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***Emily Yellin's Our Mother's War:
American Women at the Home and at the Front during World
War II (2004): Women's Contribution and its Impact on their
Rights Movement.***

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Dedication

To my dear parents Slimane and Nadia

To my best friends

To my lovely cousins

And to all those who prayed for my success

DAHIA MAHFOUF

To my dear parents and supportive siblings.

TABOU YAMINA

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Abstract:

*The present dissertation had shed light on the issue of women's status during and after the Second World War in America through Emily Yellin's book *Our Mothers' War: American Women at the Front during World War II*, by highlighting the major historical events that influenced women's position since the colonial beginnings of America. The Second World War was the most important event in which women made a major contribution and experienced great changes in their roles. It cannot be denied that some historians argued that women's participation in the war was just temporary empowerment, while others noted the great positive impact women got from their contribution in the war. For this reason, our dissertation focused on the impact of women's participation in the Second World War on their position and on women's rights movement, referring to the theory of new historicism and feminism. In the opening chapter we have shown that the historical events prior the Second World War developed women's status, but not to the same extent as the World War II did. In the second chapter, according to Yellin's book, we have displayed women's large-scale workforce participation during the war and its impact on their roles and personalities. In the final chapter we have discussed the transition and the contraction in the women's functions in the post war prior referring to Yellin's examination of that era, and highlighting the situation that women unwanted and rejected in their struggles. As a conclusion, we have noted that women in the World War II experienced the feminist proclamations and paved the way for the women's rights movement in the decades following the war.*

Key words: *women's status, Second World War, historical events, temporary empowerment, new historicism, feminism, transition, feminist proclamation, women's rights movement*

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I) General Introduction:

The history of the status of women in America is completely correlated with the history of the American society and its changes. Progress in women's rights has been non-linear and has required significant struggle. Historians and scholars have extensively studied this topic over the years. To fully understand the impact of women's involvement in the Second World War, it is crucial to consider their historical position beforehand. Women faced societal and economic limitations, being largely confined to domestic roles and low-paying jobs. The Declaration of Independence further marginalized them. These circumstances led to the formation of the women's rights movement at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which made progress in securing voting rights but women's rights overall remained marginalized.

The Second World War remains one of the greatest events in which American women were largely involved. This dissertation discusses the history of the women's rights movement in America, and how the Second World War period changed the role of women. Since women's contribution to the war effort was seen as a brave and effective task, we will attempt to examine its impact. To deepen the research, we refer to Emily Yellin's book *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front during World War II* (2004), which is a collection of real testimonies from participants who expressed their experiences and feelings; she has well demonstrated the functions and experiences of women during the war. Yellin portrays how women's roles changed due to the circumstances of the time. We will try to focus on the gains and losses experienced by women during and after the war and how they affected the women's rights movement in America.

In the long run, the war would prove to be a turning point for women, paving the way for greater participation in the workforce and for advances in their rights and opportunities. (p. xiii)

Emily Yellin's book *Our Mothers' War* delves into the personal stories of women during World War II, shedding light on their courage, resilience, and determination. Through first hand accounts and meticulous research, Yellin highlights the struggles and triumphs of women from diverse backgrounds, revealing the complex interplay between their wartime experiences.

During the war, women took on jobs previously considered men's work, as many men were conscripted into the military. This change opened up new opportunities for women and challenged traditional gender roles. Yellin shows that these women's experiences had a profound effect on their views of themselves and their place in society. The book highlights that many women found that they were capable of doing jobs that had previously been considered too difficult or dangerous for them, and they began to question the limitations that had been placed on them in the past. This new sense of empowerment laid the foundations for the women's rights movement that emerged in the post-war years.

All this threatened the position of men and the traditional view of women. In the post-war period, government policy was quite different, trying in vain to persuade women to return home, give up their jobs and leave them to the returning veterans. The majority of women resisted and refused to give up their jobs, which for many of them had meant freedom and independence. However, these unfair and discreditable actions by the American government, which treated women as inferior citizens to men, were not successful. The war and its aftermath set the stage for the second wave of feminism and the fight for equality in the 1960s

Review of the Literature

Many critics have studied the influence of the Second World War on women position through Emily Yellin *Our Mothers' War*. In her book, she explores the experiences and functions of American women during World War II.

Kara Dixon Vuic (2005) reviewed the book and according to her Yellin highlights the ways in which women served in various capacities including nurses, factory workers, and members of military. She also examines the challenges that women faced in the work place. For Kara Dixon, Yellin suggests that World War II was an "inadvertent revolution for women" (p.xiv), pointing out that the war's end brought challenges to many of the professional gains made by women and the psychological impact of the women's experiences. The self-confidence that many women gained by working and earning their own paychecks was something that the loss of a factory job could not undo. Kara Dixon adds that Yellin succeeded to show that it was these more personal and less dramatic changes that survived the war and impacted her mother's generation of women. Women taking war jobs raised many issues that persisted through to the next decades: equal pay, child care, equal job advancement opportunities, juggling home and work obligation. The book contains numerous examples of how these women had tasted a kind of freedom not known before, and "Now the genie was out of the bottle" (Yellin p; 70)

In her review, Alice Kessler-Harris, a prominent scholar of women's history and labor movements, offers high praise for Emily Yellin's book, *Our Mothers' War*. Kessler-Harris commends the author for delving into the multifaceted contributions of women during the war effort and shedding light on their often overlooked role.

One aspect of Yellin's work that stands out for Kessler-Harris is the author's skillful integration of personal stories alongside the broader historical context. By weaving together individual experiences with a comprehensive analysis of the time period, Yellin provides readers with a rich and engaging narrative. This approach not only humanizes the history but also allows readers to connect with the women who played pivotal roles during the war.

Moreover, Kessler-Harris emphasizes the significance of *Our Mothers' War* in illuminating the transformative effects of women's wartime labor on their subsequent demands for gender equality. The book showcases how women's involvement in the war effort challenged traditional gender roles and exposed the capabilities and skills that women possessed. By contributing to various industries and filling roles typically reserved for men, women gained a newfound sense of empowerment and agency. This experience, as depicted by Yellin, acted as a catalyst for women's growing demands for gender equality and paved the way for subsequent advancements in women's rights.

Kessler-Harris's review of *Our Mothers' War* lauds Emily Yellin for her meticulous research and storytelling prowess. The book not only brings attention to the multifaceted contributions of women during the war but also highlights the transformative effects of their wartime labor on their subsequent demands for gender equality. Through the incorporation of personal stories and a broader historical context, Yellin provides readers with an engaging and thought-provoking exploration of this pivotal period in women's history.

However, some scholars and researchers argue that women's contribution to the war effort was temporary empowerment. In her review of the *Journal of American History*

published in December 2005, Susan Hartmann provides valuable insights into Emily Yellin's book titled *Our Mothers' War*. According to Hartmann, Yellin's work suggests that women during World War II were able to attain a certain level of independence and self-sufficiency. These achievements, however, were limited to the unique circumstances of the war and did not signify lasting changes in gender roles.

Hartmann emphasizes that the women's increased participation in the workforce and their consequential empowerment were largely a product of the specific conditions imposed by World War II. The war created a need for labor, as men were drafted into military service, leading to an unprecedented opportunity for women to take up jobs traditionally held by men. This temporary shift allowed women to demonstrate their capabilities and assert their independence.

However, Hartmann notes that these advancements were not indicative of permanent shifts in societal norms. She argues that once the war ended, the expectation for women was to revert to their conventional roles as wives and mothers, with any gains they had made during the war being lost. The societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles prevented women from maintaining the independence and self-sufficiency they had experienced during the war.

By highlighting this perspective, Hartmann challenges the notion that the advancements made by women during World War II led to long-lasting changes in gender roles. She suggests that the cultural and societal expectations prevailing at the time prevented women from achieving lasting empowerment and reinforced the idea that their primary role was within the domestic sphere.

Overall, Hartmann's review emphasizes the temporary nature of women's empowerment during the war and posits that it did not lead to sustained changes in gender roles. This interpretation offers a nuanced understanding of the historical context and sheds light on the challenges women faced in maintaining their newfound independence and self-sufficiency once the war ended.

Issue and Working Hypotheses

It follows from our review of the literature that critics and scholars of *Our Mothers' War: American Women at the Front during World War II*, have mainly focused on the impacts of women's contribution in the Second World War; the gains or the losses that women experienced and felt during the war and in the post war period. However, one is left to wonder what women's involvement in the World War II added to the women's rights and their movements in the American society. Our dissertation is, therefore devoted to the following issues: first, it is very interesting to mention that the American women participated in the major historical events in America, but not in the same way as they did it in the Second World War. However, what was customary was that women resumed the female jobs towards the end of each event, without much improvement in their position. Second, the extent to which women's valiant and effective contribution in the machinery of the Second World War at home and the front impacted women's right movement and their social, economic and political status. This issue will be explored in Emily Yellin *Our Mothers' War: American Women at the Front During World War II* who displays the experiences and acquisitions that changed women's identity and feelings. It should be noticed that in the post war period, many women were forced to leave their workplace to men coming back from the war under the pretext that women needed protection to take care of their homes. They had to resume the traditional jobs that they used to perform

before the war. In fact, many women were in need, so they did any available job. However, they did not enjoy the changes that occurred to their function and they were not convinced of that situation. Subsequently, it is part of our concern to explore the ways in which this unfavorable circumstance served as a catalyst for women to engage in the struggle and defiance against the prescribed and restricted roles and liberties.

In her book, Emily Yellin demonstrates that women's contribution and acquisitions were unique, which they had never seen before, though their status transformed largely in the post war era. The situation of women, therefore, remains unsettled. The issue raises many questions: Are women functional only in wartimes or needs? How did the wars impact women's function? Is Yellin able to display the real influence of the Second World War on women? Does she succeed to show the deep impacts of war on women's individuality? If they were really impacted, did this influence pave the way to the resurrection of women right movement to reach gender equality in America? How could male attitude in post war era affect the feminist movements in America?

In the light of the New Historicist approach, and drawing upon the insights of Emily Yellin's book, it becomes essential to investigate the significant role of American women in historical events prior to World War II, and to examine the extent of their influence on the women's rights movement. Specifically, in our analysis, we will argue on the transformative effects of women's empowerment during World War II on their societal status in the post-war decades, as their experiences during the war shaped their ideologies and convictions. By incorporating Yellin's expertise and employing a New Historicist lens, our study aims to bridge the existing knowledge gap surrounding these critical questions.

It follows that our hypothesis in this dissertation is that World War II had a profound impact on women. Despite women returning to their pre-war roles, the effects and gains of the war resurfaced during the second wave of feminism. Consequently, the immediate aftermath of the war did not bring about significant changes to women's position, particularly in the post-war era. However, its long-term effects were substantial. We speculate that the war effort acted as a catalyst for a broader transformation in gender roles and societal expectations, ultimately laying the groundwork for women's empowerment and the emergence of the second wave feminist movement.

II) Methods and Materials:

a) Methods

To fulfill our objective, we would suggest a framework through which we conduct an analysis on the impacts of women's contribution in the Second World War on their rights in the American society. The analysis will be in the light of both the new historicist and the feminist theory. The New Historicism and feminist theory offer valuable perspectives to discuss the contributions of American women in World War II and their impact on the women's rights movement. While New Historicism focuses on the social and cultural contexts in which historical events occur, Radical feminism within feminist theory places a strong emphasis on exploring the experiences and challenges faced by women in various contexts.

Women's experiences and feelings were the reflect of the events and the historical situation of that time. New historicism is a movement in literary criticism that began in 1980s. Stephen Greenblatt is the man credited with inventing new historicism. He claims that literature is always historical. Its main claim is that the themes and meaning are the product of the author's time and cultural situation. The new historicist theory suggests that

texts should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. It also looks at literature in a wider historical context, examining both how the writer's times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer's times.

Adding to that, the feminist theory is an interdisciplinary approach to issues of equality and equity. With its focus on gender, it can highlight the ways in which the war impacted women's consciousness, their demands for equal rights, and the challenges they faced in achieving them. It can analyze how women's wartime experiences both propelled and complicated their struggle for gender equality, as societal expectations often reverted to more traditional gender roles after the war had ended. American women during the war seized the opportunity to live a kind of freedom, financial independence and perform jobs that were dedicated only for men. With their intervention, they tried to show their capacities and change the traditional image of women.

There are several arguments that can be used to justify the application of both new historicist and radical feminism within feminist theory in the analysis of American women's contributions during World War II as presented in Emily Yellin's book *Our Mothers' War: American Women at the Home and at the front during World War II*. Here are some of them:

On the first hand, New historicism encourages the examination of historical texts, such as Emily Yellin's book *Our Mothers' War: American Women at the Home and at the front during World War II*, to understand how they reflect and shape the cultural, political, and social conditions of the time in which they were written. By employing this approach, one can analyze how Yellin portrays the experiences of the American women during World War II, including their roles in the workforce, military, and home front. By examining the social, political, and cultural factors that influenced women's lives during

the war, it can gain a better understanding of how these factors affected their experiences and contributions. This can help to contextualize their achievements and give a more nuanced view of their role in the war effort.

On the other hand, Feminist theory can help to highlight the ways in which women's contributions have been overlooked or marginalized in traditional historical narratives. By examining the ways in which women's experiences were shaped by gender roles and stereotypes, it can provide a better understanding of the challenges they faced and the ways in which they overcame them. This can help to give voice to women's experiences and provide a more inclusive and accurate view of history.

Overall, by combining the insights New Historicism and radical feminism can help to gain a deeper understanding of the contributions of American women during the Second World War, while also highlighting the social, cultural, and political factors that influenced their experiences, as well, the challenges they faced and the ways in which they overcame them. Furthermore, this can help to provide a more complete and accurate view of history, one that includes the contributions and experiences of all members of society.

Yellin's book, *Our Mothers' War*, provides an excellent starting point for this analysis, as it offers a rich and detailed account of the experiences of American women during the Second World War. By applying the new historicist and feminist theory “radical feminism” to this text, you can explore the broader social and cultural forces that shaped these experiences, while also highlighting the specific challenges and achievements of the individual women. This book is necessary to our study. The letters and the journals collected in the book of Yellin are the primary sources that justify and prove the positive impacts of war on women’s functions and their visions.

b) Materials.

In terms of materials, we used Emily Yellin's book *Our Mothers War: American Women at Home and at the Front during World War II*, as a primary source, is a non-fiction work that explores the experiences of women during World War II, both on the home front and overseas. Yellin conducted extensive research, including interviews with over 100 women who lived through the war, and uses their stories to paint a vivid picture of this tumultuous time in history. The book contains a collection of wartime letters and journals written by her mother who was working at that time with the Red Cross in Saipan. These inspired her to produce the book. It contains the first person histories through interviews, letters and journals that highlight the role of women were called to perform in all fields. Yellin shows what went on in the hearts and minds of the female images of World War II. It is along examination that recreates what American women from all walks of life were doing and thinking on home front and abroad.

The book is divided into three sections: "Part I: The Home Front," "Part II: The War Zone," and "Part III: The Aftermath." In each section, Yellin explores different aspects of the war experience for women.

In "Part I," Yellin focuses on the ways in which women on the home front contributed to the war effort, from working in factories to rationing supplies to volunteering with organizations like the Red Cross. She also examines the challenges and opportunities that arose for women during this time, including the shift towards more gender equality in the workplace.

"Part II" delves into the experiences of women who served in the war zone, both as members of the military and as civilians. Yellin recounts the stories of nurses, factory workers, and other women who travelled overseas to aid in the war effort. She also

examines the ways in which women's roles in the military changed during the war, paving the way for greater gender equality in the armed forces.

Finally, "Part III" explores the aftermath of the war for women, including the challenges of returning to civilian life and the ongoing fight for gender equality in the years that followed

Overall, "Our Mothers' War" provides a compelling and insightful look at the experiences of women during World War II, shedding light on a previously overlooked aspect of this historic period.

This book will be used as a witness in our quest to show that women's contribution in World War II had positive impacts on them. The psychological impacts – confidence and trust- and the different acquired skills would change the image of women that men shaped. It would be a bold step that would urge women to gain a deserved position in the society in the next decades.

Our dissertation is composed of three chapters; it is organized in the following way. The first chapter deals with the historical background of the women's functions in the American society. It will discuss how the historical events impacted the women's status and how '*Our Mothers War: American Women at Home and at the Front during World War II*,' provides an in-depth look into the invaluable role of American women in major historical events before the Second World War. Focusing on the colonial period, their portion in the first American constitution and how these circumstances urged them to find their first convention in the suffrage movement including gender equality, justice, violence and ownership.

The second chapter, referring to Yellin's book, discusses the involvement of women in the World War II and their achievements, the government policy and campaign

to replace men by women in the workplace and the reasons behind their intervention. It focuses on their experiences and gains and what they realized and recognized.

The last chapter examines the status of women in the post war era. After the war, many women faced a difficult transition as they were expected to return to their traditional roles as wives and mothers. It also deals with the policy that the government followed to return women to the pre-war position and the reaction of women toward this policy. Yellin examines the tension between the desire for independence and the societal pressure for women to conform to traditional gender roles. She explores how women navigated this post-war landscape and the challenges they encountered as they sought to balance their wartime experiences with their domestic responsibilities. Yellin also highlights the significant social and cultural changes that occurred after the war. The war had challenged traditional gender norms and provided women with a taste of independence and new opportunities.

Were women able to continue and enjoy their roles as they performed it during the war? Our endpoint will be consecrated to show when the impacts of women's contribution in World War II reappeared and affected the women's status and rights in the history of America.

III. Results and Discussion

a) Results

After analyzing the primary source, Emily Yellin *Our Mothers' War: American Women at the front During World War II*, our dissertation takes into consideration the principle of the new historicist theory, as well as incorporating feminist theory, which recognizes the significance of women's experiences and challenges within the historical context, emphasizing how major historical events in America affected women's status in diverse way., specifically in relation to the women's rights movement. Yellin highlights several key moments in the American history, including the suffrage movement, the Great Depression, and World War II.

Overall, our first assumption is that the historical events prior to World War II deeply impacted women in America to initiate their rights movement. In her book, Yellin glimpses the size of the impact of these events; while progress was made, and there were still significant barriers to gender equality that needed to be addressed.

Our second assumption is that the circumstances of the war altered the function and place of women in the society as well as their reaction to the newfound roles. Yellin's work demonstrates how the Second World War empowered them. In their letters collected in Yellin's book, women expressed their experiences and feelings in that atmosphere and context. Therefore, the American women's contributions in World War II impacted them positively and helped them to gain feminist proclamation.

Our third assumption is that the impact of women's contribution in World War II were only momentarily. Since they had resumed their pre-war situation. In addition, the American government policies succeeded in relegating women to their traditional

position despite strong opposition. Women's contributions to the battle did not lead to long-lasting benefits for women. The equality of gender was totally disregarded. However, the empowerment women acquired during the war had given to their movement a feminist standard; it led women to oppose male oppressions and obedience.

From the analysis of women's contribution in the Second World War, it can be concluded that the acquisitions of their participation were so sizeable, but these acquisitions were ineffective in the post-war period, because all the changes they experienced did not improve their position and rights. However, it can be concluded that their contribution and gains were not in vain, but had a long-term impact on women's position. We will argue that they served as the seeds of the women's movements in the 1960s and 1970s and accelerated the rights movement compared to the first movement in the 18th century.

b) Discussion.

The historical events such as the American Revolution, the First World War... that America witnessed required the involvement of women. Obviously, this involvement would be resulted in reciprocal impacts; women provided support and aid to the country so that they could face-up the crisis as the events matured them and evolved women's position. Notably, the contribution of American women in the Second World War was a turning point in the status of women in America; this contribution played a significant role in altering and improving the social status of women in the United States. The implication is that the active involvement and contributions of women during this wartime period had a transformative impact on how society perceived and valued the role of women. This recognition of women's contributions during the war is seen as a pivotal moment in the

advancement of women's status in American society. Emily Yellin's book *Our Mothers' War* argues that this intervention provided tremendous changes to women's position. It allowed them to acquire high skills in the workplace. It also impacted them at psychological and social level besides the freedom and financial independence they experienced. Consequently, they became more confident, mature and aware of their rights. This exceptional opportunity enabled them to elaborate masculinity in their femininity, it suggests that the unique circumstances presented by the Second World War provided American women with an extraordinary chance to redefine and express masculinity within the framework of their femininity. During this time, women took on roles and responsibilities traditionally associated with men, such as entering the workforce in large numbers and participating in various wartime efforts

However, the post war era converted women's function; they turned to the pre-war era position. They were asked to overlook their skills and the outside work they performed during World War II. Many women found themselves at home serving their husbands and children and accomplishing homemaker's tasks again. Despite the 1950s' policy toward women, there were those who resisted and continued to work in female jobs because they had discovered the satisfaction and the gratification that come from work. The impacts on their intervention were still living in their hearts which raised their ambitions to pursue the fight for equal rights and opportunities. Based on Yellin's book, the chapters of this project discuss the impact of major historical events in America on the role of women and the evolution of the struggle for gender equality. The focus is on how their contribution in the Second World War improved their status in the decades after the war. Since then, their participation has been profitable and valuable in the long term rather than in the short term. The wartime gains were the root cause of the women's movement in the late 1960s.

Chapter One

I. Historical Background: American Women's Status in Historical Events Prior to the Second World War

Emily Yellin's book *Our Mother's War* depicts the lives of American women during the Second World War. However, to fully understand the significance of this period in American history, it is essential to look back at the status of women in the country before the war. The historical events that American society witnessed have profoundly influenced women and their status. Women participated in and were also impacted by these events. Their contribution varied from one event to another, the changes therefore of women's function were linked to the extent of their contribution and the extent of their influence. American women participated in most events, but their contribution to the Second World War was significant, different and special. In this chapter, we will explore the historical background of American women's status before the Second World War, focusing on their political, economic and social position; we will clarify the historical events that affected women and changed their functions, and how women began to struggle to improve their situation from the colonial era to before the Second World War. It will elucidate the extent of the impact of women's contribution in these historical events on their role, highlighting the impact of these historical events on the feminist movement in America.

1. Women's Role in the Establishment of the New Colonies

The first settlers in the new land of America came mostly from England and other parts of Europe and the puritans were the most dominated community. With their migration, they brought with them their lifestyle including social and religious beliefs, traditions and costumes. It has therefore been claimed that the ideological positions of that

time had a great impact on women's function in society. Women were oppressed and disregarded.

Historians agree that women's rights were very limited in the puritan community. The Puritans believed that women were culturally inferior to men. They also believed that social order lay in the authority of husbands over wives, parents over children, and masters over servants. They were, of course, subordinate to man, not allowed to possess property, sign contracts or conduct business. Instead, they were obliged to devote their life to their husbands and children, their functions did not extend beyond their homes and farms. Their own responsibilities were to run the household and educate the children. The home was therefore the only place where women allowed to exercise discipline. In public, they deferred to their husbands or to the patriarchy of the church and community. In this context, Marilyn was told:

New England society was an English society, and, while puritans planned to construct a biblical nation, at the core of their culture lay a family/ household structure grounded within a complex of English common law and custom founded upon assumptions of marital unity and male superiority. (Marilyn, p.14)

In addition to this, puritan society was characterised by stringent boundaries for single and married women. Unmarried women, including widows had the legal right to live where they wished and to support themselves in any occupation that did not require a licence or a college degree. Single women could enter into contracts or accumulate personal property. However, life for single women was seldom easy. They were still regarded as an oddity. Otherwise, they were dependent upon the males in their family. Nevertheless, marriage dramatically changed the legal status of women. Once married, women ceased to have an independent legal, political or economic existence. In fact, the

legal doctrine of coverture, married women were considered to be under the authority of their husbands. Furthermore, women in early colonial society had no standing in the eyes of the law. They could not vote or hold government office. They had no political rights and no political representation.

The ideal of female subjection was partially realized in the concept of coverture, through which the legal personhood of a woman was completely subsumed under her husband's identity, her property under his ownership. A wife's dependence became not only a matter of cultural, social, and legal restrictions, but necessarily of concrete economics as women moved from the households of fathers to husbands. Even widows, though legally permitted to act on their own behalf, often found the lessons of dependency overwhelming and thus sought the financial and emotional support of adult sons or another male relative. (Marilyn, p.14)

Women in early America were not able to fight against the tyranny of the male domination but this does not mean that women enjoyed and admired this situation. There were those who refused and tried to get their rights, but on an individual level.

The role of women in the building the first settlements in America, they did the same agricultural work as men, in addition to looking after the household and educating the children. Moreover, there is much evidence of women's involvement in the American Revolution 1775, without the support of American women, victory in the Revolutionary War would not have been possible, they followed the Continental Army, doing a range of jobs that usually performed by men. Women took many other actions by boycotting British goods, some following their men into the war as cooks, nurses, caregivers and defending their homes against the British attacks. At the end of the war, the United States of America

gained its independence. Although women took part during revolution, their position in the society did not change as they returned to their pre-war situation. Participation without much impact on women's status.

As a result of these circumstances, the impacts of the religious beliefs and the patriarchy and political system on women were so considerable. Women experienced harsh treatment and disdain. They lived oppression and depression. Circumstances that call for changes and amelioration, why not for equal rights.

2. Women's Position in the New America:

After the Revolution against Great Britain in 1775, the American colonies won. Then, the Americans became independent and they adopted a Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776. The Declaration of Independence states three basic ideas: (1) God made all men equal and gave them the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; (2) the main job of government is to protect these rights; (3) if a government tries to take away these rights, the people are free to revolt and set up a new government. After this declaration, all American citizens, including women, hoped and waited for the implementation of the basic ideas of the Declaration of Independence.

Because of the oppression of women by male society in the American colonies, during the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, women tried to influence the drafters of the country's laws to give women a respectable share of rights. It is said that Abigail Adam was the first woman to dare to ask for women's rights. On 31 March 1776, Abigail Adams wrote a letter to her husband, Congressman John Adams, who was in Philadelphia serving in the Continental Congress and working to establish the laws of the

new country, asking him to "remember the ladies", Abigail wanted women to have more rights under the new American government, in an age where women were seen as strictly domestic beings, the letter shows Abigail's boldness in urging her husband to "remember the ladies".

Adam's letter was a private first step in the fight for equal rights for women, recognised and admired as formidable women in their own right.

I long to hear that you have declared an independency – and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

Surprisingly, John Adams' answer was ironic and ambiguous, it included rejection and he laughed at 'saucy' letter. This explains that the American government and "the man" can't swallow the idea of women's right and they did not even take into account the existence of women in the formation of the code of law.

Depend upon it, we know better than to repeal our masculine systems. Although they are in full Force, you know they are little more than Theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full Latitude. We are obliged to go fair, and softly, and in Practice you know we are the subjects. We have only the Name of Masters, and rather than give up this, which would completely subject us to

the Despotism of the Petticoat, I hope General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight.

Some historians claimed Abigail Adams's words in her letter was without significance since the American Revolution did not free slave women, or secure Native American women's homes. The war did not even guarantee white women equality with their male counterparts. Adams' words did not have a great impact on America in the late eighteenth century. Her letters did not change her husband's views on the proper place of women in society, and they did not change the literal meaning of the words "all men are created equal."

However, the importance of Abigail Adams' letters is clear when we view the larger scope of American history. Although she was, in comparison with other women, in a very privileged position, Abigail Adams had the courage to challenge the society that surrounded her. Furthermore, she challenged the male-dominated world as both a woman and an equal right request. Though she wrote to her husband as his wife, she also confronted him with his own language, the language of liberty. After receiving John Adams' mocking reply to her plea for American women, Abigail Adams wrote the following words to her husband, predicting the course of history:

But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken – and notwithstanding all your wise Laws and Maxims we have it in our power not only to free our selves but to subdue our Masters, and without violence throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet.

After the Declaration of the Independence of America, women realized that they were marginalized in code of laws. Political turmoil swept over women as well as men, and rhetoric proclaiming liberty, freedom, and equality formed the foundation for the new nation. Yet, these great virtues did not extend to all of America's residents, and the hypocrisy was felt acutely in the hearts and minds of many women.

Though Abigail attempted to influence the American congress to take into consideration women in the new country's law, she was not able to convince them to improve women's right, but she managed to influence women's behaviour and encourage them to dare and ask for their rights. She started the path for American women's fight to seek for equal rights and freedom that were well-mentioned in the Declaration of the Independence so as to get a respectable status.

3. Women's Rights Movement in America.

The situation of American women was so critical, women were not only deprived of minimal rights, but they were also considered inferior to men at all levels, they were mistreated, and the deception that women tasted after their marginalisation in the new code of laws was so great. It is clear, therefore, that these events women experienced were a good enough reason that intensified the desire of the feminists Elizabeth Stanton and Lucricia Mott to fight for equality. The two soon agreed that the status of women needed to be improved.

Most historians agree that the fight for women's rights in the United States began in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention in New York. It was at this convention that the famous "Declaration of Sentiments" was drafted. Local feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton planned the convention with women and men of similar beliefs. Among those present were

Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony's sister Mary Anthony and her father. This convention, held at the Wesleyan Church, brought together local citizens and anti-slavery leaders to proclaim women's rights. This marked the beginning of the first wave of feminism.

Before the convention Stanton drafted the declaration of sentiments which opens with the famous lines:

We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

This First wave of the female movement had two main issues: women deserved rights as citizens of the United States and women should be granted the right to vote. Education was perhaps the stronghold of Stanton's argument for women's rights. Stanton was an advocate for all women to be educated in other matters besides home keeping and entertaining. In her essay "*The Solitude of Self*," (1892) Stanton speaks of self-reliance for all individuals: "We come into the world alone, unlike all who have gone before us; we leave it alone, under circumstances peculiar to ourselves". This means and refers to the idea that, all women—indeed, all humans had to take personal responsibility for their own lives. This personal responsibility for "her own individual life" was not only the "the strongest reason" for giving women the vote, but also for allowing women the educational opportunities necessary to develop their own talents and intellectual resources.

Women stepped up their efforts to achieve their goal, and Anthony and Stanton went on to long careers as women's rights activists. Anthony did most of the travelling and speaking, while Stanton wrote speeches and corresponded with Anthony from home.

The following years witnessed the seriousness of the women's movement. In May 1869, Stanton and Anthony formed the National Women Suffrage Association (NWSA). Their

vision was to lead an association comprised solely of women. Although the organization was created for women's rights, the NWSA's efforts were too slow and widespread among the nation for leaders of the National Women's Party organization.

It is claimed that this feminist movement was not welcomed by the government. Most of the activists were refused and rejected. The struggle was so hard for them. However, National Women's Party activists Alice Paul and Lucy Burns took a different approach, fighting President Wilson's refusal to hear women's messages by focusing on Washington and pursuing a federal amendment. Members of the National Women's Party picketed silently at the White House gates for months, marched through the streets of Washington, and were harassed by the public and the police. Arrested, imprisoned and force-fed, Alice Paul endured very difficult conditions.

Despite the restrictions, the women never gave up. They continued the struggle. Women tried to spread the movement across the nation to influence and persuade the social and political classes. From 1848 to 1920, American women fought for the suffrage right, including equality, justice, education and property. A new image of womanhood emerged, shaping public opinion and understanding of women's roles in society.

Over the years, women's struggle evolved and became so significant. More and more women became community organizers, public speakers and persuasive writers, demanding equal access to education and employment and the right to own property, control their finances and have reproductive freedom.

From what has been said, the struggle for women's rights has been long and hard, but not without results. The government has been forced to make minor changes to women's rights. The government drafted some laws that allowed married women to own property, but with strict conditions. . By 1900, every state had given married women substantial control over their property, but they still faced gender bias when it came to

financial matters. After more than half a century of struggle and resistance, the battle for suffrage was won by American women in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting the right to vote to all women in the country. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the National American Woman Suffrage Association encouraged its supporters to join the war effort. During the First World War, many women took on a variety of roles to support the war effort. With large numbers of men serving in the military, women stepped in to fill vacancies in factories, offices and other traditionally male-dominated jobs. They worked in munitions factories, as nurses, clerks and in other support roles. This period marked a significant shift in women's roles and contributed to the growth of the women's suffrage movement.

The National American Women Suffrage Association argued that women deserved the vote because they were patriots, caregivers, and mothers. Although President Woodrow Wilson had refused to endorse suffrage, in September 1918 he addressed the Senate in favour of women's suffrage. He appealed to patriotic arguments for suffrage when he asked representatives,

We have made partners of the women in this war; shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?

The Nineteenth Amendment states:

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Congress passed the amendment in June 1919. Yet, women's full participation in political life remained limited, and their employment opportunities were still restricted to women's jobs.

However, after World War I ended in 1918, the United States faced a difficult period known as the Great Depression. The stock market crash of 1929 led to widespread economic hardship, high unemployment and financial instability. The Great Depression affected people from all walks of life, including women.

Many women faced unemployment and financial difficulties during this period. They often had to take on multiple jobs or engage in informal work to support their families. Some women turned to domestic work, while others joined labor unions or participated in protest movements demanding better working conditions and economic relief.

It is important to note that while women's roles expanded during the First World War, the post-war period and the Great Depression presented significant challenges, including economic hardship and limited opportunities. The economic hardships of the period affected women's lives and highlighted gender inequalities. Women continued to fight for their rights and social recognition, paving the way for future advances in women's equality.

In particular, with the outbreak of the Second World War, the machinery of war demanded 'manpower', and women became some of the most viable 'manpower' available, as men went off to fight a global war across the Atlantic and Pacific, and then filled the gap of work. Emily Yellin, in her book *Our Mothers' War*, claims that women have always worked outside the home, but never before in the numbers and types of jobs, or with the same impact, as during the Second World War. Over three hundred and fifty thousand women volunteered for military service, while twenty times as many took up civilian jobs, including those previously closed to them. More than seven million women who had not been wage earners before the war joined the eleven million women already in the American workforce. Between 1941 and 1945, an untold number moved away from their

hometowns to take advantage of wartime opportunities, but many more stayed put, organizing home-front initiatives to conserve resources, boost morale, raise funds, and fill jobs left vacant by men who entered the service. This participation was unique and different from women's previous contributions to American history, as World War II allowed them to benefit from the shifts and make alterations of their own.

The Second World War remained the first event in which American women were heavily and widely involved and deeply affected; in contrast to the historical events of the antebellum period, women from the colonial period had fought to improve their situation, but their gains and freedoms were limited and inadequate under American social mores. Emily Yellin was moved by the letters and diaries of her mother and other war workers. She recounted their experiences and highlighted the difference between the Second World War and earlier historical events in America.

From the above discussion, it seems that the social and political situation in America from the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century obviously affected the position of women in society.

The first settlers in America came with their doctrines and socio-political system. The position of women in this system was only visible in the service of the man, who was considered culturally superior to women, and in this era women were considered domestic creatures who should only be concerned with the task of housework and taking care of their children and husbands without any kind of freedom. This subordination to men had a negative impact on women, who suffered oppression, mistreatment and dependence on men. In spite of this harsh situation, they tried to gain personal rights on an individual level, which usually ended in failure.

The American Revolution was a ray of hope for all American citizens, including women. The new America would provide equality for all Americans. The ideas of the Declaration of Independence were metaphorical; women were disappointed because their share of rights in the new legal code was imperceptible.

It is important to note that the subjugation and depression in which women lived, and the deception of alienation in the law of the new country, urged women to react. They concluded from these circumstances that their rights and status would not be offered to them, but that they would have to fight and struggle against the whole of society to obtain and secure them and to improve their situation.

It cannot be denied that the first women's rights movements in 1848 were a turning point in the history of the status of women. Their convention and the Declaration of Sentiments were seen as an official rejection of their male-dominated roles and expressed their desire for change. Their issues were American citizenship in its true sense and the right to vote, defended in the suffrage movement. Although the results were not great, women managed to win the right to vote in 1920, improving their status and painting a different image of womanhood. In fact, this movement was the first step in women's response to male domination. It introduced and shaped the concept of feminism, which later promoted and empowered women.

Chapter Two:

II. *Our Mothers' War: American Women's Contribution in the World War II: Achievements and Acquisitions.*

“Along with their new voting rights, World War II became the first war during which women had a political presence in government” (Yellin 2004.p.112)

This chapter will be devoted to discuss the intervention of the United States in the Second War World, and its desperate need for manpower to ensure the continued growth of its economy and the demands of war. In order to avoid the deterioration of the American economy, the American government pursued various ways to involve women in the war. Drawing on Emily Yellin's book *Our Mothers' War*, and relating to the New Historicist theory, we will try to reveal how this historical event influenced women's participation in the war focusing on the different functions women performed. This chapter aims to elucidate the experiences and the feelings of women in accomplishing men's jobs through the letters of the contributors highlighting their achievements. It will also discuss the impacts of war not only on the women but on the whole of American society towards women status. From the feminist point of view we will try to point out women's gains and improvements.

1. Women Status after the 19th Amendment Ratification.

The decade of the 1920s kicked off with the passage of the 19th Amendment that gave white women the right to vote, women got opportunity to join the workforce in increasing numbers, participated actively in the nation's new mass consumer culture, and enjoyed more freedom in their personal lives. Despite the heady freedoms embodied by the

flapper, real liberation and equality for women remained elusive in the 1920s, for the most part; the increase of working women did not represent a challenge to traditional gender roles. Nearly a third of working women in the 1920s were domestic servants, while the rest were clerical workers, factory workers, store clerks and other “feminized” professions. “Women are working, but they're working in what are called 'women's jobs,” says Lynn Dumenil, professor Emerita author.

At this point, it can be said that the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteed the right to vote and women experienced some personal freedoms. The 1920s saw no serious improvement in the status of women. Women's rights experienced a period of stagnation.

In fact, the outbreak of World War II in 1939 and the intervention of the United States of America in 1941 was considered a turning point in American society at all levels. The lives of all Americans, including women, changed.

2. The Outbreak of the Second World War and its Impact on America.

With the entry into the Second World War, the American nation quickly mobilized its human and material resources for war. The opportunities and sacrifices of war would change America in profound and sometimes unexpected ways. The primary task facing America in 1941 was to raise and train a credible military force. With its vast human and material resources, the United States had the potential to supply both itself and its allies. But first the American economy had to be converted to war production. As a result, war production brought immense changes to American life.

The shift to war production not only transformed the economic landscape but also altered the social fabric of American society. The demand for wartime goods led to a surge in industrial jobs, drawing millions of men and women into the workforce, including those

who had previously been marginalized. This change in employment patterns had a profound impact on gender roles, as women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers, contributing significantly to the war effort. Furthermore, the war created a melting pot of cultural influence as diverse groups of Americans worked together towards a common goal.

3. The American Government's Policy to Involve Women in the War.

As Yellin points out in her book, the United States had never mobilised so quickly or on such a massive scale as it did in the Second World War. The latter required women to be actively involved in fulfilling their patriotic duty on a daily basis.

The US government launched various campaigns and initiatives to involve women in the war effort. Before the Second World War, women did not usually work outside the home, and most of them were unaware of the types of jobs available, so the whole country rallied to persuade and encourage them to take up the jobs left vacant by men. In order to maintain America's economic and financial stability and to strengthen the war machine, the American government adopted a special policy. Special propaganda was used to encourage women to work outside the home. There were so many jobs available that "propaganda was distributed through print, film and radio to attract and encourage women to take the jobs for the duration of the war". The propaganda promoted the idea that "women could make a difference in the lives of soldiers and help the US win the war faster".

One of the most famous propaganda figures was Rosie the Riveter. She was the fictional star of a campaign to recruit women to work in the defence industry under the slogan "We can do it". Rosie the Riveter was a strong character and one of the most successful recruitment tools in American history, and the most iconic image of working women in the Second World War era. Her campaign emphasised the patriotic need for

women to join the war effort, and they did so in large numbers. “Rosie the Riveter was everything the government wanted in a female war worker. She was loyal, efficient, patriotic, compliant, and even pretty.” (Yellin,p, 43)

So, single women became the next logical group under pressure to go into factory work. Before the war, women who did not go to college often had jobs until they married. And those who went to college often did not take jobs. It was assumed in society that many in both of these groups of young women would prefer clerical jobs to factory work, even though it paid less, since those jobs were considered more respectable, less gritty. But in the face of wartime obligation, the hope was that young women, particularly those just graduating from high school, could be convinced to take factory jobs, even if it meant putting off college. (Yellin, p, 43)

As Yellin explains in her book that during the war, some serious obstacles sprang up in the path of the female solution to labor shortage, there were those entrenched attitudes of many employers, male workers, husbands, fathers, and women themselves against females working outside the home, particularly in industrial jobs. Somehow, that mind-set had to change. As President Roosevelt said in a Columbus Day Speech in 1942, “In some communities, employers dislike to hire women. In some others they are reluctant to hire Negroes. We can no longer afford to indulge such prejudice.”(Yellin ,p, 39)

It can be concluded that the government's policy succeeded in employing more than 6 million women in various jobs, a number that had never been seen before. Women entered the workplace to help their country, and this intervention involved adventure and exploration of new functions and roles that would bring unexpected results for American women.

4. Women's Contributions and Experiences during WWII:

To understand the contributions of American women in World War II, it is crucial to analyze the historical context in which these women found themselves. Yellin's book meticulously outlines the societal and cultural landscape of the time, emphasizing the limited roles available to women prior to the war. Women were primarily expected to be homemakers and caretakers, confined to domestic spheres. However, the war brought about a seismic shift, as men were mobilized for military service, creating new opportunities for women.

In fact, World War II opened up tremendous opportunities for women to deal with jobs that had been previously closed to them. It had been long assumed that women couldn't do those job engineering, other professions in the sciences, manufacturing jobs that had been considered men's work, things women were believed to be too weak to do.

However, Emily Yellin highlights the experiences of the more than six million women in the workforce during the war. These women worked in wartime industrial production plants, building ships and airplanes; they worked in sales and clerical positions as well as in hazardous munitions plants. She points out that the addition of white, middle-class, married women to the workforce required a government-sponsored public relations campaign that assured women would remain feminine and work only for the duration of the war. (Yellin, p,39)

According to the New Historicists, women's roles changed largely because of socio-political circumstances. In 1941, women entered the workforce for the first time during the Second World War. Civilian jobs for women included almost everything - clerical work, manufacturing, journalism, nursing, scientific research and more. Any man who could fight in the war was expected to do so, and his job was often filled temporarily by an able-

bodied woman. Even the military officially opened its doors to women. WAACs (Army), WAVES (Navy), and WASPS (Air Force) attended boot camp, donned uniforms, and served in the armed forces in the United States and abroad.

According to Yellin, a new emphasis on arms production during the war led women to become soldiers without guns. American women managed to produce a huge number of bombs, guns, ships and planes. This historical event pushed women into complex work. The entire aircraft industry had produced a total of only 13,000 planes. In 1942, Douglas Aircraft was one of the largest Aircraft plants in the U.S. It employed nearly 22,000 women during the war to help build many of the bombers and transport planes used in Europe and the Pacific. Lee Turner Foringer worked as riveter at Douglas aircraft in Long Beach, near Los Angeles, she had never ridden in an airplane, but she was building them. Lee worked there for almost two years. (Yellin, P, 49)

In addition to this, the munitions industry also heavily recruited women workers, as represented by the U.S. government's "Rosie the Riveter" propaganda campaign. Therefore, the producing bombs and ammunition was some of the most hazardous war work. (P, 62)

Building ships was more difficult for women to break into than the air craft industry, in part because it had such a long history as an all-male workforce. Again necessity started to change that. In 1942, the Brooklyn navy yard lifted a 141-year ban on hiring women. Commenting on the need for an additional 30,000 workers in shipyards along the Gulf of Mexico in 1943, Thomas M. Woodward, a member of the U.S. Maritime commission, said, "Women seem to be the answer, the only one, to the problem." (Yellin, p, 56)

Susan B. Anthony II spoke about women infiltrating the industry in her 1943 book, "out of the Kitchen- into the war". "*Shipbuilding is no picnic.*" (p.56)

Moreover, Yellin witnesses with the letter of the contributors their performances in the military field. Three million volunteered with the Red Cross, and over 200,000 served in the military. Women's auxiliary branches were created for every branch of the military, including the Women's Army Corps (WAC), Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), and Women air force Service Pilots (WASP). Women were restricted from combat zones; military life changed dramatically when women were admitted into the Army Navy and Air force. Staunch opposition to non-nurse women in the military gave way, but not without strict limits on women's options and status. Yellin contends that "since women did not have the right to vote in America until just after World War I, it stands to reason that they also would have been denied other rights and responsibilities of full citizenship, but after women finally secured voting rights in 1920, it was still a slow march to May 1942, when congress passed the bill allowing women to serve as auxiliaries to the U.S. Army. (P, 112).

Yellin points out on the gained right in the military service. 1942 was a pivotal year for the future of women in the armed forces. In May, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was created. In July 1942, a bill added women to the US Navy and Marine Corps, creating the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) and Women Reservists; approximately 86,000 women joined the navy as WAVES. A manpower shortage developed in the navy and women became the best alternative.(p, 137)

In November, the Coast Guard created their own women's unit—the SPARs, which stood for the Coast Guard motto, "Semper Paratus, Always Ready", about 11,000 women, joined the SPAR for the shore duty in the U.S. during World War II.(P, 142).

In 1943, two all-female pilot organizations merged to create the Women Air force Service Pilots (WASPs). Although their basic functions, were similar—to free men for

combat roles. A pilot shortage early in the war had spurred the air Force to use women civilian pilots for help ferrying planes from manufactures to military bases in the U.S. (p, 149).

Women in World War II were also given many opportunities in the army. In other words, women participated in the war to take the place of the men that died. Women became nurses, spies, journalists, medical assistants, snipers, machine gunners, and photographers. The most common and needed job in the war was a nurse.

The Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps had been formed at the beginning of the twentieth century, but they suddenly found their roles greatly expanded and changed. During World War II the first flight nurses were assigned to take part in the rescue and healing of wounded American servicemen in all theaters of war. Nurses and Red Cross volunteers, more than any other groups of women, often came closer to the rigors of battle, even going to Great Britain before the United States entered the war.

Yellin's book underscores the diverse roles American women played in the war effort. Women took up jobs in factories, munitions plants, and other industries, contributing to the production of war supplies. They also served in the military as nurses, clerks, and even pilots. Through primary sources and personal accounts, Yellin provides vivid examples of individual women who went above and beyond in their wartime duties. "Rosie the Riveter became a symbol of women in the defense industries who put their energy into victory by joining the wartime workforce." (Yellin, p. 54)

The New Historicists believe in the influence of the historical events on the writer. The dairies and the letters of the contributors in the World War II were tainted by the culture and the environment of the war, they reflect what women enjoyed and endured,

what they felt and experienced and the conversions that the war rooted in women. Yellin displays the influence of the war:

Through my mother's experiences I had found a window to the larger story of what might be called "the other American soldiers" of World War Second, who, like the men, displayed courage, experienced sacrifice, and endured heartbreak.(p,xiv)

Yellin highlights the struggles faced by women as they sought to break free from societal constraints and take on non-traditional roles. The book showcases stories of women who faced resistance, both overt and subtle, from men in positions of authority. "[Women] often felt they had to prove themselves worthy of the opportunities they were given by doing more than their male counterparts." (Yellin, p. 113)

On the bases of the New Historicism, studying the text reveals more about the history, then the study of the letters reveals more about the Second World War, Yellin argues that she had always visualized world war II in black and white, but her mother's war years was giving her more personal connection. World War II started to take on color and dimension like never before and she began to see those years of the war as a kind of inadvertent revolution in America, a time when, while men were not really watching, women learned they could accomplish things they had never been allowed or asked to try before. (Yellin, p,xiv)

In addition to this, the letters reflect the political and social situation in which women survived. The American policy of that time aimed at involving women in the war to save and preserve America from any economic or social crises, but this contribution took women to another pathway where women did not only support America but also

matured themselves and improved their vision towards themselves and women's status in the society.

5. Women's Acquisitions in the Second World War in the Light of Feminist Theory

The involvement of American women in World War II marked a transformative era in both their personal lives and the broader social context. As men were recruited to fight on the front lines, women stepped into various roles traditionally held by men, reshaping their own lives and challenging societal norms. Emily Yellin's book, *Our Mothers' War: American Women At Home And At The Front During World War II*, provides valuable insights into the experiences of these women and the profound impact their contributions had on the women's rights movement.

As is well known, feminism refers to the political, cultural and economic movement that seeks to establish equal rights and legal protections for women; it is the belief in the importance of gender equality that invalidates the idea of gender hierarchy as a socially constructed concept.

Feminists Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem.. believe that men and women are equal, that they should have the same opportunities to fulfill roles, that women are naturally capable of doing men's jobs. The Second World War was the time when women experienced these proclamations. American women found themselves thrust into new roles, both on the home front and in direct support of the war effort. Yellin highlights the growth of female power through the stories of women who worked in factories, served in military auxiliaries, and engaged in volunteer activities. These experiences challenged societal expectations and demonstrated that women were capable of performing traditionally male-dominated tasks. The Second World War changed both the type of work

women did and the amount of work they did. In particular, it led to many women taking jobs in defense plants and factories across the country. These jobs offered unprecedented opportunities to move into occupations previously thought to be the preserve of men. So, women were practicing and doing men's work.

This intervention had made a lot of changes at the personal, professional and social levels. Through the letters of the contributors, Yellin displays these transformations that women experienced and felt.

It was liberation for me, I enjoyed what I was doing. I like the hard times as well as the easier times. It was my liberation from a limited existence. Before, I had never really traveled. My world was restricted. It expanded greatly in the WAC. I met people from all over and had to get along and work with them. At the same time was learning, I felt I was accomplishing something, and contributing something. (P, 118)

Feminists as Simone De Beauvoir argue that women and men have naturally equal abilities and only the gender hierarchy which disables women and make them less confident. The Second World War revealed the women's personal side; the war affected their personalities positively as they become more confident and aware of limited freedom they were living. Women did things on their own and they were becoming self-satisfied. Edith Sokol, anticipating her husband's return from fighting overseas, sweetly foreshadowed a sea change in a letter to him near the end of the war in 1945:

Sweetie,

I want to make sure I make myself clear about how I've changed. I want you to know now that you are not married to a girl that's interested solely in a home_ I shall definitely have to work all my life_ I get emotional satisfaction out of

working; and I don't doubt that many a night you will cook the supper while I'm at a meeting. Also, dearest_ I shall never wash and iron_ there are laundries for that! Do you think you will be able to bear living with me? (p70)

Women tasted all sorts of jobs. Through which they discovered their talents and strength. So they admired their achievements and also themselves. This confirms that women are apt to deal with any situation that confront them, and only the constructed society that deprived them from proving themselves. This can be shown in Yellin's book that masses of lower- and middle -class American women had tasted a kind of freedom they had never known before. For some it as sweet, for others more bitter. But the genie was out of the bottle:

Women had had a taste of making their own money and having their own life outside the home, and many had liked it. Although society in general could not discern it right away, in hindsight it is clear that no matter how hard anyone tried to coax her, that genie was not going back in. A revolution had begun in working life and home life in America. (p,71)

Additionally, one of the significant acquisitions resulting from women's participation in the war was increased economic independence. Many women joined the workforce to fill vacancies left by men deployed overseas. Through employment in industries such as aircraft manufacturing and munitions production, women gained financial autonomy and demonstrated their ability to contribute significantly to the nation's economy. In addition to this, feminists support the idea of the financial independence and ownership. The war gave women jobs opportunities to experience independence and

freedom. They achieved a degree of financial self-reliance that was enticing. The independence that women were feeling inspired them to want to work more. Earning and managing their own money led them to find freedom, independence and individuality. Rhode Island, making gauges and precision instruments for war equipment. She described the problems for herself and other female war workers in converting back to prewar attitudes about women and work:

The women who worked did change. They had gotten the feeling of their own money. Making it themselves. Not asking anybody how to spend it.... The war taught them how to stand on their own two feet. So, when their husbands came, a lot of them didn't know how to be wives anymore because they had gotten kind of bossy. It was hard to get adjusted to somebody telling you "do this" when you've been doing what you want. (P, 69)

The work of the women, therefore, in the labour force allowed them to learn and accomplish things they had never tried before. This opportunity permitted them to become professional in their work, they acquired skills and abilities. Women took on difficult and complex tasks that were considered men's work. In doing so, they demonstrated their masculine skills and their willingness to take on challenges. These talents and skills confirmed their power and valuable role. Yellin shows in the journal of Caronelia Fort worked as a pilot.

".....I knew it when I saw my plane silhouetted against the clouds framed by a circular rainbow...I know it in the dignity and self-sufficiency and in the pride of skill. I know it in the satisfaction of usefulness ... for the first time we felt a part of something larger... I, for one, am profoundly grateful that one talent, my

only knowledge flying happens to be of use to my country when it is needed.
That's all the luck I ever hope to have (p157)

In addition, feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir and many others believe in social equality and denounce the image of women that is constructed for them by society; their contribution to the war changed the traditional stereotype of women throughout society. The war changed women's roles and their achievements empowered them. They gained more respect from the man dominated society. Their brave roles during the war obliged men to change the image of women that they shaped in their beliefs, no way to deny their successful services in maintaining the economic stability and empowering the machinery of war. This restoring image of women proved that the gender inequality is not due to the natural creature, but to the constructed society.

Women entered these jobs, excelled, and enjoyed them for the most part. Women made airplanes and warships, munitions and tanks, working technical and scientific fields for the first time. They enjoyed the work, the pay, the opportunities for the advancement, and the excitement of working with other women and men on important jobs that needed to be done for the war. All these achievements and acquisitions justify the reliability of the feminists proclamations. WAVSES director McAfee said in her letter, with some sadness, noted the differences between her work in a women's university and in the military

Life in Navy has taken me out of the cloister in which a woman was in unaware of limitations on her freedom or individuality and has thrust me into a big world where women are women and men are men (Yellin, p, 142)

From what has been stated all along this chapter, women's intervention in World War II impacted positively both women themselves and America. The war allowed women to achieve jobs that were reserved only for men. Women performed simple and hazardous labors, through these opportunities women proved their capacities and readiness to learn and get skills.

It is so important to note that, through the letters of the contributors, Yellin suggests that due to their contribution, women became skillful, confident, independent and aware of their rights. They tasted equality and sensed the great gap in the male and female rights. As, women acquired these qualities, men treated them with respect.

Women saved the American economy from deterioration and supplied and reinforced the fighting machinery with weapons. Women did not only fight beside men as nurses, pilots and snipers, nevertheless; with the absence of fathers and husbands, women managed to take care of their children and work outside to feed them.

Thus, no one can deny that the participation of American women in the Second World War was a wonderful and fruitful experience. Through their heroic achievements, they confirmed that gender inequality is not fair. This experience would make women never give up working for their rights. It would strengthen the ideas of feminism. The road to achieving gender equality is ahead of them; it is long and hard, but it is well defined and so obvious to them.

Chapter Three:

III. *American Women's Position in the Post World War Era and their Struggle Against Man Oppression and Obedience.*

This chapter is devoted to the position of women in the post-war period. It will look at women's attempts to retain their jobs after the war and the ways in which men and the government tried to persuade women to resume their traditional status. It will focus on the implications of the changes in women's status after the second war; from free, active and productive citizen to submissive housewife. It will focus on how these changes in function and the restricted lives of women in the post-war period led to the women's rights movement of the 1960s

Katherine O'Grady worked in a woolen mill during the war making blankets and other clothing for soldiers. She was a direct connection between the war years and the social transformation that followed for women in the workplace:

After the war things changed, because women found out they could go out and they could survive. They could really do it on their own. That's where I think women's liberation really started. I think it made us more aware. We were very sheltered up until 1941 (Yellin 2004, p, 70)

Emily Yellin Suggests that the war brought about changes that made women realize their ability to be independent and survive on their own. It also implies that prior to 1941; women were relatively sheltered and less aware of their powers.

When America won the war in August 1945, millions of people celebrated. The war was finally over and millions of men would finally be able to return home. In addition, when the fighting stopped, the war machine that had mobilised millions of women to work

stopped. There was no longer a need for women to leave their husbands and children to work; they could stay at home and look after their families. But for some women this was not enough.

The post-World War II era in America brought great changes in the role of women. Government policies idealised the role of women in the home, and the idea of domesticity was widely promoted to encourage women to resume their traditional roles. Emily Yellin "*Our Mothers' War: American Women At Home And At The Front During World War II*" refers the tension between the desire for independence and the social pressure for women to conform to traditional gender roles in post-war America. The challenges women faced and their attempts to redefine their place in society.

1. Women's Intention for the Post War Era:

When millions of veterans were demobilized in 1945, women were again called upon to alter their roles to suit the nation's economic needs. As war production plants closed and large industries like aircraft and shipbuilding laid off workers, the number of women in heavy industry dropped (Woloch 1994:468)

The citation refers to a historical context where, after the end of World War II in 1945, a large number of veterans returned home from military service. As a result, women were once again expected to adapt and change their roles to meet the economic requirements of the nation. Due to the closure of war production plants and downsizing in major industries, many women who had been employed in heavy industry during the war were laid off.

Although women made a lot of progress during the war, women were expected to give up their wartime jobs and resume their homemaking role full-time. In 1944 the US Women's Bureau took a survey of women "in ten war production centers around the nation found that 75 percent of them planned to keep working in the postwar period. Moreover, 84 percent of the women employed in manufacturing wanted to keep their factory jobs. Surveys conducted during the war consistently found that the overwhelming majority of women war workers intended to continue working after the war and to stay in the same line of work. Although women wanted to maintain their jobs, they were forced out by men returning home and by the downturn in demand for war materials.

It was also the subject of a description in Yellin's book, *The Riveter* Barbara Walls, who had worked in New York at the same plant as her mother, believes that though many women exited the factories, something from their war work stayed with them:

Some of the Rosies did very heroic things. And they didn't want to give up what they had experienced or achieved during their war work. But even as they left their jobs, I'm sure that a seed was planted, that women can be heroic. (Yellin, p, 70)

Yellin showcases numerous examples of women who yearned for independence and sought avenues beyond the confines of their traditional roles. These women challenged societal expectations by pursuing education, career. For instance, Yellin recounts the story of Mary Doyle Keefe, the model for Norman Rockwell's iconic "Rosie the Riveter" painting, who broke free from the limitations of her small-town life to become a successful nurse and pursue her dreams.

2. Government's Attitude Towards Women's Employment.

Despite the desire for independence, women faced considerable societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles. Yellin highlights the pervasive messages from media, government, and popular culture that urged women to prioritize marriage, motherhood, and domesticity. At the end of the war, the same propaganda agencies that had begged women to work during the war now extolled the virtues of giving up their jobs so that returning men would have work. A year after the end of the Second World War, "three and a half million women had voluntarily or involuntarily left the labour force".

The American government strategies emphasized on the objective of relaxing from war and reconstruction of the country. To realize that, women then were asked to leave their workplace so as to be occupied by men returning from the war, in this way all American families would have equal opportunities to win bread.

It is also interesting to mention that the propaganda focused on the weak point of women which is the family to convince them to deal with and take care of their husbands and children. So, the U.S government created a persuasive family image with women as the center located in the home; they suddenly reversed Rosie the Riveter's image and pictured her abandoning her welding torch and returning home. The media cooperated in this effort, popular press and advice literature that suggested that women should adopt their feminine roles, get married, bear children, create a warm home life and realize that veterans expected admiration and submissiveness.

According to Elaine Tyler May, propaganda from American government and media portrayed in American ideal of affluence in the suburbs that was white, with male bread winner and stay at home mom. This was also the era of the "happy homemaker." For

young mothers in the 1950s, domesticity was idealized in the media, and women were encouraged to stay at home if the family could afford it. Women who chose to work when they didn't need the paycheck were often considered selfish, putting themselves before the needs of their family.

The campaign used mass media to capture the attention of the population. The mass media through advertisements gave advice and helps to women about household tasks that support their new domestic life. The campaign aimed at convincing them to return to their traditional functions or what was known as women's jobs and forget completely their jobs and performances during the war.

It is claimed that the government campaign succeeded to free and fire women from the workplaces gained during the wartime. However, the latter does not deny that there were no jobs for women. The government created a large number of job opportunities. It promoted the idea of occupying the customary jobs performed by women before wartime; therefore, women were employed in what is often called the "pink collar" work force. Despite the campaign not all women wanted to go back to those jobs, a study showed that 40 to 61 percent of openings for women are in clerical, sales, secretary, waitresses and service industries. But only 15 to 18 percent of them wanted these jobs. Most women workers in the public sectors which were gender segregated and where no men were employed. Women in these workplaces remained excluded from any of the ongoing debates about equal pay. These jobs were not as well-paid and they were not as enjoyable or challenging, but women did take those jobs because they either wanted or needed to keep working. Overall, women do not want to return to their old jobs. They intended to a better and challenging jobs where they could use the skills they acquired during the war.

In addition to this, the prosperity and the luxury that characterized America in the late of 1940s was in favour of men and the government, several women did not tend to seek employment during this period. Due to their engagement with domestic and household duties, which was seen as their primary duty, they often left them isolated within the home and estranged from politics, economics and law making.

What can be deduced, American women in post-war era witnessed a dramatic transition in their functions. The government campaign exercised a kind of oppression on women to quit the role performed and to abandon the enjoyable freedom and experiences that they lived in wartime. The return to the traditional function and the role of the obedient and submissive wives annoyed them as their freedom and choices would be limited again. Sheila Tobias and Lisa Anderson in their book "*demobization and the female labor force*" published in 1974, they wrote how the women working in the war effort were furious when they were forced out of the industrial in a favour of men returning from the war. Therefore, after the war, American women experienced marginalization; disempowerment and they had less opportunity than men to officially contribute to the process of establishing peace and the post-conflict economic, social, and political reconstruction.

3. Women's Attitudes Toward Postwar Policy.

The post war era brought great changes to the American society especially to women's functions. The post war policy succeeded to convince many women to displace their heavy industry and to return to the traditional low-paying women's job. However, a lot of Americanwomen were completely disgruntled of that policy since they were waived

from the acquired rights during the war. Women also felt and recognized that men did not value their great support and achievements in wartime.

It is claimed that this alienation did not prevent women from fighting for their rights. The impacts of the World War II experiences were still alive in their hearts. For women there was no obvious reason to be prevented from continuing the same path traced during the war since they proved their abilities to deal with man's jobs in addition to the household tasks. Many women opposed to be only perfect housewives who were imprisoned in those households' tasks routine or dealing with the "women's jobs" that was seen as boring and not challenging jobs, by contrast; they aimed at expanding their roles and reducing the male dominations. So, women were eagerly motivated and never give up seeking for regaining again in the society.

Yellin's book explores how women grappled with reintegration into pre-war gender norms and expectations. Many faced resistance and disapproval when they sought to continue working outside the home or pursue higher education. The societal pressure to conform often led women to abandon their wartime independence and sacrifice their desires for societal acceptance.

Consequently, women's fight for their rights reappeared again in 1960's. After the activist Betty Friedan published her book the *Feminine Mystique* in 1963 which discussed primarily white women, Betty Friedan was known that she was influenced by Simone de Beauvoir's book, *The Second Sex*, first published in Paris 1949. According to the existentialist Simone de Beauvoir who examined the notion of women being perceived as 'other' in the patriarchal society. Simone de Beauvoir believed in the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will.

What is important to mention is that Betty Friedan in her book not only employed philosophical thought to discuss feminism, she also incorporated oral histories and her personal experiences to address the issues many women were facing. She explicitly objected to how women were depicted in the mainstream media, and how placing them at home (as 'housewives') limited their possibilities and wasted potential. She had helped conduct a very important survey which revealed that the women who played a role at home and the workforce were more satisfied with their life compared with the women who stayed home. The women who stayed home showed feelings of agitation and sadness even the hopelessness of a generation of college educated housewives who felt confined and dissatisfied as one said: I'm desperate. I begin to feel I have no personality. I'm a server of food a putter-on of paints and bed maker, somebody who can be called on when you want something but who am I?

Friedan in *Feminine Mystique* concluded that many of these unhappy women had immersed themselves in the idea that they should not have any ambitions outside their home. Friedan described this as "The Problem That Has No Name"

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning (that is, longing) that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban (house) wife struggled with it alone. As she made the bed, shopped for groceries... she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – "Is this all?"(Friedan: 1963)

The quotation highlights the unexpressed problem experienced by American women during the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. It describes a prevailing sentiment of dissatisfaction and yearning that women felt but did not openly acknowledge.

The suburban housewives, as portrayed in the quote, faced this issue individually and in silence. In essence, the quotation encapsulates the suppressed desire for something more meaningful and fulfilling beyond the traditional roles and domestic responsibilities assigned to women during that time.

The perfect nuclear family image depicted and strongly marketed at the time, she wrote, did not reflect happiness and was rather degrading for women.

In addition to this, Friedan highlights the fault of the advertising industry and education system in restricting women to the household and menial tasks that result in a loss of identity and individuality that they gained during wartime. The Freidan thesis was that women suffered variety of more or less subtle forms of discriminations and victims of pervasive system of false values under which they were urged to find fulfillment and identity through the husbands and the house hold. This book reached and touched women all over the united stated of American.Friedan's book sold over three million copies within the first three years and quickly fueled a resurgence of the feminist movement. Middle-class women across the country began to organize to advocate for women's social and political equality.

Moreover, the movement is usually believed to have begun in 1963, when Betty Freidan published the *Feminine Mystic*; and President John F.Kennedy' Presidential Commissions on the status of women released its report on gender inequality. The administration of the president Kennedy made women's rights a key issue of the new frontier and name women to many high ranking posts in his administration.

It clear that the spread of the second-wave feminism movement affected and involved many women activists who also participated in other social movements, such as

the Civil Rights Movement, counterculture movement, and the gay liberation movement. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed in 1966 and became one of the largest feminist organizations from the second wave. The NOW was founded by some of the most influential women's rights advocates in history, and the organization has remained active with over 500,000 members. Betty Friedan was elected to be the first president of the organization.

The proclamations of women in this second movement took place in the 1960s and 1970s and focused on issues of equality and discrimination. The feminist movement took off, focusing on public and private injustices, such as rape, reproductive rights, domestic violence, and workplace harassment. Second wave feminists cared deeply about exposing and overcoming the casual, systemic racism present in society. It realized that women's cultural and political inequalities were inextricably linked. They worked under a unifying goal of social equality, with sexuality and reproductive rights being central concerns to the liberation movement, and with much of the movement's energy being focused on passing the Equal Rights Amendment.

Although the Equal Rights Amendment still hasn't been ratified, second wave feminism had realized many successes. The approval of the contraceptive pill by the Food and Drug Administration in 1960 gave women more control over their reproductive rights. Feminists also worked and gained women the right to hold credit cards and apply for mortgages in their own name and outlawed marital rape. Awareness around domestic violence was raised, and gender and women's studies departments were founded at universities and colleges. The passing of the Equal Pay Act in 1963.

Consequently, it can be said that the second wave of feminism then appeared and strengthened women's positions by improving and expanding their functions. What can be

seen through Betty Freidan's book "The Feminine Mystic" was that the reason behind the movement was mainly the stereotype and the role of women in the decade after the Second World War. In addition to male and governmental oppression, which limited women's freedoms and options, women were explicitly and implicitly forced to maintain their roles and relinquish the gains of the Second World War. It is true that many women resumed their former roles, responding to the idea of a respite from the war, but they did not expect it to last for many years.

As a result, women lost their identity and felt suffocated in this situation, especially after having experienced independence, freedom and individuality during the war, returning to traditional roles was like falling back into the well. Women have demonstrated their ability and willingness to perform men's jobs, so there is no convincing reason to prevent them from having access to other types of jobs.

The awareness and maturity acquired by women during the Second World War helped them on the one hand to understand that what was being exercised and committed against their rights was in fact a kind of injustice and disregard; on the other hand, it helped and encouraged them to refuse and revolt against this situation. So women didn't forget their wartime achievements, and role models like Eleanor Roosevelt and Pauli Murry were passionate advocates for equality and human rights. The war prepared American women to challenge traditional roles in the decades to come.

According to the letters of contributors, Yellin clarifies the prominent impact in their participation in the Second World War on the second wave of feminism, as an example of riveter Barbara Walls, who had worked in New York, believes that though many women exited the factories, something from their war work stayed with them.

Some of the Rosies did very heroic things. And they didn't want to give up what they had experienced or achieved during their war work. But even as they left their jobs, I'm sure that a seed was planted, that women can be heroic. (Yellin.P.70)

From what has been inferred throughout this chapter, the second post-war era brought many changes and challenges to American society at various levels. These changes mainly affected the lives and identities of women. Men and the government adopted special strategies to persuade women to return to their familiar roles. The government reinforced domestic ideals and limited women's options in the workplace. Women were again disempowered and felt themselves to be victims of gender inequality. Despite the domestic ideals, in reality women were not satisfied, they revealed the suffering and injustice, the inequality and oppression that the community implemented by classifying them as inferior to men. Outside the home, they continued to fight for equal rights, equal job opportunities and to change the stereotype of women in the 1950s.

On the whole, women did not forget their wartime experiences. The large transition and contraction that occurred in their functions in the post war era urged them to peruse greater opportunities outside home, this transition and contraction played a significant role in the reappearance of the women's right movement and the expansion of their roles.

General conclusion:

In examining the issue of American women's contribution in World War II and its impact on their rights movement, Emily Yellin's exploration in "Our Mother's War: American Women at the Home and at the Front during World War II" (2004) sheds light on the intricate relationship between historical events during World War II and the status of American women. The analysis reveals that these events have significantly influenced both American society and women, creating a symbiotic connection.

Due to the marginalisation of women in the new code of law after the American Revolution, the year 1848 marked the beginning of first American women's rights movement with the "Declaration of Sentiments" which was signed by many feminist activists. According to Frederick Douglass, the document was the "grand movement for attaining the civil, social, political and religious rights of women". After long struggle and with their participation in the First World War, women were awarded with the right to vote in 1920 and other modest gains. Many women did work but only women's jobs and without open opportunities to exercise men jobs.

Yellin underscores the transformative impact of America's intervention in World War II on women, with the call for them to take up men's jobs. The war-induced economic mobilization swiftly altered the landscape for women, challenging the notions advocated by gender equality proponents during the war. While some argue that women's wartime involvement was a temporary empowerment, Yellin suggests it was an opportunity for women to redefine their identity. Stepping into roles traditionally reserved for men, women challenged societal norms, leading to significant shifts in attitudes and perceptions.

The post-war era witnessed substantial changes and challenges for women, as detailed by Yellin. The contraction of women's functions and the oppressive image imposed by men and the government triggered vehement objection within the women's rights movement of the 1960s. Yellin posits that this rejection was a result of the consciousness and maturity acquired by women during the war. Women, having experienced freedom and individuality during wartime, found it difficult to accept a regression in their status.

To conclude, Yellin's examination emphasizes that the impact of American women's contribution to World War II was implicit in the post-war era and explicit in the 1960s women's rights movement. The absence of World War II would likely have precluded such impacts and subsequent women's rights movements. The gains women achieved through their wartime contribution played a pivotal role in fueling larger movements for gender equality in the subsequent years, representing the seeds and root cause of the resurrection of the women's rights movement in the 1960s.

The research that has been undertaken for this dissertation has highlighted a number of issues on which further research would be beneficial. It is a fact that the issue of women's rights is still unsolved and a topic of debate, as is their role in the world war the second. Therefore, the women's status and historical events have inverse relationship that has been debated, and will no doubt continue to be discussed and argued in the future.

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