

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN WWII



**THE NATIONAL
WWII MUSEUM
NEW ORLEANS**



MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM GUIDE

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The National WWII Museum created this classroom guide to correspond with the special exhibit *Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Experiences in WWII*. In addition to an introductory essay and brief biographical profiles of prominent wartime African Americans, the guide includes three primary-source based lesson plans. The lesson plans align with Common Core and National Center for History in the Schools standards, and you can implement them either as a unit or individually. Tweet us [@WWIIEducation](https://twitter.com/WWIIEducation) to let us know how you are using this guide in your classroom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductory Essay: African American Experiences in WWII	3
Who's Who Among African Americans in WWII	5
LESSON PLAN: Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Attitudes About WWII	9
LESSON PLAN: Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: African American Soldiers' Experiences in WWII	19
LESSON PLAN: A Double Victory? The Legacy of African Americans in WWII	26

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES 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. Throghout 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.

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN WWII

Who's Who Among African Americans in World War II



Library of Congress, LC-USW3-011696-C.

A. Phillip Randolph (1889-1979)

In the two decades before World War II, many Americans considered Asa Philip Randolph's views radical even outside the Jim Crow South. Randolph called for the unionization of black workers as a means of securing financial strength, and thus political power. He also demanded that African Americans be allowed to serve their country in the military.

In 1941, Randolph cancelled a 50,000 man march on Washington, DC, after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which banned racial discrimination in war industries. After the war, Randolph and others continued the fight for increased black participation in the military. In 1947, Randolph and colleague Grant Reynolds formed the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training. One year later President Harry S. Truman's Executive Order 9981 declared an end to segregation in the armed forces. Randolph went on to become a leading figure in the Civil Rights Movement.



The Roi Ottley Collection, St. Bonaventure University Archives.

Vincent "Roi" Ottley (1906-1960)

Though Vincent "Roi" Ottley worked as a reporter throughout New York City in the 1930s, he spent most of his time in Harlem, where he became passionate about the need for social change for African Americans. Ottley's Peabody Award winning book *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* became a 1943 bestseller and was serialized on the radio.

Commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the US Army in 1944, Ottley was sent to Europe as one of the first black war correspondents. Several civilian papers, including the *Pittsburgh Courier*, picked up his columns covering discrimination and injustices faced by black soldiers. Ottley's observations frequently put him at odds with Army censors, but he remained overseas for the duration of the war.

As a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune* after the war, Ottley conducted many well-regarded interviews. One such interview resulted in a remarkable piece on Samuel Green, the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Carl Van Vechten Collection, LC-USZ62-128514.

Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955)

Called “The First Lady of the Struggle,” Mary McLeod Bethune was an educator and activist who dedicated her life to improving the social and political standing of African Americans. Born to former slaves, Bethune saw education and literacy as the means of escape from poverty among African Americans in the South. She became a teacher and was active in many civic organizations in the 1920s and 1930s.

During World War II, Bethune served as the assistant director of the Women’s Army Corps, organizing the first women’s officer candidate schools and lobbying successfully for opening up the military to admittance of African American women. A personal friend of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Bethune met regularly with President Roosevelt, using her platform to advocate for the rights of African American men and women. One of her greatest successes was the creation of the Black Cabinet, an influential group of African American officials that worked in Roosevelt’s administration.



Library of Congress, LC-DIG-PPMSCA-11758.

Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. (1912-2002)

The only black cadet at West Point in 1932, Benjamin O. Davis was shunned by his classmates. He was spoken to only when necessary, and he lived and ate alone. Newly-commissioned Second Lieutenant Davis then found that his desired position in the Army Air Corps was closed to him at that time due to his race.

Davis was in the first class of pilot trainees at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama where the first black fighter squadron was organized in 1940. After earning his wings, he was appointed commander of the 99th Pursuit Squadron. By war’s end, Davis had flown 60 combat missions and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Silver Star.

In 1947, drawing heavily on the accomplishments of the Tuskegee Airmen, Davis drafted the desegregation plan for the newly formed Air Force. Davis retired as a lieutenant general in 1970. In 1998, President Clinton promoted him to four-star general.



National Archives, 208-NP-10FF-1.

Gilbert “Hashmark” Johnson (1905-1972)

Gilbert Johnson joined the Navy in 1932 after being discharged from the Army. While a Steward’s Mate First Class, he heard that the Marine Corps was finally accepting African Americans and requested a transfer even knowing he would lose his rank. Though a private at Montford Point, Johnson had been in the military for fifteen years. He quickly became known as “Hashmark” because he had more service stripes, known as “hashmarks,” than he had rank stripes. One of the first African American drill instructors in Marine Corps history, Johnson would go on to lead 25 combat patrols on Guam, but only after persuading his commanding officer that black marines should be given that opportunity.

Hashmark, who retired from the Marine Corps in 1959, died of a heart attack in 1972 while giving a speech to the Montford Point Marine Association. Two years later Montford Point was renamed Camp Gilbert Johnson.



Navy Historical Center, NH 96775.

Samuel Gravely, Jr. (1922-2004)

After joining the Naval Reserves in 1942, Samuel Gravely, Jr. was selected to participate in the V-12 accelerated officer training program. Gravely was commissioned as an ensign on December 14, 1944, less than a year after the Navy commissioned its first thirteen black officers, who were known as the "Golden Thirteen."

Gravely became the first black officer to serve at sea when he reported aboard the submarine chaser *USS PC-1264*. After being discharged in 1946, Gravely went back to school in his hometown, Richmond, Virginia, but remained in the Naval Reserves. He was called back to service soon after President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 abolishing discrimination in the armed forces.

During his record-setting 38-year career, Gravely became the first African American to command a US warship, the destroyer escort *USS Falgout*; the US Navy's first black admiral; and the first African American fleet commander, taking over the Third Fleet in 1976. Vice Admiral Samuel Gravely, Jr. retired in 1980.



Courtesy of the United States Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Alex Haley (1921-1992)

Alexander Haley's father, a college professor, disapproved of his son's decision to drop out of college and convinced him to join the military to learn discipline. Once in the US Coast Guard, Haley frequently wrote letters to family and friends, and when word of Haley's eloquence spread, his shipmates began paying him to write letters for them as well. After America joined the war, Haley served in the Pacific Theater aboard the cargo ship *USS Murzim* (AK-95) as an officer's steward. He authored the ship's newsletter and frequently contributed to *Coast Guard Magazine*.

As a career guardsman after the war, Haley first became a Journalist First Class and then the first Chief Journalist in Coast Guard history. Haley retired from the military in 1959 to pursue freelance writing and was widely published over the next two decades. Haley's greatest success came in 1976 with the novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*.



Courtesy of the Department of Transportation.

Hugh Mulzac (1886-1971)

Born in the West Indies, Hugh Mulzac first went to sea aboard British ships after finishing high school and earning his mate's license in Wales. After immigrating to the United States, Mulzac became the first black man ever to earn a master's license in America. Because there were no positions for a black ship captain in the 1920s, he was forced to work as a steward.

Mulzac waited 24 years for the chance to command. In 1942, at age 56, he was offered command of the Merchant Marine's *SS Booker T. Washington*. The offer came with a condition: the ship was to have a black crew. Mulzac refused.

The Maritime Commission relented, and Mulzac sailed the *Washington* with an integrated crew on 22 voyages during and after the war. He said of his war service, "Now at last I could use my training and capabilities fully. It was like being born anew."



The National WWII Museum, 2008.280.011.

Higgins Industries

By war's end, the New Orleans company owned by Andrew Higgins had produced more than 22,000 military vessels of all types, most notably LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel). Higgins Industries grew from a small company with fewer than 100 workers into a corporation boasting eight plants around the city employing more than 20,000 people. To meet these staggering manpower needs, Higgins hired thousands of black men and women and paid an equal wage for a job regardless of the race of the man or woman performing the work. Such practices set it apart from many other companies, but Higgins Industries still required separate entrances and facilities for African American workers.

Dwight Eisenhower called Higgins "the man that won the war for us." Hitler referred to Higgins as the "new Noah." But the accomplishments of Higgins Industries would not have been possible without the contributions of New Orleans's African American residents.



Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-130748.

Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993)

An explosion at the naval weapons depot in Port Chicago, California, on July 17, 1944, killed or wounded more than 700 people, mostly African American sailors and laborers. The survivors refused to return to work after the explosion. In a trial that exposed rampant discrimination and racism within the US Navy, fifty black sailors were convicted of mutiny.

Thurgood Marshall could not participate in the court martial of the "Chicago 50" because it was a military court and he was a civilian. However, as Chief Counsel for the NAACP, Marshall attended all of the court sessions and began planning an appeal even before the verdicts were handed down. He represented all 50 men in Washington, DC, before the Navy Judge Advocate General and won a retrial, but all 50 convictions were upheld.

After the war, he won the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, which declared segregated public schools to be unconstitutional. In 1967, after a nearly 33-year career in law, Marshall was nominated for the US Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson. Marshall became the first African American Supreme Court Justice in US history and served on the bench until 1991.



Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-109400.

Medgar Evers (1925-1963)

Growing up in the South, Medgar Wiley Evers was routinely subjected to discrimination, including random acts of violence. Though still subjected to racism and discrimination in the army, he met many men who fought back against injustice. Determined to continue the fight, Evers returned home and became active in the Regional Council of Negro Leadership. His attempts to enter the University of Mississippi Law School in 1954 brought him into contact with the NAACP, and he soon became the organization's first field secretary in Mississippi. By 1960, he was one of Mississippi's civil rights leaders.

Early on the morning of June 12, 1963, Evers was shot in the back while walking up his driveway after attending a meeting with NAACP lawyers. His killer, white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith, also a World War II veteran, escaped conviction twice at the hands of white juries. He was not convicted of Evers's murder until 1994.



Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Attitudes About WWII

Lesson Plan

INTRODUCTION:

Even after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into World War II, African Americans fiercely debated their role in the war effort. What part could – or should – they play in the segregated military and discriminatory defense industries? Should they fight abroad for a country that denied them basic rights at home? Would support for the war help – or hurt – their own struggle for freedom? By examining African Americans' campaigns for full access to military service and defense industry jobs, this lesson allows students to explore these questions from the perspectives of those who confronted them during the war.

OBJECTIVE:

By examining multiple primary sources, students will be able to engage in a historical debate about African American responses to wartime racial discrimination and to write about the war from the perspective of a young African American who was alive at the time.

STANDARDS:

Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6](#)

Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7](#)

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

National Center for History in the Schools' National Standards for History:
Content Era 8, Standard 3C

The student is able to evaluate how minorities organized to gain access to wartime jobs and how they confronted discrimination.

Historical Thinking Standard 2

The student is able to identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.

Historical Thinking Standard 2

The student is able to describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like; to consider the historical context in which the event unfolded – the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and to avoid “present-mindedness,” judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Historical Thinking Standard 3

The student is able to consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.

TIME REQUIREMENT:

1-2 class periods

PROCEDURE:

1. Use the **Introductory Essay** to provide context about racial inequality in wartime America. In addition to highlighting Jim Crow laws and racially based voting, employment, and housing restrictions, highlight the existence of segregation within the military and discrimination within the defense industries along with African American efforts to combat these inequities.
2. Introduce **James G. Thompson's January 1942 letter to the editor** of the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Explain that ordinary people often use letters to the editor to publicly address and generate debate about important issues in their communities. Drawing upon the Introductory Essay, describe the role that the black press played during World War II.
3. Have students read Thompson's letter, respond in writing to the **accompanying questions**, and share their responses with the class. Based upon students' reading levels, you may choose to read the letter aloud, to limit the class's examination to paragraphs 2-6, and/or to have students read and summarize the letter one paragraph at a time. Students can read the transcript of the letter and you can project the scan of the original.
4. After reviewing students' responses, introduce the **Double V icon** and **Soldier Survey**, explaining that these sources will allow them to investigate the extent to which other African Americans agreed with Thompson.
5. Divide the class into pairs, distributing the Double V icon to one member of the pair and the Soldier Survey to the other. Have students independently examine their assigned source, respond to the accompanying questions, and share their responses with their partner and then the whole class. Alternatively, you may choose to examine both sources with the whole class.
6. As students report on the sources, highlight African Americans' varying attitudes about the war and ask them why they think opinions differed.

7. Have students engage in a historical debate about which attitude/argument they would have adopted if they were an African American living during World War II. Instruct students to provide evidence from the sources or Introductory Essay to support their claims. As necessary, expand upon the discussion by highlighting additional details about African Americans' wartime experiences from the Introductory Essay.

EXTENSION/ ENRICHMENT:

- For homework, have students write a letter to the editor of a black-owned newspaper from the perspective of a young African American living during WWII.
- Have students research other African Americans' experiences with segregation and their attitudes about joining the military by searching the Museum's Digital Collections at www.ww2online.org/advanced and selecting the "Race Relations" and "Ethnic/Racial Identity" tags. Students can also explore wartime segregation and race relations through the Museum's "See You Next Year! High School Yearbooks from WWII" digital collection, available at www.ww2yearbooks.org
- Encourage students to search online or in a library for additional sources on African Americans in World War II.

Primary Source I: Letter to the Editor

In January 1942 James G. Thompson, a twenty-six-year-old African American from Wichita, Kan., wrote to the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier* to express his feelings about the war. In a note above Thompson's letter, the newspaper's editor wrote: "A young man, confused and befuddled by all of this double talk about democracy and the defense of our way of life, is asking, like other young Negroes, some very pertinent questions. We reprint this letter in full because it is symbolic."

Dear Editor:

1. Like all true Americans, my greatest desire at this time, this crucial point of our history, is a desire for a complete victory over the forces of evil, which threaten our existence today. Behind that desire is also a desire to serve, this, my country, in the most advantageous way.
2. Most of our leaders are suggesting that we sacrifice every other ambition to the paramount one, victory. With this I agree; but I also wonder if another victory could not be achieved at the same time. After all the things that beset the world now are basically the same things which upset the equilibrium of nations internally, states, counties, cities, homes, and even the individual.
3. Being an American of dark complexion and some 26 years, these questions flash through my mind: 'Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?' 'Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?' 'Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life? Is the kind of America I know worth defending? Will America be a true and pure democracy after this war? Will Colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past? These and other questions need answering; I want to know, and I believe every colored American, who is thinking, wants to know.
4. This may be the wrong time to broach such subjects, but haven't all good things obtained by men been secured through sacrifice during just such times of strife.

Primary Source I: Letter to the Editor

5. I suggest that while we keep defense and victory in the forefront that we don't lose sight of our fight for democracy at home.
6. The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.
7. This should not and would not lessen our efforts to bring this conflict to a successful conclusion: but should and would make us stronger to resist these evil forces which threaten us. America could become united as never before and become truly the home of democracy.
8. In way of an answer to the foregoing questions in a preceding paragraph I might say that there is no doubt that this country is worth defending; things will be different for the next generation; colored Americans will come into their own, and America will eventually become the true democracy it was designed to be. These things will become a reality in time; but not through any relaxation of the efforts to secure them.
9. In conclusion let me say that though these questions often permeate my mind, I love America and am willing to die for the America I know will someday become a reality.

James G. Thompson

Source: James G. Thompson, "Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half-American?'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 31, 1942. Reprinted by permission from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Primary Source I: Letter to the Editor

Should I Sacrifice To Live 'Half-American?'

Suggest Double VV for Double Victory Against Axis Forces and Ugly Prejudices on the Home Front.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: A young man, confused and befuddled by all of this double talk about democracy and the defense of our way of life, is asking, like other young Negroes, some very pertinent questions. We reprint this letter in full because it is symbolic.)

DEAR EDITOR:

Like all true Americans, my greatest desire at this time, this crucial point of our history; is a desire for a complete victory over the forces of evil, which threaten our existence today. Behind that desire is also a desire to serve, this, my country, in the most advantageous way.

Most of our leaders are suggesting that we sacrifice every other ambition to the paramount one, victory. With this I agree; but I also wonder if another victory could not be achieved at the same time. After all the things that beset the world now are basically the same things which upset the equilibrium of nations internally, states, counties, cities, homes and even the individual.

Being an American of dark complexion and some 26 years, these questions flash through my mind: "Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?" "Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?" "Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life? Is the kind of America I know worth defending? Will America be a true and pure democracy after this war? Will Colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past? These and other questions need answering; I want to know, and I believe every colored American, who is thinking, wants to know.



Jas. G. Thompson

This may be the wrong time to broach such subjects, but haven't all good things obtained by men been secured through sacrifice during just such times of strife.

I suggest that while we keep defense and victory in the forefront that we don't lose sight of our fight for true democracy at home.

The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.

This should not and would not lessen our efforts to bring this conflict to a successful conclusion; but should and would make us stronger to resist these evil forces which threaten us. America could become united as never before and become truly the home of democracy.

In way of an answer to the foregoing questions in a preceding paragraph I might say that there is no doubt that this country is worth defending; things will be different for the next generation; colored Americans will come into their own, and America will eventually become the true democracy it was designed to be. These things will become a reality in time; but not through any relaxation of the efforts to secure them.

In conclusion let me say that though these questions often permeate my mind, I love America and am willing to die for the America I know will someday become a reality.

JAMES G. THOMPSON

James G. Thompson, "Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half-American?'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 31, 1942. Reprinted by permission from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Worksheet for Primary Source I

"Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half-American?'"

Directions: Please respond to the following questions after reading Thompson's letter to the editor.

1. What words or phrases stand out to you? Why do these words/phrases catch your attention?
2. Identify the date and origin of the document (e.g., When and where was it created? Who created it? Who was the target audience? How was the source produced?). How do you think these features affect the attitudes that Thompson expresses?
3. What do you think Thompson means when he asks whether he should sacrifice his life to "live half American" (Paragraph 3)? Would you sacrifice your life "to live half American"?
4. What does Thompson mean by "double victory" (Paragraph 6)?
5. What is the main argument that Thompson is making about the role African Americans should play in the war effort?
6. How does he support this argument? Here you may choose to discuss the reasons and evidence he provides and/or how the language, style, or structure of his letter supports his purpose.
7. If you were in James Thompson's position, what would you have said to your fellow African Americans about the role they should play in the war effort? Why would you choose to deliver this message?

Primary Source 2: Double V

James Thompson's 1942 letter to the Pittsburgh Courier calling for African Americans to fight for a "double victory" over racism at home and fascism abroad captivated the newspaper's – and the nation's – attention. The Courier introduced the Double Victory icon below the week after receiving Thompson's letter, and the paper displayed it 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.



Pittsburgh Courier Archives

Worksheet for Primary Source 2

Double V Icon

Directions: Please respond to the following questions after examining the Double V Icon

1. What details of the icon's design stand out to you? Why do these details catch your attention?
2. Why do you think the designer of the icon included the image of the eagle?
3. What message does the Double V icon send? What does it reveal about African Americans' wartime attitudes and priorities?
4. Why do you think the *Pittsburgh Courier* embraced the Double V campaign after it received Thompson's letter?
5. Why do you think the Double V campaign slowed down by 1943?
6. If you were alive at the time, would you have supported the Double V campaign? Why/Why not?

Primary Source 3: Soldier Survey

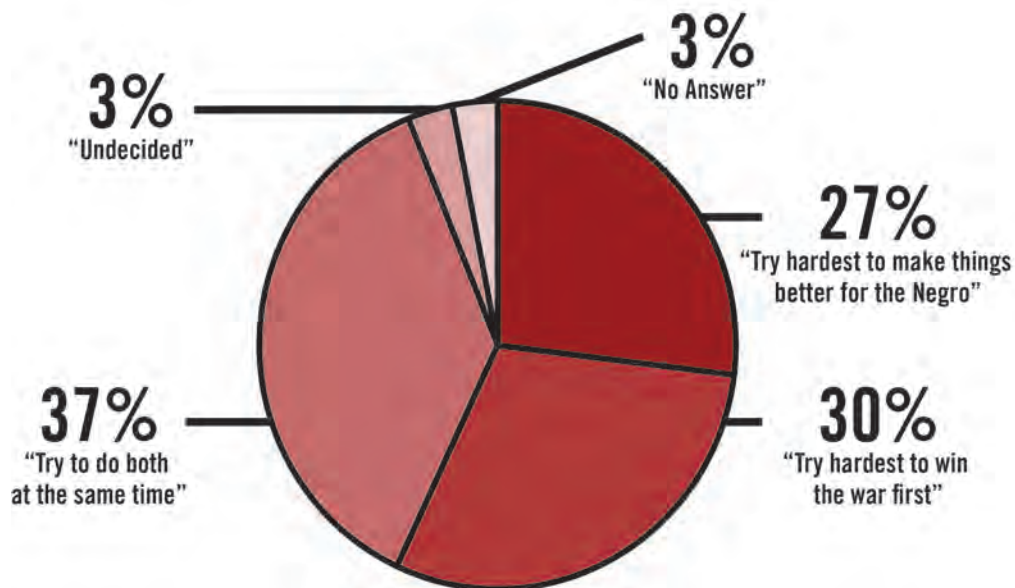
The War Department surveyed more than half a million soldiers during World War II about everything from mental health to winter clothing. The Department believed these surveys would “provide the army command quickly and accurately with facts about the attitudes of soldiers which...might be helpful in policy formation.”

But these studies also provide students like you with an extraordinary snapshot of soldiers’ thoughts, hopes, and frustrations.

In March 1943, the War Department’s Information and Education Division asked more than seven thousand African American soldiers, “Which of these things do you think Negroes back home in civilian life should try hardest to do now?”

In the excerpt from the original survey report below, the numbers to the left of the answer choices indicate how many soldiers gave that response. The pie chart presents the same information in an easier-to-read format.

Q.50. Which of these things do you think Negroes back home in civilian life should try hardest to do now?
R. Col. 40
2009 1. Try hardest to make things better for the Negro
2266 2. Try hardest to win the war first
2733 3. Try to do both at the same time
240 4. Undecided
194 0. No Answer



Source: Samuel A. Stouffer, Research Branch, Information and Education Division, War Department, “The American Soldier in World War II: Attitudes of Negroes,” March 1943, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Graphic by The National WWII Museum.

Worksheet for Primary Source 3

Soldier Survey

Directions: Please respond to the following questions after examining the results from the War Department opinion survey.

1. Which answer choice was the most popular?
2. Which answer choice was the least popular?
3. What do you find most surprising or interesting about the survey results?
4. How would you summarize the survey results? What do they reveal about African American soldiers' wartime attitudes and priorities?
5. What other primary sources could you examine to learn about African Americans' wartime attitudes and priorities? Do you think these sources would support or challenge the survey results?
6. If you were an African American soldier in 1943 and you were given this survey, how would you have responded? Why would you have given this response?



Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: African American Soldiers' Experiences in WWII

Lesson Plan

INTRODUCTION:

In this lesson, students will analyze oral histories in order to gain insight into African Americans' military experiences during World War II. They will synthesize what they learn by writing their own journal entry or letter home from the perspective of an African American serving in World War II.

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to analyze oral history interviews in order to describe African Americans' military experiences during WWII.

STANDARDS:

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

National Center for History in the Schools' National Standards for History

Content Era 8, Standard 3B

The student is able to describe military experiences and explain how they fostered American identity and interactions among people of diverse backgrounds.

Historical Thinking Standard 2

The student is able to appreciate historical perspectives and draw upon literary sources, including oral testimony.

Historical Thinking Standard 4 – The student is able to support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

TIME REQUIREMENT:

1-2 class periods

PROCEDURE:

1. As a warm-up activity, have students respond to the following prompt:

Historian Stephen Ambrose wrote, "The world's greatest democracy fought the world's greatest racist with a segregated army. It was worse than that: the Army and the society conspired to degrade African-Americans in every way possible" (Citizen Soldiers).

Based on this comment, what do you expect African American soldiers' experiences were like during World War II?

2. As students share their responses, record key ideas/themes on the board.
3. Introduce the lesson by informing students that they will be gathering evidence from multiple oral histories to test whether their initial ideas about African American soldiers' wartime experiences are accurate. Based upon your students' familiarity with the subject, you may want to share some of the background information from the **Introductory Essay** about racial inequality in the wartime United States.
4. Distribute the **Oral History Analysis Graphic Organizer** and review the instructions for taking notes on the interviews.
5. For each oral history interview, briefly introduce the interviewee, play the selected excerpt, then allow students to record their observations and analysis on their graphic organizer. To model use of the graphic organizer, you may want to fill it out for the first interview with the whole class before students practice independently.
6. After students share and discuss what they recorded on the observation and analysis portions of their graphic organizers, have them write a one-two sentence summary of African American soldiers' WWII experiences based on the evidence they gathered and analyzed. Explain that this summary is the student's unique interpretation of the past.
7. Have students share their interpretations and discuss how the conclusions they reached after examining the oral histories compare with those they reached in response to the warm-up prompt.
8. Facilitate a historical debate about which interpretation students agree with most, asking them to provide evidence from the oral histories to support their claims. As necessary, supplement the students' contributions with information from the **Introductory Essay**.

EXTENSION/ ENRICHMENT:

- For homework, have students write a journal entry or letter home from the perspective of an African American serving in World War II.
- Have students listen to additional segments from the Lavenia Breaux, Edgar Cole, William Holloman, and Eugene Tarrant oral histories in order to write mini-biographies of these veterans.
- Have students follow the Museum's Oral History Guidelines available at www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/oral-history-guidelines.html in order to conduct an oral history interview with an African American veteran from World War II or another war.
- Have students research other African Americans' experiences with segregation and their attitudes about joining the military by searching the Museum's Digital Collections at www.ww2online.org/advanced and selecting the "Race Relations" and "Ethnic/Racial Identity" tags. Students can also explore wartime segregation and race relations through the Museum's "See You Next Year! High School Yearbooks from WWII" digital collection at www.ww2yearbooks.org.

ORAL HISTORIES

Primary Source I: Oral History Interview with Lavenia Breaux

Lavenia Hickman Breaux was born in Slidell, Louisiana, in 1917, the daughter of a laborer and laundress. Her family moved to New Orleans when she was a young girl, and she found the city to be a safe and pleasant place



to grow up. "My parents were poor people," she recalled. "[But] I'm glad and grateful that I had that upbringing because then I learned to appreciate people." Breaux attended church regularly, followed the brass bands that snaked through her neighborhood during "second line" parades, and learned the value of hard work.

Shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Breaux joined an all-African American unit within the Women's Army Corps (WAC). She had always dreamed of traveling, and she figured the military would allow her to do so. Breaux's primary job in the Army was to establish camps for new recruits, and she was among the nearly 350,000 American women who served in uniform during World War II at home and abroad. In the excerpt from her oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/lavenia-breaux/segment-4 (see especially 33:14-38:24), Breaux describes life in the barracks following basic training.

Source: Lavenia Breaux Interview, The National WWII Museum, OH.321.

ORAL HISTORIES

Primary Source 2: Oral History Interview with Edgar Cole

Edgar Cole was born in Dallas, Texas, in 1925. He grew up poor and began helping his family financially at a young age with a newspaper route and a job at a grocery store. Since his home did not have running hot water, he and his six siblings bathed around a single wood stove.

Ambitious and eager to leave Dallas, Cole graduated high school then completed an advanced training program in California through the National Youth Administration. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he secured a job at a naval shipyard in order to contribute to the war effort. He was then drafted into the US Marine Corps, which had not accepted African Americans prior to 1942. The Marines sent Cole to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where he went through basic training at a segregated facility at Montford Point. In the excerpt from his oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/edgar-cole/segment-4 (see especially 33:35-36:49), Cole describes a ceremony at the conclusion of basic training.



Edgar Cole in his Marine uniform, from the collection of The National WWII Museum.

Source: Edgar Cole, The National WWII Museum, OH.0349.

ORAL HISTORIES

Primary Source 3: Oral History Interview with William Holloman

William Holloman was born in 1924 in Saint Louis, Missouri, where his father worked for the US Postal Service. He grew up in an all-black neighborhood and attended a segregated black school. But he felt sheltered



from discrimination since he never went to downtown St. Louis, where blacks were not allowed to use the theaters and lunch counters.

Holloman started flying at 16 and joined the Army Air Forces after being drafted in November 1942. He reported to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis in June 1943, then trained at Keesler Field in Mississippi and Tuskegee University, where he learned to fly Curtiss P-40 "Tomahawk" and Republic P-47 "Thunderbolt" fighter planes. In 1944 Holloman deployed to Ramitelli Air Base in Italy, where he joined the US 99th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group. The 332nd is better known as the "Tuskegee Airmen" or "Red Tails" on account of the deep red mark that its pilots painted on the tails of their airplanes.

In Italy, Holloman quickly learned how to fly the newer, long-range P-51 "Mustang." He piloted that plane on combat missions, where his job was to protect American bombers from German fighter planes. In the excerpt from his oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/william-holloman-iii/segment-3 (see especially 23:13-27:32), Holloman discusses his experiences going into combat in a segregated unit.

Source: William Holloman Interview, The National WWII Museum, OH.1233.

ORAL HISTORIES

Primary Source 4: Oral History Interview with Eugene Tarrant

Born in a small Texas town in 1919, Eugene Tarrant moved to Dallas as a young boy. After his parents separated, he grew up with his mother, who worked as a live-in cook for a wealthy white family. Since Tarrant lived in a white neighborhood and the other students at his segregated black school did not, he often felt isolated from his classmates. He also did not have many friends in his neighborhood since the nearby white children stopped playing with him around age ten.

In high school, Tarrant played four sports and excelled academically, graduating second in his class of 300 in 1938. With little money for college and few job prospects amidst the Great Depression, Tarrant hoped to join the Marines. When he arrived at the recruiting station, however, he learned that the Marines did not accept African Americans. As a result, he joined the Navy instead. In the excerpt from his oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/eugene-tarrant/segment-2 (see especially 16:50 – 19:45), Tarrant describes his early experiences aboard the USS *San Francisco*, the cruiser he served on throughout World War II.



Eugene Tarrant in his Navy uniform, from the Collection of the National WWII Museum.

Source: Eugene Tarrant Interview, The National WWII Museum, OH.2528.

Oral History Analysis Graphic Organizer

Directions: Record the most striking details from each interview in the left-hand column, then explain what those details reveal in the right-hand column. After analyzing all of the interviews, develop an interpretation

Observation (What details stand out to you?)	Analysis (What do the details reveal/suggest? What main idea do you take away from the interview?)
Lavenia Breaux Interview	
Edgar Cole Interview	
William Holloman Interview	
Eugene Tarrant Interview	
Interpretation (Based on your analysis of the evidence, what were African American soldiers' experiences like during World War II?)	



A Double Victory?

The Legacy of African Americans in World War II

Lesson Plan

INTRODUCTION:

History is not simply what happened in the past but how people make sense of it. As a result, historians often disagree with each other or even change their own opinions about the meaning of particular historical events, such as World War II's impact upon African Americans and the Civil Rights Movement. Since primary and secondary sources – and the evidence contained within them – are the building blocks upon which historians construct their interpretations, students will examine multiple sources in order to determine which interpretation of the war's legacy for African Americans they find most convincing.

OBJECTIVE:

By analyzing a range of primary and secondary source materials, students will develop an interpretation about the war's impact upon African Americans and provide evidence to support their conclusion.

STANDARDS:

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

National Center for History in the Schools' National Standards for History

Content Era 8, Standard 3C

The student is able to evaluate how minorities organized to gain access to wartime jobs and how they confronted discrimination.

Historical Thinking Standard 3

The student is able to evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past.

Historical Thinking Standard 4 – The student is able to support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

Historical Thinking Standard 4 – The student is able to interrogate historical data by uncovering the social, political, and economic context in which it was created; testing the data source for its credibility, authority, authenticity, internal consistency and completeness; and detecting and evaluating bias, distortion, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.

TIME REQUIREMENT:

1-2 class periods

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce the two interpretations below regarding World War II's impact upon African Americans and the Civil Rights Movement, informing students that they will be examining multiple primary and secondary sources in order to determine which interpretation they find most convincing. As you introduce the interpretations, have students identify the similarities and differences between them and clarify difficult vocabulary.

Interpretation 1: "The war years witnessed the birth of the modern civil rights movement."

- Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, 2nd Seagull ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 828.

Interpretation 2: "My research indicates that the Second World War delayed and stifled black protest activism, that it dampened black militancy."

- Harvard Sitkoff, "American Blacks in World War II: Rethinking the Militancy-Watershed Hypothesis" in James Titus, ed. *The Home Front and War in the Twentieth Century: The American Experience in Comparative Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: United States Air Force Academy and Office of Air Force History Headquarters, 1984), p. 148.

2. Distribute copies of the **Evidence Collection Worksheets** below to students and explain that they will use the worksheets to gather and organize evidence according to the interpretation that the evidence best supports. Inform students that they will also be responsible for explaining how individual pieces of evidence support a particular interpretation. You may need to give each student multiple copies of the worksheet.
3. Have students read the **Introductory Essay** silently or aloud as a whole class then record evidence and accompanying explanations on the appropriate Evidence Collection Worksheet. To model use of the worksheets, you may want to highlight evidence from the Introductory Essay that supports each interpretation and provide explanations for each of those pieces of evidence before students practice independently.
4. Divide the class into groups and distribute one set of the **images** and **evidence strips** below to each group. Before distributing, you should cut the evidence document into strips along the dotted line. You may want to laminate the images and evidence strips to make them easier to reuse.
5. Instruct students to assign each image and evidence strip to at least one interpretation and to record that evidence and an explanation of how it supports the interpretation on the appropriate **Evidence Collection Worksheet**. Remind students to be attentive to the date, origin, and type of each source they are examining and to consider how those features affect the source's reliability.

6. After students have assigned each source to an interpretation, have them identify the interpretation for which they have compiled the most convincing supporting evidence and explanations.
7. Have students engage in a debate about their preferred interpretations, drawing upon the evidence they gathered to support their claims.

EXTENSION/ ENRICHMENT:

- For homework, have students write an essay explaining which interpretation they find most convincing, citing the evidence they gathered to bolster their argument.
- Have students read a secondary source essay on World War II's impact upon African Americans and the Civil Rights Movement in order to assess the author's claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Evidence Strips:

"Now, Therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes, and as a prerequisite to the successful conduct of our national defense production effort, I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin."

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt
Executive Order 8802, 1941

"I think that some of the things about World War II, when we got overseas, in Italy, black and white, we were all brothers. We all were a team. We relied on one another. Those guys forgot about their racist attitudes. And when the war ended, and we came back to the States, the most amazing thing, I remembered this for the rest of my life. We were coming down the gangplank, getting off the boat. Now, there were more blacks on the boat coming back because they brought our group back together. And they had a sign, at the bottom of the gangplank, whites to one side, colored to the other. And I said to myself, 'This is some country.' I'm fighting for democracy, and this is the first time that I even thought about fighting for recognition as a first-class citizen in my own country. I was fighting for the democracy, and I had to fight for the right to fight. I thought America was a sick country."

- William Holloman,
African American WWII Veteran (Air Force)
The National WWII Museum Interview, 2009, OH.1233.

"Among the numerous adjustments the American people had to make at the end of World War II was adaptation to a new position of the Negro in the United States. This new status arose not merely because a substantial portion of the gains made during the war were retained but also because of an intensification of the drive, in several quarters, to achieve complete equality for the Negro. The war had created a climate in which substantial gains could be made, but the very nature of the emergency imposed certain restraints that could no longer be justified after 1945."

- John Hope Franklin
From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans, 3rd Ed.
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 608.

IMAGE 1



Protests in Washington D.C.

Black servicemen and women returned home to find treatment of African American citizens largely unchanged. After the war, many veterans became active in protests. Here, veterans and civilians protest the lynching of four black citizens in Georgia in 1946. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-119522.

IMAGE 2



A Man Was Lynched Yesterday

The NAACP flew this flag at its headquarters in New York City to report lynchings until the building owner threatened to evict the organization in 1938. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-PPMSCA-09705.

IMAGE 3

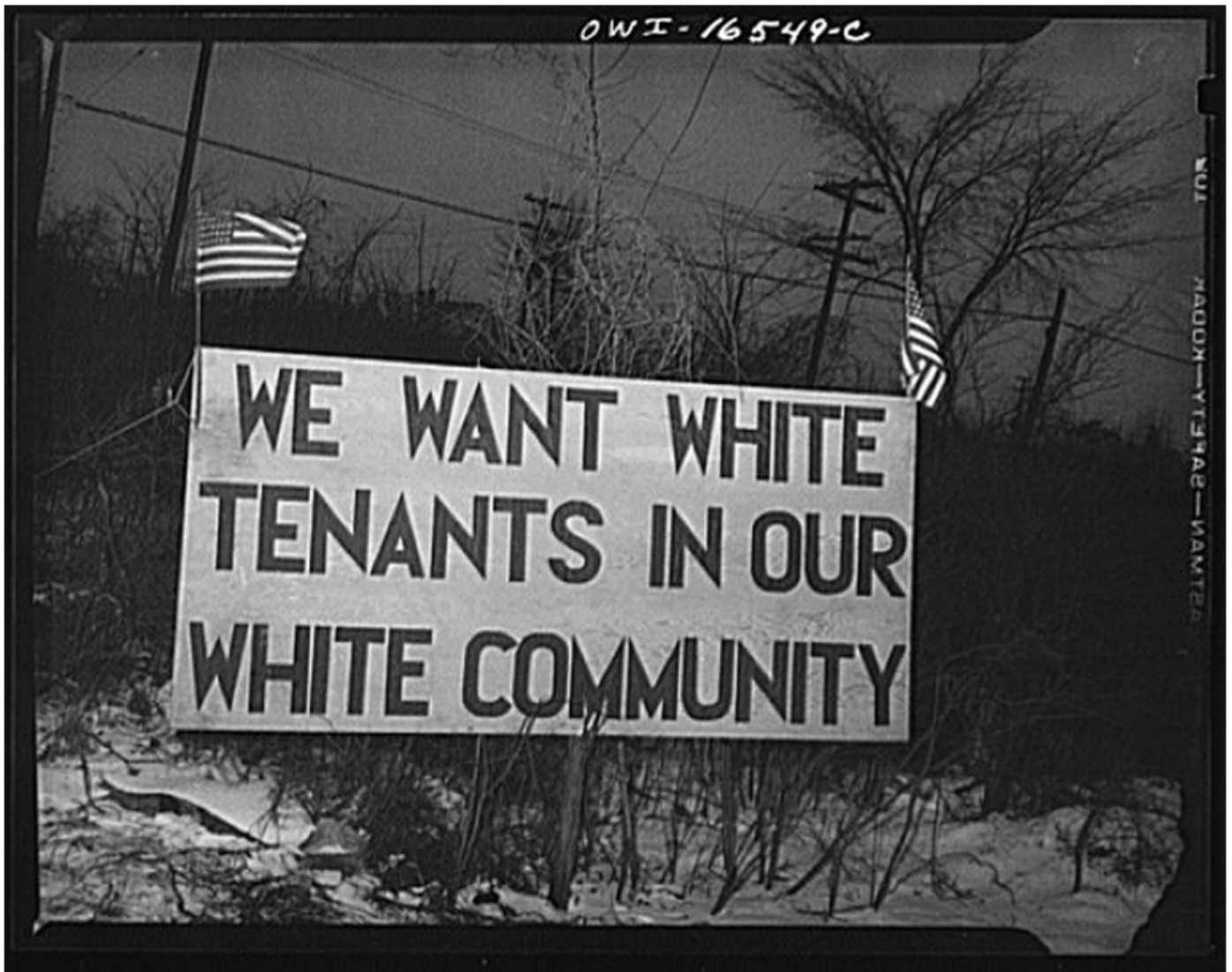


Pittsburgh Courier Archives

Double Victory

Twenty-six-year-old James Thompson's 1942 letter to the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier* calling for African Americans to fight for a "double victory" over racism at home and fascism abroad captivated the newspaper's – and the nation's – attention. The *Courier* introduced the Double Victory icon above the week after receiving Thompson's letter, and the paper displayed it 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. *Pittsburgh Courier Archives*.

IMAGE 4



We Want White Tenants in Our White Community

"Detroit, Michigan. Riot at the Sojourner Truth homes, a new U.S. federal housing project, caused by white neighbors' attempt to prevent Negro tenants from moving in. Sign with American flag 'We want white tenants in our white community,' directly opposite the housing project." Photo and original title by Arthur S. Siegel, Office of War Information, February 1942. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-FSA-8d13572.

IMAGE 5

What Are Our Immediate Goals?

1. To mobilize five million Negroes into one militant mass for pressure.
2. To assemble in Chicago the last week in May, 1943, for the celebration of

"WE ARE AMERICANS - TOO" WEEK

And to ponder the question of Non-Violent Civil Disobedience and Non-Cooperation, and a Mass March On Washington.

WHY SHOULD WE MARCH?



15,000 Negroes Assembled at St. Louis, Missouri
20,000 Negroes Assembled at Chicago, Illinois
23,500 Negroes Assembled at New York City
Millions of Negro Americans all Over This Great Land Claim the Right to be Free!

**FREE FROM WANT!
FREE FROM FEAR!
FREE FROM JIM CROW!**

"Winning Democracy for the Negro is Winning the War for Democracy!" — A. Philip Randolph

Why Should We March?

A. Phillip Randolph cancelled a 50,000-man march on Washington, DC, in 1941 after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed an executive order banning racial discrimination in war industries. But Randolph's "March on Washington Movement" (MOWM) continued to press for additional civil rights reforms during the war. This flier advertises the MOWM's 1943 convention in Chicago, which few blacks attended other than a small number of Sleeping Car Porters, whose union Randolph led. Courtesy of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Washington, DC.

IMAGE 6



We're All in This Together

"Negro, Mexican, and white girls are employed at the Pacific Parachute Company. San Diego, California." Original title and photograph by Russell Lee, Office of War Information, April 1942. A Fair Employment Practices Committee placard is on the wall behind the table. Library of Congress, LC-USW3-1186-D.

Evidence Collection Worksheet- Interpretation I

Directions: For each primary or secondary source that you examine, record any evidence that you believe supports the interpretation below. For each piece of evidence you record, write a brief explanation of how or why it supports the interpretation. Ask for an additional copy of this sheet if you run out of space.

Interpretation 1: “The war years witnessed the birth of the modern civil rights movement.”

- Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, 2nd Seagull ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 828.

	Evidence	Explanation
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Evidence Collection Worksheet- Interpretation 2

Directions: For each primary or secondary source that you examine, record any evidence that you believe supports the interpretation below. For each piece of evidence you record, write a brief explanation of how or why it supports the interpretation. Ask for an additional copy of this sheet if you run out of space.

Interpretation 2: “My research indicates that the Second World War delayed and stifled black protest activism, that it dampened black militancy.”

- Harvard Sitkoff, “American Blacks in World War II: Rethinking the Militancy-Watershed Hypothesis” in James Titus, ed. *The Home Front and War in the Twentieth Century: The American Experience in Comparative Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: United States Air Force Academy and Office of Air Force History Headquarters, 1984), p. 148.

	Evidence	Explanation
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

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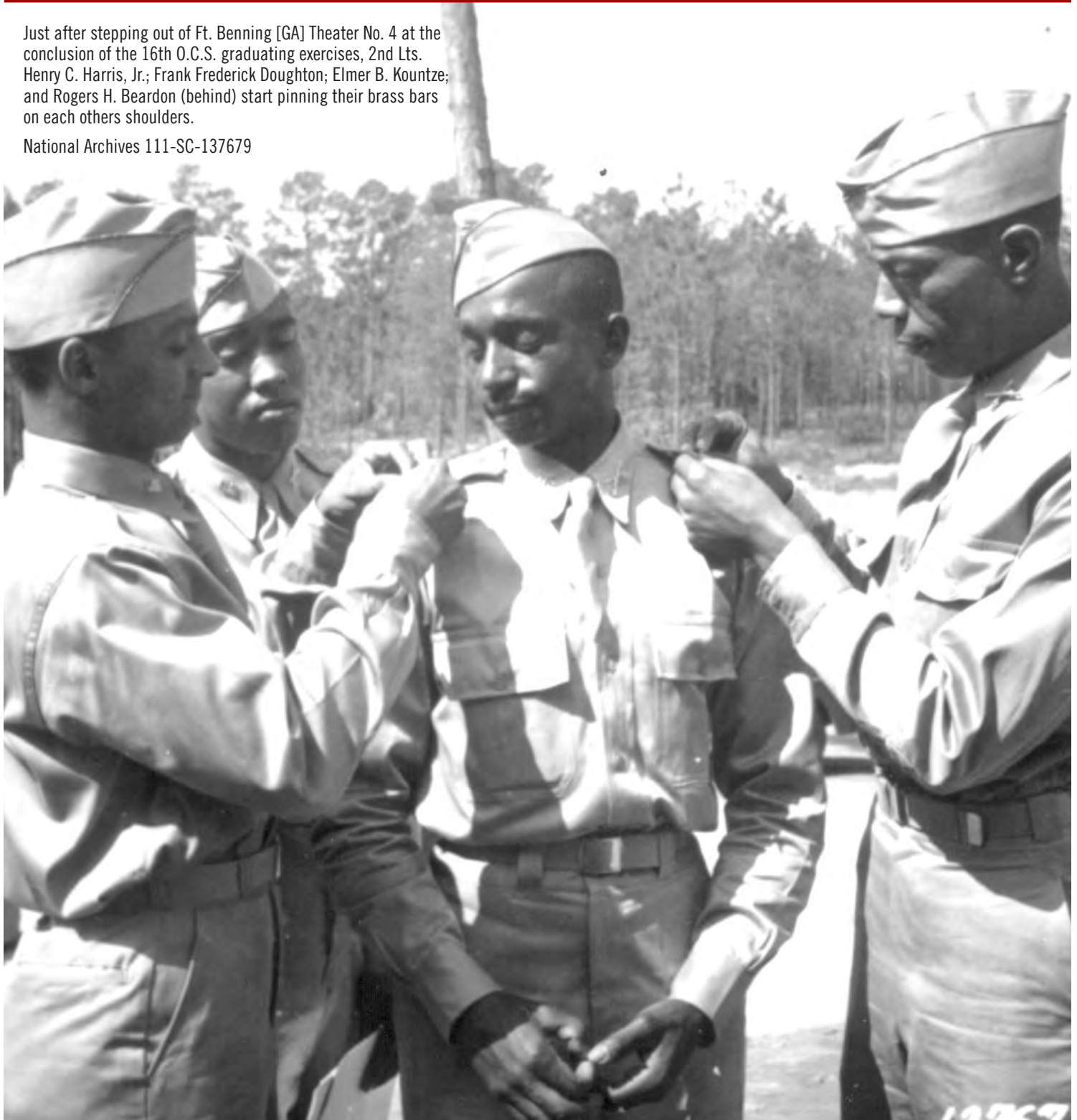
FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN WWII

The National WWII Museum
945 Magazine Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
righttofightexhibit.org

Just after stepping out of Ft. Benning [GA] Theater No. 4 at the conclusion of the 16th O.C.S. graduating exercises, 2nd Lts. Henry C. Harris, Jr.; Frank Frederick Doughton; Elmer B. Kountze; and Rogers H. Beardon (behind) start pinning their brass bars on each others shoulders.

National Archives 111-SC-137679



FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN WWII



**THE NATIONAL
WWII MUSEUM
NEW ORLEANS**



HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM GUIDE

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The National WWII Museum created this classroom guide to correspond with the special exhibit *Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Experiences in WWII*. In addition to an introductory essay and brief biographical profiles of prominent wartime African Americans, the guide includes three primary-source based lesson plans. The lesson plans align with Common Core and National Center for History in the Schools standards, and you can implement them either as a unit or individually. Tweet us [@WWIIEducation](https://twitter.com/WWIIEducation) to let us know how you are using this guide in your classroom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductory Essay: African American Experiences in WWII	3
Who's Who Among African Americans in WWII	5
LESSON PLAN: Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Attitudes About WWII	9
LESSON PLAN: Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: African American Soldiers' Experiences in WWII	29
LESSON PLAN: A Double Victory? The Legacy of African Americans in WWII	42

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES 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. Throghout 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.

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN WWII

Who's Who Among African Americans in World War II



Library of Congress, LC-USW3-011696-C.

A. Phillip Randolph (1889-1979)

In the two decades before World War II, many Americans considered Asa Philip Randolph's views radical even outside the Jim Crow South. Randolph called for the unionization of black workers as a means of securing financial strength, and thus political power. He also demanded that African Americans be allowed to serve their country in the military.

In 1941, Randolph cancelled a 50,000-man march on Washington, DC, after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which banned racial discrimination in war industries. After the war, Randolph and others continued the fight for increased black participation in the military. In 1947, Randolph and colleague Grant Reynolds formed the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training. One year later President Harry S. Truman's Executive Order 9981 declared an end to segregation in the armed forces. Randolph went on to become a leading figure in the Civil Rights Movement.



The Roi Ottley Collection, St. Bonaventure University Archives.

Vincent "Roi" Ottley (1906-1960)

Though Vincent "Roi" Ottley worked as a reporter throughout New York City in the 1930s, he spent most of his time in Harlem, where he became passionate about the need for social change for African Americans. Ottley's Peabody Award winning book *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* became a 1943 bestseller and was serialized on the radio.

Commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the US Army in 1944, Ottley was sent to Europe as one of the first black war correspondents. Several civilian papers, including the *Pittsburgh Courier*, picked up his columns covering discrimination and injustices faced by black soldiers. Ottley's observations frequently put him at odds with Army censors, but he remained overseas for the duration of the war.

As a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune* after the war, Ottley conducted many well-regarded interviews. One such interview resulted in a remarkable piece on Samuel Green, the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Carl Van Vechten Collection, LC-USZ62-128514.

Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955)

Called “The First Lady of the Struggle,” Mary McLeod Bethune was an educator and activist who dedicated her life to improving the social and political standing of African Americans. Born to former slaves, Bethune saw education and literacy as the means of escape from poverty among African Americans in the South. She became a teacher and was active in many civic organizations in the 1920s and 1930s.

During World War II, Bethune served as the assistant director of the Women’s Army Corps, organizing the first women’s officer candidate schools and lobbying successfully for opening up the military to admittance of African American women. A personal friend of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Bethune met regularly with President Roosevelt, using her platform to advocate for the rights of African American men and women. One of her greatest successes was the creation of the Black Cabinet, an influential group of African American officials that worked in Roosevelt’s administration.



Library of Congress, LC-DIG-PPMSCA-11758.

Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. (1912-2002)

The only black cadet at West Point in 1932, Benjamin O. Davis was shunned by his classmates. He was spoken to only when necessary, and he lived and ate alone. Newly-commissioned Second Lieutenant Davis then found that his desired position in the Army Air Corps was closed to him at that time due to his race.

Davis was in the first class of pilot trainees at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama where the first black fighter squadron was organized in 1940. After earning his wings, he was appointed commander of the 99th Pursuit Squadron. By war’s end, Davis had flown 60 combat missions and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Silver Star.

In 1947, drawing heavily on the accomplishments of the Tuskegee Airmen, Davis drafted the desegregation plan for the newly formed Air Force. Davis retired as a lieutenant general in 1970. In 1998, President Clinton promoted him to four-star general.



National Archives, 208-NP-10FF-1.

Gilbert “Hashmark” Johnson (1905-1972)

Gilbert Johnson joined the Navy in 1932 after being discharged from the Army. While a Steward’s Mate First Class, he heard that the Marine Corps was finally accepting African Americans and requested a transfer even knowing he would lose his rank. Though a private at Montford Point, Johnson had been in the military for fifteen years. He quickly became known as “Hashmark” because he had more service stripes, known as “hashmarks,” than he had rank stripes. One of the first African American drill instructors in Marine Corps history, Johnson would go on to lead 25 combat patrols on Guam, but only after persuading his commanding officer that black marines should be given that opportunity.

Hashmark, who retired from the Marine Corps in 1959, died of a heart attack in 1972 while giving a speech to the Montford Point Marine Association. Two years later Montford Point was renamed Camp Gilbert Johnson.



Navy Historical Center, NH 96775.

Samuel Gravely, Jr. (1922-2004)

After joining the Naval Reserves in 1942, Samuel Gravely, Jr. was selected to participate in the V-12 accelerated officer training program. Gravely was commissioned as an ensign on December 14, 1944, less than a year after the Navy commissioned its first thirteen black officers, who were known as the "Golden Thirteen."

Gravely became the first black officer to serve at sea when he reported aboard the submarine chaser *USS PC-1264*. After being discharged in 1946, Gravely went back to school in his hometown, Richmond, Virginia, but remained in the Naval Reserves. He was called back to service soon after President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 abolishing discrimination in the armed forces.

During his record-setting 38-year career, Gravely became the first African American to command a US warship, the destroyer escort *USS Falgout*; the US Navy's first black admiral; and the first African American fleet commander, taking over the Third Fleet in 1976. Vice Admiral Samuel Gravely, Jr. retired in 1980.



Courtesy of the United States Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Alex Haley (1921-1992)

Alexander Haley's father, a college professor, disapproved of his son's decision to drop out of college and convinced him to join the military to learn discipline. Once in the US Coast Guard, Haley frequently wrote letters to family and friends, and when word of Haley's eloquence spread, his shipmates began paying him to write letters for them as well. After America joined the war, Haley served in the Pacific Theater aboard the cargo ship *USS Murzim* (AK-95) as an officer's steward. He authored the ship's newsletter and frequently contributed to *Coast Guard Magazine*.

As a career guardsman after the war, Haley first became a Journalist First Class and then the first Chief Journalist in Coast Guard history. Haley retired from the military in 1959 to pursue freelance writing and was widely published over the next two decades. Haley's greatest success came in 1976 with the novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*.



Courtesy of the Department of Transportation.

Hugh Mulzac (1886-1971)

Born in the West Indies, Hugh Mulzac first went to sea aboard British ships after finishing high school and earning his mate's license in Wales. After immigrating to the United States, Mulzac became the first black man ever to earn a master's license in America. Because there were no positions for a black ship captain in the 1920s, he was forced to work as a steward.

Mulzac waited 24 years for the chance to command. In 1942, at age 56, he was offered command of the Merchant Marine's *SS Booker T. Washington*. The offer came with a condition: the ship was to have a black crew. Mulzac refused.

The Maritime Commission relented, and Mulzac sailed the *Washington* with an integrated crew on 22 voyages during and after the war. He said of his war service, "Now at last I could use my training and capabilities fully. It was like being born anew."



The National WWII Museum, 2008.280.011.

Higgins Industries

By war's end, the New Orleans company owned by Andrew Higgins had produced more than 22,000 military vessels of all types, most notably LCPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel). Higgins Industries grew from a small company with fewer than 100 workers into a corporation boasting eight plants around the city employing more than 20,000 people. To meet these staggering manpower needs, Higgins hired thousands of black men and women and paid an equal wage for a job regardless of the race of the man or woman performing the work. Such practices set it apart from many other companies, but Higgins Industries still required separate entrances and facilities for African American workers.

Dwight Eisenhower called Higgins "the man that won the war for us." Hitler referred to Higgins as the "new Noah." But the accomplishments of Higgins Industries would not have been possible without the contributions of New Orleans's African American residents.



Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-130748.

Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993)

An explosion at the naval weapons depot in Port Chicago, California, on July 17, 1944, killed or wounded more than 700 people, mostly African American sailors and laborers. The survivors refused to return to work after the explosion. In a trial that exposed rampant discrimination and racism within the US Navy, fifty black sailors were convicted of mutiny.

Thurgood Marshall could not participate in the court martial of the "Chicago 50" because it was a military court and he was a civilian. However, as Chief Counsel for the NAACP, Marshall attended all of the court sessions and began planning an appeal even before the verdicts were handed down. He represented all 50 men in Washington, DC, before the Navy Judge Advocate General and won a retrial, but all 50 convictions were upheld.

After the war, he won the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, which declared segregated public schools to be unconstitutional. In 1967, after a nearly 33-year career in law, Marshall was nominated for the US Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson. Marshall became the first African American Supreme Court Justice in US history and served on the bench until 1991.



Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-109400.

Medgar Evers (1925-1963)

Growing up in the South, Medgar Wiley Evers was routinely subjected to discrimination, including random acts of violence. Though still subjected to racism and discrimination in the army, he met many men who fought back against injustice. Determined to continue the fight, Evers returned home and became active in the Regional Council of Negro Leadership. His attempts to enter the University of Mississippi Law School in 1954 brought him into contact with the NAACP, and he soon became the organization's first field secretary in Mississippi. By 1960, he was one of Mississippi's civil rights leaders.

Early on the morning of June 12, 1963, Evers was shot in the back while walking up his driveway after attending a meeting with NAACP lawyers. His killer, white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith, also a World War II veteran, escaped conviction twice at the hands of white juries. He was not convicted of Evers's murder until 1994.



Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Attitudes About World War II Lesson Plan

INTRODUCTION:

Even after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into World War II, African Americans fiercely debated their role in the war effort. What part could – or should – they play in the segregated military and discriminatory defense industries? Should they fight abroad for a country that denied them basic rights at home? Would support for the war help – or hurt – their own struggle for freedom? By examining African Americans' campaigns for full access to military service and defense industry jobs, this lesson allows students to explore these questions from the perspectives of those who confronted them during the war.

OBJECTIVE:

By examining multiple primary sources, students will be able to engage in a historical debate about African American responses to wartime racial discrimination and to describe the war from the perspective of a young African American who was alive at the time.

STANDARDS:

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5

Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

National Center for History in the Schools' National Standards for History:

Content Era 8, Standard 3C – The student is able to evaluate how minorities organized to gain access to wartime jobs and how they confronted discrimination.

Historical Thinking Standard 2 – The student is able to identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.

Historical Thinking Standard 2 – The student is able to describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like; to consider the historical context in which the event unfolded – the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and to avoid “present-mindedness,” judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Historical Thinking Standard 3 – The student is able to consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.

Historical Thinking Standard 4 – The student is able to interrogate historical data by uncovering the social, political, and economic context in which it was created.

TIME REQUIREMENT:

1-2 class periods

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce **James G. Thompson's January 1942 letter to the editor** of the *Pittsburgh Courier*. As necessary, draw upon the Introductory Essay to provide context about wartime discrimination against African Americans and to describe the role the black press played during World War II. You may also need to clarify what a letter to the editor is.
2. Have students read Thompson's letter, respond in writing to the accompanying questions, and share their responses with the class. Based upon students' reading levels, you may choose to read the letter aloud, to limit the class's examination to paragraphs 2-6, and/or to have students read and summarize the letter one paragraph at a time. Students can read the transcript of the letter and you can project the scan of the original.
3. Drawing upon students' worksheet responses, complete the first row of the **“Should I Sacrifice to Live ‘Half-American?’” graphic organizer** by summarizing Thompson's main argument in the “Attitude” column and recording some of the reasons he provides to support his position in the “Rationale” column. As necessary, draw upon the Introductory Essay to help students identify how the date and origin of Thompson's letter affected his argument.
4. Divide the class into small groups, assigning each group a different additional primary source from among those included below. Have students independently examine the source, respond to the accompanying questions, and share their responses with their group and then the whole class. Time permitting, repeat the process for an additional source. Alternatively, you may choose to examine multiple sources with the whole class.
5. As students report on the sources, have them take notes on the “Should I Sacrifice to Live ‘Half-American?’” graphic organizer, which is designed to help them distinguish between African Americans' competing wartime attitudes and the rationales behind those positions.

6. Have students engage in a historical debate about which attitude/argument they would have adopted if they were an African American living during World War II. Instruct students to support their stands by drawing upon the rationales from the sources that they recorded on their graphic organizers. You may want to expand upon the discussion by highlighting additional details about African Americans' wartime experiences from the Introductory Essay.

EXTENSION/ ENRICHMENT:

- For homework, have students write a letter to the editor of a black-owned newspaper from the perspective of a young African American living during WWII.
- Have students research other African Americans' experiences with segregation and their attitudes about joining the military by searching the Museum's Digital Collections at www.ww2online.org/advanced and selecting the "Race Relations" and "Ethnic/Racial Identity" tags. Students can also explore wartime segregation through the Museum's "See You Next Year! High School Yearbooks from WWII" digital collection at www.ww2yearbooks.org.
- Have students examine Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 (available at www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-teachers/lesson-plans/evaluating-executive-orders.html) alongside Randolph's call for a March on Washington then debate or write about the extent to which the executive order addressed Randolph's demands and whether they agree with Randolph's decision to cancel the march after Roosevelt issued the order.
- Encourage students to search online or in a library for additional sources on African Americans in World War II.

Primary Source I: Letter to the Editor

In January 1942 James G. Thompson, a twenty-six-year-old African American from Wichita, Kan., wrote to the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier* to express his feelings about World War II. In a note above Thompson's letter, the newspaper's editor wrote: "A young man, confused and befuddled by all of this double talk about democracy and the defense of our way of life, is asking, like other young Negroes, some very pertinent questions. We reprint this letter in full because it is symbolic."

Dear Editor:

1. Like all true Americans, my greatest desire at this time, this crucial point of our history, is a desire for a complete victory over the forces of evil, which threaten our existence today. Behind that desire is also a desire to serve, this, my country, in the most advantageous way.
2. Most of our leaders are suggesting that we sacrifice every other ambition to the paramount one, victory. With this I agree; but I also wonder if another victory could not be achieved at the same time. After all the things that beset the world now are basically the same things which upset the equilibrium of nations internally, states, counties, cities, homes, and even the individual.
3. Being an American of dark complexion and some 26 years, these questions flash through my mind: 'Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?' 'Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?' 'Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life? Is the kind of America I know worth defending? Will America be a true and pure democracy after this war? Will Colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past? These and other questions need answering; I want to know, and I believe every colored American, who is thinking, wants to know.
4. This may be the wrong time to broach such subjects, but haven't all good things obtained by men been secured through sacrifice during just such times of strife.

Primary Source I: Letter to the Editor

5. I suggest that while we keep defense and victory in the forefront that we don't lose sight of our fight for democracy at home.
6. The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.
7. This should not and would not lessen our efforts to bring this conflict to a successful conclusion: but should and would make us stronger to resist these evil forces which threaten us. America could become united as never before and become truly the home of democracy.
8. In way of an answer to the foregoing questions in a preceding paragraph I might say that there is no doubt that this country is worth defending; things will be different for the next generation; colored Americans will come into their own, and America will eventually become the true democracy it was designed to be. These things will become a reality in time; but not through any relaxation of the efforts to secure them.
9. In conclusion let me say that though these questions often permeate my mind, I love America and am willing to die for the America I know will someday become a reality.

James G. Thompson

Source: James G. Thompson, "Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half-American?'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 31, 1942. Reprinted by permission from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Primary Source I: Letter to the Editor

Should I Sacrifice To Live 'Half-American?'

Suggest Double VV for Double Victory Against Axis Forces and Ugly Prejudices on the Home Front.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: A young man, confused and befuddled by all of this double talk about democracy and the defense of our way of life, is asking, like other young Negroes, some very pertinent questions. We reprint this letter in full because it is symbolic.)

DEAR EDITOR:

Like all true Americans, my greatest desire at this time, this crucial point of our history, is a desire for a complete victory over the forces of evil, which threaten our existence today. Behind that desire is also a desire to serve, this, my country, in the most advantageous way.

Most of our leaders are suggesting that we sacrifice every other ambition to the paramount one, victory. With this I agree; but I also wonder if another victory could not be achieved at the same time. After all the things that beset the world now are basically the same things which upset the equilibrium of nations internally, states, counties, cities, homes and even the individual.

Being an American of dark complexion and some 26 years, these questions flash through my mind: "Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?" "Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?" "Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life? Is the kind of America I know worth defending? Will America be a true and pure democracy after this war? Will Colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past? These and other questions need answering; I want to know, and I believe every colored American, who is thinking, wants to know.



Jas. G. Thompson

This may be the wrong time to broach such subjects, but haven't all good things obtained by men been secured through sacrifice during just such times of strife.

I suggest that while we keep defense and victory in the forefront that we don't lose sight of our fight for true democracy at home.

The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.

This should not and would not lessen our efforts to bring this conflict to a successful conclusion; but should and would make us stronger to resist these evil forces which threaten us. America could become united as never before and become truly the home of democracy.

In way of an answer to the foregoing questions in a preceding paragraph I might say that there is no doubt that this country is worth defending; things will be different for the next generation; colored Americans will come into their own, and America will eventually become the true democracy it was designed to be. These things will become a reality in time; but not through any relaxation of the efforts to secure them.

In conclusion let me say that though these questions often permeate my mind, I love America and am willing to die for the America I know will someday become a reality.

JAMES G. THOMPSON

James G. Thompson, "Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half-American?'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 31, 1942. Reprinted by permission from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Worksheet for Primary Source I

"Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half-American?'"

Directions: Please respond to the following questions after reading Thompson's letter to the editor.

1. What words or phrases stand out to you? Why do these words/phrases catch your attention?
2. Identify the date and origin of the document (e.g., When and where was it created? Who created it? Who was the target audience? How was the source produced?). How do you think these features affect the attitudes that Thompson expresses?
3. What do you think Thompson means when he asks whether he should sacrifice his life to "live half American" (Paragraph 3)? Would you sacrifice your life "to live half American"?
4. What does Thompson mean by "double victory" (Paragraph 6)?
5. What is the main argument that Thompson is making about the role African Americans should play in the war effort?
6. How does he support this argument? Here you may choose to discuss the reasons and evidence he provides and/or how the language, style, or structure of his letter supports his purpose.
7. If you were in James Thompson's position, what would you have said to your fellow African Americans about the role they should play in the war effort? Why would you choose to deliver this message?

Primary Source 2: Double V

James Thompson's 1942 letter to the *Pittsburgh Courier* calling for African Americans to fight for a "double victory" over racism at home and fascism abroad captivated the newspaper's – and the nation's – attention. The *Courier* introduced the Double Victory icon below the week after receiving Thompson's letter, and the paper displayed it 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.



Pittsburgh Courier Archives

Worksheet for Primary Source 2

Double V Icon

Directions: Please respond to the following questions after examining the Double V Icon

1. What details of the icon's design stand out to you? Why do these details catch your attention?
2. Why do you think the designer of the icon included the image of the eagle?
3. What message does the Double V icon send? What does it reveal about African Americans' wartime attitudes and priorities?
4. Why do you think the *Pittsburgh Courier* embraced the Double V campaign after it received Thompson's letter?
5. Why do you think the Double V campaign slowed down by 1943?
6. If you were alive at the time, would you have supported the Double V campaign? Why/Why not?

Primary Source 3: Soldier Survey

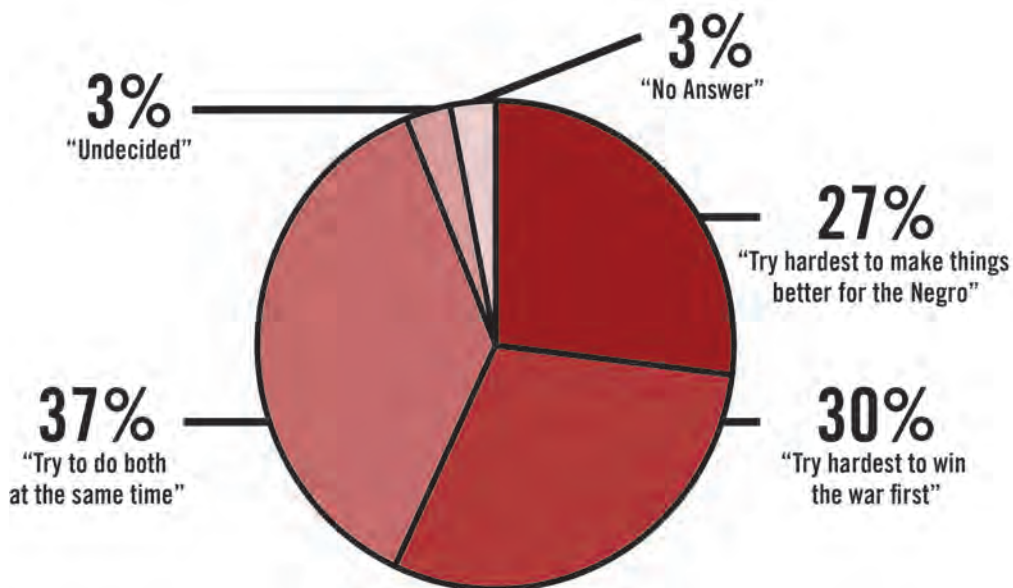
The War Department surveyed more than half a million soldiers during World War II about everything from mental health to winter clothing. The Department believed these surveys would “provide the army command quickly and accurately with facts about the attitudes of soldiers which...might be helpful in policy formation.”

But these studies also provide students like you with an extraordinary snapshot of soldiers’ thoughts, hopes, and frustrations.

In March 1943, the War Department’s Information and Education Division asked more than seven thousand African American soldiers, “Which of these things do you think Negroes back home in civilian life should try hardest to do now?”

In the excerpt from the original survey report below, the numbers to the left of the answer choices indicate how many soldiers gave that response. The pie chart presents the same information in an easier-to-read format.

Q.50. Which of these things do you think Negroes back home in civilian life should try hardest to do now?
R. Col. 40
2009 1. Try hardest to make things better for the Negro
2266 2. Try hardest to win the war first
2733 3. Try to do both at the same time
240 4. Undecided
194 0. No Answer



Source: Samuel A. Stouffer, Research Branch, Information and Education Division, War Department, “The American Soldier in World War II: Attitudes of Negroes,” March 1943, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Graphic by The National WWII Museum.

Worksheet for Primary Source 3

Soldier Survey

Directions: Please respond to the following questions after examining the results from the War Department opinion survey.

1. What do you find most surprising or interesting about the survey results?
2. How would you summarize the survey results? What do they reveal about African American soldiers' wartime attitudes and priorities?
3. What other primary sources could you examine to learn about African Americans' wartime attitudes and priorities? Do you think these sources would support or challenge the survey results?
4. Identify the date and origin of the document (e.g., When and where was it created? Who created it? Who was the target audience? How was the source produced?). How do you think these features affect the survey's reliability as an indicator of African Americans' wartime attitudes?
5. If you were an African American soldier in 1943 and you were given this survey, how would you have responded? Why would you have given this response?

Primary Source 4: A. Philip Randolph Calls for a March on Washington

In the two decades before World War II, many Americans considered A. Philip Randolph's views radical even outside the Jim Crow South. As the founder and head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the union representing the African American porters and maids employed by the Pullman train company, Randolph viewed the unionization of black workers as a means of securing financial strength and thus political power. He also demanded that African Americans be allowed to serve their country in the military.

Frustrated with discrimination in the military and defense industries, Randolph called in January 1941 for African Americans to stage a mass march and demonstration in Washington, D.C. An abridged version of his statement, which ran in black owned newspapers appears below. A scan of the original follows.

1. Negroes are not getting anywhere with National Defense. The whole National Defense Setup reeks and stinks with race prejudice, hatred, and discrimination...
2. ...Responsible committees of Negroes who seek to intercede in behalf of the Negro being accorded the simple right to work in industries and on jobs serving National Defense and to serve in the Army, Navy, and Air Corps are being given polite assurances that Negroes will be given a fair deal. But it all ends there. Nothing is actually done to stop discriminations...
3. ...Hence, Negro America must bring its power and pressure to bear upon the agencies and representatives of the Federal Government to exact their rights in National Defense employment and the armed forces of the country. No real, actual, bonafide, definite and positive pressure of the Negro masses has ever been brought to bear upon the executive and legislative branches of the city, state, and national governments.
4. Now, as to a practical program:
5. I suggest that 10,000 Negroes march on Washington, D.C., the capitol of the nation, with the slogan: WE LOYAL NEGRO AMERICAN CITIZENS DEMAND THE RIGHT TO WORK AND FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY.
6. Negroes could join this march from various sections of the country from all trades, professions and callings, such as

Primary Source 4: A. Philip Randolph Calls for a March on Washington

laborers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, preachers, mechanics, soldiers, women, and youth groups.

7. Our demand would be simple, single and central: namely, jobs in National Defense and placement as soldiers and officers of all ranks we are qualified for, in the armed forces.
8. No propaganda could be whipped up and spread to the effect that Negroes seek to hamper defense. No charge could be made that Negroes are attempting to mar national unity. They want to do none of these things. On the contrary, we seek the right to play our part in advancing the cause of national defense and national unity. But certainly, there can be no true national unity where one-tenth of the population are denied their basic rights as American citizens..
9. ... Such a pilgrimage of 10,000 Negroes would wake up and shock Official Washington as it has never been shocked before. Why? The answer is clear. Nobody expects 10,000 Negroes to get together and march anywhere for anything at any time. Negroes are supposed not to have sufficient iron in their blood for this type of struggle. In common parlance, they are supposed to be just scared and unorganizable. Is this true? I contend it is not.
10. What an impressive sight 10,000 Negroes would make marching down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., with banners preaching their cause for justice, freedom and equality.
11. One thing is certain and that is if Negroes are going to get anything out of National Defense which will cost the nation 30 or 40 billions of dollars that we Negroes must help pay in taxes as property owners and workers and consumers, WE MUST FIGHT FOR IT WITH GLOVES OFF.

Source: A. Philip Randolph, "Defense Rotten – Randolph," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 25, 1941, sec. 2, p. 1. Reprinted by permission from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Pittsburgh Courier

SECOND
NEWS SECTION

Hampton's Orchestra Clicks In Augusta

AUGUSTA, Ga., Jan. 23—(ANP)—Lionel Hampton and his orchestra were greeted by a large and enthusiastic crowd at the Delmar Casino here last Friday night.

"DEFENSE ROTTEN" -- RANDOLPH

LET'S MARCH ON CAPITAL 10,000 STRONG, URGES LEADER OF PORTERS

By A. PHILIP RANDOLPH
President, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

Negroes are not getting anywhere with National Defense. The whole National Defense Setup reeks and stinks with race prejudice, hatred, and discrimination. It is obvious to anyone who is not deaf, dumb and blind that the south, with its attitude that the Negro is inferior, worthless, and just simply don't count, is in the saddle. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Army, Navy, and Air Corps are dominated and virtually controlled by southerners.

But the southerners are not alone responsible for the fact that Negroes are being brutally pushed around. The north, east and west are also to blame, because they wink, connive at and acquiesce in this practice of discriminating against Negroes.

But regardless of who is responsible for the raw deal Negroes are getting, the big bald fact is they are getting it.

Responsible committees of Negroes who seek to intercede in behalf of the Negro being accorded the simple right to work in industries and on jobs serving National Defense and to serve in the Army, Navy, and Air Corps are being given polite assurances that Negroes will be given a fair deal. But it all ends there. Nothing is actually done to stop discriminations.



ALWAYS LOOPHOLES THROUGH SUBORDINATES

It seems to be apparent that even when well-meaning, responsible, top government officials agree upon a fair and favorable policy, there are loopholes, and subordinate officers in the Army, Navy, and Air Corps, full of race hatred, who seek its contravention, nuuification, and evasion.

This is why upstanding, independent, able and intelligent Negroes should be in responsible posts of every department of the government. They must be there to stimulate, suggest and initiate the formulation of certain policies favorable to the Negro, and they must be there to help police these policies in the interest of their fair and consistent execution.

Now, fortunately, Negroes have good, able, and sound people in Dr. Channing H. Tobias in the Draft Board, Judge William H. Hastie in the War Department, Dr. Robert Weaver in the National Defense Commission, Frances Williams in the Consumers' Section, and a few others.

LEADERS HELPLESS

But they are helpless without the collective, mass support of the Negro people. Aggressive, articulate, determined, mass support will strengthen their hands.

It is not enough for Negroes to want jobs in the factories, mills, mines, and offices, they must diplomatically and undiplomatically, ceremoniously and uncere-moniously, cry out in no uncertain terms their demand for work and their rightful places in every department of the Army, Navy, and Air Corps, based, of course, upon recognized qualifications.

Evidently, the regular, normal and respectable method of conferences and petitions, while proper and ought to be continued as conditions may warrant, certainly don't work. They don't do the job. How-

ever, they are a necessary preliminary, advance-guard work, for only a small committee can intelligently formulate a program. But the few people of ability who may develop a program may not possess the power to enforce it or secure its adoption.

ONLY POWER CAN EFFECT ENFORCEMENT

Just a casual analysis and survey of the dynamics and mechanics of modern movements, legislation, administration and execution, show that only power can effect the enforcement and adoption of a given policy, however meritorious it may be. The virtue and rightness of a cause are not alone the condition and cause of its progress and acceptance. Power and pressure are at the foundation of the march of social justice and reform.

Now power and pressure do not reside in the few, the intelligent, they lie in and flow from the masses. Power does not even rest with the masses as such. Power is the active principle of only the organized masses, the masses united for a definite purpose.

Hence, Negro America must bring its power and pressure to bear upon the agencies and representatives of the Federal Government to exact their rights in National Defense employment and the armed forces of the country. No real, actual, bonafide, definite and positive pressure of the Negro masses has ever been brought to bear upon the executive and legislative branches of the city, state, and national governments.

Now, as to a practical program:

I suggest that 10,000 Negroes march on Washington, D. C., the capitol of the nation, with the slogan: WE LOYAL NEGRO-AMERICAN CITIZENS DEMAND THE RIGHT TO WORK AND FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY.

Negroes could join this march from various sections of the country from all trades, professions and callings, such as laborers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, preachers, mechanics, soldiers, women, and youth groups.

Our demand would be simple, single and central; namely, jobs in National Defense and placement as soldiers and officers of all ranks we are qualified for, in the armed forces.

No propaganda could be whipped up and spread to the effect that Negroes seek to hamper defense. No charge could be made that Negroes are attempting to mar national unity. They want to do none of these things. On the contrary, we seek the right to play our part in advancing the cause of national defense and national unity. But certainly, there can be no true national unity where one-tenth of the population are denied their basic rights as American citizens.

Committees of the marchers could be planned to meet and confer with various government officials about the needs, demands and rights of the Negro.

Such a pilgrimage of 10,000 Negroes would wake up and shock Official Washington as it has never been shocked before. Why? The answer is clear. Nobody expects 10,000 Negroes to get together and march anywhere for anything at any time. Negroes are supposed not to have sufficient iron in their blood for this type of struggle. In common parlance, they are supposed to be just scared and unorganizable. Is this true? I contend it is not.

What an impressive sight 10,000 Negroes would make marching down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D. C., with banners preaching their cause for justice, freedom and equality.

One thing is certain and that is if Negroes are going to get anything out of this National Defense which will cost the nation 30 or 40 billions of dollars that we Negroes must help pay in taxes as property owners and workers and consumers, WE MUST FIGHT FOR IT AND FIGHT FOR IT WITH GLOVES

A. Philip Randolph, "Defense Rotten - Randolph," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 25, 1941, sec. 2, p. 1. Reprinted by permission from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Worksheet for Primary Source 4

A. Phillip Randolph Calls for a March on Washington

Directions: Please respond to the following questions after reading Randolph's essay.

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in the document? Why do these words/phrases catch your attention?
2. Identify the date and origin of the document (e.g., When and where was it created? Who created it? Who was the target audience? How was the source produced?). How do you think these features affect the attitudes that Randolph expresses?
3. What is the primary problem that Randolph identifies in his essay, and how does he propose resolving that problem? Why does he favor this approach?
4. What is the main argument that Randolph is making about the role African Americans should play in the war effort?
5. How does he support this argument? Here you may choose to discuss the reasons and evidence he provides and/or how the language, style, or structure of his essay supports his purpose.
6. If you were an African American living in 1941, would you have supported Randolph's call for a March on Washington? Why/Why not?

Primary Source 5: "Negroes to Play Creditable Part in Present War With Enemies"

A long-time aid to Booker T. Washington, Emmett J. Scott served as a special advisor to the Secretary of War during World War I and published a history of African American involvement in that war. The following is an excerpt from an essay he published in the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier* shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. A scan of the original follows.

1. The long-expected has happened. All-out war has come to the United States. All that Americans of every race, creed and color hold near and dear is being imperiled. Our very hearthstones are threatened with destruction...
2. ...The unity and devotion of the American people have been challenged. That challenge will be met. Every industrial and financial resource of this great country, together with an invincible resolve to win, will be thrown into the balance that victory may swiftly perch upon our banners. We shall finish this task.
3. In the accomplishment of this purpose, the Negro people, as in all the historic past, will play a willing, winning, creditable part. They of all the groups that make up the American whole are and always have been so far above suspicion that the most furtive mind has never charged them with disloyalty, or as lacking in whole soul devotion to the ideals of Americanism. In fact, Americanism is the only "ism" they know anything about.
4. In war, as in peace, ideals of civil liberty, freedom, equality, have been something more to them than mere shibboleths. Again they are entitled for the preservation and the full realization of democratic aspirations. Their manpower, their substance, their armed support, their every energy are at the call of the Commander-in-Chief of their country.
5. No impediment, no reservation, stands in the way of their full-hearted, unselfish co-operation with their Government as it goes forth to crush fear and force.
6. These they have opposed in the past, these they oppose now. The war with Japan, and of course, with Italy and Germany,

Primary Source 5: "Negroes to Play Creditable Part in Present War With Enemies"

offers opportunity, once again, for them to put in evidence their democratic faith, and their undiminished unity whenever the interests of their country are involved.

7. In the face of the enemy, they stand with our common citizenship for an invincible unity that shall sweep all else before it. The obligations of the present crisis they cheerfully assume. They will be no part of any group seeking to weaken our country from within. To hold and to keep high the flag of their country is their only thought and desire.
8. Their own grievous wrongs are now subordinate to the national will and purpose. From this course they will not be swerved by any influence. With all good faith and patience, when the task now before us has been accomplished, the ills that disturb them, can then again be brought into the forum of public discussion, and for final solution.
9. In this war, they will make a full contribution as always they have. They will then invoke the considerate judgment of mankind as they seek a determination of the questions and problems which, for so long, have vexed their lives, and all but crushed the spirit of their citizenship.
10. America cannot fail them. It must not fail them. It cannot ignore their just claims as they shall seek, when this war comes to an end, an amelioration of traditional prejudices and hates based on color alone.

Source: Emmett J. Scott, "Negroes to Play Creditable Part in Present War With Enemies," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 20, 1941, sec. 2, p. 1. Reprinted by permission from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

"Negroes To Play Creditable Part In Present War With Enemies"--Scott

Confidently Look To The Future For Justice and Freedom. All Greivous Wrongs Are Subordinate To National Will And Purpose.

By EMMETT J. SCOTT

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 18.—The long-expected has happened. All-out war has come to the United States. All that Americans of every race, creed and color hold near and dear is being imperiled. Our very hearthstones are threatened with destruction.

This is a sobering and solemn hour in American history. Again the sword is unsheathed that we may go forward

to "gain the inevitable triumph" to which President Roosevelt referred in his address to the joint meeting of the U. S. Senate and the U. S. House of Representatives, in which he bitingly characterized the infamy and treachery of the Imperial Japanese Empire. In his address to the American people the next evening, he also bitterly denounced the brutalities of Germany and Italy.



Emmett Scott

The unity and devotion of the American people have been challenged. That challenge will be met. Every industrial and financial resource of this great country, together with an invincible resolve to win, will be thrown into the balance that victory may swiftly perch upon our banners. We shall finish this task.

NEGROES TO PLAY A CREDITABLE PART

In the accomplishment of this purpose, the Negro people, as in all the historic past, will play a

willing, winning, creditable part. They, of all the groups that make up the American whole are and always have been so far above suspicion that the most furtive mind has never charged them with disloyalty, or as lacking in whole-soul devotion to the ideals of Americanism. In fact, Americanism is the only "ism" they know anything about.

In war, as in peace, ideals of civil liberty, freedom, equality, have been something more to them than mere shibboleths. Again, they are enlisted for the preservation and the full realization of democratic aspirations. Their manpower, their substance, their armed support, their every energy, are at the call of the Commander-in-Chief of their country.

TO CRUSH FEAR AND FORCE

No impediment, no reservation, stands in the way of their full-hearted, unselfish co-operation with their Government as it goes forth to crush fear and force.

These they have opposed in the past, these they oppose now. The war with Japan, and, of course, with Italy and Germany, offers opportunity, once again, for them to put in evidence their democratic faith, and their undiminished unity whenever the interests of their country are involved.

In the face of the enemy, they

stand with our common citizenship for an invincible unity that shall sweep all else before it. The obligations of the present crisis they cheerfully assume. They will be no part of any group seeking to weaken our country from within. To hold and to keep high the flag of their country is their only thought and desire.

Their own grievous wrongs are now subordinate to the national will and purpose. From this course they will not be swerved by any influence. With all good faith and patience, when the task now before us has been accomplished, the ills that disturb them, can then again be brought into the forum of public discussion, and for final solution.

WILL MAKE FULL CONTRIBUTION

In this war, they will make a full contribution as always they have. They will then invoke the considerate judgment of mankind as they seek a determination of the questions and problems which, for so long, have vexed their lives, and all but crushed the spirit of their citizenship.

America cannot fail them. It must not fail them. It cannot ignore their just claims as they shall seek, when this war comes to an end, an amelioration of traditional prejudices and hates based on color alone.

This domestic issue must be met in the spirit of that higher statesmanship which shall assure to them a normal, self-respecting, liberty-loving life, based on the sacred privileges and guarantees of our Charter of Liberty and Freedom.

To this end should our energies trend when Japan, Italy and Germany have been scourged so completely that never again shall they menace the peace of the world.

That democracy for which Negroes fought in 1917 and 1918 did not come to them. They suffered terribly thereafter. They were baffled, bewildered, disillusioned. They were heartlessly discouraged, dismayed.

FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

With greater faith than ever, as they now fight for democratic principles, and for the freedom of the world, they confidently look forward to that day of liberty and freedom when democracy shall truly be established in America and all over this world of ours.

In this fateful hour of America's war with Germany, Italy and Japan, however, we have but one duty and one responsibility—the safety of our country and the preservation of its principles and ideals.

With martial strength and power, we march against the three aggressor nations. Victory will be ours. Moral courage, faith, resolution, unyielding determination, complete unity of purpose, will carry us through. Confident and unafraid, we shall meet the tragic responsibilities now imposed upon us.

There are plenty of white people who would appreciate our side of the story . . . If they knew it! Pass your Courier along to such a friend.

Emmett J. Scott, "Negroes to Play Creditable Part in Present War With Enemies," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 20, 1941, sec. 2, p. 1. Reprinted by permission from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Worksheet for Primary Source 5

“Negroes to play a credible part in present war with enemies”

Directions: Please respond to the following questions after reading Scott’s essay.

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in the document? Why do these words/phrases catch your attention?
2. Identify the date and origin of the document (e.g., When and where was it created? Who created it? Who was the target audience? How was the source produced?). How do you think these features affect the attitudes that Scott expresses?
3. What does Scott mean when he writes, “Their own grievous wrongs are now subordinate to the national will and purpose” (Paragraph 9)?
4. What is the main argument that Scott is making about the role African Americans should play in the war effort?
5. How does Scott support his argument? Here you may choose to discuss the reasons and evidence he provides and/or how the language, style, or structure of his essay supports his purpose. What topics, for instance, does he emphasize or avoid?
6. If you were an African American living in 1941, would you have agreed with Scott’s argument? Why/Why not?

Mapping African American Attitudes About World War II

Even after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into World War II, African Americans fiercely debated their role in the war effort. What part could – or should – they play in the segregated military and discriminatory defense industries? Should they fight abroad for a country that denied them basic rights at home? Would support for the war help – or hurt – their own struggle for freedom?

Directions: Use the graphic organizer below to record African Americans' varying attitudes about the war as revealed in the primary sources you examined. For each distinct attitude that you describe in the column on the left, record some of the claims, reasoning, and/or evidence that wartime African Americans provided to support that stance in the column on the right.

Attitude	Rationale



Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: African American Soldiers' Experiences in WWII

Lesson Plan

INTRODUCTION:

In this lesson, students will analyze oral histories in order to gain insight into African Americans' military experiences during World War II. They will synthesize what they learn by writing their own journal entry or letter home from the perspective of an African American serving in World War II.

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to analyze oral history interviews in order to describe African Americans' military experiences during WWII.

STANDARDS:

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

National Center for History in the Schools' National Standards for History

Content Era 8, Standard 3B

The student is able to describe military experiences and explain how they fostered American identity and interactions among people of diverse backgrounds.

Historical Thinking Standard 2

The student is able to appreciate historical perspectives and draw upon literary sources, including oral testimony.

Historical Thinking Standard 4 – The student is able to support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

TIME REQUIREMENT:

1-2 class periods

PROCEDURE:

1. As a warm-up activity, have students respond to the following prompt:

Historian Stephen Ambrose wrote, "The world's greatest democracy fought the world's greatest racist with a segregated army. It was worse than that: the Army and the society conspired to degrade African-Americans in every way possible" (Citizen Soldiers).

Based on this comment, what do you expect African American soldiers' experiences were like during World War II?

2. As students share their responses, record key ideas/themes on the board.
3. Introduce the lesson by informing students that they will be gathering evidence from multiple oral histories to test whether their initial ideas about African American soldiers' wartime experiences are accurate. Based upon your students' familiarity with the subject, you may want to share some of the background information from the **Introductory Essay** about racial inequality in the war-time United States.
4. Distribute the **Oral History Analysis Graphic Organizer** and review the instructions for taking notes on the interviews.
5. For each oral history interview, briefly introduce the interviewee, play the selected excerpt, then allow students to record their observations and analysis on their graphic organizer. To model use of the graphic organizer, you may want to fill it out for the first interview with the whole class before students practice independently.
6. After students share and discuss what they recorded on the observation and analysis portions of their graphic organizers, have them write a one-two sentence summary of African American soldiers' WWII experiences based on the evidence they gathered and analyzed. Explain that this summary is the student's unique interpretation of the past.
7. Have students share their interpretations and discuss how the conclusions they reached after examining the oral histories compare with those they reached in response to the warm-up prompt.
8. Facilitate a historical debate about which interpretation students agree with most, asking them to provide evidence from the oral histories to support their claims. As necessary, supplement the students' contributions with information from the **Introductory Essay**.

EXTENSION/ ENRICHMENT:

- For homework, have students write a journal entry or letter home from the perspective of an African American serving in World War II.
- Have students analyze the government propaganda posters featuring African Americans included in this lesson plan using the **Propaganda Poster Analysis Graphic Organizer**, then have them compare their analyses of the posters with their analyses of the oral histories.

- Have students listen to additional segments from the Lavenia Breaux, Edgar Cole, William Hollo-
man, and Eugene Tarrant oral histories in order to write mini-biographies of these veterans.
- Have students follow the Museum's Oral History Guidelines available at www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/oral-history-guidelines.html in order to conduct an oral history interview with an African American veteran from World War II or another war.
- Have students research other African Americans' experiences with segregation and their attitudes about joining the military by searching the Museum's Digital Collections at www.ww2online.org/advanced and selecting the "Race Relations" and "Ethnic/Racial Identity" tags. Students can also explore wartime segregation and race relations through the Museum's "See You Next Year! High School Yearbooks from WWII" digital collection at www.ww2yearbooks.org.

ORAL HISTORIES

Primary Source I: Oral History Interview with Lavenia Breaux

Lavenia Hickman Breaux was born in Slidell, Louisiana, in 1917, the daughter of a laborer and laundress. Her family moved to New Orleans when she was a young girl, and she found the city to be a safe and pleasant place



to grow up. “My parents were poor people,” she recalled. “[But] I’m glad and grateful that I had that upbringing because then I learned to appreciate people.” Breaux attended church regularly, followed the brass bands that snaked through her neighborhood during “second line” parades, and learned the value of hard work.

Shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Breaux joined an all-African American unit within the Women’s Army Corps (WAC). She had always dreamed of traveling, and she figured the military would allow her to do so. Breaux’s primary job in the Army was to establish camps for new recruits, and she was among the nearly 350,000 American women who served in uniform during World War II at home and abroad. In the excerpt from her oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/lavenia-breaux/segment-4 (see especially 33:14-38:24), Breaux describes life in the barracks following basic training.

Source: Lavenia Breaux Interview, The National WWII Museum, OH.321.

ORAL HISTORIES

Primary Source 2: Oral History Interview with Edgar Cole

Edgar Cole was born in Dallas, Texas, in 1925. He grew up poor and began helping his family financially at a young age with a newspaper route and a job at a grocery store. Since his home did not have running hot water, he and his six siblings bathed around a single wood stove.

Ambitious and eager to leave Dallas, Cole graduated high school then completed an advanced training program in California through the National Youth Administration. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he fought to secure a job at a naval shipyard in order to contribute to the war effort, an experience he discusses in the section of his oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/edgar-cole/segment-2 (see 16:00-20:57).^{*} He was then drafted into the US Marine Corps, which had not accepted African Americans

prior to 1942. The Marines sent Cole to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where he went through basic training at a segregated facility at Montford Point. In the excerpt from his oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/edgar-cole/segment-4 (see especially 33:35-36:49), Cole describes a ceremony at the conclusion of basic training.



Edgar Cole in his Marine uniform, from the collection of The National WWII Museum.

^{*}If you do not plan to have students complete the extension activity with the propaganda posters, you may prefer to only use the excerpt in which Cole discusses the ceremony at the conclusion of basic training.

Source: Edgar Cole, The National WWII Museum, OH.0349.

ORAL HISTORIES

Primary Source 3: Oral History Interview with William Holloman

William Holloman was born in 1924 in Saint Louis, Missouri, where his father worked for the US Postal Service. He grew up in an all-black neighborhood and attended a segregated black school. But he felt sheltered



from discrimination since he never went to downtown St. Louis, where blacks were not allowed to use the theaters and lunch counters.

Holloman started flying at 16 and joined the Army Air Forces after being drafted in November 1942. He reported to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis in June 1943, then trained at Keesler Field in Mississippi and Tuskegee University, where he learned to fly Curtiss P-40 "Tomahawk" and Republic P-47 "Thunderbolt" fighter planes. In 1944 Holloman deployed to Ramitelli Air Base in Italy, where he joined the US 99th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group. The 332nd is better known as the "Tuskegee Airmen" or "Red Tails" on account of the deep red mark that its pilots painted on the tails of their airplanes.

In Italy, Holloman quickly learned how to fly the newer, long-range P-51 "Mustang." He piloted that plane on combat missions, where his job was to protect American bombers from German fighter planes. In the excerpt from his oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/william-holloman-iii/segment-3 (see especially 23:13-27:32), Holloman discusses his experiences going into combat in a segregated unit.

Source: William Holloman Interview, The National WWII Museum, OH.1233.

ORAL HISTORIES

Primary Source 4: Oral History Interview with Eugene Tarrant

Born in a small Texas town in 1919, Eugene Tarrant moved to Dallas as a young boy. After his parents separated, he grew up with his mother, who worked as a live-in cook for a wealthy white family. Since Tarrant lived in a white neighborhood and the other students at his segregated black school did not, he often felt isolated from his classmates. He also did not have many friends in his neighborhood since the nearby white children stopped playing with him around age ten.

In high school, Tarrant played four sports and excelled academically, graduating second in his class of 300 in 1938. With little money for college and few job prospects amidst the Great Depression, Tarrant hoped to join the Marines. When he arrived at the recruiting station, however, he learned that the Marines did not accept African Americans. As a result, he joined the Navy instead. In the excerpt from his oral history available at www.ww2online.org/view/eugene-tarrant/segment-2 (see especially 16:50 – 19:45), Tarrant describes his early experiences aboard the USS *San Francisco*, the cruiser he served on throughout World War II.



Eugene Tarrant in his Navy uniform, from the Collection of the National WWII Museum.

Source: Eugene Tarrant Interview, The National WWII Museum, OH.2528.

Oral History Analysis Graphic Organizer

Directions: Record the most striking details from each interview in the left-hand column, then explain what those details reveal in the right-hand column. After analyzing all of the interviews, develop an interpretation

Observation (What details stand out to you?)	Analysis (What do the details reveal/suggest? What main idea do you take away from the interview?)
Lavenia Breaux Interview	
Edgar Cole Interview	
William Holloman Interview	
Eugene Tarrant Interview	
Interpretation (Based on your analysis of the evidence, what were African American soldiers' experiences like during World War II?)	

PROPAGANDA POSTER I



PROPAGANDA POSTER 2



PROPAGANDA POSTER 3



PROPAGANDA POSTER 4



Propaganda Poster Analysis Graphic Organizer

Directions: Record the most striking details from each poster in the left-hand column, then explain what those details reveal in the right-hand column. After analyzing all of the posters, develop an interpretation.

Observation (What details stand out to you?)	Analysis (What do the details reveal/suggest? What main idea do you take away from the poster)
"Above & Beyond the Call of Duty"	
"Twice a Patriot"	
"Keep Us Flying!"	
"United We Win"	
Interpretation (Based on your analysis of the evidence, how did the government portray African Americans' experiences and contributions during World War II?)	



A Double Victory?

The Legacy of African Americans in World War II

Lesson Plan

INTRODUCTION:

History is not simply what happened in the past but how people make sense of it. As a result, historians often disagree with each other or even change their own opinions about the meaning of particular historical events, such as World War II's impact upon African Americans and the Civil Rights Movement. Since primary and secondary sources – and the evidence contained within them – are the building blocks upon which historians construct their interpretations, students will examine multiple sources in order to determine which interpretation of the war's legacy for African Americans they find most convincing.

OBJECTIVE:

By analyzing a range of primary and secondary source materials, students will develop an interpretation about the war's impact upon African Americans and provide evidence to support their conclusion.

STANDARDS:

Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8](#)

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9](#)

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7](#)

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

National Center for History in the Schools' National Standards for History [Content Era 8, Standard 3C](#)

The student is able to evaluate how minorities organized to gain access to wartime jobs and how they confronted discrimination.

[Historical Thinking Standard 3](#)

The student is able to evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past.

Historical Thinking Standard 4 – The student is able to support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

Historical Thinking Standard 4 – The student is able to interrogate historical data by uncovering the social, political, and economic context in which it was created; testing the data source for its credibility, authority, authenticity, internal consistency and completeness; and detecting and evaluating bias, distortion, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.

TIME REQUIREMENT:

1-2 class periods

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce the two interpretations below regarding World War II's impact upon African Americans and the Civil Rights Movement, informing students that they will be examining multiple primary and secondary sources in order to determine which interpretation they find most convincing. As you introduce the interpretations, have students identify the similarities and differences between them and clarify difficult vocabulary.

Interpretation 1: "The war years witnessed the birth of the modern civil rights movement."

- Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, 2nd Seagull ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 828.

Interpretation 2: "My research indicates that the Second World War delayed and stifled black protest activism, that it dampened black militancy."

- Harvard Sitkoff, "American Blacks in World War II: Rethinking the Militancy-Watershed Hypothesis" in James Titus, ed. *The Home Front and War in the Twentieth Century: The American Experience in Comparative Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: United States Air Force Academy and Office of Air Force History Headquarters, 1984), p. 148.

Interpretation 3: "What is immediately clear is that the impact and legacy of war was decidedly ambiguous, at times empowering black activists, at times constraining them, at times emboldening those seeking to preserve racial hierarchies, and at times making surprisingly little difference at all."

- Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck, "Introduction: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement," in Kruse and Tuck, eds. *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 6.

2. Distribute copies of the **Evidence Collection Worksheets** below to students and explain that they will use the worksheets to gather and organize evidence according to the interpretation that the evidence best supports. Inform students that they will also be responsible for explaining how individual pieces of evidence support a particular interpretation. You may need to give each student multiple copies of the worksheet.
3. Have students read the **Introductory Essay** silently or aloud as a whole class then record evidence and accompanying explanations on the appropriate Evidence Collection Worksheet. To model use of the worksheets, you may want to highlight evidence from the Introductory Essay that supports

each interpretation and provide explanations for each of those pieces of evidence before students practice independently.

4. Divide the class into groups and distribute one set of the **images** and **evidence strips** below to each group. Alternatively, you may want to have students work in pairs, assigning each pair a single evidence strip or photo to examine and discuss before rotating to analyze additional sources. Before distributing, you should cut the evidence document into strips along the dotted line. You may want to laminate the images and evidence strips to make them easier to reuse.
5. Instruct students to assign each image and evidence strip to at least one interpretation and to record that evidence and an explanation of how it supports the interpretation on the appropriate **Evidence Collection Worksheet**. Remind students to be attentive to the date, origin, and type of each source they are examining and to consider how those features affect the source's reliability.
6. After students have assigned each source to an interpretation, have them identify the interpretation for which they have compiled the most convincing supporting evidence and explanations.
7. Have students engage in a debate about their preferred interpretations, drawing upon the evidence they gathered to support their claims.

EXTENSION/ ENRICHMENT:

- For homework, have students write an essay explaining which interpretation they find most convincing, citing the evidence they gathered to bolster their argument.
- Have students read a secondary source essay on World War II's impact upon African Americans and the Civil Rights Movement in order to assess the author's claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Evidence Strips I

"It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed service without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale."

- President Harry S. Truman, Executive Order 9981, 1948

"[Coming home] was somewhat bittersweet. At that time the prejudice was everywhere, discrimination was everywhere, so when decisions were made about who was going to get this benefit or that benefit, this opportunity or that opportunity, the prejudice came in. As a consequence, we were the last to be brought home, and it was so bad I remember when I got off the ship in San Francisco someone yelled to me, 'The war's been over, don't you know it. Take off the damn uniform.'"

- Edgar Cole, African American WWII veteran (Marine Corps)
National WWII Museum Interview, 2012, OH.0349.

"Now, Therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes, and as a prerequisite to the successful conduct of our national defense production effort, I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin."

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Executive Order 8802, 1941

"I guess the thing that I'm more concerned about is that [my interview] confirms the President's decision to integrate the armed services because that started the whole process of the Civil Rights law, the Voting Rights [Act], all that springs from the start of the integration of the services. And even though it's not my party, 85 million Americans voted for a black man to be president. In a situation where I couldn't get promoted to first lieutenant, a black man becomes the Commander in Chief of the armed services."

- Joseph Hairston, African American WWII Veteran (Army)
The National WWII Museum Interview, 2010, OH.1097.

Evidence Strips 2

"I suggest that 10,000 Negroes march on Washington, D.C., the capitol of the nation, with the slogan: WE LOYAL NEGRO AMERICAN CITIZENS DEMAND THE RIGHT TO WORK AND FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY."

- A. Philip Randolph, January 1941

"As previous scholarship has already demonstrated, black servicemen gained a reputation as militant opponents of Jim Crow. Numerous reports came from Birmingham of black soldiers attempting to move the color boards [on busses], sitting or standing in the white section, and fighting with operators as well as white passengers over any act of injustice."

- Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), p. 64.

"World War II opened a quarter of a century of increasing hope and frustration for the black man. After a decade of depression, the ideological character of the war and the government's need for the loyalty and manpower of all Americans led blacks to expect a better deal from President Franklin D. Roosevelt. With a near unanimity rare in the Negro community, civil rights groups joined with the Negro press and influential church, labor, and political leaders to demand 'Democracy in Our Time!' Individuals and organizations never before involved in a protest movement found it respectable, even expedient, to be part of the new militancy in the black community. The war stimulated racial militancy, which in turned to increased interracial violence that culminated in the bloody summer of 1943."

-Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," *Journal of American History* 58, no. 3 (December 1971), p. 661.

"[African Americans'] own grievous wrongs are now subordinate to the national will and purpose. From this course they will not be swerved by any influence. With all good faith and patience, when the task now before us has been accomplished, the ills that disturb them, can then again be brought into the forum of public discussion, and for final solution."

- Emmett J. Scott, "Negroes to Play Creditable Part in Present War With Enemies," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 20, 1941.

Evidence Strips 3

"I think that some of the things about World War II, when we got overseas, in Italy, black and white, we were all brothers. We all were a team. We relied on one another. Those guys forgot about their racist attitudes. And when the war ended, and we came back to the States, the most amazing thing, I remembered this for the rest of my life. We were coming down the gangplank, getting off the boat. Now, there were more blacks on the boat coming back because they brought our group back together. And they had a sign, at the bottom of the gangplank, whites to one side, colored to the other. And I said to myself, 'This is some country.' I'm fighting for democracy, and this is the first time that I even thought about fighting for recognition as a first-class citizen in my own country. I was fighting for the democracy, and I had to fight for the right to fight. I thought America was a sick country."

- William Holloman, African American WWII Veteran (Air Force)
The National WWII Museum Interview, 2009, OH.1233.

"The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form government just as surely as the Axis forces."

- James G. Thompson, Letter to the Editor, *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 31, 1942.

"While there is no explicit, official documentation for racial prejudice in the awards process for the Medal of Honor, and while this study found no official documentation for a black nominee, the study concludes that the failure of an African-American soldier to win a Medal of Honor most definitely lay in the racial climate and practice within the Army in World War II."

- Elliott V. Converse et al, "The Medal of Honor and African Americans in the United States Army During World War II," US Army commissioned study, 1995.

Evidence Strips 4

"Among the numerous adjustments the American people had to make at the end of World War II was adaptation to a new position of the Negro in the United States. This new status arose not merely because a substantial portion of the gains made during the war were retained but also because of an intensification of the drive, in several quarters, to achieve complete equality for the Negro. The war had created a climate in which substantial gains could be made, but the very nature of the emergency imposed certain restraints that could no longer be justified after 1945."

- John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd Ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 608.

"Mr. Speaker, it is about the Negro soldier I wish to speak today. I wish to pay him respect and to express the gratitude of the American people for his contribution to the greatest battle of all time – the battle which decided whether or not we were to remain a free people.

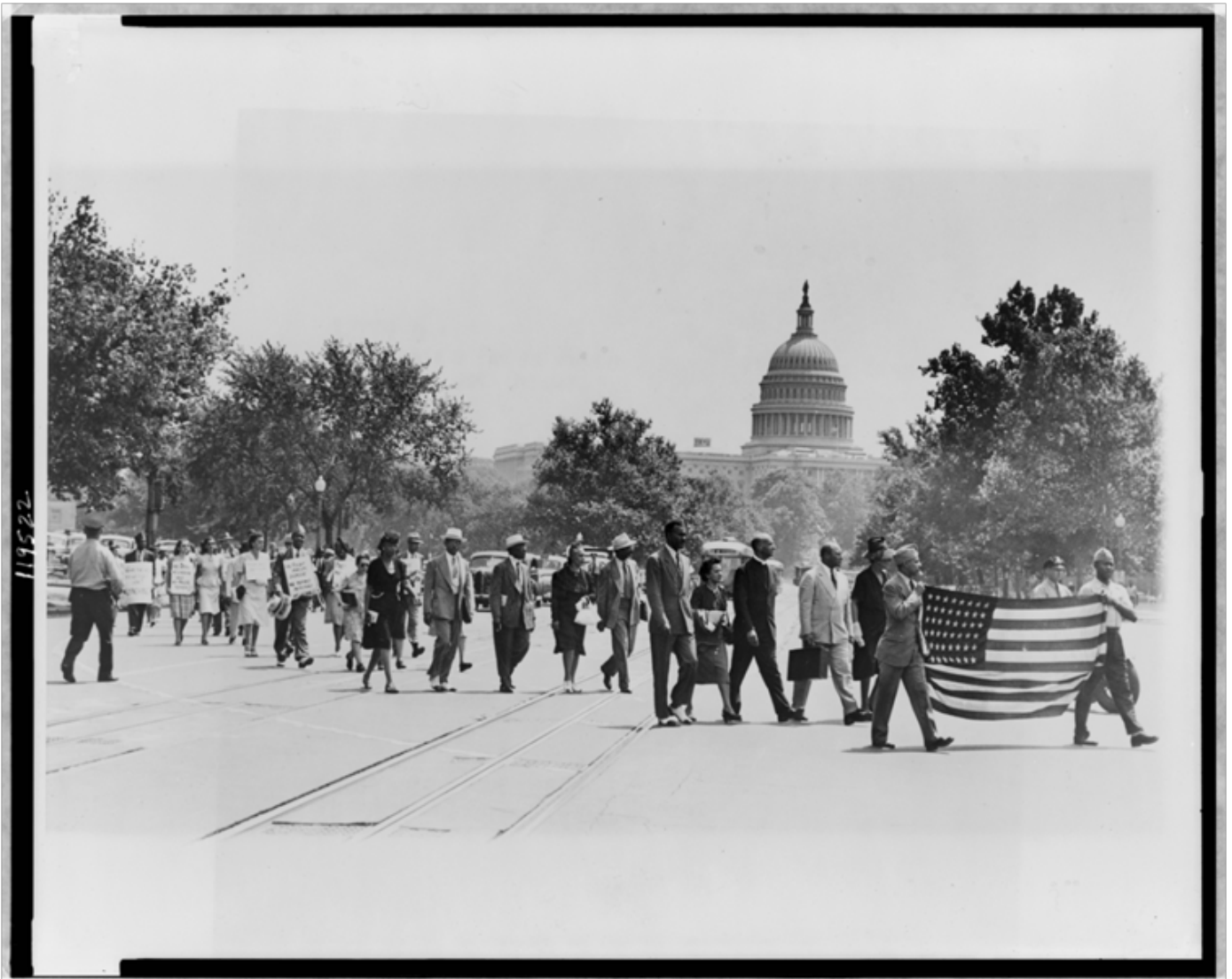
"We should be especially mindful of the Negro soldier, remembering that he fought and shed his blood for a freedom which he has not as yet been permitted fully to share."

- "The Negro Soldier: A Partial Record of Negro Devotion and Heroism in the Cause of Freedom Gathered From the Files of the War and Navy Departments,"
Remarks of Rep. Helen Gahagan Douglas of California in the House of Representatives, February 1, 1946.

"When you get back to the States, you fought a war, you've shed some blood, you've seen people die – black and white – and you come back to the States, and you're treated in the same damn way you were before the war started. You've got to practically kiss somebody's behind just to say, 'I can walk the street.' There are still theaters out there you can't go to. You're still in some parts of the country restricted to riding the back of the bus or that one coach in the train that is for black people only. Same old crap. Was it worth it? Things have changed. But there are still some people out there, I have never done a damn thing to, don't even know them, but because of the color of that skin, there's animosity there. They don't like me."

-Harold Ward, African American Veteran (US Navy)
The National WWII Museum Interview, 2012, OH.2744.

IMAGE 1



Protests in Washington D.C.

Black servicemen and women returned home to find treatment of African American citizens largely unchanged. After the war, many veterans became active in protests. Here, veterans and civilians protest the lynching of four black citizens in Georgia in 1946. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-119522.

IMAGE 2



A Man Was Lynched Yesterday

The NAACP flew this flag at its headquarters in New York City to report lynchings until the building owner threatened to evict the organization in 1938. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-PPMSCA-09705.

IMAGE 3



Pittsburgh Courier Archives

Double Victory

Twenty-six-year-old James Thompson's 1942 letter to the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier* calling for African Americans to fight for a "double victory" over racism at home and fascism abroad captivated the newspaper's – and the nation's – attention. The *Courier* introduced the Double Victory icon above the week after receiving Thompson's letter, and the paper displayed it 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. *Pittsburgh Courier Archives*.

IMAGE 4



We Want White Tenants in Our White Community

"Detroit, Michigan. Riot at the Sojourner Truth homes, a new U.S. federal housing project, caused by white neighbors' attempt to prevent Negro tenants from moving in. Sign with American flag 'We want white tenants in our white community,' directly opposite the housing project." Photo and original title by Arthur S. Siegel, Office of War Information, February 1942. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-FSA-8d13572.

IMAGE 5


What Are Our Immediate Goals?

1. To mobilize five million Negroes into one militant mass for pressure.
2. To assemble in Chicago the last week in May, 1943, for the celebration of

"WE ARE AMERICANS - TOO" WEEK

And to ponder the question of Non-Violent Civil Disobedience and Non-Cooperation, and a Mass March On Washington.

WHY SHOULD WE MARCH?



15,000 Negroes Assembled at St. Louis, Missouri
20,000 Negroes Assembled at Chicago, Illinois
23,500 Negroes Assembled at New York City
Millions of Negro Americans all Over This Great
Land Claim the Right to be Free!

**FREE FROM WANT!
FREE FROM FEAR!
FREE FROM JIM CROW!**

"Winning Democracy for the Negro is Winning the War for Democracy!" — A. Philip Randolph

Why Should We March?

A. Phillip Randolph cancelled a 50,000-man march on Washington, DC, in 1941 after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed an executive order banning racial discrimination in war industries. But Randolph's "March on Washington Movement" (MOWM) continued to press for additional civil rights reforms during the war. This flier advertises the MOWM's 1943 convention in Chicago, which few blacks attended other than a small number of Sleeping Car Porters, whose union Randolph led. Courtesy of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Washington, DC.

IMAGE 6



We're All in This Together

"Negro, Mexican, and white girls are employed at the Pacific Parachute Company. San Diego, California." Original title and photograph by Russell Lee, Office of War Information, April 1942. A Fair Employment Practices Committee placard is on the wall behind the table. Library of Congress, LC-USW3-1186-D.

Evidence Collection Worksheet- Interpretation I

Directions: For each primary or secondary source that you examine, record any evidence that you believe supports the interpretation below. For each piece of evidence you record, write a brief explanation of how or why it supports the interpretation. Ask for an additional copy of this sheet if you run out of space.

Interpretation 1: “The war years witnessed the birth of the modern civil rights movement.”

- Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, 2nd Seagull ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 828.

	Evidence	Explanation
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Evidence Collection Worksheet- Interpretation 2

Directions: For each primary or secondary source that you examine, record any evidence that you believe supports the interpretation below. For each piece of evidence you record, write a brief explanation of how or why it supports the interpretation. Ask for an additional copy of this sheet if you run out of space.

Interpretation 2: “My research indicates that the Second World War delayed and stifled black protest activism, that it dampened black militancy.”

- Harvard Sitkoff, “American Blacks in World War II: Rethinking the Militancy-Watershed Hypothesis” in James Titus, ed. *The Home Front and War in the Twentieth Century: The American Experience in Comparative Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: United States Air Force Academy and Office of Air Force History Headquarters, 1984), p. 148.

	Evidence	Explanation
1		
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Evidence Collection Worksheet- Interpretation 3

Directions: For each primary or secondary source that you examine, record any evidence that you believe supports the interpretation below. For each piece of evidence you record, write a brief explanation of how or why it supports the interpretation. Ask for an additional copy of this sheet if you run out of space.

Interpretation 3: “What is immediately clear is that the impact and legacy of war was decidedly ambiguous, at times empowering black activists, at times constraining them, at times emboldening those seeking to preserve racial hierarchies, and at times making surprisingly little difference at all.”

- Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck, “Introduction: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement,” in Kruse and Tuck, eds. *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 6.

	Evidence	Explanation
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FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN WWII

The National WWII Museum
945 Magazine Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
righttofightexhibit.org

Just after stepping out of Ft. Benning [GA] Theater No. 4 at the conclusion of the 16th O.C.S. graduating exercises, 2nd Lts. Henry C. Harris, Jr.; Frank Frederick Doughton; Elmer B. Kountze; and Rogers H. Beardon (behind) start pinning their brass bars on each others shoulders.

National Archives 111-SC-137679

