court said the government policy was justified by “military necessity.” After the war, the **Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)** pushed the government to compensate, or pay back those sent to the camps.

Over the years, Congress passed bills to repay those who had been interned for the loss of their property. Finally, in 1990, cash payments were sent to all former internees. In a letter that year, President Bush said the nation “recognized the injustice done to Japanese Americans during World War II.”

### 3. What reason was given for the internment of Japanese Americans?

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