

# Heroes Abroad, Second Class Citizens at Home



Power Point to accompany the Consortium's lesson "Heroes Abroad, Second Class Citizens at Home: John Seagraves, African Americans, and World War II," available in the Database of K-12 Resources.

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Historian, Stephen Ambrose



“The world’s greatest  
democracy fought the world’s  
greatest racist with a  
segregated army.”

# DEMOCRACY



# Should I Sacrifice to Live As Half American?



- ❧ What do you think the author means by “living half American?”
- ❧ What past indignities against “colored Americans” is Mr. Thompson referring to?
- ❧ What is “Jim Crow”? What were conditions for African Americans like under Jim Crow?
- ❧ Where are does Mr. Thompson we fighting for a “double victory”?
- ❧ Who or what do you think “enemies from without” is referring to?
- ❧ Who or what do you think “enemies from within” is referring to?

# Double V Campaign

Mr. Thompson's suggestion for a "Double V" campaign was quickly put into action in early 1942 by the newspaper that published Mr. Thompson's letter, the *Pittsburgh Courier*. At the time, *The Courier* was the nation's most widely read African-American newspaper. In support of the campaign, the *Courier* ran editorials, encouraged its readers to buy war bonds, and urged African American members of the military to share their wartime experiences.

## RACE UNITES FOR DRIVE TO SECURE REAL DEMOCRACY

In continuing the policy of The Courier to fight for the rights of the Negro race, the paper recently started the "Double V" drive for victory at home against prejudice and discrimination as well as victory abroad against the enemies of democracy. Since this "Double V" emblem has been

*"Come, let us take counsel together!"*

**Attend NAACP**

**WARTIME CONFERENCE FOR TOTAL PEACE**

**CHICAGO**

**JULY 12-16**



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION for THE ADVANCEMENT of COLORED PEOPLE**  
**JOIN NOW!**

Chicago Branch:  
3456 SO. STATE STREET

- OR -

National Office:  
69 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 3, N. Y.

# Great Migration



- ❧ A period from 1940 - 1970 of mass African American migration from the South to the North and Midwest.
- ❧ Mainly due to:
  - ❧ Job opportunities in the North
  - ❧ To escape the brutality of Jim Crow
- ❧ Historian Isabela Wilkerson describes the Great Migration as, "six million black Southerners [moving] out of the terror of Jim Crow to an uncertain existence in the North and Midwest."



# Executive Order 8802



- ❧ Millions of jobs were being created, primarily in urban areas, as the United States prepared for war. When large numbers of African Americans moved to cities in the north and west to work in defense industries, they were often met with violence and discrimination.
- ❧ In response, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and other black leaders, met with Eleanor Roosevelt and members of the President's cabinet. Randolph presented a list of grievances regarding the civil rights of African Americans, demanding that an Executive order be issued to stop job discrimination in the defense industry.
- ❧ Randolph, with others, threatened that they were prepared to bring "ten, twenty, fifty thousand Negroes on the White House lawn" if their demands were not met.

# Executive Order 8802

- ❧ After consultation with his advisers, Roosevelt responded to the black leaders and issued Executive Order 8802, which declared, "**There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries and in Government, because of race, creed, color, or national origin.**"
- ❧ It was the first Presidential directive on race since Reconstruction. The order also established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to investigate incidents of discrimination.



# Patriotism Crosses the Color Line

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“The military's view toward African Americans during World War II reflected that of the wider American culture. According to a report commissioned by the Army War College, African Americans were "careless, shiftless, irresponsible and secretive" and "unmoral and untruthful." Commanding officers were instructed to "handle" their African American subordinates "with praise and by ridicule." The accepted viewpoint of the day was that African American soldiers were not equally capable as -- and would require more intensive leadership than -- their white counterparts. Furthermore, the military believed black soldiers were unsuited to serve as officers.”

# Patriotism Crosses the Color Line

- ❧ In 1941, fewer than 4,000 African Americans were serving in the military and only 12 were officers.
- ❧ After US entry into World War II, over 2.5 million African American men registered for the armed forces.
  - ❧ 1.0 million served as draftees or volunteers in all branches (Navy, Army, etc.)
- ❧ Originally, many African Americans were placed in “support”, not combat, positions.



# African American Recruitment

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- ❧ After EO 8802, the armed forces began to recruit African Americans.
- ❧ The goal was to have the armed forces reflect the population of the US.
- ❧ Since African Americans were 10% of the US population, a goal of 10% African American members was set for each branch of the armed forces

# Graham Jackson



- ❧ Musician and personal friend of FDR
- ❧ Volunteered for the Navy, but due to his celebrity status, he was responsible for recruiting and raising money for war bonds.



*Famous photo of Graham Jackson playing  
as FDR's funeral train leaves for  
Washington DC*

# African Americans in the Marines

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- ❧ "If it were a question of having a Marine Corps of 5,000 whites or 250,000 Negroes. I would rather have the whites." – *Thomas Holcomb, Commandant of the Marine Corps*
- ❧ From 1798 – 1942, the Marines denied African Americans the right to serve.
- ❧ In 1942, after pressure from FDR, the Marines reluctantly agreed to organize a segregated battalion and they (along with the Navy & Coast Guard) agreed to enlist 1,000 African Americans a month

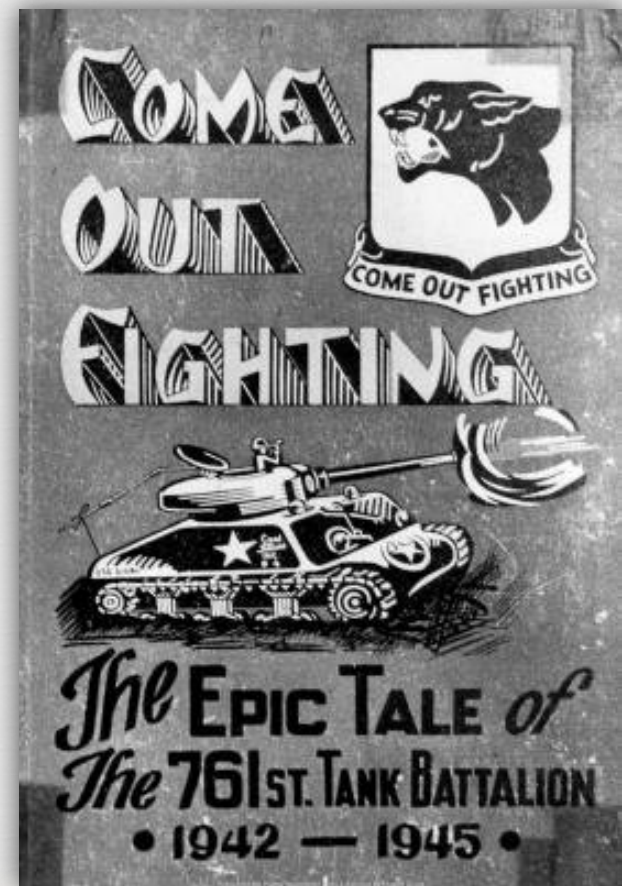
# African Americans in the Marines

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- ❧ African American Marines were trained at Camp Montford Point, in Jacksonville, NC.
- ❧ The Marines failed to reach their recruitment goal. African Americans made up about 4% of the Marine forces.
- ❧ Of the 19,168 African Americans who served in the Marine Corps during World War II, 12,738 went over seas in the defense battalions or combat support companies or as stewards.
  - ❧ 51st Defense Battalion
  - ❧ 52nd Defense Battalion

# African Americans in the Army

- Despite the long history of African Americans serving in the Army, many African American units were relegated to support positions. Despite this, they were still a vital part of the war effort.
  - Red Ball Express
- The Army failed to reach their recruitment goal. African Americans made up about 8% of Army forces.
- As fighting wore on, the armed forces began to organize African American combat units.
  - 92<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division – “Buffalo Soldiers”
  - 761<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion – “Black Panthers”



# African Americans in the Army

- ❧ In 1940, the US Army Air Force began organizing segregated African American units.
- ❧ Although many were forced to serve menial jobs, 992 were trained to become pilots at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.
- ❧ Those pilots that saw action, were incredibly successful at escorting bombers and as fighters.
- ❧ They were nicknamed the Tuskegee Airmen, Red Tails, and Red Tail Angels.



# African Americans in the Navy

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- ❧ Throughout the history of the United States until the end of World War I, the Navy had enlisted African Americans for general service, but they were barred from joining from 1919 to 1932.
- ❧ After Executive Order 8802, the Navy started recruiting African Americans, but they were limited to two roles:
  - ❧ Mess attendants: prepared food
  - ❧ Stewards: clean officers rooms, shine shoes
- ❧ The Navy failed to reach their recruitment goal. African Americans made up about 5% of the Navy forces.

# Dorie Miller

❧ When Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese, Serviceman Dorie Miller dragged his commanding officer to safety and, without any formal training, manned a machine gun, shooting down several Japanese planes.

❧ Miller was awarded the Navy Cross for his bravery on May 27, 1942, becoming one of the first recognized heroes of World War II.



# African American Women in the War

- ❧ African American women served in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC)
  - ❧ More than 6,200 served
  - ❧ Most served stateside
  - ❧ Served as nurses, secretaries, switchboard operators, cooks, etc.
- ❧ Many more served by working in factories or government offices.



# UNCOMMON HERO

THE JOHN SEAGRAVES STORY



DAVID SEAGRAVES

# John Seagraves



- ❧ John Seagraves grew up in Georgia during the Great Depression. Like many African Americans, he experienced poverty and racial discrimination.
- ❧ Despite these hardships, John was determined to succeed where others before him had fallen short.
- ❧ He dropped out of school in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade to work in order to support his family. After starting his own businesses and working various jobs from cutting grass, to cook, to movie theater attendant, he saw the Navy as a way to escape poverty and the oppressiveness of Jim Crow.
- ❧ In 1943, at the age of 16, he joined the US Navy.
- ❧ He went to boot camp in Jacksonville, Florida and was then sent to St. Simone's Island in South Carolina for Steward's School.



*John & his son, David.*



# *Uncommon Hero*

## Debrief Questions

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- ❧ What words would you use to describe John Seagraves?
- ❧ How might John Seagraves' experience have been different from other African Americans?
- ❧ What forms of discrimination did John Seagraves experience? How did he react to discrimination?
- ❧ If you could talk to John Seagraves, what questions would you ask him about his life?
- ❧ Would you lie about your age to join the military? Why or why not?
- ❧ If you had to rename the book, *Uncommon Hero*, what title would you use? Why?

# EXECUTIVE ORDER 9981



- ❧ What is the purpose of EO 9981?
- ❧ What reason(s) does President Truman give for issuing EO9981?
- ❧ How long will it take for EO9981 to be implemented?
- ❧ How do you think Americans felt about EO9981?
- ❧ Why do you think President Truman decided to issue EO9981?

# Sources



- ❧ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/alaska-WWII/>
- ❧ [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/npswapa/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003132-00/sec1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/npswapa/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003132-00/sec1.htm)
- ❧ <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=45742>
- ❧ <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/world-war-ii/essays/patriotism-crosses-color-line-african-americans-world-war-ii>
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