



The postwar era became known as the Jazz Age—perhaps because the musical form embodied the innovations, complexities, and contradictions of a world that seemed so suddenly modern.

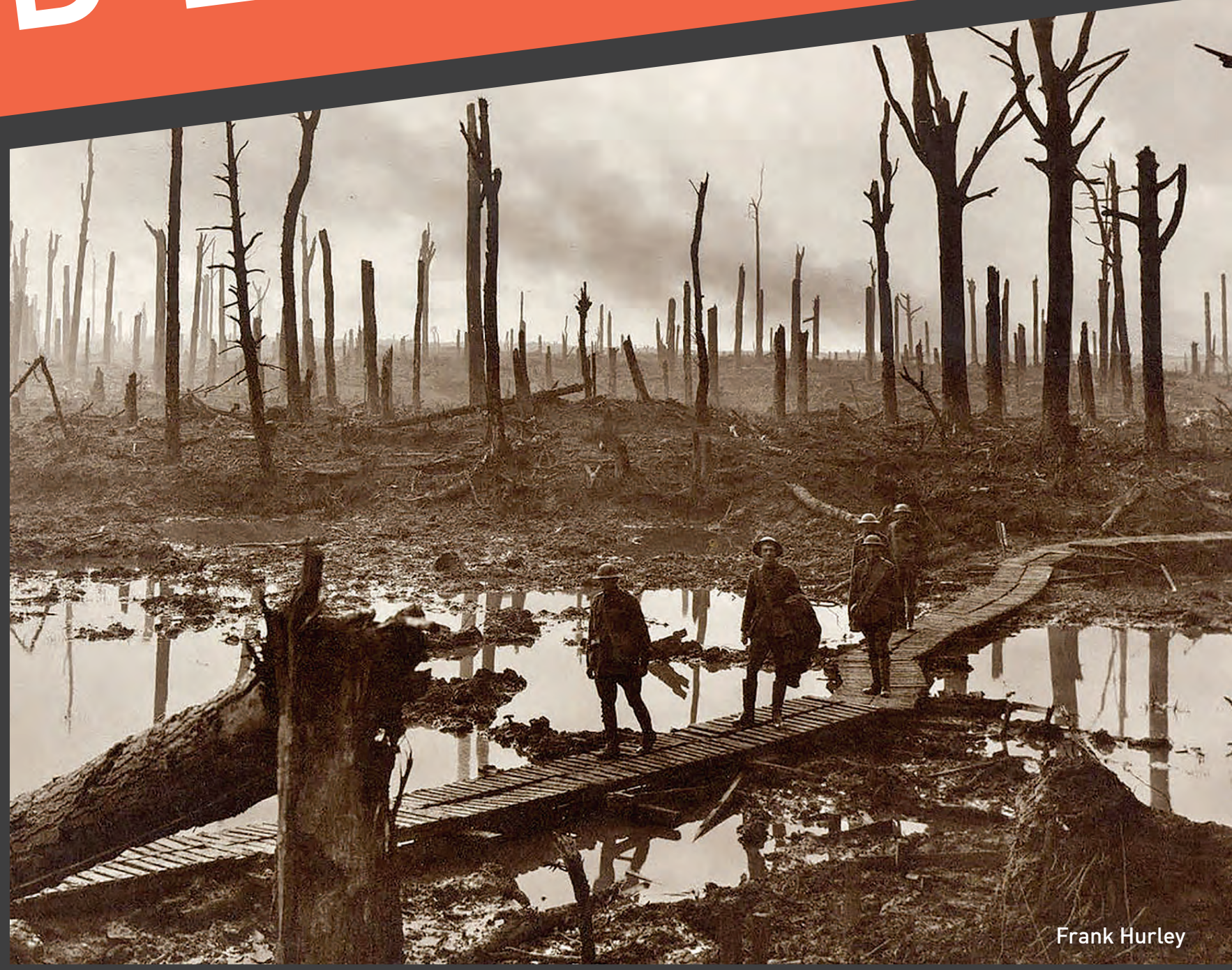
Le Tumulte Noir/Jazz Band by Paul Colin. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

World War I arose from widespread social, political, cultural, and economic upheavals that were reshaping the world. How did the Great War accelerate those changes and transform private and public life in the United States?

“This is the end and the beginning of an age.”
—H.G. Wells, 1916

WORLD WAR I: LESSONS AND LEGACIES

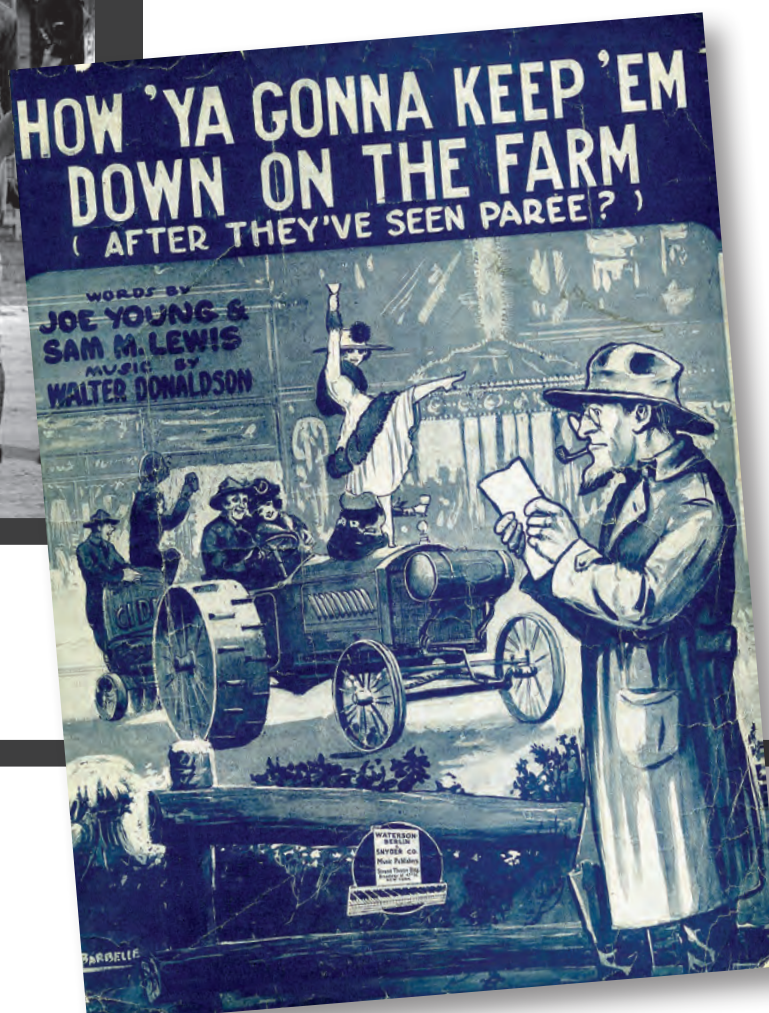
In 1914, war erupted in Europe. Rival nations around the globe took sides: The Central Powers—Germany, Austria-Hungary, and others—united against the Allies that included Britain, France, Canada, Australia, France, Italy, Japan, and Russia. After three years of ferocious fighting, both sides were dug in and deadlocked. The United States entered the war on April 6, 1917, broke the impasse, and helped bring the war to an end on November 11, 1918.



Frank Hurley



Brown Brothers, Sterling, Pa.



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More than 116,000 Americans died in service. But unlike other nations caught up in the Great War, the United States did not suffer the overwhelming loss of life that left an estimated 10 million soldiers and 6 million civilians dead. Nor did the United States experience the utter destruction of its built and natural environments.

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WORLD WAR I:
LESSONS AND LEGACIES

World War I: Lessons and Legacies is organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and the National Museum of American History, in cooperation with the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission. It is funded in part by the Smithsonian Women's Committee.

World War I changed life in the United States in ways that continue to reverberate today.

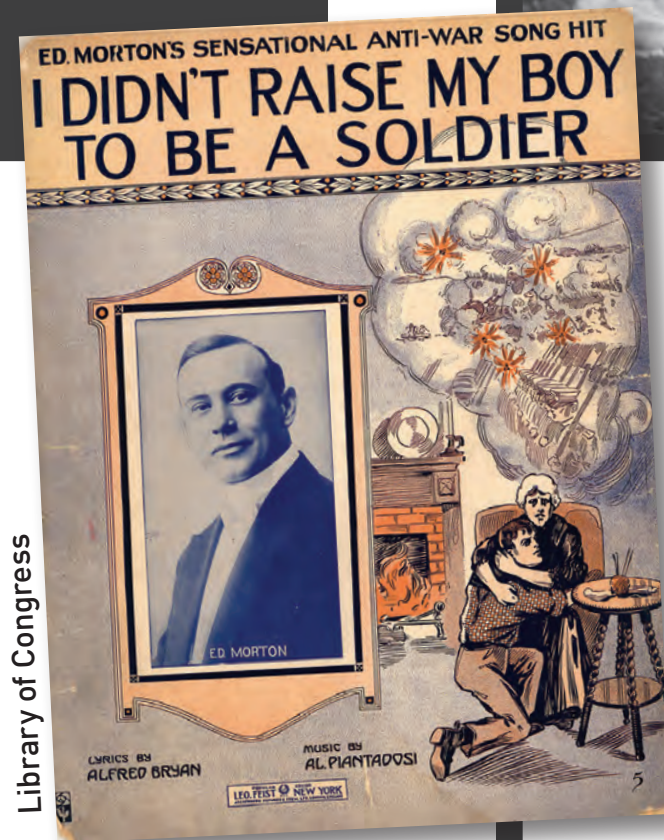




Film comedian Fatty Arbuckle pastes a government poster in Times Square, New York, in 1917.



Minnesota Historical Society



When the United States entered World War I in 1917, not many Americans were interested in joining the fight. The government called upon the fast-growing advertising industry to turn public opposition into enthusiastic support.

SELLING THE WAR

“The Committee on Public Information... was a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world’s greatest adventure in advertising.”
—George Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 1920

Posters were plastered everywhere. They provoked fear, outrage, sympathy, and patriotism—even guilt—in order to spur Americans to enlist in the armed forces, buy war bonds, donate to refugee relief efforts, conserve resources, and volunteer for private social and religious organizations supporting troops at home and abroad. The success of the wartime media blitz confirmed the power of the advertising industry.

Courtesy of David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University



More than 300 advertising artists and copywriters volunteered their services. They created a campaign based on the same psychological strategies they used for selling consumer goods—one that played on people’s emotions, then told them what to do.



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**I WANT YOU
FOR U.S. ARMY**
NEAREST RECRUITING STATION

Two million Americans joined the armed forces and 2.7 million more were drafted. Nearly half of them saw combat in France. All who went abroad understood the inescapable tragedy of total war, a war that spared no one.



He waits for death—
He knows—
He watches it approach—
He hears it coming—
He can feel it underneath his feet—
Death bearing down on him from every side,
Violent death, death that tears the sky to
shrieking pieces...

—Mary Borden, excerpt from the poem "Unidentified," 1917

OVER THERE

Over 350,000 African Americans served in segregated units, where many were assigned menial tasks. Others were deployed with the French Army and fought with distinction, earning France's highest military honor, the Croix de Guerre.



National Air and Space Museum



National Archives and Records Administration



Many who went abroad experienced first hand the muck-filled and rat-infested trenches that ran nearly 500 miles across northern France. They witnessed the horrors of mechanized warfare: machine guns, flamethrowers, poison gas, tanks, warplanes, and an endless rain of exploding shells from rear-line artillery. And they learned that warfare had become "cruel, deliberate, scientific destruction," as President Warren Harding described it in 1921.

Casts of wounded soldiers with sculptures used to make prosthetic masks, about 1918



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Tens of thousands of women served for the first time in the armed forces—in supporting roles or as nurses in the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marines.



Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution



The Migration Series, 1940-41, Panel 40: The migrants arrived in great numbers, by Jacob Lawrence.

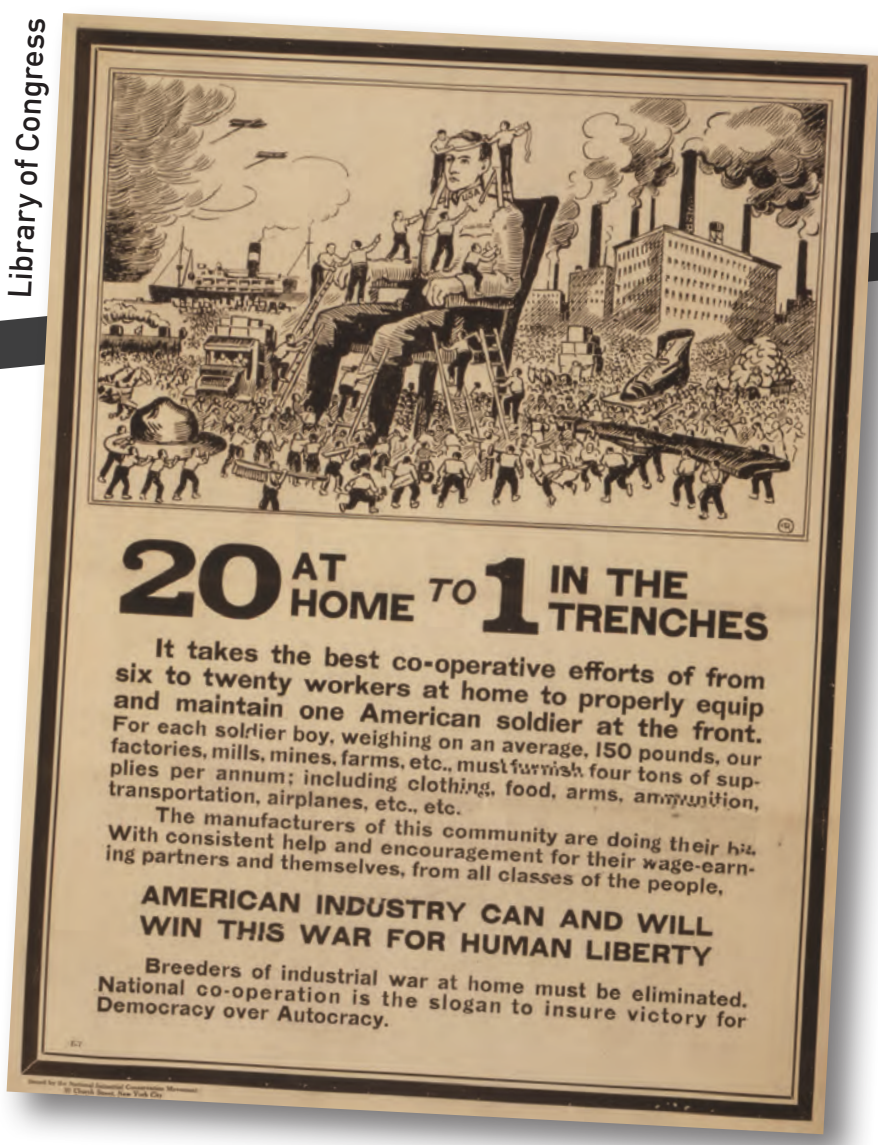
The Museum of Modern Art, gift of Mrs. David M. Levy. © 2017 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Some are coming on the passenger,
Some are coming on the freight,
Others will be found walking,
For none have time to wait.

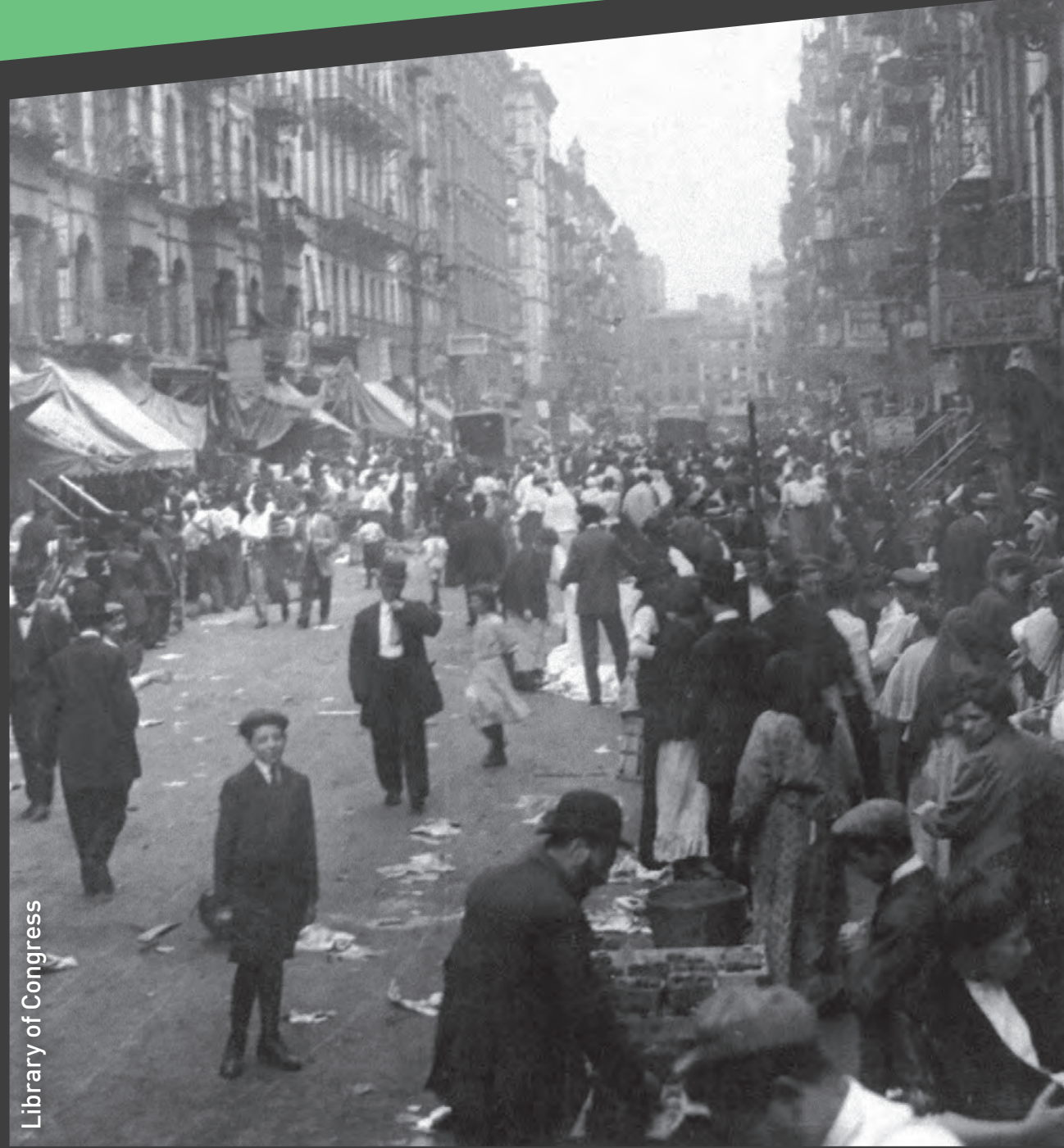
-Excerpt from the poem "They're Leaving Memphis," published in The Chicago Defender, 1917

OVER HERE

On the home front, as industrial production expanded to satisfy the growing needs of the Great War, American industry mobilized to produce weapons, equipment, munitions, and supplies.



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Munitions factory, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.



African Americans were among the hundreds of thousands who migrated from rural areas to work in cities and factories. There they joined a massive influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe.

The economy transitioned from one rooted in small farms and businesses to one based on large-scale industry. By the end of the war, half the population of the United States lived in urban areas and 25% of Americans worked in factories.



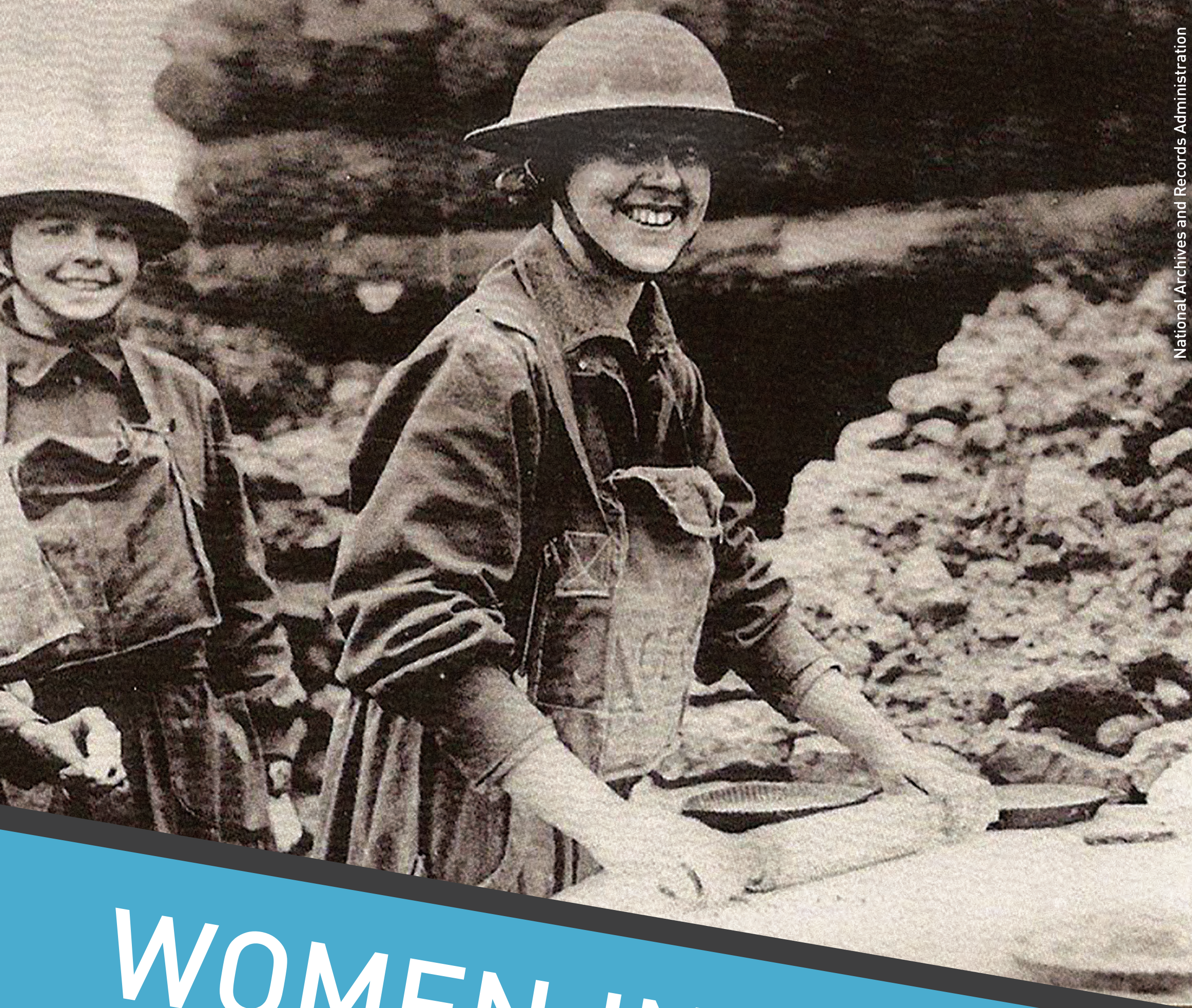
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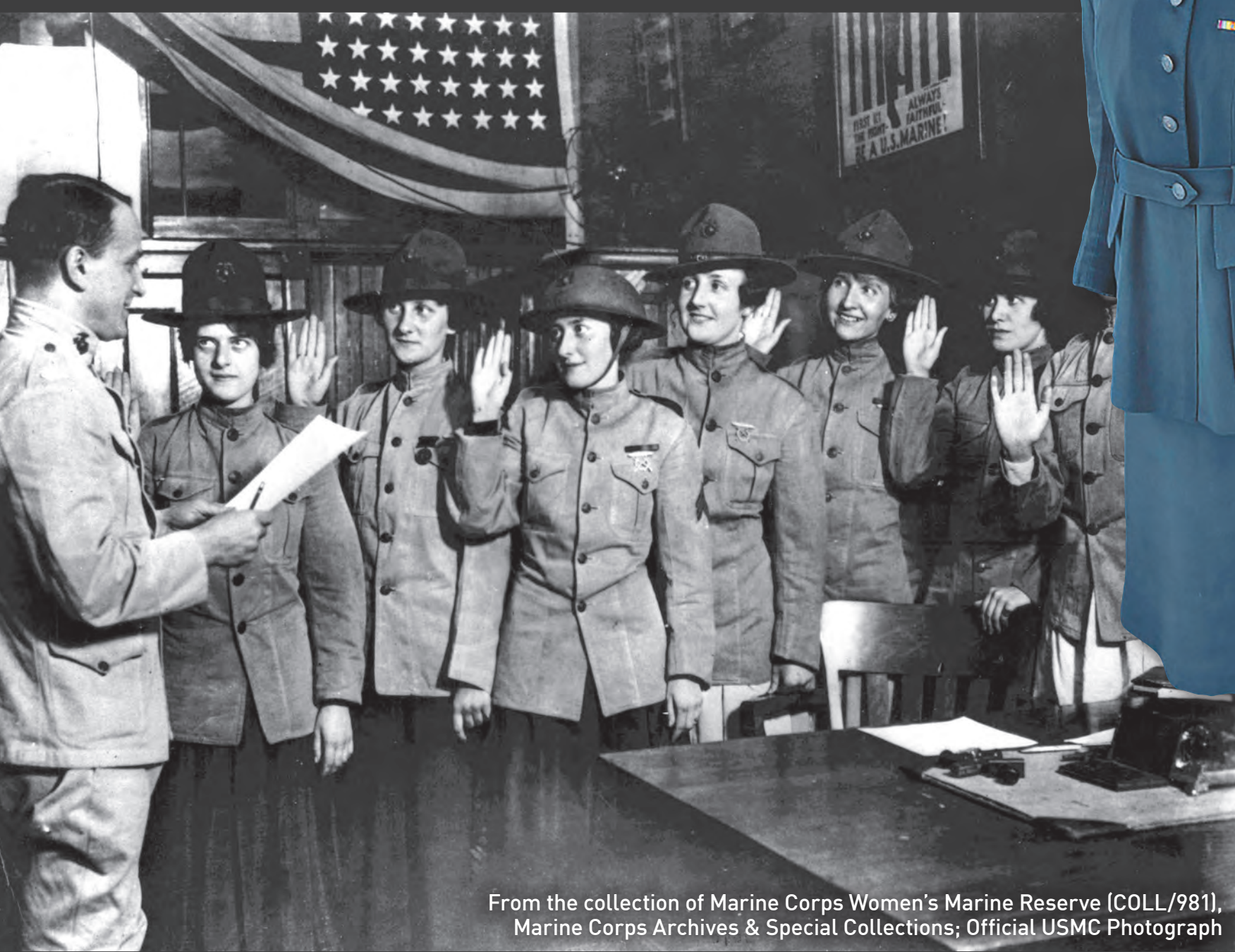
The Girl on the Land Serves the Nation's Need
 apply **Y.W.C.A.**
 Land Service Committee.

Thousands of American women volunteered with private social service and religious organizations. They grew crops, supported civilian relief efforts in Europe, and ran social centers for servicemen stateside and abroad.

Before and during the war, millions of American women served the country in countless ways, in and out of uniform, at home and abroad.

WOMEN IN THE GREAT WAR

Thousands more women put on military uniforms. Over 20,000 volunteered for the U.S. Army and Navy Nurse Corps. Nearly 13,000 joined the ranks of the U.S. Navy and Marines for the first time—taking over office jobs that, per the popular saying, “freed a man to fight.” And 450 trained as telephone operators in the U.S. Army, connecting headquarters to officers in the field.



From the collection of Marine Corps Women's Marine Reserve (COLL/981), Marine Corps Archives & Special Collections; Official USMC Photograph



Uniform worn by U.S. Army Signal Corps operator.

“This war is being fought by women. It is women who suffer and lend courage to us. Women... when the war is over...will deserve honor for their aid in establishing democracy.”
 —General John J. Pershing, 1917

A million women joined the civilian workforce.



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**WORLD WAR I:
 LESSONS AND LEGACIES**

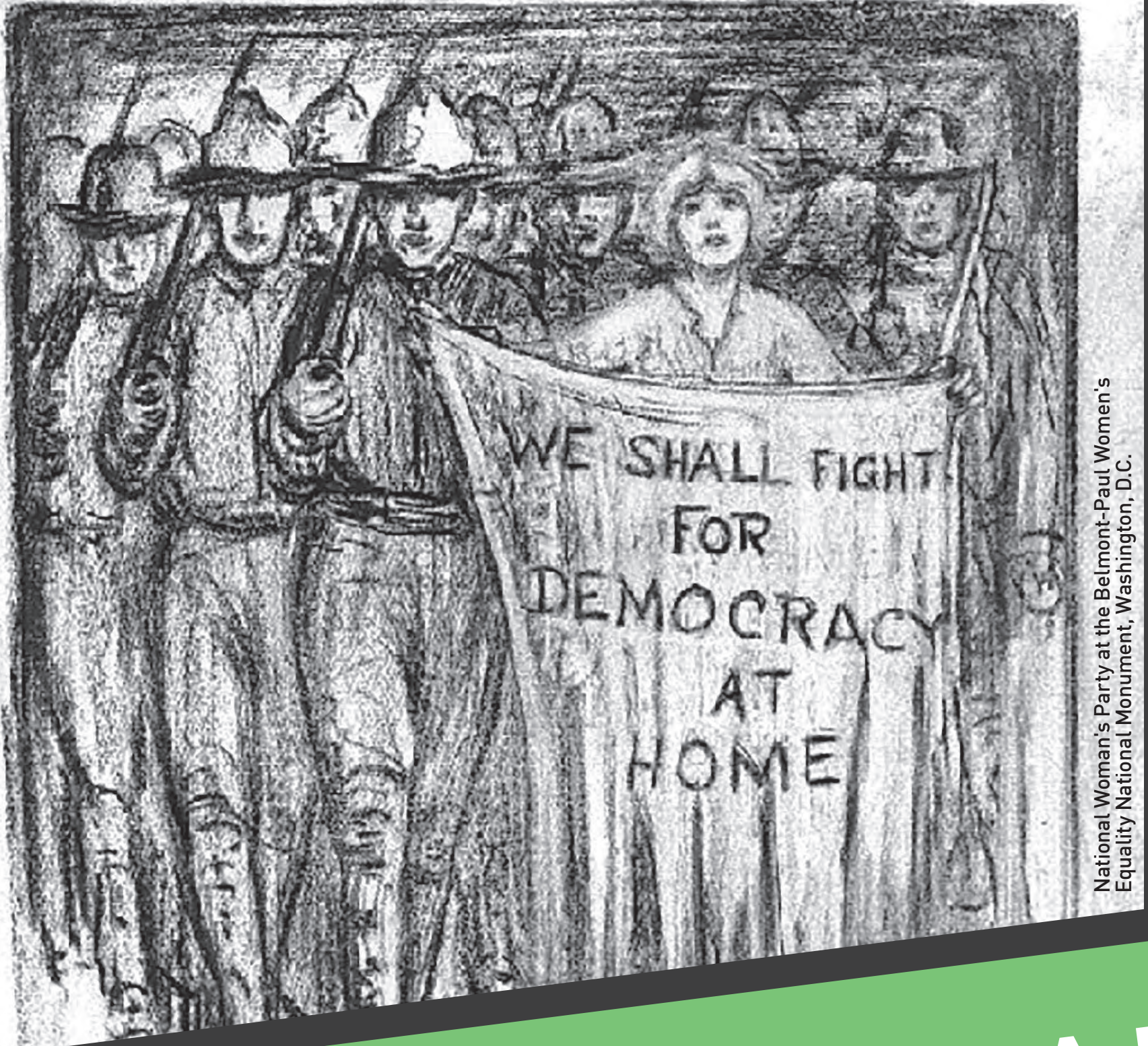
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Women saw their service as justifying their claim to full citizenship. They won the right to vote in 1920, in part for their wartime efforts.



National Woman's Party at the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, Washington, D.C.

President Woodrow Wilson declared that World War I was a battle to make the world safe for democracy. But in the United States, many Americans struggled for equality and democracy—a struggle that continues.

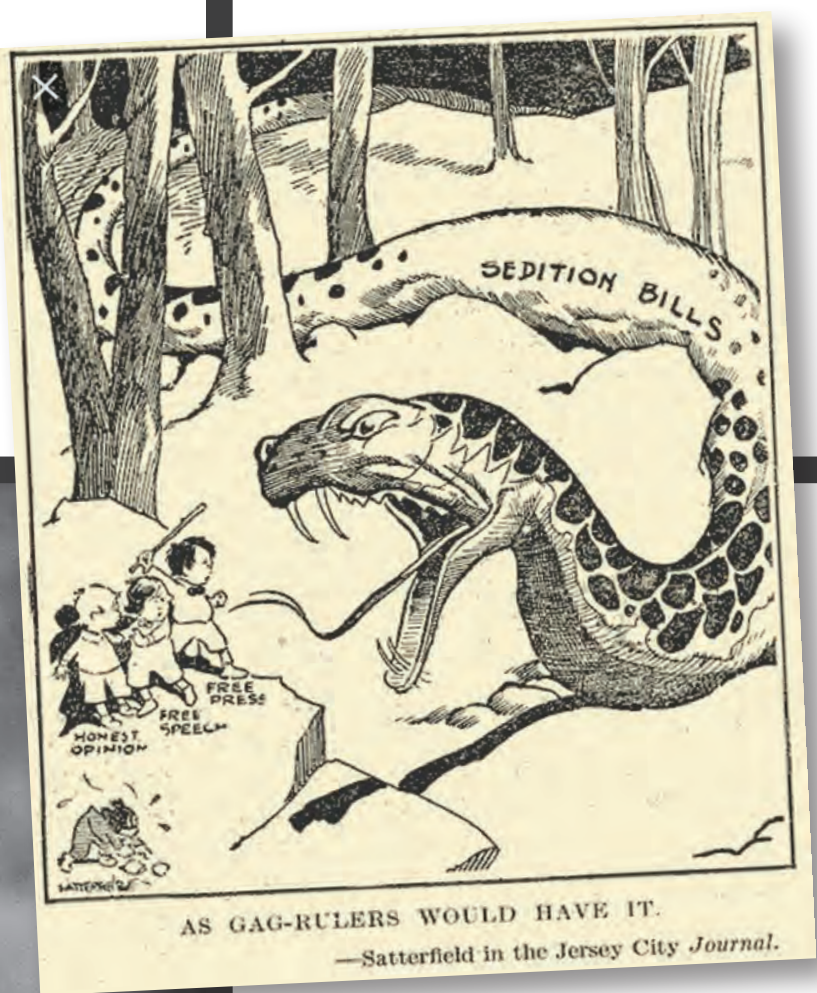
I, too, am America.

—Langston Hughes, excerpt from the poem "I, Too," 1926

A WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY?

German Americans faced vicious discrimination—some were tarred and feathered.

Literary Digest



Under the Sedition Act of 1918, anyone who spoke out against the war could be jailed.

AtlantaRelics.com

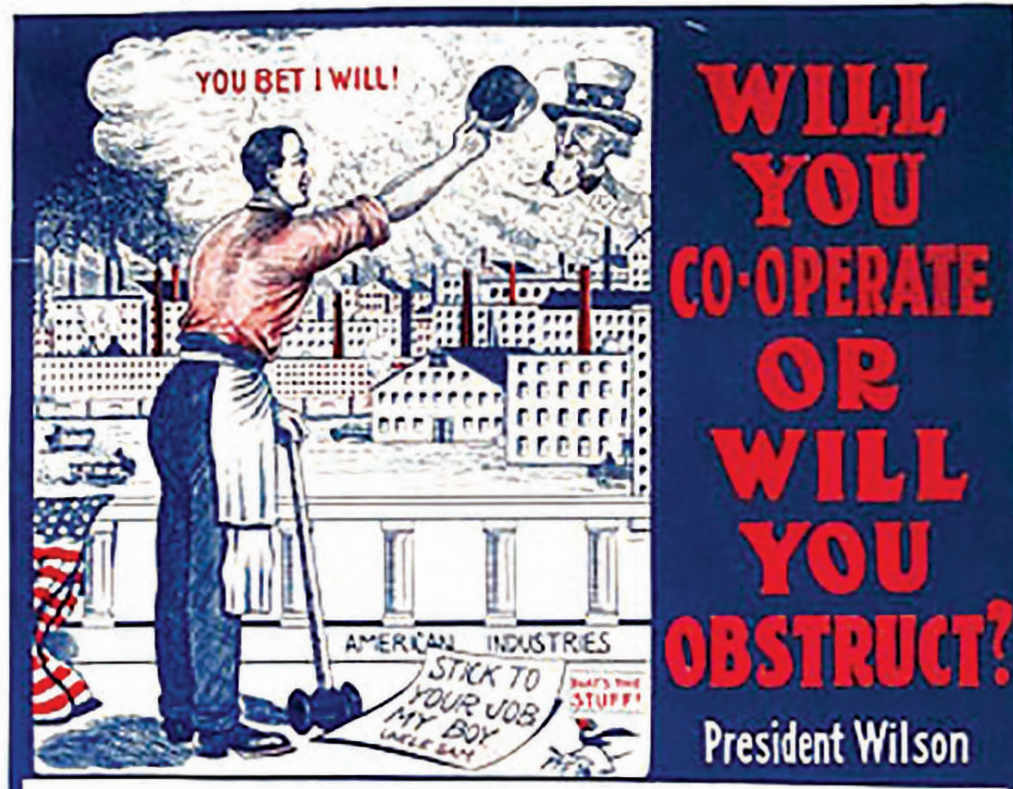


African Americans—increasingly tired of the inequalities and racial oppression of Jim Crow—wanted change. But, they faced backlash from both white supremacists in a revived Ku Klux Klan and the Wilson Administration.



National Archives and Records Administration

Many workers and their unions, concerned about fair labor practices, were quashed in the name of patriotism.



America Needs Its Man Power
 Sticking to your job will help to shorten the war and pave the way for a prosperous peace. The demand for supplies for Our Boys "Over there" is so great that every bit of man power we possess is needed. If you can't enlist, get a Job and hold on to it.
IT'S YOUR WAY TO HELP "LICK THE KAISER"

"Jailed for Freedom" pin



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Alice Paul Centennial Foundation, Inc.

Women who picketed the White House or marched on Capitol Hill on behalf of voting rights were arrested for interfering with the war effort.



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A highly organized system was put in place to move wounded men quickly off the battlefield. They were sent to aid stations, then field hospitals, and, if necessary, to evacuation and base hospitals where they received successively more complex levels of care.



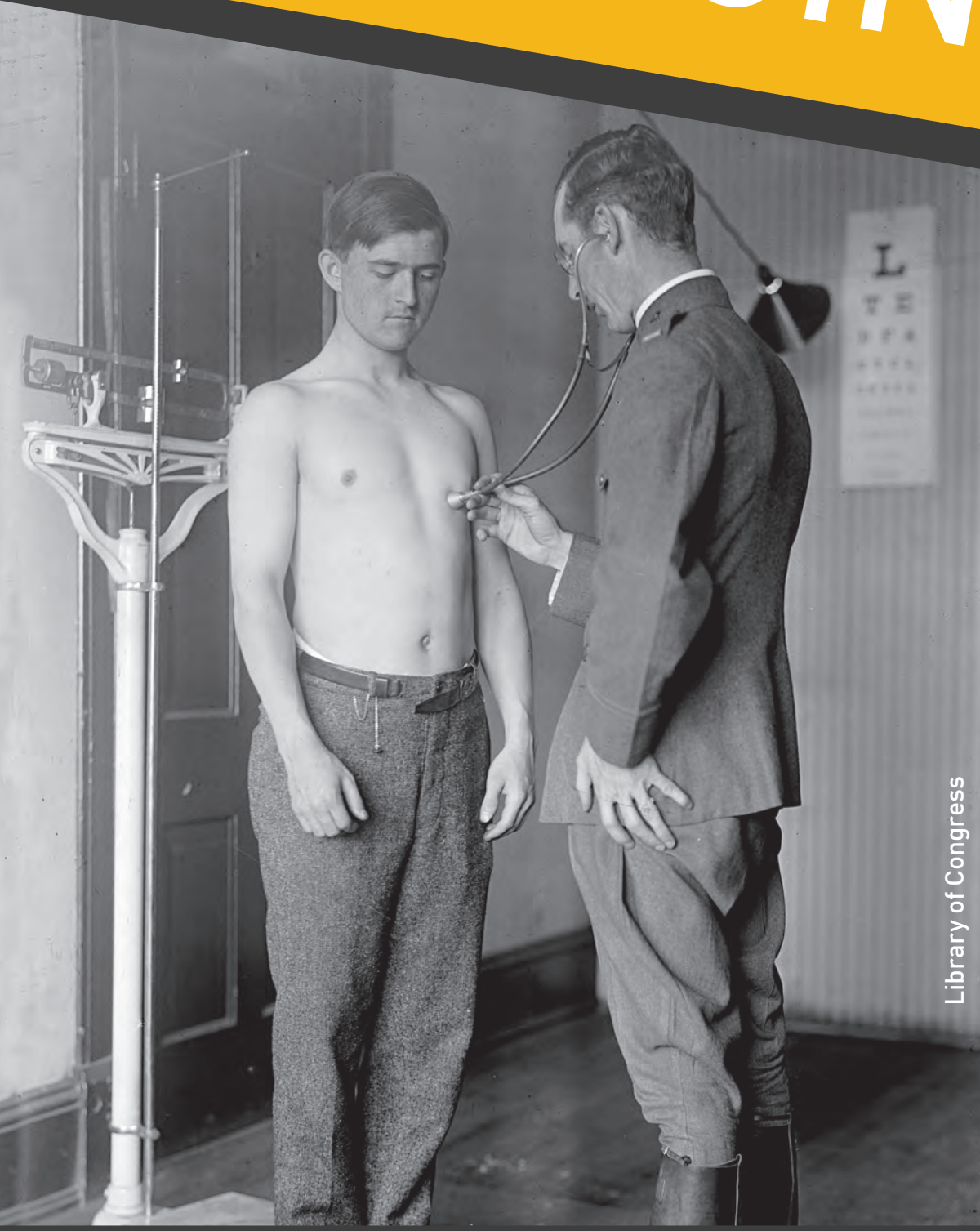
Medic's belt



Doctors developed new antiseptics and liberally administered tetanus antitoxins in an attempt to prevent infections.

"A war benefits medicine more than it benefits anybody else. It's terrible, of course, but true."
 -Dr. Mary Merritt Crawford, surgeon at the American Hospital in France, about 1919

MEDICINE AND WAR



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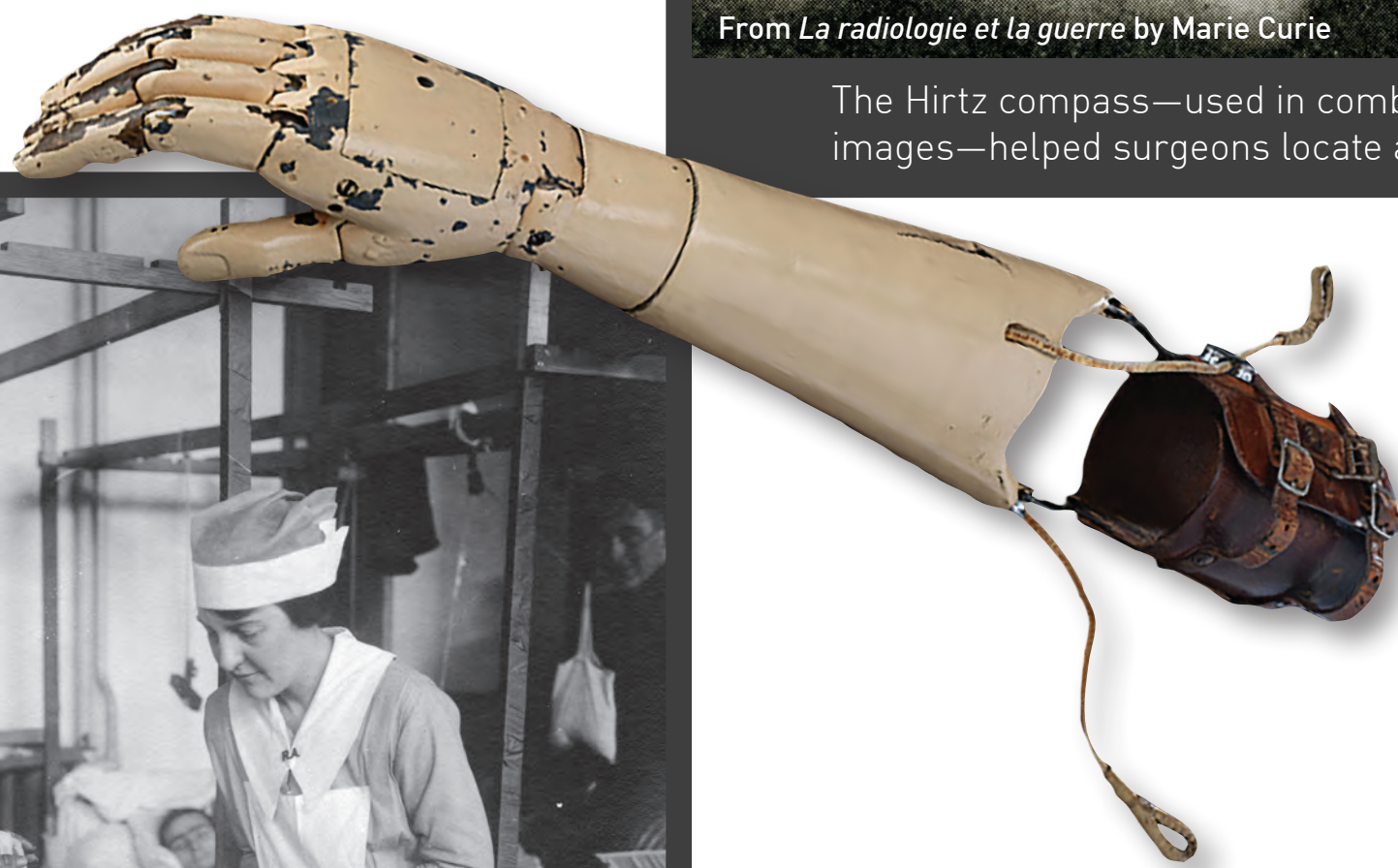
Many soldiers were killed in the horrific fighting, often by exploding artillery shells. But the desperate needs—and sheer number—of those who survived their wounds or gas attacks inspired innovations in trauma care, medical evacuation strategies, surgical and nursing procedures, and rehabilitation practices.



From *La radiologie et la guerre* by Marie Curie

The Hirtz compass—used in combination with x-ray images—helped surgeons locate and remove shrapnel.

Before millions of recruits were sent to France, military physicians evaluated their health and physical condition, providing the basis for the nation's first comprehensive health assessment.



Many of those who survived underwent new types of physical and occupational therapy in order to return them to "usefulness." Stateside, the government established a system of special veterans hospitals that in 1921 became part of a newly established Veterans Bureau.

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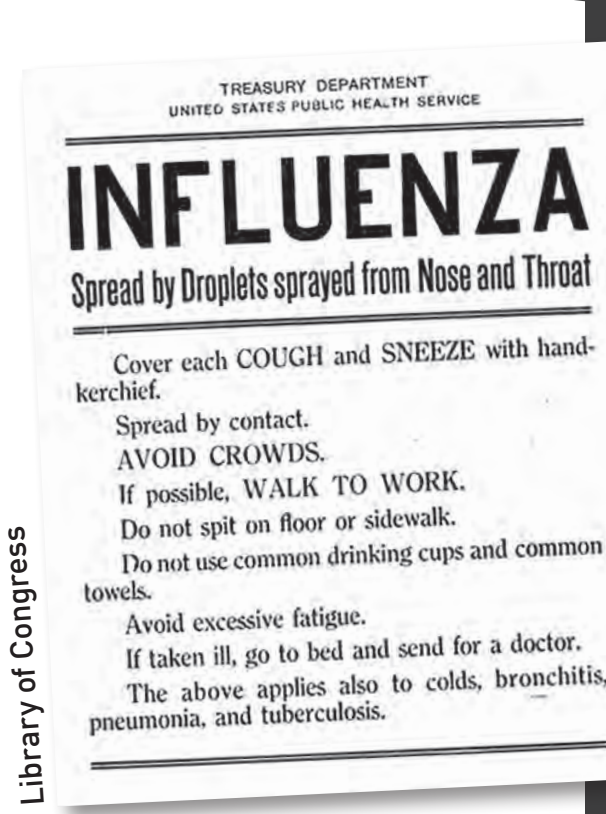
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In 1918, Americans rejoiced at the Armistice ending the war. Many sought a return to the “normalcy” of the prewar status quo. And many hoped to isolate the nation from the rest of the world.

“We are citizens of the world. The tragedy of our times is that we do not know this.”

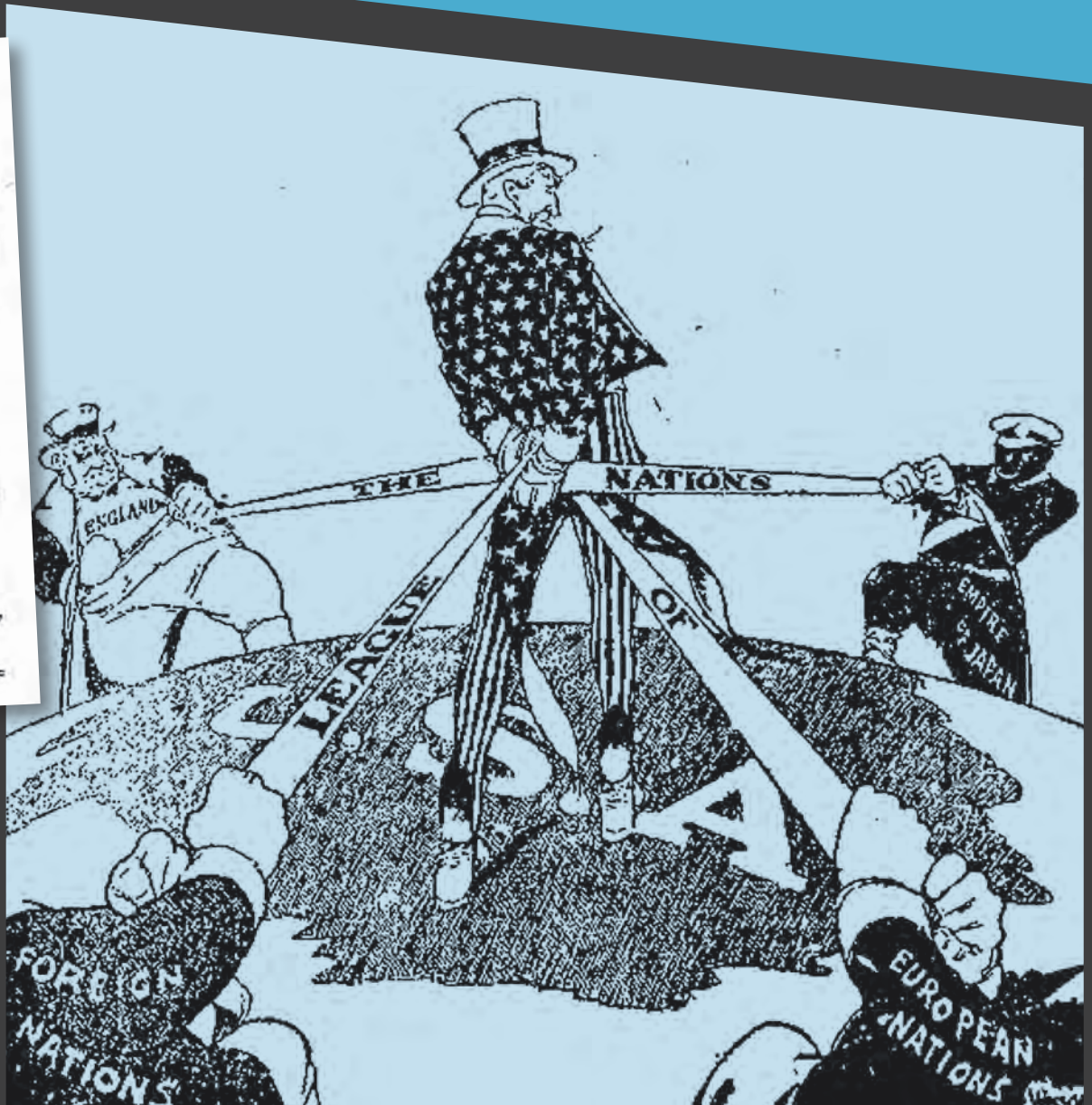
—President Woodrow Wilson, 1919

A WORLD TRANSFORMED



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Americans' brief foray onto the global stage had exposed them to the horrors of modern warfare and a flu pandemic that killed millions worldwide.



Americans rejected the Treaty of Versailles and membership in a League of Nations as President Wilson's attempt to entangle the United States in a global tug of war.

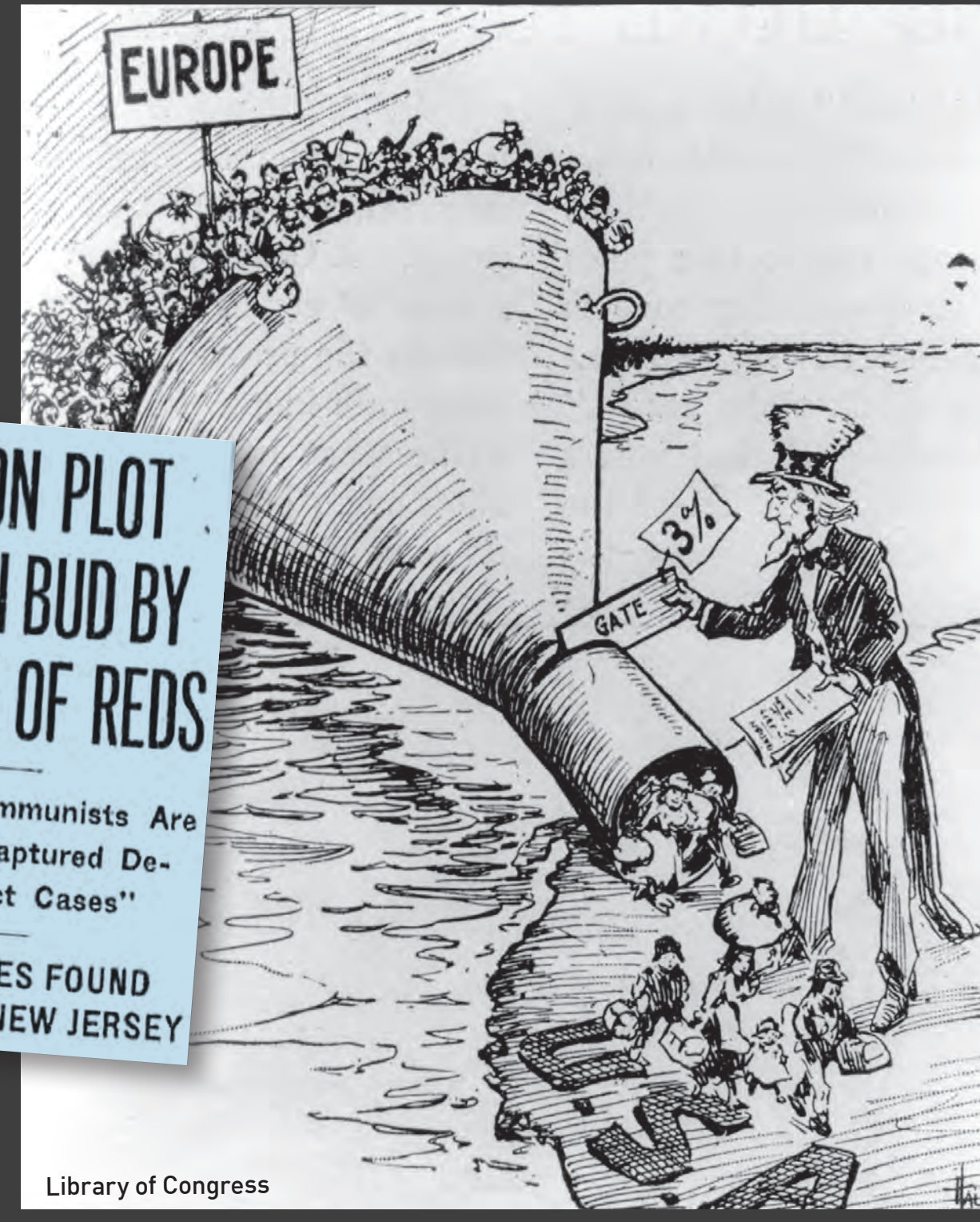
Following the war, the federal government severely restricted immigration. It also launched a campaign against labor and political activists perceived to be foreign-influenced Communists or anarchists.



In politics, economics, culture, and beyond, the end of the Great War signaled the dawn of a new modern era. And in spite of its isolationist bent, the United States increasingly found itself a global player.

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REVOLUTION PLOT NIPPED IN BUD BY SEIZURE OF REDS
 2616 Alleged Communists Are Among Those Captured Declared "Perfect Cases"
BOMBS AND RIFLES FOUND IN NORTHERN NEW JERSEY



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Missouri History Museum, St. Louis