
Rosie The Riveter Empowers Women During World War II

Events in the past have shaped the minds of women from being housewives to holding higher paying jobs comparable to their male counterparts. The slogan, "We Can Do It!", portrayed by Rosie the Riveter, inspired women during World War II to become more independent and gain a greater confidence in filling the roles that men had previously held. There was a growing need for women in the workplace and posters were used as a type of propaganda in order to invoke both an emotional response and a call to action. The propaganda poster that J. Howard Miller produced in the 1940's, known as Rosie the Riveter, was designed to use a persuasive technique, known as bandwagon, to convey to women that they are strong and are capable of breaking gender barriers. This image has become iconic in reminding women of the awakening that has taken place both economically and socially amidst a time of conflict in American history. This visual propaganda raises the argument that if Rosie could join the workforce and support her country while still caring for her household then so could any other woman. Not only was Rosie a symbol of strength for women, but she represented the millions of those working to produce supplies for the war.

After World War I the United States experienced economic prosperity that eventually ended with the Great Depression. During this time period, women became known for raising their children while men sought after higher paying jobs. As the United States entered World War II, many of the men were in the military and began to fight for their country. Throughout the war, "As men were deployed overseas, women were called to take their places in manufacturing roles on the homefront" (Pearce Rotondi). Initially, women didn't feel they could take on such a responsibility and the men that were still at home didn't think women were suitable for the job. The American government decided that a form of propaganda needed to be created in order to encourage women to contribute to the war effort by entering the workforce. The "We Can Do It!" slogan was introduced featuring Rosie the Riveter who represented American women. The American government felt that it was important for Rosie to empower women to take on an active role in supporting the war.

The "We Can Do It!" poster was a form of bandwagon propaganda that persuaded and encouraged women to become more self confident and take on new responsibilities. It challenged women to promote equality and help in the war effort. Once men left to fight the war, jobs needed to be filled. Many women stepped up and were more than willing to prove themselves. Through the representation of Rosie the Riveter, "The message was clear: although men did the physical fighting on the frontlines, women were also doing their part to defeat the enemy" (Hawkes). In the advertisement, Rosie is depicted as a courageous and resilient woman who is willing to commit to helping her country by rolling up her sleeves and getting the job done. She also represents a typical woman's appearance during this time period. As a result, women were able to relate to her and see a reflection of themselves in her image. Rosie compelled women to change the way they were viewed and convince those that doubted them that they were able to contribute to fighting the war. Using a bandwagon approach, J. Howard Miller's posters, "Subtly indicated that you were unpatriotic if you did not conform to an ideal image" (English). After seeing firsthand the women that accepted this call to action, others were inspired to follow in their footsteps and were willing to enter the workforce with their newfound confidence. Women were able to connect with Rosie and her motto and felt

that since she could do it, so could they. Those that were unsure or questioned their capabilities were convinced that what was being asked of them was attainable.

Rosie the Riveter was a helpful and effective piece of propaganda that rallied women to help fight for their country. She was able to spur many women to action and challenged them to take on a different role than what they were accustomed to. Through the use of the "We Can Do It!" motto, she had a great influence on the way women were portrayed. She was able to boost their morale and allowed them to overcome challenges and hardships. This use of propaganda created a sense of unity between women across the nation and allowed them to accept their new responsibilities as a team. Rosie was able to inspire women to do whatever they put their minds to and to believe in themselves. The impact she had on women would last for many years and paved the way for future generations.