UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

RACE, ENVIRONMENT, AND MASCULINITY IN RICHMOND'S WWII SHIPYARDS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

ALISTAIR WILLIAM FORTSON
Norman, Oklahoma
2018

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RACE, ENVIRONMENT, AND MASCULINITY
IN RICHMOND'S WWII SHIPYARDS

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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Dr. David Wrobel

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Dr. Kathleen Brosnan

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Dr. Robert Griswold

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TO MY FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COLLEAGUES

IN THE STATES AND ABROAD

TO THE FOUR FORTSONS – AND THE FIFTH

IN MEMORY OF MS. LIZ COLE

WITH GRATITUDE TO THE MERRICK FAMILY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first order of business is to express my heartfelt thanks to my thesis committee. Dr. David Wrobel, an excellent advisor, impeccably detailed scholar, and the constant provider of helpful feedback, even when his attention was drawn to a hundred pressing issues, was essential at every point of the thesis's construction since my arrival in Oklahoma. He also became a personal friend, and more than just the academic thesis would have never made it through a graduate program without his genuine concern and help along the way. My heartfelt thanks go to Dr. Kathleen Brosnan, for her help and encouragement in the creation and direction of the first chapter and for encouraging me to pursue its publication. Many thanks to Dr. Robert Griswold for his willingness to be a member of the thesis committee, and for his helpful scholarship on the WWII homefront. Dr. Elyssa Faison also deserves a mention for both her seminar help and her understanding. Dr. Anne Hyde, who arrived at the university the same semester I did, offered much feedback on the second chapter, was an excellent resource on multiple occasions, and is a remarkable person. Thank you to Dr. Lydia Gerber and Dr. Lawrence Hatter for advising me through my undergraduate studies at Washington State and for leading the seminar classes where this research first took shape.

I am indebted to the archival staff at the Bancroft Library Archives at UC Berkeley for their assistance and prompt responses to my questions. Thanks also to the archival staff at Holland and Terrell, as well as MASC director Dr. Bond. Thank you to Lipi and Doug for your help and for giving me the opportunity to work on the Kimble Collection digitization project. Thank you to the Writing Center professional staff, especially Lisa and Brooklyn, and to all my fellow tutors and teachers for three amazing

years of hard work and growth. Thank you to Dr. Josh Sides and the editorial staff at *California History* for all your help, editing suggestions, and general willingness to assist me in polishing the prose and developing the argument of the article that has become Chapter 1. Melinda McCrary at the Richmond Museum offered helpful archival assistance and greatly enhanced my own grasp of the wartime period and the effect of the Kaiser Shipyards on the region and the lasting impacts of the 1940s – and although I have not yet taken up the offer to dress up as a "Brosie" to take part in the world record attempt, I appreciate all the assistance provided. Thank you to the crew of the USS Red Oak Victory, a floating museum moored at the edge of a former shipyard, and a fixture of my time in the Bay Area – keep up the good work, and hopefully I will be able to be on board when she sails again. I owe much gratitude to the memory of my late great grandfather Howard Anthony Fortson and to my granduncle Dale Bors, who continues to serve in other ways, for their willingness to serve this country in time of need.

Deepest thanks to the Merrick Family Foundation for your generous financial assistance in my academic career, and for sponsoring me personally through the program. I am also grateful to Leroy Meyers for being a great friend during my time here, and for commentary and editing suggestions above and beyond the call of duty. Everyone's help has made this thesis stronger; any errors in the document are mine.

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ABSTRACT

The Kaiser company shipyards in Richmond, California, the largest shipyards in the world for the duration of World War II, employed workers from across America and from around the world. New technological advances and hiring practices meant women, alongside African Americans and Indigenous persons, entered heavy industry work in large numbers and earned wages far higher than those available before. These circumstances have been portrayed in the popular history of the United States as a part of the 'Good War' ideal, where all worked together for common goals, and Kaiser's company advertised using these slogans. However, the 'Good War' framework elides the environmental damage, toxicity to land, water, and human bodies, and lasting racial segregation resulting from industrial production in Richmond. Unions in the region continued to segregate their local chapters, limited minorities from theoretically unsegregated federal housing projects, and prevented minority workers from voting in union matters. White men in the shipyards, who saw themselves as patriots and soldiers of production in the war against fascism and racism abroad, nonetheless felt threatened by female and minority 'usurpers' to their traditional role as industrial workers. Executives encouraged these men to confirm their masculinity outside of the military, through the use of patriotic symbolism, patriarchal leadership, and sports. This thesis thus demonstrates the paradoxical impact of social forces, including the mythical conceptions of the West and a desire, on the part of women and racial minorities, to defeat Nazism abroad and racism and sexism at home. The yards closed in 1945, and despite the cooperation of diverse former workers, the failed General Strike of 1946 illustrates racial animus that continues to affect residents of Richmond today.

Keywords: Race, Environment, Environmental Justice, WWII, Kaiser, Shipyard, Good War, Masculinity, Soldier of Production, Fatherhood, Marriage, Sports, Redlining, Segregation, African Americans, Indigenous People, Emigration, Labor Relations.

INTRODUCTION

Richmond, California, a small industrial city north of Oakland and east of San Francisco, expanded from a pre-WWII population of 23,000 to more than one hundred thousand residents by 1942. Migrants to the area from all over the United States, and particularly from the South-Central West – most notably Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, and Louisiana – arrived by the thousands. In fact, in-migration of African American people to the West Coast of California outpaced minority migration to the region in any previous period. Urban areas such as the San Francisco Bay, San Diego, and the urban areas of Seattle and Portland in the Pacific Northwest grew by the largest margins. Wartime development in these areas, and Richmond in particular, stemmed from the growth of federal defense industries in the West. The Kaiser Richmond Shipyards, the largest shipyard complex in the world for the duration of World War II, catalyzed this growth in the East Bay.

The city of Richmond deserves further study during this period because of its status as a fairly minor municipality on the outskirts of an urban area that would soon encompass both some of the richest and also some of the most polluted industrial landscapes in America. The production in WWII was not the first significant metal-hulled shipbuilding in the Bay of note in the modern era; that had centered in San Francisco. The U.S. Navy, alongside private firms, had settled their shipyards in the deep natural harbor of San Francisco Bay, an area of water covering 1600 square miles (a third larger again than Rhode Island). Following the incorporation of Richmond in 1905, the city witnessed its first industrial boom in the wake of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. The skilled laborers found in the shipyards of Oakland and

Richmond during the Second World War had abandoned buildings and quays destroyed or damaged by the 1906 earthquake and fire in favor of the mild climate and relatively plentiful industrial zoned real estate of the East Bay littoral. This workforce would expand during World War I. Large numbers of professional shipbuilders who had weathered the uncertainty and deprivations of the yards during the Great Depression were thus able to offer lessons and skills to the new, and much more diverse, workers who would arrive in the 1940s. This small but significant growth of industry in the prewar decades, alongside the election of business-friendly local government officials, presaged the significant rise of the region's population and the importance Richmond would attain during World War II – but also set the stage for later racial and gender-based discrimination that continues to affect residents today.

The peripheral East Bay before World War II, absent the glamour and Gold Rush history of San Francisco, had been largely unknown on the national stage other than the University of California at Berkeley. Abruptly, Richmond and its industrial labor force became a national spectacle. The Kaiser Yards and the diverse working population of Richmond presented an example of wartime cooperation resulting in high production numbers. This had not been guaranteed by any means: in fact, it was much more likely that other areas in the Bay with larger available industrial sites or areas on the Gulf Coast or East Coast, with their skilled boilermakers and pipefitters, would host the major shipyards and industrial facilities that Kaiser located in the West. Through study of the 1940s the results of longer trends towards heavy industry in the region can be seen in context and in clearer focus. With the introduction of the first federal contracts for World War II, Roosevelt and his government showed their definitive

support for the Allied powers despite strong calls for isolationism at all levels of American society – most famously by Charles Lindbergh and his America First party. For the purposes of this study, the city of Richmond therefore demonstrates a clear shift from a fairly rural and sparsely populated pre-war town with a few key industrial employers to one of the most productive and fastest growing cities on the West Coast from 1940 to 1945. In fact, the Richmond area was the fastest growing place in the country save only San Diego during the war years.

As the War in the Atlantic began to impinge on neutral American Merchant Marine shipping in 1940 and early 1941, lawmakers sought a solution to persistent transport ship production shortages away from the highly populous and cramped East Coast facilities then available. In addition to these concerns, War Production Board members worried that the crowded eastern cities were already operating at near their optimal level of production, with few workers available on short notice to meet the continuously expanding needs of American military planners. While the East Coast had the most technically developed shipyards and the most experienced workers and craftspeople, expansion potential remained limited. For this reason, war production planners turned their eyes west to the burgeoning economy of California, seeing opportunities for growth beyond the confines of the war itself. The Richmond Chamber of Commerce and city boosters encouraged the location of the yards in their city, hoping to profit from the large workforce the yards would require. Unfortunately, city officials and residents had not prepared for the sheer volume of workers who would travel to Richmond during the war years.

Migrants from the Deep South, including large numbers of African American

men and women, were drawn to industrial centers including the Richmond Yards by promised wages that far outpaced extant earning options. These new opportunities enabled a wave of emigration beginning before American involvement in World War II, as the contractors produced war materiel and munitions for the British despite the official neutrality of the United States at the time. These new arrivals, and particularly African American laborers, expressed their hopeful views of the American West to oral interviewers in later life, and described California as a land of promise where they had faced discrimination and segregation in the South and East. As many of the workers willing to undergo the trip were young and brought their families with them, the Bay Area population shifted dramatically during the war years, becoming much younger and more female. Unfortunately, their arrival sparked a resurgence of virulent nativist and segregationist sentiment that had plagued the small pre-war African American population but returned virulently during the war years – and resulted in segregation throughout the city.

The creation of redlined, or segregated, neighborhoods in war industry locations such as Richmond resulted from a confluence of factors. Local government and business leaders banded together with rental companies and real estate agents to systematically exclude all non-whites from the dynamic central area of Richmond, where social services covered all residents, and limited them to the oldest and worst housing options. These unofficial segregation agreements operated in combination with union leaders, who enforced segregation in their union chapters and relegated African American, Chinese American, and Indigenous people to non-voting auxiliary chapters. In addition, the unions prevented nonwhite members from renting Kaiser-sponsored

housing, further exacerbating serious environmental justice problems.

Beyond the reach of essential social services, with few shops and businesses in their neighborhood to buy basic essentials (an urban phenomenon known today as a "food desert") and close to the sources of industrial pollution in factories, these bay-front and railroad properties were coated by toxic dusts, aerosols, and liquid pollutants. While it is difficult to know exactly whether or not the government leaders and rental agents knew the danger this segregation directly caused minority populations, recent scholarship by environmental justice researchers has demonstrated the close relationship, and often causal link, between racial discrimination and subjection to dangerous conditions. With full American involvement in a two-front war after December 1941, and a massive uptick in emigration to the region, the segregation-minded local government and real estate industry professionals redoubled their efforts to exclude minorities. This resulted in the perpetuation of white-only neighborhoods even in federal properties officially intended to be unsegregated. This migration, and the efforts of workers to function in newly diverse workscapes, fundamentally shaped the process of development in the region west of the Mississippi – and significantly impacted the history of the Bay Area.

This study of Richmond during the war and immediate postwar years places special focus on the effect of population increase on race relations and the cultural makeup of the region alongside the environmental impact of defense industry. Defense industry production remained inextricably linked to environmental justice and the development of the modern Western city; much of the growth in the West after 1939 can be directly traced to martial investment. This massive growth added pressure to the

labor market and established the context of conflict between "natives" of the West Coast and new arrivals. The racial and environmental dynamics of the wartime and postwar years also help us better understand the city today. These focal categories and groups included in most modern histories of the West are a product of revisionist and New Western history responses since the 1980s against midcentury histories propagating and defending the 'Good War' thesis.

Posters and propaganda films, including those produced by Kaiser-owned businesses, touted the diversity and freedom of life on the West Coast – a key part of the 'Good War' thesis. However, reality lagged far behind this gilded image for people of color and minority groups. A combination of private capital and local government (with federal funding but not necessarily federal oversight) from 1939 until the midcentury, fundamental to the growth of the defense industry, also fostered segregation. A sense of disappointment at continued discrimination through the war years, and a rejection of the "natural order" argument then prevalent across the United States in support of Jim Crow laws, led to challenges of the racist status quo. War workers, in combination with organized and active veterans of color, utilized the image of successful anticolonial movements around the globe to organize both moderate and militant civil rights movements. These movements became an increasingly common feature in the cultural life of the Bay Area after the 1944 strikes.

One example of this, demonstrating the clear correlation between union participation and later activism movements, occurred in 1944 when African American auxiliary union members orchestrated a series of strikes which successfully forced unions to accept partial union membership. Civil rights activists were emboldened by

the progress of democratic victory against fascism in 1945 but disappointed with the glacial pace of change in Washington D.C. and continued discrimination. These same actors were integral to later civil rights movements. They helped orchestrate the failed Oakland General Strike of 1946, and after its unsuccessful conclusion, the creation of strong activist groups including the NAACP to fight for their rights, thus proving the link between wartime work crew cooperation and later civil rights activism. Lobbying efforts and campaigns that laid the foundation for desegregation of the US Armed Forces by Executive Order 9981 in 1948, the Brown v. Board decision of 1954 and subsequent federal intervention, and later landmark civil rights legislation can be traced in part to this collaboration.

White men in the yards, who found their dominant social position threatened by these African American and minority men and women, sought to reestablish their predominance. To do this, white male workers equated their efforts on production lines and in welding rigs, precariously positioned on giant steel hull plates and gantry cranes, to the actions of frontline soldiers in the war effort. Calling themselves soldiers of production, these workers faced all the inherent dangers of a modern industrial workplace with few safety regulations. Industrial accidents killed and maimed both careless and attentive workers indiscriminately. The welding torches, paints, and industrial chemicals ubiquitous to industrial workplaces slowly filled the lungs and bodies of workers with toxic material. While these workmen and women flocked to the jobs available in the yards, factors beyond the control of the contemporary government agents combined with these industrial dangers to create a viscerally and psychologically damaging workspace. Workers suffered industrial accidents at an alarming rate even

when compared to combat casualties. The workers, and more vociferously the entrepreneurs, investors, and city officials who prospered from the rapid industrial development of the West, created narratives of conquest and power over landscape and production goals, and thereby bolstered both the national narrative of exceptionalism and their manliness through proven value to the war effort.

Some of these industrialists, such as Henry J. Kaiser, appeared to be genuinely benevolent actors; nonetheless, modern scholars should be leery of accepting booster literature and advertisements at face value. Kaiser attempted to nurture cooperation, reduce sexism and racism, and promote racial equality in the wartime workplace through his own actions and his choice of company executives. These leaders included his own sons (Edgar Kaiser helmed the Portland Kaiser shipyards in Vanport) as well as college-trained executives, uniquely capable of orchestrating the scientific workplace Kaiser desired. Although the lasting legacy of the yards and of Kaiser's business empire more broadly remains positive, his efforts failed to prevent minority discrimination, segregation, and suffering.

A highly sought-after sermon writer on the worldwide mission circuit, Kaiser assumed that production and the surface cooperation in the yards derived from the moral and political superiority of Christian Americans. In particular, Kaiser believed his company was morally obligated to both protect and extend opportunity to minority groups. In fact, Kaiser's Permanente Metals Corporation was ahead of the federal regulations and recommendations in defense hiring practices. The impact of Kaiser's programs – although limited in terms of real national progress towards racial equality and later civil rights legislation – nonetheless gave many women and minority laborers,

who would never have held such industry jobs in the prewar years, opportunity for real improvement to their economic and social circumstances. In addition, the yards served as an example of cooperation and healthy market growth in industrial work that would be used by corporate leaders in negotiations with union members following the war years. However, this rhetoric also disguised the creation or importation of racialized and negatively gendered terminology and segregation in work and recreational spaces. While the emphasis on "Rosie the Riveter" and her empowering message for women was undoubtedly a positive outcome of issues and challenges faced by female industrial workers, the famous poster and much of the subsequent emphasis upon Rosie was not present until after the war. The advancement of women, and especially female minority workers, was limited and upended by the retrenchment of peacetime business interests after 1945 and the continued strength of segregationist interests after the conclusion of the war.

The mythical narratives of the blissfully united homefront – the Good War stereotype – continue to obfuscate the damaging practices of both local and federal government intervention against minorities and women. Segregationists masqueraded racist practices and ideas as necessary to the maintenance of services, security, and policing for the white population in rapidly expanding production centers. The city officials and local as well as federal government agents affected the development of the workers' lives and the ways they interacted with one another on many levels. In addition to these concerns, government agents became newly interested in the family, considering truants and delinquent children extreme social threats that necessitated immediate action. The African American community in particular experienced harsh

treatment and exclusion, but the mistreatment of the "other" affected many groups.

The study's first chapter, "Victory Abroad, Disaster at Home," investigates the origins of the Richmond yards and their workforce from before the beginning of the Second World War. Redlined, or denied rental applications because of race through legal policy and unofficial neighborhood agreements, minority workmen and women disproportionately remained in substandard housing even after the construction of federally-funded housing units. Minority groups sought, and federal leadership encouraged, the development of protective legislation to end restrictive covenant practices during the war in response to these conditions. Despite this, local labor unions paired with racist leadership at the local government level against minority workers and forced them to occupy substandard housing after white workers were able to move into new housing projects. These workers thus continued to suffer from the effects of industrial pollutants, urban waste, and human effluent despite the efforts of humanitarian-minded industrialists as well as state and federal government officials. Although these minority groups faced severe discrimination in World War II home front production, their stories are overshadowed by the triumphal image of "Rosie the Riveter" and the total war victory of the "Greatest Generation" in national memory. Thus, this chapter seeks to demonstrate the reality of wartime living conditions in the city.

The second chapter investigates how white male workers in the yards, faced with challenges to their masculinity in their workspaces and lives, controlled and manipulated the rhetoric of war labor and production in an attempt to return to the status quo. These workers, who often came from Southern and Eastern states with entrenched

legal segregation, brought new cultural touchstones such as musical tastes, preferred sports, and recreational activities. Less benign, their pejorative language and views of minority residents and laborers followed them to the coastal city. Through humor that demonstrated a desire to return women and minorities to a subordinate position, and through the presentation of white male workmen in the yards as "soldiers of production," these men found new ways to reinforce their masculinity.

The Coda brings the legacy of the Kaiser Shipyards and their impact on the Bay Area and California from wartime through the Oakland General Strike of 1946. 'Good War' narratives attributed to these workers and their interests largely recognized the collective nature of their work, as almost all of these defense industries were closed shop – that is, workers were required to obtain union membership before entering the workforce. This communal organization and collective action base was vital to the development of strike organization, with workers crossing race and gender lines to collectively earn better wages. White male workers calling themselves "Soldiers of Production" banded together with women and minorities – adversaries during the war – after leaving the shipyards, as many realized that collective organization in unions offered the opportunity to agitate for wages and inclusion for all.

These optimistic visions of labor cooperation culminated in the three-day Oakland General Strike in December 1946. Although almost all of the striking workers' demands were rejected by conservative businessmen against the backdrop of red-baiting and anti-communist agitation in the post-World-War-II years, the legacy of diverse union cooperation lived on. These factors were also vitally important to the minority resistance against federal and local discrimination that has shaped the modern city of

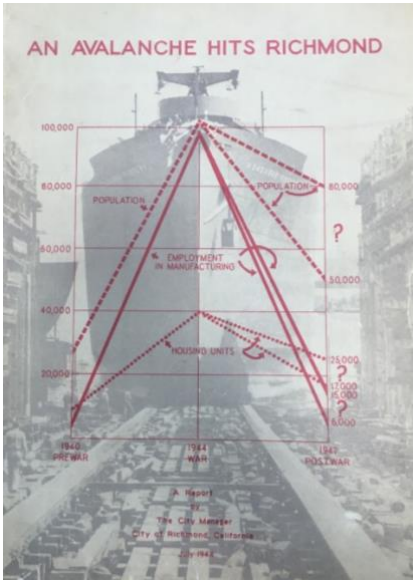
Richmond. The city was subject to the same contractions and changing production possibilities that wracked heavy industry in other regions of the nation. This process of industrial offshoring and disengagement of investment left only rusted hulks and polluted industrial land behind for the majority of the city's modern residents. Many of these residents, and particularly racial minorities, also struggle with poverty, homelessness, crime, and urban decay despite the hard work of community organizers and local government. The shift in production techniques and movement of skilled labor southward from the East Bay in the midcentury contributed to the fall of the center city in the East Bay along with urban decay, a legacy that negatively affects local populations of color in Richmond today.

While Kaiser's shipbuilding corporation advertised for—and city leaders sought—white skilled labor, military realities and expanding Allied production needs encouraged the hiring of unskilled African American, Indigenous, and other minority men and women in unprecedented numbers. While the early struggles of workers to find housing and adequate services in Richmond and the East Bay more broadly have been clearly documented by historians, a legacy of continued substandard housing and service allocations disproportionately affected minority workers and their families. Public contracts, utilized as sources of private capital for industrialists, required working populations that public funds could not support. This thesis thus juxtaposes the legacy of "Rosie the Riveter" and the inclusive hiring practices of the Kaiser Yards – a point of pride for many in the local community – against environmental damage and segregationist practices that continue to affect the region.

CHAPTER 1

INJUSTICE ON THE HOME FRONT:

ENVIRONMENT, RACE, AND WORLD WAR II SHIPYARD PRODUCTION


[1]

Glossy, full-page spreads with picturesque nature scenes and happy white families frolicking in the beauty and bounty of Northern California beckoned wartime Americans, encouraging flight from traditional industrial centers to new defense industries begun in the West after 1939. According to shipyard work advertisements, jobs were plentiful, paid well, included unprecedented benefits, and provided access to pastoral landscapes that no longer existed in the East. Managers, local officials, and long-time residents of the San Francisco Bay Area hoped to recruit white male workers

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[1] Image credit, Title Page; J. A. McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond, a Report by the City Manager, City of Richmond, California August 15, 1944," delivered to Col. Alexander R. Heron, State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, Sacramento, CA, Available in the Richmond History Museum Research Room, *Shipyards*, shelf 3.

An earlier rendition of this chapter appears as the article "Victory Abroad, Disaster at Home: Environment, Race, and World War II Shipyard Production," *California History*, Vol. 94, Number 3, pp. 20–36, ISSN 0162-2897, electronic ISSN 2327-1485. © 2017 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved.

for the newly expanding defense industry of the Bay Area. One organization in particular deserves closer inspection and analysis for both its representative and unique qualities; Henry J. Kaiser's Permanente Metals Corporation, the umbrella company that encompassed the Kaiser Shipbuilding Company and Todd-California Shipbuilding Company, known colloquially as the four Kaiser Richmond Shipyards. These yards were responsible for the production of 747 distinct ships, constructed new varieties of merchant marine vessels, troop transports, amphibious warfare tank landing ships, and later still landing craft for the new amphibious warfare the Allies would face around the world by 1944 and 1945.[2]

Given the number of white men in military service, despite their reluctance to hire other employees, industrial employers faced limited options. Ironically, although there had been a significant labor force extant on the West Coast before the beginning of the war years, these people were also unacceptable. Military and political reactionaries removed Japanese Americans and resident aliens, the 'threatening' population, from the area right as the need for workers became the most acute. The 'Yellow Peril' of Japanese loyalists who would operate as saboteurs and fifth

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[2] Today, the area once occupied by the Kaiser Richmond Yards houses a floating ship exhibit, the USS Red Oak Victory, the last seaworthy vessel remaining of the Victory ships built at the Kaiser yards, run as a part of the Richmond History Museum Organization, and the Richmond History Museum Research Room in the original Richmond Library building, both offer excellent source bases for further research. The largest and most available significant collections of Kaiser-Richmond related papers, photographs, and ephemera are those preserved in the UC Berkeley Bancroft Library Special Collections. The yards were built and expanded upon continually from 1940 to 1944, with the first shipyard completed in December 1940 and the last operations under military contract ending with the war. For a complete list of the ships built at the Kaiser Yards, their lading, and their destination agency including wartime service record, if any, see the webpage "Liberty Ships built by Permanente Metals Richmond, California Yard #1 and Yard #2, and Marinship Corporation, Sausalito, California, for U. S. Maritime Commission 1941-1945", *American Merchant Marine at War, www.usmm.org*, last modified May 6th, 2002. Frederic Chapin Lane and the United States Maritime Commission, *Ships for Victory; a History of Shipbuilding under the United States Maritime Commission in World War II.* United States. United States Government Historical Reports on War Administration. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), 72–100.

columnists, it was presumed (despite a total lack of corroborating evidence at the time or after the war's conclusion) loomed large over these developing areas of California.[3] The Kaiser Yards thus opened their recruitment qualifications to workers other than Japanese Americans regardless of race, gender, or experience. Furthermore, Kaiser organized both the corporate and blue-collar staff of his business as a meritocracy. As such, the yards operated in a remarkably progressive manner compared to many industrial workspaces nationwide, recruiting and lobbying for minority labor – though the town itself remained firmly segregated. This chapter will demonstrate the paradoxical consequences of such efforts, where an increasing minority population strained prewar infrastructure, leading to the disproportionate ingestion and exposure of minority bodies to toxic chemicals and gasses. Corporate and government leaders presented national audiences with the image of happy, united, and productive workers through the war years, but these images masked another reality.[4]

Rapid industrial production at the Kaiser Yards catalyzed both social and cultural change and produced the foundations of postwar racial segregation in work and

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[3] Elliot Robert Barkan, *From All Points: America's Immigrant West, 1870s-1952*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), specifically the pre-war and wartime sections, most notably 342-346, 353-354, and 365-366. The *Oakland Tribune*, and its editor Joseph Knowland, are good examples, as is the *Sacramento Bee* from the time, both of which took hardline republican and anti-labor stances. See also Roger W. Lotchin, "A Research Report: The 1940s Gallup Polls, Imperial Japanese, Japanese Americans, and the Reach of American Racism," *Southern California Quarterly* 97 No. 4, Winter 2015 DOI: 10.1525/ucpsocal.2015.97.4.399, 401-403.; Richard R. Lingeman, *The Noir Forties: The American People from Victory to Cold War*, (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2012), 17-30.; and Heather Fryer, *Perimeters of Democracy: Inverse Utopias and the Wartime Social Landscape in the American West*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), Introduction 2-7.

[4] Booklets and documents used as promotional materials and advertisements for the Kaiser Shipyards and other defense industry locations remain archived in the Bancroft Library Special Collections, as well as preserved by the Richmond History Museum, the Oakland Museum, and national collections including the Library of Congress, the National Archives, et al. See also Marilynn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in WWII*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), especially pgs. 104 and 182.

housing. Environmental damage from the nonstop shipyard production was unequally borne by poor, federally subsidized neighborhoods and their nonwhite inhabitants. Wartime emergency conditions, the concentration of heavy industry, and the pace of construction increased the waste products and inefficiency of East Bay defense work. African Americans, Indigenous peoples arriving in Richmond on the rail lines from the California Valley and the Southwest (most notably Pueblo of Laguna, Acoma, Encinal, and Navajo people), and Chinese Americans were particularly affected by this pollution. Following this rapid industrialization, and ultimately magnifying its effect, came "white flight" and suburbanization. Redlining – racist segregation practices in housing — allowed whites to escape the polluted flatlands near the San Francisco Bay in favor of hillside and suburban towns without the physical or ephemeral scars of industrial production.[5]

Portraying a productive synergy of skilled white and unskilled minority labor, advertisements and booster literature disguised hazards exacerbated by racial segregation in Richmond's built environment. Increasing population in the East Bay during the years 1942 and 1943 severely strained extant social services, particularly affecting these new minority residents. Newcomers encountered redlining and other forms of discrimination that grouped African American, Chinese American, and Indigenous peoples in deleterious environmental settings. This purposeful racial discrimination through forced environmental hazard exposure deserves research and analysis beyond traditional social, environmental, or racial histories of East Bay

[5] Marilynn S. Johnson, "Wartime Shipyards and the Transformation of Labor," chapter 3 in *The Second Gold Rush*, 66–75.

shipyards.[6]

The Kaiser shipyard magazine *Fore'n'Aft* and various advertising materials provide snapshots of life in the yards and speak to the expectations of workers for the war years and beyond. These images portrayed idealistic conditions for white workers in Kaiser's yards, an escape from the pollution and population of eastern cities, and the potential for minority inclusion. Inclusivity of different racial identities and people from diverse parts of the world was a particular focus of the magazine, with a section on "Who We Are" in each week's magazine highlighting the diversity and variation of people employed by Kaiser. *Fore'n'Aft* magazine thus provides excellent source material for changing racial and nativist attitudes during the war years. In the late 1930s, Richmond residents had held decidedly negative perceptions of Asian, Southern European, and African workers reinforced by the status of these people as former or current colonial subjects.[7] Workers from these areas rapidly gained the respect of the paper's editors and its readership as of 1941 and 1942, where stories of individuals working in the yards turned to an emphasis of their Americanness and willingness to facilitate production without regard for former association.[8]

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[6] J. A. McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," especially sections on "New Arrivals," "Worker Turnover," etc., and Part V, titled "Services to Future Citizens: Schools, and Youth Services and Juvenile Delinquency," 70-98.

[7] For an analysis of American and European views of colonial subjects and their "incapacity" for improvement, an "inability" to learn crucial skills, perceived moral bankruptcy, etc., reinforced the "need" for white colonial rule or intervention, and also how this change affected colonial people in the metropole from Africa between 1890 to 1980, see Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, and History, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially pages 51 and 96. The attitudes described here derive directly from the 19th century "scramble" mentality and their effects will be discussed more in the third chapter.

[8] See issues of the *Fore'n'Aft* Magazine, "Who We Are" and "Where We're From", periodical sections that appear in the magazine from 1941-1943. Some select issues are available for purchase from the website Wartime Press, https://wartimepress.com/product-category/united-states/magazines-united-states/home-front/fore-n-aft/, with others available in archives nationwide. *Fore'n'Aft* had a national

Environmental injustice in wartime production was carefully hidden behind the natural beauty of Northern California. Absent from these photographs and posters were the minority groups who often experienced the worst of industrial pollution. While shipbuilding in the East Bay had occurred during World War I, the massive amounts of supplies required abroad and the immediate need for ships spurred new levels of in-migration. Nonwhite laborers represented a large percentage of new migrants to the Bay Area, following the western development of wartime work and transportation infrastructure. African Americans from both southern and eastern seaboard cities and states, Chinese Americans, and Indigenous groups from the California Valley, the Southwest, and the Great Basin — attracted by the promise of defense work and pushed by racism and discrimination — flooded into the East Bay.

Although many white migrants had come west in the years before World War II, particularly important was an unprecedented migration of African Americans into the East Bay from 1941 to 1943. In addition, and highly significant for later development, this migration was largely female; of the million African Americans who entered the workforce for the first time during WWII, 600,000 were women. This demographic increase was felt strongly on the West Coast, where African American women took

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audience and impact much larger than one might expect because the magazines were sent to train stations around the country where Kaiser recruited workers from, particularly in the south and Midwest. The largest areas of departure, and thus the areas where the flyers were the most successful, were Minneapolis, Minn.; Memphis, Tenn.; Phoenix Ariz.; St. Louis, Mo.; Cape Girardeau, Mo.; Sikeston Mo.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Little Rock, Ark.; Omaha, Neb.; Ft. Smith, Ark.; Chicago, Ill.; and Los Angeles, California. The source material records the number shipped from each location, and the total cost of shipping from those cities, by month, as well as recording the number who did not complete the journey west and those who finished the journey but then failed to hire on at the Kaiser yards, thus representing a loss to the company. The papers also record the average cost to the company per "man" although this process brought large numbers of both women and men west. For December to March of 1942, for instance, this number was $56.36 per capita, an enormous investment into workers who might or might not actually present themselves at the yards for work.

advantage of Kaiser company healthcare and childcare and federal childcare where they existed although the coverage of these programs remained limited, with most women forced to leave their children at schools or with friends and relatives while working in the yards. This enabled both white and minority women to help provide for their families in ways they had not been able to before. Although Anderson claims that the increase in the number of women in industrial work from before the war years was only approximately ten percent, this still marks a highly significant shift in context.[9]

Some historians, such as Roger Lotchin, downplay the effects of World War II on long-term urban development even though cities in the San Francisco Bay Area experienced dramatic demographic shifts during the war years – arguing instead that the process of change from a peripheral region of the resource rich West into the modern powerhouse that California would become in the postwar era was a more long-term process. Marilynn Johnson's foundational article on the wartime expansion of Richmond, "Urban Arsenals," argues that the federal government directly affected the city in a profound and lasting manner, "assuming an unprecedented role in the construction and rearrangement of residential neighborhoods."[10] Between 1940 and 1945, the African American population of the Bay Area grew 227 percent, from just below 20,000 to over 64,000. An even more stark and incredible population shift

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[9] For the figure on African American women in the wartime workforce, see Karen Tucker Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, no. 1 (June 1982), 82. Scholars emphasized that the change in the female wartime working population was a minor one; however, this is off base. Though the increased percentage of women in the workforce was relatively small, it was not just married women entering the yards (the classic "Rosie") who were emphasized: the fact that working-class women entered the heavy industrial sector, and represented over 30 percent of the total, is incredibly significant by itself.

[10] Marilynn S. Johnson, "Urban Arsenals: War Housing and Social Change in Richmond and Oakland, California, 1941–1945," *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (August 1991), 284.

occurred in the African American population of Richmond itself, as the number increased from 270 individuals to 5,673, a growth rate of 2001 percent from 1940 to 1944. Although the pace of in-migration slowed, growth continued in the postwar period, with the population increasing by another 135 percent to over 13,000 persons by 1950.[11]

While many white migrants from the Middle West and South-Central states (Oklahoma, Texas, etc.) had already completed their process of migration to the West by 1940, African Americans by and large had not yet had the financial means, even if they had the motivation, to leave their former states. According to War Manpower Commission reports in 1943, nearly three fourths of African Americans who settled in the Bay Area came to the west on their own recognizance and volition, with only about a quarter having been contacted by a recruiter. Instead, they relied on traditional information networks such as family letters, neighborhood friends, and churches or religious organizations. It was only with the relative standardization of the African American experience in the Second World War, when African American southerners and urban populations from the East Coast flooded into the West, and particularly the West Coast cities, that we see cooperation and communication between activists and leaders that facilitated the emergence of national civil rights movements. Added to this were the returning veterans from World War II's battlefields both during the war and for years following its conclusion; not satisfied with the slow progress of the local

[11] For graphs and cartographic depictions of minority migration to World War II shipyards in the East Bay, see Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, p. 52. See also David Wrobel, *America's West: A History, 1890-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Ch. 8 – "The Good War?" 214-239, especially 217-222.

NAACP chapter and other moderate African American improvement organizations, these veterans called for a 'Double Victory' against fascism abroad and racism at home.[12]

This migration of people to the states in the West (the contiguous territory from Texas to North Dakota and all areas West to the Pacific), counting the decade of the 1940s, increased the overall African American population of the states by 443,000, or 33 percent. African American migration to the area added a massive new minority presence in California, where the population grew by 272 percent. Even more impressive, the African American population in San Francisco grew 800 percent from under five thousand to over 43,000 individuals in the decade. When combined with the visible increase of African Americans in Richmond and other East Bay townships and cities, this remarkable growth diversified the region. Unfortunately, it also saddled local authorities with a daunting task: somehow keeping employment turnover low while making housing available. Failure to do so, combined with lackluster responses to the reports of government agents in the region, lead to the disproportionate poisoning of minority workers and their families. Exacerbated by racial segregation, the inability of local authorities to solve the housing crisis contributed to the postwar decline of Richmond's industrial and commercial center.[13]

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[12] California Youth Authority, "A Study of Youth Services in Contra Costa County," (Typescript, 1945, copy in Richmond Collection, Richmond Public Library), 107-108; Davis McEntire, "Postwar Status of Negro Workers in the San Francisco Area," *Monthly Labor Review* 70 (June 1950), 614; Federal Regional Advisory Council, Region 12, "Minutes of the Eleventh Meeting, Friday, August 20, 1943," 4, Community Reports file, Region 12, OCWS, RG 215, NA; Commonwealth Club of California, *The Population of California*, (San Francisco: Parker Printing Co., 1946), 128, 197.; Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, 46-59.

[13] Wrobel, *America's West*, 217-18. This section derives figures and information from Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 1998), 251-277. Postwar Richmond, CA was marked by urban decline, white flight, and

The remarkable pace and construction rate of the Kaiser Richmond Shipyards both mirrored and fueled the explosive population growth of the region. As the pace of migration, turnover, and construction accelerated during the war years, the social and infrastructure problems associated with that industrial growth proportionately expanded. Wayne Bonnett emphasizes that "San Francisco Bay Area shipbuilders produced almost 45 percent of all the cargo shipping tonnage and 20 percent of warship tonnage built in the entire country during World War II." Bonnett goes on to demonstrate that because 1400 ships were fully completed and delivered to the Merchant Marine and United States Navy during an American war effort lasting 1365 days, the shipyards actually averaged production of more than one ship a day. This remarkable statistic was largely due to new construction methods such as prefabrication and assembly-line construction, the use of welded rather than riveted bulkheads and hull sections, and other factors that served to speed production. However, the rapid pace exacerbated the already substantial dangers of shipyard work.[14]

The crucial war industry status of these shipyards and other industrial sites in the Bay Area meant an enormous federal investment, and a focus on the region in the form of federal agents. Good paying work in defense industries attracted young white migrants from across the nation, including many whites from Southwestern or Middle

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rampant African American poverty beginning in the immediate postwar years. For an analysis of this period, and its influence on Bay Area civil rights struggles and the formation of the Black Panthers, as the region turned from an "industrial garden" into the city of the 1960s and 1970s, see Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 21-75.

[14] Wayne Bonnet, *Build Ships! San Francisco Bay Wartime Shipbuilding Photographs*, (Sausalito, CA: Windgate Press, 1999), 126.; Christopher James Tassava, "Launching a Thousand Ships: Entrepreneurs, War Workers, and the State in American Shipbuilding, 1940–1945," *Enterprise and Society* 6, no. 4 (December 2005): 594–598.

West states living in California who had emigrated during the Great Depression. They saw defense work as a new opportunity for personal advancement, while minorities were generally banned from these jobs before the passage of the Fair Employment Practices in Defense Industry Act, Executive Order 8802, in July of 1941. While the yards employed mostly whites through the earliest year of the American war effort, from the first rush of December 1941 to late 1942, mounting losses overseas and the expansion of the Pacific campaign pulled more and more qualified white men from the factories and into the frontlines. As a result, those working in the defense industries in Richmond or the Bay Area during the era of fastest production were white men exempted from the draft, crippled by injury from the war, or African-Americans and women who had previously been purposefully excluded. While the minority workers were included in the yards after white employees became harder to find, their transition into the workforce was not a smooth one. In fact, in many cases the all-white unions which dominated work in the yards, including the Local 513 of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, excluded minority workers from the union benefits granted white workers – including housing project units, which the federal government had allowed union leadership to distribute to their members. This specific and harmful segregation perpetuated and exacerbated environmental injustice in the region.[15]

Although the housing and waste disposal crisis affected thousands of defense workers, few scholars have examined the implications of exponential population growth on minorities in the urban environment of the East Bay through an environmental

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[15] Peter Thompson, "How Much Did the Liberty Shipbuilders Learn? New Evidence for an Old Case Study," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 109, No. 1 (February 2001), The University of Chicago Press, pp. 120–126.

justice lens. Sarah S. Elkund has provided a masterful analysis of oil in the Bay Area environment during World War II, exploring environmental and industrial conditions. Her analysis does focus helpfully on the rise of scientific sanitarians, who competed with local community knowledge regarding what a dangerous environment entailed. However, Elkund's focus remains on the governmental process as drilling in California was federalized, leaving large issues of environmental justice and race unexplored. While revealing the pollution of air, water, and soil that accompanied industrial oil production, the work does not address class and race in these complex industrial sites.[16]

Christopher J. Tassava argues that a unique situation occurred in the Kaiser and Bechtel merchant marine yards – like Kaiser, Bechtel shipbuilders worked only for the federal government during the war years. Distinguishing these shipyards from other production facilities nationwide and around the world, Tassava demonstrates the Federal practice of operating decentralized and privatized war industry facilities. Westward expansion of the defense industry increased productive capacity by encompassing factories and labor pools idled by the Depression. This process, whereby the labor pool of the West could now be utilized as the skilled labor in the East was already engaged at capacity, provided unique fiscal and production advantages against all other combatants. The remarkable growth of industry in the early war years, according to Tassava, can thus be traced to a corporate partnership with the Federal government that was assisted and encouraged by the industrial leadership, notably

[16] Sarah S. Elkund, "Public Oil, Private Oil: Tidelands Oil Controversy, World War II, and Control of the Environment," in *The Way We Really Were: The Golden State in the Second Great War*, ed. Roger W. Lotchin, 120—142 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Lotchin, a preeminent scholar of the defense industry phenomenon in wartime California, collates several prescient articles in this volume.

Kaiser himself. The U.S. Maritime Commission specifically allowed and encouraged the explosive growth of the Kaiser and Bechtel yards in World War II Richmond. Far from the dangerous waters of the Atlantic, Richmond offered a flexible labor situation, a deep-water port, and a location on the key rail termini of the lines that could haul supplies, investment, and manpower west to the Bay.[17] It is this favorable combination of geographic and environmental conditions perhaps more than any other factor that truly drove the monumental growth patterns in Richmond, California. The history of the region leading to these developments is as follows.

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC REACHES RICHMOND: THE DEVELOPMENT OF EAST BAY INDUSTRY, 1906—1942

Development of industrial sites in the East Bay, and in California more broadly, had been a relatively slow process compared to earlier extractive mining and agricultural development. Many boosters, first to draw migrants from eastern states and later to garner the capital necessary for infrastructure after the boom of Gold Rush migration had died down, wrote paeans to California's bountiful natural resources and beauty. Minor industrial production had developed in the city of San Francisco, and particularly on the waterfront, servicing trading vessels. Shipbuilders had first arrived in the East Bay following the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire in 1906. The fire had devastated shipyards in San Francisco proper and Sausalito (immediately north of the City) operating since Spanish occupation and opened the wider area of San Francisco's

[17] Tassava, "Launching a Thousand Ships," Ph.D. Dissertation, 594. A scholar of wartime shipbuilding and Kaiser particularly, Tassava's article and dissertation advance the idea that shipbuilders embodied the new American workplace that would become common after the war, with working class people and middle managers organizing foremen within task-based regions of a factory or yard, rather than centralized control.

excellent natural harbor to commercial development. This process, in combination with increased transportation potential following the completion of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937, displaced San Francisco's skilled working population.[18]

These skilled laborers moved to the East Bay, taking jobs in new cannery industries, small shipbuilding yards, and Standard Oil's refinery station. Increasing orders for industrial goods nationwide, and particularly for new steel-hulled ships following American entry into World War I, brought additional work to the region. Richmond experienced a small and swift boom in the Great War years, a foreshadowing of the much larger demographic shift that would occur during World War II. While in 1917 the East Bay industrial sector remained largely white, "purified" by social and housing segregation, the seeds of change were planted that would come to fruition twenty years later. Defense workers remained in the East Bay during the 1920s and 1930s despite rapid swings in the market which at times idled all the shipbuilders. In industrial centers, including Richmond and the East Bay, the established cannery and oil industries sheltered these skilled workers from the worst effects of the Great Depression and unemployment numbers remained moderate.[19]

From late 1939 to 1941, before the United States officially entered World War II, German U-boats wreaked havoc on the American and British convoy system. Unrestricted submarine warfare, unsuccessfully limited by post–Great War peace deals, once again rendered the mid-Atlantic one of the most dangerous places in the world. German commanders, particularly Karl Donitz, realized that the Nazi navy could never

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[18] Lotchin, *Fortress California*, p. 34.
[19] Roger Lotchin, "City and the Sword," in *Fortress California*, pp. 2–5; and Johnson, "Prelude to War," in *The Second Gold Rush*, chapter 1, 15-23.

break British and French naval superiority in open combat. Instead, the resources designed for a comparable navy were rerouted into submarine construction, more quickly available against American and British shipping. Operating raid-and-retreat maneuvers designed to prevent loss of any U-boats, the German navy was thus able to limit the supplies that reached Russian, British, and Chinese allies. If the United States hoped to remain the "Arsenal for Democracy," it needed to not only replace the lost tonnage, but also develop systems to facilitate faster ship production.[20] Despite resistance from isolationists in the U.S. Congress and among American citizens, Roosevelt and his advisors clung firmly to their international commitments and unofficial alliances.

Recent studies have demonstrated that the economic and cultural influence of the United States before the war years guaranteed global involvement even while rhetoric remained isolationist. Immigrants to the United States wrote to their Congress members and enforced the importance of developments in western Europe, including the rise of Fascism in Spain, Italy, and Germany. The Roosevelt administration and concerned individuals believed the world could only be safe for America as a democracy if other major powers were not themselves totalitarian. Nazi control over the vast resources of Eurasia, American advisors warned, if combined with the resurgence

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[20] Merchant Mariners suffered the worst casualties per capita of any American armed forces branch, at one death in every twenty-six members of the branch over the course of war. The losses in merchant marine tonnage were staggering as well—in unrestricted submarine warfare, before the development of the long-range escort fighters and carrier fleet groups, the United States Army Air Force could only provide air cover for convoys for two-thirds of the North Atlantic convoy route, leaving ships exposed for hundreds of miles of open Ocean. See George J. Billy and Christine M. Billy, *Merchant Mariners at War: An Oral History of World War II*, New Perspectives on Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology Series, with a foreword by James C. Bradford and Gene Allen Smith, (Tallahassee; University Press of Florida, 2008), 75-92.

of autarkic and closed-market trading practices, would force the United States to adopt unfree governance and totalitarian control to not be overrun. These internationalists feared that, given the speed of German rearmament and the pace of wartime production, Britain and France alone could never prevent the establishment of a Eurasian bloc under Nazi rule. Relying on this underlying international concern, Roosevelt and his cabinet pushed for aid programs to the enemies of Nazi aggression. [21] Ideological and fiscal commitments to democracies worldwide thus engaged the U.S. federal government, and the U.S. Maritime Commission particularly, in defense spending. Henry J. Kaiser's Richmond yards were built as a direct result of this increased spending, and the subsequent demographic changes in the Bay Area were signaled by construction predating the American declaration of war.[22]

Originally organized to build ships for the British war effort, an extension of the Destroyers for Bases deal and FDR's developing international interventionist tendencies, the Permanente Metals Corporation took shape in 1939. After the signing of federal contract approvals by the War Production Board and the aforementioned Maritime Commission in the winter of 1939-1940, the construction of the yards began in earnest in 1941. This seems to present a straightforward example of private industry

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[21] For an analysis of isolationism in the United States and its roots in World War I as well as the interwar expansion of soft power abroad, see Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920–1941,* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 440-448; Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, Stanford Nuclear Age Series, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 141-150, and particularly 267. For the fear of a return to autarkic systems and of Nazi control of Eurasia, see Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times,* (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 2005), 155-156.

[22] "Carrico Report," 57. The report cites the growth of Standard Oil in the immediate prewar years, as well as a discussion of the Maritime Commission's decision to incorporate new emergency shipyards in the East Bay and renovate extant yards to fill the orders Roosevelt had promised as a part of lend-lease agreements with the British government.

lobbying for, and following, federal intervention; however, scholars have debated the purpose and timeline of federal involvement in the West. Gerald Nash notably argued that the federal government's intervention was positive in terms of production, infrastructure, and demographic change, but stopped short of any analysis of the environment except as something that federal and local officials sought to control and tame. At times, Nash lionized federal power in the West, arguing for its supremacy in all political matters and charging that federal intervention was the solution to local disagreements; however, federal intrusion could be destructive as well as beneficial.[23]

Marilynn S. Johnson, in *The Second Gold Rush*, largely agrees with Nash, stating that the growth in the martial industries in the East Bay, based on federal loans and private industrial organization, represented a departure from established business patterns. Johnson's study represents extensive research into social and cultural issues within the Bay Area. As such, her narrative avoids oversimplification and generalization that at times necessarily clouds Nash and Lotchin's respective conclusions, reflecting their focus on a much larger region. Johnson's social and cultural history narrative depicts the migration to California and the growth of unions and class distinctions. Her research follows groups of individuals through the prewar and postwar period, and she provides excellent analysis of the wartime population boom. Johnson particularly emphasizes the importance of African American communities in Oakland and the larger East Bay.[24]

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[23] Gerald D. Nash, *The Federal Landscape: An Economic History of the Twentieth Century West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 45-49; and Nash, *The American West Transformed* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 26-30. Nash was an established scholar of industry and migration in wartime America.

[24] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, particularly 28-32, 62, and 79.

Lotchin posits that rather than a sudden federal intrusion during the Second World War, local political capital and lobbying, alongside the rise of technocratic efficiency-first municipal governments, catalyzed urban and military interaction and contract shipbuilding. Perhaps best elucidated in his study *Fortress California, 1910–1961: Warfare to Welfare*, Lotchin's argument relies heavily on political and military overlap, local government, and the lobbying efforts of western metropolitan boosters. Engagement with, and lobbying for, federal defense locales and dollars in West Coast municipalities, as well as a new interest in Pacific Ocean trade and spheres of influence, can be partially credited for driving federal interest westward. Referred to as the "Goo Goo's," these technocratic local politicians and boosters followed the formula of Frederick Winslow Taylor. "Goo Goo's" believed that workplace efficiency, and by extension efficiency of town management and resource use, would make the city a more pleasant and productive place to live. Lotchin asserts that these politicians were the actual foundational impulse for the rise of defense spending in the West. Rather than federal influence being applied haphazardly, boosters and city officials courted military institutions, sought orderly and morally sound communities, and built their infrastructure to accommodate massive numbers of service members and dependents, as these additions attracted military leaders.[25]

According to Lotchin, the influence of the federal government in the rise of heavy industry in the East Bay was significant, but not through direct intervention. Instead, the officials of small towns and residential sectors lobbied for federal funds and

[25] Rodger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910–1961: From Warfare to Welfare,* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 35–44.

public monies to guarantee that their private investment in small western towns would produce profits. The Kaiser Yards were no exception, as Kaiser appealed to the U.S. Department of War, to the U.S. Maritime Commission, and directly to the War Production Board to fund his investments in East Bay shipbuilding, steel foundries in Fontana, as well as massive aluminum and concrete production facilities in the central Californian valley.[26]

Californian industrial leaders received huge amounts of capital from the federal government, but their funding was only part of a massive surge in federal capital ventures that resulted in staggering growth in real federal ownership of land and capital in the West. "As of 1939, the nation's industrial facilities were valued at $40 billion (1939). 'To this capacity there were added about 26 billion dollars of new plant and equipment. Roughly two-thirds of this 26-billion-dollar plant expansion was provided directly from federal funds, and the other third from private funds.' At the war's end, the federal government owned approximately 40% of the nation's capital assets." Quoting the report *Economic Concentration and WWII,* an article on federal funding and its impact in the West, Gregory Hooks and Leonard Bloomquist reveal the massive growth of direct industrial ownership by the federal government during the war years – a dramatic shift from private ownership common in the United States at the time.[27]

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[26] Mark S. Foster, *Henry J. Kaiser, Builder in the Modern American West*, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1, 85-95, 137, and 180-198.

[27] Gregory Hooks and Leonard E. Bloomquist, "The Legacy of World War II for Regional Growth and Decline: The Cumulative Effects of Wartime Investments on U.S. Manufacturing, 1947-1972," *Social Forces* 71, no. 2 (1992): doi:10.2307/2580013, 305. The figure of federal input and the growth related to federal investment quoted within this segment is taken from the report *Economic Concentration and World War II*, (U.S. Smaller War Plants Corporation, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1946). For more on Kaiser's facility as it relates to other private manufacturers, see *War Manufacturing Facilities Financed with Public Funds through June 30, 1944*, (Report, U.S. War Production Board, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1944).

In opposition to Nash's conclusion that growth in the West was federally orchestrated, Lotchin argues that the population increase in the Bay Area, and the industrial expansion that followed the introduction of federal contracts seen in Richmond during the war years, resulted from continued forces of migration from the south and northeastern United States to the West since Reconstruction and local government agitation rather than a top-down federal orchestration.[28] In Lotchin's view, the federal intervention in terms of the Maritime Commission simply reinforced and funded processes of growth extant since the early twentieth century. Despite their differences, these historians agreed that the growth of the Richmond Yards and the East Bay, in federal dollar amounts and in industrial productivity, was unparalleled except by San Diego during the wartime years.

Federal dollars flowed into San Diego during the war years, an effective comparative example to the growth of Richmond. San Diego Chamber of Commerce officials secured the contracts for several massive Naval fleet headquarters, Army bases, and Army Air Force yards in the early war years. Thousands of civilians, recruited for defense industry work, moved into the city – San Diego's total population grew by over 110 percent during the war years. In addition to this, San Diego, Seattle, and the San Francisco Bay Area all gained a much larger female than male population during the war years, as the wives and families of soldiers congregated to West Coast bases and airfields, while young women throughout the country flocked to new opportunities in western cities and the defense industry. As a result, the population of Richmond and other cities of the West Coast were much younger and with a significant

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[28] Nash, *Federal Landscape*, 12-15; Lotchin, *Fortress California*, 44.

gender imbalance compared to their prewar populations. As Johnson summarizes, "By 1944, the Bay Area population was younger, more southern, more female, and noticeably more heavily African American than in 1940."[29] Although few of these scholars refer to the living conditions and built environment of Richmond, both of these elements dramatically affected the lives of minority women and men working in East Bay industry. Heavy reliance on federal subsidies for housing, work, and recreation meant that minority workers disproportionately experienced negative consequences from the environmental impact of the yards. The federal government's role in development of the West in wartime and the influx of population from areas around the nation thus created a particular demographic situation in Richmond, albeit one rooted firmly within previous developments in East Bay industry.[30]

DEFENSE INDUSTRY IN THE EAST BAY: NEW ARRIVALS, OLD ANIMOSITY

The Bay Area's demographic diversity provided fertile ground for racial and class-based sociological studies of Kaiser Yards workers. These investigations included studies of domestic and work habits, interactions among workers as they crowded into the limited recreation facilities, schools, and hospitals of Richmond, as well as how the

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[29] Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, percentage growth 8, women as dominant population group in the western cities and the young population, 58-59.

[30] For context of the recent scholarship on the city and urban environment in American life, as well as several informative sections on expressions of race and culture in those same urban environments, see Raymond Mohl and Roger Biles, eds., *The Making of Urban America*, 3rd ed., (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 54, 61-75, and 98-113. For Gerald D. Nash's perspective, that the West was irrevocably and permanently changed by federal interventions and dollars (especially for military infrastructure), see Nash, *The American West Transformed*, 45-49 and Nash, *The Federal Landscape*, 12-15, and 26-30. Lotchin argues that the American West was in the process of development into the modern federated system long before the Great Depression and World War II placed focus on the West as a unit. See Lotchin, *The Martial Metropolis: U.S. Cities in War and Peace* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 70-91; Lotchin, *Fortress California*, 30-48.

new residents were policed. Federal, state, and local officials referred to these reports to justify policy decisions. Thus, the text of these studies provides a clear window into the mindset of city officials, who expressed their concern over the growing industrial center and couched their arguments in racialized terms. The coordination of worker production into effective shipbuilding by the Kaiser corporation in the Richmond area, despite adverse conditions for the early workers at the yards, thus provides a fascinating example for scholars of wartime industrial interaction.[31]

Long-term changes in population, commercial production, private investment, and boosterism affected the demographic and industrial shift more significantly than individual federal bills or actors, although federal agency recommendations and dollars often empowered local government action. An increase of immigration from south and central Europe, African American flight from the South to escape Jim Crow, and smaller-scale wartime production of ships, canned goods, and oil had all presaged the development of industry in the region which occurred during World War II. Another fundamental factor was the movement of indigenous people to the area, facilitated by contract obligations of railroad companies who guaranteed work and lodging for Pueblo of Laguna, Acoma, Encinal, and Navajo people, among others, in exchange for right of way and land along the railroad path. While these contracts with the Santa Fe offered work and lodging, the lodging was in boxcars recently taken off of the rails with crudely cut windows, a shocking deprivation for indigenous people who had owned their own homes on reservation land. Residents of the village were able to maintain their traditional cooking and living practices in these small boxcars and spoke positively

[31] Tassava, "Launching a Thousand Ships," article, 599-601.

about the connection they felt with other residents. Unfortunately, indigenous residents also reported that the smoke from the Standard Oil factory, feet from the edge of the village, as well as industrial pollutants from the Bay's heavy industry areas, often wafted right through the doors and hastily cut windows of these rudimentary shelters. Residents reported health problems in the population in oral interviews that are consistent with industrial illness, as was the case in African American neighborhoods of Richmond.[32]

The huge capital sums required to set up heavy industrial production and irrigation systems meant that federal funding was needed, but it certainly did not mean that the industrialists always followed current hiring practices – which at the time meant hiring only white male workers for industrial labor. In the Kaiser shipyards, the hiring managers far outstripped the required federal regulation created by executive order 8802 in June 1941, titled "Fair Employment Practice in Defense Industry." This executive order reaffirmed the federal policy of requiring defense industry contractors not to discriminate in hiring because of "race creed, color, or national origin," despite

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[32] See the *Rosie the Riveter WWII American Homefront Project*, a part of the Regional Oral History Office at the Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, and particularly the interviews of Emily DeCorey, Irvin Shiosee, and Nellie Sarracino, part of the Richmond Indian Boxcar Village, formally known as the Santa Fe Indian Village. For more on the issue, as well as the edited video of Boxcar Village residents, see the Regional Oral History http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/projects/rosie/. Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project: An Oral History with Emily DeCory conducted by Elizabeth Castle, 2005, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2007.; Abstract of Irvin Shiosee interview on the railroad contract: "The Laguna Pueblo negotiated an agreement with the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company, allowing it to lay tracks through their ancestral lands in exchange for jobs with the railroad. His grandfather and father worked for the railroad; during the school year, he grew up in Richmond and traveled back to the reservation for the summer." Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project: An Oral History with Irvin Shiosee conducted by Elizabeth Castle, 2005, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2007; and Nellie Sarracino, who describes life in the Santa Fe Indian Village. Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project: An Oral History with Nellie Sarracino conducted by Elizabeth Castle, 2005, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2007.

the fact that policies to this effect remained common nationwide. Kaiser's yards were not exempt from racial discrimination, and the effect of the executive order was limited in the yards as well despite rosy descriptions of cooperation and community sponsored by the management. While leadership figures including Clay P. Bedford, A. B. Ordway, and Tim Bedford (the three highest ranking executives at the yards not surnamed Kaiser) clearly demonstrated a belief in equality of opportunity in their intentions and actions, including in interoffice memoranda, they allowed the union leadership to control minority participation. As such, unions remained heavily segregated, and union leadership during the war presented the strongest anti-minority voice in the region.[33]

In addition to African American and other internal migrants, the advertising at the yards emphasized the international origins of their employees. Immigrants from southern and central Europe, and particularly Italian immigrants, had a significant impact on the growth of industry in Richmond. Clay Bedford, the general manager of the yards, urged his hiring hall manger Jean Johnson to specifically seek out Italian immigrants and to report the numbers hired, so that this added diversity could be included in booster literature.[34] Southern Italians brought their agricultural and artisanal talents to the Central Valley and Bay Area of California, while merchants and industrial laborers from northern Italy also flooded the state. This was no accident; Italians immigrating to the United States sought areas that closely approximated their homeland, and then as now the central Californian valley sports a Mediterranean climate, rich

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[33] "Fair Employment Practice in Defense Industries," Executive Order No. 8802, June 25th, 1941, National Archives Record Group 44: *Records of the Office of Government Reports, 1932–1947*, World War II Posters, 1942–1945.
[34] Nash, *The Federal Landscape*, 41-54; "Carrico Report," 62.

natural soil, and a bountiful variety of natural wildlife that made these new arrivals feel at home. The experience of these migrants reflects a small part of the larger story, helping to categorize and identify the demographic and economic conditions of the region.[35]

Public contracts for defense industries as diverse and far ranging in material need as the Bay's new population became sources of private money for industrialists, developing facilities that public funds could not possibly support. Henry J. Kaiser, whose industrial empire had been built on public construction contracts from Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal economic recovery programs in the 1930s and an infrastructure boom abroad, maintained these key relationships with military and civilian loan procurement agencies into the 1940s. Kaiser's contacts in the federal government facilitated loans and contracts to his businesses. Kaiser was valued as a known quantity and an effective leader, whom Harold Ickes, secretary of the interior, and Francis Perkins, secretary of labor, had been able to work closely with in the interwar years. Thus, when Kaiser placed a bid for shipbuilding contracts in a new facility on the West Coast, he was quickly supplied with federal subsidies.[36]

Kaiser's corporation finished construction of the first Richmond yard, funded by tax dollars, months before the United States had actually entered the war. Although the ship production facilities were quickly completed, public housing crises and sanitation issues that could have been best ameliorated by public spending went unsolved. The

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[35] Exhibit on early Italian immigration to the Central Valley, along with economic and cultural forces that Italian Americans involved themselves in, such as ranching, viticulture, artisan crafts, construction, and general labor positions before and during the Second World War, including work at defense industry sites. "Italian Heritage of California," Carmichael Italian Center and Museum, Carmichael, CA.
[36] McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 22-34; see also Lotchin, *The Way We Really Were*, pp. 7–8.

exigencies of this wartime production quickly overwhelmed Richmond's sanitary systems and housing. Paradoxically, the city failed to meet promised worker health goals, provide recreation facilities, remove garbage, or effectively police the city due to the unexpected success of the corporate advertising programs in expanding the pool of available workers. In fact, the large unskilled labor pool that the U.S. Maritime Commission expected, and that Henry J. Kaiser sought, furnished significant challenges during the war years.[37]

These examples persuasively demonstrate growth separate from an overarching federalist power, where private companies, family linked migration, and appeals to the state government remained largely free of federal intervention before 1941. The growth of the defense industry in the United States offers evidence of further separation from federal control, despite federal funding, as munitions production in the United States was not nationalized.[38] Tassava describes the process of military and civilian linkage that occurred in American defense industries as "supercontracting," where businesses poised to produce for the war effort doubled and tripled in size due to their close connections with Congressional purse strings. These developments, while substantial, relied on the perceived suitability of the East Bay as a white worker's paradise. To accomplish this end, the Kaiser Yards provided advertisements and booklets of astonishing production numbers depicting the East Bay as an area where recreation and healthy air would save the desiccated eastern industrial worker. In addition, Kaiser and

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[37] McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 67-72, and the "Carrico Report," pages 26-37, in "Data Respecting Manpower, Housing, Community, and Commercial Facilities at Richmond Shipyards April 15th, 1943," Box 129, Folder 22 – *Miscellaneous*, Permanente Metals Corporation, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[38] Wrobel, *America's West*, 203.

other contractors funded by the U.S. Maritime Commission hoped these federal infrastructure loans would provide long-term profits, and make them rich beyond measure, developing on previously "useless" land tracts with treasure from federal coffers.[39]

The remarkably successful advertisements for work in Kaiser's Richmond yards appeared in train and bus depots, port cities, and post offices throughout the United States. Particularly effective in the South and Central Southwest, these advertisements offered cash advances and train tickets to any potential workers, regardless of gender or color, seeking passage west to defense industry workplaces from 1941 on. Taking the form of national newspaper advertisements, booster booklets containing postage- paid return notes to confirm a spot in the shipyards, and the *Fore'n'Aft* magazine series published by the company, these materials cast the California coast, and the East Bay specifically, as a white worker's paradise. At the same time, this depiction of work in western defense industry disguised deep divisions in East Bay society. Local officials, business owners, and federal agents reminded African American, Chinese, and indigenous laborers that their cultures and lifeways did not belong in the idealized workscape these officials sought to create.[40]

White workers, especially skilled laborers, were welcome in the closed-shop

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[39] For a definition of "supercontractors," as well as the ways that private industrialists capitalized on wartime emergencies to emerge as private producers following the war, see Tassava's article "Launching a Thousand Ships," 589, 593, 598.

[40] "Workscape," a term coined by Thomas Andrews to describe people who affect and are affected by the environment of workspaces they inhabit, effectively aligns with the dangerous and debilitating effects of shipyard labor. Mining, welding, pipefitting, riveting, and drilling all release chemicals and dusts that become part of workers' bodies as much as the workers shape their workplace. Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: Americas Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 125. Small numbers of *Fore'n'Aft* magazines are available at the UC Berkeley Bancroft Library Special Collections, in the Henry J. Kaiser Papers.

union yards; African American, Chinese American, and Native American people were not. Published to draw new workers into the yards, promotional magazines were included with weekly paycheck booklets depicting cooperation and helpful collaboration between people of different racial groups and international origins. As a matter of fact, the race relations in the city were anything but rosy; as one white member of the local for the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders and Helpers of America (IBB) put it during the early war years, "The officers of this union can do what they want about a lot of things so far as I'm concerned … But I sure will be here shouting if they try to let those niggers in. It's all I ask of them – that they keep those black boys out."[41]

Such racist attitudes – and virulent slurs – flourished among white defense workers in the Richmond Shipyards, a fact that belies the popular perception of easygoing Californians and yards with happy "Rosie the Riveters" and "Wendy the Welders." In fact, the union situation in the Bay Area shipyards factored heavily into the creation of segregated African American neighborhoods in the more polluted areas of the city. This was because the union locals dominated the discussions between workers and the federal agencies in charge of constructing housing units, overruling the few African American representatives allowed to attend the regular International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB) meetings and housing people of color in the oldest and most dilapidated parts of Richmond.

Minority migrants to the Kaiser Yards sought the workers' paradise advertised

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[41] Katherine Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity*, (San Francisco: University of California Press, 1947), 82.

by East Bay boosters and employers, although few of these migrants had been directly recruited. Instead, family and hometown boosterism worked in concert with chain migration to motivate southern labor in areas affected by unemployment, and brought whole minority communities West to work in the defense industry, thus forcing whites to confront people of color in the workplace in ways they had never done before.[42] Seeking an escape from Jim Crow and white supremacy in the posters and literature of wartime industrial boosters, thousands of workers nonetheless found similarly racist attitudes in the East Bay. African Americans quickly replaced Asian Americans as the largest minority group with the displacement and internment of Japanese Americans, both citizen and noncitizen. The reorientation of Chinese Americans in editorials, public discourse, and cartoon depictions from the pernicious enemy of white society to partners in production and wartime allies also significantly affected the way minority workers were viewed during the war years.[43]

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[42] Booklets and documents that were used as promotional materials were archived in small numbers in the UC Berkeley Bancroft Library Special Collections, as well as preserved by the Richmond History Museum, the Oakland Museum, and national collections including the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and War Department records. The documents used in this work specifically were sourced from Box 13, Folders 1–36, Permanente Metals Corporation, Henry J. Kaiser papers, Banc MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, and the Richmond History Museum Research Room. For chain migration to the Bay Area, see Johnson, The Second Gold Rush, pages 2, 51-58, 88-93, and 114.

[43] Taylor Quintard, *Racial Frontier*, 231-261. For an analysis of the shift in American racialization from Chinese Americans as enemy to ally, and the sudden and vicious condemnation of Japanese Americans as spies and traitors on a racialized basis, see John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books,1986), "Know Your Enemy," 15-33. For a glimpse of racial stereotyping visible to a 1940s theater audience, see the Frank Capra–directed *Why We Fight* film series, especially *Why We Fight: Prelude to War* and *Why We Fight: Japan*; both portrayed the Pacific war as a race war begun by the Japanese people as a product of unquestioning loyalty to their militaristic ruling class, as well as cultural practices and lifeways that included a supposed incapacity for individual thought, Shinto religious practices, and other blatantly racialized notions that demonstrate a viewpoint then common to residents of Western combatants. The final Capra film in the series, *Why We Fight: Japan*, was released to the Pacific front after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima; due to the film's incendiary character, General Douglas MacArthur stopped distribution to his troops, recognizing the need for postwar reconciliation. Frank Capra, *Know Your Enemy: Japan*, musical score by Dimitri Tiomkin, narrated by Walter Huston, (1945: Los Angeles). The seven films in the Why We Fight series

Work had been promised on an equal basis but was instead doled out according to racialized notions of ability, especially in the early war years. Chinese Americans employed by the shipyards labored in segregated crews dedicated solely to electrical installation. These workers, excluded from traditionally "heavier" industry work due to their assumed fit for detailed jobs, lobbied for the opportunity to work in higher-wage positions. Women, both white and nonwhite, found employment sketching in drafting rooms, as typists in secretarial offices, assembling sheet metal in the (purportedly safer) covered prefabrication sheds, and performing lighter "top-down" welding duties.[44]

White craft unions such as the American Federation of Labor demanded that pipe fitters, the source of their largest prewar industrial membership, be maintained as skilled workers. Rather than a single worker or workers taking a steel blank and refining, cutting, and burning until it was assembled on the ship's hull, the Kaiser Yards separated these tasks into prefabrication and installation work. Older shipbuilding processes had required skilled laborers for large segments of the process, and thus bottlenecked all production until these parts could be fabricated and attached piece by piece. Separation reduced these bottlenecks in the production process, cutting the overall production time by weeks. In the separation process, however, wages for each individual production-line position were decreased.[45] Spatial and industrial realities in the East Bay meant that the Kaiser Yards left lasting impacts on their workers in terms

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directed by Capra, with their year of release, are as follows: *Prelude to War* (1942), *The Nazis Strike* (1942), *Divide and Conquer* (1943), *The Battle of Britain* (1943), *The Battle of Russia* (1943), *The Battle of China* (1944), and *War Comes to America* (1945). See Chapter 2 for a further analysis of film, cartoon, and other depictions of workers in the yards and their value to the war effort.

[44] Peter Thompson, "How Much Did the Liberty Shipbuilders Learn? New Evidence for an Old Case Study," *Journal of Political Economy* 109, no. 1 (February 2001), 105.

[45] Tassava, "Launching a Thousand Ships," dissertation, 325-344.

of both health and a lack of social services, a phenomenon explored below.

A POISONED TOWN: THE HIDDEN CONSEQUENCES OF INDUSTRIAL BOOSTERISM

Designed to produce immense quantities of steel plate, welded superstructure, and cables in a twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week rush for ship production, the Kaiser Corporation's Richmond shipyards also produced a comparable amount of industrial waste. Welding and burning (cutting steel plates for prefabricated sections), the most common shipyard labors, relied on acetylene gas and produced both toxic fumes and steel by-products, dust, and oils that soaked or coated the ground, the skin and lungs of workers, and food and water supplies.[46] Most damaging to the urban poor and populations of color, the suburbanization of white wealth simultaneously removed vital tax revenues and businesses from polluted districts while encasing and limiting minorities to the most dangerous zones. Old towners thus figuratively swept both pollution and undesirable residents out of their neighborhoods, segregating them to industrial "flatland" regions on the Bay. These factors particularly affected Richmond, as the growth from the prewar cannery and Standard Oil refinery to the massive shipyards, replete with auxiliary businesses and an influx of federal capital, outpaced the best efforts of city council members and inspectors to identify and respond to poor living conditions. People of color, locked into phenotypically segregated neighborhoods by redlining, were subsequently exposed to greater levels of pollution both because of their location inland and downwind of the Kaiser Yards, and due to an unequal

[46] Tassava, "Launching a Thousand Ships," dissertation, particularly 230 and 315.

allocation of services by local government.[47]

In addition, the working conditions of African Americans and other minority workers were significantly limited as union policy forbade the official welder training school for the yards to accept minority students. While some minority workers created their own private training organizations in an attempt to break out of these limitations, this was a luxury many recent migrants could not afford.[48] Instead, labor bosses inserted the largely unskilled Southern and Eastern minority recruits into cutting and burning crews. Cutting, forming ship components with an acetylene torch by following a pre-drafted model, was done outdoors to reduce the risk of industrial fires and explosions spreading through the covered warehouses. Burning in the yards involved the use of torch equipment to remove slag, excess metal that slowed the assembly process, from prefabricated joint elements. Although the pollution, fumes, and dusts produced were recognized as deleterious, few safety measures existed for minority workers. Rudimentary safety protocol required that cutting and burning, as well as most of the heavier welding process, be conducted outdoors, so that the gases and metal particles could vent into the open air. However, based on modern research investigations into occupational safety measures and the inhalation of gas fumes and metal particles from welding and burning, the open-air location offered little protection.[49]

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[47] "Carrico Report," 27; and McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 82-5.
[48] Moore, in Trotter, ed., *Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, 121-122.
[49] Thompson, "Liberty Shipbuilders," 120. For more on chemical and metal dusts, as well as the hazards a modern shipbuilder faces (that would have been much worse with the minimal and often homemade protective gear available to a World War II shipyard worker), see S. Krstev et al., "Mortality among Shipyard Coast Guard Workers: A Retrospective Cohort Study," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 64, no. 10 (October 2007), 651–658, DOI: 10.1136/oem.2006.029652. For an analysis of the effects of welding gases and dust on modern shipyard workers in South Korea, controlling for age and smoking habits, see D. H. Koh et al., "Welding Fume Exposure and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease in Welders," Korea Welders Cohort Group, *Journal of Occupational Medicine* 65, no. 1 (2015):

In fact, African Americans and other minority workers, as well as white men and women, labored in these dangerous and difficult occupations in a twenty-four-hour-a-day shift schedule. This schedule exacerbated the production of corrosive conditions and metal dusts that the World Health Organization recognizes as extreme health hazards today. While the effects of industrial byproducts on employee health were not fully understood in terms of modern syndromes and illnesses, Kaiser company doctors recognized the impact of toxic chemicals on workers' bodies. Chinese Americans, limited specifically to electrical occupations where asbestos insulation was used ubiquitously with few safety precautions, similarly expressed symptoms of asbestos related cancers and pulmonary-respiratory illnesses over their lifetimes at rates much higher than those of other shipyard workers.[50]

Further studies into shipyard-specific applications, such as heavy-duty industrial welding, confirm the danger inherent in such practices, as well as the inefficacy of simply locating facilities out-of-doors. In particular, a 2007 *Occupational and*

72–77, DOI: 10.1093/occmed/kqu136. For airborne dust hazards in occupational applications that can be associated with dangers to shipyard workers in the 1940s, see "Hazard Prevention and Control in the Work Environment: Airborne Dust," World Health Organization–Occupational Education and Health, WHO/SDE/OEH/99.14, http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/en/oehairbornedust3. pdf. 07/03/2017.

[50] Raed A. Dweik and Peter J. Mazzone, "Disease Management: Occupational Lung Disease," *Cleveland Clinic Center for Continuing Education*, August 2010, http://www.clevelandclinicmeded.com/medicalpubs/diseasemanagement/pulmonary/occupational-lung-disease/, 07/01/2017. See also Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project: An Oral History with Tony Avalos conducted by David Washburn, 2002, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2007; for a working woman and her family's experience with deleterious health problems from Richmond industry, see Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project: An Oral History with Stella Faria conducted by Judith Dunning, 2002, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2007.; for an African American woman whose family was adversely affected by Richmond industry, see Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project: An Oral History with Willie Mae Cotright conducted by Judith Dunning, 2002, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2007.

Environmental Medicine study investigating mortality rates in shipyard workers in Coast Guard yards from 1950 to 1964, utilizing practices closely related to those of World War II shipyard labor, revealed that the combination of associated chemicals and dusts in shipyard construction created very dangerous conditions. Shipyard production and repair placed workers in enclosed bulkhead spaces, with welders and burners often working practically on top of one another. The authors of that study definitively confirm that this closeness elevated industrial risk factors.

> Ship construction and repair are among the most hazardous industries in the world … Specific to shipbuilding and ship repair is that many tasks are often performed within close proximity to workers performing other tasks; therefore, workers may be exposed to, and also experience interactions with, agents not generated from the performance of their particular tasks.[51]

In fact, the data suggests that working over ten years in a shipyard, controlling for contingent variables, initiated mortality earlier than other occupations.[52]

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[51] S. Krstev, "Mortality among Shipyard Coast Guard Workers," 651. The full quotation, from the "Conclusion" section, is as follows; "Shipbuilding and repair are highly technical and complex processes, requiring a number of skilled trades and expertise. Ship construction and repair are among the most hazardous industries in the world. Although shipbuilding has been changed radically since 1980 and many exposures have been dramatically reduced, occupational hazards are still present. These include work in confined spaces, work at considerable heights, extensive manual work, and potential exposure to various chemicals (dusts, asbestos, spray mists from paints, coatings, solvents and thinners, metal fumes from welding, burning, soldering and brazing, epoxy resins, lead and chromate paints, oils, greases, etc.), and physical hazards (heat and cold, electricity, ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, noise, vibration, etc.). A number of potential exposures typical of shipyard work are known or suspected human carcinogens—for example, asbestos, lead, solvents, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, silica, chromium and cadmium. Specific to shipbuilding and ship repair is that many tasks are often performed within close proximity to workers performing other tasks; therefore, workers may be exposed to, and also experience interactions with, agents not generated from the performance of their particular tasks."

[52] For an analysis of the effects of welding gases and dust on modern shipyard workers in South Korea, controlling for age and smoking habits, see Koh et al., "Welding Fume Exposure," 73-75. For airborne dust hazards in occupational applications that can be associated with dangers to shipyard workers in the 1940s, see "Hazard Prevention and Control in the Work Environment," especially chapters 1 and 2, illustrating the origins of occupational dusts that would have been in common occurrence at the Kaiser Yards as well as the relative biological effects of various types of occupational health hazards in the yards, including silicates, asbestos related particulate inhalation, welding fume inhalation, drilling by-products, and many more natural and artificial compounds and by-products that are hazardous to workers.

These factors significantly affect any investigation into World War II shipyards in the East Bay, as dangerous working conditions without adequate safety gear or best practices to control exposure were a constant fact of life. As prefabrication of parts and wiring constructions at the Kaiser Yards were required on the slipway the moment they were constructed, preproduction facilities were located close behind the warehouses and ship quays. This placement, as well as the wind patterns of cooler ocean air drawn inland by much warmer valley air, encouraged the airborne distribution of hazardous particulate matter and gaseous fumes on African American workers limited to these outdoor applications. Perceived by supervisors as less skilled or able for training, these African American workers were thus exposed to storms in the winter and the heat of the inland Bay's summer months, as well as fog that restricted vision and caused accidents at the yards.

THE HOUSING CRISIS: A LOCAL AND FEDERAL RECORD

Redlining practices – originally orchestrated by white supremacist town officials and community groups in the 1920s to prevent African American, Latino/a, and Chinese laborers and their families from entering white neighborhoods by rejecting minority applicants from whole areas of the city – exacerbated the problems faced by migrants to the region. Although housing was scarce for all in the rush for ship production labor, the first federal dormitory housing units were disproportionately allocated to white families. 'Security' for the white population of the Bay Area meant separating, and officially segregating, minorities to lower-quality housing located on cramped and polluted

industrial land.[53]

In the early years of Richmond's war history, minority and white workers alike could be found living in boxcars, tents, and lean-tos made of scrap plywood, metal sheeting scraps from the yards, converted school buses, and small boats that the shipyard workers leased or bought and moored by the thousands in nearby quays. Newspaper and magazine articles demonstrated the extent of the housing crisis and the effect it was having on local residents. One, an ad in the *Richmond Independent*, lists "Boats for Sale. Home for shipyard workers. Walk to work. Permanently berthed. Richmond Yacht Service." Another describes a common issue for workers in the yards; despite good wages, with so few housing units (and even boats) available, their time off was spent in repurposed cars and busses with no proper place for cooking, increasing the danger of grease fires and general uncleanliness despite the best efforts of the workers and their families. "Said one mechanic, 'I brought my tools along. If we're still without a house by the time winter comes, I'll show my wife how to make coffee and fry eggs in the car, using my blowtorch. But I'd rather not.'"[54]

National newspapers ran images and descriptions of workers and attempted to depict their situation in a positive light, as their labor was vital to the war effort, despite what looked like a return of Depression Era conditions. The image the following

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[53] Richard Rothstein, "A History of Exclusion: How African Americans were Blocked from Living in Most East Bay Neighborhoods," *The East Bay Monthly*, October 2017, 7-11.

[54] Another image shows a harried woman attempting to cook while ducking her head under the low ceiling of a repurposed transport vehicle; "Interior view of outmoded bus, now home for a family of six. This shipyard worker's wife wants 'a kitchen.'" *Richmond Shipyards*, Calisphere: The Online Collections of the University of California, http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/themed_collections/subtopic5d.html (accessed March 1, 2017). Specific photographs on this webpage are from the *Kaiser (Henry J.) Collection – Selections from the Pictorial Collection, 1941-1946*, Bancroft Library Archives, UC Berkeley.

description accompanies shows two white men in sleeping bags under the fender of a car, while a white woman holds a child in her arms at one side and pours coffee from a camp kettle for one of the workers. This depiction of white homelessness even for employed people shocked national audiences and led to an influx of federal funds for housing projects – although minority laborers remained in conditions like these throughout the war.

> Both these excellent, intelligent workmen are employed in Richmond shipyards. "We brought our tent so's we could camp out on the way here; we didn't figure to have to live in it," they said. Between them, the men earn $100 weekly. "That's good money, but if we quit and go back home," the woman said, "it's only because of the kids. How can they keep clean in a place like this? Mister, when'll those houses be done?"[55]

This was far from the only time the question had been posed to federal authorities, but for the first year of production housing lagged behind other provisions. Kaiser's company itself constructed some barracks housing for workers but the lack of rentable units remained a real issue for the duration of the war.

In response, some took advantage as best they could of the nonstop production schedule. Another image of men sleeping under the fender of a car is accompanied by the description below.

> These men are not bums; they are skilled workers helping to build ships. Several hundred of them sleep outdoors for lack of rooms. These pictures were taken in August, when it never rains. "We deliberately choose to work the graveyard shift," they explain. "We get off at eight in the morning, have breakfast. By then it's warm enough to sleep most anywhere there's grass. Along toward evening we get up, shave in a filling station, and bum around town - in the bars, mostly; where else is

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[55] *Richmond Shipyards*, Calisphere: The Online Collections of the University of California, http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/themed_collections/subtopic5d.html (accessed March 1, 2017). Specific photographs on this webpage are from the *Kaiser (Henry J.) Collection – Selections from the Pictorial Collection, 1941-1946*, Bancroft Library Archives, UC Berkeley.

there? - until time to go to work at midnight again."[56]

Men in the yards underwent significant hardships when forced to sleep rough in this way despite good wages, but the conditions proved even more untenable for their dependents and families. Many families, even those that had been working class in areas with lower wages than earned in the Bay Area, were nonetheless used to owning their own property and having control over their surroundings.

> This woman, a refined and rather lovely grey-haired woman of two children and wife of a shipyard man, carries water for washing, has to dump waste water on the ground, because there are no sewers, uses a dirty outdoor privy kept that way by others - less fastidious. "We bathe in the washtub," she says. This family plans to stick it out, "because whenever we get to feeling sorry for ourselves, we think of what the soldiers are up against." But this viewpoint isn't too common.[57]

These conditions illustrate a part of the housing and environmental crisis in Richmond in 1942 and 1943. Oral histories such as these also illustrate why so many workers in the yards given train passage to the West Coast either worked for a short time or simply went home when they could not find housing, leading to the remarkable rate of 3 and 1/3 workers recruited for each one that worked a full year in the yards. Kaiser company officials, who recognized the link between the poor housing and absentees from the yards, worked to change these conditions.

Enacted and funded largely in response to these shocking depictions of homelessness for well-paid industrial workers, federal and local government agents worked to improve the situation. Subsequent developments of federal housing projects,

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[56] http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/themed_collections/subtopic5d.html (accessed March 1, 2017)
[57] http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/themed_collections/subtopic5d.html (accessed March 1, 2017)

healthcare and childcare for mothers in the yards, and other protections, helped whites adjust. Minority workers, whose images were notably not included in these national stories, continued to face similar circumstances through the war years and beyond and were not able to move into federal housing projects due to redlining.[58] Childcare, federally funded by an addendum to the 1941 Community Facilities Act, known as the Lanham Act, was a particularly vital part of this social service program. Federal funding allowed the expansion of childcare to serve over 600,000 children in more than 3000 facilities during the war years; of the more than 50 million dollars invested by the federal government, most was directed towards California.

Although federally funded childcare programs were designed so that children received adequate care and that women with children were freed for work in defense industry, funding was hopelessly inadequate for the millions of people who could have benefitted from the program. The program had been designed to preserve traditional roles of femininity and motherhood through the course of the war. The program theoretically provided a resource to care for children while it maintained the mother's role in her child's development as married women entered the yards. Despite these lofty aspirations many women preferred to leave their children with a friend or neighbor rather than with the underfunded childcare system. The program was cancelled in 1946, but post-war sociological studies claimed that both worker availability and childhood

[58] All these narratives and the pictures described are available from *Richmond Shipyards*, Calisphere: The Online Collections of the University of California, http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/themed_collections/subtopic5d.html (accessed March 1, 2017). Specific photographs on this webpage are taken from the *Kaiser (Henry J.) Collection – Selections from the Pictorial Collection, 1941-1946*, Bancroft Library Archives, UC Berkeley.

health, growth, and development benefitted even from this limited program.[59]

Johnson emphasizes the effects that local and state governments had on the federal understanding of both the ideal worker type and where these workers were to be found. These studies also depicted the kinds of housing different groups deserved, and the protections from health damage that they would require in the war years. Despite various advances, minorities remained firmly rooted in polluted land and with few services. In addition to the daily experience of workers, officials wrote of the conditions of these housing units and called for changes.[60]

Local federal officials, sending word to Washington of the conditions they found, provide a clear view of the workers in the Richmond shipyards. Understanding the shipyards, and the challenges faced by local government in their attempts to keep workers healthy and safe, benefits from the use of unpublished reports by local and town government officials to central federal authorities. Paul E. Carrico, an analyst for the Federal Regional Advisory Council, part of the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Service, authored one such document to the Federal War Progress Board on East Bay living conditions in 1943. Another fundamental example, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," consists of a 1944 report by Richmond city manager J. A. McVittie to the Californian War Reconstruction Board. Clearly elucidating the tensions and problems facing Richmond government and industry leaders, these reports called on the federal

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[59] Susan E. Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children: Federal Child Care Policies in the World War II Era." *Polity* 26, no. 4 (1994): doi:10.2307/3235099, 659-663; for several key sources, and the cited figures, on the Lanham Act, see Wrobel, *America's West*, 220; and Andrew Rolle and Arthur Verge, *California, A History*, 7th edition, (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2008), 323.
[60] Johnson, *Second Gold Rush*, 105-112; McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 28; "Carrico Report," 45.

government to fund the expansion of city services denied new residents.[61]

These governmental documents demonstrate the environmental hardships faced by minority workers and provide an interesting local viewpoint of the "dangerous" new migrants to the Bay Area, often formerly Southern or Southeastern agricultural laborers. These new arrivals, both African American and white, were characterized as vagrants and a drain on social services.[62] As Johnson demonstrates, fully 30 percent of the new arrivals in the East Bay industry were migrants from within California. Depletion of agricultural jobs for poor whites as the war progressed, shifting designations of war-critical industries, and a significant increase in the hourly wage a worker could expect in the coastal defense industry drew these former Southeasterners to the East Bay. In addition to second-stage migrants from within California, another 16 percent of workers in the shipyards and war-critical oil processing and storage facilities in Richmond and nearby Pinole were from the four states of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana.[63]

Paul E. Carrico's report alleged that the conditions of the trailer camps and shack dwellings many employees at the Richmond Yards occupied were unfit for human habitation. Carrico presented his report to the federal government in January 1943.[64] The federal interest in Richmond that Carrico represented had intensified that winter due to the crucial nature of troop, tank, and sundry munitions transport ship

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[61] "Carrico Report," 42; and McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 30-33.
[62] Katherine Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity*, (San Francisco: University of California Press, 1947), Reprinted with an introduction by Eric Arnesen and Alex Lichtenstein, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), xliv-xlvi.
[63] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, p. 43.
[64] "Carrico Report.", 47-54.

production for expanding campaigns in the Pacific and European theaters. Tasked with analyzing the cause for rapid and disruptive employee turnover in defense industry labor at the time, Carrico's report demonstrates the degree that the federal government influenced and directed the course of development in the West. Pouring billions into defense industries and granting millions of dollars of contracts to Richmond industries, the federal government far outpaced both local and state government in total labor positions and contractors by 1942.[65]

Federal authorities, such as the U.S. Maritime Commission, the War Manpower Commission, and others, tasked local federal agents and government officials with searching for and describing the characteristics of production facilities. Managing governmental projects for efficiency and the health of workers, the report includes maps of the region, available housing, redlining districts then in place, and the funding needed to adequately house minority workers. Providing healthy and clean workplace and living environments for workers, even if focused disproportionately on white families, was a specific personal concern of Kaiser's. This was reflected in his business model and in his speech to the graduating class of Washington State College in 1943.[66]

The Kaiser Yards were operated as a fully governmental contract business, or one that built ships only for the federal government and had been constructed by loans and funding sourced within the federal munitions structure. This singular buyer and funding source meant that rather than respond to the Californian government or outside

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[65] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, p. 2.
[66] Henry J. Kaiser, "Commencement Address to the Graduating Class of Washington State College, Spring 1943," Container 288, Folder 2, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

business interests the privately-owned Permanente Metals Corporation leadership reported directly to the federal government. Officials carefully studied the living and working conditions in and nearby the yards, both for the impact these factors had on the employees of the wartime munitions plants as well as for their successful operation. In the estimation of labor management professionals and bureaucrats, healthy and happy employees built faster and tolerated wartime job site conditions, including the nonstop production schedule, better than those without adequate housing and recreation facilities. The Carrico report thus demonstrates the living and working conditions of the Richmond shipyard employees, detailing environmental conditions that affected shipyard employees in the bustling town sweeping from the inland hills to the Bay coast. Describing the "abysmal" conditions of shack dwellings and other living situations available to employees, Carrico felt moved by the conditions workers faced during the winter of 1942–1943, when unseasonable storms pushed the city's already strained sewer and storm-water drain system past its limits.[67]

The inspector visited one shack, pieced together from rotted wooden boards that did not join at the seams, housing a welder, his wife, and five children. Within twenty feet of the shack was San Pablo Creek, a major water line that connects the Oakland Hills with the Bay, filled at that time with unfiltered human, animal, and industrial waste. Carrico noted the fact that, despite slurry from the main privy and garbage pile at

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[67] For references to the perceived connections between healthy employees and faster, better production, see "Relation of Manpower, Housing, Community and Commercial Facilities to the Rate of Ship Construction"; "Closer Home—Fewer Quits" (chart); "Percent of Total Turnover due to Transportation, Health and Housing Problems" (chart); "Labor Turnover due to Transportation and Housing Problems" (chart); and "Letter to Vice Admiral Emory S. Land Chairman of the U.S. Maritime Commission, from Joseph P. Tufts–March 25th, 1943, relative to construction of community facilities as necessary for employee production," all found in Box 129, Folder 22 – Miscellaneous, Permanente Metals Corporation, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

the house flowing past the dwelling, the owner received over two hundred dollars per month – which would be comparable to about four thousand inflation-adjusted dollars a month in rent. Very few rooms were available within reasonable distance of the shipyards, and every spare square foot of housing was converted into an apartment or a room for rent, including these sorts of ramshackle chicken huts. This particular shack rented for. At a price point expensive even for professionals in the Bay Area today, and totally unreachable for industrial workers at the time, the shack represented typical stories of worker housing situations. In fact, the available housing in Oakland had dropped from an already low 1940 rate of 2 percent to just 0.02 percent by 1942, reflecting the scarcity of housing options available for industrial workers.[68]

Although the statistical analysis Carrico's report developed did not specifically separate workers by race and gender, the anecdotes attached to the report speak volumes about the expected living conditions of a skilled or semiskilled white worker. Carrico reported being disturbed by the fact that a white welder, with a high paying and skilled labor position, nonetheless remained relegated to a dwelling that he qualified as "certainly uninhabitable, justifiable to condemn for the safety of the occupants."[69] The report thus demonstrates the extremes the people of Richmond were forced to by the emigration of workers from the South, Midwest, and East Coast, and internal secondary migrants from the agricultural fields of the Californian valley. To try to limit the impact

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[68] "Carrico Report," 57. For the statistic on Oakland housing availability and a comparison with other districts of defense production where housing was plentiful, see Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, chapters 1 and 2, particularly 33-42, 126, 151, and 206-229.

[69] Carrico Report," "Data Respecting Manpower, Housing, Community, and Commercial Facilities at Richmond Shipyards April 15th, 1943," Box 129, Folder 22 – *Miscellaneous*, Permanente Metals Corporation, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

of the conditions he had experienced on "morale and working capacity of labor," specifying both the collective and individual welfare of workers in the yards who were exposed to these environmental and occupational hazards, Carrico suggested that the local government fund sanitary inspectors who would aid in finding possible alternate accommodations. Thousands of workmen and women packed up and left when faced with these poor living conditions, further upsetting an already volatile job market. Documents from the shipyards estimate an average of 3.3 employees were hired for each one who stayed in the yards a calendar year from 1942-1944, most citing the living conditions as their reason for leaving. Although the clear majority occupying this housing engaged in defense or other critical industries and qualified for public housing under the Wartime Housing Authority, too few new units had been completed to accommodate the influx of labor.[70]

With a prewar population of 23,000, Richmond had experienced sudden growth to a population of over 120,000 people during the spring and summer of 1943. This population boom disproportionately affected racial minorities. Overcrowded living quarters were not the only factor in the hazardous living environments of Richmond; race was also a key component. Many new dwellings built by federally subsidized grants and military funds for the shipyard workers were officially redlined, or restricted to only whites in their contracts, with privilege given to families with workers in

[70] McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 46-55; see also Linda Harris Mehr, "The Way We Thought We Were: Images in World War II Films," Lotchin, *The Way We Really Were,* 30–46; "Richmond Shipbuilding Area Richmond California: Transportation and Housing Requirements, May 13, 1942," and "The Transportation and Housing Problem as it Affects Labor Turnover in the Richmond Shipyards: February 1943," BANC MSS Box 288 Folder 7, Bancroft Library Archives, University of California Berkeley.

essential defense industries such as the shipyards and outfitters. The official redlining was also accompanied by unofficial redlining practices and race-based neighborhood agreements, limiting non-whites to the worst neighborhoods and ramshackle dwellings. For example, all-white union local leadership lobbied for, and gained, control over the distribution of some federal housing units, giving them out to their members as benefits and further limiting minority housing. African American, Native American, and Chinese American workers who applied to these projects were specifically denied entry because of race. City leaders and neighborhood committees justified this exclusion as a form of protection for the white community.[71]

This chapter, and the exclusionary practices described above, draw clear comparisons with Kate Brown's *Plutopia*. While Dr. Brown focused on nuclear production rather than heavy industry, her study of American and Soviet nuclear production nevertheless explores many themes that significantly inform East Bay wartime industry studies. Expressing an acute concern in the race for technological and production superiority against German and Japanese war machines, military officials demanded that their civilian contractors operate in a state of continual wartime emergency. Kaiser's Richmond yards, like the nuclear production facilities Kate Brown describes in *Plutopia*, also highly valued safety and security while in a state of emergency production – but in turn, like in Hanford, normal safety measures were seen as unnecessary waste during wartime production.[72]

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[71] Peter Thompson, "How Much Did the Liberty Shipbuilders Learn," 122–126; Xiaojian Zhao, "Chinese American Women Defense Workers in World War II," *California History* 75, no. 2 (Summer 1996), 147.
[72] *Plutopia* focuses specifically on the Hanford Reservation, in Washington State, in comparison with the Soviet plutonium production site at Ozersk in the southern Ural Mountains. Manhattan Project scientists and American military officials located plutonium production facilities used until the end of the Cold War

Kaiser's workers experienced industrial accidents, pollutant spills, and respiratory diseases at high rates due to the 24-hour work schedule, a result of the demanding realities of military contracts and constant pressure for faster production. The deleterious nature of welding gases, metal dusts, lead, and asbestos used in ship construction further complicated the process and the legacy of wartime defense industry production. Many affected by the shipyard work experienced cancers and toxicity later in life, again paralleling the effects of nuclear production on worker health. In fact, the industrial pollution within the borders of the modern city of Richmond was so severe that to this day, construction projects are often halted upon the discovery of 'purple earth' when digging foundations, a self-explanatory descriptor of the horrifically polluted soil and water in the former industrial areas of the city.[73]

Although many industries around the world during the 1940s were similarly cavalier about industrial waste, shipbuilding in wartime emergency conditions was particularly dirty and released oils, heavy metals, and waste products from welding and casting metal. Highly toxic gases and metal dusts of all types, released in close proximity to large numbers of workers, and the frenetic pace and close-quarters production of wartime labor contributed to these dangers. Coating the shipyard region and the lungs of welders and seeping into housing and business buildings available to

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on the Hanford Military Reservation, in the Tri-Cities region of central Washington. Hanford's closed production system, with crucial safety provisions that should have prevented the deleterious effects of industrial plutonium production applications, became unnecessary wastes of time and money. In turn, these reduced safety provisions resulted in ubiquitous industrial pollutants and a reduction of necessary services. Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), especially chapter 22, "Managing a Risk Society," 165-171.

[73] For a discussion of military demands on Richmond shipyard workers, see McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 25.

Bay Area laborers, these chemical toxins provided new challenges to a rapidly expanding city. The U.S. Maritime Commission, an organization that rarely garnered any limelight but that proved vital to the American and Allied war effort, had encouraged industrialists utilizing federal loans and production money to build on areas of land that had been considered useless or already stripped of any extractive value. Industrial leaders thus pictured turning these waste spaces into production facilities that rivaled those on the East Coast.[74]

Segregated housing conditions meant that industrial dust, oils, and toxic heavy metals were more likely to be present in the homes of minorities. These toxic chemical compounds and industrial waste products increased the danger of an already overcrowded, and volatile, built environment. Racial minorities, relegated to areas closest to the industrial dumps, were unduly exposed to these dangers. Furthermore, in lower-quality dwellings, because of racial exclusion, African American and Native American laborers were more likely to be subjected to chemical pollution in their water, air, and food. Poisons could easily pass through the ramshackle walls and wax-paper windows of the converted boxcars of the Santa Fe Village as well as seep into rusting school buses, tents, and myriad other makeshift shelters minority workers continued to inhabit into 1944 and 1945.

Minority workers continued to inhabit these substandard housing units after the white workers were moved to federal housing projects such as Atchison Village beginning in late 1943. The very characteristics that had originally attracted labor

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[74] Henry J. Kaiser, "Housing Conditions," Box 159 Folder 25, BANC MSS 83/42 c, Richmond Calif., *Henry J. Kaiser Papers*, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

organizers and executives to Richmond—its small size and relative obscurity would protect the ships built there from sabotage—served to exacerbate the problems and challenges associated with compact living and working environments. In their reports, officials from local government offices throughout the Bay Area reported on worsening conditions and proposed solutions within the local government. While these reports and the concern of local government did contribute meagerly to gains in health and human security, the explosive population growth of the early war years presented substantial barriers to equal housing opportunities for minorities in the East Bay. The realities of wartime emergency production—industry that sacrificed long-term health and wellness for short-term gains on the battlefield—was ubiquitous in World War II, with every nation making this tradeoff to some extent. In Richmond, however, the negative effects of this tradeoff on worker health were exacerbated by poor housing and services for minorities. Thus, although sacrifices for the war effort were commonplace, Richmond's production facilities polluted land and bodies in ways that expressly created race-based environmental injustice.

Production numbers for East Bay industry were touted as the best in the nation, particularly in terms of merchant marine shipbuilding, although the reality of living and working conditions were less glorious. Portraying the yards as a symbol of cooperation and democratic values at work, propaganda films on newsreel screens and articles in magazines, flyers, and booster literature formed a collective image of American home-front labor featuring all races and genders working as one. In fact, the longest-lasting and most famous legacy of the East Bay shipyards was the image of "Rosie the Riveter," a strong and productive woman but also an elegant and lipstick-wearing lady.

These images whitewashed the workforce in the East Bay and confirmed stereotypes of wives and homemakers who picked up side work as welders under the pressing wartime demands of the nation.

Famous images of the yards and labor force that countered this narrative, including those of photographer Dorothea Lange, demonstrated the diversity and strength of African American, Chinese, and Native American workers. Exclusionary housing practices and propaganda narratives nevertheless hid a legacy of minority discrimination and blatant racial inequality that remained firmly entrenched long after the guns fell silent. Posters, magazines, and publications depicted a cooperative workforce even as racism in defense of the white power structure remained ascendant. These white leaders, emboldened by scientific production and sanitation objectives, sought to both racially and ethnically purify the landscape. In their successful presentation of these workers as cooperative parts of the greatest generation, as soldiers of industrial, the white population was able to secure and reinforce racial categories and their masculinity for years to follow.

CHAPTER 2

VETERANS OF INDUSTRY:

MEN AND MASCULINITY IN "ROSIE THE RIVETER'S" WORLD



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Ten thousand war industry employees attended a massive company picnic, with sporting events, copious meals, and dancing funded by employee contributions to celebrate Labor Day 1942. The company, Henry J. Kaiser's Permanente Metals Corporation, had reserved a massive piece of reservoir land in the Oakland Hills called Tilden Regional Park for an entire day - so that workers in each 8-hour shift could enjoy fresh air and camaraderie away from the shipyards. Newspapers covering the event

[75] Blue Eagle clutching an anchor from "Ships for Victory", the end piece to an advertising flyer for the Richmond Shipyards titled "Serve Your Country and Yourself: Help Build War Winning Ships at Richmond California," Box 288, Folder 3, *Henry J. Kaiser Papers*, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. "The display of the Blue Eagle by any employer is notice to the people of the United States that he is dealing fairly with his workers in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Recovery Program, that he is not taking advantage of child labor and that he is living up to the prescribed high responsibility to the public and to his competitors. The absence of a Blue Eagle indicates that the employer has omitted or refused to adopt some of these standards and to cooperate with the Government and his economic and actual neighbors in trying to bring about a better day." Franklin D. Roosevelt, "White House Statement on Executive Order 6723 on Service Industries and the N.R.A.," May 27, 1934. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, Accessed Online 4/1/18, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14886.

emphasized the remarkably large and diverse population of the workers present, but issues of challenged masculinity and racial tension remained close to the surface. A large influx of Southern and Eastern American women and people of color to the East San Francisco Bay Area of California in 1942 and 1943, although crucial to the timely production of war materials America and the allies needed in their fight against the Axis powers, rankled workers in the yards and led to conflicts between minority workers and women and white men, often newly emigrated from the South. Despite the positive spin that the Kaiser Corporation put on this new working population – emphasizing the differences present in the community, rather than actually encouraging cooperation – many of the southern immigrants flatly refused to work in unsegregated crews.[76] Conservative white Californians found frequent fault with the new arrivals. Even as women and African American war workers challenged the pattern of life in the East Bay including traditional notions of manhood, wartime exigencies allowed these groups to advance beyond what would have been possible in pre-war years.

The end destination for many of these internal migrants to the East Bay, the Richmond Shipyards, thus became a national spectacle and focus of propaganda. For Kaiser and his corporate allies, the maintenance of masculinity and the family unit were vital to employee production and health. As many young men in the war years left for the front, those who remained found that their efforts at the classic masculine demands of being an economic support, or breadwinner, and the center of the family unit, was

[76] For direct quotations of the southern workers and their disgust of the new arrivals, including a great deal of creatively racist language, see Alyce Mano Kramer, "The Story of the Richmond Shipyards," Typescript, Carton 330, Henry Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, pages 45-55, 61-63.

usurped by their status as non-soldiers. Kaiser recognized this as both a cultural and business challenge, as it could disrupt worker productivity. Thus, Kaiser encouraged men who stayed in the regular workforce to confirm their masculinity outside of the military, through the use of patriotic symbolism, marriage, fatherhood, and sports.

The efforts of shipyard workers to prove their masculinity against the perceived assault of women and non-white workers took several key forms in the years 1942-1943.[77] White male workers emphasized the strenuous nature of shipyard work, their virility, and their ability to marry and create the nuclear family. These masculine characteristics, crucial to the myth of rugged American yeomanry, were important to constructing masculinity while also avoiding the draft. These workers further touted their participation in yard-based sporting events and recreation through the Richmond Shipyards Athletics Association and its massive company-wide picnics in the East Bay hills as signs and evidence of patriotic masculinity. All of these factors demonstrated a desperate need to bolster and create masculinity against the idea of soldiers as the only masculine form in a worldwide conflict – a myth that gained strength in the ensuing decades through the exceptionalism narratives of Cold War historians.[78]

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[77] Eileen Boris, "Desirable Dress: Rosie's, Sky Girls, and the Politics of Appearance," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 69 (2006): http://www.jstor.org/stable/27673025, 139.

[78] For a history of the ideals of civilization as maleness and whiteness, especially at the turn of the century (1880-1917) as explored through the lives of Ida B. Wells, Stanley Hall, Charlotte Gilmann, and Theodore Roosevelt – all representing different aspects of the battles over masculinity, race, and primitiveness vs. civilization – where the ideals of Victorian manhood, that needed control to be truly proper, were subsumed in a desire to keep minority masculinity in check after the turn of the century, tied in with empire and colonialism. For ideas that undoubtedly impacted the organization of masculine vs feminine values, racial categories, and the need to recreate masculinity seen in the 1940s in the yards in a useful case study, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.02528.0001.001, particularly xi-xii, 2-5, 50, and 145-146; For the most recent discussions of exceptionalism and mythic America, see Wrobel, *America's West*, for early exceptionalist narratives: 16-27; and for later exceptionalism narratives, including during the Second World War and Cold War to the present, see 236-246.

The yards, like many places around the country, fielded semi-pro and amateur baseball teams, wrestling leagues, and handball competitions, as well as hiking clubs and outdoor adventure programs. Oral interview material, company publications, and amateur histories of the yards demonstrated the goal of funding these programs. E. E. Trefethen, Kaiser's second in command of his massive business empire, developed and ran the programs that Kaiser thought up. Business partners considered him the practical developer of Kaiser's grand (if impractical) vision for the local area, nation, and the world. It was Trefethen who had organized the creation of the Athletics Association through the office of the Fore'n'Aft magazine staff on the shipyard grounds – a natural progression, as employees had asked newsletter staff where recreational pursuits and sports teams could be found for years.[79]

In this way Kaiser could say both that the company cared for its workforce and that their workers were healthy and active outside the yards, both significant in seeking new workers and new federal loans to expand the shipyards – a process which occurred four separate times during the war years. Therefore, despite the positive effects of funding sports teams, the real goal of the Athletic Association was more to keep the company profitable and keep employees on the payroll than an altruistic desire for worker health. While scholars and bibliographers have extensively researched and written on the subject, this thesis develops a theory that manhood expression, theoretically challenged, was encouraged by Kaiser's ideals. Trefethen's focus on sports programs for shipyard workers also came from Kaiser's theories of successful worker

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[79] *Kaiser Co. Inc. Richmond Shipyard Number Three,* blue canvas-cloth cover, employee manual given upon hire in Yard 3, Box 288, folder 2, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley,

production and assembly line work.

Narratives of success and cooperation in the yards, combined with idealized visions of a cooperative Homefront workforce, help to explain how workers in the yards preserved or recreated their masculinity in the war years. These conclusions are not limited in utility. In fact, they are vital to understanding the city of Richmond in 1940, 1945, and today. Kaiser has been presented as a visionary and model industrialist, with a capable supporting cast, who ran forward thinking and modern industrial businesses. This simplistic description fits nicely within the 'Good War' narrative – the good industrialist who allows or encourages his employees to maintain their health – and it is fair to assume that the actual reason behind the creation of athletics programs was financially motivated rather than worker-centered. This was because the health plan that Kaiser's employees bought into was often used for injuries to new arrivals to heavy industry, and it was thought that incidences of these injuries could be reduced if employees were healthier and exercised more – thus, participation in sports teams was directly linked to profit and a reduction in healthcare costs.[80]

Lissa Smith highlights the increasing inclusion of women in sports generally and

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[80] Materials on this subject are available in the Bancroft archives in Kaiser's personal papers as well as those of his lieutenants, namely E. E. Trefethen and J. S. Dorsey, general manager; all available from the *Henry J. Kaiser Papers*, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. For a perspective of the same phenomenon in a different geographic area, a Kaiser industries plant in Denver, where the end of the war brought a contraction in industrial employment and it was hoped that women would leave the workforce and thus soften the impact of the loss of employment in other sectors, see R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Plains During World War II*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 54-55; Roger Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910–1961: From Warfare to Welfare*, (Urbana–Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 142-145, 171-178; David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 650-653, 781n; for the businesses that "flew the Blue Eagle" like the one see on page 55 – meaning that the business followed fair trade practices, did not have child laborers, etc., see Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920—1941*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 312; Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children," 656, 659-661.

particularly in sports that were seen as non-feminine before the war such as baseball and rodeo. This inclusion was especially important in the wartime era where men who left for the war were portrayed as heroes and those who stayed behind became pariahs in their neighborhoods. Despite this perceived emphasis on wartime manliness as exclusively derived from fighting in that war, many men either returned from their war tours, had remained at home with health exemptions, or had never left their war critical industry jobs, but successfully grounded their masculinity in other ways. For these men, sports, and particularly the very manly exhibits of bull riding, boxing, football, and baseball offered a way to silence critics around them who wondered why young and strong looking men were not volunteering for combat. At the time, preliminary diagnoses of "combat fatigue" – a World War II era phrase for what is called PTSD today, or other psychological disorders, were very rare. Other disabilities and injuries soldiers suffered that made military service impossible, but were not observably symptomatic, were also looked down upon. Even for these men, reviled by society as cowards and shirkers, sports programs and sponsored recreation events allowed the construction of manliness and put it on display for friends and neighbors.

The shipyards represented a catalyst for change – meaning that the wartime conditions in the yards speeded the process of changes already in motion, as opposed to the view that social change appeared spontaneously. President Roosevelt, former undersecretary of the Navy, and East Coast resident, was obsessed with naval primacy in military strategy. The president and his cabinet were also heavily influenced by Prime Minister Churchill, formerly First Lord of the Admiralty, who himself was obsessed with his military defeat at Gallipoli during WWI largely due to a lack of

effective landing craft. Both world leaders had come of age in a time when the need for total primacy of naval superiority over other branches was obvious, beginning with the battleship line and evolving, by the time of the Richmond Shipyards, into a totally amphibious armored force. These armies would be sent around the word with few continental bases, relying instead on the new merchant marine ships produced in Richmond and elsewhere around the country.[81]

INVADERS IN THE SHIPYARDS: CREATING COMPLEX MASCULINITIES

When discussing masculinity and work in wartime, one must not assume that the workers felt cheated or weakened because of their non-combat roles. In fact, the yards were operated under wartime conditions, and the employees received reminders with each paycheck that the United States needed war bonds, and that the war effort depended upon their cooperation and upon their work in the yards. Employees took this to heart, and war bond sales pitted crews in different areas of the production facility against one another for the honor of being the most generous and patriotic. In fact, bond sales to employees at Yard 2 outpaced those at every other shipyard in the United States.[82]

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[81] Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Warren F. Kimball, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 197-210, 298-305, and 381-385. David M. Kennedy, *The American People in World War II: Freedom from Fear Part Two*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 18-39.

[82] Permanente Metals Corporation photograph album; "In Appreciation of Your Cooperation on a JOB WELL DONE," Permanente Metals Corporation - Kaiser Richmond CA Shipyards; Liberty and Victory Ships; San Pedro, California. Given to J.S. Dorsey on his Release from Permanente Metals Corporation, August 1945. "Richmond Shipyards." Calisphere - the Online Collections of the University of California. Accessed September 15, 2014. In October 2014, given to the staff of the SF Maritime National historical park; accession guide now available at http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8pg1w4g/entire_text/. 1941-1945, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Historic Documents Department Building E, Fort Mason San Francisco, CA. 94123 P14-006 (SAFR 24426), Permanente Metals Corporation photograph album, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

New employees were taught essential job skills by the use of pamphlets and posters as well as on-the-job training through unions, as workers were often recruited from totally different industries or with no experience at all. For these unskilled employees, the pamphlet would thus be the most important part of their education in the yards and would show the clear hierarchies of class and work that kept racial and gender gaps in place. As the war progressed these boundaries would loosen and, in some cases, disappear entirely. By the end of the war, African American and Latina women led mixed-race and mixed-gender crews in essential areas of the prefabrication and assembly areas at the Kaiser yards, thus complicating simple declarations of total racial segregation.[83]

While this is seen as a marked example of American patriotism as well as unity among the races during war, the reality of everyday life remained much as it had been before the war began. War industry work at the Richmond Ford plant, reconfigured to produce Jeeps and to refurbish damaged Allied tanks, as well as shipyard labor in the Kaiser yards, was now opened to men and women of all skill levels. As described above, men working in the yards, even if they were veterans themselves, were often written off as weak or effeminate because they were at home while others fought the war. Patriotic women who enlisted in the WAVES, WAACs, and other auxiliary support groups such as the Red Cross nurses were also subject to scrutiny because they

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[83] The Bancroft Library Special Collections, on UC Berkeley's campus, have many examples of these pay cards and pamphlets, as well as linear yards worth of ephemera and documents from the Kaiser Corporation and the employee unions. *Kaiser Co. Inc. Richmond Shipyard Number Three,* blue canvas-cloth cover, employee manual given upon hire in Yard 3, Box 288, folder 2, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, (Princeton University Press, 2003), 27-32, 48-57.

upset traditional roles, although the length of the war, the evident need for women, and the appeal to patriotism in advertisements and propaganda helped reduce outcry until 1945. At that point, the rhetoric and propaganda that had attracted women and minorities to war industry work was flipped in an attempt to place women back in subservient positions, often out of the workplace and into the household, and to make room for return war veterans in heavy industry work.[84]

While some authors have advanced the war years as a pivotal moment where women had opportunities never seen before, Donna Knaff persuasively argues that women's rights were not as stable nor as encompassing as they are assumed to have been. In fact, many of the positive accounts of women workers in the yards were juxtaposed with those of men who sought to tear down any minor gains women might have made in order to shore up their own masculinity. Humor was often a key part of the way men sought to reinforce their own masculine roles and put down women, using comics, war posters, cartoons, and advertisements. This type of humor appears throughout the instruction manual given to new employees at Kaiser's Yard Three, as

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[84] James J. Kimble and Lester C. Olson, "Visual Rhetoric Representing Rosie the Riveter: Myth and Misconception in J. Howard Miller's "We Can Do It!" Poster," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 4 (2006): https://muse.jhu.edu/ (accessed October 12, 2017), 533-541 – a section on the more well-known posters and the images they represented before Rosie later gained fame. Advertising flyers emphasized the weather and sports leagues available for workers in the yards; portraying Richmond and work in the industrial sector through rose-tinted glasses, classic examples of wartime booster literature, nonetheless offer a fascinating glimpse of expectations workers in the yards held about their wartime work before they ever set foot in Richmond. The flyer, as cited on page 55, is also a key piece of evidence in other ways. Its wording and composition, spreading photographs of smiling white workers and their recreation over and around blocks of text, reveals much about how the management of the yards perceived the average worker. The inclusion of such items as education and recreational opportunities also ran alongside articles that enforced the idea that these workers would not be limited to war work alone, and that their jobs would be secure after the war, a platitude that turned out to be completely false. "Serve Your Country and Yourself," Box 288, Folder 3, Henry J. Kaiser Papers.

the book attempts to explain shifting power relations in the yards.[85]

The booklet explained the minutiae of yard work to new hires who were unfamiliar with the dangers of heavy industry. Going beyond careful explanations of the potential dangers the workers might face, the booklet also effectively reinforced established gender roles and sought to put down the new female usurpers of the established masculine industrial workspace. Presumably as a way to sustain employee attention through the dull technical manual, the margins include pejorative jokes and cartoons that reveal significant social and cultural biases. One example, drawn by a company artist named Bob Lawrence, depicts a crane operator who literally and figuratively "picks up" a suggestively buxom woman in a dress, a single panel that speaks volumes to worker expectations even after women had been employed in the yards for years. Depicting a worker in overalls and a woman in a dress, whose undergarments are exposed – as shown in Fig. 3, following page – the cartoon demonstrates the divide between traditional roles of work and home life even though thousands of women would have read the manual. The cartoonist thus removes women from shipyard labor, a silencing that continues in Fig. 4. In that cartoon, although in a less obviously sexist manner, women are relegated to home life. It thus seems that the cartoonist expected women to only experience the yards through the magazines a father,

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[85] Donna B. Knaff, *"This Girl in Slacks": Female Masculinity in the Popular Graphic Art of World War II*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of New Mexico, 2006), ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/305292556/?pq-origsite=primo, 15; *Kaiser Co. Inc. Richmond Shipyard Number Three*, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, pages 22-27; J. A. McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," a report by the City Manager, City of Richmond, California August 15, 1944, delivered to Col. Alexander R. Heron, State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, Sacramento. Available in the Richmond History Museum Research Room, "Shipyards" shelf 3, 33-34; Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), viii.

brother, or husband brought home. Knaff sees this sort of humorous depiction as a direct contradiction to triumphal narratives of "Rosie the Riveter" and "Wendy the Welder." Knaff persuasively argues that when gendered, as these jokes are, humor represents popular perceptions of the target group and these stereotypes are often taken for granted.[86]

Knaff further argues that these items of ephemera clearly demonstrate cultural attitudes that attempted to both utilize and limit women in the war effort. She claims that "women were encouraged to take up masculinity ('men's' jobs, behavior, clothing, language) while maintaining femininity for the duration of the war. Cartoons and war posters attempted to define the boundaries of femininity and masculinity and explored the implications of women's masculinization."[87] Knaff's interpretation that one can "take up masculinity" is problematic, as masculinity is neither monolithic nor simply an amalgamation of male-dominated activities. Her analysis does helpfully suggest, very importantly for these war workers, that women entered the workforce with expansive ideas of what they could do and what kinds of jobs they were physically able to perform. In response, male workers harassed, sexualized, and rejected female workers in order to confirm their dominant role as breadwinners, and sought to relegate women workers to the fringe of industrial operations.[88]

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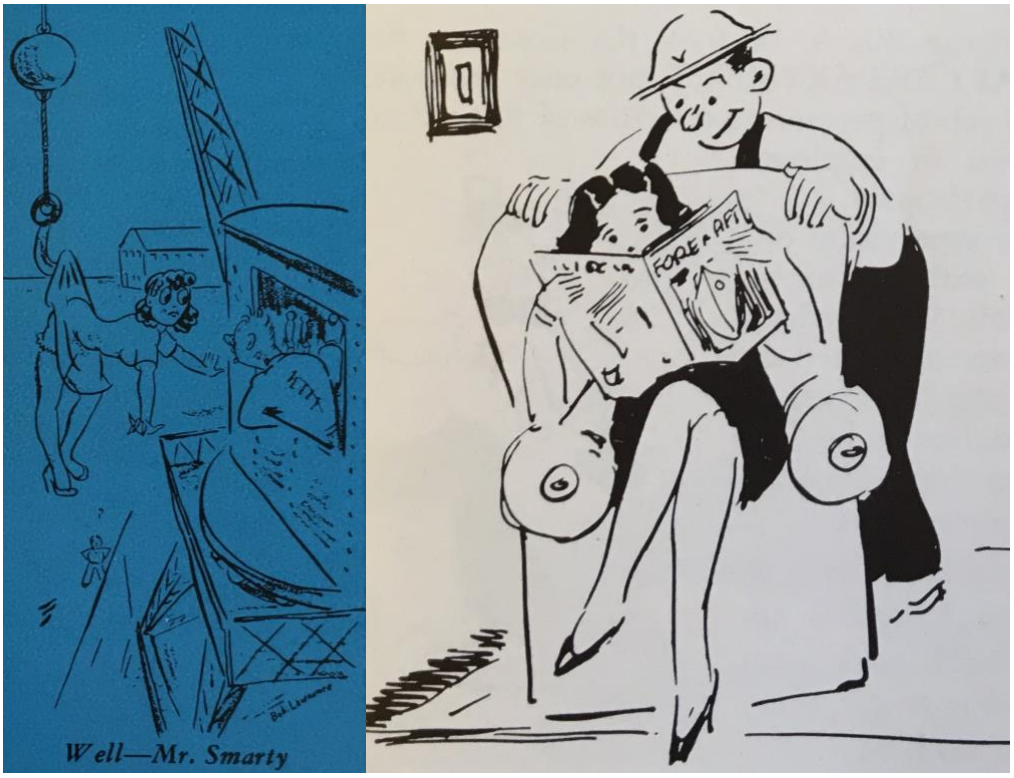
[86] *Kaiser Co. Inc. Richmond Shipyard Number Three* manual, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, especially 35-36, 41-42, 53-54, 68-69.
[87] Peter W. Lee, "From Depression Kids to Cold Warriors: Constructing American Boyhood Through Hollywood Films in the Postwar Years, 1946-1951," (Madison, NJ: Drew University, 2017), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, https://search-proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/1975772527?accountid=12964, 27-36; Knaff, "This Girl in Slacks," 15.
[88] Knaff, "This Girl in Slacks," 16.

Figures 3 and 4: Two Cartoons of Women in the Employee Handbook, 1943.[89]



WELDERS VS. PREFAB: 'RECREATION ESSENTIAL TO WAR INDUSTRY'

In the wartime yards sports programs were very popular with white men and minority men alike, because they allowed the demonstration of physical domination in front of their female colleagues. According to Knaff, one of the reasons for this enthusiasm for demonstrating masculinity was that "women's displays of [power, authority, autonomy, and strength] … were seen as dangerous and emasculating to men." Thus, men in the shipyards and in other war industries sought ways to control

[89] Bob Lawrence, "Well—Mr. Smarty", hand-drawn cartoon in the manual given to shipyard employees, page 81, and an unnamed cartoon of a worker's wife reading the Fore'n'Aft magazine provided to each worker with their paychecks, both from the *Kaiser Co. Inc. Richmond Shipyard Number Three,* Henry J. Kaiser Papers, MSS 83/42C, container 288 folder 22. It is worth noting as well that these are the only representations of women in the book itself, with all other depictions and cartoons showing only men. The text also does not include women, using "brother," "buddy," and "guy" to illustrate their point.

and maintain their pre-war relationships with women, including through gendered sports and recreation activities. While the gendering of sports persists worldwide, including the typical distinction between female and male professional sports, Knaff argued that the separation of these casual recreational activities at the time served to further alienate the new workers in the yards.[90]

These monographs, films, and the propaganda of the time were meant to encourage spending on war bonds and to make war industry work attractive. Thus, the multimedia from the period illustrates the government's view of civilians, complete with implicit biases and sexism. As propaganda films reflect only one side of the complex history of masculinity in the yards, scholars must utilize social and cultural histories as well as read between the lines of memos and reports to accurately depict the parallel history of progress and segregation, often tied to cultural values such as masculinity and belonging. Disruptions to the status quo upset the traditionally white and male heavy industry workforce, and their complaints show the negative reactions of the local populace that propogandists sought to cover up. White male war workers sought to reinforce their masculinity and whiteness against the perceived assault of working women and African Americans migrating into the area. Thus, cartoons and stories printed in corporate publications represented the attitudes of workers and leaders in the yards, while the white unions affected all aspects of life in the region for minority workers. Reports about cooperation appeared nationally, paid for by federal agencies and private businesses to draw workers together for the duration of the war, but these

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[90] Ibid, 27; Smith, *Nike Is a Goddess*, 78; "Sports and Recreation", pg. 18, *Fore'n'Aft* magazine, Box 13, folder 5, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

reports did little to ameliorate racial conflict and sexism present in the yards.[91]

Semi-pro and amateur sports participation in the WWII shipyard followed patterns of team sport creation and viewership in earlier decades. Some authors, including Seth Dowland, have illustrated this growth from military units and college sports programs. Collegiate athletics at the time remained nothing more than an elite dream for the average working-class person. The very fact that those sports were amateur in nature made them no less exclusive of the population at large since higher education remained a luxury until the full implementation of the G.I. Bill (passed in June 1944) after the end of the war. Dowland posits that in response to the loss of accustomed group affiliation in the military, newly returned veterans popularized both sports participation and attendance in the immediate aftermath of World War I. This was carefully differentiated from the masculine constructions of earlier years, where masculinity would be more closely linked to control and restraint than personal health or virility. Overly muscular and well-built men, as well as those who needed to use their hands to make a living, had been seen as too animalistic and uncivilized to be good men in the immediate Victorian past. Elizabeth Bagwell, writing about California's home front participation, further discussed how baseball leagues in the Kaiser yards brought together disparate and diverse workers in ways that later became the basis for immense wartime production numbers.[92]

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[91] Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963*, The George Gund Foundation Imprint in African American Studies Series, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 20-35, 50-53, 62-72; Daniel A. Cornford, *Working People of California*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 5-13; J. A. McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 73.

[92] Seth Dowland, "War, Sports, and the Construction of Masculinity in American Christianity," *Religion Compass*, 5: (2011), doi:10.1111/j.1749-8171.2011.00278.x, 355-7; Elizabeth Bagwell, *Oakland: The Story of a City*, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), 222.

Baseball and softball players, boxers, and others in the Richmond yards used the outlet of sports and recreation to demonstrate masculinity when they were not able to or did not want to join the military. These sporting events conformed to standard masculine roles of violence and control over self, key aspects of Muscular Christianity, without warfare or combat. This evolution in the interwar years portrayed sporting events as a labor outlet for the ultimate Christian man. Kaiser company leadership, including Kaiser himself and E. E. Trefethen, firmly agreed with this portrayal and spoke about the need for sponsored recreational events to develop Christian masculinity. Women, although they were effective war workers, were thus relegated to the position of 'dangerous' and 'subversive' stand-in replacements, further securing white male workers as masculine soldiers of production.[93]

Interactions between masculine values, challenged by the wartime emphasis on combat soldiers as the manliest and toughest people, and participation in sports and recreational activities in the yards represent a key factor in understanding the mindset of both yard employees and their supervisors. Kaiser began to encourage movement from the South and East Coast to his yards through advertisements of these sporting events and told recruiters to feature the recreation available on every poster and flyer.[94] Kaiser and his company presented sporting events as a way to blow off steam, enforce masculine roles in the wartime yards, and induce competition between yards to

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[93] Dowland, "Masculinity in American Christianity," 357-8; Knaff, *"This Girl in Slacks,"* 77-86.
[94] Marilynn S. Johnson, "War as Watershed: The East Bay and World War II," *Pacific Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (1994): doi:10.2307/3640969 esp. 321-330; Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 77-82; Lotchin, *Fortress California*, 323. For geographic representations of Richmond with recreational and other sports facilities marked, see Donna Graves, "Mapping Richmond's World War II Home Front," A Historical Report Prepared for the National Park Service, *Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park*, July 2004.

determine who the most productive and hardest working crews were. These competitions strengthened the idea of patriotic "soldiers of production," as they enforced maintenance of good physical condition in case of a further expansion of the draft. Much in the same way that ROTC and military training programs were part of curriculum during the war years, sports offered a casual way to stay in shape, meet and fraternize with fellow workers in the yards, and to break the monotony of heavy industry work. Examples of these programs in other war industries include those printed in the *Douglas Airview News,* a magazine published by the Douglas Aircraft Company in Santa Barbara. Each magazine contained several pages of coverage on sports between aircraft manufacture workers and their counterparts in other industries, including in the Kaiser shipyards. The teams at Douglas were split up by specialty like the Kaiser yard teams and would travel hundreds of miles to play against workers in other defense industries, earning awards and commendations based on their performance in sporting events.[95]

Sports and recreation occupied a full two-page spread of the April 14, 1944 Anniversary edition of the *Fore'n'Aft* magazine, a booklet of employee-written articles and pictures distributed with each paycheck. On page 18, the following appeared; "Tiny Thornhill, the official department of relaxation and muscle building, reports 545 softball games, 149 basketball, 36 bowling teams, football, soccer, and handball in the several Richmond shipyards in '43." On these same pages, a picture of a softball game in

[95] *Douglas Airview News*, Magazine, Oklahoma Historical Society Archives, Lee S. Robison – TL 501 D6 v.1 1943/44. The magazine was published by the Douglas Aircraft Company, Santa Monica, CA, monthly from 1939 to 1945, with several pages of detailed coverage on inter-industry and inter-factory sporting events.

progress in the swing shift break appears as well as a picture of a basketball game, titled "Swing Welders vs. Prefab," an homage to the fact that the different groups in the yards would often gather and compete with one another for primacy in athletics and in total yards of steel welded per shift, a carefully orchestrated set of competitions that kept production numbers up and helped to bond the crews together by way of sports participation. While these activities were also effective methods for staving off boredom in repetitive war production, Trefethen also told Thornhill in private memoranda that the sporting events were intended to bolster the masculinity of workers and keep them engaged in the yards. Trefethen feared white male workers would leave the yards when confronted with men and women of color in the workplace; therefore, the sporting events meant workers could reinforce their masculinity within the vital war production area, rather than leaving it for more segregated workplaces.[96]

A key part of Henry J. Kaiser's personal goal for the yards, and one that had led his ambitions in other building projects, was the idea that workers needed to be entertained and have avenues to release built up tension and stress from the workplace. For Kaiser, these avenues were to be through organized and casual pickup sports teams and through picnics like the one at Tilden. In fact, the yards contained workers who had been wrestling champions and rodeo riders, football players, and more who now held welder's torches and wire strippers. The former coach of Stanford University's football team, Claude E. "Tiny" Thornhill, chaired the Richmond Shipyards Athletic

[96] E. E. Trefethen to Claude E. Thornhill, "Interoffice Memoranda, Richmond Shipyards Athletics Association, Fore'n'Aft Department, Richmond Shipyard No's 2&3," April 3, 1943, *General Files 1943*, Box 14, Folder 14, *Henry J. Kaiser Papers*, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Association and was a prominent feature in the advertisement literature for the yards. Thornhill, ironically named "Tiny" for his giant size and powerful frame, was a former pupil of the legendary Glenn "Pop" Warner at the University of Pittsburg. Tiny had coached several collegiate and early professional teams, and his largest career accomplishment came when he won the 1936 Rose Bowl as coach of the Stanford Indians. Famous in the local area and nationally for this victory, his barking voice on the sideline, and aggressive coaching style, Tiny was a significant part of advertising literature at the yards. In fact, workers were told that they could have "competitive sports teams, with a Big-Time coach in our athletics office," referring to Tiny Thornhill.[97] Thornhill even coached a football team comprised of workers in the yards. Organized sporting competitions between defense industry workers across the nation served to keep up morale, fight boredom, and prove their physical prowess to their peers.[98]

During the war, then, patterns of larger demographic change resulted in a shift in masculine expression and development. To explore these complex and intricate linkages of religion, race, gender expression, and the shift or maintenance of prewar roles, requires investigation of the encouragement of sports and recreation in the Richmond Shipyards. Scholars have helpfully dissected the creation of parallel masculinities during World War II. In particular, Matthew Basso's *Meet Joe Copper* fundamentally

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[97] "Recreation: Important to All of Us," pg. 16, *Fore'n'Aft* magazine, Box 13, folder 5, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[98] Murry R Nelson, *American Sports: A History of Icons, Idols, and Ideas*, (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2013), 24-29; Elliott J. Gorn, Warren Goldstein, and Eric Foner, *A Brief History of American Sports*, 1st ed., (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), particularly the chapter on the interwar period and WWII, 213-235, 275; see also the Richmond and WWII collections of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland.

shifts the scholarly approach to the ideas of manliness and industrial labor at the onset of the war. The monograph is aptly named; the expression 'if you think GI Joe is tough, meet Joe Copper,' is itself an illustration of the self-confirmed toughness of copper miners. In his book, Basso contends that these workers considered themselves "soldiers of production," identical language to that shipyard workers used. Basso clearly demonstrates how hard rock miners challenged accusations of cowardice or shirking their national duty as patriots and sought to prove their own manliness by emphasizing the inherent difficulty and danger of their occupation.[99]

In particular, copper miners in Montana, like riveters in the shipyards, felt threatened by women who began to work the less-skilled aboveground positions at the mines. With national newspaper coverage questioning the manhood of anyone who did not volunteer, and the selective service system favoring married men and those with families over those without dependents, miners began to construct their sense of belonging in terms of their contribution to the war effort. In a similar fashion, shipyard workers used the dangers of their wartime occupation as a bolster to their masculinity. The Richmond Shipyards, operating at a breakneck pace, were often the site of injuries and accidental deaths. The *Fore'n'Aft* magazine published a health and wellness section with every annual special issue, with the 1943 issue proclaiming that the Kaiser hospitals and first aid field station had the most modern, well stocked, and cleanest facilities in the area. The article claimed that from the Pearl Harbor attack until October of 1943, there were 48,330 total American military casualties, while 7,080,000

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[99] Chapter 4, "Redrafting Masculinity" and Chapter 5, "The Emerging Labor Shortage", Matthew Basso, *Meet Joe Copper: Masculinity and Race on Montana's World War II Home Front,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), particularly 101-122.

casualties occurred during the same time period in the war industry sector – proportionately similar to the number of employed persons. Dr. Morris Collen, Bryan Culp, and Tom Debley further assert that the women working in the shipyards suffered the same rate of injury as did the men, while receiving fewer official protections.[100] The aforementioned manual from Yard 3 cautioned the new workers about the lost eyesight, loss of limbs, and other dramatic injuries possible as they entered the heavy industrial workforce, a confirmation for these workers that their job was worthy of respect as a masculine pursuit.[101]

Richmond shipyard workers also read that "We sincerely welcome you as a brother soldier of production … Victory must be won in our war plants before it can be won on the battle fronts."[102] In response to challenges to their masculinity, miners and shipyard workers alike created narratives of place and belonging that served two purposes. Seeing their production of copper for shell casings and the merchant marine ships that carried those shells and guns to the frontlines around the world as vital to the war effort, these workers were also "soldiers of production" and could thus defend their own masculinity against charges of unpatriotic behavior.[103] Basso further claims that protests against drafting by local government agents and draft boards was common. Workers found career professionals and bureaucrats who had never thought to volunteer themselves but who were willing to send them to their deaths unsettling.[104] In the early

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[100] Morris Collen, Brian Culp, and Tom Debley, "Rosie the Riveter's Wartime Medical Records," *The Permanente Journal*, 12 (3), 2008, 84–89.; "How We're Cared For…" p. 20, *Fore'n'Aft* magazine, Box 13, folder 5, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[101] *Kaiser Co. Inc. Richmond Shipyard Number Three* manual, 73.
[102] "Welcome to the New Workmen," *Kaiser Co. Inc. Richmond Shipyard Number Three* manual, 7.
[103] Basso, *Meet Joe Copper*, 110.; *Kaiser Co. Inc. Richmond Shipyard Number Three* manual, 28.
[104] Basso, *Meet Joe Copper*, 124-126.

years workers had left the yards voluntarily or through the draft, with Kaiser promising workers in all of his many different business ventures that their positions would be held for them on their return. For those who did not leave, athletic prowess and status as soldiers of production directly challenged assumptions of 'unpatriotic' behavior.[105]

The development of the sporting and recreation spaces in the Kaiser Yards occurred in a total war environment during 1941-1945 with a large pool of workers seeking reinforcement of their masculinity after long years of unemployment and low wages during the Great Depression. Before US entry into the war (1939-late 1941), many of the workers in shipyards in the east and in other war-related industries were located in cramped and dangerous workplaces with few recreational facilities, a fact Kaiser thought should change. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd president, popularized the idea of America as the "Great Arsenal of Democracy" in a Fireside Chat to the American public on December 29th, 1940. Manufacturers and business conglomerations such as Henry J. Kaiser and his Six Companies stood ready to implement their skill at organizing and running large projects in the pursuit of the war effort and saw the wide-open harbors and valleys of the West as prime ground for expansion.[106] Kaiser and war munitions planners realized that the Great Depression's effect on heavy industry had actually benefitted large scale war production. This was because while the depression years had caused a lag in manufacturing, they had

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[105] "Assurances to Our Own Volunteers," 23-24 in "Data Respecting Manpower, Housing, Community, and Commercial Facilities at Richmond Shipyards April 15th, 1943", Carton 126, Folder 25, Permanente Metals Corporation, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[106] Kennedy, *America in WWII,* 40-51; Arthur Herman, *Freedom's Forge: How American Business Produced Victory in World War II*, 1st ed., (New York: Random House, 2012), 120-146, 171, 206.

nonetheless left resources, including shuttered factories and a huge, mobile labor pool available that could easily be retrofitted and repurposed to work on war industries.[107]

In the mad rush for ships, bullets, tanks, and fuel required for newly technologically based warfare, the usual insistence on segregated workspaces and recreation areas was upheld despite its inherent impracticability until African American workers struck for more equal treatment as late as 1944. Despite the common perception that women were the main employees in these yards because of the fame of "Rosie the Riveter", these workplaces were still dominated by men during the years of the American war effort – as much as 70 percent of the workforce remained male throughout. While significant numbers of women who were married and of older ages did enter the workforce during the war years, a dramatic change from earlier decades, white men in closed-shop industrial work still represented the largest segment of the workforce. When considering the role of women and men who worked side by side, historians have emphasized sexual harassment in the early-war shipyards, and while the novelty of the women in the yards wore off and the open discrimination faded from view by the last two years of the war, the same tensions existed below the surface through the end of the conflict.[108]

NEW MEN IN THE YARDS: SOUTHERN PLAINS CULTURE IN RICHMOND

The massive influx of population to the Bay Area of California during the early

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[107] Henry J. Kaiser to the War Production Board, Washington D.C., *H - miscellaneous. 1944-45* Box 150, Folder 26, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; see also Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West*, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 496-499.
[108] Alice Kessler-Harris, PBS Special: *The First Measured Century, A Look at American History by the Numbers*, transcript to FMC Program Segments 1930-1960, "World War II: the Homefront", accessed November 23, 2017, http://www.pbs.org/fmc/segments/progseg8.htm.

1940s included second stage migrants from the central valley of California, originating in the Southern Plains states, as well as many more new hopefuls who disembarked from train cars every day to join in the rush of shipyard and defense industry workers. In addition to shipyards, many other draws on the Bay Area labor pool existed in the immediate pre-war era until workers could be sourced from other population centers. Some examples included large Army bases in Oakland and the Berkeley Hills and their accompanying assembly yards for wartime rations and dry goods. Naval bases such as Mare Island in the Sacramento River Delta also needed thousands of support staff on site to feed and service troops stationed in the area. Secondary businesses large enough to encompass the needs of employees at retrofit and repair centers where the new Liberty and Victory ships were repaired and returned to the Pacific front were another drain on the labor force. The Ford plant on the Richmond Coastline that built and repaired tanks on its brand-new assembly line, the home bases of auxiliary corps from numerous armed forces branches where their mustering out yards required civilian workers, and oil refining and storage facilities in Pinole and the Carquinez Straits all reduced available civilian labor.

All of these federal locations also required hundreds of civilian support workers and secondary businesses, such as shopkeepers, maintenance and repair stations, fire and police departments, and numerous professional workers in service industries. Thus, when the new shipyards came to the area as well as the massive influx of federal funding at the beginning of the American war effort, the draw on the labor pool necessitated importation of workers from across the country. Kaiser and his Permanente Corporation were unique in that they often paid the initial train tickets for, and gave

cash advances to, workers who signed up at rail stations in major hubs across the nation. At an average of about $65 dollars per person, the advance and ticket represented a remarkable investment in workers who had never set foot in the yards. Although cannery plants and oil refineries from pre-war Richmond generally maintained a stable workforce, every industry was disrupted by this influx.[109]

For all these reasons, large numbers of Southern, Southern Plains, and Midwestern families migrated to the Bay Area. The influx of large percentages of migrants from the Southern Plains, particularly Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, and Texas, presaged a shift in focus to more southwestern-style sports viewership, including rodeo and boxing, in greater profusion around the Bay Area. In addition to a general increase in sports viewership, the new population brought with it preferences and cultural tastes that differed from the conservative establishment. These new cultural predilections were different aspects of the same masculinity-reinforcing activities that had taken place before; and if the events were not designed to reinforce masculinity, they certainly brought workers together outside of the yards in ways that would manifest in labor strikes from 1944 on, a precursor to postwar labor activism in Richmond. In fact, minority workers maintained separate recreational areas and activities from the white majority, as Moore illustrated in her research on African American migration to the region. Even when the recreational tastes of minority workers conflicted with those of the majority, their insistence on maintaining these

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[109] Donna Graves, "Mapping Richmond's World War II Home Front," 43-47; "Report on Investment for Contract Men in the Yards Given Ticket Fare and Cash Advance through March 31st, 1943," Box 20 folder 32a, the first 6 sections of a partially sealed report on Union membership fees paid by the Kaiser hiring hall team, and cash advance activity in the Richmond yards, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

activities and community gatherings set the stage for later conflicts with white authorities.[110]

These new in-migrants not only increased the audiences and demand for recreation but also had emigrated from the Protestant tradition in the Southern Plains states, seen as an unadulterated continuation of the hardy European peasantry. These traditions, including harvest festivals, livestock fairs, and barn-raising dances, were foreign to most coastal residents. Nonetheless, Kaiser recognized the vital role of these traditional events in maintaining the morale of his employees.[111] One example was a 'Victory Barn Dance' performance advertised in local papers, funded by the Permanente Metals Corporation and advertised specifically for shipyard workers. *Elwin Cross and his Arizona Wranglers* were on the main stage, performing their hit songs "You Can Take Me From Dixie (But You Can't Take Dixie From Me)" and "Back in Dear Old Oklahoma," popular covers of classic western swing ballads from the 1920s, a clue to the taste and preference of the Richmond yard workers.[112]

The show was advertised on February 17, 1944 in the *Richmond Independent*, a local newspaper that often circulated in the yards and in employee frequented barbershops and businesses. Entry to the show in a packed dance hall cost a dollar. The

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[110] Alyce Mano Kramer, "The Story of the Richmond Shipyards," Typescript, Carton 330, Henry Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 57–58; J. A. McVittie, "An Avalanche Hits Richmond," 65.; Nelson, *American Sports*, 158-164; Benjamin G. Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, Illinois History of Sports, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 288-301.; Gorn, *American Sports*, 93.; Smith, *Nike Is a Goddess*, 221.; Bagwell, *Oakland: The Story of a City*, 225.; Moore, in Trotter, ed., *Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, 121-122.
[111] "Where We're From: Traditions and Colors in the Yards," p. 23, Fore'n'Aft magazine, Box 13, folder 5, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[112] Elwin Cross and his Arizona Wranglers, "You Can Take Me from Dixie (But You Can't Take Dixie Out of Me)" / "Back in Dear Old Oklahoma," *Sun Starr Records* – APS-774 / APS-775, released 1944, Shellac, 10", 78 RPM.

money was used to buy five $25 war bonds, and these were then raffled off to the dancers as a patriotic symbol. The attitude of these "soldiers of production" was clearly displayed when they scrimped, saved, recycled, and bought war bonds, despite the fact that the war itself was not always the most pressing concern for most Americans.[113] Even the most innocuous activities, such as these barn dances, were roped into service as fundraising efforts for the war. This advertisement itself as well as the band it advertised underscore the massive influx of Southern and Southern Plains Americans to the region and how the musical tastes and cultural mindset of the small port city were dramatically shifting.[114] Specifically aimed at workers in the Richmond Shipyards, who needed to show their employee ID for entry, the advertisement is an example of the shows and performances in dance halls and parks that Kaiser and his businesses encouraged to enhance worker morale, performance, and retention in the yards.

Kaiser, concerned with the loss of workers who were unfamiliar with the West Coast and who were likely to quit the job without guarantees of housing security and a sense of familiarity, encouraged these events. These white former southern plains residents, clearly delineated and stereotyped by their rural attitudes, moral values, and accents, often faced their own sort of discrimination from the fiercely nativist prewar Richmond population. Designations as agricultural 'hayseeds' were common. In fact, Katherine Archibald, a sociology student at UC Berkeley, worked in the yards to form

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[113] Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front 1941—1945*. (New York: Nation Books, 2003), 57-65.

[114] "Another Sunday Victory Barn Dance for Shipyard Employees, Music by Elwin Cross and his Arizona Wranglers, Stars of Screen and Radio," *Richmond Independent*, February 17th, 1944, Richmond History Museum Permanent Exhibit, "Shipyards: Yard Three, Recreation," courtesy of Melinda McCrary, executive director, Richmond Museum Association.

participant observation data for her later work, *Wartime Shipyard, A Study in Social Disunity* (1947). Particularly informative of the attitudes of the day, the book depicted women workers in the yards from the southern plains as uncivilized and broad-shouldered, too muscular, masculine, and ugly to be proper American women workers who fit into proscribed cultural roles.[115] In order to try and coordinate the sports viewership desires and musical tastes of such a diverse group, the Kaiser yards began plans to host a massive company picnic for the yard workers with sporting events pitting crews from within the yards against each other for bragging rights and a chance to display their masculinity.[116]

A GATHERING FOR THE AGES: LABOR DAY, 1942

The company picnic sponsored by Henry J. Kaiser in 1942 was enormous in size and impact on the workers. The context of the picnic, and why it seemed necessary, had its roots in earlier progressive ideas about the new workforce for the later industrial period, as creativity gave way to efficiency in the drive for profits. While the goal in the Kaiser yards had been to create cleaner workplaces with airflow and hazard diminishment, as explored in Chapter 1, these measures were a stop-gap at best and the safety measures were often considered an unnecessary restriction on the emergency pace of production due to the war. While these measures delayed some dangers to the white working population, they certainly did not eliminate damage to environment and

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[115] Katherine Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity*, (San Francisco: University of California Press, 1947), 51-52, 63; see also Alyce M. Kramer, "The Story of the Richmond Shipyards," 57.
[116] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 473; Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 554-558; Cornford, *Working People,* 215.; Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*; Johnson, "Urban Arsenals," 435.

body, particularly evident in people of color, less able to escape the most polluted sections of town. In response, industrial leaders like Henry J. Kaiser, believing that a healthy and hale worker was one that would produce at a faster rate, and whose work would result in better materials and ships for the war effort, authorized recreation programs. It is from this idea of total wellness that the idea for the first mutually insured worker health plan was developed, the origins of the modern Kaiser hospital and healthcare system. Priced at fifty cents per paycheck, the health plan's comprehensive coverage was great value for money – the average worker earned sixty-one dollars a week and spent an average of eight dollars and fifty cents on rent and eighteen dollars and fifty cents on food.[117]

Recreational pursuits in the yards, and the origins of the company picnic discussed, were a key part of this health plan for Kaiser and his subordinates at the corporate level. Organizing preventative care, and taking effort to reduce on-the-job injuries, common with workers unused to the heavy industry tools and hard labor of shipyard work, were important factors in the decision. Furthermore, Kaiser emphasized physical health and athleticism as a way to reduce the future cost of the health plan. Recreation in the yards was considered to be an essential part of any good working day, with a particular emphasis placed on team sports. Kaiser encouraged the workers in each yard to participate, replacing pre-assembly line factory organization with new scientific industrial and sanitarian impulses, including provisions for worker health

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[117] Title to this section taken from the *Fore'n'Aft* article on the Labor Day Picnic, Sept. 12, 1942, Box 13, folder 5, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.; "Hometown USA: The Average Richmond Shipyards Employee," Postcard reproduction, Richmond History Museum Permanent Exhibit, "Shipyards," courtesy of Melinda McCrary, executive director, Richmond Museum Association.

outside the job. In the model of a scientific assembly line, the workers were thus to be given an opportunity to participate in recreation activities sponsored by the yards themselves. In particular, the Labor Day celebration of September 7, 1942 demonstrated the commitment to employee wellness. Yard recreation planners organized a picnic attended by over ten thousand employees at the nearby Tilden regional park, a massive water storage reserve just over the Oakland hills. Photographs of the outdoor recreation at Tilden were used as advertisements for new employees, linking recreation and health as the symbol of the new Kaiser workforce. As such, advertisement posters and flyers across the country could accurately describe the Kaiser yards as located near idyllic recreation spots, a key point of promotional literature. This represented one of the best working opportunities available to inexperienced youth or those with jobs now rendered nonessential by wartime, such as many light manufacturing employees.

As the imagined masculinity of war heroes surpassed all others in popular imagination, even workers in the yards who experienced terrible hardships and privations during the war feared that others would look down upon them and see them as having shirked or neglected their perceived patriotic duty in the military. This was necessary because, according to Basso, "the government's power to define wartime masculinity was palpable, its ubiquitous propaganda depicting men who stayed home as shirkers, cowards, and traitors."[118] To combat the loss of key industrial workers needed to train the next generation of labor in the Richmond yards, employees were also encouraged to start a family and thus qualify for draft exemption. These encouragements often carried Kaiser's signature on interoffice memoranda that called

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[118] Basso, *Meet Joe Copper*, 138.

for, and later authorized, the funding of such programs.[119]

Clay P. Bedford, general manager of the shipyards, and Tim A. Bedford, Jr., assistant general manager of the Kaiser Yard No. 2, were fundamental to the creation of a specific organization to channel the energy and anger at the war schedule in productive ways. Employees, it was feared, might have let resentment at the frantic pace of yard production fester until they struck, an action that would have destroyed Kaiser's labor-friendly reputation, a concern shared privately with his executive board and publicly in the form of calls to end industrial strife until the war was over. Kaiser's own papers and memoranda to his workers, as well as the *Fore'n'Aft* employee magazine, extoll the virtues of the worker who also was given space and time for recreation. In particular, Kaiser's thoughts on recreation as a part of working values are evident in address to the annual meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York on December 4th, 1942, at the time when production in the Kaiser Richmond yards was just coming into full swing. In that speech, Kaiser extolled the need to develop workers who had the drive to maintain Christian family values and also sought to patriotically expend every ounce of their strength in improving their bodies and their workplaces.[120]

SELECTIVE SERVICE AND MASCULINITY IN WARTIME SHIPYARDS

These recreation activities were marketed as a benefit to workers, but they could

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[119] Henry J. Kaiser to C.P. Bedford, Interoffice Memoranda, *General Files 1941*, Box 10, Folder 8 and "Richmond Shipyards Recreation Planning" – Richmond Shipyards Athletic Association Memos, 1942, and Henry J. Kaiser to Claude E. Thornhill, *General Files 1942*, Box 14, Folder 14, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[120] "Address to the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers at the Waldorf/Astoria on December 4th, 1942," Box 262, folder 4, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

also be helpful for legally avoiding the draft. The recreational events were promoted as a way for single workers, who could be drafted at any time from their relatively unskilled fabrication and assembly positions, to meet women in the yards and in the local area. Workers thus realized that these jobs and their benefits also conferred some possibility of escaping the draft through war-essential status. Many of the men in the crews at the Richmond yards were too old to be drafted, or by 1943, had actually been in active combat and then discharged. For those who remained, marriage was a key avenue of escape. Kaiser's yard bosses prided themselves on the fact that a dishonorable discharge or similar disciplinary issue in the army precluded work in any shipyard position, reinforcing the privileged position of these workers as soldiers of production.[121] Until the war expanded the number called into service, many workers sought simple exemption as husbands or fathers of dependents. One flyer advertising work in the Kaiser yards had a section specifically on activities that could bring workers into contact with eligible marriage partners. With exemptions offered based on age, health, or work in essential industry, workers sought to maneuver through the local politics of their draft boards.[122]

On the ground, the process of selective service was purposely left up to local

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[121] Injuries or illness requiring home leave were the two most common reasons for honorable discharge from the military, and Kaiser was clear in his direction to hiring managers that he wanted as many veterans who fit these characteristics as possible. "Shipbuilding – Richmond." Richmond Shipyards Reports, miscellaneous interoffice memorandum, vols. 68-73, Henry J. Kaiser to Hiring Department, Richmond Yards, 1942, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. "Construction Progress Reports, Richmond Yards (Parts 1-6), 1940-43," vol. 74, "How Can We Get Them Out? Bottle Neck Strategy," Yard 3. 1942; vol. 76, "Progress Reports for Yard 2," 1943, *Scrapbooks, vols. 77-78*, Richmond Yards, 1942, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[122] "Recreation: Important to All of Us," pg. 17, *Fore'n'Aft* magazine, 1943, Box 13, folder 5, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

town governments and officials. As such, local draft boards often operated with significant biases – family, business associates, and friends rarely faced frontline service. With the knowledge that their hometown family connections meant nothing in Richmond, men of draft age often felt the need to shore up their chances of exemption. This was accomplished through gaining dependents or through certification in war-critical industry. Some 20 million men appeared before draft boards in the early years of the war. The biases and danger inherent in the process led many men, patriotic or not, to distrust the system and seek a way to delay or prevent being drafted altogether. The key segments of the Selective Service legislation classification for workers in the yards were classifications 2 and 3. Classification 2 identified those who were of good health and should be drafted other than the fact that they worked in war-critical industries – identified in the legislation as "registrants who are *necessary or essential*" to (A) civilian businesses and production management, (B) the war production program workers such as those in the Richmond shipyards, and (C) agricultural laborers, all seen as vital to war supply.[123]

These classifications are important to understanding masculinity and the challenge to that masculinity war workers faced in the Kaiser yards; roughly, the yards were divided into white-collar workers, often classified as 2-A or 2-B because of their management status, and unskilled, often transient, laborers who were deemed 'non-

[123] When researching or reading about the selective service acts one might see various combinations of letters and numbers; most simply, these were used by local draft authorities to separate the most and least likely to be drafted based on their health and other characteristics split up potential candidates by health and potential availability. The order was numeric and alphabetical, with 1-A representing what the local boards determined to be the healthiest and most available young men, 2-A less available, and so on. Basso, *Meet Joe Copper* chapters 4 and 5, pages 95-113. For more on the selective service act, see Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 364.

essential'. This second unskilled group, including most notably African American, Latino, Indigenous, and unskilled southern plains whites described above, was much larger in the Kaiser Richmond yards than in other shipbuilding facilities at the time.[124] This was largely a result of the use of welded rather than riveted plate sections on the merchant marine ships, a production-line-style operation, and the use of prefabrication and assembly rather than piecework. These factors increased the total yards of steel welded and ships produced, reducing the total time required to build astronomically.[125]

For the workers in the Kaiser yards, however, the change was not necessarily a happy one. Changing perceptions of working men, moving from the mythic American 'yeomen' to cogs in a machine of production rather than essential and individual parts of the whole, also served to emasculate workers and force them to seek outside reinforcement of their manliness.[126] Workers needed less knowledge to accomplish their work, worked in monotonous repetition, and thus could be replaced by other unskilled laborers in short order, as demonstrated in Chapter 1.[127] The fact that exemptions for these 'less-essential' workers in war-critical industries were through dependents, and

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[124] Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 1998), 251-259, 271-279, 293; Kevin Kruse and Stephen Tuck, "Introduction: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement," pgs. 3-14 in Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck, eds., *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[125] The speed and sloppiness of these new welding techniques, combined with the lack of skill inherent in the hiring of brand new workers from other industries, also reduced the lifetime of the welds and led to ships' hulls breaking in half and sinking, with all hands, in the frigid waters of the north Atlantic. Piecework refers to the process of constructing one ship from the keel up before starting another. Thompson, "New Evidence," p. 110; Tassava, "Launching a Thousand Ships," 593.

[126] For a discussion of the mythic America and the ways that it has informed and influenced historians and the progression of the conquest narrative up to and including the 1940s, see Wrobel, *America's West*, 14, 41, 22-25, and 236-239.

[127] Much in the same way that a worker on an assembly line does not earn as much as a craft artisan would for a product they had fashioned by hand, workers in the yards earned significantly less than a shipbuilder in more traditional yards. Tassava, "Launching a Thousand Ships," 594–598.

not on the skill or merit of the worker themselves, further limited their existential perception of their masculinity – encouraging, in other words, an outside reinforcement of masculine value. African American and Indigenous men in particular sought a different and distinct masculinity from that of the white American majority. Having created separate recreational activities and cultural systems, African American residents of Richmond during the early 1940's built social support networks separate from white society despite the fact that local officials used this separation as a justification for harsh mistreatment and neglect.[128]

These men, who would hardly consider themselves cowards or traitors but who had no desire to fight and die, chose to either use their status as fathers before the war or sought dependents to defer them from service. This drive for dependents led to a dramatic increase in marriages after the passing of the peacetime draft legislation and leading up to registration day in October 1940, a pattern that continued throughout the war.[129] This encouragement to start a family, possible now that the economy was recovering from its Depression-era stagnation, became a fundamental part of yard work and a key aspect of manhood and masculinity in the yards. This correlation between the cultural creation of combat soldiers as true patriotic manhood in World War II America, and the erosion of things that had previously served to justify or create masculinity during the deprivations of the Great Depression, including holding a working-class job or having a family, illustrates the difficult decisions that shipyard workers and others in war production industries faced.

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[128] Knaff, "This Girl in Slacks", 237; Dowland, "War, Sports, and the Construction of Masculinity," 362.
[129] Basso, *Meet Joe Copper*, especially chapter 4, "Redrafting Masculinity," 117-128.

Thus, unskilled workers in the yards of draft age were soon bumped to 1-A, those most likely to be drafted, if they had not already volunteered for war service. African American men, patriotic members of society who were nonetheless distrusted by the white establishment, represented a danger to the white establishment for several reasons. African Americans had a frightening potential to serve with gallantry in the armed forces and demand equal treatment upon their return from the segregated units. Pejorative dismissal of these men by workers, military officers, recruiters, and war production boards alike took the form of emasculating jokes; these insults drove African American men to demonstrate patriotism and value to the war effort, through which they could prove their worth and manliness. As such, African American men, and especially veterans returning from the various fronts during the war, catalyzed and militarized protests against racist treatment by the segregationist establishment in the Bay Area.[130]

The popular perception of the yards at the time fundamentally ignored these issues. Instead, movies, propaganda, and stage plays presented an idealized version of war industry work to the American imagination. Donald Duck and the Merrie Melodies cartoons featured as a vital part of this shift, with several key examples being *The New Spirit* (1942) and its sequel *Spirit of '43* (1943), encouraging workers to patriotically buy bonds and refrain from spending on luxury goods so that tax money could go to build war munitions. While intensely racially charged, with Scottish Scrooge McDuck promoting saving, and a stylized zoot-suited Latino supporting the Axis, the short scenes provide key insight into the attitudes around industrial work. The brief films

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[130] Taylor, *Racial Frontier*, 15, 251-259, and 271-279; Kruse and Tuck, eds., *Fog of War*, 124.

further promote work in war industry by associating taxes with support for the Arsenal of Democracy. These cartoons and other films attempted to bring respect to war work and offered a humorous way to encourage war preparedness.[131] They provided war workers a way to easily demonstrate their own patriotism without going into active combat. Thus, movies and propaganda reels had a huge effect on feelings of togetherness and the value of all Americans to the war effort despite personal beliefs and faith.[132]

When speaking directly about California during the war years, Kevin Starr helpfully categorizes the industrial centers of the coast and Los Angeles as a sort of government sponsored cartel, one of the things that the greatest generation saw as an enemy tactic. Speaking specifically about the aircraft industry central production board, but with conclusions that echo in the shipbuilding at Richmond and in most other wartime production centers, Starr observed that "an emergency wartime council suspended just about all anti-trust provisions of American law and created what was in effect a coordinated industrial policy operating through a temporary instance of capitalist-syndicalism parallel to those of Germany and Japan."[133]

Industry leaders played an intricate game. At times, they would become incensed at the federal government for attempts to control the free exercise of capitalism but subsequently worked to shore up their contract provisions and the privileged place provided through a close relationship with Washington. Despite conflicts with federal officials over the undue influence they felt the government held

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[131] Linda Harris Mehr, "The Way We Thought We Were," in *The Way We Really Were,* 33–36.
[132] *Sergeant York*; Linda Harris Mehr, "The Way We Thought We Were," 33-35.
[133] Starr, *Embattled Dreams,* 136.

over private enterprise, industrial leaders saw the war effort as more than just a way to line their own pockets, and so accepted limited federal oversight in their production facilities. Kaiser himself rejected a position at the War Production Board (WPB) because it would have created an immensely profitable conflict of interest. Kaiser's sterling reputation, built up over thirty years of business dealings, was valuable to him and he rejected the position, claiming he wished it would go to a person with more practical military procurement and production experience. It is also worth noting that the executive preferred to live on the West Coast, as well as personally control his business empire on a daily basis – both of which would have been impossible in the WPB position.[134]

At corporate events, collegiate convocation ceremonies, industrial labor meetings, and in thousands of pages of sermons written for international church publications, Kaiser spoke and wrote eloquently about the need to pull together for the war effort and to leave party politics behind for the war. In doing so, Kaiser evoked the classic American myths of togetherness and rugged individualism. These ideas were, he thought, displayed in the conquest of the American West – and closely tied to masculinity. For Kaiser, infrastructure projects that had garnered most of his fame to that point were a continuation of early 'victories' over nature and the landscape. Kaiser himself his deputies closely tied to the ideas of masculinity and manhood in the early 20th century to an outspoken combination of a Christian duty to help better the lives of

[134] Henry J. Kaiser, "War Production Board Membership Request," memo carbon copy of original text sent from War Production Board, Washington D.C. to Kaiser Permanente Metals Corporation Headquarters, Oakland, CA, Box 159, folder 25, *Henry J. Kaiser Papers*, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

the downtrodden, and the need to produce at a fantastic pace for the war effort.[135]

Development of the Kaiser yards and their recreational facilities, connected to these missionary impulses by the inclusion of donated resources for the workers, illustrates just how vital religion and faith were in this period. A special issue of the *Fore'n'Aft* magazine that Kaiser himself helped to write discussed the variety of religious views represented in the yards, calling on workers to respect the faith displayed by men and women around them even if it was quite unfamiliar, and in fact the combination of such diverse belief systems would have probably elicited riots in Richmond or Oakland otherwise, since the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups had gained notoriety for their impunity in the region. In the 1920s, as described by Chris Rhomberg, several city council members and the sheriff of Oakland had openly held leadership positions in the resurgent Ku Klux Klan. Klan membership in the East Bay was significant enough that the federal government agents in the region had commented matter-of-factly on the evident and virulent hatred for non-protestant and non-white inhabitants of the region in 1935.[136]

As the wartime rush brought together Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and Native American traditional religious worshipers in the same yards, these workers were encouraged to find compassion and open-mindedness towards others as a masculine virtue rather than a sign of weakness. As Kaiser wrote to his employees in 1943, this

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[135] Henry J. Kaiser, *Management Looks at the Post-War World*, A Newcomen Production, 1944, published text of his address to the War Congress of American Industry/National Association of Manufacturers, Box 262 folder 19, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[136] Chris Rhomberg, "White Nativism and Urban Politics: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Oakland, California," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 2 (1998) http://www.jstor.org/stable/27502269, esp. 39-41.; "Faith: Who We Are, And What We Believe," *Fore'n'Aft* magazine, Box 13, folder 5, Henry J. Kaiser papers, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

tolerance and helpful spirit would be essential to not just matching the production of the Axis powers but would help to shorten the disastrous war. This purposeful invocation of a tolerant workplace environment and the need to allow all sorts of workers directly contradicted the East Bay attitude towards religious and racial minorities in the interwar years. The necessity of group action against these actors was evident in cases such as the rise of African American church congregations in the Bay Area, the engagement with social issues that arose alongside ideas of community belonging, and the Dual Front of African American soldiers who escaped hellish battlefield conditions but found segregation and hate upon their return.[137] White supremacist views and sexism battled against new imports from the American South and Southwest. *Fore'n'Aft* magazine's editors sought to carefully allay fears of racial violence by declaring that all groups and all nations were represented and accepted in the yards.[138]

These workmen brought their own tastes with them, including country and western music; where there had been few radio stations picking up the Grand Ole Opry's broadcast from Nashville nationwide before the war, the migration of people brought with it these same tastes. Similar aspects of taste applied to sports participation and the sorts of entertainment war shipyard workers sought out; rodeo games and formalized semi-professional rodeo participation shot up in the war years, partly due to the new influx of migrants and partly due to the new wages that these secondary migrants from the central valley of California could earn in the shipyards or defense

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[137] See Johnson, "Wartime Shipyards and the Transformation of Labor," chapter 3, in *The Second Gold Rush*, 22, 171-188, and 202-207. Johnson, "Urban Arsenals," 274; "Double V Campaign," *Pittsburg Courier*, 31 January 1942.
[138] Self, *American Babylon*, 5-8.

work elsewhere. While many of the aspects of the population growth were positive, the new arrivals clashed with the undercurrents of racial tension already thriving in the Bay Area.

CODA

THE 1946 GENERAL STRIKE



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"Everything stops today. I mean everything," declared a union picket captain. Thousands of angry picketers, many more than the actual workers, roared, "Scab! Scab! Scaly Scab!" any time they saw a face appear in the windows of Khan and Hastings, the department store where the American Federation of Labor had decided to make their stand. Importantly for the strike's mixed-race organizers and participants, the multi-story department store was on the north side of the city and close to the Richmond Yards on the southern Bay end of Richmond, and thus attracted large numbers of

[139] Text Caption from exhibit: "A gender and racial mix of striking employees and their supporters from other unions form a picket line in front of Kahn's Department Store, November 1946." Marcia Eymann, Charles Wollenberg, and Fred Glass, "We Called it a Work Holiday: the 1946 Oakland General Strike," a special exhibit of the Oakland Museum of California, Strikes and Lockouts, Oakland, California, Accessed through the University of California Library, (Berkeley: University of California Library Archives, 1996), Electronically published June 2011, Local UID 1996.001.16.

former Kaiser shipyards workers. One of the pedestrian entrances to the iconic Oakland storefront of is pictured above, complete with a mixed-race picket line – African American men might have been only on the end of the picket, but these men like many others realized the power of union cooperation. The few men and women who tried to break the linked arms of the picket line were thrown back amid cheers and encouragement from the thousands who enveloped the building. Picket cars patrolled the streets of Alameda County, urging union truck drivers to "Pull it over to the curb, Mac, and leave it there." By December 4, 1946, according to *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Stanton Delaplane, "Oakland was dead on its feet."[140]

THE GENERAL STRIKE: THE ROOTS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

The striking American Federation of Labor chapters, which included many former employees of the Richmond Shipyards, numbered over one hundred thousand in the city center. At the time, the entire combined population of Oakland and Richmond was 350,000, thus making the strike both highly disruptive and effective at garnering national attention. African Americans, Latino/a, Indigenous people, and women allied with white men, all thoroughly dissatisfied with the status quo in businesses and government in the city. Where these striking women and men had come from, and their effect on the Bay Area region, remains fundamental to understanding Richmond today. By focusing on the East Bay context, and studying the denial of civil rights, this

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[140] All quotations, and the descriptions surrounding them, from Stanton Delaplane and unnamed authors, "East Bay General Strike – Mass Walkout Deadline 5 AM; No key busses or trains will run today on the Bay Bridge,"; "A Story of a Dead City and the Living In It," "Chronology of Events Leading to Tie-Up,"; "More about East Bay Tie-Up by 142 AFL Unions,"; "The Oakland General Strike and the Coal Tie-Up – Employer-Union Peace Conference in East Bay Fails," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 3rd, 1946, pages 1 and 8, and December 4th, 1946, pages 1-3, Microforms, Holland Library, Washington State University, Reel 741, AN5.S5-D35x.

investigation reveals the roots of the strike in postwar Richmond and helps explain the city's subsequent development. The collaboration of racial minorities in the strike alongside white male workers who had encouraged segregation and fought against allowing women in the yards just a few years before illustrates the paradox inherent in the shipyards. Workers decried organizations and politicians that simultaneously emphasized the protection of decolonization movements abroad and collective action to benefit minority workers but also encouraged segregation. The story of minority participation in union activities complicates the region's history.

The industrial city of Richmond that existed from 1945 on derived from a confluence of jointly significant factors. These elements included the perilous conditions on the Atlantic seascape in 1939—1942, inexpensive industrial land on the coast, a natural deep-water harbor, rail termini for the major routes across the country, and a large working-age population, as described above. Alongside no small amount of lobbying by local government agents, these natural and artificial features led the federal government to award massive industrial contracts to the industrialist Henry J. Kaiser and implicitly support his enlightened corporate vision. Resource allocations for the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond flowed in from the War Manpower Commission in concert with the U. S. Maritime Commission, the War Production Board, and others. Vicissitudes of fate slashed the productive potential of Richmond and other Kaiser business interests at the end of the war, bringing new challenges to the Kaiser company and to the city of Richmond.[141]

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[141] Henry J. Kaiser and his programs for worker retention featured heavily in the impressions outside observers gleaned from the yards and from the East Bay more broadly, where, for the most part, the liberal hiring practices of Kaiser were the norm for the duration. For a description of a few of these

Remarkably, although limited gains in real equality had been realized in the yards by 1945, and the majority of employees at the yards were white males, many expressed genuine concern for the rights of women and non-white laborers during postwar strikes. These attitudes were especially evident in the newspaper coverage of the 1946 Oakland General Strike.[142] Racist attitudes and expressions of sexism were slowly changing by the war's end, and in a sense led to the later advances of rights by the 1960s. However, in the immediate postwar period, new industrial demands and workers with limited training (only prepared for wartime work) were often incompatible. In the same way that workers became cogs on a production line and lost their individuality in the shipyards, the general mechanization of the industrial sector and agriculture in the Post-War era now meant a near-total loss of identity for many unskilled laborers who had known relative security during the war years.

Another crucial factor in the organization of postwar strike activities was continued discrimination against minorities in the local area. City council members and business organizations had fought hard to keep segregation intact. While many in the city would have preferred to exclude minorities entirely, the process of change would begin with wartime migrants, veterans, and the cooperative clubs and benevolent societies begun in the war years. Many of these African American workers were war

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programs, see Ch. 1 of this thesis, as well as Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Ch. 5, 130-158.

[142] See the articles on the Oakland General Strike from the San Francisco Chronicle, including "East Bay General Strike – Mass Walkout Deadline 5 AM.; No key busses or trains will run today on the Bay Bridge"; "A Story of a Dead City and the Living In It"; "Chronology of Events Leading to Tie-Up"; "More about East Bay Tie-Up by 142 AFL Unions"; "The Oakland General Strike and the Coal Tie-Up – Employer-Union Peace Conference in East Bay Fails", *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 3 and 4, 1946, accessed through Microfilm, Holland Library, Washington State University, Reel 741, AN5.S5 D35x.

veterans who had served in a military that would remain segregated until the mid-1950s. Finding work on return from the front lines during the war years was difficult for many, and the Kaiser yards had advertised around the country specifically for these veterans and their families. In addition, the returning veterans were often placed in the worst housing units recently vacated by white workers as they, in turn, were moved to the new federal housing units such as Atchison Village. A small segregated part of the Atchison Village complex, constructed in 1943 in response to government reports (discussed in Chapter 1), did allow single minority workers. These segregated dormitories were the site of one of the more unpleasant moments in Richmond's African American defense industry history. *The Chicago Defender*, an African American newspaper, reported on one dormitory building burning down and trapping eight African American defense workers inside. The fire department had arrived in time to save the workers but focused their efforts on keeping the blaze contained, and away from white housing units, rather than working to douse the fire in front of them. All eight workers perished, partially because the Fire Department had failed to procure ladders tall enough to reach into the dormitory buildings, dooming the workers.[143]

Richmond, like any city where industrial production spiked during wartime, experienced the pain of economic contraction in heavy industry as the war ended. The GI Bill and federal home loan projects for veterans kept unemployment and homelessness low in the postwar years, but these successes were unfortunately bolstered by the near-total loss of skilled employment for women and people of color in the

[143] "Eight Die in Coast Blaze", Page 1, Jan 22, 1944, *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/492620637?accountid=12964.

Richmond area after 1945. While many white men who held union positions during the war were able to parlay their experience into another industrial job upon closure of the Richmond Yards, minorities were not. This loss of industrial work, well paid jobs that required very specialized skills, presaged severe consequences for minority groups in the subsequent years – as they could not shift their work as easily to peacetime applications. White veterans, as well as white workers who had taken wartime defense jobs, were far more likely to be hired in industrial and service industries in the postwar period. As veterans and skilled white wartime workers became more visible in news media and popular culture, the overall reaction to the shift was a positive one, despite its negative consequences for people of color like Wilbur Wheat and Frances Perkins.[144]

Shirley Moore's study of African American migration to the Bay Area, and the direct link between the influx of workers of color from the South, covers minority participation in unions and their work in postwar years for the betterment of all engaged in strike action. On one hand, the wages offered by Kaiser's executives, particularly Clay P. Bedford, the vice president and general manager of the Richmond yards were more than competitive. Wages of between 75 cents and $1.10 an hour were an obvious improvement for minority men and women who had earned approximately 30 cents an hour as unskilled laborers and domestics in the South and East. Partly because 24,000 employees of color cycled through the yards every month, the workers found collective organization in the face of extreme racism and the contempt of white officials difficult

[144] Davis McEntire, "Postwar Status of Negro Workers in the San Francisco Area." *Monthly Labor Review* 70 (June 1950), 612.

until 1944, when the population turnover cooled.[145]

Moore claims that while the Kaiser yards used pictures and accounts of their diverse workforce in advertising, the practice of allowing unions to determine the treatment of workers of color was actually more damaging to the rights of African Americans than practices at other yards. This was because local chapters of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, especially the Local 513 operating exclusively in the Richmond shipyards, had a policy of excluding people of color from 'leaderman,' or crew boss, positions even while the Kaiser companies claimed to reject prejudicial hiring practices.[146]

One African American man in the yards who expressed his discontent with the system, Wilbur Wheat, quit his job at the yards rather than accept a promotion to lead a segregated crew and continued to agitate for minority inclusion and leadership of desegregated crews. Wheat was a key figure in the 1944 strikes by African American workers, generally orchestrated to earn proportional voting power in the actual union which negotiated worker raises and working conditions, rather than continue to accept the overbearing control of all-white union leadership. Wheat's strike forced the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers to accept the segregated auxiliary members as voting members, even though the white union workers insisted that physical separation remain in place. After helping to organize, and taking a lead role in, the 1946 Oakland General Strike, Wheat also became a significant leader in later civil rights

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[145] Shirley Moore, " in Joe William Trotter, ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender*, Blacks in the Diaspora, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 118—121, 123-4.
[146] Moore, in Trotter, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, 115-119.

movements in the Bay Area.[147]

Frances Mary Albrier, a woman who learned to weld in a segregated community hall, like many African Americans excluded from Kaiser- or Union-sponsored training schools, passed her welding exam with "flying colors." Her application to work in the Kaiser Yards, however, was rejected specifically because she was an African American woman. Albrier threatened to sue Kaiser over this clear breach of Executive Order 8802, the Fair Employment Practices Act. In response, and to avoid the negative national publicity the suit would have brought to the yards and to Kaiser's reputation, Albrier was allowed to hire on at the yards. Her union dues, however, were not sent to the white union in the Yards; instead, they were siphoned away to a segregated union auxiliary at the Moore shipyard in Oakland, thus further enforcing the racist status quo.

A current of discontent at this racist and segregationist treatment flowed through the workforce at the Kaiser yards and after their closure, compounded by the deleterious environmental conditions facing Richmond's residents. African American workers in the yards followed Wheat in striking against Kaiser and the corporate management system then in place. Men and women who had been paid well (but not as much) for the same work as whites recognized they would lack control over their lives and would lose the benefits union workers enjoyed if they remained in segregated 'auxillary' unions. Auxiliaries, the African American, Latino/a, and Indigenous nonvoting minor chapters of the main white-only unions in the yards, are poorly understood and their history is often overlooked in popular histories of the region. Despite this, their history reveals a great deal about the local circumstances and challenges the 'Good War' narrative. The

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[147] Trotter, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, 119-120.

Kaiser Yards executive staff, and particularly Clay Bedford and Tim Bedford (assistant general manager of Yards 1, 2, and Pre-Fab) used statistics of labor participation, worker diversity, and language use as marketing tactics, claiming that there were never any issues with unions in the yards. However, the actual course of events was much less positive. In 1944, African American union auxiliaries continued a series of strikes in the Kaiser yards against their lack of voting power and fought for representation in the white worker's unions rather than maintain membership, but no vote, in the process.[148]

Some positions in war industries were transferrable to peacetime industrial work in the civilian manufacturing plants, refineries, canneries, and train maintenance yards in the region. However, for a majority of new industrial work, such as highway construction and communications infrastructure, contract labor and new technologies rendered Richmond's workforce obsolete. Building houses, cars, and convenience appliances for the thousands of whites who flooded the Bay Area's suburbs, as well as work in service labor, soon became some of the only semi-skilled labor available in the area for former shipyard workers. Some African Americans and other minority groups, particularly Latino/a and indigenous groups, moved to outlying areas to work harvests and calving seasons on farms. Those with experience in another career or job from before the Depression years attempted to reenter that other industry; in short, the workforce suddenly faced a crisis. Even as wages rose in the new spending boom after the end of wartime rationing and a return to civilian production, Richmond remained unbuoyed by the rising economy. In addition to the problems unemployed men presented to society, jobless fathers of all races were seen as particularly obnoxious

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[148] Trotter, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, 118—121, 123-4.

leaches and drains on society, upsetting the natural order of breadwinning for their family. Thus, even when women did take jobs that would pay well enough to support themselves and any dependents, the family still faced immense pressure because of this disturbance to a 'natural order.'[149]

Considering a strong provider and "breadwinner" essential to the family unit, thinkers and writers in the late 1940s and early 1950s exulted the praises of the family unit and father figure. However, these provisions including calls to exempt all fathers from the draft disguised the harmfulness of this perception vis-a-vis the rights and wages of women and people of color. In fact, the perceived threat of children and adolescents without parents supervising them – the fathers drafted and the mothers working in war industry – worried J. Edgar Hoover, the obsessively anti-communist head of the FBI, so much that he suggested the absence of married men in the home would lead to a "complete breaking down of morale and morals of the boys and girls of this country."[150]

Married men and women, with the new possibilities for employment that came about after the turn of the century, now had the possibility of procuring two incomes, stabilizing their monthly expenditures, and moving out of a cyclical poverty common especially to people of color but also a large part of life for poor whites. Just as the Great Depression had particularly victimized these workers by exposed underlying economic insecurity issues in farm labor, the war galvanized production but also demonstrated the power of large corporations, as the manufacturers who gained

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[149] Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), Introduction and particularly 17-25.
[150] Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 167-169.

contracts to supply the federal government were already usually massive, well established, and with executives who generally supported the President's internationalist agenda. For this reason, even though wages and jobs increased, some families still failed to attain income security or stable savings.

Further challenges arose as legions of farm and factory workers were replaced by mechanization. Reduced hours, positions, and wages combined with specialization marked the period from the end of World War I in these sectors, and only accelerated towards midcentury. Sometime-tyrannical corporate farm owners associations used this opportunity, as well as the remarkably low prices the federal government was willing to accept for former military reservation and base land, to evict tenants and laborers in favor of mega-farms, leaving unemployed laborers to flock to the burgeoning coastal cities. Many of these unskilled laborers of color who had moved to urban areas during the Great Depression thus remained stuck in a rapidly declining urban center during the late 1930s and the early 1940s. Thus, these workers were both justifiably upset about the loss of their employment and also had experienced severe deprivation before the end of the war, allowing them solid ground to fight back against editors and politicians who claimed race-based ineptitude and laziness as a cause of their problems.

One key example of this sort of language was evident in the editorials of Joseph Knowland, especially during the war years. A hardline Republican and fervent anti-labor and anti-union writer, Knowland produced hundreds of polemic editorials in the *Oakland Tribune* after the conclusion of the war calling for the destruction of what he saw as cartel-like business and union organizations, equating minority and white labor union members alike to communists, terrorists, and criminals. Knowland's editorial

diatribes accused the people of color in the city and unions of creating, rather than attempting to negotiate, the issues of postwar constriction. Knowland mobilized the Republican-redlining establishment, vehement supporters of segregation and racial separation, through redbaiting and the collation of unionists and African Americans with Russian agitators in the waning years of the war, and especially after the end of the war, seeing the new position of Russia in the world as a danger to all humanity. A response originated from a coalition of both white and non-white laborers in 1946, when the city of Oakland was brought to a standstill by a three-day general strike. The striking laborers marched several times around Tribune Tower in Oakland, then headquarters of the newspaper, before closing streets and dancing to jukeboxes pulled out of the city's bars.[151]

Brought on by a convoluted series of factors including failed negotiations between the Khan and Hastings department store chain in Oakland and their female and African-American, Asian-American, and Latino/a clerks, the strike was a fascinating episode harkening to earlier industrial action. While the expression of utopian visions of racial equality and demands for equal guarantees of work on gender lines in the 1946 strike might seem outlandish when viewed in context of the twentieth century, this did not mean that the views of the time excluded the possibility for a creation of better working and living situations. A key prerequisite to these changes in mindset and

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[151] Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 223-230. For later white migrant farm workers, sometimes called "Okies," see James Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California*, (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1989), 12-31. For descriptions of the strike and the occurrences described above, see the articles from the San Francisco Chronicle of December 3rd and 4th cited above – particularly "A Story of a Dead City and the Living In It," and "Chronology of Events Leading to Tie-Up," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4th, 1946, pages 1 and 2.

understanding was the social view of defense industry, partly expressed in World War One but reinforced and recreated in World War II. In this perception, workforce entry by minorities and women was to be only temporary, and these new arrivals were expected to give up their positions in the postwar years to allow white male veterans back into the job market. Despite training and a desire to continue to work, women in the shipyards were not able to keep these high-paying industrial jobs. Forced to work demeaning jobs at much lower pay, women who had averaged 85-90 cents an hour in the yards and in defense industry nationwide averaged only 45-50 cents an hour by the summer of 1946.[152]

Dissatisfied and disenchanted by this treatment, people of color fought to establish their own place in unions and in the discussions with owners over wages, responsibilities, and keeping up with the frantic pace of production. Workers in the yards were less surprised by this condition as they had experienced nearly these exact circumstances for years. War workplaces across the nation were by and large a place of progress in racial and gender relations, with possibilities for advancement that far surpassed previous expectations. In addition, the workers in the yards were at all times hopeful that the exceptional victory of democracy abroad as well as the steady progress of independence movements from white colonial authorities would give rise to a rights revolution at home. This was called a "Double Victory" – that African American veterans and war workers would win rights as they had helped to win the war. As the percentage of African Americans working in defense industries by 1945 was eight

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[152] Kathie D. Williams, *The All-American Girls after the AAGPBL: How Playing Pro Ball Shaped Their Lives*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2017), 19-20.

percent, the number of war workers nearly proportionately matched the demographics of the nation, but their positions remained volatile and uncertain. Many were forced to give up these jobs as the war ended, with few able to turn this experience into reliable employment.[153]

The counterpoint to this buoyant hope and expectation for a triumphant future was the crushing defeat that accompanied the end of urban labor revolts of 1946, including other massive general strikes across the nation. The subsequent retrenchment of racial segregation and the defeat of activist movements in the late 1940s in the newly populous and affluent cities and suburbs of the Bay Area set the stage for violent conflict in later decades. The 'Good War' myth of unity and productivity, while appearing correct from historical distance, has been revealed to be a mirage over the extant social and cultural issues of the period. According to Robert Self, the postwar fate of Oakland, Richmond, and the other East Bay cities and towns had everything to do with "white flight" to the suburbs and "urban decline" in the city centers, and turned the former "postwar garden" into, in the words of African American activists and the Black Panther Party, an "urban plantation." It was these juxtapositions, in both lived experience and in a reaction to the way these neighborhoods were written about or filmed, that served to denigrate the life experience and culture of minority residents and

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[153] Quintard Taylor, "Facing the Urban Frontier: African American History in the Reshaping of the Twentieth–Century American West," *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring 2012), 22.; Roger Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910–1961: From Warfare to Welfare*, (Urbana–Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 133.; Micheal Pounds, "Details In Black: A Case Study Investigation And Analysis Of The Content Of The United States War Department Non-Fiction Motion Picture, "The Negro Soldier," (Volumes I and II)," (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1982), ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 44-48.; Sarah Kohn Barksdale, "Prelude to a Revolution: African-American World War II Veterans, Double Consciousness, and Civil Rights 1940-1955," (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2014), 1-23.

replace it with another idealized lifestyle.[154]

Self's narrative brings the story of Oakland from the late 1940s until the 1970s to vivid life for the reader, a combination of civic consciousness, racial tension and relations, and political maneuvering. This led to the adoption of arguably racist legislation in Oakland and the East Bay, alongside the emergence of some of the most vocal and violent proponents of racial supremacy, especially in the aftermath of World War II and the buildup to the violence and political upheaval of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Self follows the development of civil rights activism through postwar reorganization, transition, and development into the 1970s. Fundamental to Self's study, activists in the late 1940s Bay Area feared that there remained an extensive battle to gain traction on any civil rights advances and perceived racial issues in the Bay Area as intractable. Created or furthered by the retrenchment of white power structures in the region following World War II. Major obstacles to progress in the postwar period remained the idea that racial injustice was impossible to overcome and a lack of confidence in government actors.

African American veterans and workers, alongside sympathetic white allies, realized the process of developing united action in the face of these splintered desires and motivations would be a difficult one. A report prepared by Jean Johnson, working in the Kaiser shipyards Hiring Hall, explained the difficulties these collaborators faced. "[T]he men from the South complain more [than other hires] about the fact that the

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[154] Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1; Gregory Hooks and Leonard E. Bloomquist, "The Legacy of World War II for Regional Growth and Decline: The Cumulative Effects of Wartime Investments on U.S. Manufacturing, 1947-1972," *Social Forces* 71, no. 2 (1992): doi:10.2307/2580013, 303-308.

shipyards employ, and they must mingle with, all races, creeds, and colors."[155] Fighting to earn civil rights was to be a long and fraught struggle on the West Coast just as it was elsewhere. Former workers in the yards faced their old co-workers and city officials, who remained opposed to real integration on the community and neighborhood level. In fact, the creation of working-class unity and the positive interpretations of war industry neglect to understand that while Rosie's worked in the yards, Jim Crow was never far away.

Residents of the West Coast confirmed and encouraged racialized views of nonwhites in the Bay Area. The West Coast residents of the immediate postwar era certainly exhibited nativist and racially stereotypical views similar to those held by their fellow citizens in the south, adding to the racial animus of the area. Despite this, Richmond residents often dismissed the urgency or reality of racial violence or discrimination, claiming that these attitudes had no place in the West Coast yard town; however optimistic and truthful about the individual, these blanket statements were of little comfort to people of the Santa Fe Indian Village or the African American and Latino/a residents of Richmond in the postwar years.[156]

In many cases the workers who migrated to the yards followed different moral systems and religious practices than "natives" of Richmond. In addition, minority groups often sought different economic goals, further exacerbating the process of "othering." Simple human psychology explains the fear of the outsider and of the

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[155] Jean Johnson, "Explanation of Losses," memorandum to J. C. Egan, Kaiser Shipyards Hiring Hall, Richmond CA, Part 3 of the *Richmond Shipyards Industrial Relations Report: Contract Recruits Section*, Industrial Relations Department, 1943, Box 20, Folder 32a, *Henry J. Kaiser Papers*, BANC MSS 83/42 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[156] Self, *American Babylon,* Introduction, 4-12.

unknown. Examples of these 'intruders' on traditional Bay Area populations included the newly burgeoning populations of African American and Asian American people in Richmond after 1943. As millions of women returned from the wartime defense industry, they did so newly independent and with significant personal buying power. In fact, the wartime industry and manufacturing had employed 32 percent women by 1945, a jump of ten percent from the numbers employed in such jobs in prewar years. Some of this growth can be attributed to childcare in the Richmond Shipyards: both private childcare and company sponsored childcare centers, such as those available at the Kaiser yards, were a significant factor in employment availability.[157]

Americans at the time viewed postwar labor involvement and strikes with a mixture of suspicion and hope for industrial progress. Many whole crews of mixed-gender and race persons from the Richmond shipyards banded together in 1946 and beyond to fight what they saw as the newly entrenched Right, emboldened by the end of wartime labor guarantees and eager to return their companies to the fleetest and fittest possible position. The word choice is also apt, as racial classifications in these companies favored returning white veterans as hires, who might not have any real workplace experience other than their status as veterans, over women and men who had led industrial crews for years. Where there had been over a million jobs in shipbuilding industry in 1945, by 1950, that number had dropped to 155,000. Non-white unemployment in the East Bay stood at 29 percent in 1950, while white unemployment was 13 percent. The unemployment rates also show a division by classification of work:

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[157] For more on the preceding two paragraphs, see Starr, *Embattled Dreams*, esp. pages 12-15, and 180-189; O'Brien and Parsons, *The Home-front War,* 4-10.

whites gained employment in service industries and bought new houses in suburbs.[158]

This process would continue after the midcentury; As the war industry spooled down and the private manufacturing sector rebounded, the skilled white workers and middle management professionals once needed in the yards moved out of the city and left its social services without vital tax dollars. In addition to this, the traditional positions that had required the worker immediate access to the workspace, such as the 24-hour emergency wartime defense factory work, now could be reached in a matter of minutes by car on the newly expanded roads of the American West. The most obvious example of road construction leading directly to this sort of suburbanization was begun in 1956 with Eisenhower's Highway Act. While these roads were planned, and their monumental expense justified, as a way to modernize and speed travel around the states for military readiness, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's pet project quickly became the most significant impetus to western movement and economic growth since the federal defense industry investment. Spider web maps of suburban growth out from the industrial city increased in pace to a frantic level, able to expand to a further and further degree than had ever been possible.

African Americans and non-whites were largely unable to make the same transition despite their uptake of skills in the wartime shipyards – where all workers learned some skills through Kaiser and other shipbuilding company training, no such democratized system was available in the postwar period. In addition, nonwhite

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[158] Rubin Lester, William Swift, and Hubert Roof Northrop, *Negro Employment in the Maritime Industries: A Study of Racial Policies in the Shipbuilding, Longshore, and Offshore Maritime Industries*, Industrial Research Unit, Wharton School, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), 5-9; For the figures cited here, see Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage*, 108-109.

residents remained in public housing projects built to last only the duration of the war for the next half century. The result was that the negative environmental impacts to Richmond's population explicated in Chapter 1 continued to affect the minority populations of the East Bay for decades after the war's conclusion and after the shipyards had stopped their production.[159]

Recent scholarship on the Kaiser Yards has sought to emphasize positive gains but ignores serious issues that affected the city of Richmond after the war. One that involves interviews with workers from the yards portrays the conditions in the yards as equal and without prejudice. This argument has serious flaws, however, and these are exposed with a closer examination of the city of Richmond records and housing arrangements both before, during, and after the war. Certainly, the inclusion of female and minority industrial workers in the yards was a departure from previous ideas of a work force in the immediate prewar years; and as such, it is a commendable set of actions on the part of Kaiser and his executive board at the Permanente Metals Corporation. In reality, the inclusion of African American and other minority workers in these defense shipyards both began before the war and also continued after the fact. During World War I, with the start of American involvement in 1917 and continuing into the early 1920s, shipbuilding yards had sprung up in Richmond. This continuation and expansion of shipbuilding until the postwar years, rather than the insistence on a

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[159] For a thorough history of welding as a technological innovation and how it affected work and workers in the Richmond Shipyards, see Ch. 5: "Industrial Shock Troops," pages 221-223 and especially 238-240, a subsection titled Welding in Bay Area Shipyards - For training on welding and some of the skills involved, as well as much more in depth discussions of the technological aspects of welding training and the impracticability of welding outdoors in the often-foggy Bay Area, see pg. 255, all from Christopher James Tassava, "Launching a Thousand Ships: Entrepreneurs, War Workers, and the State in American Shipbuilding, 1940–1945," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 2003).

sudden upwelling of industry where none of the kind had existed before, presents Richmond as a remarkable, and unique, situation worth further study.[160]

Furthermore, writing about or debating such virulent issues clashes with the modern image of California as the progressive state of the future. The intertwined issues of education and policing youth of color and poor white children speak volumes to the current state of the city as well as provide insight into studies that tackle such controversial issues as the propagation, and in fact extension, of segregation into the twenty-first century. In fact, the insidious nature of modern day segregation is the very fact that it is hard to trace. While the words "underprivileged neighborhood" have replaced "ghetto" or "inner city" in the parlance of politicians and historians alike, narratives that perpetuate these stereotypical representations of people of color reinforce damaging narratives of intractability. If these issues are unsolvable, the reasoning goes, they are a non-issue. This assumption further emboldens supremacist and divisive groups and permits moderate leaders additional reasons to balk when considering changes to these circumstances.[161]

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[160] Mark Gaines, "Rosie the Riveter: Narratives from the Wartime Workforce in the Richmond Shipyards," (Ph. D. Dissertation: California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant University International, Fresno, 2017), https://search.proquest.com/docview/1929257794?accountid=12964, particularly pages 50-54. For an alternate view of working class issues in Richmond, CA and beyond, see Ch. 1 of this document; Albert S. Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954*, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 1993), 46-47; Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage*, 53. For a discussion of the skills and labor in the yards themselves that had been missing from the cultural, gender, and race histories of the yards, see Christopher James Tassava: "Launching a Thousand Ships" in dissertation form, particularly pages 332-339.

[161] As an example of the casual disregard of the public for people of color in the newly expanding Bay Area of California from a contemporary author, as well as the perceived threat of Japanese attack on the West Coast, see Phillip S. Rush, *The Californias 1846-1957*, 1st ed., (San Diego: Neyenesch Printers, 1957), 133-145. For a local author's perspective on postwar development in the East Bay, see Elizabeth Bagwell, *Oakland: The Story of a City*, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), 223-257. For an excellent history of the voting ballot measures in California from 1900-1990 that dramatically impacted minorities through a loss of rights, privileges, and the impact of the June 6th, 1978, tax revolt in California on minority populations, see Daniel HoSang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot initiatives and the Making of*

The example of racial redlining outlined in the first chapter focuses primarily upon African American residents of the city of Richmond in the 1940's, but these same urges towards removal and retrenchment to "white-only" neighborhood practices were more broadly applied. Encouraged by military planners and with "traditional" roots that harkened to a racism common in the West Coast's rapidly expanding port cities, such as San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Portland, racial exclusion in the war years was hardly new or more virulent than previous nativist movements. Aimed more at perceived Asian and Latino/a threats than at African Americans, who represented a relatively minor population before the 1930s, this racism and exclusion had been a permanent fixture of the Californian culture for decades by the time of World War II economic expansion. Zoot suit riots in Los Angeles during the war years, encouraged and even participated in directly by military and police authorities, harassed Latino/a populations perceived to threaten white workers' stranglehold on higher-paying industrial labor positions, slipping through wartime hiring practices.[162]

While some bemoaned the 'idealistic' standards of Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, specifically prohibiting federal contractors from discrimination in hiring, Kaiser's corporation met or exceeded all guidelines on racial inclusion in war industry for the duration of the conflict. From before the beginning of the war, Kaiser and his lieutenants established forward-thinking and open ideas on leadership, attempted to

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Postwar California, (Berkeley: UC Press, 2010). The most relevant section for this thesis is pages 26-73, chapters one and two, discussing the rise of a genteel apartheid in California, racial liberalism, and a desire for racial equality that never materialized after the honeymoon period following the Second World War.

[162] Shirley A. W. Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963*, The George Gund Foundation Imprint in African American Studies, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 127.

balance the skill and experience of whites and nonwhites equally, and promoted candidates on merit. Even with this progressive thinking, however, employees in the yards often expressed views hostile to their fellow industrial workers as part of their patriotic assumption of the role of "soldiers of production," as explicated in the second chapter. This desire to keep the American people safe from attack by the enemy took on different forms, perversely emerging as racial contempt and degradation of patriotic citizens.[163]

Firmly rooted in the past history of the City of Richmond, the causes of these interrelated and complex failures to prevent segregation also resulted in union strikes from 1944 on. As such, the underlying cause of racism and discrimination in a place where such things would be considered a nuisance or happenstance by a contemporary audience remains difficult. It would be easy to overlook the profound impact and lasting scars left by just such practices if one only took into account the words of even liberal white workers. In addition, modern residents tend to overlook historical causation when discussing the issues facing a modern post-industrial city with a high level of toxicity. During the war, corporate leaders and bureaucrats at every level of government attempted to classify areas by their suitability for production, their safety from enemy attack, and their proximity to extant federal institutions and population centers throughout the largely rural American West. As expounded by scholars such as Nash, Lotchin, Richard Etulain, and others, these processes of development and change in the West had different possible causes, and no one single event or statute can be pinpointed

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[163] See Chapter 2 for a more detailed examination of the "Veterans of Industry." For a Pulitzer-winning and influential oral history that advanced the Good War thesis, see Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two*, 1st ed., (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

as the root cause. Whatever the real reason for this extreme development, it had immense consequences for later industrial development of the West and for American economic and military success in the postwar era.

The collation of contradictory impulses of racism and collective action might seem fraught, but the paradox creates an opportunity to effectively discuss the fundamental impacts and long-lasting effects of responses to minority workers in the period. It is also crucial to include multiple minorities in any analysis of the region, because few towns in the West contained no African American, Latino, Asian, and other minority groups after 1850. The evolution and development of Western assets, businesses, and capital ventures during the 1940s and early 1950s therefore served to accelerate and catalyze this process of demographic diversification in the West, with significant consequences on later civil rights developments.

The new impact of the Federal government had begun in the Western states in the form of relief programs and infrastructure projects during the Great Depression. In Richmond and in many towns and cities across the West the most obvious sign of federal influence in the decade of the 1940s was in the form of infrastructure and transportation upgrades, defense industry production, and the removal of rights. These federal investments included many different social and cultural programs along with the massive investment involved in building roads and improvements, and also followed newly militarized federal policing agencies that sought to regiment and limit working class life. Debates over what sorts of things belonged in the American ideal led to laws that controlled or barred working class people from keeping traditional cultural touchstones and practices. By banning drug and alcohol cultures common in southern

Europe, Africa, and Asia in an attempt to enforce their interpretations of white supremacy over these 'degenerate' and 'lazy' cultural groups, the federal government and local government functionaries enforced racial categorizations of what was or was not illegal in a multitude of ways.[164]

These persons, alongside others who entered into the United States from military territories or former German, French, and other European colonial possessions after 1945, represented a significant labor influx in the postwar era. These groups were most prevalent in the cosmopolitan West Coast urban areas of San Diego, Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Portland, and Seattle. As a result, as illustrated by Quintard Taylor, the purportedly all African American (and thereby monolithic) population of the East Bay was actually much more diverse than previously thought, further emphasizing the need for new analytical frameworks. These Americans claimed thousands of individual minority group affiliations, rather than any one cultural or ethnic bloc that could be mobilized, as was the case with African Americans fighting blanket oppression in the American South at the time. It was only with the relative standardization of the African American experience in the Second World War, when African American southerners and urban African American populations from the East Coast met with extant small

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[164] For an analysis of American and European views of colonial subjects and their "incapacity" for improvement, an "inability" to learn crucial skills, perceived moral bankruptcy, etc., that reinforced the "need" for white colonial rule or intervention, and also how this change affected colonial people in the metropole from Africa between 1890 to 1980, see Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, and History, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), particularly 109-138. For a helpful analysis of drug culture and prohibition as a way to disenfranchise minorities in the US, see Amund Tallaksen, "Jim Crow: Drugs, Race, and Incarceration in New Orleans, 1880-1980," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 2015), Chapters 1-2, esp. 5-6; and Jeffery Roth, *Narcotics, National Security, and Social Control Policy in the United States*, (master's thesis, Stephen F. Austin State University, 1996), ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 61-74.

populations on the West, that the civil rights movement began to take the shape familiar to subsequent decades.

Larger issues of the postwar development and perceived failure of industry to keep pace with urban decay were exhibited in postwar Richmond. Quick progress was perceived as too extreme or revolutionary, thus conditioning sympathetic whites and some African Americans to accept continued segregation and civil division in return for defense industry jobs and very basic progress in the distribution of social services. As a result of these combined influences in the Bay Area, minority relations and the growth of minority businesses diverged sharply from its previous track during the war years. As such, scholarship that fails to recognize the pivotal role of cultural and ethnic tensions in the Bay Area when discussing its recent history fails to provide sufficient context for problems that affect the economic and cultural landscape of the East Bay. Part of this process can be explained by the shift from Japanese and German to Chinese and other Asian immigrants as a 'desirable minority,' where American stereotypes of strong family values and work ethic encouraged immigration of these groups. These urges nevertheless simultaneously sought to exclude African Americans and other minority groups on the West Coast, a pattern of discrimination that lasted far longer than the war itself.

CONCLUSION

The city of Richmond today, in both physical and metaphysical location, occupies the shadow of its wartime self. The small industrial city that would become enormously famous for production and inclusion in the propaganda and booster material of the American homefront, and house complex juxtapositions of inclusion and exclusion, was incorporated in 1905. Bordering the San Francisco Bay north of Oakland, and San Pablo Bay to the East, the city remains at a literal crossroads of commerce and industry in the region. The modern city limits encompass approximately 33 square miles of land and 22 square miles of the Bay itself, including large swathes of land that hosted heavy industry production during World War II. As of the 2010 census, the population of the city was 103,701, and the population has since grown by a few thousand; this makes it the second largest city in Contra Costa County.

Only a few thousand fewer than wartime population numbers, the city today operates with far greater technological and organizational control than had been the case during the war years. During that period, social service estimates calculated for a prewar population proved insufficient to house, police, and adequately manage the new residents. The inclusion of minority workers in the yards, and the inclusion of women of all races in the newly expanded population has been celebrated in propaganda both at the time and through the recent past. However, this diversity created additional points of contention in local governance, union leadership and involvement, in the allocation of federally funded resources, and the yards themselves. Although designed to benefit the entire population, in practice many liberal reform ideals and attempts to improve worker morale and performance benefitted only some residents.

As in many areas around the United States and overseas, the end of the war brought a massive sell-off of military equipment at prices far below their cost during the war, only pennies on the dollar for the best materials and factories built in the war. Factories, mines, and the federally built harbors and railroads that had produced the material of American war power and transported it to the front now passed to private hands, further enriching their developers. World War II defense industrialists such as Kaiser built heavily upon, and expanded, existing systems using federal loan monies and infrastructure contracts that, while they helped to quickly supply the allies, also significantly benefited their own profit margins. As a result, the city abruptly lost a huge percentage of its productive industry and wage labor at the end of the war, devastating the secondary and tertiary businesses (barbershops, bars, markets, etc.) that had relied on this population.[165]

Development in the city since the 1990s has been positive and diverse, with a technological and light industrial focus. Significant state and federal funding has encouraged the development of Point Richmond, the home of the Kaiser Richmond Shipyards from 1940-1945, from polluted industrial land into housing districts, shopping, and technology business parks. These new developments, taking full advantage of Richmond's close proximity to the financial districts and businesses of San Francisco, have added significant new revenue to the region. The geographic location of Richmond at the edge of large rail lines, modern freeway termini, and a deep-water port has led to a resurgence in its value; in total tonnage, Richmond is the third busiest port in the United States. Modern residents benefit from this trade,

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[165] Wrobel, *America's West*, 203.

although any industry will have negative environmental impacts, and the most visible sign of a rebounding market in the region are massive receiving areas for imported cars and machinery located on the former grounds of the Kaiser Shipyards.

The few signs that the shipyards existed at all that remain today are the oddly shaped quays and massive hollow dry-dock compartments bordering the Point visible from the air, as well as a few period buildings in disrepair abutting the Bay, and were used in military production and shipping concentration in subsequent conflicts, including Korea and Vietnam, and were retired after the withdrawal of American troops. Former Navy veterans, including naval mechanics and some relatives of those who worked in the yards and in the region's shipyards in later years help to restore and exhibit the *USS Red Oak Victory*. A Navy ammunition transporter and later Merchant Marine hauler, preserved after being mothballed, the *Red Oak* is the last seaworthy vessel of the Victory Class transport ships produced at the Richmond Shipyards. The restored floating museum, berthed on the waterfront at the former site of Yard 2, remains a popular destination of field trips and casual tourists of the region's history alike.

This rebound from the removal of industrial work from the town at the midcentury, as well as economic contractions that gripped the city in the 1970s and 1980s, has continued to improve the economic situation of the region in the last 20 years. This economic recovery pairs with an active city government and residents that care deeply not only about the current city but also about the reputation of Richmond regionally and nationally. Unfortunately, in the wartime era and immediately following, urban sprawl and white flight led to ghettoization familiar to other postindustrial cities.

The motto of Richmond is a fine example of this desire to improve the image of Richmond, and what the city government ascribes to be: "The City of Pride and Purpose." Richmond residents, on the whole, are fiercely proud of their city as well as efforts in manufacturing during the Second World War and beyond. Their pride in the city and its production remains justified – this town on the periphery of several much larger, prosperous, and more populous cities was responsible for a huge percentage of the Allied merchant marine production in the war years.

Kaiser's yards also produced specialized landing craft for amphibious tank invasions, troop transport ships, and other specialized craft including oilers and repair ships needed for the far-flung military objectives of the United States and her allies during WWII. While the Richmond yards were under construction before American involvement, supplying Merchant Marine vessels to the British, production exploded through the summer of 1942. This period also witnessed the largest influx of labor to the city, as the defense industry businesses in the region increased production and the existing population reached near-total employment. Kaiser, who recognized the need for workers beyond the available labor pool in the Bay Area, sent recruiters into the California Valley, states in the Middle West, and the South. These recruiters offered advances that paid the train ticket West as well as money to help workers pay union dues on arrival – necessary to hire on in the yards. The most common stations of departure for the westward-bound recruits were Minneapolis; Memphis and Chattanooga, Tennessee; Phoenix; St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, and Sikeston, Missouri; Omaha; Little Rock and Fort Smith, Arkansas; Chicago; and Los Angeles.

Despite liberal hiring policies that accepted men and women of color,

democratic ideals of the American system that were touted as the reason to fight and produce ships rang hollow when the segregation and repression of African Americans, the persistent denial of rights to Indigenous people, and the sexism women faced in the shipyards and in postwar Richmond are weighed equally with wartime production successes. Women, urged or forced to return to the home in many cases following the advances of the war years, banded together with African American and indigenous people to strike for their rights and for higher wages after 1945. Although their efforts resulted in few immediate changes in the volatile business environment of the postwar Bay Area, the stage had been set for later monumental civil rights advances.

Particularly relevant to the years following the end of World War II were the encouragement and distribution of community resources, as well as the increasingly difficult task of encouraging civic pride in an area with low development metrics, rampant poverty, and chronic unemployment. Subdued and sober from the war losses and continuing discrimination minority workers and residents remained hopeful and exuberant for the changes seen both domestically and abroad in favor of minority rights and a general quality of life. The population of this industrial center had to adapt and change in response to the new circumstances and demographic shifts that occurred after the war, including a continued population influx.

Part of this influx reflects the perception of California in the war years; as a tolerant and liberal place where the greatest generation selflessly gave for the war. While the myth of the 'Good War' has been thoroughly dissected since the 1980s, its deep roots in popular culture and its persistence in everyday speech and history classes at every level are reminders of its lasting power. This thesis emphasizes the

countercurrents to this myth while demonstrating its power over collective memory of the time. Despite awe-inspiring production numbers during the war years, per capita incomes in areas surrounding the former Kaiser Richmond Shipyards today remain low and the poisons that leaked into the soil and water of the region continue to harm residents. In addition, the formerly prosperous downtown area has experienced urban blight, with few stores offering fresh food in the area, limited funds for schooling and policing, and other problems associated with the modern city.

The origins of these problems lie in the wartime atmosphere of the 1940s, when production brought not only new technological innovations but also new working populations to the region. African Americans, Indigenous people from the southwest, and other groups were generally optimistic about the treatment they expected when they arrived in the Bay Area. Despite wartime assurances that the population could move past their nativist sentiment, and the modern view of the coast as a progressive region, the response to these new arrivals was not generally a positive one. Women were also newly able to enter the shipyards, as childcare systems in the yards and through federal government programs freed mothers during the day. In fact, the school system often worked in tandem with childcare programs for workers in the night or graveyard shifts. Due to the small prewar population and the few available school buildings, schools operated all day, in an attempt to corral and prevent delinquent behavior among the newly expanded young population brought to and born in the region in the early war years. As the gender balance and average age of Richmond significantly shifted in the course of this migration government advisors and industrial executives were forced to rethink their approach to workers and their families.

Workers in the yards thought of themselves as "soldiers of production"; white male workers who remained in the yards occupied the majority of industrial positions and couched narratives of their successes in terms of their own martial prowess, fatherhood, and masculinity. These 'soldiers of production' utilized sports participation, the events sponsored by the Kaiser company, and cultural touchstones of their former regional identity to bolster their masculinity even as they avoided being drafted into front line combat. Meanwhile, the national narrative extended by business leaders and workers alike emphasized the cooperative and collaborative nature of work in defense industries. Corporate publications of the Kaiser company emphasized commonalties between these workers. A work force comprised of minority groups and women entering the workplace in numbers larger than any previous time in American history and from varied cultural and economic backgrounds, constructed merchant marine vessels. Women, who represented a largely untapped labor resource, were hired and utilized effectively in the shipyards, increasing production where there would otherwise have been severe labor shortages. Many different wartime industries boomed in the West or blossomed from extant industrial centers, as was the case in Richmond. While many scholars have debated the forces driving industrial growth in the West, this work links this scholarship with ideas of patriotism and racial tensions to the legacy of the yards in new ways.

This legacy of industry and tension between population groups in Richmond, complex from its origins, combined remarkable production numbers of merchant shipping and naval vessels with many negative impacts. Through the course of the war, despite the passage of Executive Order 8802, racial segregation in both the workplace

and in federal housing project allocation limited African Americans, indigenous peoples, and other minority groups to ramshackle housing. Segregated to the oldest and least well-funded areas of the city by unofficial restrictive covenants, minority populations were also subject to urban decay. The effects of industrial solvents, welding gasses, and other such harmful industrial processes were made exponentially more damaging by these same racially motivated local ordinances. Minority groups in the area were forced into housing covered in toxic chemical residue that harmed their bodies and limited future opportunities for employment. Related social ills such as higher crime rates and a general reduction in health resulted from these factors, as well as limited opportunities for economic advancement. While these consequences could not have been fully predicted using the scientific data available, this purposeful denial of rights and systematic restricting of a racialized geography certainly contributed to these issues. Despite this bleak picture of Richmond in the mid-twentieth century, indirect and direct federal investment from victory loans and federal production contracts did have some positive impacts on the region.

As described above, industrialists who received these federal contracts and loans, such as Henry J. Kaiser, were perceived at the time as genuinely benevolent actors. Even if this perception was false, and though like any businessman Kaiser operated with his profit margin in mind, one cannot doubt his demonstrated personal commitment to improving the lives of his workers. Kaiser attempted to bolster cooperation, sought to reduce instances of sexism and racism in the yards, and promoted racial equality in wartime workplaces. Kaiser assumed that this cooperation derived from the moral fortitude of Christian Americans in the yards, as well as their

ability to collaborate with other religious groups. These religious connections would prove useful for the development of civil rights protests, as minority veterans of combat and industrial workers from the home front alike pushed for rights and better treatment on moral grounds. Pairing with white Christian activist groups, African American and indigenous activists created religious coalitions that assisted in the later struggle for civil rights.

In Kaiser's mind, the company had a need to both protect and extend opportunity to minority groups – and, in fact, Kaiser's Permanente Metals Co. was ahead of federal regulations in its hiring practices. The impact of Kaiser's programs and hiring practices at his factories, mines, and production yards nationwide was limited in terms of real national progress towards racial equality and later civil rights legislation, as his businesses represented only a section of defense production. Nonetheless, these hiring practices opened opportunities to many women and minority laborers who would never have held such industry jobs in the prewar years, or indeed for years following the end of World War II. In addition to this, the yards served as an example of cooperation and healthy market growth in industry that would be used by corporate leaders in negotiations with union members. During the war years the exemplary production of the yards resulted partly from an agreement between unions and the management of the Kaiser yards, who largely avoided even the threat of discord or strikes for the duration.

Impacts of this beneficial work towards the inclusion of women, African Americans, and many other minority groups in industrial labor cannot be overstated. Nonetheless, Kaiser and his company followed a narrative of conquest in the West, where industrial production developed and "improved" a formerly "pristine" landscape

through extractive labor and on the backs of minorities. This resulted in a reduction of rights and exposure to deadly environmental conditions. Negative consequences for African Americans were especially manifest in the construction and rental of federal housing projects in the City of Richmond. However, in contemporary print materials for public consumption, on the silver screen, and in museum exhibits after the fact, Richmond boosters presented the city to both contemporaries and future residents as a glowing example of the Greatest Generation. These memories include a very positive emphasis on the impact of women in the wartime workforce and tend to elide the struggle that minorities and women faced in the defense industry. There can be no doubt that progress for women and minority populations is an important part of Richmond's wartime legacy; nonetheless, it is equally important to acknowledge Richmond's failures in this regard and to recognize the limitations of the larger Good War narrative.

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