



#### INSERT MEDIA CONTACT INFORMATION

### ***Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Experiences in World War II* Opens at INSERT HOST NAME**

***New exhibit explores challenges and triumphs of African Americans during war era***

**INSERT CITY (INSERT DATE)** - On **INSERT OPENING DATE**, **INSERT HOST NAME** will open a new special exhibit called *Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Experiences in World War II*. Produced by The National WWII Museum, the exhibit features artifacts, photographs and oral histories to highlight some of the extraordinary achievements and challenges of African Americans during World War II, both overseas and on the Home Front.

A national advisory committee, including the late Dr. Clement Alexander Price of Rutgers University, was commissioned to help frame the exhibition. The committee, led by co-chairs Dr. John Morrow of the University of Georgia and Claudine Brown of the Smithsonian Institution, helped advise on the exhibition's narrative arc and content.

In the years before World War II, African Americans in many parts of the country were treated as second-class citizens. Discriminatory practices were condoned by the government, and African Americans were systematically denied many rights and liberties by laws that kept them in positions of inferiority. Due to the landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision in 1896, the United States was a nation where "separate but equal" was law in many states. In addition, many military leaders declared African Americans unfit to serve in combat. However, once the war began, thousands rushed to enlist, determined to fight for freedom, while still being denied equality at home.

On display through **INSERT CLOSING DATE**, *Fighting for the Right to Fight* illustrates how hopes for securing equality inspired many to enlist, the discouraging reality of the segregated non-combat roles given to black recruits, and the continuing fight for "Double Victory" that laid the groundwork for the modern Civil Rights Movement.

Through a myriad of interactive experiences, visitors will discover the wartime stories of individual servicemembers who took part in this journey of extraordinary challenge, from unheralded heroes to famous names, including Alex Haley (US Coast Guard); Sammy Davis Jr. (US Army); Benjamin Davis, Jr. (US Army Air Forces); Medgar Evers (US Army) and more.

The centerpiece of the exhibit is an original eight-minute video about the famed 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group (better known as the Tuskegee Airmen), who in many ways became the public focus of African American participation during the war. The piece is narrated by television personality Robin Roberts, whose own father flew with the Tuskegee Airmen during the war.

Including personal accounts from members of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group, the video provides an overview of how their success in battle became a great symbol of bravery, helping refute notions that African Americans were inferior performers in the military, especially in roles requiring advanced training. Lieutenant Colonel William Holloman III recalls his leader Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.'s encouragement: "He said, 'America's watching you.' He instilled in us a pride that I don't think was there before we went in the service."



Additionally, *Fighting for the Right to Fight* will feature two medals representing the seven African Americans who were awarded the Medal of Honor in 1997, the bittersweet result of a long investigation by the US military on discriminatory policies in the awarding of combat medals. The exhibit will also provide in-depth coverage of lesser-known events and service, such as that of the USS *Mason*, the first American ship to have a predominately African American crew.

See artifacts and images from the exhibit and learn more at [righttofightexhibit.org](http://righttofightexhibit.org).

**Advisory Committee for *Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American Experiences in World War II***

**Co-chair Dr. John Morrow**  
History Department Chair, University of Georgia

**Co-chair Claudine Brown**  
Assistant Secretary for Education and Access, Smithsonian Institution

**Dr. Dan Haulman**  
Chief, Organizational History Division, Air Force Historical Research Agency

**Dr. Clement Alexander Price (deceased)**  
Former Director of the Institute on Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience, Rutgers University

**Dr. Raphael Cassimere**  
Professor Emeritus, Department of History, University of New Orleans

**Dr. Charles Teamer**  
Director Emeritus, The Amistad Research Center, Tulane University

**INSERT HOST BOILER PLATE**

The National WWII Museum tells the story of the American experience in *the war that changed the world* - why it was fought, how it was won, and what it means today - so that future generations will know the price of freedom, and be inspired by what they learn. Dedicated in 2000 as The National D-Day Museum and now designated by Congress as America's National WWII Museum, it celebrates the American Spirit, the teamwork, optimism, courage and sacrifices of the men and women who fought on the battlefield and served on the Home Front. For more information, call 877-813-3329 or 504-528-1944 or visit [nationalww2museum.org](http://nationalww2museum.org).

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