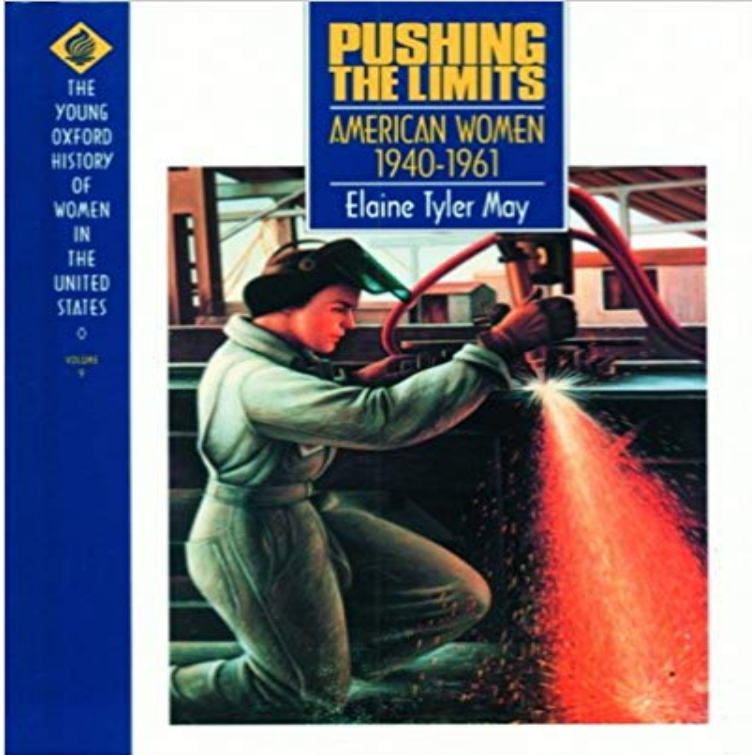


Pushing the Limits: American Women 1940-1961 (Young Oxford History of Women in the United States)



Americans living in the mid-20th century saw momentous change. A decade of severe economic depression in the 1930s was followed by the largest-scale war the world had ever seen. The Allies victory in World War II brought formal peace and new prosperity but also the beginning of a tense and long-lasting cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Womens lives in the United States reflected and helped to shape these world changes. The importance of their contributions became obvious during the war, when production demands drew women into manufacturing jobs and broadcast the image of Rosie the Riveter. When the hot war ended the cold war began, marriage and birth rates began to accelerate, resulting in the famous postwar Baby Boom. Women were encouraged to give up their jobs to the returning veterans and resume their tasks as wives and mothers, and there was a mass migration to the suburbs. Thousands of women lost well-paying jobs, but many remained in the work force. Whether they were college-educated homemakers working to elevate the job of housewife to a respected career, working-class women struggling to preserve the gains of wartime, or African-American women leading the struggle for civil rights, women of all backgrounds pushed the limits of their circumstances, paving the way for the social movements of the 1960s and the feminist gains that would follow. Pushing the Limits tells the stories of ordinary women and their efforts to make a better life for themselves and their children.

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