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## Executive Order 8802: Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry (1941)

In early July 1941, millions of jobs were being created, primarily in urban areas, as the United States prepared for war. When large numbers of African Americans moved to cities in the north and west to work in defense industries, they were often met with violence and discrimination. In response, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and other black leaders, met with Eleanor Roosevelt and members of the President's cabinet. Randolph presented a list of grievances regarding the civil rights of African Americans, demanding that an Executive order be issued to stop job discrimination in the defense industry. Randolph, with others, threatened that they were prepared to bring "ten, twenty, fifty thousand Negroes on the White House lawn" if their demands were not met. After consultation with his advisers, Roosevelt responded to the black leaders and issued Executive Order 8802, which declared, "There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries and in Government, because of race, creed, color, or national origin." It was the first Presidential directive on race since Reconstruction. The order also established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to investigate incidents of discrimination.

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**Page URL:** <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=72>

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