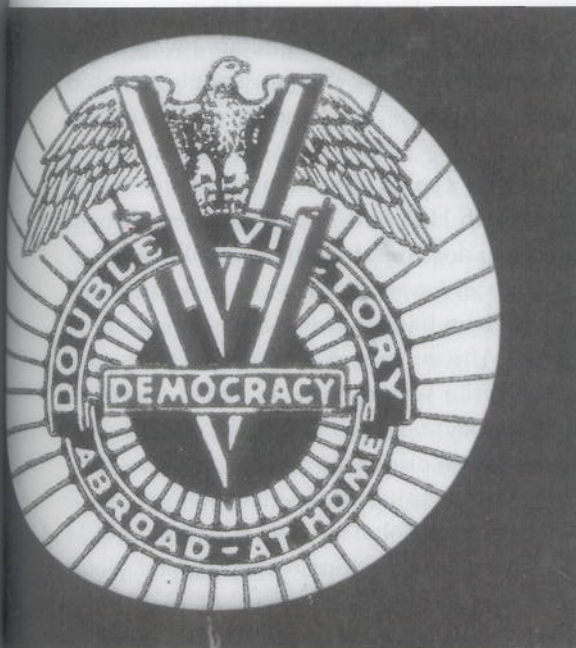


Double V for Victory

Reframing the Arsenal of Democracy

In Military Service

Keeping the Home Fires Burning



Double victory

During World War II, African Americans launched a double victory campaign: “Victory at Home and Victory Abroad.”

The international rivalry and territorial aggression that characterized the years leading up to the First World War resumed all too soon after the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 produced the Treaty of Versailles. The idea that the “Great War,” as it was called, would indeed be the “War to End All Wars” proved as naïve and illusory as the idea that the League of Nations would create a lasting peace. In fact, after 1919 the more powerful nations had used the League as a cloak behind which they imposed their will on weaker nations. The League curtailed neither Japan’s imperialism toward China beginning in 1931 nor the resurgent militarism of Nazi Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, who took power in 1933. The League’s limitations became painfully clear to African Americans when the Italian fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in the fall of 1935. In 1938 public opinion in the United States generally denounced Hitler for annexing Austria and dismembering Czechoslovakia. The dark clouds of war hovered over the international landscape and then burst suddenly and violently with Germany’s invasion of Poland in September 1939. War had once again erupted in Europe.

In a ferocious assault in the spring of 1940, Hitler’s army and air force conquered and occupied the nations of Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium. In June, France succumbed to German control. The Nazi blitzkrieg appeared to be unstoppable. As the American people looked on from afar, they were forced to contemplate the horrifying possibility of Britain’s collapse under Nazi military might. In September 1940, Germany, Japan, and Italy forged their Tripartite Pact—a military alliance of these so-called Axis Powers. As Americans began to ask themselves what disposition Germany would make of the New World colonies of the conquered nations, they realized that the war had come frightfully close to them. It was time to prepare, and the following year witnessed a feverish effort to do so.

As war ravaged Europe and East Asia, the United States government stood aloof, but on December 29, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt took a step toward belligerency when he delivered one of his most famous radio fireside chats. Speaking of the city of Detroit and the automobile industry, he asked the American people to become “the great arsenal of democracy.” Although nearly a year would elapse before American military involvement began, Roosevelt urged patriotism and sacrifice, admonishing that “we must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war.”

Most African Americans joined the war effort with a spirit of patriotism despite racism in the land of their birth. Those who were familiar with Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*—the infamous book in which he set forth his program—detested Nazi doctrines from the start. They recognized his racist ideas of Aryan supremacy as sounding all too similar to white racist beliefs in the United States. In the years preceding the war, a claim had circulated widely throughout black communities that Hitler had disrespected the African American Olympic track stars Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe during the 1936 Berlin Games. African Americans felt a further affront when Germany’s Max Schmeling knocked out the black boxer Joe Louis in 1936. Louis’s victorious rematch with Schmeling for the World Heavyweight crown in 1938 caused blacks to revel in the victory as a gain for “the race” and all of America.

In contrast to World War I, however, during this new global struggle American blacks did not sacrifice the fight for democracy at home for the fight for democracy abroad. Black lawyer and NAACP board member Theodore Berry captured this spirit when in 1942 he noted that blacks were not motivated by “disloyalty or lack of patriotism, but a war in defense

of ideals of freedom leaves the Negro spiritually uninspired without some belief that there is hope of realizing a fuller measure of the things for which we are fighting." Energized and strengthened by the activism of the 1930s—the struggles of numerous black organizations of varied political persuasions for economic justice, desegregation, and the vote and against lynching and colonialism—during World War II African Americans would neither silence nor soften their civil rights demands. Many even criticized boxing idol Joe Louis for giving his prize money to the U.S. Navy after his victory over Buddie Baer in January 1942. They refused to applaud Louis's generosity in the face of the segregated policy of the nation's military.

Blacks openly denounced both the Jim Crow character of the U.S. Army and the Navy's policy of using blacks only in menial capacities. In their local communities, in the black media, in their professional associations, and in national civil rights organizations, they protested vigorously against barriers to equal citizenship, demanding that the federal government adopt a new and interventionist role in behalf of racial equality. Blacks' growing voting bloc in the northern states emboldened them to exact accountability and concessions from elected officials, and they leveraged their newfound political clout all the way to the president himself. During World War II, black Americans unapologetically battled on two fronts, committed to a "Double-V" campaign—for victory over the racism in America and for victory over the fascism that American troops fought to destroy on foreign soil.

Reframing the Arsenal of Democracy

An overarching theme in Roosevelt's "arsenal of democracy" speech was the need for many of the manufacturers of domestic products to shift gears and transform themselves into defense industries with loyal workers, supportive of America's allies abroad. His call for patriotic sacrifice, and specifically for the adoption of non-strike agreements, required that labor unions abandon commonplace tactics during the 1930s. At the time of his speech, the president was well aware of the undercurrent of racial dissatisfaction that ran deep in African American communities in regard to both the military and defense industries. In 1939, the black civil rights lawyer and World War I veteran Charles Hamilton Houston wrote Roosevelt in anticipation of another global war. Emphasizing the critical importance of the black population to national defense, Houston warned that African Americans would no longer "silently endure the insults and discriminations imposed on its soldiers and sailors in the course of the last war."

As the United States began to put itself on a war footing, black Americans wondered what consideration would be given them, both in the building up of a large fighting force and in the manufacture of the materials of modern warfare. In 1940 black leaders voiced their opinions about the proposed Selective Service Act, which would restore the military draft. For example, Howard University history professor Rayford W. Logan testified before Congress on behalf of the Committee on the Participation of Negroes in the National Defense. As chairman of this committee and also as a veteran of World War I, Logan asserted that blacks demanded "equal opportunity to participate in the national-defense program, civil as well as military."

In September 1940, a group of black leaders, including labor leader A. Philip Randolph and NAACP president Walter White, submitted a seven-

Blacks in the Armed Forces

for the just treatment of African Americans in the nation's armed forces. They urged that all available black reserve officers be used to train recruits; that black recruits be given the same training as whites; that existing units of the army accept officers and enlisted men on the basis of ability and not race; that specialized personnel, such as physicians, dentists, and nurses, be integrated; that responsible African Americans be appointed to draft boards; that discrimination be abolished in the Navy and the Army Air Corps (as the air force was then known); and that competent African Americans be appointed as civilian assistants to the secretaries of war and the navy.

The War Department responded by issuing a statement that African Americans would be received into the Army on the general basis of the proportion of the African American population of the country. However, the government's policy did not call for integrated troops but rather required separate units by race. In addition, the War Department refused to place black officers, except for medical officers and chaplains, over black units that had white officers. African Americans were indignant, and they made their indignation known. Neither African Americans nor the president were oblivious of the political implications of their respective positions, especially given the imminent presidential election between Roosevelt and the Republican candidate Wendell Willkie. On October 25, 1940, just a little over a week before the election and under pressure from black leaders, Roosevelt promoted the black army officer Colonel Benjamin O. Davis to brigadier general.

He appointed other blacks to significant positions—the lawyer and Howard University Law School dean William H. Hastie as a civilian aide to the Secretary of War and the army officer Campbell Johnson as an executive assistant to the director of the Selective Service. Senior ROTC units were added at the historically black schools of West Virginia State College, Hampton Institute, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College, Prairie View State College, and Tuskegee Institute. These additions and promotions on the government's part did little to quiet the protest of the many African Americans who sought an end to the Jim Crow military. A black soldier's letter to the *New York Age* described the proponents of segregated troops as “ripping to rags the American flag's meaning of equality.”

The industrial mobilization that preceded the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and America's declaration of war offered few opportunities to black workers. As the arsenal of democracy, American industry began to surge once again, at last helping to lift the nation out of the throes of the 1930s depression. The United States offered aid to Britain and the other Allied powers through sales, outright gifts, and the Lend-Lease program.

Racial prejudice ran rampant in the industrial plants that converted from domestic to war-related production. Employers' first preference was to hire the several million white workers whom the Great Depression had left unemployed. From the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 through 1941, the number of unemployed white workers fell dramatically, and wages rose dramatically. Some industries even hired white workers from distant regions rather than opening their doors to local black residents, according to a report of the Labor Division of the National Defense Advisory Commission. Black workers found themselves unwelcome by employers and white workers, both of whom argued that blacks were insufficiently skilled while at the same time denying them opportunities for apprenticeship and other war-production training programs. In a national survey of employers with defense contracts, conducted by the Bureau of Employment Security of the Social Security Board, more than half of employers admitted to following rigid anti-black policies. They refused black workers in any capacity, including unskilled jobs.



Blacks Picket the Glen Martin Plant

These workers demanded jobs from the defense industry.

When African Americans benefited from defense work, they did so in a far more limited and indirect way, since they usually got the jobs of whites who had moved up the ladder to higher-paying defense plants. In response, protests resounded forcefully from the black press, civil rights organizations, black churches, and individual black community leaders. In April 1941 a delegation of black leaders, including Walter White of the NAACP, Mary McLeod Bethune of the National Council of Negro Women, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and Lester Granger of the National Urban League, met with President Roosevelt to argue for his support in desegregating the military and the defense industries. The delegation demanded more than the president was willing to give. At the time of this meeting, the U.S. Office of Education had already declared that there should be no discrimination on account of race, creed, or color in the spending of funds in defense training programs. In August 1940, the National Defense Advisory Committee had issued a statement against the refusal to hire African Americans at defense plants. The Office of Production Management established a black employment and training branch in its labor division to facilitate the hiring of African Americans in defense industries. However, these official statements were not accompanied by any enforcement and thus had produced little results.

The president's own rhetoric served to heighten the distance between American ideals and its deeds with respect to racial discrimination. In his State of the Union address to Congress on January 6, 1941, Roosevelt spoke eloquently and unambiguously of the "Four


WHY SHOULD WE MARCH?

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.



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

A. Philip Randolph

A. Philip Randolph rallies black Americans throughout the nation to march on Washington in 1941.

Freedoms" to which the world must aspire—freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. To this list of freedoms worth fighting for, the increasingly assertive African American population added freedom from racial discrimination.

In the same month of Roosevelt's annual address to Congress, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, proposed a mass March on Washington. The idea of a march on the nation's capital to seek redress for grievances had long roots in American reform. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century woman suffragists, Coxe's army of the unemployed in 1894, and the Bonus Expeditionary Force in 1932 had all converged on Washington in pursuit of their respective causes. And Randolph's plan met with tremendous enthusiasm in black communities throughout the nation. He called for an all-black march with the aim of emboldening African Americans with a sense of their own power and also to preclude communist infiltration and dominance. Randolph's stirring words to his people emphasized the need for a new style of activism, specifically large-scale, direct-action protest with pressure on the federal government itself.

Demanding defense jobs and an integrated military, Randolph proclaimed:

Dear fellow Negro Americans, be not dismayed in these terrible times. You possess power, great power. Our problem is to hitch it up for action on the broadest, daring and most gigantic scale. In this period of power politics, nothing counts but pressure, more pressure and still more pressure, through the tactic and strategy of broad organized, aggressive mass action behind the vital and important issues of the Negro.

As plans for the march got underway, high government officials became increasingly alarmed at the growing momentum of the March on Washington Movement in such cities as Baltimore, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Richmond, Atlanta, Tampa, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. As African Americans from all over the United States prepared to converge on the Capitol on July 1, government leaders took cognizance of the world's attention on American racial policies and asked worriedly, "What will they think in Berlin?"

During the last three weeks of June 1941, prominent local and national leaders, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and New York City mayor Fiorello La Guardia, met with Randolph in an attempt to discourage the march. They argued that the march would do no good and would perhaps cause reprisals against blacks. Randolph did not budge. The president then sent for Randolph and conferred at length with him, along with Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. Yet their pleas did not dissuade Randolph or the escalating enthusiasm for it in black communities in various parts of the nation. As the day of the march drew closer, government officials became more desperate. After several conferences, the president proposed a compromise—he promised to issue an order "with teeth in it," prohibiting discrimination in employment in defense industries and in the government, if Randolph called off the march. On June 25, 1941, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, in which he ordered categorically: "there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or Government because of race, creed, color, or national origin. . . . And 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." Hopeful, Randolph canceled the march.

In pursuance of the executive order, a clause prohibiting discrimination was placed in all defense contracts, and a Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) was established to receive and investigate complaints against industries in violation of the order. Comprising public officials, as well as management and labor leaders, the committee held hearings in such cities as Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York. The FEPC disclosed evidences of discrimination, although it had no power to impose punishment and, because of the war emergency, generally refused to recommend the cancellation of war contracts. Occasionally employers and unions changed their policies to avoid being called to appear as defendants at committee hearings.

Executive Order 8802

The executive order and the committee received a mixed assessment from African Americans. Many initially hailed the order as the most significant document affecting them since the Emancipation Proclamation. In its first year, the newly established Committee on Fair Employment Practice (FEPC) received more than six thousand complaints of racial discrimination. Blacks filed 78 percent of the complaints nationally; of these, a third came from black women (who accounted for 86 percent of all complaints by women). The New York City office, the first agency to be empowered to "eliminate and prevent discrimination in [all] employment because of race, color or national origin either by employers, labor organizations, employment agencies or other persons," received 20 percent of the national total, or 1,162 in eighteen months. According to historian Cheryl Lynn Goldberg, in New York City religious discrimination, primarily directed at Jews, constituted the most frequent complaint (43 percent); race came second, with 19 percent of the total.

Prior to the establishment of the FEPC, the labor division of the Office of Production Management's black employment and training branch had only limited success in negotiating

with employers and persuading them to use African Americans on war construction projects and in defense plants. Increasingly, blacks registered their complaints against persistent and widespread discrimination. White employers opposed the order altogether. The executive order did not overturn Jim Crow in the southern states, observed Mark Ethridge, a Louisville newspaperman and an original member of the FEPC. "All the armies of the world, both of the United Nations and the Axis," he said, "could not force upon the South the abandonment of racial segregation." Incensed over the order, a white Alabama lawyer formed the League to Maintain White Supremacy, while the governor of Alabama declared segregation to be essential to racial peace. The effort to integrate the defense industries would continue throughout the war years and afterward, just as would the effort to desegregate the military.

In September 1941, William Hastie (then at the War Department) authored a report that revealed the ways in which blacks were underutilized and discriminated against in the armed forces. Hastie found it appalling that blacks made up only 5 percent of the 1.5 million enlisted men and, worse yet, that they were overwhelmingly assigned unskilled and menial duties. In June 1940, only four thousand African Americans served in the Navy, the majority of them as messmen (kitchen staff). They had no opportunity to learn the many trades provided in the naval training program or to become combat seamen. Early in the war African Americans protested this discrimination, but for several months Navy officials refused to revise their policy.

Hastie and Discrimination in the Armed Forces

In an address to the executive board of the National Lawyers Guild in October 1941, Hastie argued that the "Negro, whether he be soldier or civilian, finds it difficult to concentrate on the horrors of a Germany without civil liberties, when his immediate attention is continually diverted to proscriptions at home." His plea for raising the morale of black troops through the full inclusion of black people in American life met with little sympathy in the War Department (which oversaw the U.S. Army). The response to his report noted the impossibility of solving a racial problem that had endured through custom and habit for centuries. As far as the War Department was concerned, integrating the troops was neither practical nor desirable. In a response to Hastie, dated December 1, 1941, the Army's chief of staff, General George C. Marshall, wrote: "the level of intelligence and occupational skill of the negro population is considerably below that of white and . . . that experiments within the Army in the solution of social problems are fraught with danger to efficiency, discipline, and morale."

Six days later, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed the American naval base Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Within days, Congress declared war on Japan and the other Axis Powers.

In Military Service

When war broke out in Europe in 1939, the United States government embarked feverishly on a program to remedy the nation's low state of military preparedness. In the years between the First and Second World wars, the American people had been strongly isolationist. Disinclined to support a large peacetime standing army, Americans sought to return to prewar "normalcy." The number of officers and soldiers declined, and the number of African American ranks in the United States Army dwindled to relatively inconsequential numbers. In the prewar army of 230,000 men, fewer than five thousand African American soldiers were serving. At the beginning of the emergency, the regular army had fewer than



Lt. Harriet Pickens and Ens. Frances Wills

African American women served in World War II in a number of capacities. These two women were the first to be commissioned in the WAVES.

a dozen African American officers. Only four black units, the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantries and the Ninth and Tenth Cavalries, operated at full strength.

With the passage of the Selective Service Act in September 1940, more than 3 million African Americans registered for potential military service. By 1941 the armed forces had enlisted more than 100,000, and by 1942 the number grew to 370,000. In September 1944, the Army alone had 701,678 black soldiers. During the war approximately 165,000 blacks

would serve in the Navy, 5,000 in the Coast Guard, and 17,000 in the Marine Corps. A rough estimate of the total number of blacks in the armed services during World War II places the figure at approximately 1 million men and women.

Despite discrimination in the armed forces, blacks served in more capacities than they had in previous wars. African Americans' participation in administering the Selective Service System in various locations throughout the United States doubtless reduced discrimination in accepting blacks into the armed forces. In addition to the executive assistant to the director, an African American served on the president's Advisory Committee on Selective Service. At the local level, blacks participated in such capacities as draft board members, members of the registrants' advisory board, examining physicians, and appeal board members. Blacks in the armed forces held a great variety of positions—in the infantry, coast and field artillery, cavalry, tank battalions, transportation units, signal corps, engineer corps, medical corps, and many others.

More than four thousand African American women enlisted in the Women's Army Corps (WAC). However, black women often felt slighted because of segregated units and other racially discriminatory policies. Their dissatisfaction was evident,

Black Women in the Military

for instance, in the protracted effort to bring respect and inclusion for black nurses. Although nurses were a crucial part of the American forces, the Army Nurse Corps discouraged the presence of black nurses in the many field hospitals, hospital trains, hospital ships, and medical transport planes.

The restrictive quota on black nurses appeared especially insulting to African Americans, since the government complained of a dearth of trained nurses. Historian Darlene Clark Hine notes that on January 9, 1945, Congress debated amending the Selective Service Act of 1940 to include the drafting of nurses, although this debate did not address issues of racial discrimination. The Draft Nurse Bill (H.R. 1284), which was promoted by the president, eventually was left to languish in the Committee on Military Affairs. With regard to black nurses, however, the bill reinforced the racial discrimination already in place, since it permitted very few black nurses, thus continuing the Army Nurse Corps's quota on black nurses.

Since the war's inception, Mabel Staupers, then executive-secretary of the National Association of Graduate Colored Nurses (NAGCN), had denounced the Jim Crow military policy as well as the refusal to grant officer's rank to black nurses—protesting in letters and meetings with influential civilians and government officials. According to Hine, as Staupers traveled in important political circles in the election year of 1944, she never failed to hint at the possibility of her organization's "willingness to go public with black nurses' disaffection." In January 1945, Staupers exploited the timing of the controversial nurse-draft proposal and turned to the black press. The news coverage resulted in an avalanche of telegrams on the White House from civil rights groups, religious organizations, fraternal societies, and labor unions. In less than two weeks after the Draft Nurse Bill was introduced in Congress, the Army Nurse Corps ended its discriminatory policy, and the Navy fell in line soon thereafter. At the war's end, about 76,000 black nurses were stationed in hospitals in the United States and abroad—in Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Late in 1940 the War Department announced its plan to train African American pilots at Tuskegee, Alabama. Although some African Americans vociferously objected to the segregation of blacks in the Army Air Corps, others viewed the announcement as a step forward, since no prior policy had allowed for the training or use of black aviators. The Tuskegee Airmen, as they were known, were college-educated men



Members of the Ninety-Ninth Fighter Squadron, stationed in Italy

After training at the segregated air base at Tuskegee, Alabama, black pilots saw service in several theaters of the war.

who came to Tuskegee Army Air Field from every section of the country. A large number of them hailed from New York City, Washington, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit. Initially they were trained as pilots, navigators, and bombardiers but later also as aircraft and engine mechanics, armament specialists, radio repairmen, parachute riggers, control tower operators, and policemen. As the pilots began their training at Tuskegee, ground crews trained at Chanute Field, Illinois.

In 1941 the Ninety-Ninth Pursuit Squadron prepared for organization as a fighting unit, as did other groups of black fighter pilots. From 1942 through 1946, 994 pilots received their commissions and pilot wings. Lieutenant General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., was one of the more famous graduates. Born on December 18, 1912, in Washington, D.C., Davis was the son of the nation's first African American general and was educated

at an integrated high school in Ohio, the University of Chicago, and ultimately the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where he was admitted with the help of African American Congressman Oscar DePriest.

Isolated at West Point (he never had a roommate), Davis committed himself to excelling. Graduating in the top 15 percent of his class, he became (apart from his father) the only black line officer in the Army. Although he was initially denied permission to serve in the Army Air Corps, Davis finally won his wings when just before the 1940 election President Roosevelt founded the Tuskegee Army Air Field to train African Americans as aviators. During World War II, Davis led missions in North Africa and Italy, and his Tuskegee Airmen distinguished themselves for their lack of casualties and the number of completed missions. Following the conclusion of the war Davis held posts at the Pentagon and was Force chief of staff during the Korean War. He served in the Philippines and in Vietnam and in 1965 he was promoted to be the first African American lieutenant general. He died on July 4, 2002.

Nearly two thousand black men completed either pilot or support skills training in the Tuskegee program, and 450 of its black pilots flew combat missions during World War II. The 332nd Fighter Group successfully escorted bombers in 1,578 missions and 15,500 sorties. One of their remarkable accomplishments in the war is the sinking of a German destroyer in Trieste harbor using only machine gun fire. Sixty-six of the 332nd were killed during the war, and one hundred members received the Distinguished Flying Cross. The Tuskegee base closed on September 5, 1946. Even though the fighter squadron dispersed, its members' accomplishments and courage contributed to the desegregation of the armed forces in the United States in 1948.

The Navy, the Marines, and Officer Training

Not until April 1942 did the Secretary of the Navy announce the Navy's plan to accept the enlistment of blacks for general service and as noncommissioned officers. A separate location, Camp Robert Smalls, was established for them at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, and from there promising recruits were sent for further training to Hampton, Virginia. Others were sent to sea or to navy ammunition depots. In 1943 the Navy decided to allow African Americans to enter the officer-training program. Later, African American women gained admission into the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). In 1942 the Marine Corps ended its exclusionary policy, which was as old as the corps itself, and late in the summer of 1942 African American leathernecks began their training at the Marine base at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Within a short period the Fifty-First Composite Defense Battalion was organized.

Throughout the war African Americans agitated as well for the opportunity to become commissioned officers. High among the stated goals of black leaders was the demand that African Americans be trained as officers on an equal basis with whites and in an integrated class setting. In the summer of 1941, when such classes began at officer candidate schools, the problem remained of getting white commanding officers at the various camps to recommend African Americans for advanced training. In the first six months, fewer than thirty blacks were admitted to officer candidate schools. Only after the Secretary of War issued a stern order that African Americans be sent to the candidate schools on a nondiscriminatory basis did blacks get into the schools in considerable numbers.

By the middle of 1942, black officers graduated with commissions from the adjutant general's school in the Air Corps administration, cavalry, coast artillery, infantry, chemical

warfare, quartermaster service, and other branches. In each instance they studied and graduated with whites. The Navy first commissioned African Americans as officers in 1944. Before the end of the war, more than fifty blacks were ensigns, lieutenants, medical and dental officers, nurses, WAVES officers, and chaplains. The Marines and the Coast Guard also had a small number of African American officers. Only the Air Corps demanded segregated schools for commissions.

Approximately half a million African Americans saw service overseas during World War II, and black newspapers featured the exploits of black soldiers and conveyed to their readers pride in the performance of black units. In the European Theater, blacks made up almost half of the transportation corps. They served in the port battalions, whose job it was to come ashore shortly after an invasion and unload supplies for the assault troops. During the summer of 1944 and for the remainder of the war, black amphibian truck companies made a significant contribution to the successful drive across France. After D-Day, more than 50,000 African American engineers erected camps, tents, and buildings; cleared debris; rebuilt cities; and performed other important services. They constituted about one-fifth of the American engineers in the European Theater. Approximately 11 percent of the ordnance men in Europe were African Americans. The chief of ordnance reported that not only did they “pass the ammunition” but on numerous occasions they also fought the Germans, participating in patrols and taking prisoners.

Twenty-two black combat units participated in ground operations in the European Theater: nine field artillery battalions, one anti-aircraft battalion, two tank battalions, two tank destroyer battalions, and eight engineer combat battalions. The 761st Tank Battalion was particularly notable as a fighting unit. It saw combat in the Battle of the Bulge and in six European countries and received commendation from four major generals and the undersecretary of war for its gallant service. The battalion would eventually receive the prestigious Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation. However, this honor would only come many years later and after repeated denials. Finally, in 1978 President Jimmy Carter conferred the medal on the 761st Tank Battalion. The 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion served in several important actions, and one of its officers, Capt. Charles L. Thomas, received the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism in the action before Climbach, France. Black field artillery units entered France within ten days after the invasion. The 333rd fought throughout Brittany and northern France against vicious German attacks in the fall of 1944.

In January 1945, the War Department announced that platoons of African American troops and platoons of white troops were to be integrated in a unit to fight on German soil.



Cpl. Carlton Chapman, tank machine gunner

Volunteers soon doubled the quota of 2,500. After a short period of training, such units saw action with various divisions of the First Army to the east of the Rhine. On April 30, 1944, the War Department announced that the volunteer black infantrymen had "established themselves as fighting men no less courageous or aggressive than their white comrades." The integrated units were short-lived, however, since the war ended soon afterward. Although African Americans continued to protest against the Jim Crow army, the War Department considered the experiment over.

In the Mediterranean Theater, American troops remained segregated. The principal black combat unit, the Ninety-Second Division, had been reactivated at Fort McClellan, Alabama, in 1942. In 1943 the Ninety-Second moved to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, and went into intensive training. In June 1944, it was sent to North Africa and later to Italy, where it served with the Fifth Army. It comprised four regiments of infantry and four battalions of field artillery, as well as other service units. Its first major offensive action was to cross the Arno River in Italy in September 1944. The offensive was successful until December, when the division was driven out of several towns that it had taken earlier. Within a few days, however, all the lost ground had been recaptured. The following February, the Ninety-Second suffered serious reverses, for which it received severe criticism. After a visit to the division, the civilian aide to the Secretary of War, Truman K. Gibson, Jr., was reported to have said that the Ninety-Second had not made a good showing.

Many critics of African American combat troops immediately seized on Gibson's report to bolster their arguments against the combat effectiveness of black troops. African Americans severely criticized Gibson for his statements. It was later revealed, however, that Gibson's report had been misquoted and was not as critical of the troops as earlier reported. He had actually stated that whatever poor showing there was of the Ninety-Second was doubtless due to the low educational attainment of a large part of the division's rank and file, 17 percent of which belonged in Class Five, the lowest literacy class admitted to the Army. However, the division's more than 12,000 decorations and citations indicated that its performance was creditable, considering the unusually unfavorable circumstances.

The two major black combat air units overseas were the Ninety-Ninth Pursuit Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group. The Ninety-Ninth went to the Mediterranean Theater in April 1943, and in February of the following year the 332nd followed. Both groups participated in various types of fighting over Europe. They escorted bombers and went on strafing and other missions. The 332nd was instrumental in sinking an enemy destroyer off the Istrian peninsula, and it protected the Fifteenth Air Force bombers in important attacks on the oil fields of Romania. Under the command of Colonel (later General) Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the fighter group won the admiration of African Americans everywhere and the generous praise of high officials in the Air Corps. More than eighty pilots won the Distinguished Flying Cross, having destroyed 111 planes in the air and 150 on the ground. The 477th Bombardment Group, which was activated late in the war, did not see action.

From the time that black engineers first landed in New Guinea to prepare landing strips, African Americans took an increasingly active part in the war in the Pacific and East Asia.

Service in the Pacific Approximately 10,000 black troops worked on construction of the Ledo Road in Burma (today Myanmar). These service troops included engineers, port companies, quartermasters, and amphibious and chemical warfare units. They also fought when necessary. Among the combat units that saw service against the Japanese was the Twenty-Fourth

Infantry, which helped take the New Georgia Islands in May 1942. There were several other outfits, including two battalions of coast artillery and one anti-aircraft barrage balloon battalion.

The main black combat unit in the Pacific was the Ninety-Third Division, which saw its first action at Bougainville in the Solomons. From there it proceeded against the Japanese in the Treasury Islands, on the Dutch East Indian (today, Indonesian) island of Morotai, and in the Philippines. While the soldiers of the Ninety-Third did not perform the kind of spectacular deeds that captured the imagination of citizens on the home front, they fought steadily and consistently under adverse tropical conditions.

Opportunities for African Americans in the Navy during World War II opened slowly, but they expanded significantly compared to available opportunities in World War I. In July 1943, no longer confined to being messmen and other menial **Service in the Navy** positions in the Navy, thousands of blacks were trained to perform numerous technical tasks and were given the appropriate ratings—that is, occupational designations indicating specific skill and ability. For this, historians credit the influence of Franklin D. Roosevelt himself, for decades earlier the president had served as assistant secretary of the Navy in the Wilson administration. On March 20, 1944, the destroyer escort *Mason* was commissioned, and African Americans of various grades were assigned to duty on it. Later, blacks manned a patrol chaser and hunted enemy submarines in the Atlantic.

By the fall of 1944, the Navy was able to announce that five hundred black seamen were on duty on twenty-five large auxiliary vessels operating primarily in the Pacific. Among the African Americans with ratings were storekeepers, yeomen, radiomen, ship fitters, carpenter's mates, gunner's mates, quartermasters, and coxswains. Meanwhile, approximately 12,500 black Seabees served in the Pacific, constructing advanced naval bases and doing other jobs. The work they performed, frequently under severe enemy attack, was praised by high navy officials. African American Marines were stationed at several strategic Pacific outposts to defend areas taken from the enemy. Their conduct caused the commandant of the Corps to say, "Negro Marines are no longer on trial. They are Marines, period." The more than 900 African Americans in the Coast Guard did rescue work in the Atlantic, in the Pacific, and in Alaskan waters. They were among the first to go ashore at Okinawa early in 1945 and on occasion performed invaluable services on shore duty both at home and abroad.

Approximately 24,000 African Americans served in the Merchant Marine, which practiced considerably less segregation and discrimination than any of the other branches of the armed forces. African Americans worked as ordinary seamen, engineers, **Service in the Merchant Marine** radio operators, and the like. Four black captains commanded Liberty ships with integrated crews. Eighteen ships were named for African Americans—fourteen for famous African Americans and four for African American merchant seamen who had lost their lives while on active service with the Merchant Marine. An African American, Captain Hugh Mulzac, commanded the S.S. *Booker T. Washington*. During the course of the war two of the ships, the S.S. *Frederick Douglass* and the S.S. *Robert L. Vann*, were sunk.

It was not uncommon for black soldiers to be the target of racist acts by white civilians. In March 1941, the lynching of Private Felix Hall of Montgomery, Alabama, shocked black Americans. He was found in his uniform hanging from a tree in a wooded section of Fort Benning, Georgia. The War Department **Racism at Home** determined Hall's death to be a suicide despite the fact that his hands and feet were bound by rope. As blacks began to challenge Jim Crow, reports of violent confrontations on the

ground escalated, and, between 1940 and 1941, there were thirteen reported lynchings. The black press covered the deaths of black soldiers—some killed by local police in Columbia, South Carolina; in Little Rock, Arkansas; and in Alexandria, Louisiana; and one killed by an armed bus driver in Mobile, Alabama, in 1942 for questioning the driver's authority to enforce segregated seating. In Durham, North Carolina, the court found a white bus driver not guilty of murder after he left his bus in July 1944 and killed a black soldier with whom he had earlier argued.

Black writer James Baldwin described the helplessness and uneasiness felt by blacks in the North upon sending their loved ones to southern military camps: "People I knew felt, mainly, a peculiar kind of relief when they knew their boys were being shipped out of the South to do battle overseas. It was, perhaps, like feeling that the most dangerous part of the journey had been passed and that now, even if death should come, it would come with honor and without the complicity of their countrymen."

In southern communities, some restaurants refused to serve black men in uniform while accommodating German prisoners of war, who ate in these same restaurants, rode in the "whites only" section of Jim Crow trains, and enjoyed American hospitality denied to all black Americans. In a Kentucky railroad station, white civilian policemen beat three African American women in uniform for failing to move promptly from the white waiting room when asked to do so. Because of their race, their identity as women and as WACS did not command any respect. In covering these stories, the black press helped to mobilize agitation on the home front. Several commanding officers even forbade the reading of black newspapers on military bases in an attempt to keep such stories away from black soldiers. In such instances, black newspapers were taken from newsboys or from the soldiers themselves and burned.

Myriad acts of racism occurred on military bases themselves. Everywhere blacks registered their protest against the Red Cross's practice of separating black and white blood in the blood banks established for the relief of wounded service personnel. The Red Cross policy was all the more ironic, because of the pioneering work of black physician Charles Drew in the discovery of blood plasma. Lester Granger, the head of the National Urban League, asserted in 1942 that "the policy of racial blood segregation must be discontinued as it affronts the respect of 13,000,000 Negroes and undermines their morale in a period of national peril."

African Americans also censured the United Service Organization (USO), a nonprofit organization for the support of American troops, when it banned the circulation of anthropologist Ruth Benedict's antiracist book *Races of Mankind* throughout its clubs. Blacks in the armed forces endured additional slights. Many camps refused to provide satisfactory transportation to black soldiers and followed a custom of boarding buses first with the white soldiers, thereby forcing blacks to wait. At PXs, black soldiers were segregated and were often sold inferior merchandise. Theaters and other entertainment facilities near a military base separated the races, offering black soldiers inferior accommodations.

The War Department took cognizance of the discrimination against African American soldiers in its order of July 8, 1944, which forbade racial segregation in recreational and transportation facilities. When the order was made known, a storm of protest arose in the South. For example, the *Montgomery Advertiser* asserted that "Army orders, even armies, even bayonets, cannot force impossible and unnatural social race relations upon us." Some commanding officers disregarded the order altogether. They considered the order to be merely a "directive" and failed to enforce it. Other officers sought to wipe out discrimination as the

order required. Many black soldiers demanded equal treatment in pursuance of the order but found themselves rebuffed and denied service at PXs and theaters.

The attempts of African Americans to resist segregation and discrimination led to clashes both on and off military posts. Few camps could boast at the end of the war that they had experienced no racial clashes. Serious riots took place at Fort Bragg, Camp Robinson, Camp Davis, Camp Lee, and Fort Dix.

Racial Clashes

At Freeman Field, Indiana, more than a hundred black officers were arrested for attempting to enter an officers' club maintained for whites. They were later exonerated. At Mabry Field in Florida and at Port Chicago, California, black servicemen were charged with mutiny when they refused to perform work that they felt was assigned to them because of their color. The emotional conflicts and frustrations they experienced became increasingly difficult to reconcile with the doctrine of the Four Freedoms. Neither the antidiscrimination orders of the War Department nor the concessions made in the commissioning of African American officers in the Navy could compensate for the many small and large acts of racism toward those wearing the uniform of their country.

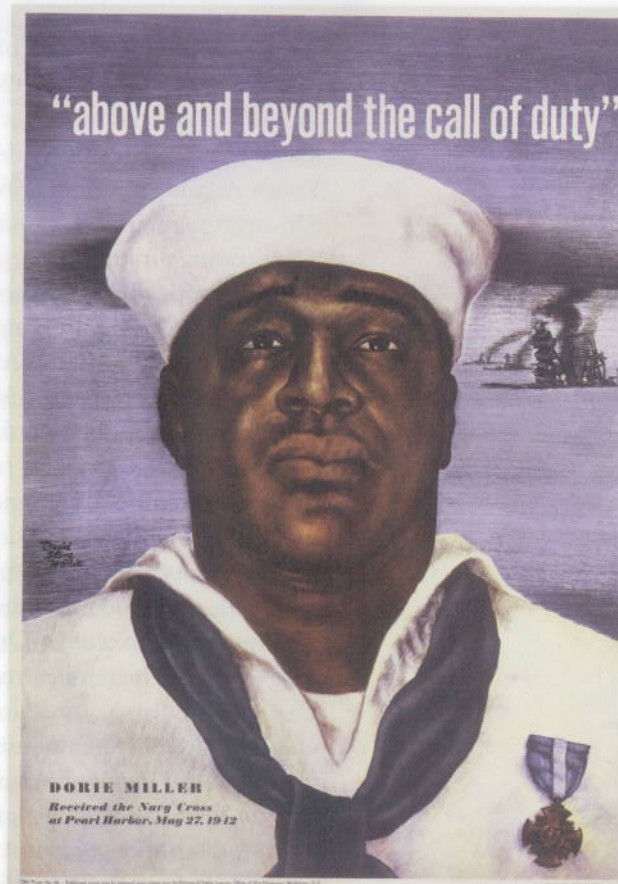
During the war years, however, blacks in the military received significant recognition for their service. The Secretary of War, the Army chief of staff, and high military officials in the various theaters of war praised their heroism and service. Many black units received the Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation for their gallantry. Individual men received recognition that ranged from good conduct medals to the Distinguished Service Cross.

Recognition for Service

Ship Messman Doris (Dorie) Miller was the first African American to be honored, receiving the Navy Cross for his outstanding heroism during the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. With no machine gun training, Miller manned the weapon in the face of enemy bombs and torpedo damage that eventually caused the crew to abandon the battleship *West Virginia*. For the late Private George Watson, the citation of honor read: "Extraordinary heroism—on March 8, 1943, when he lost his life in Portlock Harbor, New Guinea, after assisting several men to safety on a raft from their sinking boat, which had been attacked by Japanese bombers. Overcome by exhaustion, he was pulled under and drowned by the suction of the craft." Eighty-two black pilots received the Distinguished Flying Cross. Other African Americans received the French Croix de Guerre and the Yugoslav Partisan Medal for Heroism, and one received the Order of the Soviet Union. With some justification, the black members of the armed services could feel that they had made their contribution to the preservation of the ideal, if not the reality, of the Four Freedoms.

Dorie Miller

Miller was the first African American hero during World War II, winning the Navy Cross for manning a machine gun in the face of serious fire during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.



No African American was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor at the war's end. In the Civil War, sixteen black soldiers and five sailors won the medal, and in the Spanish-American War seven black servicemen received the nation's highest military decoration. In both World Wars, despite recognized valor, none had received the Medal of Honor, and blacks began to ask if the nation reserved its highest award for white soldiers. In 1993 the U.S. Army initiated a study "to determine why no black soldier had received the Congressional Medal of Honor." It concluded that "racism was the cause." In January 1997, after reviewing the records of African Americans who had received the Distinguished Service Cross, an awards panel bestowed the Medal of Honor on seven blacks, only one of whom, Vernon Baker, was still living. Lieutenant Baker's citation described his valor in leading twenty-five men through minefields and against superior German firepower to take a strategic position near Castle Aghinolfi in Italy, where Germans blocked the advance of Allied troops.

During World War II, many white units were undermanned and needed qualified people but were unable to get experienced black personnel because of the segregation policy. The newly formed U.S. Air Force initiated plans to integrate its units as early as 1947, and on July 26, 1948, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order Number 9981, ending the policy of racial segregation in the military forces by enforcing "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."

Keeping the Home Fires Burning

Wartime necessity and black demands caused the government to adopt several economic and social policies that challenged existing race relations. On numerous occasions African Americans pointed to the racial restrictions to equal employment as a tremendous waste and inefficiency in the nation's defense effort. Thanks to the New Deal programs of the National Youth Administration (NYA) and the Work Projects Administration (WPA), thousands of African Americans had attained the necessary skills for employment in the defense industry. The training programs sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education, the Vocational Training for War Production Workers, and the Engineering, Science, and Management War Training (ESMWT) program augmented their number further. As a result, by December 1942 more than 58,000 African Americans had enrolled in pre-employment courses. In the summer of 1943, sixty-five black colleges participated in the ESMWT program, which trained more than 50,000 students for work in aircraft industries, shipbuilding, welding, automotive mechanics, electricity and radio, and numerous other defense-related activities. Although the nondiscriminatory provisions of the federal training programs ensured the preparation of African Americans for defense work, the discriminatory hiring practices plagued black job applicants throughout the war.

In the years following the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) by Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, the tide slowly began to turn for black workers. An

The Work of the FEPC

increasing number of blacks found jobs in government service and in defense industries. Considerable antagonism to the FEPC developed, however, because of its practice of citing industries for violating the president's executive order even after those industries had initiated programs for the integration of minorities. The FEPC also put pressure on the U.S. Employment Service to give preference, in job referrals, to employers who did not discriminate against minority groups. These various forms of government pressure resulted in much greater utilization of the country's total workforce for the war effort.



African Americans in wartime industry

These women are at work at a welding plant in New Britain, Connecticut, and the men at a shipyard in Baltimore, Maryland.

Despite the limitations of the FEPC and the other government agencies that tried to eliminate discriminatory policies, their activities showed clearly the federal government's instrumental role in changing employment practices. At the beginning of the wartime emergency, almost no blacks, for example, worked in the aircraft industries, but near the end of the war thousands did. The shipyards increased their black workers, both in the quantity and the quality of employment opportunities. More than 100,000 African Americans found employment for the first time in the iron and steel industries, although primarily at lower-level jobs. Upgrading to higher-level jobs, however, would elude the great majority of the workers in these industries for the duration of the war.

During and after the war, African Americans played an increasingly vocal role at the conventions of such organizations as the United Automobile Workers, the United Steel Workers, the National Maritime Union, and the United Rubber Workers, and on the national councils of the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations). By 1944 blacks had better opportunities than before the war, but they still fared considerably worse than whites in finding jobs. They remained disproportionately concentrated in unskilled labor, personal service, and domestic work, with family income, housing, schools, and medical care inferior to that of whites. Many black leaders argued that the government should guarantee employment on a basis of nondiscrimination, and they formed the National Committee for a Permanent FEPC to rally public sentiment behind such a proposition. In the electoral campaign of 1944 both major parties committed themselves to this proposal, but neither the Democrats nor Republicans pushed to secure the necessary legislation.

Window in Time

Walter White's Call for Victory at Home and Abroad—1944

The Negro people, like all other Americans, recognize the war as the chief issue confronting our country. We demand of any political party desiring the support of Negroes a vigorous prosecution of the war. We are opposed to any negotiated peace as advocated by the Hitler-like forces within our country. Victory must crush Hitlerism both at home as well as abroad.

In evaluating the merits of parties and candidates we must include all issues—those touching the life of Negroes as a group as well as those affecting the entire country. The party or candidate who refuses to help control prices, or fails to support the extension of social security, or refuses to support a progressive public program for full post war employment, or opposes an enlarged and unsegregated program of government-financed housing, or seeks to destroy organized labor, is as much the enemy of the Negro as is he who would prevent the Negro from voting.

Source: Walter White and others, "A Declaration by Negro Voters," *The Crisis*, 51 (January 1944), pp. 16–17. Reprinted by permission.

African Americans gave generous support to the war effort on the home front. They purchased bonds, and many corporations reported that black employees signed up for the payroll savings plan, under which regular amounts were deducted from wages for the purchase of bonds. In every bond campaign, African Americans held rallies in schools, churches, and community centers to sell war bonds. With the help of blacks on the staff of the Treasury Department, especially William Pickens and Nell Hunter, the campaigns among African Americans were almost always successful.

With the establishment of the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD), African Americans became active in preparations to defend the country against possible enemy attack. Crystal Bird Fauset served as the OCD's race relations adviser on the national level, while on the local level blacks became block managers, messengers, and auxiliary firefighters and police officers. In the program to conserve foods and other essential commodities and to control prices, African Americans also played their part. When the Office of Price Administration (OPA) was established, blacks were employed as attorneys, price analysts, and economists. They worked in regional and state offices as information specialists and in the local offices of some communities as clerks, as well as members of ration boards.

There seemed to be more general satisfaction among African Americans with the way in which the OPA was administered than with any other wartime agency, perhaps because of the rather general policy of the agency to employ workers for jobs regardless of race. In the agencies established for morale-building purposes, African Americans participated in larger numbers than during World War I. They served the Red Cross

as Gray Ladies, as nurses' aides, and as drivers in the motor corps. In fighting areas they worked in camps, clubs, and hospitals. During the war approximately two hundred professional workers served as club directors and in other capacities in four theaters of war.

Growing economic opportunities on the home front impelled the migration of ever-growing numbers of blacks to the North and the West in search of employment. Black migration during the 1940s grew at a fever pitch, larger than the migration of any previous decade. For example, within the five-year period between 1940 and 1945, the African American population of Los Angeles County increased from 75,000 to 150,000. The industrial communities of San Francisco, Oakland, Portland, and Seattle experienced similar high levels of black migration. Among the Midwestern cities that witnessed an influx of blacks and whites, Detroit showed the greatest strains in the problem of achieving adjustment. The migration of large numbers of blacks and whites into the city, the lack of housing, the presence of race baiters and demagogues, the problem of organizing the newly arrived workers, and the impotence of the government created a combustible combination.

On June 20, 1943, the most serious race riot of the war years broke out in Detroit. Tensions accumulating for months exploded after a fistfight between a black man and a white man, and this altercation rapidly spread to involve several hundred people of both races. Wild rumors, as usual, swept through the town. Within a few hours blacks and whites were fighting throughout most of Detroit.

When the governor hesitated to declare martial law and call out troops, whites began to roam the streets, burning blacks' cars and beating large numbers of black people. Nothing effective was done to bring order out of the chaos until President Roosevelt proclaimed a state of emergency and sent six thousand soldiers to patrol the city. After more than thirty hours of rioting, twenty-five African Americans and nine whites had been killed, and property valued at several hundred thousand dollars had been destroyed.

Detroit was not the only city in which racial tensions spiraled uncontrollably. Harlem blacks exploded in rioting in 1943 after a uniformed soldier interfered with the arrest of his mother for disorderly conduct and was wounded by the police. The man was alleged to have threatened and hit the officer, and he sought to escape his arrest when someone in the surrounding crowd accosted the policeman from behind. The soldier's effort to escape failed, and he was shot by the policeman and carried wounded to the hospital. Distorted news of the shooting passed rapidly through the Harlem community—the story being that the arrested soldier had been killed, not wounded, while defending his mother. Angry crowds destroyed buildings and looted businesses that they perceived to be “white property,” to the amount of three to five million dollars in damages. When calm was finally restored more than 600 people had been arrested, 6 were killed, and 189 injured. Undoubtedly, a combination of racial oppression and poor economic conditions fanned the incendiary situation.

The problem of low morale worried black leaders (ministers, newspaper editors, elected officials, academics, businessmen, and civil rights activists), who sought to galvanize communities around the Double V campaign. Black leaders spoke of receiving letters that questioned “whether living under the domination



Crystal Bird Fauset, special assistant, Office of Civilian Defense

Black-White Conflict at Home

The Problem of Low Morale

of the Japanese or even under Hitler, could be worse than living under the fascism as practiced in the southern states . . . whether a concentration camp is worse than a Georgia Gang." A survey conducted by the Office of Facts and Figures in 1942, entitled "The Negro Looks at the War," revealed a disturbing cynicism on the part of the respondents. The War and Navy Departments made possible the visits of leading African Americans to the fronts in order to raise the morale of service personnel and to inform civilians at home of the activities of those at the front.

According to historian Barbara Savage, black lawyer Theodore Berry, who served as a staff officer in the government's Liaison Bureau of the Office of Emergency Management during the war, in 1942 recommended a media campaign with extensive use of the radio for building black morale and informing white listeners of the role of black Americans in the war effort. (Berry also insisted on the desegregation of the armed forces as the most immediate signal to black Americans of the nation's belief in its ideals of freedom and democracy.)

The radio proved to be an extremely effective medium for delivering information to the black public. For example, in New York City the black Episcopal minister John H. Johnson, also a member of the Mayor's Committee on Unity, declared over the radio in 1941: "In battle, it doesn't make any difference if a soldier be Catholic, Protestant, Jew, or Negro. They are united in their efforts to defend their country. We have the obligation to be united in our efforts to create that disposition and sense of justice that will make life better for all our citizens when this conflict is ended." In the same manner, the Office of War Information sought to use its radio programs to strengthen black morale. The Office of War Information (OWI) produced radio broadcasts that featured leading political and educational figures, as well as news bulletins on blacks in combat.

The War Department also turned to black artists, photographers, and film writers to assist in its propaganda campaign to tell the African American story of bravery and patriotism. Carlton Moss wrote the script for and acted in the army film *The Negro Soldier*. In his role as a black preacher, Moss recounted the contribution of black servicemen in America's past wars. The film debuted in 1943 with much acclaim from black audiences. Also in 1943, the OWI distributed 2 million copies of a large pamphlet entitled *Negroes and the War* to a wide array of black community organizations. Its numerous photographs captured the patriotism and sacrifice of black service personnel, war workers, scholars, scientists, and artists. The glossy photographs in the stylishly produced *Negroes and the War* were carefully selected by the veteran black newspaperman Ted Poston, who had been appointed as racial advisor in the Office of War Information. Through Poston's office, news of how blacks fared in the armed services and on the home front was sent to newspapers that were read by African Americans.

Such publicity did not assuage black resentment toward segregation in the military, however. Lester Granger of the National Urban League asserted that the publication was a "monumental mistake and a disservice to the government and the Negro. I say this . . . because it is like kicking a man who is down and congratulating him because he is not yet dead." In 1943 William Hastie resigned as a civilian aide to the Secretary of War because of the government's refusal to desegregate the troops. Hastie had become something of a persona non grata to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who described Hastie's views as unrealistic and impossible. The black press, black community, and liberal whites praised

Window in Time

W.E.B. Du Bois, On William Hastie's Receipt of the Spingarn Medal

There are two sorts of public relations officials in Washington working on the situation of the Negro: one sort is a kind of upper clerk who transmits to the public with such apologetic airs as he can assume, the refusal of the department to follow his advice or the advice of anyone else calculated to serve the racial situation. The other kind of race relations' official seeks to give advice and to get the facts and if he receives a reasonable amount of cooperation he works on hopefully. If he does not, he withdraws. It is, of course, this second type of official alone who is useful and valuable. The other is nothing. Hastie belongs to the valuable sort and will not be easily replaced.

Source: "Text of the Award of the Twenty-Eighth Spingarn Medal" to Hastie, March 1943, NAACP Papers.

Hastie. The NAACP awarded Hastie the Spingarn Medal for his courage to resign rather than accommodate a Jim Crow military.

Although the War Department sought to allay black concerns on the home front by maintaining a black officer in its press section and by accrediting black newspapermen as war correspondents, the twenty African Americans who covered the various theaters of war for the press did not silence their protest. The reports of such correspondents as Ollie Stewart of the *Afro-American* and Lem Graves of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* conveyed vivid accounts of both black heroism and white racism in the armed forces, while Walter White's book, *A Rising Wind*, based on his visits to the war fronts, contained revelations of racial injustice that caused even more determined efforts to fight for a double victory.

Black leaders also used the radio and printed matter to link black patriotism with the struggle for economic advancement. The National Urban League's annual campaign directed attention to the role of black women in the war effort while at the same time calling for greater employment opportunities for black women, the great majority of whom remained in domestic service even as white women were entering new lines of work as a result of the war. Campaigning for the hiring of black women in war industry work, the League adopted the slogan "Womanpower is vital to victory." League staff member Ann Tanneyhill, a young black woman, coordinated the vocational opportunity campaign by gaining network radio airtime for the league's broadcast of "Heroines in Bronze."

Historian Barbara Savage describes Tanneyhill's prebroadcast publicizing activities—press releases, endorsements by noted leaders, and "listening groups" dispersed throughout the nation. To accentuate the campaign, *Opportunity*, the official organ of the National Urban League, featured the theme "brown American womanpower" and carried photographs of



women in a variety of wartime capacities. In his introduction to the *Opportunity* issue, League president Lester Granger called African American women “the mighty force working for the redemption of the soul of Democratic America.”

Throughout World War II, blacks envisioned their role as a national conscience of sorts—as a force that would help to redeem the soul of America and declare finally triumphant the nation’s professed, but still unrealized, ideals. Eleanor Roosevelt had remarked early in the war that “the nation cannot expect colored people to feel that the United States is worth defending if the Negro continues to be treated as he is now.” At the end of the war, blacks understood all too well this poignant dilemma. In 1945 they rejoiced with other Americans in celebration of the defeat of Hitler and fascism. Yet victory over Jim Crow had yet to materialize. In the years after World War II, blacks mobilized for an even more concerted fight for equality and justice in America.