



Dear Teacher,

Thank you for scheduling a **VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP** with The National WWII Museum. We look forward to connecting with you soon. Please read the following instructions carefully to ensure a successful distance learning program.



After confirming the program, you and the Virtual Classroom Coordinator will discuss connection method and set up a test call approximately a week prior to the scheduled program.

There are two ways to connect with the Museum:

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCING EQUIPMENT (Polycom, Tandberg, Lifesize, etc. system):

The Virtual Classroom Coordinator will switch on the videoconferencing system 10 minutes before the program is set to start. Please dial in to the Museum at **207.29.220.77**. The Virtual Classroom Coordinator will be there to greet you and your students.

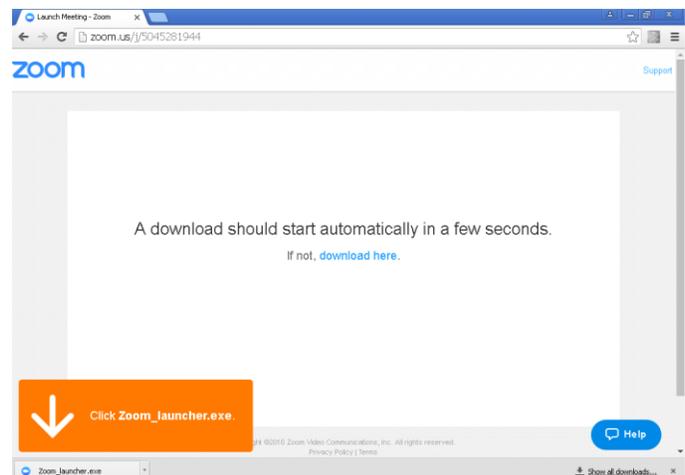
VIA WEBCONFERENCING:

This option is especially for those who do not have designated videoconferencing equipment. You will need the following to connect:

- A computer with high speed internet connection (hardwire connection preferred)
- An interactive white board or digital projector
- External speakers
- Webcam
- Microphone

When ready to connect, go to the following link:
<http://zoom.us/j/5045281944>

If you've never participated in a Zoom meeting, the link will prompt you to download a launcher:



Click on downloaded launcher, and then click “Run.” This will install launcher and allow you to access the meeting room.



If you've connected with a site via Zoom before or downloaded the Zoom application, the link <http://zoom.us/j/5045281944> will prompt the application to launch from your desktop.

Attached with these instructions are handouts and curriculum materials related to the program you requested. Further instructions below.

Thank you and I look forward to connecting with you soon!

Chrissy Gregg

Virtual Classroom Coordinator
The National WWII Museum, New Orleans
virtualclassroom@nationalww2museum.org
Distance learning studio number: **504-528-1944 x351**



Virtual Field Trip TEACHER GUIDE

Before the Virtual Field Trip:

1. A week before the Virtual Field Trip, the Virtual Classroom Coordinator will schedule a test call with you.
2. Please share with students the **African Americans in WWII Introductory Essay** on pgs. 4-5.

During the Virtual Field Trip:

1. Please follow connection instructions as outlined in the preceding letter. The Virtual Classroom Coordinator will be available to connect 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the program.
2. Please distribute Josh White song lyrics on pg. 6 of this guide. You can make one copy per student or one copy per group.
3. Please remain in the room the entire time of the Virtual Field Trip. You will be asked by the Virtual Classroom Coordinator to call on students and facilitate Q&A.
4. If you lose connection, please try to redial. If problems persist, call the Distance Learning Studio direct line at **504-528-1944 x351**

After the Virtual Field Trip:

1. Check out the Middle School or High School Classroom Guides for the Museum's special exhibit: **Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Experiences in WWII**. Both are available for download at: <http://righttofightexhibit.org/home/education.php> under "Classroom Resources." Each contains an Introductory Essay, Who's Who Among African Americans in WWII, and 3 lesson plans.
2. Explore all of the online resources from **Fighting for the Right to Fight**, including oral histories, photographs, and artifacts at: <http://www.righttofightexhibit.org>

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN WWII

Introductory Essay

Racial inequality was deeply ingrained in wartime America. **Segregation**, the system of separating people based on race in schools, transportation, public accommodations, and/or housing, was common throughout much of the country. In the South, where nearly 80 percent of African Americans lived before the war, so-called **Jim Crow laws** divided almost every aspect of life – from schools and streetcars to restrooms and recreational facilities – along racial lines. Segregation also flourished in other regions, thanks in part to the Supreme Court's endorsement of the practice in its landmark 1896 decision in **Plessy v. Ferguson**. While that ruling established the idea of **separate but equal**, segregated facilities for blacks rarely received equivalent resources as those for whites.

Southern states also denied African Americans their constitutional **right to vote**, and **racial violence** and **employment discrimination** threatened black lives and livelihoods across the United States. Between 1918 and 1941, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) recorded at least 544 lynchings of African Americans. On the eve of World War II, African Americans also had an unemployment rate twice that of whites and a median income that was one-third of the average family.

African Americans confronted these inequalities by building strong communities and institutions and by pursuing opportunities for greater freedom wherever and however they could. Writers and activists such as **W.E.B. Du Bois** advocated for the protection of African Americans' rights, while others such as labor leader **A. Philip Randolph** organized black workers to gain economic and political equality.

As World War II erupted, African Americans also faced discrimination in defense industries and the military. In 1940, fewer than 250 of the more than 100,000 workers in the expanding aircraft industry were black, and some companies made clear that they would not hire blacks, regardless of their qualifications. The US Marine Corps and the Army Air Corps (renamed the US Army Air Forces in 1941) also barred blacks from service. While the US Army and US Navy accepted a limited number of African Americans, the Army segregated black soldiers into separate units while the Navy confined them to service positions as cooks and stewards.

Pressure from the NAACP and others led the War Department to pledge in the fall of 1940 that the army would receive African Americans according to their percentage in the population as a whole. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued additional directives to the military to increase opportunities for black enlistment following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and the Air Forces and Marines began accepting African Americans in 1941 and 1942, respectively. Yet even as African American numbers grew dramatically in all branches of the service, the proportion of African Americans in the wartime military never reached the 10.6% of blacks within the nation's overall population.

While most African Americans serving at the beginning of WWII were assigned to non-combat units and relegated to service duties, such as supply, maintenance, and transportation, their work behind front lines was equally vital to the war effort. Many drove for the famous **Red Ball Express**, which carried a half million tons of supplies to the advancing First and Third Armies through France. By 1945, however, troop losses pushed the military to increasingly place African American troops into positions as infantrymen, pilots, tankers, medics, and officers. The all-black **761st Tank Battalion**, for instance, fought its way through France with the Third Army. They spent 183 days in combat and were credited with capturing 30 major towns in France, Belgium,

and Germany. For this, the 761st Tank Battalion received the Presidential Unit Citation for “extraordinary heroism.”

The Army Air Forces also established several African American fighter and bomber units. The pilots of the 99th Fighter Squadron, and later the 332nd Fighter Group, became the symbol of African American participation during World War II, despite being one of the smallest black units of the war. Bomber crews often requested to be escorted by these **Tuskegee Airmen**, who were responsible for destroying 111 enemy planes in the air and 150 on the ground during the war.

While African Americans served with as much honor, distinction, and courage as any other American soldier, the government was often painfully slow to recognize their contributions to the war effort. No African American soldier received the Medal of Honor for his WWII service until after a 1995 government-commissioned report concluded that discrimination marred the awards process. By the time President Bill Clinton awarded the Medal of Honor to seven African American WWII veterans in 1997, only one of those men was still living.

During the war, black protest also yielded significant, if mixed, results on the Home Front. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph cancelled a threatened **March on Washington** after Roosevelt signed **Executive Order 8802**, which banned racial discrimination in war industries and established a **Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC)** tasked with investigating workplace inequality. Employment discrimination persisted, and the African Americans flocking to cities for war production jobs often faced significant hostility, most notably during **wartime riots** in Detroit and Los Angeles in 1943. But blacks nevertheless advanced within the industrial economy. By April 1944, African Americans comprised eight percent of the nation’s defense workers. The massive wartime migration of African Americans out of the South also reshaped the nation’s cities and its postwar political order.

Many African Americans also viewed the war as an opportunity to fight for a **Double Victory** over racism at home and facism abroad. Twenty-six-year-old James G. Thompson proposed the idea of a Double Victory in a 1942 letter to the editor of the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Courier* soon introduced a **Double V** icon, which it displayed prominently in its pages for months. Throughout much of 1942, the *Courier* also vigorously promoted a Double V campaign by running regular Double V-related photos and stories and by encouraging its 140,000 subscribers to form Double V clubs. By 1943, however, the *Courier* had mostly ended its Double V campaign.

After the war, President Harry S. Truman created the President’s Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR) in response to increased reports of violence against black veterans and a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. The committee looked at the service of African American men and women in World War II, and in 1948 Truman acted on the committee’s recommendations by drafting **Executive Orders 9980 and 9981**, banning segregation in the federal government and ordering the integration of the armed forces. Profoundly unpopular in many quarters, these were groundbreaking moves toward reform directly based on African American service in World War II. While some integrated units served in the Korean War, the US Army did not deploy a truly integrated force until the Vietnam War.

African Americans served bravely in every theater of World War II, while simultaneously struggling for their own civil rights at home and fighting against discrimination – and for the right to fight – within the military. The National WWII Museum honors their contributions.



“Uncle Sam Says”

Written by Josh White and Waring Cuney, 1939

Well, airplanes flying close to land and sea,
Everybody flying but a Negro like me.
Uncle Sam says, 'Your place is on the ground;
When I fly my airplanes, don't want no Negro 'round.'

The same thing for the Navy when ships goes to sea,
All they got is a mess boy's job for me.
Uncle Sam says, 'Keep on your apron, son;
You know I ain't going to let you shoot my big Navy gun.'

Got my long government letter, It's my time to go,
When I got to the Army, found the same old Jim Crow.
Uncle Sam says, 'Two camps for black and white.'
But when trouble starts, we'll all be in that same big fight.

If you ask me I think democracy is fine,
I mean democracy without a color line.
Uncle Sam says, 'We'll live the American way.'
Let's get together and kill Jim Crow today.

“Defense Factory Blues”

Written by Josh White, 1941

Went to the De-fense factory, trying to find some work to do,
Had the nerve to tell me, “Black boy, nothing here for you.”

My father died, died fighting 'cross the sea.
Mama said his dying never helped her or me.

I'll tell you brother, well, it sure don't make no sense
When a Negro can't work in the national defense.

I'll tell you one thing, that boss man ain't my friend.
If he was he'd give me some democracy to defend.

In the land of the free called the home, home of the brave,
All I want is liberty, that is what I crave.