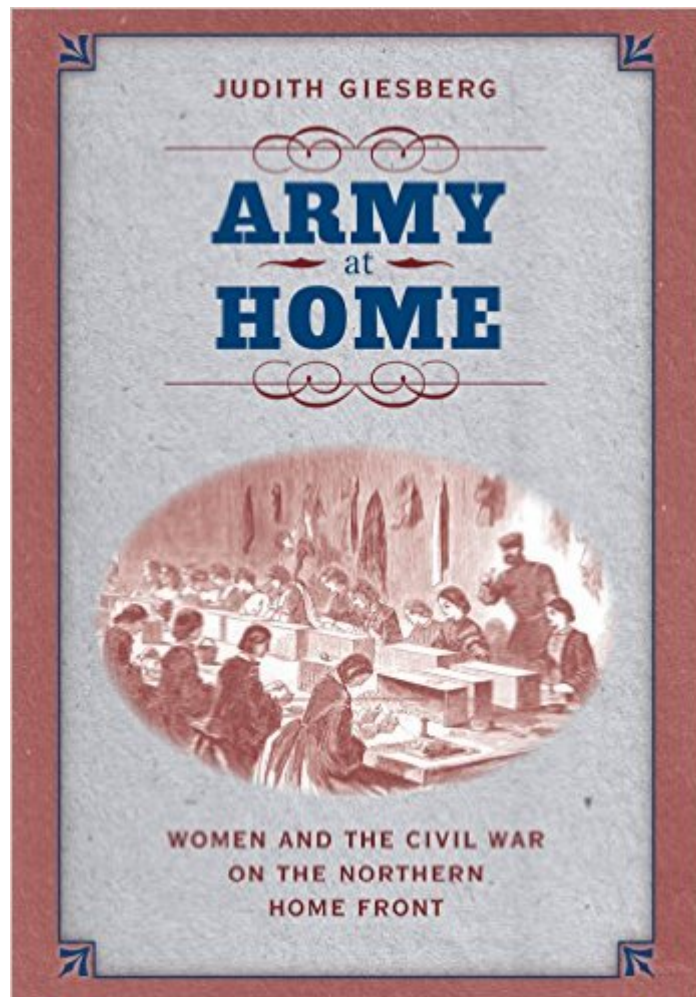


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Army At Home: Women And The Civil War On The Northern Home Front (Civil War America)



Synopsis

Introducing readers to women whose Civil War experiences have long been ignored, Judith Giesberg examines the lives of working-class women in the North, for whom the home front was a battlefield of its own. Black and white working-class women managed farms that had been left without a male head of household, worked in munitions factories, made uniforms, and located and cared for injured or dead soldiers. As they became more active in their new roles, they became visible as political actors, writing letters, signing petitions, moving (or refusing to move) from their homes, and confronting civilian and military officials. At the heart of the book are stories of women who fought the draft in New York and Pennsylvania, protested segregated streetcars in San Francisco and Philadelphia, and demanded a living wage in the needle trades and safer conditions at the Federal arsenals where they labored. Giesberg challenges readers to think about women and children who were caught up in the military conflict but nonetheless refused to become its collateral damage. She offers a dramatic reinterpretation of how America's Civil War reshaped the lived experience of race and gender and brought swift and lasting changes to working-class family life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

True or false: It may well have been because of its women that the South lost the Civil War. • It is often a statement, often a question, and always conjecture; for Judith Giesberg this question rests at the heart of her book, *Army at Home - Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front*. In

less than two hundred pages, Giesberg attempts to quickly illustrate that Northern women were instrumental in national social reform, and that women were instrumental in the war effort. Arguably, Giesberg would disagree with the opening line of this paper. Giesberg's attempt to reconcile the aforementioned question, while addressing the seriously marginalized working-class, immigrant, and African American women of the Civil War, is a noble task; one she accomplishes fairly well. Despite the book being one of war, how women responded in various ways to war, Giesberg employs a thematic, not a chronologic, outline for her narrative. While the war was literally in the backyards of Southern women, Northern women faced issues of their own. Giesberg's thesis essentially contends the Northern home front was not restricted to the battlefield, the women were an army at home, influencing the entirety of the war in every regard. (p. 12) Each chapter serves as a brief case study of sorts, addressing issues relevant to Northern women who were experiencing the war as a withdrawal of labor from their farms and their rural communities. (p. 19) The brief chapters cover a wide range of motifs, from women learning to how to cope with managing the family farm in place of their soldier husbands (chapter one), to the relocation of thousands of women at the hands of the military; a commonly shared experience in the South (chapter two).

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