# Freedom Under Pressure

Wartime contributions and the push for equal rights

**USH.5.4** "Explain the experiences of African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and women at war and on the homefront during World War II and explain how they were a catalyst for social change."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline one wartime contribution from each group and circle one example of unequal treatment it faced. Number the passages that show how people pushed for social change.

### The War at Home and Abroad

1. At a wartime shipyard, the promise of democracy met unequal rules. African Americans built ships and served in segregated military units, while defense employers often denied them jobs or promotions. A. Philip Randolph's threatened march helped push President Franklin Roosevelt to ban discrimination in defense hiring in 1941. The Double V campaign demanded victory over fascism abroad and racism at home. Women also worked in defense plants and served in military support units, often facing lower pay and pressure to leave jobs when men returned. Their work challenged claims that skilled labor belonged only to men.

2. Japanese American soldiers in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team fought in Europe while many Japanese American families were confined in camps after forced removal from the West Coast. This contradiction spurred later campaigns for redress, though a federal apology did not arrive until 1988. Mexican Americans served in the armed forces and filled farm and factory jobs. Yet the 1943 Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles exposed violent prejudice against Mexican American youths. After the war, Mexican American veterans founded the American GI Forum to fight discrimination.

3. Many Native Americans served in the military. Navajo code talkers transmitted messages using a code based on their language that Japanese forces never decoded. Other Native Americans worked in wartime factories far from their communities. Returning veterans still faced barriers to voting in some states, and Native activists challenged those restrictions. Court decisions in 1948 struck down voting barriers in Arizona and New Mexico. These victories did not end discrimination. Across these communities, service and homefront labor made unequal treatment harder to defend, while organizing and legal challenges turned wartime claims about freedom into demands for change.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did African Americans' and women's wartime work challenge unequal treatment? Explain one difference in the barriers they faced.

2. What contradiction did Japanese Americans experience during the war, and how did it lead to a later demand for change?

3. How did Mexican American veterans and Native American activists respond to discrimination after the war?

4. Why does the passage suggest that wartime contributions alone did not end unequal treatment? Use evidence from two groups.

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence museum label arguing whether wartime service and labor alone were enough to create lasting change. Use evidence about three groups from the passage, explain how at least one organized action moved change forward, and name one limit.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.5.4

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one wartime contribution from each group and circle one example of unequal treatment it faced. Number the passages that show how people pushed for social change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did African Americans' and women's wartime work challenge unequal treatment? Explain one difference in the barriers they faced. | **Both groups performed work that challenged claims they should be excluded from skilled jobs. African Americans faced discriminatory hiring and segregated military service, while women faced lower pay and pressure to leave jobs after the war.** |
| 2 | What contradiction did Japanese Americans experience during the war, and how did it lead to a later demand for change? | **Japanese American soldiers fought in Europe while many families were confined in camps. The contradiction helped spur campaigns for redress.** |
| 3 | How did Mexican American veterans and Native American activists respond to discrimination after the war? | **Mexican American veterans founded the American GI Forum to fight discrimination. Native activists challenged voting restrictions, and courts struck down barriers in Arizona and New Mexico in 1948.** |
| 4 | Why does the passage suggest that wartime contributions alone did not end unequal treatment? Use evidence from two groups. | **Contributions did not remove barriers automatically. For example, women faced pressure to leave their jobs when men returned, and Native American veterans still faced voting barriers that activists had to challenge.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Wartime service and labor exposed injustice, but they did not produce lasting change on their own. African Americans built ships and served in segregated units, while Randolph's planned march helped win a ban on discrimination in defense hiring. Japanese American soldiers fought in Europe even as families were held in camps, and later campaigns sought redress. Native veterans returned to voting barriers, which activists challenged in court and won rulings against in 1948. These examples show that wartime contributions strengthened demands for equality, but discrimination persisted and organized pressure was needed to change policy.

Accept other passage-based comparisons that connect a wartime experience to a demand or action for change. Responses should distinguish a contribution from the organizing or legal action that followed it.