

# Women

The advent of World War II meant changes for women. Women began to work outside of the home in many capacities.

## **Think about:**

- What different roles did women engage in during World War II?
- How were women viewed in these roles?
- How did women feel about their new roles?
- How did these new roles change the lives of women during WWII?

### **A War Worker Finds New Independence on the Job**

*When Los Angeles resident Beatrice Morales Clifton went to work at the Lockheed Aircraft plant in Burbank, California, she was a married mother of four children. In this excerpt from a longer interview, Morales Clifton, the daughter of Mexican immigrants, describes how the experience of wartime work gave her a new independence. She returned to Lockheed in 1951 and stayed there until her retirement in 1978.*

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[on applying for a job at Lockheed] So I took the forms and when I got home and told my husband, oh! He hit the roof. He was one of those men that didn't believe in the wife ever working; they want to be the supporter. I said, 'Well, I've made up my mind. I'm going to go to work regardless of whether you like it or not.' I was determined.

I was very scared because, like I say, I had never been away like that and I had never been among a lot of men. Actually, I had never been out on my own. Whenever I had gone anyplace, it was with my husband. It was all building up inside of me, so when that guy told me that I wasn't worth the money Lockheed paid me, it just came out in tears. . . . When I got home, the kids just said, 'Oh, Mom is here.' My husband, he didn't have very much to say, 'cause he didn't approve from the beginning. As time went on, his attitude changed a little, but I don't think he ever really, really got used to the ideas of me working. I bought the clothing at Sears. It was just a pair of pants and a blouse. To tell you the truth, I felt kind of funny wearing pants. . . . And those shoes! I wasn't used to low shoes. Even in the house, I always wore high heels. That's how I started.

I went from 65 cents to \$1.05 [per hour]. That was top pay. It felt good and, besides, it was my own money. I could do whatever I wanted with it because my husband, whatever he was giving to the house, he kept on paying it. I used to buy clothes for the kids; buy little things that they needed. I had a bank account and I had a little savings at home where I could get ahold of the money right away if I needed it. Julio never asked about it. He knew how much I made; I showed him. . . My money, I did what I wanted.

**Source** | Beatrice Clifton Morales, interview by Sherna Berger Gluck, in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, The War, and Social Change* (Twayne Publishers, 1987), 208-213. **Interviewer** | Sherna Berger Gluck **Interviewee** | Beatrice Morales Clifton **Item Type** | Oral History **Cite This document** | "A War Worker Finds New Independence on the Job," *HERB: Resources for Teachers*, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/1006>

### **"I'm Proud... My Husband Wants Me To Do My Part"**

During World War II, the U.S. government produced a number of propaganda posters aimed at mobilizing women workers to contribute to the war effort.



**Source** | John Newton Howitt, *I'm proud ... my husband wants me to do my part*, poster (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944); from Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/95504753>. **Creator** | John Newton Howitt/War Manpower Commission  
**Item Type** | Poster/Print **Cite This document** | John Newton Howitt/War Manpower Commission, "'I'm Proud... My Husband Wants Me To Do My Part'", *HERB: Resources for Teachers*, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/1217>

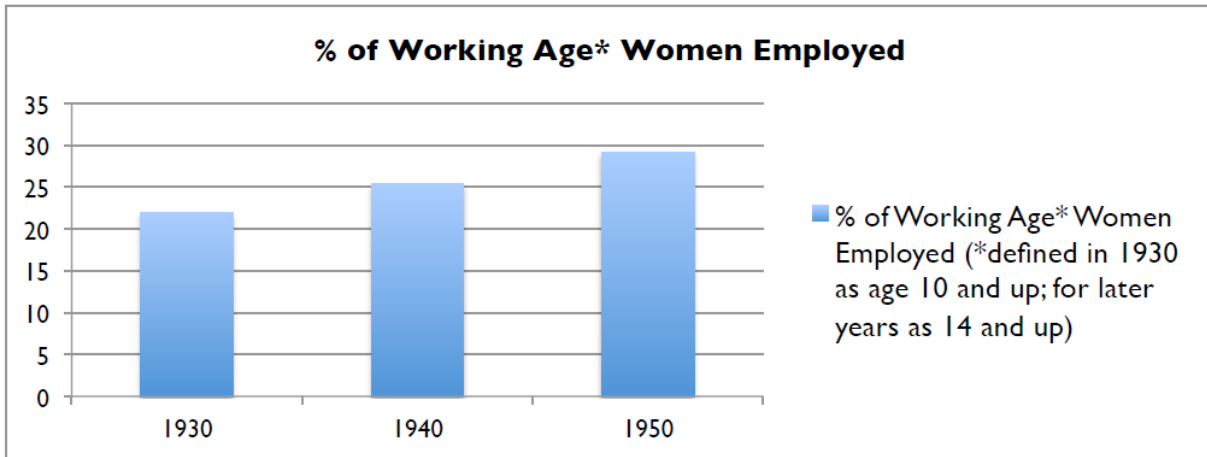
### **Operating a hand drill at Vultee-Nashville"**

In this rare color photograph taken for the Office of War Information, a "real life" Rosie drills on the side of a dive bomber plane. Nearly three million women worked in defense industries during World War II, including thousands of African Americans.



**Source** | Alfred T. Palmer, "Operating a hand drill at Vultee-Nashville," photograph, Feb. 1943, Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Collection, Library of Congress, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsac.1a35371> **Creator** | Alfred T. Palmer **Item Type** | Photograph **Cite This document** | Alfred T. Palmer, "'Operating a hand drill at Vultee-Nashville,'" *HERB: Resources for Teachers*, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/1099>.

## Statistics on Women in the World War II Era Workforce



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

### 1944 Survey by the Department of Labor Women's Bureau

75% of women intended to continue working in the postwar period

86% of women wanted their postwar jobs in the same industrial group as their wartime jobs

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau

<b>Women in Industry as a Percentage of All Production Workers</b>	<b>1940</b>	<b>1944</b>	<b>1946</b>	<b>1950</b>
Iron and Steel	6.7%	22.3%	9.4%	5%
Automobiles*	5.7%	24.4%	8.9%	10%
Textile Mill Products	43.0%	51.4%	46.7%	43%
Apparel (clothing)	75.2%	78%	76.9%	76%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. All figures are for the month of October of the years indicated. \* In 1944, this industry did not produce automobiles, but instead tanks, airplanes, military vehicles, etc.



### "We Can Do It!"

Among the most famous images from the World War II era, the "We Can Do It!" poster of a determined working woman (colloquially dubbed "Rosie the Riveter") has been reproduced thousands of times since its original appearance in 1942. Thus "Rosie the Riveter" has become a feminist icon to many in the years since her original incarnation.



**Source** | J.Howard Miller, "We Can Do It," poster, produced for Westinghouse/The War Production Co-Ordinating Committee, 1942, National Archives, *Powers of Persuasion*, [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/its\\_a\\_womans\\_war\\_too/images\\_html/w\\_e\\_can\\_do\\_it.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/its_a_womans_war_too/images_html/w_e_can_do_it.html). **Creator** | J. Howard Miller/War Production Co-Ordinating Committee **Item Type** | Poster/Print **Cite This document** | J. Howard Miller/War Production Co-Ordinating Committee, "'We Can Do It!,'" *HERB: Resources for Teachers*, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/1192>