

“Rosie the Riveter”

Song Lyrics

Rosie the Riveter appears to have come first in song, not in art. In 1942, a song titled “Rosie the Riveter” was written by Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb and was issued by Paramount Music Corporation of New York. The song was released in early 1943 and was played on the radio and broadcast nationally. It was also performed by various artists with popular band leaders of that day. The song became quite popular, particularly one version recorded by the Four Vagabonds, an African-American group — a version that caught on and rose on the Hit Parade. It seems likely that Saturday Evening Post artist Norman Rockwell heard this song, and possibly was influenced by it, especially since he wrote the name “Rosie” on the lunch box in his painting.

In the Post’s cover illustration, Rockwell’s Rosie is shown on her lunch break, eating a sandwich from her opened lunch pail as her riveting gun rests on her lap. A giant American flag waves behind her. Rosie appears content, gazing off into the distance. However, Rockwell portrays her with some important details, from the lace handkerchief visible in her right hand pocket, to her foot placed smack on the cover of Adolph Hitler’s Mein Kampf at the bottom of the painting. But there was also something else in Rockwell’s Rosie.



*While other girls attend their fav’rite
cocktail bar
Sipping Martinis, munching caviar
There’s a girl who’s really putting
them to shame
Rosie is her name*

*All the day long whether rain or shine
She’s a part of the assembly line
She’s making history,
working for victory
Rosie the Riveter
Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage
Sitting up there on the fuselage
That little frail can do more than a
male will do
Rosie the Riveter*

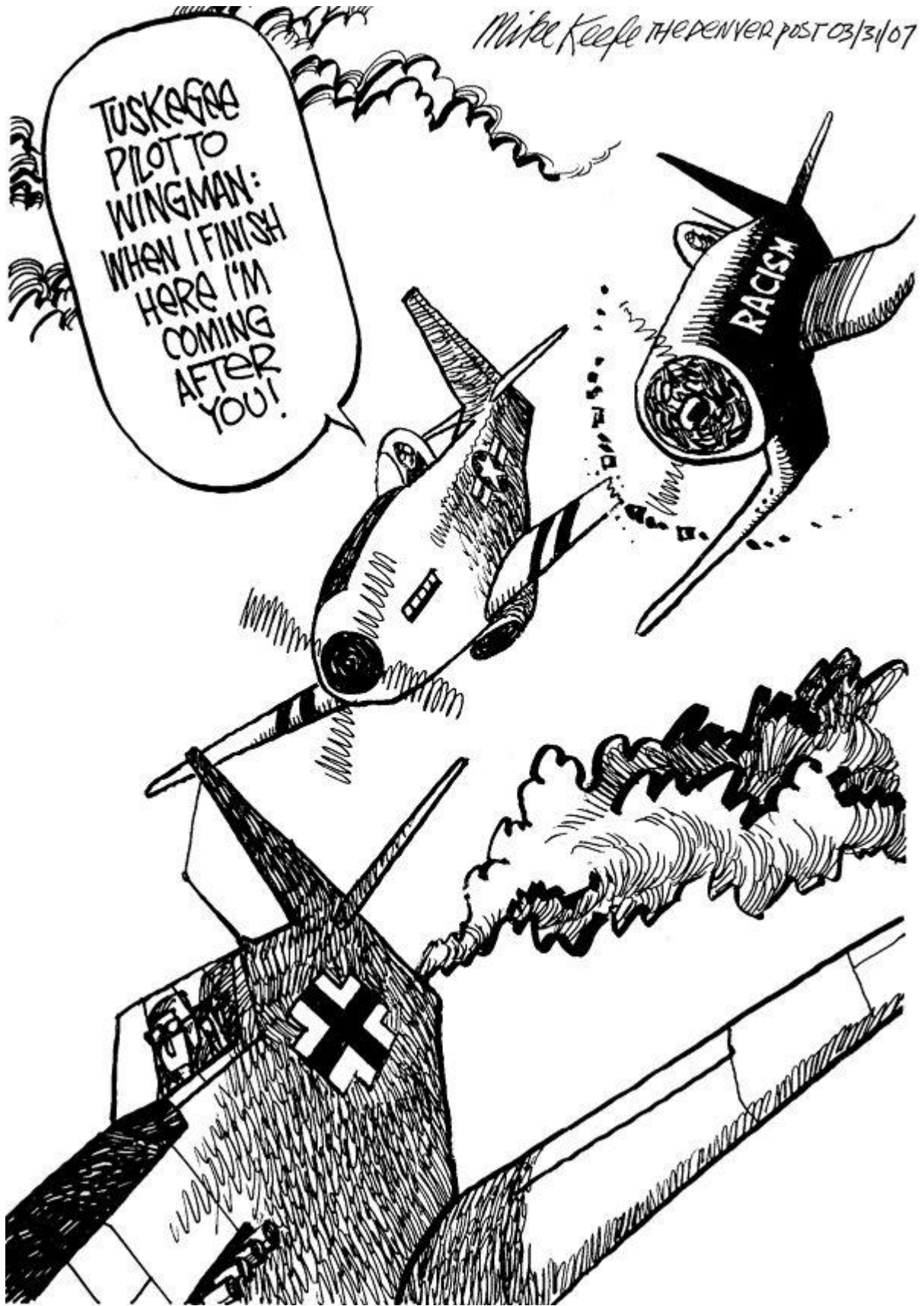
*Rosie’s got a boyfriend, Charlie
Charlie, he’s a Marine
Rosie is protecting Charlie
Working overtime on the
riveting machine
When they gave her a production “E”
She was as proud as a girl could be
There’s something true about
Red, white, and blue about
Rosie the Riveter*

*Everyone stops to admire the scene
Rosie at work on the B-Nineteen
She’s never twittersy, nervous or jittery
Rosie the Riveter
What if she’s smeared full of
oil and grease
Doing her bit for the old Lend-Lease
She keeps the gang around
They love to hang around
Rosie the Riveter*

*Rosie buys a lot of war bonds
That girl really has sense
Wishes she could purchase
more bonds
Putting all her cash into national
defense
Senator Jones who is “in the know”
Shouted these words on the radio
Berlin will hear about
Moscow will cheer about
Rosie the Riveter!*

*Paramount Music Corporation, NY,
1942.*

Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 03/31/07



I do know one thing, this place was very segregated when I first come here. Oh, Los Angeles, you just couldn't go and sit down like you do now. You had certain places you went. You had to more or less stick to the restaurants and hotels where black people were. It wasn't until the war that it really opened up. 'Cause when I come out here it was awful, just like be in' in the South.... The war helped some people because they come back, they took trades, learned to do things. My brother come back and now he is very successful. I think the army really made a man out of him. He works at Rockwell in the missile department and he's a supervisor. He wouldn't have known what to do if he hadn't gone in the army.... They didn't mix the white and black in the war. But now it gives you a kind of independence because they felt that we gone off and fought, we should be equal. Everything started open in' up for us. We got a chance to go places we had never been able to go before....

Source: Opportunities for Women and Blacks, ca. 1942-1945

All Packed Up and Ready to Go

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By Rodger



"Americanizing" the Indians

Land not allotted to individual landholders was sold to railroad companies and settlers from the East. The proceeds were used to set up schools to teach the reading and writing of English. Native American children were required to attend the established reservation school. Failure to attend would result in a visit by a truant officer who could enter the home accompanied by police to search for the absent student. Some parents felt resistance to "white man education" was a matter of honor.

In addition to disregarding tribal languages and religions, schools often forced the pupils to dress like eastern Americans. They were given shorter haircuts. Even the core of individual identity — one's name — was changed to "Americanize" the children. These practices often led to further tribal divisions. Each tribe had those who were friendly to American "assistance" and those who were hostile. Friends were turned into enemies.

The Dawes Act was an unmitigated disaster for tribal units. In 1900, land held by Native American tribes was half that of 1880. Land holdings continued to dwindle in the early 20th century. When the Dawes Act was repealed in 1934, alcoholism, poverty, illiteracy, and suicide rates were higher for Native Americans than any other ethnic group in the United States. As America grew to the status of a world power, the first Americans were reduced to hopelessness.

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/40d.asp>

On June 3, 1943, a number of sailors claimed to have been beaten and robbed by Mexican *pachucos*. The following evening, a mob of about 200 sailors, tired of boredom and fired up with bigotry, hired a fleet of cabs and rolled into East Los Angeles to beat up and strip the clothing off any young Latino male they could find. The authorities seemed to approve. Police made a few initial token arrests of sailors, but they were quickly released. This emboldened the sailors. For several subsequent nights, the swelling mobs of sailors were joined by soldiers and some civilians as they invaded the *barrio*, marching abreast down streets, invading bars and movie houses, assaulting and humiliating any and all young Latino males, many not attired in "zoot suits."

Source: "Zoot Suiters Learn Lesson in Fight with Servicemen," *Los Angeles Times*

Interview with WASP video (posted on Google Classroom)
Navajo Code Talker video (posted on Google Classroom)