## The impact of the war on other minority groups

### Key question: How did the war affect other minority groups?

Such was the power of the USA that it was able to determine how South American countries dealt with their own Japanese immigrants, especially in Peru.

### Japanese citizens in South America

#### The treatment of Japanese Peruvians

At the time of Pearl Harbor, there were about 26,000 people of Japanese descent living in Peru. The USA had been concerned about the possibility of Japanese spies in Latin America before 1941 and moved quickly after Pearl Harbor to ask neighbouring governments to help prevent possible espionage and sabotage.

The US State Department made an agreement with Peru about potential troublemakers and 1800 Japanese Peruvians were arrested and sent to internment camps in the USA. The camps were run by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. On internment, the Japanese Peruvians had their passports confiscated and became stateless people.

The USA also asked Peru to prevent Japanese officials from leaving the country.

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### Native Americans

#### The position of Native Americans in society

The war had a significant impact on Native American people in the USA. They played a part in the war by joining in combat and the general war effort. This involvement began to lead to a greater demand for equal rights.

There were about 350,000 Native Americans living in the USA at the beginning of the Second World War. Most lived on tribal reservations. It was as late as 1924 that most Native Americans had finally been granted US citizenship. Life on the reservations had been difficult. Native Americans were marginalized and suffered poverty, poor education and poor health provision. Nevertheless, when war was declared in 1941, they volunteered for military service on a large scale.

#### The participation of Native Americans in the war

At the beginning of the conflict, there were some 5000 Native Americans serving in the US military and by the end a further 40,000 had enlisted. The number involved was more than ten per cent of the Native American population. However, some who tried to enlist were rejected because they were unfit due to years of poverty, illiteracy and ill health.

One important contribution to the military was the use of 400 members of the Navajo tribe as code talkers, serving in all six Marine divisions, Marine Raider battalions and Marine parachute units. They transmitted coded messages by telephone and radio in their native language, a code that the Japanese never broke.
In addition, several hundred Native American women served as WACS, WAVES, and in the Army Nurse Corps (see page 141).

The impact of the war

For many Native Americans, the income from a permanent post in the military and work in the war industries meant that their standard of living dramatically improved. By 1944, the annual income of the average Native American was two and a half times greater than that of 1940. During the war, leaders of various tribes came together and formed the National Congress of American Indians, which sought to establish equal rights in areas such as education and health.

At the end of the war, many Native Americans who had served in the war moved to live in urban America; on their return to the reservations, some began to campaign for improved rights.

Hispanic Americans

Hispanic Americans on the west coast of America

There was racial tension during the war between whites and Hispanic Americans, the descendants of Mexican migrants and those who had settled in the USA, mainly in California, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There were also issues with those who came to work in the USA during the war under the Bracero Agreement (see below).

Southern California became a place of conflict in 1942 and 1943. In 1942, there were clashes between members of the armed forces and members of Mexican youth gangs. The area between San Diego and Los Angeles had several military bases and, as a result, as many as 50,000 servicemen could be found in Los Angeles. The servicemen saw the Hispanic Americans as delinquents who spoke and dressed differently and challenged US values and customs.

The young Hispanics had their own fashion uniform called the zoot suit, although many young whites also wore these clothes. The intermittent clashes between the zoot suiters and members of the armed services broke out into continuous rioting in June 1943. Police only arrested zoot suiters even though sailors had been known to start the trouble. The mayor of Los Angeles declared the city off limits to US sailors and gradually the rioting subsided.

SOURCE

Excerpt from 'Strong measures must be taken against rioting' in the Los Angeles Times, 5 June 1943, page 4 (from https://invention.mithshonian.org/centerpieces/whole_cloth/a7d6uMateritals/congrevole.html).

To preserve the peace and good name of the Los Angeles area, the strongest measures must be taken jointly by the police, the Sheriff's office and Army and Navy authorities, to prevent any further outbreaks of zoot suit rioting. While members of the armed forces received considerable protection at the hands of the unidentified rioters, such a situation cannot be cured by indiscriminate assault on every youth wearing a particular type of costume. It would not do, for a large number of reasons, to let the impression circulate in South America that persons of Spanish-American ancestry were being singled out for mistreatment in Southern California. And the incidents here were capable of being exaggerated to give that impression.

The Governor of California ordered the creation of a citizens' committee to investigate the cause of the riots. In 1943, the committee issued its report; it determined racism to be a central cause of the riots. At the same time, the mayor of Los Angeles said that the riots were caused by juvenile delinquents and by white southerners, and that racial prejudice was not a factor.

Rioting was just one of the ways in which the war made an impact on Hispanic Americans. Employment was also affected.

Mexican migrant workers

There had been substantial emigration from Mexico to the USA in the early twentieth century as people came to look for work in the border states of California and Texas. They had sought work mainly in agriculture and despite low wages, life in the USA was an improvement on that in Mexico. However, because of the lack of work during the Depression of the 1930s, immigration had stopped and almost 500,000 returned to Mexico. Nevertheless, a 1940 census indicated that there were almost 400,000 people who had been born in Mexico living in the USA; they were called chicanos in a derogatory manner by white Americans.

When the USA became involved in the war, farmers soon began to complain that there was a shortage of labour as a result of workers joining the armed forces. In June 1942, the USA and Mexico signed the Bracero Agreement (which stood until 1964) by which Mexican citizens were allowed to work temporarily in the USA. The agreement meant that Mexican workers could be employed in agriculture and on the railroads. It was hoped that this emergency measure would stem the labour shortage. One key point of the agreement stated that Mexican workers working in the USA would not experience discriminatory acts of any kind (Executive Order 8802).

Despite this, the Bracero workers did experience discrimination. Many had to work long hours and received poor pay, and lived in run-down, unsanitary housing. Mexican workers went on strike in California because of the low pay and farmers eventually agreed to increase wages.

The Bracero Agreement had an unintended consequence. Prospective workers brought their families with them and this increased pressure on local areas for housing, education and hospitals. By the end of the war, more than 100,000 Braceros were working in the USA and many more had worked temporarily during 1942-5 and returned to Mexico.
Conclusion
The war had an impact on several ethnic groups, including Japanese Peruvians, Japanese Brazilians, Hispanic Americans and Mexicans. Other groups, such as women and African Americans, were also severely affected by the war.

**SUMMARY DIAGRAM**
The impact of the war on other minority groups

- **Hispanic Americans**
  - Racial tension in California between Hispanic Americans and US troops
  - Zoot suit riots
  - Braceros Agreement allowed large numbers of Mexicans to work in the USA

- **Japanese Peruvians**
  - c.1900 deported to USA and interned
  - The internment became a form of blacklisting
  - Few returned

- **Native Americans**
  - Large number volunteered for the services
  - Many joined US Marines
  - Navajo codes were used as code talkers
  - War work improved their standard of living

- **Japanese Brazilians**
  - Travel restrictions placed on Japanese Brazilians
  - Forced to relocate from coastal areas

**The impact of the war on women**

- **Key question**: How did the position of women change during the war?

This section will look at the changing employment patterns of women during the war and how they were able to work in the armed services.

**The impact of the war on female employment**

During the 1940s, the traditional role of a woman was still seen as a wife and mother. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the Second World War, there were about 13 million female workers and at the height of the war in 1944, this figure had increased to 19 million. Many did take on the jobs of men, but many employers and male workers considered them inferior colleagues.

Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady, was a powerful spokesperson for female workers during the war.

**SOURCE G**
An excerpt from an article by Eleanor Roosevelt published in the Reader's Digest in January 1944.

Some of the married women workers are not doing their best because they haven't taken into consideration their personal problems. Their homes must still go on. Their children must be cared for. Day nurseries are now being established, but they are not always properly organized. Sometimes they are not located conveniently for the mothers – I was told of one nursery which was five blocks from a bus stop, which meant that a woman had to walk 20 blocks every day. To a tired woman carrying a child, these blocks were very long.

It is clear that women did make a tremendous contribution to the war but there were constant attempts to trivialize their role by the press, male soldiers and those who thought that a woman's place was in the home.

**SOURCE H**
US servicewomen photographed in 1944, who were in a contest to find the most attractive woman in the US armed forces.

Women and the war effort

Many new jobs during the war were in traditionally 'male' occupations such as the shipyards, aircraft factories and munitions. One in three aircraft workers and half of those working in electronics and munitions were women. Indeed, the pay in munitions work could be double that normally paid to women in 'female' occupations.

In 1942, a poll showed that 60 per cent of Americans were in favour of women helping with the war industries, yet there was a degree of ambivalence to the employment of women throughout the war.
SOURCE 1

The men really viewed the women very much, and in the beginning it was a little bit rough... The men that you worked with, after a while, they realized that it was essential that the women worked there. Because there wasn’t enough men and the women were doing a pretty good job, the resentment eased. However, I always felt that they thought it wasn’t their place to be there.

Wartime changes
Some US states made equal pay between men and women (for the same role) compulsory, while others tried to protect women from workplace discrimination. However, racial discrimination continued, for instance African American women were, by and large, almost always the last to be hired. These were also many “hate strikes” such as the ones at the Packard car factory in Detroit as a result of the employment of African American women.

At the end of the war, the majority of women willingly gave up their wartime jobs and returned to their traditional pre-1941 female roles. In 1945, despite some progress in the position of women, there were still problems:
- They were generally excluded from the top, well-paid jobs.
- On average, women earned 50-60 per cent of the wage that men earned for doing the same job. In 1944, the average weekly wage for working women was $31.21 and for men it was $56.60.
- A woman could still be dismissed from her job when she married.

The role of women in the US military during the war
By 1945, the numbers of women serving in the various forces were as follows:
- Army: 140,000
- Navy: 100,000
- Marines: 23,000
- Coast Guard: 16,000
- Air Force: 1000
- Army and navy nurse corps: 74,000

The army
The Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was set up in 1910, but there was antipathy from senior members of the army who did not want to accept women directly into its ranks. The WAAC allowed women to contribute to the US war effort directly by carrying out non-combatant military jobs for which they were already trained, such as clerical work. Thus, to some degree,

this perpetuated the female employment stereotype and did not create a situation for barriers to be removed or broken.

The Women’s Army Corps (WAC) was formed in 1943 and most WAACS transferred across. The creation of the corps was a clear recognition of the work that women had carried out. From a position of being in groups which assisted the army when and where necessary, soldiers of the WACs were now an integral part of the army.

However, there was no improvement in the poor esteem in which the women were held, not only by their male counterparts, but also by much of US society in general. WACs were regularly accused of being promiscuous, something which deterred many women from joining up.

The navy
In 1942, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (or WAVES) became a female-only division of the US Navy. The WAVES could not serve aboard ships that went into combat and did not serve in any theatres of war. They were instead involved in clerical, medical, communications, intelligence and technical work. African American women were not accepted into the WAVES until 1944.

The air force
The US Army Air Force (USAAF) established the Women’s Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) to teach women to fly. At the same time, the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) was set up in September 1942 to fly aircraft within the USA. Both of these merged to become the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs).

More than 25,000 women applied to join the WASPs in 1943. Almost 2000 were accepted into WASP training and more than 1000 graduated. The WASP was never a full part of the USAAF, and those who served as WASPs were considered civil service employees. The WASPs were disbanded in December 1944.

Army nurse corps
Army nurses received little training, except in general military matters. Members of the army nurse corps served in theatres all over the world. The importance of nurses can be seen in the changing status of the profession. In June 1944, the army granted its nurses officers’ commissions and full retirement privileges, dependents’ allowances, and significantly, equal pay.

The army nurse corps accepted only a small number of African American nurses during the Second World War – there were only 479 African American nurses serving when the war ended. The army authorities argued that the appointment of African American nurses was limited because they were only allowed to care for black troops in black wards or hospitals.
The impact of the war on African Americans

Key question: How did the war change the position of African Americans?

This section will consider the changing position of African Americans and their contribution to the war both at home and abroad. Before the Second World War, African Americans experienced segregation and discrimination in all walks of life. When war broke out, there was increased optimism that things would change. After all, if the USA was fighting fascism and racism, how could it continue to discriminate and deny civil rights to large sections of its own population?

Employment and African Americans

In 1940, there were 12.9 million African Americans in the USA. The census of that year showed that there were almost 5.4 million employed, of whom 3.5 million were male. The vast majority of those employed had manual jobs which were paid low. The average annual wage was $557 for men in 1939 and $331 for women. Both earned less than half of that of their white counterparts. When the war broke out in Europe, unemployment among whites was 14 per cent and as war-related industries began to seek workers, whites were taken on immediately. Unemployed African Americans did not benefit from this initial boom.

Impacts of the war on women

- Female workforce grew from 13 million to 19 million
- Women formed part of the forces: army (WAACS), navy (WAVC), air force (WASP)
- Church and marine
- Nurses corps (few African American women joined)
- Large numbers worked in munitions
- Factory work
- Took up traditional male roles: welders, lathe operators

Issues for women in the war

- Male resentment continued
- Unequal pay
- Hade strikes
- Poor conditions for women with children

A survey conducted by the US Employment Office in 1940 among the defense industries indicated that more than half would not employ African Americans. In some cases, it was not simply the companies' owners who were promoting discrimination, it was their workers. The owners did not wish to fall foul of their employees.

SOURCE


While we are in complete sympathy with the Negro, it is against company policy to employ them as aircraft workers or mechanics, regardless of their training, but there will be some jobs as janitors for Negroes.

The March on Washington Movement

A. Philip Randolph, one of the most prominent leading African American activists and trade unionists, was appalled at the discrimination not only in the war industries but also in the US armed forces. Randolph called for immediate action and sought to shame the government into action and bring an end to the inequality. He was unwilling to follow the legal and political route that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) followed (see page 149); he wanted direct action and organized the March on Washington Movement. He used the slogan 'We loyal Americans demand the right to work and fight for our country' and proposed a demonstration, a mass march on Washington, DC, together with a possible strike to try to make the government bring an end to discrimination in the workplace.

It was expected that the march would include up to 300,000 demonstrators and, if this were published across the world, then it could do little to sustain the USA's image of the upholder of liberty and democracy.

Roosevelt was concerned that the march would discredit and embarrass not only the government, but the USA as a whole. Senior government members and Eleanor Roosevelt were sent to meet Randolph in an attempt to persuade him to call off the march. Even though President Roosevelt openly condemned job discrimination, Randolph refused. Eventually they came to a compromise. Randolph called off the march and Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 and set up the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to prevent discrimination at work.

However, Randolph did not completely disband the March on Washington Movement. He continued to encourage African Americans to go on protest rallies to ensure that the issue of discrimination remained firmly in the public view. He also encouraged acts of civil disobedience to show opposition to laws which permitted unfair and unequal treatment.
Trade union involvement increased and African American membership rose from 15,000 in 1935 to 1.25 million in 1945. Members were able to fight for improved working conditions and wages.

The war also meant a broadening of opportunities for African American women. The number who worked in domestic service fell from 75 per cent to less than 45 per cent by 1945. As aviation worker Fanny Christina Hill said, 'The war made me live better. Hitler was the one that got us out of the white folks' kitchen.' Many became nurses but were only permitted to help African American soldiers (see page 141).

However, gains made in the war were small. Increased wages and improved opportunities had to be measured against similar and greater ones made by whites. Opportunities in education and employment prospects were still poor and segregation and discrimination continued. It was only when legislation was passed in the 1950s and 1960s that significant strides were made in achieving civil rights.

**SOURCE L**

Female workers in the arms industry during the war. This photograph, which is undated but thought to be from about 1940, shows Luedell Mitchell and Lavida Cherry at the El Segundo Plant of the Douglas Aircraft Company, USA.
African Americans and the armed forces

The army

In order to win the African American vote in the 1940 presidential election, Roosevelt promised that the army would comprise the same ethnically mixed society that is, 90 per cent white and ten per cent African American. Nevertheless, African Americans were still underrepresented by early 1942 and at the end of the war accounted for less than three per cent of all men assigned to combat duty.

The war highlighted the racism and discrimination in the armed forces. Many African Americans enlisted in what became known as the Jim Crow army. On occasions, African American soldiers were given inferior training, had few recreational facilities, and endured racial slurs and even serious physical mistreatment. Moreover, many white officers thought that African American soldiers were undisciplined, mentally wanting, mentally deficient and even cowardly in battle.

They performed the menial non-combat tasks such as cooking, guarding prisoners, delivering supplies, and building camps and roads. They found promotion difficult and the highest rank most reached was first lieutenant. As late as the spring of 1943, only 79,000 out of a total of 504,000 black soldiers were overseas, simply because white army commanders did not want them.

General Eisenhower supported integrated combat units in the Battle of the Bulge but only because he was short of replacements for white soldiers. The 761st Tank Battalion won acclaim in the Battle of the Bulge (see pages 79-80) and received praise from General Patton, a leading US army general. The battalion’s nickname was the ‘Black Panthers’.

By the end of 1944, there were almost three-quarters of a million African Americans in the US Army and hundreds of officers. Many now fought in integrated combat units. However, the number of African Americans in the army never reached the planned ten per cent of 1940.

Similar to their experience in the army, African American recruits faced discrimination in the air force and navy.

The air force

African Americans had not been allowed to enlist in the developing air force. However, in 1940, President Roosevelt ordered the air corps to recruit an all-African American flying unit. By the end of 1945 more than 600 pilots had been trained, although they were not allowed to fly in the same groups as whites. The all-African American squadron was based in Tuskegee, Alabama. It became known as the Tuskegee Airmen (332nd Fighter Group) and won great acclaim acting as fighter escorts for US bombers.

The navy

Discrimination was worst in the navy with African American sailors given the most dangerous job of loading ammunition on ships bound for war zones. For example, in July 1944 a horrific accident occurred at Port Chicago in California when ammunition that was being loaded on to two vessels detonated, killing 223 people – most of them African American sailors. Hundreds of African American sailors went on strike the following month in protest at the dangerous working conditions. This was called the Port Chicago Mutiny and 50 sailors were arrested and imprisoned. The navy examined its treatment of African Americans in the light of events at Port Chicago and began to enact changes which would help lead to desegregation in the force in 1946.

Marine corps

The US Marine Corps started enlisting African Americans on 1 June 1942 but before 1944 did not allow them into combat. Initially, as in the army, African American marines were employed as cooks, labourers and guards.

Racial tension and the African American armed forces

There were many instances of race-related acts of violence within the USA and in the various theatres of war. There were riots at nine African American army training camps during 1943–4, where the soldiers resented their unequal treatment, and sometimes people were killed:

- An African American soldier was shot by the Little Rock police in 1942.
- An African American soldier was killed in a race riot in Centreville, Mississippi in 1943.
- Two African American soldiers were killed in riots in El Paso, Texas, in 1943.
- A firefight at Camp Stewart, Georgia, left five injured and one dead in 1943.

The treatment of African Americans abroad, by host nations, was often far better than that given by their own country.

SOURCE M

This ‘prayer’ appeared in the Baltimore Afro-American, 16 January 1943, a weekly newspaper founded in 1842 and published in Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

Drake's prayer

Dear Lord, today
I go to war:
To fight, to die
Tell me what for
Dear Lord, I'll fight,
I do not fear
Germans or Japs.
My fears are here.
America!
**The impact of the war on civil rights**

**Key question:** What were the effects of the war on civil rights?

During the war, many African Americans became more active in campaigning for civil rights. New employment opportunities did not always bring improvements in the quality of life, and many pointed out the paradox of fighting fascist nations yet at the same time living in a country which denied equality to many of its own citizens.

**African Americans and activism**

- **Increasing activism**
  - Some African Americans cited the Atlantic Charter (see pages 44–5) in their demands for better treatment, although many did not wish to challenge the status quo too much, for fear of a white backlash. In addition, they did not wish to be seen as unpatriotic or troublemakers. Yet there was some gradual change.
  - It was noticeable that the number of registered African American voters increased during the war, showing a greater political awareness. In the south, among African Americans, the numbers of registered voters rose from three to 12 per cent in the years 1940–7. In the north, activists such as Adam Clayton Powell Jr led the way. He was the first African American elected from New York state and, in 1944, the first elected to the House of Representatives in post-Reconstruction USA from any northern state except for Illinois.

  - Activism was also more clearly seen through the work of key organizations such as the NAACP and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

- **Status quo**
  - A Latin term meaning the existing state of affairs.

- **Primaries**
  - Preliminary elections in which the voters of a state choose a political party’s nominee for president.

- **Civil rights movement**
  - A movement that attempts to secure equality in social, economic, and political rights.

**The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**

The NAACP had been founded in 1909 by a group of leading African American intellectuals. The main aim of the NAACP was to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. The NAACP sought to use all legal means to achieve equality. One case was Smith v. Allwright in 1944, where the Supreme Court stated that it was unconstitutional for states to prevent African Americans from voting in the Democratic primaries.

Throughout the war, growing awareness of discrimination, its injustice and a willingness to challenge it led to a growth in NAACP membership, from 50,000 in 1940 to 450,000 by 1945. Many of these were professionals, although there were also many new urban workers (whose wages now enabled them to afford subscriptions). The NAACP began to play an important part in the civil rights movement after the war because it raised...
the profile of issues not only within the African American community but
also within the white community, and encouraged activism.

The Congress of Racial Equality
CORE was founded by James Farmer, a civil rights activist, in 1942. CORE
was inspired by the non-violent tactics of Mohandas Gandhi in India.
Gandhi had confronted British authorities without reverting to violence and
had mobilized mass support for his campaign of independence. CORE
members felt that putting pressure on the government in wartime might
bring about change because it would not wish to be seen to be too harsh on
its own citizens. They used non-violent protest to achieve civil rights for
African American and started to organize sit-ins against segregated
restaurants and theaters, which led to the end of segregation in some
northern cities in the years 1943–5. CORE continued to grow in importance
and was crucial in the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

As activism against racial discrimination increased, so did racial tension,
especially regarding employment, housing and education.

The Double V campaign
Despite the valiant contribution that African Americans made to the war
effort, they continued to be treated poorly. An African American newspaper,
Pittsburgh Courier, created the Double V Campaign after readers began
complaining about the second-class status of African American workers during
wartime. Double V meant victory at home in terms of improved civil rights as
well as victory abroad against fascism and dictatorship. The newspaper
promoted the campaign by publishing numerous articles, letters, and
photographs. The effect was immediate and black newspapers across the
USA began to support the campaign, thereby raising the profile of civil rights.

Increasing racial tension
There was increased racial tension as a result of the war. With thousands of
African Americans migrating from the south to the north, pressure was
placed on existing infrastructure. In urban areas such as Chicago, there was a
shortage of housing and insufficient schools. Many whites felt that not only jobs
but also houses were being taken away from them. The National
Housing Agency estimated that the internal migration of US workers
amounted to nine million workers who had to be housed. An example of this
was Detroit, where 60,000 African Americans had migrated in order to
find work in the car industries in the years 1940–3. The Detroit housing
commission indicated that most African American workers’ homes were
sub-standard.

The rapid growth and overcrowding of African American districts,
discrimination in the armed forces and employment, demands for economic
and social equality, and African American activists raising public awareness
are all factors which contributed to riots during the war.

In Detroit, a riot broke out on 21 June 1943. The army had to be called in to
to end the disorder. By the time peace had been restored, 34 people had been
killed, more than 600 injured and more than 1800 arrested. Damage to
property was estimated at $2 million. German and Japanese propaganda
broadcasts used the riots to criticize the US government’s hypocrisy and
encouraged African Americans not to fight for the white, racist ‘democracy’.
Troops occupied Detroit for six months until President Roosevelt felt it was
time to pull them out in January 1944.

Riots also erupted in Harlem, New York, in August 1943. The immediate
cause was the intervention of a black soldier in the arrest of a black woman.
In the ensuing fracas, the soldier was shot. Rumours quickly spread that he
had been killed and this began the riot. Violence continued for two days
during which six African Americans were killed, 300 people were injured and
about 500 were arrested. It took 6000 police officers, 8000 state guardsmen
and 1500 civilian volunteers to bring the rioting to an end.

There was also rioting in Philadelphia in 1944 when white streetcar workers
refused to work with African Americans. Roosevelt had to deploy several
thousand federal troops to restore order.

The impact of the war was to make visible many issues and tensions which
had previously simmered under the surface. By the end of the war, many
things had changed for African Americans.

The situation at the end of the war
By 1945, there had been some progress in employment and the armed forces,
and many African Americans had become more active in campaigning for
civil rights. On the other hand, discrimination and segregation remained a
way of life in the southern states, while the migration of many African
Americans to the industrial cities of the north had created greater racial
tension. Yet, the work of NAACP, CORE and individuals such as Randolph
had ensured that the position of African Americans would be under
constant scrutiny and that efforts would continue to bring about further
and far-reaching changes.

How had the status of African Americans changed by 1945?
The Office of Price Administration (OPA) set up local rationing boards which issued a family's coupons based on the number of people in a household and also their needs. The ration books limited purchases of certain goods by assigning points to goods and allowing each person a certain number of points per year. The number of ration points required for certain items fluctuated each week, which made the task of shopping even more difficult. The OPA was able to control food distribution and prevent shortages. Non-foods such as clothing, car tires, petrol and oil were also rationed. A speed limit of 35 mph (56 kph) (the 'velocity speed') was imposed to ensure that petrol was used sparingly and that tires were preserved.

The government asked people to restrict their consumption of red meat and fats and this resulted in healthier eating. There were even training sessions to teach women how to conserve food and shop wisely. The government also printed recipe books describing how to prepare home-grown vegetables from the 'victory gardens' (see below) to make nutritional and tasty meals. Advertisers encouraged Americans to use less – a popular slogan was 'use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without'.

Rationing also had a serious side effect, the introduction of the black market, where people could secretly buy rationed items but at higher prices in violation of the specified controls.

**Victory gardens**

In 1941, the Secretary for Agriculture asked the American people to plant 'victory gardens' and to begin growing their own vegetables. This was to permit farmers to concentrate on producing food for the armed forces. The food would also supplement the foods they could buy with their ration stamps. Almost 20 million victory gardens were planted and it was estimated that they produced about 10 million bushels of vegetables, which was about 40 per cent of all the vegetables grown in the USA during the war. For many ordinary people planting a victory garden became the most patriotic thing they could do.

Victory gardens were planted in any available space. If people lived in apartment buildings, then the rooftops were used, and if people had no outdoor space, then window boxes were used. People came together and worked cooperatively, pooling their resources and planting a wide range of foods.

There were victory gardens in some unusual places: the prison at Alcatraz, Ellis Island and the lawn of the White House. Many schools planted victory gardens on their grounds and used their produce in school lunches. This ensured that the children received nutritious food but the gardens also involved them in doing something positive to help win the war.