force or lost their jobs. Meanwhile, former military women faced a litany of obstacles in obtaining veteran's benefits during their transition to civilian life. The nation that beckoned the call for assistance to millions of women during the four-year crisis hardly stood ready to accommodate their postwar needs and demands.

IX. Race and World War II

World War II affected nearly every aspect of life in the United States, and America's racial relationships were not immune. African Americans, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Jews, and Japanese Americans were profoundly impacted.

In early 1941, months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the largest black trade union in the nation, made headlines by threatening President Roosevelt with a march on Washington, D.C. In this "crisis of democracy," Randolph said, defense industries refused to hire African Americans and the armed forces remained segregated. In exchange for Randolph calling off the march, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, banning racial and religious discrimination in defense industries and establishing the FEPC to monitor defense industry hiring practices. While the armed forces remained segregated throughout the war, and the FEPC had limited influence, the order showed that the federal government could stand against discrimination. The black workforce in defense industries rose from 3 percent in 1942 to 9 percent in 1945.[21]

More than one million African Americans fought in the war. Most blacks served in segregated, noncombat units led by white officers. Some gains were made, however. The number of black officers increased from five in 1940 to over seven thousand in 1945. The all-black pilot squadrons, known as the Tuskegee Airmen, completed more than 1,500 missions, escorted heavy bombers into Germany, and earned several hundred merits and medals. Many bomber crews specifically requested the Red Tail Angels as escorts. And near the end of the war, the army and navy began integrating some of their units and facilities, before the U.S. government finally ordered the full integration of its armed forces in 1948.[22]

While black Americans served in the armed forces (though they were segregated), on the home front they became riveters and welders, rationed food and gasoline, and bought victory bonds. But many black Americans saw the war as an opportunity not only to serve their country

The Tuskegee Airmen stand at attention in 1941 as Major James A. Ellison returns the salute of Mac Ross, one of the first graduates of the Tuskegee cadets. The photographs captures the pride and poise of the Tuskegee Airmen, who continued the tradition of African Americans' military service despite widespread racial discrimination and inequality at home. Wikimedia.

but to improve it. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, a leading black newspaper, spearheaded the Double V campaign. It called on African Americans to fight two wars: the war against Nazism and fascism abroad and the war against racial inequality at home. To achieve victory, to achieve "real democracy," the *Courier* encouraged its readers to enlist in the armed forces, volunteer on the home front, and fight against racial segregation and discrimination.[23]

During the war, membership in the NAACP jumped tenfold, from fifty thousand to five hundred thousand. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was formed in 1942 and spearheaded the method of nonviolent direct action to achieve desegregation. Between 1940 and 1950, some 1.5 million southern blacks, the largest number of any decade since the beginning of the Great Migration, also indirectly demonstrated their opposition to racism and violence by migrating out of the Jim Crow South

to the North. But transitions were not easy. Racial tensions erupted in 1943 in a series of riots in cities such as Mobile, Beaumont, and Harlem. The bloodiest race riot occurred in Detroit and resulted in the death of twenty-five blacks and nine whites. Still, the war ignited in African Americans an urgency for equality that they would carry with them into the subsequent years.[24]

Many Americans had to navigate American prejudice, and America's entry into the war left foreign nationals from the belligerent nations in a precarious position. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) targeted many on suspicions of disloyalty for detainment, hearings, and possible internment under the Alien Enemy Act. Those who received an order for internment were sent to government camps secured by barbed wire and armed guards. Such internments were supposed to be for cause. Then, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal of any persons from designated "exclusion zones"—which ultimately covered nearly a third of the country—at the discretion of military commanders. Thirty thousand Japanese Americans fought for the United States in World War II, but wartime anti-Japanese sentiment built on historical prejudices, and under the order, people of Japanese descent, both immigrants and American citizens, were detained and placed under the custody of the War Relocation Authority, the civil agency that supervised their relocation to internment camps. They lost their homes and jobs. Over ten thousand German nationals and a smaller number of Italian nationals were interned at various times in the United States during World War II, but American policies disproportionately targeted Japanese-descended populations, and individuals did not receive personalized reviews prior to their internment. This policy of mass exclusion and detention affected over 110,000 Japanese and Japanese-descended individuals. Seventy thousand were American citizens.[25]

In its 1982 report, *Personal Justice Denied*, the congressionally appointed Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that "the broad historical causes" shaping the relocation program were "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."[26] Although the exclusion orders were found to have been constitutionally permissible under the vagaries of national security, they were later judged, even by the military and judicial leaders of the time, to have been a grave injustice against people of Japanese descent. In 1988, President Reagan signed a law that formally apologized for internment and provided reparations to surviving internees.

But if actions taken during war would later prove repugnant, so too could inaction. As the Allies pushed into Germany and Poland, they uncovered the full extent of Hitler's genocidal atrocities. The Allies liberated massive camp systems set up for the imprisonment, forced labor, and extermination of all those deemed racially, ideologically, or biologically "unfit" by Nazi Germany. But the Holocaust—the systematic murder of eleven million civilians, including six million Jews—had been under way for years. How did America respond?

Initially, American officials expressed little official concern for Nazi persecutions. At the first signs of trouble in the 1930s, the State Department and most U.S. embassies did relatively little to aid European Jews. Roosevelt publicly spoke out against the persecution and even withdrew the U.S. ambassador to Germany after Kristallnacht. He pushed for the 1938 Evian Conference in France, in which international leaders discussed the Jewish refugee problem and worked to expand Jewish immigration quotas by tens of thousands of people per year. But the conference came to nothing, and the United States turned away countless Jewish refugees who requested asylum in the United States.

This photograph, originally from Jürgen Stroop's May 1943 report to Heinrich Himmler, circulated throughout Europe and America as an image of the Nazi Party's brutality. The original German caption read: *Forcibly pulled out of dugouts*. Wikimedia Commons.

In 1939, the German ship *St. Louis* carried over nine hundred Jewish refugees. They could not find a country that would take them. The passengers could not receive visas under the U.S. quota system. A State Department wire to one passenger read that all must "await their turns on the waiting list and qualify for and obtain immigration visas before they may be admissible into the United States." The ship cabled the president for special privilege, but the president said nothing. The ship was forced to return to Europe. Hundreds of the *St. Louis*'s passengers would perish in the Holocaust.

Anti-Semitism still permeated the United States. Even if Roosevelt wanted to do more—it's difficult to trace his own thoughts and personal views—he judged the political price for increasing immigration quotas as too high. In 1938 and 1939, the U.S. Congress debated the Wagner-Rogers Bill, an act to allow twenty thousand German-Jewish children into the United States. First lady Eleanor Roosevelt endorsed the measure, but the president remained publicly silent. The bill was opposed by roughly two thirds of the American public and was defeated. Historians speculate that Roosevelt, anxious to protect the New Deal and his rearmament programs, was unwilling to expend political capital to protect foreign groups that the American public had little interest in protecting.[27]

Knowledge of the full extent of the Holocaust was slow in coming. When the war began, American officials, including Roosevelt, doubted initial reports of industrial death camps. But even when they conceded their existence, officials pointed to their genuinely limited options. The most plausible response was for the U.S. military was to bomb either the camps or the railroads leading to them, but those options were rejected by military and civilian officials who argued that it would do little to stop the deportations, would distract from the war effort, and could cause casualties among concentration camp prisoners. Whether bombing would have saved lives remains a hotly debated question.[28]

Late in the war, secretary of the treasury Henry Morgenthau, himself born into a wealthy New York Jewish family, pushed through major changes in American policy. In 1944, he formed the War Refugees Board (WRB) and became a passionate advocate for Jewish refugees. The WRB saved perhaps two hundred thousand Jews and twenty thousand others. Morgenthau also convinced Roosevelt to issue a public statement condemning the Nazi's persecution. But it was already 1944, and such policies were far too little, far too late.[29]

X. Toward a Postwar World

Americans celebrated the end of the war. At home and abroad, the United States looked to create a postwar order that would guarantee global peace and domestic prosperity. Although the alliance of convenience with Stalin's Soviet Union would collapse, Americans nevertheless looked for the means to ensure postwar stability and economic security for returning veterans.

The inability of the League of Nations to stop German, Italian, and Japanese aggressions caused many to question whether any global organization or agreements could ever ensure world peace. This included Franklin Roosevelt, who, as Woodrow Wilson's undersecretary of the navy, witnessed the rejection of this idea by both the American people and the Senate. In 1941, Roosevelt believed that postwar security could be maintained by an informal agreement between what he termed the Four Policemen—the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China—instead of a rejuvenated League of Nations. But others, including secretary of state Cordell Hull and British prime minister Winston Churchill, disagreed and convinced Roosevelt to push for a new global organization. As the war ran its course, Roosevelt came around to the idea. And so did the American public. Pollster George Gallup noted a "profound change" in American attitudes. The United States had rejected membership in the League of Nations after World War I, and in 1937 only a third of Americans polled supported such an idea. But as war broke out in Europe, half of Americans did. America's entry into the war bolstered support, and, by 1945, with the war closing, 81 percent of Americans favored the idea.[30]

Whatever his support, Roosevelt had long shown enthusiasm for the ideas later enshrined in the United Nations (UN) charter. In January 1941, he announced his Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, of worship, from want, and from fear—that all of the world's citizens should enjoy. That same year he signed the Atlantic Charter with Churchill, which reinforced those ideas and added the right of self-determination and promised some sort of postwar economic and political cooperation. Roosevelt first used the term *united nations* to describe the Allied powers, not the subsequent postwar organization. But the name stuck. At Tehran in 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill convinced Stalin to send a Soviet delegation to a conference at Dumbarton Oaks, outside Washington, D.C., in August 1944, where they agreed on the basic structure of the new organization. It would have a Security Council—the original Four Policemen,

plus France—which would consult on how best to keep the peace and when to deploy the military power of the assembled nations. According to one historian, the organization demonstrated an understanding that "only the Great Powers, working together, could provide real security." But the plan was a kind of hybrid between Roosevelt's policemen idea and a global organization of equal representation. There would also be a General Assembly, made up of all nations; an International Court of Justice; and a council for economic and social matters. Dumbarton Oaks was a mixed success—the Soviets especially expressed concern over how the Security Council would work—but the powers agreed to meet again in San Francisco between April and June 1945 for further negotiations. There, on June 26, 1945, fifty nations signed the UN charter.[31]

Anticipating victory in World War II, leaders not only looked to the postwar global order, they looked to the fate of returning American servicemen. American politicians and interest groups sought to avoid another economic depression—the economy had tanked after World War I—by gradually easing returning veterans back into the civilian economy. The brainchild of William Atherton, the head of the American Legion, the G.I. Bill won support from progressives and conservatives alike. Passed in 1944, the G.I. Bill was a multifaceted, multibillion-dollar entitlement program that rewarded honorably discharged veterans with numerous benefits.[32]

Faced with the prospect of over fifteen million members of the armed services (including approximately 350,000 women) suddenly returning to civilian life, the G.I. Bill offered a bevy of inducements to slow their influx into the civilian workforce as well as reward their service with public benefits. The legislation offered a year's worth of unemployment benefits for veterans unable to secure work. About half of American veterans (eight million) received $4 billion in unemployment benefits over the life of the bill. The G.I. Bill also made postsecondary education a reality for many. The Veterans Administration (VA) paid the lion's share of educational expenses, including tuition, fees, supplies, and even stipends for living expenses. The G.I. Bill sparked a boom in higher education. Enrollments at accredited colleges, universities, and technical and professional schools spiked, rising from 1.5 million in 1940 to 3.6 million in 1960. The VA disbursed over $14 billon in educational aid in just over a decade. Furthermore, the bill encouraged home ownership. Roughly 40 percent of Americans owned homes in 1945, but that figure climbed to 60 percent a decade after the close of the war. Because the bill did away with down payment requirements, veterans could obtain home

loans for as little as $1 down. Close to four million veterans purchased homes through the G.I. Bill, sparking a construction bonanza that fueled postwar growth. In addition, the VA also helped nearly two hundred thousand veterans secure farms and offered thousands more guaranteed financing for small businesses.[33]

Not all Americans, however, benefited equally from the G.I. Bill. Indirectly, since the military limited the number of female personnel, men qualified for the bill's benefits in far higher numbers. Colleges also limited the number of female applicants to guarantee space for male veterans. African Americans, too, faced discrimination. Segregation forced black veterans into overcrowded "historically black colleges" that had to turn away close to twenty thousand applicants. Meanwhile, residential segregation limited black home ownership in various neighborhoods, denying black homeowners the equity and investment that would come with home ownership. There were other limits and other disadvantaged groups. Veterans accused of homosexuality, for instance, were similarly unable to claim GI benefits.[34]

The effects of the G.I. Bill were significant and long-lasting. It helped sustain the great postwar economic boom and, even if many could not attain it, it nevertheless established the hallmarks of American middle class life.

XI. Conclusion

The United States entered the war in a crippling economic depression and exited at the beginning of an unparalleled economic boom. The war had been won, the United States was stronger than ever, and Americans looked forward to a prosperous future. And yet new problems loomed. Stalin's Soviet Union and the proliferation of nuclear weapons would disrupt postwar dreams of global harmony. Meanwhile, Americans who had fought a war for global democracy would find that very democracy eradicated around the world in reestablished colonial regimes and at home in segregation and injustice. The war had unleashed powerful forces that would reshape the United States at home and abroad.

XII. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Joseph Locke, with content contributions by Mary Beth Chopas, Andrew David, Ashton Ellett, Paula Fortier, Joseph Locke, Jennifer Mandel, Valerie Martinez, Ryan Menath, Chris Thomas.