**7.2 Overview Essay**

**To what extent did Americans make the sacrifices necessary to mount a total war effort? To what extent did all Americans contribute to this war effort?**

The fighting of World War II required the total **mobilization** of the American economy, the United States government, and American society on the home front. At the urging of the Roosevelt administration,

1. Private industries converted to war production even before the Japanese attacked US bases in Pearl Harbor.
2. These industries supplied the Allies through **Lend Lease**.
3. The national government managed the economy by controlling the allocation of scarce resources to businesses, and controlling wages and prices.
4. In order to finance the war, war bond drives marshaled all of the techniques of modem advertising to persuade citizens to lend money to the American government by purchasing war bonds.
5. Although citizens were urged to plant **victory gardens** and conserve resources as during World War I, persuasion was not enough. During World War II, **rationing** of scarce resources was made mandatory through the allocation of **ration coupon booklets**. Although there was a black market, all consumers were required to make sacrifices.
6. Because young male workers were needed on the battlefield, women and minorities were urged to work in wartime industries. Women often took traditionally male jobs and **"Rosie the Riveter''** became an icon of the period. Women were allowed to serve in some support positions in the military.
7. A leader of an African American labor union, **A. Philip Randolph**, threatened to organize a march on Washington demanding equal access to war-time jobs. In response, President Roosevelt issued an executive order establishing a commission to ensure that war jobs were open to African American workers.
8. Mexican workers were also welcomed into the United States to take the place of American farm workers who had enlisted or been drafted.

Despite the unifying experience of the war effort and wartime propaganda, racial and ethnic tensions impacted American society and threatened individual liberties. African American soldiers served in **segregated units** and faced discrimination as they trained on military bases in the South. Many young northern African Americans experienced the humiliation of **Jim Crow laws** for the first time. These experiences would influence the civil rights movement of the postwar period. Young Mexican Americans were attacked in Los Angeles because their clothing was considered un-American.

After Pearl Harbor, the western states, fearing a surprise attack and expressing their ethnic prejudices, urged President Roosevelt to take action against Japanese residents and Japanese American citizens. Without any evidence of wrong doing, Japanese residents and Americans of Japanese descent were ordered to sell their property and belongings and to report for deportation to camps in inland deserts. The Supreme Court upheld the establishment of these internment camps by the United States government

Assignment: Make a chart listing the five most important things civilians did to support the war effort. Use your own opinion to decide which are the most important. Be able to justify why you think these were the most important.

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| Rank | Civilian mobilization response | Justification for your ranking |
| One | **Private industries converted to war production prior to attack on Pearl Harbor** | **Industry had to produce the war materials** |
| Two | **Government management of the economy** | **Someone had to make decisions on what to produce and why** |
| Three | **Women and African Americans get jobs in defense industries** | **People previously discriminated against get job opportunities** |
| Four | **Mexican immigrants brought into the country to help take the place of farm workers in the military** | **Proof that the country has relied on immigration to continue our development** |
| Five | **Rationing and couponing** | **Gets the average citizen involved in a shared sacrifice for the war** |

Next, list three examples of racial or ethnic discrimination practiced during WWII. Why might the experiences suffered by racial minorities influence the post war Civil Rights Era?

1. **African Americans forced to serve in segregated military units**
2. **Japanese Americans forced into internment camps**
3. **Mexican Americans attacked for wearing clothing considered “un-American”**