Liberty University

The Experiences of African Americans in World War II and How They Were Affected Compared to People of European Descent

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the History Department
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts in History

Department of History

by
Lane Gooding

Grayslake, Illinois
December 2022

Contents

Abstract

The service of African Americans in the United States Army during World War II shaped their perceptions regarding fighting for the same country but with different experiences than their comrades in arms of European descent due to the exposure to racism within their own forces and the harsh realities of warfare. The struggles of African Americans in the army were evident from the start of the United States' involvement in the war and continued to pose problems even as some soldiers were able to earn the respect of both comrades of European descent and civilians back home. African Americans who participated in World War II would go on to become famous, such as the Tuskegee Airmen and the tank battalions, showing they had the courage and tenacity needed for warfare. Despite their service, African Americans returned home to an America that was more hostile to them than before the war, as their contributions during wartime were seen as a threat to the racists' status quo. While some African Americans developed a sense of bitterness over the lack of change to racism, even abandoning the United States in favor of Europe as a result, others decided to stay in order to use their wartime experiences to improve their lives and those of others, refusing to give in to Jim Crowism. Ultimately, however, it would be nearly a decade before World War II African Americans would get the recognition that had been denied them for so long.

Introduction

When most Americans think about World War II, they probably imagine the popular images of soldiers of European descent valiantly fighting on such battlefields as Iwo Jima and Normandy. However, few people seem to know about the African Americans who fought on the same war fronts as their comrades of European descent. This fact leads to an important question: how and why did the African Americans' experiences in World War II shape their perceptions of fighting a foreign enemy? How were these perceptions further shaped by having to deal with racism among their own compatriots? This issue is important because it could have influenced willingness to participate in future American wars and how perceptions from different groups can lead to a richer, more nuanced narrative of World War II America. What effects killing the enemy and racism had on African American soldiers should also be closely examined, as these variables could have determined if the soldiers believed fighting for America was worthwhile.

For African Americans fighting in World War II, the conflict both from home and on the battlefield would have started as soon as they were drafted or enlisted. When the United States entered the war after Japan's unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor, the government decided it needed all the support it could get, even from an oppressed minority. Despite the need for unity, however, African Americans could not escape racism amongst their supposed brothers-in-arms, as Jim Crowism had ensured the segregation of nearly all aspects of military life, and this caused concern from contemporary onlookers that disunity could seriously hurt the war effort against Hitler. Even when the war ended with Hitler's defeat, African Americans returned to a United States that had become more racist than when they had last experienced it, which interviews with veterans and writings at the time demonstrate very well. For example, Alexander Jefferson

recounted having high spirits as he sailed into New York City on June 7, 1945, only for the mood to be ruined by a private of European descent forcing African Americans to go down the left side of the gangplank and Americans of European descent on the other.[1] Thankfully, after the Civil Rights Movement, publications and other news started coming out during the late 1980s and 1990s where African American veterans of World War II were finally getting the respect and recognition that had been denied them decades earlier.

Perhaps more crucially, however, was the later scholarship on the African American presence in World War II written during the 21st century. This scholarship provided a strong connection between the veterans of one of the most destructive wars in recorded history and the rise of the Civil Rights Movement that brought an end to the institutional racism against African Americans that had been present since the colonial period, such as how the actions of the Tuskegee Airmen eventually led to President Truman desegregating the army in 1948.[2] By tying together all these eras into a single narrative, a broader picture was painted of how the service of African Americans in the United States Army during World War II shaped their perceptions regarding fighting for the same country as their comrades of European descent. However, these would have been different experiences due to their exposure to racism within their own forces and the harsh realities of warfare.

When it comes to analysis of historical events, people, and places that have changed over time, one of the more drastic examples of such a shift would be the interpretations of the presence of African American soldiers in World War II. It is a well-known fact that the 1940s

[1] Alexander Jefferson, and Lewis H. Carlson, *Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman and POW, Revised Edition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 118.

[2] Alexander M. Bielakowski, *Proud Warriors: African American Combat Units in World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021), 48.

were a time when African Americans were subjected to various forms of racist treatment from their counterparts of European descent, from being forced into segregated establishments to being threatened with violence from believers in racial superiority, with the former being shown when Charles W. Dryden could not eat at dine-in restaurants due to them being for Americans of European descent only.[3] Works of historians that were written throughout the period of American involvement in World War II or modern ones reporting on how people in the United States military viewed the presence of African Americans explicitly showed how the latter group was no safer from racism in the army than they were in their private lives. This point was made clear in Daniel L. Haulman's 2015 article, "Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen." Haulman drew attention to six military officers of European descent who were openly racist to the Tuskegee Airmen and other African American soldiers. One of them, Colonel William Boyd, was so determined to keep Selfridge Field segregated that he forbade African American officers from entering the local Officers' Club, which Haulman noted was a violation of Army Regulation 210-10.[4] Overall, African Americans in the army would have been deeply affected by the realization that racism was inescapable during World War II.

Overt racism being present in the American army as well as in civilian life showed how pervasive the notion of racial superiority was for many Americans of European descent. The fact some Americans of European descent were willing to go against established military protocol and laws left more open-minded people concerned that this would negatively affect the war effort. In his April 13, 1942 article in *The Washington Post*, Milton Jacobs expressed shock at

[3] Charles W. Dryden, *A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 194.

[4] Daniel L. Haulman, "Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen," *Air Power History* 62, no. 3 (2015): 46, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276635.

the news of African American conflict with soldiers of European descent, stressing that a conference was needed to settle the differences between the two races because the rest of the world needed to see that both sides could live in harmony and not give the Axis Powers any advantage that would come from a divided army.[5] This sentiment towards ensuring a united front against the Nazis and their allies also applied to a July 20, 1943 article from *The Washington Post* simply titled "Negro Soldiers." In a similar writing to Jacobs, the anonymous writer stressed that it was unquestionable that all men who wore the uniform of the United States Army were equally entitled to the respect that wearing that attire entailed, and even if Jim Crow segregation prevailed in the military camps, it was still the duty of officers to demonstrate their devotion to democracy by treating African American soldiers as they would ones of European descent.[6] Despite this call for unity in the face of a common foe, however, it was difficult to determine whether the motives for these demands were in the interest of truly wanting equality or a mere pragmatic desire for a fighting force focused only on the foreign enemy.

The racism present in the United States at the time did not, however, prevent some soldiers of European descent from highly praising African American comrades if they performed exceptionally well in the line of duty. In a March 5, 1945 article in *The Sun* titled "Negro Tank Force, Cut Off, Mauls Nazis for 18 Hours," the writer recounted the performance of the all-African American 784th Tank Battalion who, despite being pinned down in enemy territory, managed to repel the Nazi forces through combat skill and excellent teamwork among the unit.

---

[5] Milton Jacobs, "Better World," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 1942, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fbetter-world%2Fdocview%2F151514321%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[6] "Negro Soldiers," *The Washington Post*, July 20, 1943, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-soldiers%2Fdocview%2F151640939%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Colonel Bernard Byrne was impressed to the point of going on record stating the battalion gave a good account of themselves, with other infantry soldiers saying the unit could fight alongside them anytime.[7]

This praise from a military officer of European descent showed that despite the pervasiveness of racism in the United States at the time, there were some Americans of European descent who were willing to give credit where credit was due, regardless of prejudices. What also made this article stand out is that it was released during the final year of World War II. This fact indicated that after over three years of combat with the Axis powers, the racism that would have been prevalent when America entered the war subsided sufficiently in the army for some to recognize African Americans could be as formidable as men of European descent. Revisiting Haulman's 2015 article described above, the author also went out of his way to describe how while there were six military officers of European descent who opposed the Tuskegee Airmen, there were six others who were supportive and could be considered important allies and friends. According to Haulman, the best known of these allies of European descent was Colonel Noel Parrish, who despite hailing from the South, supported and encouraged the African Americans under his command as long as they showed the ability and effort needed to be airmen while still enforcing strict standards for anyone desiring flight training.[8] Despite these victories, however, African Americans still had to endure another two decades of discrimination before their accomplishments could be recognized by most Americans. Overall, the interpretations of writers

[7] "Negro Tank Force, Cut Off, Mauls Nazis for 18 Hours," *The Sun*, March 5, 1945, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-tank-force-cut-off-mauls-nazis-18-hours%2Fdocview%2F537436999%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[8] Daniel L. Haulman, "Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen," *Air Power History* 62, no. 3 (2015): 47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276635.

and historians at the time painted a picture of African Americans that ranged anywhere from open racism to acceptance.

Despite how much of a grip racism had on the United States for over a century by the time World War II ended, it would not last with the same intensity by the end of the 20th century. This trend towards finally recognizing African American contributions during World War II was prominent in the 1990s, with one example being Michael D. Shear's *The Washington Post* article titled "They Fought on Two Fronts: Tuskegee Airmen Recall War with Hitler--and Jim Crow." Published on March 5, 1995, the article featured an interview with former Tuskegee Airman Charles Dryden, who still felt anger over the unfairness of him and his fellow African American soldiers being treated with less respect than even the German prisoners of war who were allowed to eat and drink in the white section of the base's cafeteria.[9] However, Shear stated that the then-present day had seen aviators like Dryden finally getting the respect they deserved during World War II and were now recognized as some of the greatest fighter pilots in history.[10] Despite the racial hatred they had been exposed to regardless of their valor during World War II, it was clear the final decade of the 20th century saw a massive shift towards giving African American veterans the recognition they had been owed for years, something they clearly appreciated. The connection between World War II veterans and the Civil Rights Movement was evident from the accounts of these brave men at the time, a connection that would only get stronger in the following years.

[9] Michael D. Shear, "They Fought on Two Fronts: Tuskegee Airmen Recall War with Hitler--and Jim Crow," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1995, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fthey-fought-on-two-fronts%2Fdocview%2F903442071%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[10] Ibid.

By the time the 21st century was nearing the end of its first decade, some World War II and African American historians had dedicated whole books or scholarly articles to the connection between the war and the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement. In his 2007 book *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe*, Joe Wilson, Jr. described how members of the titular battalion, such as Bill Hughes, would have seen the seeds of the movement be planted after the war ended by the United States Army desegregating thanks to President Truman issuing Executive Order 9981, even though it took two more years for the integration to occur before the Korean War forced the issue for army leaders.[11] Despite this promising development, the fact army leaders dragged their feet on implementing a direct order from the President demonstrated just how widespread and entrenched racism was despite the accomplishments of African American soldiers. This sort of behavior had resulted in other historians writing a more cynical narrative as to how World War II contributed to the Civil Rights Movement.

In his 2010 book *The African American Experience During World War II*, Neil A. Wynn stated in the introduction that part of the reason for the war influencing the Civil Rights Movement could have been the result of bitterness of the increased racial hatred they experienced after the conflict. To illustrate this point, Wynn used a quote from NAACP secretary Walter White stating how many African American families had at least one member who could recount the promises made to them during the war, only to be greatly disillusioned when they had to deal with the likes of the Ku Klux Klan instead of being rewarded.[12] This disillusionment

[11] Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 173.

[12] Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 20.

illustrated Wynn's point that despite their performance during World War II, African Americans did not return to a more tolerant United States. If anything, the war appeared to strengthen racial hatred and brought new levels of violence to both the northern and southern United States, with African American military service being derided and returning servicemen seen as a threat to the status quo racists desired.[13] However, the fact remained that historians were able to discover a link between the African American military presence in World War II and the development of the Civil Rights Movement through key materials that had not been available before the past four decades. In determining how the African Americans who fought and sometimes died in the service of their country during one of the most destructive conflicts in world history endured despite experiencing racial hatred at every turn, it could also fill in gaps in other, similar studies on how the presence of other minority groups in major conflicts from the United States ended up affecting them in the long run regarding their standing in American society.

When the United States made the decision to go to war against the Axis powers in December 1941, the American government evidently realized that it needed all the help it could get in ensuring the country's safety. However, the decision to enlist African Americans into the army was something that attracted controversy from certain officials of European descent who wished to keep the former group in a subservient position. When wartime pragmatism won out over racial agendas, there was still the matter of how to recruit African Americans into the army. To encourage enlistment, some recruiters resorted to making promotional films to convince African Americans that serving in the army and fighting against Hitler and his allies would be rewarded with greater rights and recognized citizenship. According to Kathleen M. German's

[13] Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 20.

2017 book *Promises of Citizenship: Film Recruitment of African Americans in World War II*, the most famous of these films was *The Negro Soldier*, which features a narrative that transforms the formerly "inferior" African American into a capable soldier ready to strike at the enemy abroad.[14] While the use of film did help recruit African Americans into the army, German was careful to note what she called a conversion narrative, as used in *The Negro Soldier*, would eventually form the foundation for the development and evolution of racial attitudes and behavior that would follow in the coming years.[15]

While some African Americans were swayed by the promotional films the American government released to encourage participation, others were simply drafted into the army like officers of European descent. In a 2011 interview, former fighter pilot John H. Adams recounted how he was initially deemed not physically fit to be in the army, but after volunteers did not arrive for the war effort, Adams was suddenly approved for military action and officially drafted in October 1942.[16] Ultimately, however, despite attempts at recruitment via promotional films or just straight enlistment, the greatest obstacle to African Americans joining the fight against Nazi Germany was the Jim Crow racism that was as much a part of the military as it was for civilian life in America. Historian Thomas A. Gugliemo made this point especially clear in his 2021 book *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military*. As Guglielmo described early on after America's entry into World War II, to many military officials, African Americans overall made poor soldiers, and, because of this, their numbers

[14] Kathleen M. German, *Promises of Citizenship: Film Recruitment of African Americans in World War II* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 7.

[15] Ibid.

[16] John H. Adams, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with John H. Adams," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1427.

needed to be limited in the interest of improving the general quality of the United States combat forces.[17] Gugliemo further explained that military officials also believed that the morale and overall efficiency of the military forces required the strict segregation of all African American troops, an arrangement that they believed would have been undermined by the uncontrolled stream of black recruits.[18] This stark demonstration of how far racist military officers were willing to go to keep African Americans on the periphery of the army showed how pervasive Jim Crow law was even in parts of society where it should not have mattered. Based on this racism, it is not surprising that several African Americans enlisted to participate in what was called the Double V campaign: "Victory over our enemies at home and victory over our enemies on the battlefields abroad."[19]

Ultimately, only the latter victory proved immediately possible, as racism was so strong in the army that famous baseball player Jackie Robinson was unfairly court-martialed for refusing to go to the back of a military bus despite stating that the Army had recently ordered all posts to desegregate its services.[20] The overt racism is so evident to modern historians that, even almost a century after World War II ended, they easily realized that some people in the 1940s subscribed to the school of interpretation that African Americans either did not belong in the army for racial reasons or grudging admission by others that the United States needed as many soldiers as possible in the fight against Hitler and his allies. This pervasive racism proved to be

---

[17] Thomas A. Guglielmo, *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 17-18.

[18] Ibid, 18.

[19] Beth Bailey, and David Farber, "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (1993): 817. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3788782.

[20] U.S. Army Airborne & Special Operations Museum. "Jackie Robinson's Career in the Army." Accessed June 1, 2022. https://www.asomf.org/jackie-robinsons-career-in-the-army/.

such a large problem that some officials in America became concerned at how it would affect the war effort.

During March and April of 1943, the Committee on Military Affairs met in order to discuss important matters related to the United States' efforts in World War II. Perhaps somewhat inevitably, the subject of African Americans serving in the United States army at the time was addressed by one of the speakers. The transcript for the meeting revealed that by this time in the war, the number of African Americans then-currently serving in the army, enlisted and commissioned, totaled more than 450,000 personnel, with many working in the infantry divisions, numbering more than 70,000 overall.[21] However, the real issue as presented during this meeting was the implementation of a so-called poll tax that would force African Americans to pay money to the government if they wanted to vote for any politician, which the speaker saw as undemocratic and something African American soldiers should not have to do after fighting and giving their complete devotion to democracy and preserving the United States' way of life.[22] This hearing further demonstrated that while there were plenty of African Americans dutifully serving in the United States army by March 1943, there were still some expectations placed upon them based on racial ideology. More importantly, however, the testimony of at least one member of the meeting showed that some people in the American government were willing to advocate for better treatment of African Americans in the military. However, it was not entirely clear whether this was pragmatism on these officials' parts or a genuine desire for equality in the armed forces.

---

[21] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs, *Manpower (National War Service Bill), Part 2: Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs, 78th Cong*. 1st sess., March 4, 1943, 101. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1943-mas-0031?accountid=12085.

[22] Ibid.

Regardless of the officials' intentions, the issue of African Americans in the military continuing to receive racist treatment would become serious enough to warrant another meeting of the Committee on Military Affairs on April 1, 1943. The transcript of the report described how some government officials were trying to maintain morale and enthusiasm for the war among African American soldiers, but these efforts had been hampered by the lack of any sort of action to correct racist treatment both in Washington D.C. and other places where African Americans were present.[23] The speaker continued by mentioning that Tokyo and Berlin were playing stories of lynchings, discrimination, repeated attacks on African Americans, and defilement of the principles of democracy over the radio in order to sway parts of the world inhabited mostly by non-Americans of European descent to turn these areas against the United States by demonstrating their hypocrisy by claiming to fight for equality in all aspects of life while engaging in acts of racial hatred.[24] The fact that the Axis powers were able to use reports of the extreme racism that was present in the United States and use it as propaganda to sway other countries by highlighting the nation's hypocrisy regarding democracy was a demonstration of how severe the issue was. As mentioned previously, the racism in America was severe enough that some Americans at the time wrote newspaper articles describing their fears that hatred would cripple the war effort. Overall, these Senate hearings demonstrated that some American officials were willing to help African Americans with being treated as equals in the army, whether it was for pragmatic reasons or not. Unfortunately for African American soldiers, the

[23] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs, *Manpower (National War Service Bill), Part 16: Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs, 78th Cong,* 1st sess., April 1, 1943, 655. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1943-mas-0045?accountid=12085.

[24] Ibid.

racial tensions and hatred they experienced in their private lives and now the army would only get worse as World War II continued for the next few years.

As World War II continued for its final years, African Americans serving found themselves having to come to grips not only with the racism they continued to experience from their supposed comrades but also the harsh realities of fighting and killing in an armed conflict. In an interview conducted on September 13, 2011, former soldier Leroy Rolfe recounted his harrowing experience fighting on the frontlines in the Italian Alps. Rolfe specifically described an incident where the unit he was in was spotted and shot at by Nazi forces almost as soon as they were dropped behind enemy lines, and while he managed to escape death by diving into the body of water they landed in, he still sustained injuries from the Nazis shooting and dropping shells into the water as well as becoming severely cold due to his clothing getting soaked and exposure to the snowy environment.[25] In addition to the brutal conditions and situation, Rolfe also admitted that an officer he identified as General Almond had few scruples when it came to using African American troops as frontline troops in a somewhat transparent disregard for their safety compared to soldiers of European descent.[26] The horrors of warfare were also made obvious with an interview with William Tarlton, who admitted that getting close to anyone in the army could have resulted in heartbreak when they were killed in action, so he did not get close to anyone during his time in the army, accepting it as the way it had to be.[27] Overall, Rolfe and Tarlton's accounts of the combined brutality of warfare and racism from commanding officers

[25] Leroy Rolfe, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Leroy Rolfe," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1433.

[26] Ibid.

[27] William Tarlton, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with William Tarlton," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1435.

showed how hellish the conditions could be for African Americans fighting on the frontlines in World War II. The overall racism African Americans were exposed to was so bad that some would develop a camaraderie with a surprising group of people.

In any armed conflict, prisoners of war could be as much a fact of military life as enemies killed on the battlefield. Matthias Reiss opened his Fall 2013 article "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II" with a quote from African American Private James Pritchett, stating that people like him were nothing at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, that it "is a hell hole. The German War Prisoners are treated better than we are here."[28] The fact an African American felt so strongly about the racism he was exposed to that he believed German prisoners of war were given better treatment was another strong indicator of how ingrained it was, and historians in the past used this and similar quotations to create a narrative that African Americans were treated worse than prisoners of war, showing how hypocritical American democracy was. Reiss, however, offered a more nuanced perspective on the relationship between the two groups. By the end of the article, Reiss revealed that, while African Americans were exposed to racism once Allied forces had occupied Germany and their presence triggered anxieties among the civilians, these fears seldom translated into open hostilities, and not only did an African American veteran who felt like a prisoner in the United States say he was surprised by how friendly some of the German civilians were, but most Germans also considered African Americans in the army to be "friendly, fun-

[28] Matthias Reiss, "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 531. doi:10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.4.0531.

loving, and generous."[29] The fact that African Americans were able to find solidarity with people who would normally be considered the enemy, even more so than they had with their own countrymen, painted a rather sobering picture of the racial tolerances of one country over another. Interestingly enough, this article combined more than one school of interpretive thought, as while some of it was seen through the viewpoint of potentially prejudiced people during the 1940s, other parts were clearly written with the benefit of information and interpretations that would not have been available until after World War II had ended. Overall, the ability of African Americans to find more camaraderie with enemy prisoners of war and civilians was another stark demonstration of how severe racism was in the United States. Luckily, it was around the middle of America's involvement in the war that some African American units started to prove just what they were capable of in the face of death and destruction.

Out of the African American units who saw active combat during World War II, the most well-known of these was probably the Tuskegee Airmen. After receiving training at Oscoda Army Air Field that David K. Vaughan described as "extended, intensive, and thorough,"[30] the first members of the Tuskegee Airmen would soon leave their mark on the history of World War II. According to J. Todd Moye's 2010 book *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II*, Lieutenants William A. Campbell, Charles B. Hall, James T. Wiley, and Clarence C. Jamison flew the Tuskegee Airmen's first combat sorties alongside pilots of European descent from another squadron in launching aerial assaults on German installations on the island of Pantelleria in the Mediterranean as part of Operation Corkscrew for the Allies in order to prepare

[29] Matthias Reiss, "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 553. doi:10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.4.0531.

[30] David K. Vaughan, "The World War II Training Experiences of the Tuskegee Airmen at Oscoda Army Air Field," *Air Power History* 63, no. 4 (2016): 25, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276812.

for an invasion of Sicily.[31] The participation of African American fighter pilots in a mission to pave the way for a strategy to bring the fight to one of the Allies' enemies did not go unnoticed by higher ranking officials in the military.

The Airmen would continue to serve throughout the rest of World War II, supporting the contemporary interpretation that some soldiers of European descent were willing to support African Americans if they proved their combat prowess. Daniel L Haulman demonstrated in his 2018 article "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., as a Tuskegee Airman" that a key reason for the Tuskegee Airmen's success was the leadership of Commander Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. Davis led his squad in what Haulman considered the Airmen's most famous mission, which was to escort bombers attacking Berlin on March 24, 1945, and while Davis himself did not shoot down any enemy aircraft, his troops eliminated 112 Nazi fighter jets by the mission's completion.[32] The Tuskegee Airmen's combat prowess would only be further proven as the war continued, with Robert Williams recounting in a newspaper interview that his squad flew over 700 missions without losing a single bomber to enemy aircraft, and the initially reluctant bomber crews of European descent would eventually request the Airmen's services.[33] The efficiency of the Tuskegee Airmen proved they were a force to be reckoned with for enemy forces, and African Americans who were either part of the squad or worked closely with them could attest to that.

---

[31] J. Todd Moye, *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 99.

[32] Daniel L. Haulman, "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., as a Tuskegee Airman," *Air Power History* 65, no. 3 (2018): 30 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26571141.

[33] Jane Ciabattari, "Intelligence Report: The Tuskegee Airmen Remembered," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 1995, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fintelligence-report%2Fdocview%2F903448467%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Despite being a communications officer and hence not involved in fighting, Harvey Bayless went on record in an interview that he was content with his role in keeping the Tuskegee Airmen going, acknowledging that servicing the radios was crucial for communicating with the air forces as well as communication responsibility to the headquarters where they were stationed in Italy.[34] Bayless's account of being a non-combatant working alongside such a formidable air squadron painted a picture of someone who was happy to be involved in fighting in World War II in any way he could help. Sadly, racism in the United States army meant not everyone would get the full chance to prove their worth. U.L. Gooch exemplified this discrimination in an interview where he explained that despite his aspirations to be a fighter pilot and spending time at Tuskegee, the officers of European descent ruined his chances by transferring him from the Army Air Corps to Camp Livingston, Louisiana, which Gooch described as being like hell due to the appalling living arrangements African Americans were forced into by the officers of European descent.[35] Gooch being robbed of his military aspirations by racist officers even when the Tuskegee Airmen had proven their worth demonstrated how racism was so entrenched that nothing African Americans did would ever make them not less-than-human in the eyes of officers of European descent. Thankfully, other African Americans were not only able to become Tuskegee Airmen but parted with the army on good terms. Merrill Ross proved to be an example of this during an interview with him, and while he was ill to the point his wife Barbara needed to do most of the talking, she made it clear that by the time they first met, they were both fortunate that the war had ended before Ross could be deployed overseas, allowing him to leave on

[34] Harvey Bayless, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Harvey Bayless," *World War II: The African American Experience,* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1428.

[35] U.L., Gooch, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with U.L. Gooch," *World War II: The African American Experience,* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1430.

peaceful terms and for the two to start a family.[36] Ross's experience showed that some African Americans were able to walk away from World War II on good terms with others, but Gooch showed this sort of positive outcome was the exception, not the rule, and lent credence to the interpretation that most officers of European descent offered reluctant acceptance at best and hatred at worst. However, none of this stopped the Tuskegee Airmen from proving their worth, nor did it stop ground-based African American units from doing the same.

While the Tuskegee Airmen fought the Axis forces with their aerial prowess, a handful of all African American tank battalions engaged in land combat. One of the more famous battalions, the 761st, became the first segregated unit to be alerted to movement across the Atlantic, sailing from New York to England before finally arriving on continental Europe in October 1944 to assist the Third Army's stalled advance in France.[37] The 761st officially entered combat six days later, beginning six months of action across France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and Austria, and eventually, ten of the battalion's tanks were used for the divisional honor guard for the surrender of Nazi forces in the latter country.[38] Later, in March 1945, Paul Bates led the 761st as part of Task Force Rhine, which played a major part in breaking through the Siegfried Line to allow the Allies to march forward into Germany, with Bates noting with pride the chaos his men had created from their attack on the enemy.[39] The valor and effectiveness of the 761st

[36] Merrill Ross, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Merrill Ross," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1434.

[37] Dale E. Wilson, "The Army's Segregated Tank Battalions in World War II," *Army History*, no. 32 (1994): 14, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26304245.

[38] Roger Cunningham, "761st Tank Battalion," *On Point* 9, no. 3 (2004): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44610265.

[39] Gina M. DiNicolo, *The Black Panthers: A Story of Race, War, and Courage: the 761st Tank Battalion in World War II* (Yardley: Westholme, 2014), 202.

Tank Battalion proved that African Americans could be a formidable enemy, and contemporaries would have been hard pressed to disregard that fact.

While the 761st certainly left its mark on the African Americans' involvement in World War II, others were also engaging the Axis enemy elsewhere. Unfortunately for the 758th Tank Battalion, its first major engagement against enemy forces did not end well. In his 2018 book *The 758th Tank Battalion in World War II: The U.S. Army's First All African American Tank Unit*, Joe Wilson, Jr. explained that for the entirety of February 1945, the 758th supported the 92nd Infantry Division, only to witness the attempted diversionary attack in the Serchio Valley end in failure with over 2,000 casualties on the Allied side, something racist officers were only too eager to blame on the African American troops.[40] Thankfully, the 784th Tank Battalion had a much better performance during its first major offensive. As mentioned previously, the 784th was pinned down for eighteen hours in enemy territory but refused to give up in the face of the enemy. Instead, they not only managed to keep firing on the Nazi parachute units that arrived, but also remained calm under pressure and left the safety of their tanks while being assaulted by mortar shellfire to refuel, the combined actions allowing the unit to earn the respect of the Thirty-fifth Infantry Division.[41] The successes of the African American tank battalions being sufficient to earn the respect of military men of European descent was another example of the interpretation that while some Americans of European descent would either be racist or reluctantly respectful, others were more than willing to give credit where credit was due. African

[40] Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 758th Tank Battalion in World War II: The U.S. Army's First All African American Tank Unit* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018), 103.

[41] "Negro Tank Outfit Stages Own 'Bastogne'," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1945. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-tank-outfit-stages-own-bastogne%2Fdocview%2F151768231%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Americans proved they could be formidable opponents, but aerial and terrestrial combat were not the only roles they played during World War II.

Not every African American who was part of the United States Army during World War II was involved in combat roles. Some resisted being put in a situation where they would have to fight and kill the enemy, such as Charles S. Ellington. In an interview with him, Ellington described how when he discovered his superiors wanted to draft him into the Navy, he made it very clear to them that he did not want to go onto a boat or into the water due to the stories he had heard of how discriminatory people were in the Navy.[42] Surprisingly for the time, Ellington not only succeeded in his request being honored, but his superiors noted his aptitude for radio training, resulting in Ellington being a radio man stationed in Kentucky for the duration of World War II.[43] Ellington's successful resistance to what military officers wanted him to be showed that some African Americans were able to use their position in the army to bring about change for the better. This resistance was also made evident by an interview with Robert Reed, who recounted a time when he was stationed in North Africa where he confronted a colonel for beating Arabs who were scrounging for food in the military camp by saying it was against the laws of war, an act that resulted in Reed being put in the guardhouse as punishment.[44] Even though some African Americans were willing to use their army position to make a stand, others were content to stay where they were, such as Lieutenant Commander Carlton Skinner, commander of the racially integrated weather ship *Sea Cloud*, who led his ship in helping to sink a Nazi submarine in June

[42] Chales S. Ellington, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Charles S. Ellington," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1429.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Robert Reed, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Robert Reed," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1432.

1944.[45] Despite these accomplishments, racism meant some African Americans were relegated to less desirable positions, with Andrew E. Kersten mentioning in his 2002 article "African Americans and World War II," that African American soldiers were largely confined to the Corps of Engineers and the Quartermaster Corps due to being perceived as inferior combatants.[46]

Luckily, other African American units proved their worth, such as the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, with Brenda L. Moore explaining that this all-African American women unit brought a diverse array of skills such as security and communication, in addition to being self-reliant, that allowed them to stand out as a successful group in the European theater.[47] Other successes were even more striking, with the USS *Mason*, captained and crewed entirely by African Americans, being the result of activism by African American leaders and the pressure they placed on high-ranking policymakers in the government to begin removing racist policies in the Navy.[48] The various roles African Americans found themselves in during World War II helped them enjoy a greater standing in the military, supporting the interpretation that those who proved themselves could earn the respect of their peers of European descent. Sadly, that respect was not to last for much longer once the war came to an end.

---

[45] Benjamin Jacobs, *Jim Crow Goes to War: The African-American Military Experience in the Second World War* (Monee: Benjamin Jacobs, 2017), 29.

[46] Andrew E. Kersten, "African Americans and World War II," *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 3 (2002): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163520.

[47] Brenda L. Moore, *To Serve My Country, to Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACS Stationed Overseas During World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 124.

[48] Louis Lee Woods, II, "Messmen no More: African -American Sailors on the USS Mason in World War II." (PhD diss., Washington, D.C., Howard University, 2006), 9, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fmessmen-no-more-african-american-sailors-on-uss%2Fdocview%2F305326860%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

As World War II entered its final four months, the Select Committee on Post-War Military Police met over the course of June 1945 to discuss matters related to what needed to be done after the war ended. Perhaps inevitably, the subject of African Americans in the army was brought up, with the speaker on the subject noting that while the war had brought substantial changes to the restrictions placed on opportunities to serve, the types of training and service open to an African American were still majorly restricted, such as men enlisted in the Medical Corps being forced to work for sanitary companies.[49] Sadly, racism towards African Americans being a major problem even after over four years of warfare would soon translate to how both African American veterans and civilians would continue to be treated after World War II ended. A December 12, 1945 article in the *New York Times* demonstrated this quite well, as it described how many African Americans were opposed to forcefully conscripting individuals into the military, not only due to wishing for the prevention of extending military forces based on Jim Crowism, but also because such forced enlisting went against past American policy.[50] This disrespect given to African Americans even after most proved their worth during World War II was another demonstration of how ingrained racism was in the United States. Robert Child based his 2022 book *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II* on how out of the nearly 500 Medal of Honor recipients who were awarded for their bravery during the war, only seven of those men were African Americans, a major contrast against the more than one

[49] U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee on Post-War Military Police. *Universal Military Training, Part 1: Hearings Before the Select Committee on Postwar Military Policy, 79th Cong*. 1st sess., June 4-9, 11-16, 19, 1945. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1945-pmp-0001?accountid=12085.

[50] "Negro Group Excepts: Report on Military Training Held 'Entirely Unwarranted'," *New York Times*, December 12, 1945, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-group-excepts%2Fdocview%2F107116592%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

million African American soldiers who served.[51] Even decades after the war, Child made it clear that the then-contemporary interpretation of African Americans as inferior was omnipresent. Even African American veterans who were disabled by combat were not safe from racist treatment, which Henry Williams discovered the hard way when he was denied the compensation benefits he was rightfully owed by the Veteran Association and would receive no help from organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, forcing him and other black veterans to form their own disabled veterans' group.[52] For some African Americans, the increased and continuing racism would prove to be too difficult to tolerate.

In many ways, the racism in the United States had gotten worse after World War II had ended, so much so that some African Americans chose to abandon the dream of equality in America in favor of moving to Europe, where they were treated with a much greater level of respect than they could ever hope to receive in their home country.[53] An article written by Frank E. G. Weil a mere two years after World War II titled "The Negro in the Armed Forces" made note of this fact by mentioning that the percentage of African Americans applying for discharge overseas was about three times as high as that of veterans of European descent.[54] The fact that racism was so strong that it convinced some African Americans to live in Europe showed how

---

[51] Robert Child, *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2022), 11.

[52] Robert F. Jefferson, "'Enabled Courage': Race, Disability, and Black World War II Veterans in Postwar America," *The Historian* 65, no. 5 (2003): 1102, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24452485.

[53] Kaffia Jones, "The Experiences of World War II U.S. American Expatriate Veterans of African Descent," (PhD diss., Pasadena, Saybrook University, 2010), 2, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fexperiences-world-war-ii-u-s-american-expatriate%2Fdocview%2F753321372%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[54] Frank E. G. Weil, "The Negro in the Armed Forces," *Social Forces* 26, no. 1 (1947): 98. https://doi.org/10.2307/2572611.

the contemporary interpretation of war valor meaning nothing to racists was strongly prevalent in society. Despite these negative experiences, however, some African Americans were able to walk away from World War II with a more positive outlook on their experiences.

While discussing his life in an interview, Harry Gumby described how after returning home to Pennsylvania after World War II was over, he tried to find a normal job, but when he found no opportunities were available, Gumby reenlisted in the military and worked as part of the Air Force, serving until the time of the Vietnam War, when he decided he wanted no further exposure to the harsh realities of warfare.[55] The fact that some African Americans were willing to continue fighting for their country even after exposure to racism in the army demonstrated that they had strong convictions to do what they believed was right. This pattern of growing stronger from the war can also be seen in the story of Harts Morrison Brown. After spending time as part of the Tuskegee Airmen's ground crew, Brown went on to attend the 1963 March on Washington where Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, became a member and later president of the Central Maryland Chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, and worked to preserve the Ellicott City Colored School, the first school built with public money in Howard County, Baltimore to teach African American children.[56] Even African Americans who did not accomplish anything noteworthy after the war were still able to look back with fondness, with Frank Hosendove claiming that it was a wonderful experience and that he really enjoyed it, despite the constant danger to his and his comrades' lives throughout the

[55] Harry Gumby, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Harry Gumby," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1431.

[56] Frederick N. Rasmussen, "Harts M. Brown: World War II Vet and Management Consultant Led the Way in Preservation of Howard County's African-American Past," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 6, 2011, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fharts-m-brown%2Fdocview%2F875255655%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

conflict.[57] The fact some African American veterans walked away from World War II with good memories and used their experience to better their lives and those of others demonstrated how resilient African Americans were in the face of racism, something contemporary historians recognized against the racial climate that was still strong in the United States. Ultimately, though, it would take about four decades for things to change for the better, with one event being key to this shift in perspective.

A newfound appreciation for the efforts and actions of African Americans during World War II began to take hold for Americans of European descent as the 20th century neared its end. In 1993, Cynthia Neverdon-Morton opened her article "African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay" by acknowledging Doris Miller as technically the first African American to participate in World War II by braving the Japanese planes strafing Pearl Harbor to drag his fatally wounded captain to cover before destroying six fighters with one of the *West Virginia*'s machine guns.[58] This marked a shift in historians' interpretations of World War II African Americans, as they were now willing to give credit to the latter's valor during the war and give them the respect and recognition that had been denied them for the past decades. This was further evidenced by an interview conducted with former Tuskegee Airman Charles E. McGee, who freely admitted to thinking African Americans like him were born in the United States,

[57] Patricia Swanson, "Vet Recalls 'a Wonderful Experience' Despite the Constant Danger, War Gave Him a Chance to See the World Series: Faces that Won the War this is One in a Series of Profiles of Area World War II Veterans the Courier & Press Will Publish each Day Until the May 29 Dedication of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.: [Final Edition]," *Evansville Courier & Press*, May 25, 2004, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fvet-recalls-wonderful-experience-despite-constant%2Fdocview%2F331091257%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[58] Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay," *Negro History Bulletin* 51/57, no. 1/12 (1993): 6, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44177225.

making them American as well, so the country had to change after World War II had ended.[59] The trend of African American veterans finally getting the recognition they deserved has continued since the start of the 21st century. On March 29, 2007, the Tuskegee Airmen were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal in the Capitol rotunda, with the writer of the article describing this event saying how these were men who had to struggle for recognition in a segregated army and were finally receiving their long withheld due.[60] In a 2008 article, Joseph D. Caver and his co-authors argued that Sherman White and James McCullin, the first African American fighter pilots to be killed in action, deserved to be honored like any other American who died fighting in World War II.[61] It was noted in a 2009 article of the *New York Times* that although former Tuskegee Airmen Julius Freeman, William Wheeler, and Floyd Carter lived very different lives from each other, it was now recognized they all broke racial boundaries in matters both large and small.[62]

It would also become evident that African Americans were not the only people of African descent who suffered from discrimination. John H. Morrow based his 2010 article "Black

---

[59] Natalie Hopkinson, "Tuskegee Airmen's Winning Ways: Group Advanced Civil Rights Cause," *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1999, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Ftuskegee-airmens-winning-ways%2Fdocview%2F1707440648%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[60] Lauren Monsen, *World War II African-American Airmen Receive Congressional Medal: Elite Group of African-American Pilots Cited for Heroic Service to Country*, Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, LLC, 2007, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Freports%2Fworld-war-ii-african-american-airmen-receive%2Fdocview%2F189974451%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[61] Joseph D. Caver, Jerome A. Ennels, and Wesley Phillips Newton. "Setting the Record Straight Regarding Lieutenants White and McCullin, Tuskegee Airmen," *Air Power History* 55, no. 3 (2008): 11, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275019.

[62] Anne Barnard, "Tuskegee Airmen Embrace their Past: Long Unrecognized, but Now Celebrated," *New York Times*, May 25, 2009, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Ftuskegee-airmen-embrace-their-past%2Fdocview%2F1030622579%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Africans in World War II: The Soldiers' Stories" on the argument that African infantry from the ranks of French and British forces were ignored or met with disdain by their own country, paralleling American of European descent racism towards African Americans.[63] Thankfully, changing times ensured that racism had weakened. A 2012 interview with Edgar Law stated that the month before the article was published, Law and the other surviving 391 men of the Montford Point Marines were invited to a ceremony in Washington, D.C. to receive replicas of Congressional Medals that they had been denied for over 60 years.[64] On February 24, 2013, it was reported that Henry Mouzon, Sr. would be honored by the Howard County Center of African American Culture for his service aboard a ship that destroyed several enemy destroyers and battleships the following month.[65] Throughout the late 20th century and continuing in the 21st, African Americans were finally getting the recognition they deserved for their service in World War II, showing what an impact the Civil Rights Movement had on making this respect obvious. However, it would not be until the 2010s that it would become obvious to historians how closely connected World War II and the Civil Rights Movement were connected to each other.

Regarding the remaining chapters of this thesis, they will be organized in the following manner. Chapter 2 will go into greater detail regarding how African Americans were first

---

[63] John H. Morrow, "Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers' Stories," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (2010): 24, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27895945.

[64] "Valor and Faith Breaking Racial Barriers: Edgar Law Recalls Life as One of the First Black Marines and Role in World War II," *Daily News*, July 30, 2012, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fvalor-faith-breaking-racial-barriers-edgar-law%2Fdocview%2F1030144585%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[65] Joe Burris, "Remembered with Honor: Howard County Center of African American Culture to Celebrate the Service of World War II Veteran Henry Mouzon Sr," *The Baltimore Sun*, February 24, 2013, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fremembered-with-honor%2Fdocview%2F1312444055%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

brought into World War II and what methods were used to convince them to join. Chapter 3 will focus on the experiences of African Americans during the war and how they processed the death and destruction as well as the racism or respect they received from their peers of European descent. Finally, Chapter 4 will examine what African Americans experienced in the first two years after World War II ended and whether the majority found it to be a positive or negative time in their lives. There will be a conclusion afterwards tying everything together and explaining the main takeaways from the thesis.

Overall, African Americans who fought in World War II were not only shaped by their exposure to the death and destruction around them but also the racism they were exposed to from soldiers of European descent on their own side of the conflict before, during, and after the war ended. Despite this, African Americans were able to make a considerable impact through their combat performance and refusal to give up that it proved to be a major factor in the new positive developments shortly after World War II ended. By understanding how and why African Americans fought in World War II and how their actions differed from Americans of European descent, a richer, more nuanced narrative of these events can be created.

Chapter 1

1939 – 1942

When the United States entered World War II following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the government realized it needed all the support it could get. While African Americans had been serving in the army in some capacity before 1941, it was the aftermath of one of Japan's greatest war crimes that intensified the push for recruitment of this minority group. In the beginning, wartime pragmatism resulted in different methods of recruiting African Americans to the army. Recruitment was accomplished either with promotional films or by simply drafting. Both methods could be seen as degrading to African Americans. Recruitment using either method was met with resistance from racist officers or grudging acceptance that America needed every advantage to win. The amount of racism present in the army, however, was enough for some Americans to become concerned that it would hamper the war effort.

While America's entry into World War II made the African American presence in the United States Army more prominent, it was not the first time this minority group had been serving in the military or seen active duty. In an August 28, 1940 correspondence with Colonel Robert R. McCormick, General George C. Marshall mentioned that the African American presence in the United States Regular Army was not only being more than doubled but would also include a new regiment of field artillery, another one of engineers, two antiaircraft artillery battalions, and several smaller units.[66] Despite this seemingly promising development, racism was still as much a presence here as it would be when America entered World War II. A little

[66] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 297–298.

under a month later, Marshall sent a message to General Shedd stating that the President was troubled when African American representatives informed him that their people under the draft were being limited to labor battalions, and that African Americans in all branches of the army should be given shares proportionate to their approximately 10% presence.[67] This move of forcing African Americans into positions where they could not be in combat like those of European descent showed that Jim Crow racism was just as prevalent in the United States Army as it was in everyday life. This racism was also supported by Frank E. G. Weil's 1947 article "The Negro in the Armed Forces," stating that the Army had used the bulk of its African American personnel as work troops, such as quartermasters, engineers, and medical sanitary companies.[68] This racist treatment would only become more pronounced as American involvement in World War II drew closer.

As 1941 came and the United States continued to maintain its neutral position in World War II, overt racism in the military was still very apparent from the writings exchanged between army officials. In a March 20, 1941 memorandum for General Ulio, George C. Marshall said he had learned from General Devers at Fort Bragg that no service club or guest house had been authorized for 8,000 African American soldiers stationed at the fort and requested that Ulio investigate the matter.[69] A day later, Marshall had also been informed that there was an

---

[67] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 306.

[68] Frank E. G. Weil, "The Negro in the Armed Forces," *Social Forces* 26, no. 1 (1947): 95, https://doi.org/10.2307/2572611.

[69] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 448 – 449.

allegation that Colonel Randell, the intended commanding officer of one of the African American units, was going to be relieved of duty for racial reasons.[70] Two separate incidents within two days of each other showed how determined some government officials were to ensure African Americans in the army would never be allowed to be in more valuable military positions. A May 2, 1941 memorandum further demonstrated how volatile a situation could become if an African American in the army showed criminal tendencies, with one such individual from Arkansas City being tried for rape but could not be brought to trial without troops to protect him on the way, so two infantry companies were requested from Camp Robinson.[71] The African American in question ultimately pleaded guilty, but the fact he needed protection from potentially being lynched shows just how volatile race relations were in the Army.

While some soldiers and civilians of European descent proved to be potentially dangerous to African Americans, there were government officials who were willing to sabotage efforts to bring African Americans into the army. This willingness to sabotage was shown by a letter sent by Marshall to Frederick D. Patterson regarding the latter's report that attempts are being made to make a fool out of the aviation program set up in Chicago for African Americans, revealing that the issue is present elsewhere, apparently an effort to discredit the success seen at Tuskegee.[72] A June 4, 1941 memorandum sent to General Richardson goes into further detail,

---

[70] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 449.

[71] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 490.

[72] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The*

revealing that Patterson and Tuskegee had been under attack by racists from Chicago and Harlem, determined to remove the Tuskegee Air Program as a means of national defense.[73] These efforts to bring ruin to Tuskegee out of racial hatred became severe enough that Marshall had to send a memorandum the same day to Colonel Wilson to investigate the matter out of the former's desire to get Patterson and his efforts some much needed government assistance.[74] While it would seem Marshall's efforts did contribute to Tuskegee becoming a major player in the coming war, not even a high-ranking officer like himself was immune to the effects of racism, as he bitterly noted in a November 6 writing that anyone who is a member of the African American personnel who stays with Marshall experiences a severe loss in rank due to their race.[75] Being in the presence of a supportive and high-ranking officer not being enough to prevent discrimination towards African Americans provides a stark demonstration of how deeply ingrained racism was for other government officials. The treatment and conditions African Americans in the military were exposed to would only become pronounced once America had no choice but to enter World War II.

Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 2, "*We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 518 – 519.

[73] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 525.

[74] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2*, "We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 526 – 527.

[75] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2*, "We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 666.

When the unprovoked Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor forced the United States to end its neutrality and enter World War II, it was inevitable that the subject of African Americans in the army was brought up. Despite the efforts of racist parties to sabotage efforts of Tuskegee and other African American military groups, wartime pragmatism won out over racial agendas. African Americans had already proved their mettle to some extent, as Louis Lee Woods II mentions in his 2006 dissertation "Messmen no More: African -American Sailors on the USS Mason in World War II" that on that fateful December day, an African American named Dorie Miller manned an unused antiaircraft turret aboard the battleship *Arizona* and shot down two Japanese fighter planes.[76] However, the bigger issue was how to recruit more people from a population that had been treated poorly for about two centuries at that point. In her book *Promises of Citizenship: Film Recruitment of African Americans in World War II*, Kathleen M. German pulled no punches when she described that for African Americans, the main obstacle to gaining full citizenship was the omnipresent belief that the black race was fundamentally inferior to the white one.[77] In order to recruit African Americans that would have been obviously wary of potential racist treatment, the American government initiated the creation of promotional films that would go against negative stereotypes prevalent at the time.

These films featured a compromise between the different races, unifying the different interests of each group to the broader national goal of military victory over the Axis powers, with the central piece being the patriotism of African Americans in their contributions to military

[76] Louis Lee Woods, II, "Messmen no More: African -American Sailors on the USS Mason in World War II" (PhD diss., Washington, D.C., Howard University, 2006), 64, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

[77] Kathleen M. German, *Promises of Citizenship: Film Recruitment of African Americans in World War II* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 22.

history.[78] One of the more well-known films produced was *The Negro Soldier*, whose purpose involved overcoming racial tensions by creating a more positive view of African American contributions, raising patriotism among otherwise uncaring African American communities, and reassuring viewers of European descent that their fellow Americans were capable of military service.[79] *The Negro Soldier* was also significant because its existence signaled a drastic change in government policy regarding the abilities of African Americans, implicitly sanctioning their claims to full citizenship by admitting their suitability for active service and their contributions in previous wars.[80] While it would take a couple of more decades before lasting change was in effect, promotional films for African American soldiers clearly helped with presenting a more positive image of their people. However, the use of film to recruit African Americans was not the only method of gaining more soldiers for the World War II effort.

Much like how soldiers of European descent were drafted or volunteered their services, many African Americans in the military were made part of it in similar manners. In an interview conducted on March 26, 2011, John H. Adams admitted that he had no interest in volunteering due to needing to care for his parents, and was initially placed in 3F or 4F, but when more volunteers were not forthcoming, Adams was reclassified as 1A and officially drafted.[81] Even though he was drafted, the fact Adams was not initially given priority as a recruit implicitly shows that African Americans were seen as a matter of last resort for recruiters. However, it was

[78] Kathleen M. German, *Promises of Citizenship: Film Recruitment of African Americans in World War II* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 41.

[79] Ibid, 47.

[80] Ibid.

[81] John H. Adams, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with John H. Adams," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1427.

not always the case, as Harvey Bayless' June 23, 2011 interview revealed that he was serving as a radar mechanic in Boston, Massachusetts before being drafted as soon as he was eligible when America entered World War II.[82] A similar story played out with Leroy Rolfe, who mentioned in a September 13, 2011 interview that he had been drafted shortly after he and his family had the notice that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, and Rolfe's parents were concerned by the prospect of him and his brothers having to go to war.[83] While some African Americans were drafted without volunteering, others attempted to volunteer their services.

In a June 21, 2011 interview, U.L. Gooch described how despite his attempts at volunteering for the army, he was repeatedly rejected until he unexpectedly moved up on the draft list, was placed in a then-recent draft call, and sent in the service as a draftee, where Gooch's attempts to tell others that he had volunteered were met with refutations that his serial number did not fit a volunteer.[84] Gooch's account of how his genuine attempts at volunteering in the army were not only rejected but also made to seem as if they never happened, as well as only being drafted by being moved up the list like with Adams is another prime demonstration of how unwilling some military officers were in allowing African Americans into the army. This point was further reinforced by a December 6, 2011 interview with Harry Gumby, who did not mince words when he states that government officials did not want African Americans like him to go to war under the belief that World War II was a white man's war and that Gumby and the others

[82] Harvey Bayless, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Harvey Bayless," *World War II: The African American Experience,* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1428.

[83] Leroy Rolfe, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Leroy Rolfe," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1433.

[84] Gooch, U.L., interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with U.L. Gooch," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1430.

had no business in it.[85] Gumby also states that for African Americans, it was like being from a different United States than people of European descent, a feeling that was present even in the army.[86] As can be plain to seen from the experiences of Gumby and other African Americans, being drafted into the American army was fraught with difficulties due to the racist beliefs of government officials in charge of recruiting soldiers for World War II. Despite the racism making African Americans' attempts to be in the army more difficult than it needed to be, some government officials proved to be pragmatic enough to not discount the value of this group in the army.

Despite the racism throughout both military and civilian lives, some government officials were willing to give African Americans a chance out of wartime pragmatism. In the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, George C. Marshall gave an address to a conference of African American newspaper editors on December 8, 1941, 10:30 a.m. after already discussing measures with his staff to send more weapons to Hawaii before the Japanese could cause more damage.[87] Despite the chaos happening in the Pacific, Marshall disclosed to the editors that it might interest them to know that an African American division had been activated, with a second to hopefully follow.[88] Marshall also told the conference that as many officers as they could employ would be

[85] Harry Gumby, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Harry Gumby," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1431.

[86] Ibid.

[87] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 3, *"The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941 – May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 9 – 10.

[88] George C. Marshall, "Address to the Conference of Negro Newspaper Editors," speech, Washington, DC, December 8, 1941, 317 - 318, *The George C. Marshall Foundation*. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15687.

included while also considering the needs of existing military units, and younger officers were already being trained in candidate schools and would be assigned to tactical and other units depending on who was commissioned.[89] The fact that Marshall took the time to organize this conference with African Americans demonstrates that there were attempts to assure the overall population that they were being considered valuable assets in the army.

As indicated earlier, this value was clearly seen in Tuskegee, as an October 30, 1941 report of total African Americans enlisted in the United States Army showed that Tuskegee's 99th Pursuit Squadron was made up of 390 men, compared to the other Air Corps stations' 250 personnel, the most out of the 2,640 African Americans enlisted in the Air Corps at that point.[90] However, this was far from the greatest output African Americans provided in the army, as the document reveals that there were 16,625 individuals enlisted for infantry, the most out of any of the combat aspects listed and second only to the 18,815 serving as trainers at replacement training centers around the country.[91] These statistics demonstrate that African Americans were already a major presence in the army, likely owing to the need for as many soldiers as possible for a potential war. Despite racial hatred, some government officials were clearly willing to give African Americans a chance to prove their military might.

This willingness to give African Americans a chance can also be seen in a memorandum sent to Eleanor Roosevelt, assuring her that the War Department was doing everything it could to prevent discrimination against African American workers in industry, actively working with and

[89] Marshall, "Address to the Conference of Negro Newspaper Editors," 318. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15687.

[90] "Negro Enlisted Personnel - Authorized Strength: Army of U.S., as of October 30, 1941," The George C. Marshall Foundation, October 30, 1941. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15699.

[91] Ibid.

supporting the people in charge of such places in their pleas to eliminate the prejudices against black workers.[92] The fact that a government official sent a memorandum to the First Lady of the United States regarding the African American situation shows just how vested some officials' interests were in ensuring that African Americans were allowed to prove themselves in the field. However, it should be noted that not all African Americans were willing to head to war, as William Tarlton mentioned in an October 12, 2010 interview that while he knew about the attack on Pearl Harbor and could determine that the situation was going to cause problems for his work as a delivery driver, he did not give much thought into the war and was not enthusiastic about the possibility of serving in the army.[93] Thankfully, this attitude was not shared by all African Americans, as other individuals who had not yet become a part of World War II were still supportive of it.

This loyalty to the United States was demonstrated by Robert Reed in an interview conducted on July 12, 2011, stating how his parents and, indeed, most other parents in his Topeka neighborhood were incredibly supportive of the war, as were African Americans across the United States.[94] The African Americans' loyalty to the United States despite how they were treated was also shown how, in some cases, it was not their first time in combat. A June 14, 2011 interview with Merrill Ross and his wife Barbara demonstrated this when they described how Ross was in the air service of Fort Bragg for some time before he met a young lieutenant from New York, who not only became a close friend of Ross but also encouraged him and a few

[92] Robert P. Patterson, "Negroes in the National Defense Program," *The George C. Marshall Foundation*, June 13, 1941, 1. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15701.

[93] William Tarlton, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with William Tarlton," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1435.

[94] Robert Reed, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Robert Reed," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1432.

others to conduct some tests to become Tuskegee Airmen.[95] A similar situation applied to Frederick Temple, who in an October 2010 interview described how as an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin, he joined the Army Enlisted Corps before returning to his home in Topeka, Kansas in 1942, where Temple stayed until he was drafted in 1943.[96] The fact that some African Americans were willing to answer the call of duty after already experiencing combat shows their loyalty to a country that had treated them poorly in many ways. While this loyalty to their country was lost on racist government officials, it is indicative of why many African Americans were willing to fight in World War II, and there were high-ranking members of the military who were able to appreciate this loyalty.

As mentioned previously, one of these officials with vested interests was General George C. Marshall. In a 1941 talk delivered by Major Winfield S. Overton in Cooper A.M.E. Zion Church, Oakland, California, Overton addressed an African American named Captain Young, telling him that the major knew Marshall personally and assured the young captain that the General would treat African Americans like Young in a fair manner, but also warning him that several officers of both races are likely to be relieved of duty if major mistakes were made.[97] The warning Overton gave to Young was not without reason, as it would seem as though many African Americans in the army were not entirely comfortable with their position unless they were close to communities where discrimination occurred less. This was made apparent in a 1941 report signed by Walter B. Smith that due to perceived difficulties with African Americans

[95] Merrill Ross, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Merrill Ross," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1434.

[96] Frederick C. Temple, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Frederick C. Temple," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1436.

[97] Winfield S. Overton "The Negro in the American Army," *The George C. Marshall Foundation*, August 31, 1941, 3. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15698.

stationed at Camp Bowie in Brownwood, Texas, the Chief of Staff requested a resurvey be conducted to relocate a proportionate amount of African American personnel at locations next to communities with a large black population instead of concentrating many troops near areas with a low African American population.[98] The government's attempts to ensure that African Americans serving in the army would feel comfortable among soldiers of European descent supports the notion that for every government official that was racist, there were others who were willing to give at least grudging respect to the African American's ability to fight. Sadly, racism was still the most prominent mindset, and African Americans drafted into the army were quick to find out that fact the hard way.

For African Americans in the United States Army, it would have quickly become apparent they were no safer from Jim Crow racism in the military than they were in their civilian lives. Peter N. Carroll, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small, editors of *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, made this point abundantly clear in the introduction to the book's second set of letters, describing how instead of being assigned to training programs to prepare for World War II, many veteran members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade found themselves being limited to service units.[99] While some of this discrimination could have been because of the actions taken by the whole Abraham Lincoln Brigade before the United States entered World War II, the fact there were African American members among the brigade indicates a racial motive to the wrongful treatment was likely as well. This racial treatment was made more evident in James N. Leiker's 2012 article "Freedom, Equality, and

[98] Walter B. Smith, "Allocation of Negro Units," The George C. Marshall Foundation, November 25, 1941, https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15694.

[99] Peter N. Carrol, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small, eds., *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 44.

Justice for All?: The U.S. Army and the Reassessment of Race Relations in World War II," noting that after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the induction of African American draftees was postponed by the United States Army until separate barracks and other facilities for each group could be made.[100] The fact that recruitment of African Americans was put on hold to make sure military facilities were segregated demonstrates the commitment to such racist actions and, for some officials, keeping African Americans as restricted as possible in the Army.

Indeed, this point was addressed in detail by Thomas A. Guglielmo in his 2021 book, *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military*. As has been stated more than once already, there were American government officials who were determined to keep African Americans out of military service, and Guglielmo explains that there were two key, related reasons for this. The first reason was that these officials believed that African Americans in general made poor soldiers, and because of this, their numbers needed to be restricted in order to ensure that the quality of the United States' fighting forces remained high.[101] The second reason for banning or limiting African American enlistment was the belief that the morale and efficiency of United States forces required the strict segregation of African American troops, something that the officials believed the unrestricted influx of black inductees would undermine.[102] This blatant demonstration of racial policies shows how even African Americans who wanted to help in World War II were stymied by the racist beliefs of their own government. This racism would be the norm for African American units throughout World War

[100] James N. Leiker, "Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All?: The U.S. Army and the Reassessment of Race Relations in World War II," *Army History*, no. 82 (2012): 32. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26296201.

[101] Thomas A. Guglielmo, *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 17-18.

[102] Ibid, 18.

II, even when they earned the respect of soldiers and government officials of European descent in some instances.

Despite racism being inescapable, some African Americans served in units that would eventually become famous decades later. Such was the case with the Tuskegee Airmen, perhaps one of the most famous air squadrons in World War II. As noted in Benjamin Jacobs' 2017 book *Jim Crow Goes to War: The African-American Military Experience in the Second World War,* training for the Airmen started in 1941 at Alabama's Tuskegee University, a historically African American college that had previously participated in the Civilian Pilot Training Program.[103] Tuskegee's inception was reinforced after the NAACP successfully sued the United States War Department on behalf of a pilot trained by Howard University who demanded his promised military training, resulting in the creation of the all-African American 99th Fighter Squadron.[104] The 99th was then officially activated on March 22, 1941 at Chanute Field, Illinois, but since there were no African American pilots at that point, the squadron initially consisted of a few officers and enlisted men of European descent.[105] This fact that soldiers of European descent were initially used for what is now famously known as an African American unit shows how little value African Americans were seen to have as combatants, and the people at Tuskegee were aware that their mission was a gamble.

---

[103] Benjamin Jacobs, *Jim Crow Goes to War: The African-American Military Experience in the Second World War* (Monee: Benjamin Jacobs, 2017), 22.

[104] Donna Britt, "Pilots Who Broke the Barrier: Tuskegee Airmen, Remembering Their Role as America's First Black Fighter Squadron Tuskegee Airmen Black Fighter Pilots," *The Washington Post,* August 12, 1989, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fpilots-who-broke-barrier%2Fdocview%2F139945645%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[105] David K. Vaughan, "The World War II Training Experiences of the Tuskegee Airmen at Oscoda Army Air Field," *Air Power History* 63, no. 4 (2016): 26, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276812.

The Tuskegee program was sometimes referred to as an ”experiment,” because if African Americans could be accomplished pilots, it would prove Jim Crow wrong and lend credence to a growing movement to eliminate segregation and open new opportunities.[106] Tuskegee proved to be an inviting training ground for African Americans wishing to play their part in the military, as evidenced by Harts Morrison Brown, who despite being unable to pilot due to losing an eye to a baseball, was still allowed to be part of the ground crew of the 96th Maintenance Group.[107] The first class of 13 flight cadets in August 1941 also showed what African Americans were capable of, with one student, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., being destined to become commander of the Airmen’s most important units.[108] Despite the prestige associated with becoming a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, the contemporary perception of African Americans as inferior was prevalent even in this aspect of the military.

Daniel L. Haulman illustrates this point in his 2015 article *Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of t Airmen*, at one point describing how Colonel William Boyd was so determined to enforce racial segregation at the station of Selfridge Field, Michigan that he eventually forbade African American officers from entering the Officer’s Club, which Haulman noted was a direct violation of Army Regulation 210-10.[109] This racial hostility even to African

---

[106] J. Todd Moye, *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 71.

[107] Frederick N. Rasmussen, "Harts M. Brown: World War II Vet and Management Consultant Led the Way in Preservation of Howard County’s African-American Past," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 6, 2011, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fharts-m-brown%2Fdocview%2F875255655%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[108] Daniel L. Haulman, “Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., as a Tuskegee Airman,” *Air Power History* 65, no. 3 (2018): 27, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26571141.

[109] Daniel L. Haulman, “Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen,” *Air Power History* 62, no. 3 (2015): 45–46, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276635.

Americans such as the Tuskegee Airmen proved how nothing but race mattered to some government officials of European descent. In his 1997 book *A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman,* Charles W. Dryden experienced this discrimination firsthand on the train ride to Tuskegee for the first time, describing how in the process of eating in the train's dining car, he "was seeing the faces of southern hospitality: spontaneous friendliness on the Black face, instant hostility on the White."[110] Even though the Tuskegee Airmen would go on to become one of the most celebrated and successful American units in World War II, the struggles present at the start of the pilots' careers showed that racism meant that getting to experience combat was more of an uphill battle compared to pilots of European descent. The African American's struggle with racism would only increase as the United States' involvement in World War II entered its second year.

1942 marked the second year of the United States' involvement in World War II, but the passage of time did nothing to ease the racism that was present in the army. The American Army certainly did not lack African American personnel, as a January 7, 1942 listing shows African American personnel scattered across four separate military units in Wyoming, Kansas, and North Carolina numbered 2,407 soldiers.[111] Later, a January 27, 1942 distribution of African American personnel mobilization and training plan revealed that there were a staggering 337,750 recruits serving in various roles at the time.[112] While a February 7, 1942 listing of African American

[110] Charles W. Dryden, *A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 33.

[111] Harry L. Twaddle, "Negro Army Personnel," The George C. Marshall Foundation, January 2, 1942. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15693.

[112] "Distribution of Negro Personnel: Mobilization and Training Plan, 1942," The George C. Marshall Foundation, January 27, 1942. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15692.

personnel only offered a total of 5,850 individuals, this was made up of a smaller sample size compared to the January 27 distribution, with 19 units scattered across 15 stations.[113] Andrew E. Kersten also demonstrated this growth in African American personnel in his 2002 article "African Americans and World War II," stating that the number of African American servicemen in the army rose drastically from 98,000 in late 1941 to 468,000 in late 1942.[114] Even high-ranking government officials contributed to this growth, as Cynthia Neverdon-Morton noted in her 1993 article "African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay" that Franklin D. Roosevelt created the all-African American Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, shortened fourteen months later to Women's Army Corps, when he signed Public Law 554 on May 4, 1942.[115] However, this increase in African American servicemen did not change the fact that racism was still rampant throughout the United States and could affect African Americans even when they were not an active fighter or off duty.

Before World War II demonstrated African Americans needed to be deployed in more active combat roles, most were simply assigned to more menial labor functions within the United States Army. In Robert Child's 2022 book *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II,* this point was made clear in the second chapter dedicated to George Watson, who after being dropped off at Camp Lee, Virginia after being drafted on September 1, 1942, was assigned to the Quartermaster Corps stationed there, training for 12 weeks to become a

[113] Twaddle, Harry L. "Negro Army Personnel," The George C. Marshall Foundation, February 4, 1942. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15691.

[114] Andrew E. Kersten, "African Americans and World War II," *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 3 (2002): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163520.

[115] Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay," *Negro History Bulletin* 51/57, no. 1/12 (1993): 8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44177225.

laundry specialist on mobile laundry trucks for the rest of the army.[116] While the position of quartermaster did require training in using weapons for offense and defense, if necessary, an African American being assigned to what was mostly a labor function supported the racist belief that African Americans were inferior and not fit for combat.

This racist treatment also affected African Americans who were off duty. In his 2005 book *Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman and POW*, Alexander Jefferson recounted how he had been sworn into the Army Reserves on September 23, 1942, only to learn later that there was a strict quota restricting how many African Americans could be inducted each month into Tuskegee's training program.[117] As a result of being on this waitlist, Jefferson worked as an organic chemistry professor in Washington, D.C., but he seldom ventured off campus and never went downtown to visit any of the museums or other tourist attractions because Washington during wartime was a very racist and completely segregated city.[118] Jefferson's account from before he was enlisted as a Tuskegee Airman highlights how hostile both civilian and military life was for African Americans in the 1940s. Despite the turmoil, however, there were still those who were attempting to give African Americans a fairer chance in the American military, even if they were misguided in some respects.

As stated elsewhere, George C. Marshall was a major leader in allowing African Americans into the army and attempting to give them more equal rights. However, it was by no means an easy task for even a high ranking general, nor was he perfect regarding his treatment of

---

[116] Robert Child, *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2022), 157-158.

[117] Alexander Jefferson, and Lewis H. Carlson, *Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman and POW, Revised Edition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 25.

[118] Ibid.

African Americans. On the one hand, Marshall mentioned in a memorandum he sent to General McNair on October 22, 1942 that the last he had heard from Infantry Colonel John C. Newton, the colonel was commanding, with great success, an African American battalion in one of the first training centers, and this success, Marshall felt, meant that Newton should be considered for a promotion.[119] Unfortunately, as described by Alexander M. Bielakowski in his 2021 book *Proud Warriors: African American Comat Units in World War II*, Marshall still fell victim to the United States Army's racist notion that only Southern Americans of European descent were suitable to command African American units because they were somehow the only ones who knew how to deal with African Americans.[120] This belief was so pervasive in the Army that even after an IG investigation in 1942 determined that high-ranking officials were assigning inferior officers to command African American units, no change was ever made to assigning Southerners to these units, meaning the quality of these officers never changed.[121] The fact that even someone like Marshall could be a follower of racist notions was another indication of how ingrained such beliefs were in all aspects of American society.

The racism prevalent in American society, as indicated earlier in this chapter, made it difficult for African Americans to have the ability to become part of the United States Army even after a year at war with the Axis powers. In Phillip McGuire's 1983 collection *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II*, a May 20, 1942 letter from Aeron

[119] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 3, *"The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941 - May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 406 – 407.

[120] Alexander M. Bielakowski, *Proud Warriors: African American Combat Units in World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021), 48.

[121] Ibid.

D. Bells to William H. Hastie describes how after trying to volunteer for the army, Bells was eventually told by the local board that it had been advised by the associated headquarters that African Americans were not accepted in the army as volunteer officer candidates, with Bells finding it confusing why he would instead be forced to shed blood by drafting as a private.[122] This deliberate rejection of African Americans attempting to volunteer was further reinforced by another letter on November 10, where three privates described how they had been waiting months to receive their transfers to the Air Corps after passing the necessary examination and approval of the Cadet Examining Board but had received no word even though the papers were in Washington.[123] This treatment was also the case in a December 13, 2011 interview with Charles S. Ellington, who said that even though he had taken the examination for an aviation cadet and passed in September 1942, he was never told when he would be needed until he finally asked the relevant people in July 1943, at which point he was finally drafted.[124] Even though it would seem some people in the American government were willing to admit that the United States needed all the soldiers it could get, the letters from African Americans who wanted to willingly help shows that other officials were determined to keep the African American presence to a minimum in the military.

Racism was such a deeply embedded facet of American military personnel of European descent that some were willing to go behind their superiors' backs to keep the racial status quo in check. In his 2013 article "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German

[122] Phillip McGuire, ed., *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 9.

[123] Ibid, 10.

[124] Charles S. Ellington, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Charles S. Ellington," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1429.

Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," Matthias Reiss described how President Eisenhower made a request in April 1942 that the prisoner of war division be provided with information that would be the basis of instructions for the commanding officer regarding the use of African Americans as Military Police Escort Guards.[125] This request was taken out of context and subsequently used to recommend that the personnel of the Escort Guard Companies be made up of men of European descent.[126] Reiss further explained that not only was a reference to "the nature of the mission" enough to justify excluding African Americans from MP Escort Guard units, but when other units besides the Escort Guards were used to guard prisoners of war, they only used troops of European descent.[127] These events clearly showed that racism was so strong for some military officers that they would not only sabotage African Americans in the army but would even go behind the backs of their superior officers to ensure their racial agendas were supported. This defiance was further highlighted by Sarah Ayako Barksdale's 2014 dissertation "Prelude to a Revolution: African-American World War II Veterans, Double Consciousness, and Civil Rights 1940-1955," where she noted that whenever Eleanor Roosevelt intervened on behalf of African American troops in the Navy, commanders tended to point out to her that the military "was not a social experiment," unwilling to let there be any potential turmoil between African Americans and soldiers of European descent.[128] Racism was so strong that some were willing to go against the highest authority to ensure the status quo remained the same.

---

[125] Matthias Reiss, "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 535, doi:10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.4.0531.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Sarah Ayako Barksdale, "Prelude to a Revolution: African-American World War II Veterans, Double Consciousness, and Civil Rights 1940-1955" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), 19, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

At times, the racism was so severe that military officials of European descent, especially Southerners, were willing to spread outright harmful rumors to make the lives of African American soldiers difficult. In their 1993 article "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power," Beth Bailey and David Farber explained how by the time the all-African American 369th arrived in Hawaii in the summer of 1942, Southern sailors and soldiers had told the locals that African Americans were dangerous animals with monkey tails, stories that were believed by the native Hawaiians for a while until the 369th could prove otherwise.[129] The fact that Southerners of European descent were willing to be petty and make the African Americans' experience of World War II miserable highlights just how much harsher the war must have been for African Americans on all fronts of the war due to their European counterparts' refusal to cooperate. This open hostility could get so much worse, however, as Neil A. Wynn explains in his 2010 book *The African American Experience during World War II* that in addition to conflict between African American soldiers and Southern police officers or bus drivers of European descent, there were a total of five wartime lynchings during 1942.[130] By the time 1942 was nearing its end, this refusal to cooperate and, in some cases, willingness to murder, caused some onlookers to worry about World War II's chance of an American victory.

With the sheer volume of racist behaviors and actions towards African Americans in the Army, it was only a matter of time before word spread to the American press, and it caused some newspaper outlets to become concerned that racism would negatively affect the war effort. In an

[129] Beth Bailey, and David Farber, "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (1993): 825, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3788782.

[130] Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 76.

April 13, 1942 issue of *The Washington Post*, Milton Jacobs mentioned that he had been shocked by the conflict between African Americans and soldiers of European descent in the American military before stressing the need for a conference to be assembled to help settle the differences between the two races to demonstrate to the rest of the world that they could live in harmony.[131] This sentiment would be repeated over a year later in another issue of *The Washington Post*, with the anonymous writer stating that it was important that everyone who wore the uniform of the United States Army were equally entitled to the respect which that attire deserved, both African Americans and soldiers of European descent.[132] The concerns of these newspaper writers were clearly not unfounded, as John H. Morrow revealed in his 2010 article ”Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers' Stories” that not even people of African descent from Europe were completely safe from racism, as the British adhered to the policy they had used in earlier conflicts of deploying only African labor battalions and no combat troops in Europe.[133] Overall, 1941 and 1942 was a time when African Americans in the army were suffering from the racism of their supposed fellow Americans while they also had to fight in a brutal war. Thankfully, the first two years of American involvement had not been a total loss.

Even though 1941 and 1942 proved to be a turbulent time for African Americans in the army due being in a war and faced with racism, they still achieved some victories during the first two years of American involvement in World War II. One such success story was the Tuskegee

---

[131] Milton Jacobs, "Better World," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 1942, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fbetter-world%2Fdocview%2F151514321%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[132] "Negro Soldiers," *The Washington Post*, July 20, 1943, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-soldiers%2Fdocview%2F151640939%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[133] John H. Morrow, “Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers’ Stories,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (2010): 19, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27895945.

Airmen, with Colonel Charles E. McGee, former member of Tuskegee's 332nd fighter group in 1942, boldly stating that the United States' injustices towards African Americans did not stop the Airmen from claiming America as their own.[134] This boldness was reflected in the number of registrations for classes at Tuskegee, as while the number of graduates were small at first, with Sherman White being among only five to graduate on May 20, 1942 and James McCullin among nine on September 6, 1942, the number of new students increased as news spread of this African American program's success.[135] This increase shows that "the experiment" at Tuskegee was paying off and challenged the assertion that African Americans did not belong in the military.

1942 also saw the number of Tuskegee squadrons increase in number, with the 100th Fighter Squadron being activated at Tuskegee on February 19, 1942 and later being joined by the 301st and 302nd as part of the 332nd Group on October 13.[136] Tuskegee allowed African Americans opportunities they did not have before in places besides the Airmen. Such was the case of Edgar Law, who originally intended to be an airman but instead started training for the Marine Corps at Montford Point, North Carolina at his mother's behest in 1942, and despite the racism present meaning he was placed on ammunitions duty, Law never felt bitter about the situation, and ultimately enjoyed his time as one of the first African American marines.[137] While

[134] Natalie Hopkinson, "Tuskegee Airmen's Winning Ways: Group Advanced Civil Rights Cause," *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1999, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Ftuskegee-airmens-winning-ways%2Fdocview%2F1707440648%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[135] Joseph D. Caver, Jerome A. Ennels, and Wesley Phillips Newton, "Setting the Record Straight Regarding Lieutenants White and McCullin, Tuskegee Airmen," *Air Power History* 55, no. 3 (2008): 6, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275019.

[136] Daniel L. Haulman, "The Tuskegee Airmen in Combat," *Air Power History* 57, no. 3 (2010): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275921.

[137] "Valor and Faith Breaking Racial Barriers: Edgar Law Recalls Life as One of the First Black Marines and Role in World War II," *Daily News*, July 30, 2012,

the Tuskegee Airmen had proved their worth as a combat unit, they were not the only African American group that saw prominence by the end of 1942.

While Tuskegee was taking African Americans into the air, 1942 saw the African American tank battalions fight the Axis powers on the ground. While there was already one tank battalion, enough African American tankers had entered the Army by the spring of 1942 that a second all-African unit could be created, and the 761st was assembled on April 1 using a group of officers and NCOs provided by the 758th battalion.[138] After the 761st's activation, its numbers increased dramatically over the coming months, starting with 27 officers and 313 enlistees at its inception and boasting an enlisted roll of 529 men by June 1942.[139] This increase in personnel manning the tank battalions showed how willing African Americans were to prove their worth to the rest of America and, like Tuskegee, demonstrated that the Jim Crow ideology was a falsehood. However, it was not until July 1942 that the 758th and the 761st received a major boost of morale and lowered racial tension when their first African American officers arrived, including Lieutenants English, Bobo, Jenkins, and Morgan.[140] The racial tensions needing to be dispelled by African American officers demonstrated how stressful racism could be for the members of these military units. Thankfully, this did not stop the creation of the 784th Tank Battalion, consisting of enlisted men from the 758th and 761st, as well as officers and enlistees

http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fvalor-faith-breaking-racial-barriers-edgar-law%2Fdocview%2F1030144585%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[138] Dale E.Wilson, "The Army's Segregated Tank Battalions in World War II," *Army History*, no. 32 (1994): 14, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26304245.

[139] Gina M. DiNicolo, *The Black Panthers: A Story of Race, War, and Courage: the 761st Tank Battalion in World War II* (Yardley: Westholme, 2014), 44.

[140] Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 758th Tank Battalion in World War II: The U.S. Army's First All African American Tank Unit* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018), 38.

from Fort Knox's Armored Force Replacement Training Center.[141] Despite the trials African Americans went through in the first two years of World War II, 1941 and 1942 still saw triumphs brought on by hard work and determination.

Even as 1943 came and World War II intensified in more ways than one, African Americans were still managing to achieve victories. Despite the Tuskegee Airmen being assembled, there were still racist officials who were determined they would never fight overseas. Thankfully, the Airmen had a champion in Eleanor Roosevelt, and after visiting Tuskegee and then having a talk with her husband, an air squadron was finally sent to North Africa in 1943 to provide cover for United States bombers.[142] Eleanor's advocacy for African American rights was clearly well known by this point, as George C. Marshall sent a message to her on January 5, 1943 asking for Eleanor's advice regarding his suggestion of keeping race relations advisor Crystal Bird Fauset away from her planned trip to Liberia due to safety concerns and instead be sent to England.[143] While Marshall was previously shown to be misguided in some areas regarding African Americans, this message showed he still wanted to do right by them. This desire was also further shown by a January 31, 1943 letter to Judge William H. Hastie, saying Marshall was happy that he and the judge had done their best to address racism in the military and hoped Hastie's influence would bring a better understanding towards a solution to the

[141] Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 17.

[142] Jane Ciabattari, "Intelligence Report: The Tuskegee Airmen Remembered." *The Washington Post*, August 6, 1995, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fintelligence-report%2Fdocview%2F903448467%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[143] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3, *"The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941 - May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 504 – 505.

issue.[144] Despite having people like Marshall and Eleanor who were willing to help, racism was still prevalent in the army, and African Americans would still have to endure as World War II entered its twilight years.

Even though wartime pragmatism won out over racial agendas, racism was still a major component of the World War II American army. African Americans who joined the army were either swayed by promotional films or by being drafted like other soldiers, but Jim Crow racism was still prevalent enough that some government officials and news reporters were concerned that it would negatively affect the war effort. Despite this, African Americans joining the army would have shaped their perceptions of fighting for the United States differently compared to soldiers of European descent, as they would have experienced they were no safer from racial hatred in the army than they were as civilians. The first two years of American involvement in World War II proved to be challenging for African Americans, something that, even with some successes and people of European descent who were willing to help, would become even more so as the war continued into the next two years.

[144] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3, *"The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941 - May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 522.

Chapter 2

1943 – 1944

As World War II entered its twilight years, the conflict only intensified for the African Americans serving in the army. While this intensity would have been felt by all participants due to the Axis powers gradually losing ground to the Allies, African Americans would have experienced the intensity for more personal reasons. As World War II entered 1943 and 1944, African Americans would have not only experienced the brutality of warfare, but also how racism appeared to only worsen as the conflict continued. Thankfully, African Americans still managed to achieve some victories while in the army. While the Tuskegee Airmen were demonstrating their combat prowess in the skies, the all-African American tank battalions were proving their tenacity on the ground. Something that also benefitted African Americans during World War II's twilight years was that there were soldiers and government officials of European descent who had either helped them from the beginning or respected African Americans after they proved themselves in combat.

After having experienced one or two years of warfare by the time World War II continued into 1943, African Americans would have realized how brutal and horrifying warfare could be. Some African Americans attempted to think in hopeful terms regarding the war, with poet Dudley Randall explaining that troops like him were fighting for something good, specifically against the evils of fascism.[145] Indeed, some African Americans who had not yet experienced combat, such as the 761st Tank Battalion, were said to have become captivated by

[145] Sarah Ayako Barksdale, "Prelude to a Revolution: African-American World War II Veterans, Double Consciousness, and Civil Rights 1940-1955" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), vi, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

the news they were hearing from the European theater, with the Associated Press' reports of heavy fighting in Italy grabbing the soldiers' attention despite not knowing what was involved.[146] However, for the African Americans who were participating in active combat, their continued involvement in the war further reinforced the hellish aspects of warfare as the Axis powers evidently became more desperate to achieve victories over the Allies. For some African American soldiers, the horrors of World War II had already had a profound effect on their views of warfare. In an October 12, 2010 interview at his home in Topeka, Kansas, William Tarlton described how by the time he was serving in Italy's Po Valley, he had become painfully aware that becoming attached to anyone else serving in the army had a high chance of ending in heartbreak when they were killed, so Tarlton did not get close to his fellow soldiers, accepting that was the way it had to be in wartime.[147] Tarlton's account of how friendship was not worth potential heartbreak in a war illustrates that the combat aspect of World War II had as much of an impact on African Americans as it did on soldiers of European descent. Sometimes, events that otherwise had nothing to do with World War II could leave an impact on African Americans, which was demonstrated in an October 2010 interview with Frederick C. Temple. During the interview, Temple recounted how when he was stationed in Algeria during World War II, he bore witness to the colonial revolt against France, seeing French officials arresting and placing Algerians in only one prison as well as witnessing the families being arrested and

[146] Gina M. DiNicolo, *The Black Panthers: A Story of Race, War, and Courage: The 761st Tank Battalion in World War II* (Yardley: Westholme, 2014), 90.

[147] William Tarlton, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with William Tarlton," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1435.

imprisoned at times.[148] These experiences of conflicts unconnected to wartime showed how anything could happen during a war, and how conditions could be harsh for everyone involved.

The hellish brutality of war and the mercilessness of the enemy was further emphasized in a September 13, 2011 interview with Leroy Rolfe. Rolfe recounted his harrowing experience fighting on the frontlines in the Italian Alps, specifically describing an incident where the military unit he was assigned to was spotted and shot at by Nazi forces almost as soon as Rolfe and the American troops parachuted behind enemy lines.[149] Rolfe further explained that even though he managed to escape death by diving into the body of water his unit had landed in, he was still injured by the Nazis shooting and dropping shells into the water, and his plight only worsened after his escape when he became dangerously cold due to his outfit being drenched from the water as well as exposure to the snowy alpine environment.[150] Rolfe's account of this near death experience perfectly illustrated not just the brutality of warfare, but also how the physical toll could be as damaging to an African American soldier as it was for one of European descent. Unfortunately for African American soldiers, threats from enemy forces were not the only reason why World War II proved physically and emotionally taxing.

In an article written for *The Washington Post* in April 1942, Milton Jacobs expressed shock at the continuing conflict between African Americans and soldiers of European descent, stressing that for democracy to successfully spread abroad, it must be practiced on the home

[148] Frederick C. Temple, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Frederick C. Temple," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1436.

[149] Leroy Rolfe, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Leroy Rolfe," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1433.

[150] Ibid.

front as well.[151] As January 1943 was only just beginning, however, it became clear from written communications between high-ranking government officials that racism in the army had not improved, and was just as much a problem as it was when the United States entered World War II. As stated earlier, General George C. Marshall was one of the most prominent officials attempting to make the army a more hospitable place for African American soldiers. Marshall was not without allies in his attempts to make the African American situation better, as a January 5, 1943 communication showed him seeking advice from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt regarding the feasibility of meeting with African American forces in Liberia due to the then-current difficulties in securing an available transport.[152] Marshall's willingness to seek the First Lady's advice on African Americans showed how serious the general was regarding the issue, as did a communication later that month with William H. Hastie expressing his gratitude in believing the two men had done their best to address the racism towards African Americans before Hastie's resignation.[153] This and the previous communication made it clear that there were some government officials of European descent who were willing to attempt to increase the African American soldiers' standing in the army from the beginning of United States involvement in World War II. Sadly, the efforts of these individuals could only do so much to address the problems, and racial tensions would become prevalent despite their efforts.

---

[151] Milton Jacobs, "Better World," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 1942, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fbetter-world%2Fdocview%2F151514321%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[152] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3*, "The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941-May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 504 – 505.

[153] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3*, "The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941-May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 522.

Despite the passage of three years since the United States became involved in World War II, racism towards African American soldiers was still as prevalent in the army in 1943 as it was in earlier years. In his 2002 article "African Americans and World War II," Andrew E. Kersten described how despite American involvement in World War II entering its third year, African American soldiers were still being assigned to the Corps of Engineers and the Quartermaster Corps due to being seen as having inferior fighting ability.[154] James N. Leiker would also state in his 2012 article "Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All?: The U.S. Army and the Reassessment of Race Relations in World War II" that a survey conducted in 1943 indicated that about 90 percent of soldiers of European descent preferred being in separate units compared to 38 percent of African American troops.[155] These racist treatments and beliefs at a later point in the war showed just how deeply ingrained such fraudulent perceptions were, and these racial beliefs would have more severe consequences on the battlefield. At another point in the interview with Leroy Rolfe, the former soldier admitted that an officer of European descent he identified as General Almond did not mind using African American soldiers as frontline troops, a somewhat transparent disregard for their safety compared to soldiers of European descent.[156] The General Almond Rolfe referred to was Edward M. Almond, who had previously been assigned to command the 92nd Infantry Division to the war's end.[157] Already a controversial choice due to

[154] Andrew E. Kersten, "African Americans and World War II," *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 3 (2002): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163520.

[155] James N. Leiker, "Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All?: The U.S. Army and the Reassessment of Race Relations in World War II," *Army History*, no. 82 (2012): 33. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26296201.

[156] Leroy Rolfe, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Leroy Rolfe," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1433.

[157] Alexander M. Bielakowski, *Proud Warriors: African American Combat Units in World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021), 46.

his lack of experience as a commander, Almond's racism resulted in him being a burden to the division, being a micro-manager, exhibiting poor decision-making, and refused to accept any responsibility for his own failures or those of officers of European descent, instead shifting blame to African American officers and soldiers.[158] Almond's incompetence and racism in the face of open warfare provided a stark demonstration of how such behavior was inescapable in the army.

Interviews with African American veterans also demonstrated this racial treatment all too well. In a March 26, 2011 interview, John H. Adams recounted how after he was drafted into the army, the camp he was sent to was segregated, with Adams only being allowed to share a tent with four or five other African Americans, as well as admitting that he had no idea where the soldiers of European descent were living while he was there.[159] An interview with Harry Gumby further elaborated that training in southern military camps could be tricky, as Gumby explained that during his time training in Camp Pickett, Virginia, he and other African Americans had to be cautious because the officers were mostly from the South and treated Gumby and the others similarly to how they would have been treated as civilians.[160] Ashley Bryan's account of his time in World War II also illustrated that northern military camps, while an overall safer environment than southern camps, were just as susceptible to racism. Bryan specifically recounted his confusion as to why he was rated tech sergeant, 4th class, winch operator, on account of not

[158] Alexander M. Bielakowski, *Proud Warriors: African American Combat Units in World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021), 48-49.

[159] John H. Adams, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with John H. Adams," *World War II: The African American Experience,* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1427.

[160] Harry Gumby, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Harry Gumby," *World War II: The African American Experience,* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1431.

knowing what a winch even was and having no skill with machinery in general.[161] This continued racism was evidently a concern to some civilians of European descent, with a July 20, 1943 article in *The Washington Post* saw the author stressing that all men who wore the United States Army's uniform were equally entitled to the respect that military garments deserved, and it was the duty of officers to demonstrate their devotion to democracy to treat African Americans as they would soldiers of European descent.[162] Sadly, this call for unity mostly fell on deaf ears, and the fact Almond would serve as an oppressive commander for the entirety of World War II showed how African Americans often had to suffer in silence due to how deeply ingrained such racial treatment was in the American military.

The racist treatment understandably led to bitterness for some African American soldiers, as demonstrated by Matthias Reiss in his 2013 article "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II." Right from the start, Reiss made it clear how hellish conditions were with a quote from African American Private James Pritchett, who stated that people like him were viewed as nothing at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, going as far as decrying the location as a hell hole and that the German prisoners of war were treated better than African Americans stationed at the camp.[163] An African American having such a strong opinion regarding African American treatment in the army is yet another demonstration of the negative impact racism in the military had on African

[161] Ashley Bryan, *Infinite Hope: A Black Artists' Journey from World War II to Peace* (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2019), 12.

[162] "Negro Soldiers," *The Washington Post*, July 20, 1943, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-soldiers%2Fdocview%2F151640939%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[163] Matthias Reiss, "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 531. doi:10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.4.0531.

Americans serving in the army, and how people who were supposed to be universally regarded as the enemy were treated better just because of their skin color. The enemy itself was also more than willing to use American racism to its advantage. In an April 1, 1943 meeting of the Committee of Military Affairs, one of the speakers revealed that Tokyo and Berlin were broadcasting stories of lynchings, discrimination, repeated attacks on African Americans, and the clear defilement of democratic principles over radios for the purpose of swaying parts of the world mostly inhabited by non-Americans to turn against the United States by demonstrating that they were hypocrites for claiming to fight for the freedoms of speech, worship, and from want and fear while also engaging in acts of racial hatred.[164] The fact the Axis powers were able to weaponize American racism for propaganda purposes provided a stark demonstration of not only how severe racist attitudes were, but also how it made American ideals seem like falsehoods. For African Americans serving in the army, this hypocrisy would have been all too clear, and it was an issue that was still evident during the later months of 1943.

As 1943 was drawing closer to 1944, communications between American government officials made it clear that the African American presence in the army was still something that warranted discussion. An October 11, 1943 memorandum for General McNarney contained a recommendation that considering how Washington D.C. was better able to contain the African American soldier population than other large American cities, their presence in the nation's capital would give the impression that the government was not holding anyone back who wanted to go overseas as soon as possible.[165] The fact that African Americans had to be put in situations

[164] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs, *Manpower (National War Service Bill), Part 16: Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs, 78th Cong,* 1st sess., April 1, 1943, 655. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1943-mas-0045?accountid=12085.

[165] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett*

to make it appear as though they were eager to leave illustrated how, due to being perceived as inferior fighters, they seemed doomed to be kept on standby as emergency troops. There were also still issues of incompetent management, as an October 13 memorandum for General McNair described how inspections conducted for overseas readiness of anti-aircraft units had discovered flaws that were avoidable, especially regarding African American units, leading the writer to question this system's efficiency.[166] The overall bitterness some African Americans were feeling at the time was also made evident by a message George C. Marshall sent to Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, stating that General Reckord would make an efficient Provost Marshal in relation to evident problems that had been occurring with the African Americans stationed in Great Britain.[167] While Marshall did not go into detail regarding what troubles were happening regarding African Americans, it was evident that the African American element in the army could be as much a hindrance as a help due to the racist treatment they received. The bitterness was also evident from letters written by African Americans, with one letter written on September 27 featuring an anonymous soldier decrying how those stationed at a camp in Florida were nothing but slaves for the Americans of European descent stationed there, receiving poor treatment compared to their supposed allies.[168] However, the racial conditions did not dissuade

Marshall, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 151.

[166] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 155.

[167] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 162–163.

[168] Phillip McGuire, ed., *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 19-20.

African Americans, and some groups were already achieving success despite the racist atmosphere in the army.

While African Americans serving in the army were still suffering from increasing racism, some groups were proving they had the skill and will to achieve success in the military, the most famous being the Tuskegee Airmen. After spending the previous two years receiving flight training at Oscoda Army Air Field that David K. Vaughan described as "extended, intensive, and thorough,"[169] the Tuskegee Airmen began to make their presence on the battlefield felt by the middle of 1943. As described J. Todd Moye in his 2010 book *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II,* Airman Lieutenants William A. Campbell, Charles B. Hall, James T. Wiley, and Clarence C. Jamison participated in the Tuskegee Airmen's first combat sorties alongside pilots of European descent from another squadron in launching aerial assaults on Nazi installations on the island of Pantelleria in the Mediterranean.[170] These assaults were conducted as part of Operation Corkscrew, an Allied mission that served as preparation for an invasion of Sicily.[171] The fact the Tuskegee Airmen were able to participate in a major operation such as this showed that African Americans were beginning to make a name for themselves in World War II, supporting the interpretation that some individuals were able to earn enough respect from Americans of European descent for the latter to give what was still an oppressed minority a chance when they proved themselves. Being a part of the Tuskegee Airmen proved to be a boon for African Americans in non-combat roles as well, as shown by an interview with former

[169] David K. Vaughan, "The World War II Training Experiences of the Tuskegee Airmen at Oscoda Army Air Field," *Air Power History* 63, no. 4 (2016): 25, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276812.

[170] J. Todd Moye, *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 99.

[171] Ibid.

communications officer Harvey Bayless. Bayless specifically described how he was content with this role among the Airmen, since he knew that servicing the radios was critically important for communicating with the air forces, as well as the importance of being responsible for communication at the headquarters where the Airmen were stationed.[172] The fact that a non-combatant could achieve success among the Tuskegee Airmen showed how much this group of fighter pilots affected African American lives for the better through granting opportunities that would not have been available before the Airmen's formation.

Sadly, not even African Americans who were able to become Tuskegee Airmen were safe from racist treatment, which was demonstrated by an August 12, 1989 article of *The Washington Post* that provided testimony from several former members of the Airmen. A standout statement came from Charles McGee, who recounted that after he and his fellow officers had proved they were capable of being fighter pilots, racist officers told them they lacked the courage necessary to engage in combat.[173] Even though McGee later noted with pride that the Airmen's combat record ultimately proved the racists wrong,[174] it does not change the fact that successful African Americans faced resistance from people who would never view them as anything but inferior. In a separate newspaper interview with McGee published on October 13, 1999, the former Tuskegee Airman further illustrated this belief in inferiority when he recalled some of the racist statements he would hear during his time in the army, such as "go back to Africa" or

[172] Harvey Bayless, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Harvey Bayless," *World War II: The African American Experience,* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1428.

[173] Donna Britt, "Pilots Who Broke the Barrier: Tuskegee Airmen, Remembering Their Role as America's First Black Fighter Squadron Tuskegee Airmen Black Fighter Pilots," *The Washington Post,* August 12, 1989, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fpilots-who-broke-barrier%2Fdocview%2F139945645%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[174] Ibid.

"separateness," though McGee also admitted he never gave those feelings much thought.[175] Another article from *The Washington Post* further illustrated the harsh realities of the ongoing racial treatment during the war, with Charles Dryden saying he still felt anger over the unfairness of African American soldiers like him being treated with less respect than the Nazi prisoners of war who were allowed to be in the white section of the base's cafeteria.[176] The similarity of this account to the one described earlier by Matthias Reiss again showed how little national allegiance mattered to racist Americans of European descent, and their treatment of African Americans only worsened an already brutal time for the latter people.

The racism the Tuskegee Airmen endured after being successful also meant that not all aspiring African Americans would get a chance to become Airmen. U.L. Gooch illustrated this point when he described in an interview how officers of European descent transferred him from the Army Air Corps to Camp Livingston, Louisiana, which Gooch further describes as being like hell due to the horrid living conditions African Americans were forced into.[177] For an African American who was able to become a Tuskegee Airmen, the realities of warfare meant that not everyone was able to survive the experience. On July 2, 1943, the Airmen suffered their first casualties when, after returning to their base in Tunisia from escorting an Allied bomber, it was discovered that 1st Lieutenant Sherman White and 2nd Lieutenant James L. McCullin had gone

---

[175] Natalie Hopkinson, "Tuskegee Airmen's Winning Ways: Group Advanced Civil Rights Cause," *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1999, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Ftuskegee-airmens-winning-ways%2Fdocview%2F1707440648%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[176] Michael D. Shear, "They Fought on Two Fronts: Tuskegee Airmen Recall War with Hitler--and Jim Crow," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1995, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fthey-fought-on-two-fronts%2Fdocview%2F903442071%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[177] U.L, Gooch, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with U.L. Gooch," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1430.

missing, and despite a lengthy search for the men, they were never found and had been pronounced dead by war's end.[178] However, these incidents did not detract from the success of not only the Tuskegee Airmen, but also other African American military units.

While the Tuskegee Airmen were fighting the Axis powers in the air, other African American units were being prepared to engage the enemy in the form of tank battalions. On September 15, 1943, the 784th Tank Battalion (Light) arrived at Camp Hood, Texas to train in advanced armored warfare to sharpen their skills against tank destroyer units, and the unit would grow even stronger when it became the 784th Tank Battalion on October 29, swapping their Stuart light tanks for more powerful M4 Sherman medium tanks.[179] The fact the 784th were given an upgrade in terms of powerful weapons in their unit indicates that the American government was acknowledging how dangerous the Axis armies were and needed any combat units still at home to be ready to strike major blows to the enemy overseas. This need to ensure American tank battalions were ready for large-scale combat was also evident by the training other units were receiving across the country. By November 1943, the 758th Tank Battalion had received their tanks and equipment at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, after which intense training that emphasized multiple infantry battalions, artillery, and one light tank company working together was conducted in order to prepare the unit not only to fight, but to navigate changing terrains and conditions on the battlefield.[180]

---

[178] Joseph D. Caver, Jerome A. Ennels, and Wesley Phillips Newton. "Setting the Record Straight Regarding Lieutenants White and McCullin, Tuskegee Airmen," *Air Power History* 55, no. 3 (2008): 7, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275019.

[179] Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 25.

[180] Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 758th Tank Battalion in World War II: The U.S. Army's First All African American Tank Unit* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018), 50.

While World War II African Americans were perhaps most famous for groups such as the Tuskegee Airmen and the tank battalions, not all who served did so in combat roles, with some resisting being put in a position where they would have to fight and kill to survive. One case of a non-combatant was Charles S. Ellington, who described in an interview that when his superiors wanted to draft him into the Navy, Ellington stated he did not want to be on the water due to the accounts he had heard of how discriminatory officers of European descent were in the Navy.[181] Surprisingly, Ellington not only succeeded in getting his request honored, but his superiors noticed he had talent for radio training, so they assigned Ellington to a station in Kentucky, where he would serve as a radio operator for the rest of World War II.[182] Ellington's successful resistance to what officers of European descent wanted him to be demonstrated that with the passage of time, some African Americans had become unwilling to be regarded as inferior as they had been in the beginning.

Ellington's defiance was not without precedent, as African Americans had been pushing harder for greater equality by 1943. Beth Bailey and David Farber explained in their 1993 article "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power" that African Americans' desire to be treated as equals would have been evident at the beginning of World War II. Several African Americans enlisted in order to participate in what would become known as the Double V campaign, referring to the African Americans' desire for victory over racism in the United States and victory over the Axis powers on the

[181] Charles S. Ellington, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Charles S. Ellington," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1429.

[182] Ibid.

European battlefield.[183] This willingness to rebel could also be seen in an interview with Robert Reed, who described how when he was stationed in North Africa, Reed confronted a colonel who was beating Arabs when the only crime they were committing was scrounging for food in the military camp, saying it was against the laws of war.[184] Even though Reed's defiance did not go unpunished, his example was still indicative of how African Americans in the army were becoming bolder and more willing to stand up for their beliefs as time went on.

In some respects, the resistance to the racism of officials of European descent paid off in major ways. One example of resistance paying off was the case of the USS *Mason*, a ship that was not only captained and crewed entirely by African Americans, but was also made possible by the activism conducted by African American leaders and the pressure they had placed on high-ranking policymakers in the government to begin removing racist policies in the Navy.[185] Other African Americans who were otherwise not in a position to fight showed off their ability to cope, with Adolph Ross of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade stating in a letter that although being forced to be idle could be torture, it also taught the value of being patient and the pride of knowing how strong and dignified his deeds were.[186] As in other areas of the African American experience of World War II, those in non-combat roles also benefited from the fight for civil

---

[183] Beth Bailey, and David Farber, "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (1993): 817. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3788782.

[184] Robert Reed, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Robert Reed," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1432.

[185] Louis Lee Woods, II, "Messmen no More: African -American Sailors on the USS Mason in World War II." (PhD diss., Washington, D.C., Howard University, 2006), 9, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fmessmen-no-more-african-american-sailors-on-uss%2Fdocview%2F305326860%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[186] Peter N. Carrol, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small, eds., *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 101.

rights, with Edgar Law stating that he was fortunate to work communications for the 51st Composite Defense Battalion as well as other duties he did not describe further.[187] African Americans who contributed to the war machine in the United States also benefited from this resistance, with the number of African American aircraft workers having rose from zero to five thousand by 1943, showing how the efforts of major authority figures had produced great change for the better.[188] The tenacity of African Americans would eventually leave an impact on the enemy, as Nazi prisoners of war in North Africa were quoted as having said that the Allied troops they feared the most were Australians and African Americans, a testament to the latter group's fighting ability.[189] Despite these successes, however, the racism of Americans of European descent was still omnipresent, and these beliefs were continuing to cause problems when 1943 ended.

As World War II continued into 1944, communications between American government officials showed that the African American presence in the army was still an issue that needed to be addressed. These communications were inevitable in some respects, as by this time in the war, the United States Army, being constrained by a 10 percent quota, had reached its peak enlistment with more than 700,000 African Americans.[190] An editorial note covering African American troops from December 1943 through March 1944 described how by the early months of 1944,

---

[187] "Valor and Faith Breaking Racial Barriers: Edgar Law Recalls Life as One of the First Black Marines and Role in World War II," *Daily News*, July 30, 2012, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fvalor-faith-breaking-racial-barriers-edgar-law%2Fdocview%2F1030144585%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[188] Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 64.

[189] Frank E. G. Weil, "The Negro in the Armed Forces," *Social Forces* 26, no. 1 (1947): 97, https://doi.org/10.2307/2572611.

[190] Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay," *Negro History Bulletin* 51/57, no. 1/12 (1993): 6, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44177225.

the United States War Department was facing increasing criticism due to their converting of African American combat units into non-combat service functions.[191] This note demonstrated how even after over two years of warfare against the Axis powers, racism from officers of European descent was still strong and pervasive enough that African Americans were regarded as weak combatants. This unwillingness to utilize African Americans as soldiers was also addressed in a March 18 message George C. Marshall sent to Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon, telling Harmon that due to the increasing backlash against not deploying African Americans, it would be in the War Department's best interest to employ African American soldiers as soon as possible as well as carefully test them to determine their fighting ability.[192] These communications demonstrated that even with the passage of roughly four years, there were still government officials of European descent who had no faith in the African Americans' ability to fight and would rather keep them in service roles instead.

The lack of faith in the African Americans' ability to fight was not the only racial belief that was being practiced by 1944. Other racist beliefs regarding African Americans were also made evident in an August 3 message to General Douglas MacArthur, with Marshall recommending that Major General Harry H. Johnson be placed in charge of select African American units due to Johnson having what was seen as an aggressive character with the courage

[191] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4*, "Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 354–355.

[192] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 355–356.

of his convictions, with a further note that he could "handle" African Americans.[193] The use of "handle" in this message was indicative of the racist belief that African Americans were people who needed constant supervision to be effective, a notion that had not changed since American involvement in World War II had started. The racism could also result in other forms of harsh treatment, as recounted by Charles W. Dryden in his 1997 book *A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman*. In May 1944, Dryden, despite knowing how such practices were frowned upon in the army, led a flight of four planes on a low altitude pass across Walterboro Army Air Base in a practice known as "buzzing," an action that resulted in Dryden's dismissal from the United States Army Air Corps two months later.[194] Regardless of his reasons for the low altitude flight, the harsh disciplinary action against Dryden demonstrated there was no mercy for African Americans who were perceived as worthless, as many Americans of European descent continued to believe of the former.

By 1944, it was still plain to see that racism was still making life harder for African Americans in the army. Sadly, it would seem as though these racist beliefs were infectious to a certain extent, with African American journalist Roi Ottley noting in a September 2, 1944 entry in his diary that "the seeds of prejudice" were easily spread, with some troops of European descent who not only accepted these beliefs despite previously harboring no racism, but had also seemed determined to spread hatred for African Americans to their British allies.[195] This seeming

[193] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 543–544.

[194] Charles W. Dryden, *A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 4-6.

[195] Mark A. Huddle, ed., *Roi Ottley's World War II: The Lost Diary of an African American Journalist* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 104.

desire to spread racism to another continent had been reflected earlier in a late 1943 letter from Roland Hayes to Eleanor Roosevelt, who reported that African Americans stationed in England were subject to routine mistreatment by troops and officers of European descent, who spread lies about them among the British, banned them from pubs, regularly picked fights with them, imprisoned them for talking to British women, and denied their commissions and promotions.[196] The fact that racist Americans of European descent seemed determined to spread their beliefs to others is a brutal demonstration of how far they were willing to go to ensure African Americans were kept in a position of perpetual inferiority.

These beliefs of inferiority and other racist policies, as noted earlier, caused significant unrest in certain populations of African Americans. In an October 26 memorandum for the assistant chief of staff from the G-1 division in Washington, D.C., Marshall described how General Somervell had made a plea for additional military police battalions in response to African American unrest in the United States, despite the already pressing issue of lacking manpower to be sent overseas by the end of the year.[197] This unrest among African Americans in the military demonstrated just how much the ongoing racism from officers of European descent was affecting these soldiers, especially after four years of no positive change. This level of racism was also made clear by an incident on July 6, 1944, where the famous baseball player Jackie Robinson refused to go to the back of a military bus by citing how the Army had recently ordered all military posts to desegregate their services, an act of defiance that resulted in

[196] Thomas A. Guglielmo, *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 297.

[197] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 639–640.

Robinson being unfairly court-martialed.[198] This racist treatment also went hand and hand with the continued harsh realities of warfare, which Alexander Jefferson experienced firsthand on August 12, 1944, when his fighter plane was shot down over France and had the further misfortune of landing in the middle of the Nazi 20mm gun crew that had brought him down, starting Jefferson's status as a prisoner of war for the remainder of the conflict.[199] Due to Jefferson being an African American, his loss was probably considered less important to some than if a pilot of European descent had been captured. The Tuskegee Airmen also continued to experience wartime hardships, as demonstrated in *Soaring to Glory: A Tuskegee Airman's Firsthand Account of World War II*. In mid-August 1944, Harry T Stewart, Jr., received news that a childhood friend of his, Joseph Gordon, had been killed in action on a strafing run in Toulon, France, shattering Stewart's previously idealized notions of being a fighter pilot.[200] These incidents that emphasized the harsh realities of warfare would have made African Americans feel just as many negative emotions as generated by the continued racial hatred they received from their nominal allies of European descent. Thankfully, not all military officials of European descent were as prejudiced as the majority seemed to be.

As World War II was nearing its end, African Americans serving in the army were gaining allies among military officials of European descent as the former continued to prove themselves in battle. As described by Daniel L. Haulman in his 2015 article "Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Friends and Foes of the Tuskegee Airmen," the best known of the Tuskegee

---

[198] U.S. Army Airborne & Special Operations Museum, "Jackie Robinson's Career in the Army," accessed June 1, 2022, https://www.asomf.org/jackie-robinsons-career-in-the-army/.

[199] Alexander Jefferson, and Lewis H. Carlson, *Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman and POW, Revised Edition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 61.

[200] Philip Handleman, and Harry T. Stewart Jr., *Soaring to Glory: A Tuskegee Airman's Firsthand Account of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2019), 97-98.

Airmen's allies of European descent was Colonel Noel Parrish, who despite having grown up and lived in the South, was supportive and encouraging of the African Americans under his command, so long as his men showed the ability and effort needed to be fighter pilots, all while still enforcing strict standards for anyone desiring flight training.[201] Another famous ally was First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, whose history of supporting African Americans was well known at the time. In an August 6, 1995 article of *The Washington Post*, Jane Ciabattari described how Roosevelt had visited Tuskegee and flew with one of the pilots before returning to Washington, D.C. to talk to her husband, a conversation that led to a squadron of Tuskegee Airmen finally being allowed to deploy to North Africa to guard United States bombers.[202] Roosevelt's intervention also helped with other Tuskegee squadrons being deployed overseas, with Harts Morrison Brown and the other members of the 332nd Fighter Group being sent to Italy in 1944.[203] Whether it was the colonel or the President's wife, African Americans had gained allies, demonstrating that Americans of European descent would support and respect the former once they proved themselves.

Allies, or at least some support, were also evident in high-ranking levels of the government, as evidenced by a March 4, 1943 meeting of the Committee on Military Affairs. One speaker addressed the implementation of a poll tax that would force African Americans to

---

[201] Daniel L. Haulman, "Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen," *Air Power History* 62, no. 3 (2015): 47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276635.

[202] Jane Ciabattari, "Intelligence Report: The Tuskegee Airmen Remembered." *The Washington Post*, August 6, 1995, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fintelligence-report%2Fdocview%2F903448467%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[203] Frederick N. Rasmussen, "Harts M. Brown: World War II Vet and Management Consultant Led the Way in Preservation of Howard County's African-American Past," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 6, 2011, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fharts-m-brown%2Fdocview%2F875255655%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

pay the government money if the former wanted to vote for American politicians, and the speaker saw this tax as undemocratic and something African American soldiers should not have to pay after showing their devotion and willingness to fight for democracy and ensuring the United States' way of life was preserved.[204] While this statement against the poll tax could have had more to do with wartime pragmatism, it nevertheless showed that African Americans in the army were receiving some measure of support from Americans of European descent. Another example came from another committee meeting on April 1, 1943, where it was reported that some government officials were trying to maintain morale and enthusiasm for World War II among the African American soldiers, efforts that were unfortunately being hampered by how no action was being taken to punish and correct racist treatment in Washington, D.C. and other places with a significant African American presence.[205] Once again, whether speaking out of wartime pragmatism or a genuine desire for peaceful coexistence, government officials of European descent certainly wanted to make the wartime situation for African American soldiers as painless as possible. This coexistence seemed to prove beneficial, as some African American units were finally ready to deploy.

As World War II in 1944 wound down, some African Americans that had been kept stateside were now able to take the fight to the Axis powers and be successful in the process. One of the more striking examples of African American success was Lieutenant Commander Carlton Skinner, who not only held the position of commander of the racially integrated weather

[204] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs, *Manpower (National War Service Bill), Part 2: Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs, 78th Cong*. 1st sess., March 4, 1943, 101. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1943-mas-0031?accountid=12085.

[205] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs, *Manpower (National War Service Bill), Part 16: Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs, 78th Cong,* 1st sess., April 1, 1943, 655. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1943-mas-0045?accountid=12085.

ship known as the *Sea Cloud* but would also lead the ship in helping to destroy a Nazi submarine in June 1944.[206] Other African American military leaders were demonstrating their capacity for compassion as well as tenacity, as Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., commander of the Tuskegee Airmen's 332nd Fighter Group, made sure that the 180 bomber crewmen of European descent who were forced to land due to bad weather were welcomed, and the crewmen were grateful for the African Americans' hospitality in return.[207] Davis's compassion and fighting spirit proved to be beneficial in the long run, as these attributes eventually allowed him to become the first African American general officer in the United States Air Force.[208] The presence of African Americans as successful military leaders showcased how far their presence in the American army had come since the beginning of United States involvement in World War II, and the military units operating on land were experiencing similar success at the same time.

African American military units operating on land were demonstrating their own tenacity and success on the battlefield. One of the African American tank battalions, the 761st, became the first segregated unit to be made aware of movement across the Atlantic, leaving New York and sailing to England before arriving in Europe in October 1944, where they shortly after assisted the Third Army's stalled advance in France.[209] However, it was not until six days after their arrival that the 761st officially entered combat, where they would begin six months of battle

[206] Benjamin Jacobs, *Jim Crow Goes to War: The African-American Military Experience in the Second World War* (Monee: Benjamin Jacobs, 2017), 29.

[207] Daniel L. Haulman, "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., as a Tuskegee Airman," *Air Power History* 65, no. 3 (2018): 30, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26571141.

[208] Daniel L. Haulman, "The Tuskegee Airmen in Combat," *Air Power History* 57, no. 3 (2010): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275921.

[209] Dale E. Wilson, "The Army's Segregated Tank Battalions in World War II," *Army History*, no. 32 (1994): 14, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26304245.

as they moved across France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and Austria.[210] The fact the 761st was able to make such progress within a relatively short amount of time was a testament to the tenacity and overall fighting spirit of the African American tank battalions. Other armored vehicle units had individuals who demonstrated their valor in the face of danger. Such was the case of Charles L. Thomas, who despite being severely injured by Nazi forces in France, forced himself to open fire on the enemy in order to cover his men's deployment of two guns from their own vehicles.[211] Thomas' willingness to fight against seemingly impossible odds was another excellent demonstration of the African Americans' fighting spirit as World War II neared its end.

The fighting spirit of the African American tank battalions would have continued to be made evident in the early months of 1945, when the 784th Tank Battalion was pinned down in Nazi territory for eighteen hours, but managed to keep firing on the enemy parachute units that were arriving and remained calm under pressure both while fighting and while leaving the safety of their tanks to refuel while being assaulted by mortar shells, these combination of factors causing the unit to earn the respect of the Thirty-fifth Infantry Division.[212] A separate newspaper article discussing the event described how Colonel Bernard Byrne was so impressed he went on record stating the 784th performed admirably in the battle, and other infantry soldiers even said that the unit could fight alongside them anytime.[213] The Tuskegee Airmen were also proving

---

[210] Roger Cunningham, "761st Tank Battalion," *On Point* 9, no. 3 (2004): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44610265.

[211] Robert Child, *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2022), 39.

[212] Negro Tank Outfit Stages Own 'Bastogne'," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1945. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-tank-outfit-stages-own-bastogne%2Fdocview%2F151768231%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[213] "Negro Tank Force, Cut Off, Mauls Nazis for 18 Hours," *The Sun*, March 5, 1945, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-

their worth, with Merrill Ross being proud to have worked as a mechanic for the Airmen overseas, despite the fact he was pulled from his job as a sixth grade teacher in order to serve.[214] Non-combat units would also prove their worth during the early months of 1945, with February 12 seeing the arrival of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion in England, and this all-African American women unit brought a wide array of skills such as security and communication, as well as having the ability to be self-reliant, that allowed the battalion to not only stand out as a successful group in the European theater, but also as the only African American Women's Army Corps group to serve overseas during World War II.[215] Unfortunately, none of these achievements changed the racism that was still omnipresent in the army, and the conditions brought on by racial beliefs would only become worse.

As World War II entered its twilight years in 1943 and 1944, African Americans would have been hammered by the brutality of warfare and the continued racism in the army. Despite the hardships, African Americans achieved a measure of greatness through groups such as the Tuskegee Airmen or the tank battalions. Because of their successes, African Americans' perceptions of fighting for the United States compared to soldiers of European descent were evolving. Even though racism was still strong, African Americans became less tolerant of the hatred in the army due to being emboldened by their achievements. Despite this increased boldness, the intense racial hatred African Americans continued to experience would only become more pronounced after World War II ended.

---

newspapers%2Fnegro-tank-force-cut-off-mauls-nazis-18-hours%2Fdocview%2F537436999%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[214] Merrill Ross, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Merrill Ross," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1434.

[215] Brenda L. Moore, *To Serve My Country, to Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACS Stationed Overseas During World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 124.

Chapter 3

1945 – 1947

As 1945 finally saw the end of World War II, African Americans would have hoped that their service for the United States would be recognized by their government. African Americans had certainly achieved some success, such as earning the respect of some of their comrades of European descent due to their combat performance and bearing witness to the beginnings of the army desegregating. However, many African Americans were left disappointed and embittered when racism had only worsened since the beginning of the war. The worsening racial hatred caused African Americans to react in different ways over the course of the next two years. Some African Americans resorted to extreme measures such as moving to Europe to escape the constant hatred. Others, however, decided to rise to the occasion and try to better not only their stance in society, but the stances of other African Americans.

1945 marked the final year of World War II, and the Axis powers making a desperate last stand against the Allies would have made the conflict more intense compared to when it had started. In addition to deciding what would be the best methods to striking the final decisive blows to the Nazis, Japanese, and other enemy countries, government officials of European descent would have still needed to address and acknowledge the African American presence in the army. A February 14, 1945 communication to then-General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower indirectly mentioned how integral African Americans had become to some military units, recommending that one African American infantry regiment in the 92nd Division be reorganized in order to strengthen their frontal defense as they stormed Germany.[216] Indeed,

[216] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett*

George C. Marshall's need to stress the importance of African Americans in the army is reflected in how the latter had made progress in earning the respect of their peers of European descent.

For soldiers still serving in the United States military by 1945, those of European descent would have gained a greater appreciation and respect for their African American comrades in arms. A March 5, 1945 article in *The Sun* reported that despite the all-African American 784th Tank Battalion being stranded in Nazi territory for eighteen hours, they fought ferociously against the enemy forces, even leaving their tanks to fire the .50-caliber flak machine guns mounted on top of the tanks when their other ammunition ran out.[217] Another article in *The Sun* published the same day further revealed that non-combatants in the battalion played their part as well, with artillery mechanic Sergeant Ambrose Hicks being sent to help a supply convoy navigate through the carnage, saving three of the convoy's trucks parked near a burning ammunition truck filled with 2,300 pounds of TNT.[218] As stated previously, the 784th's bravery and tenacity in the face of seemingly impossible odds earned them the respect of military men of European descent, demonstrating how for some, skin color did not matter as long as fellow soldiers could pull their own weight on the battlefield.

African American units who had been present in World War II from almost the start of United States involvement were still achieving success as the war wound down. According to

---

Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947 (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 49–50.

[217] "Negro Tank Force, Cut Off, Mauls Nazis for 18 Hours," *The Sun*, March 5, 1945, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-tank-force-cut-off-mauls-nazis-18-hours%2Fdocview%2F537436999%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[218] "Negro Tank Outfit Stages Own 'Bastogne'," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1945. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-tank-outfit-stages-own-bastogne%2Fdocview%2F151768231%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Daniel L. Haulman's 2018 article "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., as a Tuskegee Airman," Commander Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., led his squadron of Tuskegee Airmen on a mission conducted on March 24, 1945 to escort Allied bombers attacking Berlin, and his men destroyed 112 Nazi fighter jets by the time the mission was over.[219] The fact the Tuskegee Airmen were able to down that many enemy fighters during one mission illustrated how formidable the former were in combat. This ferocity in the face of the enemy was also made apparent in Jane Ciabattari's August 6, 1995 article in *The Washington Post*, "Intelligence Report: The Tuskegee Airmen Remembered." In her interview with former Tuskegee Airman Robert Williams, Ciabattari recorded Williams' account of how by the time World War II ended, his squad had taken part in over 700 missions without losing one Allied bomber to Axis aircraft, and the originally reluctant bomber crews of European descent became willing to request the Airmen's services.[220] The ability of the Tuskegee Airmen to earn the respect of Americans of European descent illustrates their effectiveness in combat, supporting the historical interpretation that respect was earned when African Americans proved their merit.

The Tuskegee Airmen's formidability in combat was further illustrated by a March 5, 1995 article written in *The Washington Post* by Michael D. Shear, who specifically noted that the Airmen went on to destroy nearly 600 enemy aircraft as well as a multitude of other targets, such as locomotives, boxcars, river barges, and fuel dumps, earning the Airmen over 150

[219] Daniel L. Haulman, "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., as a Tuskegee Airman," *Air Power History* 65, no. 3 (2018): 30 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26571141.

[220] Jane Ciabattari, "Intelligence Report: The Tuskegee Airmen Remembered," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 1995, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fintelligence-report%2Fdocview%2F903448467%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Distinguished Flying Crosses and 780 Air Medals.[221] The awards and praise the Tuskegee Airmen received also came from Americans of European descent who would rise to prominence in later years, with then-General Dwight D. Eisenhower publicly praising the 99th Fighter Squadron, one of the most prominent of Tuskegee's squadrons, as well as the engineer and antiaircraft ground units that were stationed in Italy.[222] Unfortunately, the Tuskegee Airmen were not immune to Jim Crow America at this late stage in the war, with Charles W. Dryden remembering how in some places on his trip from South Carolina to Kentucky options for food and restrooms were so limited by segregation that it necessitated the use of grocery store snacks along the way.[223] Also unfortunately, the Tuskegee Institute, the college that was responsible for the creation of the Airmen, would be unable to contribute more to the military after World War II, as the institute's flying program closed in 1946.[224] Despite these setbacks, it does not detract from how the Tuskegee Airmen were a force to be reckoned with, one that was deserving of respect and admiration.

In addition to the Tuskegee Airmen, the all-African American tank battalions were also bearing the fruits of their tenacity on the battlefield. For some, however, the initial forays into warfare did not go smoothly, as demonstrated in Joe Wilson, Jr.'s 2018 book *The 758th Tank Battalion in World War II: The U.S. Army's First All African American Tank Unit*. As recounted

---

[221] Michael D. Shear, "They Fought on Two Fronts: Tuskegee Airmen Recall War with Hitler--and Jim Crow," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1995, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fthey-fought-on-two-fronts%2Fdocview%2F903442071%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[222] Andrew E. Kersten, "African Americans and World War II," *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 3 (2002): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163520.

[223] Charles W. Dryden, *A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 194.

[224] Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay," *Negro History Bulletin* 51/57, no. 1/12 (1993): 7, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44177225.

by Wilson, the 758th Tank Battalion supported the 92nd Infantry Division throughout February 1945 but witnessed the attempted diversionary attack in the Serchio Valley fail with more than 2,000 casualties on the Allied side, an outcome that racist officers of European descent were only too willing to blame on the African American soldiers.[225] Thankfully, other tank battalions had much greater success in the war. The 761st Tank Battalion, in particular, had the honor of personally witnessing the fall of important Nazi strongholds, with ten of the battalion's tanks being used for the divisional honor guard for the surrender of German forces stationed in Austria.[226] The 761st baring witness to the fall of Nazi Germany did not stop there, something that was reinforced in Gina M. DiNicolo's 2014 book *The Black Panthers: A Story of Race, War, and Courage: the 761st Tank Battalion in World War II*. DiNicolo specifically recounted how, in March 1945, Paul Bates led the 761st as part of Task Force Rhine, and ended up playing a crucial role in breaking through the Siegfried Line, thus allowing the Allies to march forward into Germany, prompting Bates to note with pride the chaos his men had created due to their attack on the Nazis.[227] The fact the 761st were able to take part in two major military offenses that dealt serious blows to Nazi Germany was another prime example of how African Americans could be a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield. However, tenacity and valor were not always enough to win battles, as by the time World War II ended, the 761st had experienced a 50 percent casualty rate, with 34 personnel dead and 71 tanks destroyed, although the battalion was ultimately rewarded with eleven Silver Stars, 69 Bronze Stars, and 269 purple hearts for their

[225] Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 758th Tank Battalion in World War II: The U.S. Army's First All African American Tank Unit* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018), 103.

[226] Roger Cunningham, "761st Tank Battalion," *On Point* 9, no. 3 (2004): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44610265.

[227] Gina M. DiNicolo, *The Black Panthers: A Story of Race, War, and Courage: the 761st Tank Battalion in World War II* (Yardley: Westholme, 2014), 202.

service.[228] The ability of the 761st to earn recognition showed how, like the Tuskegee Airmen, they were formidable combatants who had earned their place in the military.

African Americans who were in the military but not part of the Tuskegee Airmen or the tank battalions were also experiencing success in their fields. Despite 1945 bringing an end to World War II, there were still African Americans who were being trained to fight. John H. Adams was one of these late arriving individuals, as he admitted in a 2011 interview that he did not graduate from flight training until 1945, when he was commissioned as a second lieutenant before being sent to Eglin Field, Florida for gunnery training and Godman Field, Kentucky for other training that he did not specify.[229] A similar sequence of events occurred for Frederick Temple, who revealed in an October 3, 2010 interview that he was not drafted into the army until around August 21, 1945, where he would go on to serve in North Africa and Naples, Italy for the remainder of the war.[230] Even though these African Americans were late to join the battle against the Axis powers, their willingness to fight for their country showed they were still eager to see the war through to the bitter end.

The performance of African Americans in the army and the respect they earned as a result had reached a point that government officials of European descent with more open minds regarding the former's presence were having discussions about potentially integrating the armed forces. The success of African Americans in the army would have been impossible to ignore in some regards, as shown in Alexander M. Bielakowski's 2021 book *Proud Warriors: African*

---

[228] Wilson, Dale E. "The Army's Segregated Tank Battalions in World War II." *Army History*, no. 32 (1994): 14–17. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26304245.

[229] John H. Adams, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with John H. Adams," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1427.

[230] Frederick C. Temple, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Frederick C. Temple," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1436.

American Combat Units in World War II. Bielakowski illustrated how African Americans had become successful by war's end by describing individuals finding leadership opportunities that could not be found elsewhere in the United States at the time, with several men not only reaching the rank of field grade officers, but one earned the rank of brigadier general.[231] The efforts of African American leaders also paid off when June 1945 saw the Navy declare that all segregated training camps or programs would be permanently discontinued, with African American recruits being trained at facilities anywhere in the United States.[232] This integration is another stark demonstration of how the combat performance of African Americans could no longer be ignored by the American government, and integrating was now necessary to make army life more bearable.

An editorial note on racial integration of infantry combat units illustrated this point well, revealing that after about 1,700 enlisted men of European descent were handed questionnaires asking about how they felt about the use of African American riflemen, the results, issued on July 3, 1945, surprisingly showed that Americans of European descent had more positive feelings regarding the African American volunteers than expected.[233] This further demonstration of the respect African Americans had earned illustrated how and why integration was being more seriously considered compared to the previous years of World War II. This possible integration

---

[231] Alexander M. Bielakowski, *Proud Warriors: African American Combat Units in World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021), xi.

[232] Louis Lee Woods, II, "Messmen no More: African -American Sailors on the USS Mason in World War II." (PhD diss., Washington, D.C., Howard University, 2006), 124, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fmessmen-no-more-african-american-sailors-on-uss%2Fdocview%2F305326860%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[233] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 288–289.

was discussed further in an August 25, 1945 memorandum agreeing that the practice of integrating African Americans into units composed of men of European descent should be considered further, while also stressing the need to wait for the results on the Special Planning Division's study on postwar utilization of African American troops.[234] While integration was being discussed and had taken a step forward in the right direction, African Americans would find they still faced an uphill battle regarding full acceptance, and some were becoming impatient for better opportunities for equality.

While many African Americans in the army held out hope for improved race relations after World War II ended, some individuals were beginning to realize that Europe may have been the better place to live. In his 2013 article "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," Matthias Reiss explained that after Germany had been officially defeated, African Americans stationed in the nation encountered something that surprised them. While African Americans still experienced racism in the now-occupied Germany and their presence made German civilians anxious, these feelings rarely led to outright hostilities, with one African American describing how some of the civilians were quite friendly and was further surprised when he discovered that most Germans saw African American soldiers as a good-natured and generous group of people.[235] This unexpected camaraderie with people who were previously considered the enemy would have certainly shaped African American perceptions of life in Europe, especially for

[234] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 289–290.

[235] Matthias Reiss, "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 553. doi:10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.4.0531.

individuals who felt like prisoners in their native United States. This feeling was emphasized in Thomas A. Guglielmo's 2021 book *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military*. Guglielmo specifically drew attention to an early 1945 memo sent to President Roosevelt from New Guinea, with NAACP leader Walter White observing that some African American officers had been kept as second lieutenants for almost three years, while less educated and overall inferior officers of European descent had been brought in and promoted over African Americans.[236] This blatant favoritism based on race showed how racism was not only still negatively affecting African Americans but was also potentially advancing inferior soldiers up to ranks where they could cause damage due to incompetence. Understandably, this sort of treatment led to some African Americans lashing out at their oppressors, with it being reported that multiple outbreaks of violence between African Americans and Americans of European descent had occurred at Pearl Harbor by 1945, including four minor riots.[237] Sadly for African Americans, this continuing racist treatment was merely a prelude to what they would experience after World War II ended.

World War II reaching its explosive conclusion inevitably led to discussions on how to best handle the demobilization and other necessary actions of military units. For example, an October 3, 1945 memorandum had George C. Marshall specifically ask, among other actions, for an update on the progress of the demobilization of African American soldiers since the Nazis' surrender on May 8, as well as the number of African American troops that were expected for the

[236] Thomas A. Guglielmo, *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 313.

[237] Beth Bailey, and David Farber, "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (1993): 817. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3788782.

rest of October and November.[238] The efforts to demobilize African American units after World War II while also keeping some enlisted for future military operations indicated that the American military had realized to some extent just how valuable African Americans were as soldiers. However, even as conditions seemed to have reached a high point for military African Americans, Marshall was experiencing situations that illustrated how African Americans had become emboldened by their service. In an October 16, 1945 message addressed to Frederick D. Patterson, Marshall acknowledged receiving Patterson's telegram withdrawing the latter's suggestion that the participation of African Americans in the Army Air Corps could be encouraged and aided by using the facilities and relationships developed during World War II at Tuskegee Army Air Field, due to African Americans vehemently objecting to being stationed at a racially segregated facility.[239] African Americans' objection to being kept on the periphery, even when it was an institution that allowed some of them to achieve greatness, illustrated how bold they had become due to their experiences during World War II. Ultimately, African Americans would need as much of their newfound bravado as possible, as the racial situation in the United States was only heating up.

When World War II finally ended on September 2, 1945, African Americans returning home would have hoped and prayed that their duty and performance in warfare would have made racial conditions better. Some African Americans were certainly ready to go back to a calmer

[238] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 322–323.

[239] *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 330–331.

life, with Charles S. Ellington stating in an interview that when given a choice between staying in military service or being discharged, he chose the latter because he could not stand warfare anymore.[240] This desire for home was also seen in an August 7, 1945 letter written by Harry Fisher to his wife Ruth, where he stated that while he was in awe of the power of the atomic bomb, what he wanted most of all was for it to end the war as soon as possible.[241] Sadly, these African Americans returned to a United States that was even more racist than when they had started. This distressing development could already be seen during meetings held by the Select Committee on Post-War Military Police throughout the majority of June 1945. During one of these sessions, a speaker brought up the subject of African Americans in the army, saying that while World War II had brought major positive changes to the restrictions placed on African American opportunities to serve, the forms of training and service open to African Americans were still severely limited, with the speaker citing men who were enlisted in the Medical Corps being relegated to working for sanitary companies in the army.[242] The fact that racism was still limiting the roles African Americans could play showed how deep these beliefs ran, something that only worsened after the war's end. A similar situation was also present in the Navy, as while Secretary James Forrestal had allowed messmen to change specialties in May 1945, the Navy insisted that it was not possible to allow a large number of African Americans to be assigned to a

[240] Charles S. Ellington, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Charles S. Ellington," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1429.

[241] Peter N. Carrol, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small, eds., *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 238.

[242] U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee on Post-War Military Police. *Universal Military Training, Part 1: Hearings Before the Select Committee on Postwar Military Policy, 79th Cong*. 1st sess., June 4-9, 11-16, 19, 1945. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1945-pmp-0001?accountid=12085.

certain activity in the organization.[243] This continuing racism would have also been evident soon after World War II ended, with Ashley Bryan recounting how German prisoners-of-war were allowed to sit at the front of the buses headed towards a prisoner exchange in Le Havre, France, while he and other African Americans were forced to the back.[244] This racist treatment demonstrated the harsh realities of how deeply racism was embedded in all aspects of American society, something that would have been evident to all African Americans in the army.

Not even the Tuskegee Airmen had gained any immunity to racist treatment, with Alexander Jefferson recounting how after an altercation with racist officers of European descent, he realized that despite his skills as a pilot, African Americans like himself were still treated as less than dirt.[245] The overall belief that African Americans could not be trusted was also made evident in a War Department survey conducted in 1945, which revealed that while the number of racial incidents involving African American soldiers had decreased since 1943, that could have had more to do with the improved use of military police by the time World War II ended.[246] Not even veterans who were still in uniform were safe from hate being shown towards them, with a June 21, 2011 interview with U.L. Gooch revealing that despite wearing his military attire, an

---

[243] Sarah Ayako Barksdale, "Prelude to a Revolution: African-American World War II Veterans, Double Consciousness, and Civil Rights 1940-1955" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), 25. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fprelude-revolution-african-american-world-war-ii%2Fdocview%2F1548983446%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[244] Ashley Bryan, *Infinite Hope: A Black Artists' Journey from World War II to Peace* (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2019), 79.

[245] Donne Britt, "Pilots Who Broke the Barrier: Tuskegee Airmen, Remembering Their Role as America's First Black Fighter Squadron Tuskegee Airmen Black Fighter Pilots," *The Washington Post*, August 12, 1989. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fpilots-who-broke-barrier%2Fdocview%2F139945645%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[246] James N. Leiker, "Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All?: The U.S. Army and the Reassessment of Race Relations in World War II," *Army History*, no. 82 (2012): 38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26296201.

American of European descent demanded he move to the back of the bus Gooch was taking out of Memphis, and the resulting assault on the racist man ended in Gooch being forced off the bus.[247] The fact that not even African Americans who had proven themselves in combat were safe from racism was another stark demonstration of how much of a grip it had on the United States, a truth African Americans returning home would have to face.

By the time most African Americans had returned to the United States, the brutal realities of a racist America would have been a bitter truth for veterans to face. George C. Marshall acknowledged this point in an interview conducted on February 20, 1957, stating that once an African American unit returned to the United States, they demobilize or move into areas where nothing had changed regarding racial segregation, which proved to be almost impossible to handle for some veterans.[248] The lack of change was further illustrated in a February 24, 2013 article of *The Baltimore Sun*, where Henry Mouzon, Sr., explained his disappointment when he returned to his home in South Carolina, thinking that because World War II was won, the situation would be different for African Americans, only for conditions to be virtually the same as when he left.[249] The fact that race relations in the southern United States had not changed at all over the nearly five years of American involvement in World War II showed how seemingly inescapable Jim Crowism was, which must have led some African Americans to question why they fought for a country that still actively despised them. Some African Americans took a more

[247] U.L. Gooch, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with U.L. Gooch," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1430.

[248] Tape 17 - Demobilization problems; 1945; African-American soldiers; relations with FDR, *George C. Marshall: Interviews and Reminiscences for Forrest C. Pogue*, 17.

[249] Joe Burris, "Remembered with Honor: Howard County Center of African American Culture to Celebrate the Service of World War II Veteran Henry Mouzon Sr," *The Baltimore Sun*, February 24, 2013, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fremembered-with-honor%2Fdocview%2F1312444055%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

introspective look on race relations, with journalist Roi Ottley reflecting in an October 19, 1946 entry in his diary how due to the Nurenberg trials establishing the "concept of collective guilt," it could mean that Americans of European descent living in the northern states were just as guilty of lynchings as those in the south, just as how all Germans were complicit in the Holocaust.[250] Ottley's thoughts on the matter also highlighted how many African Americans felt regarding the continued cruel treatment, and it became too much for some African Americans to bear emotionally.

For some African Americans, the realization that they had returned to a country that still hated them led to a sense of bitterness over what appeared to have been a war fought for nothing. In his 2010 book *The African American Experience During World War II*, Neil A. Wynn illustrated this point using a quote from NAACP secretary Walter White, with White stating that by the time peacetime was in full effect, several African American families had at least one member who remembered the promises made to them during World War II, only to be bitterly disillusioned when they found themselves dealing with the likes of the Ku Klux Klan instead of being rewarded.[251] This demonstration of how African American veterans and their families were effectively abandoned by the United States government showed how extreme racism was after World War II. Wynn further explained how World War II seemed to strengthen racial hatred in both the northern and southern United States, with African American military service being actively dismissed as worthless and returning soldiers and other veterans clearly being

[250] Mark A. Huddle, ed., *Roi Ottley's World War II: The Lost Diary of an African American Journalist* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 182.

[251] Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 20.

seen as a threat to the status quo that racist Americans of European descent valued.[252] Not even Tuskegee Airmen were safe from feeling bitter over what seemed like a futile fight against oppression, as shown in a May 25, 2009 article in the *New York Times*. In the article, former Airman Julius Freeman recounted how he was so disappointed to find that his trailblazing as a fighter pilot had not lessened racism in the United States that he severed ties with his military friends, destroyed his old uniforms, and never prominently stressed his former army identity.[253] Other African Americans were more resigned to the racial hatred, with Alexander Jefferson saying that while it was very discouraging to find such aspects of life still in existence, he knew that meant he was back home.[254] Racist Americans of European descent having such an overpowering need to ensure that African Americans were kept on the periphery of society illustrated how even after the latter had proved their worth in World War II, it would still be an uphill battle for equality on the home front, with multiple forms of racism being used against African Americans.

Some forms of racism took on less violent but equally unsubtle forms, with a *New York Times* article published on December 12, 1945 describing African American opposition to forceful conscription into the military for future service, with African Americans wanting to prevent extending military forces based on Jim Crow beliefs as well as pointing out how such a

---

[252] Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 20.

[253] Anne Barnard, "Tuskegee Airmen Embrace their Past: Long Unrecognized, but Now Celebrated," *New York Times*, May 25, 2009, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Ftuskegee-airmen-embrace-their-past%2Fdocview%2F1030622579%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[254] Alexander Jefferson, and Lewis H. Carlson, *Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman and POW, Revised Edition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 118.

practice went against past American policy.[255] Jim Crowism being omnipresent to the point that African Americans could be forced to serve in the Army further illustrated how much power it had in the United States, which also made life hard for those who had come out of World War II damaged. In his 2003 article "'Enabled Courage': Race, Disability, and Black World War II Veterans in Postwar America," Robert F. Jefferson explained that after Henry Williams attempted to claim the compensation benefits he was rightfully owed by the Veteran Association, he was denied not only by them but by other organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, leaving Williams and other disabled African American veterans with no choice but to start their own disabled veterans' group.[256] The fact that Williams was forced to start a new disabled veterans' group with other African Americans showed how much they were despised by their own country, and this racial hatred had found other ways to infiltrate their civilian lives.

Racism proved to be so bad that not even families and loved ones of African Americans who were killed in action were safe from discrimination. In their 2008 article "Setting the Record Straight Regarding Lieutenants White and McCullin, Tuskegee Airmen," Joseph D. Caver and his co-authors described how in the spring of 1946, Sherman White, Sr., and his wife Nettie received an invitation from the segregated Civitan Club to attend a cenotaph dedication for Montgomery County, Alabama soldiers who had died in World War II, which would have

[255] "Negro Group Excepts: Report on Military Training Held 'Entirely Unwarranted'," *New York Times*, December 12, 1945, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-group-excepts%2Fdocview%2F107116592%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[256] Robert F. Jefferson, "'Enabled Courage': Race, Disability, and Black World War II Veterans in Postwar America," *The Historian* 65, no. 5 (2003): 1102, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24452485.

included their son, Sherman, Jr.[257] Unfortunately, the invitation proved meaningless as the couple's status as African Americans meant they were denied seats and would have been forced to stand, prompting the Whites to leave before the ceremony began, and there was never a public apology issued for the racist treatment.[258] Not even official histories on World War II were safe from racist bias, as shown in Daniel L. Haulman's 2010 article "The Tuskegee Airmen in Combat." Haulman specifically described how in the first few years after the war's end, historians outright ignored the Tuskegee Airmen's combat record, with historical writings not mentioning the only African American fighter pilots or the achievements of squadrons within the Airmen such as the 332nd Fighter Group and the 99th Fighter Squadron.[259] Racial hatred was so strong in the United States even over a year after World War II ended that other military African Americans were still not immune to potential harm. This point was best shown in a November 12, 1946 letter sent to the assistant to the Secretary of War Marcus Ray by Major Samuel L. Ransom, who not only reported that a group of African Americans stationed at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin had been receiving so much hate that there was concern that all of the tension present could erupt into violence.[260] Racism being so strong that even northerners of European descent were hateful showed just how inescapable it was even after African Americans proved themselves in World War II. This seemingly hopeless battle against racism proved to be the breaking point for some African American veterans.

---

[257] Joseph D. Caver, Jerome A. Ennels, and Wesley Phillips Newton. "Setting the Record Straight Regarding Lieutenants White and McCullin, Tuskegee Airmen," Air Power History 55, no. 3 (2008): 8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275019.

[258] Ibid, 9.

[259] Daniel L. Haulman, "The Tuskegee Airmen in Combat," *Air Power History* 57, no. 3 (2010): 18, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275921.

[260] Phillip McGuire, ed., *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 182.

For some African Americans returning home from World War II, the increased racism eventually became too much to bear. Influenced by their wartime experiences, some African Americans decided that the dream of equality in the United States would never come to pass and instead abandoned America in favor of Europe, where they had been treated with a substantially greater level of respect than they could have ever hoped to have experienced in their original country.[261] The fact some African Americans resorted to uprooting themselves to live on another continent illustrated how unbearable racism had become by the time World War II had ended, and this point was further illustrated in Frank E. G. Weil's 1947 article "The Negro in the Armed Forces." Weil specifically drew attention to how the percentage of African Americans who had applied or were then-currently applying for discharge overseas was about three times as high as the percentage of veterans of European descent.[262] The greater number of African Americans leaving the United State for Europe was a demonstration of not only how severe racism still was in America, but also how much these individuals' hopes of equality due to their wartime performance was shattered by this racial intolerance. Interestingly, however, the desire of some African Americans to abandon the United States for Europe seemed to be foolhardy in some regards, with John H. Morrow's 2010 article "Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers' Stories" showing how native Europeans were just as discriminatory towards their citizens of African descent as America. Morrow specifically mentioned at one point how in contrast to French Africans being placed prominently in their parade celebrating victory in World War I,

[261] Kaffia Jones, "The Experiences of World War II U.S. American Expatriate Veterans of African Descent," (PhD diss., Pasadena, Saybrook University, 2010), 2, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fexperiences-world-war-ii-u-s-american-expatriate%2Fdocview%2F753321372%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[262] Frank E. G. Weil, "The Negro in the Armed Forces," *Social Forces* 26, no. 1 (1947): 98. https://doi.org/10.2307/2572611.

France's government decided not to give anything besides limited recognition of the Africans' achievements during the victory celebrations after World War II ended.[263] Despite this European racism, it was apparent that not all of Europe followed these beliefs. In his 2017 book *Jim Crow Goes to War: The African-American Military Experience in the Second World War*, Benjamin Jacobs described how many British not only objected to the United States Army's enforcing of racial separation and rotating privileges based on race, but also how some Americans of European descent were determined to pass these racist beliefs to foreign lands.[264] Overall, Europe certainly seemed the better alternative for African Americans who had given up on equality in the United States, but others were not as willing to cave in to racial hatred.

Despite the hardships that had convinced some African Americans to seek better opportunities in Europe, others chose to stay in the United States, refusing to let the racial hatred they were exposed to get in the way of bettering themselves. Some African Americans who were still overseas after World War II ended chose to persevere, with Myrtle Rhoden of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion saying how the unit had become a tight knit group by 1946 and were determined to deal with the backlog of mail in France before heading home.[265] Other African Americans also got their chance for a better life as the war ended, such as in the case of Merrill Ross. Although Ross was ill by the time of the interview conducted on June 14, 2011, requiring his wife Barbara to do most of the talking, she explained that when they first met each other, she considered them both fortunate that World War II ended before Ross could be

[263] John H. Morrow, "Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers' Stories," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (2010): 17, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27895945.

[264] Benjamin Jacobs, *Jim Crow Goes to War: The African-American Military Experience in the Second World War* (Monee: Benjamin Jacobs, 2017), 39.

[265] Brenda L. Moore, *To Serve My Country, to Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACS Stationed Overseas During World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 120.

deployed overseas, allowing him to be honorably discharged and leading to the two getting married and starting a family.[266] Ross' ability to start a new life after World War II ended would prove to be a pattern for African American veterans as they returned home.

Other African Americans who left the army after World War II ended also used the opportunity to move on with their civilian lives, as was the case of Harts Morrison Brown. As reported in a July 6, 2011 article of *The Baltimore Sun*, it was described how after serving in the Tuskegee Airmen as part of the ground crew, Brown was discharged in 1945 with two Bronze Stars, and afterwards enrolled at Temple University, where he would eventually earn a bachelor's degree in 1950.[267] A similar instance was true of Edgar Law, who in a July 30, 2012 article of the *Daily News* recalled how after his decision to end his military career after Japan surrendered, he progressed through life to earn a degree in architecture at Howard University on the GI Bill before moving to California and having a family, as well as working in city planning.[268] The ability to start a family after World War II could also be seen in a September 13, 2011 interview with Leroy Rolfe, who recounted how he married his wife Leodis on November 10, 1946, and would go on to have five children with her.[269] A July 12, 2011 interview with Robert Reed further illustrated the African Americans' will to persevere, as he recounted that

---

[266] Merrill Ross, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Merrill Ross," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1434.

[267] Frederick N. Rasmussen, "Harts M. Brown: World War II Vet and Management Consultant Led the Way in Preservation of Howard County's African-American Past," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 6, 2011, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fharts-m-brown%2Fdocview%2F875255655%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[268] "Valor and Faith Breaking Racial Barriers: Edgar Law Recalls Life as One of the First Black Marines and Role in World War II," *Daily News*, July 30, 2012, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fvalor-faith-breaking-racial-barriers-edgar-law%2Fdocview%2F1030144585%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[269] Leroy Rolfe, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Leroy Rolfe," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1433.

after doing multiple jobs in his native Topeka, Kansas, he left for Kansas City to attend Washburn College in 1946 using his GI Bill before transferring to Kansas University two years later and earning a degree in psychology.[270] Some African Americans simply returned to what their lives were before World War II, with Charles Black returning to the job he had left behind when he was drafted into the military after being discharged from Iwo Jima in 1946.[271] Whether it was starting a family or earning an education, African American veterans were able to lead fulfilling lives despite the racism that still hounded them.

Some African Americans who left the army would go on to become world famous in their civilian lives, such as Jackie Robinson. During his time serving in World War II, it was known that Robinson fought hard against racism, and his courage and fierceness undoubtedly played a part in making him and his uniform number 42 legendary in the world of baseball.[272] Even African American allies of European descent showed their ability to support African Americans after World War II. In his 2015 article "Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen," Daniel L. Haulman described how after World War II ended, longtime Tuskegee ally Noel Parrish continued to support African American aviation in the United States Army Air Corps, eventually writing a thesis advocating for complete racial integration of the Air Force while he was a student at the Air Command and Staff College at Air

[270] Robert Reed, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Robert Reed," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1432.

[271] Clarence E. Willie, *African American Voices from Iwo Jima: Personal Accounts of the Battle* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 109.

[272] U.S. Army Airborne & Special Operations Museum. "Jackie Robinson's Career in the Army." Accessed June 1, 2022. https://www.asomf.org/jackie-robinsons-career-in-the-army/.

University in 1947.[273] Overall, African Americans who left the army after World War II proceeded to live their best lives, but that was not the only path these veterans took.

While some African Americans like Ross, Brown, and Jackson left the army after World War II was over, others chose to continue fighting for the United States despite the constant racial hatred. One African American who chose to continue his military duties was Harry Gumby, who told his story in an interview conducted on December 6, 2011. Gumby recounted how after World War II had ended, he attempted to find a normal job, but when no opportunities were available, he reenlisted in the army as part of the United States Air Force, which he served in until the Vietnam War, when Gumby decided he no longer wanted to be exposed to the brutality and bloodshed that warfare brought.[274] Gumby's willingness to continue serving for a country that actively hated people like him is an excellent demonstration of just how strong the African American spirit could be in the face of adversity. This willingness was also shown in a June 3, 2011 interview with Harvey Bayless, where he revealed he was kept in the reserve troops until his services were called for in the Korean War.[275] In addition to this continued willingness to fight for their country, other African Americans were able to look back on their experiences with fondness, such as Frank Hosendove. In a 2004 article published in the *Evansville Courier & Press*, Hosendove described in an interview that despite the constant danger to his life and the lives of his comrades that came with fighting in a war, he viewed the experience as a wonderful one that he thoroughly enjoyed, though whether that was due to meeting new friends or just

[273] Daniel L. Haulman, "Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen," *Air Power History* 62, no. 3 (2015): 47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276635.

[274] Harry Gumby, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Harry Gumby," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1431.

[275] Harvey Bayless, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with Harvey Bayless," *World War II: The African American Experience*, https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1428.

serving the United States was not made clear by Hosendove.[276] Hosendove's ability to look back on his service in World War II with pride was also evident in an interview conducted with former Tuskegee Airman Charles E. McGee in a 1999 article in *The Washington Post*. Most notably, McGee stated that as far as he was concerned, African Americans like him were born in the United States, which made them Americans just as much as others of European descent, meaning the country needed to change for the better after World War II ended.[277] Ultimately, the efforts of African Americans like Hosendove and McGee would be rewarded in a major way.

Charles McGee's belief that the United States needed to change for the better was well-founded and would eventually be vindicated by the end of the decade. In a major development, the Airmen's service record and achievements would go on to be cited as one of the key factors in convincing Harry S. Truman to finally desegregate the United States armed services in 1948.[278] Some African Americans who continued to serve in the army after World War II got to experience desegregation firsthand while out on duty, with William Tarlton recalling one time when a soldier of European descent approached him and, having evidently heard about the

[276] Patricia Swanson, "Vet Recalls 'a Wonderful Experience' Despite the Constant Danger, War Gave Him a Chance to See the World Series: Faces that Won the War this is One in a Series of Profiles of Area World War II Veterans the Courier & Press Will Publish each Day Until the May 29 Dedication of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.: [Final Edition]," *Evansville Courier & Press*, May 25, 2004, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fvet-recalls-wonderful-experience-despite-constant%2Fdocview%2F331091257%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[277] Natalie Hopkinson, "Tuskegee Airmen's Winning Ways: Group Advanced Civil Rights Cause," *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1999, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Ftuskegee-airmens-winning-ways%2Fdocview%2F1707440648%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[278] Lauren Monsen, *World War II African-American Airmen Receive Congressional Medal: Elite Group of African-American Pilots Cited for Heroic Service to Country*, Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, LLC, 2007, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Freports%2Fworld-war-ii-african-american-airmen-receive%2Fdocview%2F189974451%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

desegregation himself, said he was going to bunk with Tarlton, to which Tarlton agreed.[279] Other African Americans who had returned to civilian life eventually found the call to serve irresistible, as while Vernon Baker originally considered going to college with his GI Bill, encouragement from his sister ultimately convinced Baker to reenlist upon his commission as a 1st Lieutenant expiring.[280] The willingness of some African Americans to continue serving their country showed how strong their spirits were, as they did what was right even if others hated them for it.

Regardless of the paths African Americans took after World War II, their legacy and impact would invariably be felt by the ones they were closest too. As described in Joe Wilson, Jr.'s 2007 book *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe*, former 784th member Franklin Garrido lived well after World War II ended, with his family stating how his life "was filled with his love for family, friends and colleagues, service to his community, and country and an artistic expression that was unmistakably God-given."[281] Garrido's family's glowing testimony of him showcased the sort of character that was able and willing to do what was right, even when he was met with racial hatred from Americans of European descent. The excellence of African American combat units such as the Tuskegee Airmen eventually led President Harry S. Truman to create the President's Committee on Civil Rights in December 1946 using Executive Order 9808, and the committee subsequently started studying the issue of racism and discrimination in the United States in

[279] William Tarlton, interviewee and Deborah Dandridge, interviewer, "Interview with William Tarlton," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1435.

[280] Robert Child, *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2022), 247.

[281] Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 170.

1947.[282] Furthermore, Truman expressed his disgust towards southerners of European descent for their continued racial hatred of African Americans, saying that the former were living eighty years behind the rest of America, and the sooner they came to terms with the new reality, the better it would be for the whole country.[283] Unfortunately, it would take another decade before the new reality Truman referred to would be widely accepted by America.

As World War II reached its end in 1945, African Americans serving in the army had earned the respect of some officers of European descent due to proving their combat prowess and achieving victories. Sadly, African Americans returned to a United States that had become even more hateful towards them than when American involvement in World War II began. This increased racism shaped the perceptions of African Americans in different ways, with some growing so disillusioned that they chose to live in Europe while others did not let hatred stop them from continuing to live their best lives, hoping to make a difference for everyone in the country after World War II. Ultimately, however, the racist conflict would not abate until roughly two decades later.

[282] J. Todd Moye, *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 153.

[283] Philip Handleman, and Harry T. Stewart Jr., *Soaring to Glory: A Tuskegee Airman's Firsthand Account of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2019), 180.

Conclusion

March 29, 2007 saw an event take place that was long overdue for the participants involved. On this date, the Tuskegee Airmen were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal in Washington D.C.'s Capitol rotunda, and the writer of the article describing the ceremony described these men as ones who struggled for recognition in a segregated army but were now finally receiving their well-deserved due.[284] The fact the article's author acknowledged that the Tuskegee Airmen receiving the Congressional Gold Medal was long overdue illustrated how much physical and emotional turmoil would have led up to this moment of recognition not only for the Airmen but for all African Americans who were part of the military. This awareness also served as a sad reminder of how the African Americans' excellency in World War II was not acknowledged until a half century later.

For any African Americans who survived to experience the recognition that had been denied them in World War II, events such as the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony would have been a joyous occasion. Sadly, other African American veterans never lived to see their wartime efforts be finally recognized. As described in the introduction of his 2022 book *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II*, out of the seven African Americans who were eventually rewarded Medals of Honor for their services, four were killed in action while the other three returned home to a United States that had not changed from when

[284] Lauren Monsen, *World War II African-American Airmen Receive Congressional Medal: Elite Group of African-American Pilots Cited for Heroic Service to Country*, Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, LLC, 2007, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Freports%2Fworld-war-ii-african-american-airmen-receive%2Fdocview%2F189974451%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

they had left, with only one ultimately living to receive his Medal personally.[285] The battle for recognition and equality that had lasted since the days of American slavery had been won for the most part by the time African American veterans of World War II were rewarded for their contributions, but it did not change the harsh reality that reaching this goal had not come without a great deal of physical and emotional grief for everyone involved, with both wartime and racism contributing to this turmoil.

The trials and tribulations African Americans went through in World War II would have been evident even before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor forced the United States to enter the war against the Axis powers. Evaluating African American involvement even here, however, demonstrated the valor and resilience they were capable of in the face of adversity. For example, Doris Miller, widely regarded as the first African American to take part in World War II, demonstrated his courage in the face of adversity by engaging the Japanese forces without hesitation, gunning some of them down with the ship *West Virginia*'s machine guns.[286] This act of bravery and willingness to face potential death unflinchingly would set a pattern for African Americans once the United States declared war on Japan, with all-African American military units now famous for their contributions. Unfortunately, this loyalty and willingness to fight for America was lost on racist Americans of European descent, who were determined to keep African Americans either on the periphery of World War II or exclude them entirely. Thankfully, history would show that not all Americans of European descent were willing to needlessly hate African Americans in the army.

---

[285] Robert Child, *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2022), 14.

[286] Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay," *Negro History Bulletin* 51/57, no. 1/12 (1993): 6, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44177225.

Evaluation of the opinions of Americans of European descent on the involvement of African Americans in the military that were not based on open racism revealed two related but distinct forms of thought: those whose willingness to have African Americans in the army was based on wartime pragmatism, and those who genuinely appreciated the African American presence and wanted to fight alongside them. General George C. Marshall, despite seemingly having the best intentions in ensuring African Americans were comfortable in the army, nonetheless made misguided decisions based on racist ideals in the military, such as the notion that only southerners of European descent could effectively lead African American units because they knew how to "handle" African Americans.[287] Marshall's ultimate ignorance regarding why assigning southerners to lead African Americans would weaken such military units' effectiveness demonstrated that while some Americans of European descent tried to do what was best for the former, such desires were ultimately fueled by a combination of wartime pragmatism and racist beliefs. Thankfully, other Americans of European descent, like Noel Parrish and Eleanor Roosevelt, were not only openly supportive of African Americans in the war, but would continue to advocate for equal rights, as mentioned previously regarding Parrish's thesis on why racial integration of the Army Air Forces should be made a priority.[288] However, having allies in Americans of European descent was not enough to enact quick change for the African Americans' stance in American society, and the latter would have eventually realized that they would need to be the ones to stand up for their rights.

[287] Alexander M. Bielakowski, *Proud Warriors: African American Combat Units in World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021), 48.

[288] Daniel L. Haulman, "Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen," *Air Power History* 62, no. 3 (2015): 47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276635.

African Americans who had fought in World War II had every reason to want to enact change after their wartime experiences, but these feelings would have been fostered by what they had accomplished while the war was ongoing. These wartime African Americans came in two distinct groups: those who fought on the frontlines against the Nazis and their allies, and the noncombatants who were still active in keeping the American war machine running. The frontline African Americans included such famous groups as the Tuskegee Airmen and tank battalions like the 758th and the 786th. While held back in some regards by the racism that was virtually omnipresent in America, they would still go on to become frontrunners in the eventual creation of the Civil Rights Movement, with the Airmen especially being seen as contributing due to their impressive battle record, managing to prevent the loss of a single Allied bomber while they protected them from enemy aircraft.[289] This sort of excellence would certainly have been needed to advance the African Americans' desire for equality on the home front, and multiple letters and other communications exist that demonstrate how African Americans were willing to fight. Even African Americans who were involved in noncombat roles, such as communications or military engineers, were content with where they were, knowing they were contributing to something that could lead to change for the better in the United States. With the excellent performances of African Americans on and off the battlefield during World War II, it was little wonder why the American government began to consider integrating the armed forces. In addition to George C. Marshall, this potential integration found support in the likes of future president Dwight D. Eisenhower and Eleanor Roosevelt, who were keenly aware of the African Americans' accomplishments and knew they could be of great importance in future armed

[289] Daniel L. Haulman, "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., as a Tuskegee Airman," *Air Power History* 65, no. 3 (2018): 30 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26571141.

conflicts. Despite this recognition, it did not change the fact these African Americans returned home to a United States that was still in the grip of Jim Crowism.

For Americans of European descent who held fast to the beliefs in African American inferiority, seeing the latter people becoming successful during World War II would have undoubtedly been perceived as a threat to the status quo they had valued for nearly two centuries. While some racist Americans of European descent were content to simply keeping African Americans on the periphery of society, others decided a more violent approach was needed. 1946 saw a racist mob in rural Georgia murder African American veteran George Dorsey, his wife, and two of their friends with over 60 bullets, and there was no justice served in the aftermath.[290] Thankfully, this crime and similar incidents proved unforgivable to President Truman, who as a fellow veteran, felt African Americans were due the same respect as everyone else, which no doubt fueled his actions to make race relations better, ending a letter with "I am going to try to remedy it and if that ends up in my failure to be reelected, that failure will be in a good cause."[291] While Truman ultimately honored his ideals by desegregating the army, it would still take another decade before African Americans would truly gain a sense of equality and safety in a post-World War II America.

While their participation in World War II had allowed African Americans greater opportunities than would have been possible before the war started, it did not change the fact that it would take the rise of the Civil Rights Movement before their dreams of equality in the United States would be achieved. The actions of all-African American groups such as the Tuskegee

[290] Philip Handleman, and Harry T. Stewart Jr., *Soaring to Glory: A Tuskegee Airman's Firsthand Account of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2019), 180.

[291] Ibid, 181.

Airmen and the tank battalions certainly helped in gradually giving African Americans the courage needed to finally put their foot down regarding racism, but it was still a struggle along the way, as racist Americans of European descent were not willing to give up keeping African Americans on the periphery of society without a fight. However, the experiences of African Americans in World War II, though different in significant ways from soldiers of European descent, helped shape their perceptions of their place in the United States and made them realize equality was worth fighting for. Overall, the African American experience of World War II illustrated how world events, no matter how horrific, could potentially bring out the best in people and give them the courage needed to enact societal change for the better.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Adams, John H., interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with John H. Adams," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1427.

Barnard, Anne. "Tuskegee Airmen Embrace their Past: Long Unrecognized, but Now Celebrated." *New York Times*, May 25, 2009. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Ftuskegee-airmen-embrace-their-past%2Fdocview%2F1030622579%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Bayless, Harvey, interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with Harvey Bayless," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1428.

Britt, Donna. "Pilots Who Broke the Barrier: Tuskegee Airmen, Remembering Their Role as America's First Black Fighter Squadron Tuskegee Airmen Black Fighter Pilots." *The Washington Post*, August 12, 1989. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fpilots-who-broke-barrier%2Fdocview%2F139945645%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Bryan, Ashley. *Infinite Hope: A Black Artists' Journey from World War II to Peace*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2019.

Burris, Joe. "Remembered with Honor: Howard County Center of African American Culture to Celebrate the Service of World War II Veteran Henry Mouzon Sr." *The Baltimore Sun*, February 24, 2013. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fremembered-with-honor%2Fdocview%2F1312444055%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Carrol, Peter N, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small, eds. *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Ciabattari, Jane. "Intelligence Report: The Tuskegee Airmen Remembered." *The Washington Post*, August 6, 1995. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fintelligence-report%2Fdocview%2F903448467%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

"Distribution of Negro Personnel: Mobilization and Training Plan, 1942," The George C. Marshall Foundation, January 27, 1942. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15692.

Dryden, Charles W. *A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997.

Ellington, Charles S., interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with Charles S. Ellington," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1429.

Gooch, U.L., interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with U.L. Gooch," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1430.

Gumby, Harry, interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with Harry Gumby," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1431.

Hopkinson, Natalie. "Tuskegee Airmen's Winning Ways: Group Advanced Civil Rights Cause." *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1999. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Ftuskegee-airmens-winning-ways%2Fdocview%2F1707440648%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Huddle, Mark A. ed. *Roi Ottley's World War II: The Lost Diary of an African American Journalist*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011.

Jacobs, Milton. "Better World." *The Washington Post*, April 13, 1942. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fbetter-world%2Fdocview%2F151514321%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Jefferson, Alexander, and Lewis H. Carlson. *Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman and POW, Revised Edition*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

Marshall, George C. "Address to the Conference of Negro Newspaper Editors." Speech, Washington, DC, December 8, 1941. *The George C. Marshall Foundation*. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15687.

McGuire, Phillip, ed. *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983.

Monsen, Lauren. *World War II African-American Airmen Receive Congressional Medal: Elite Group of African-American Pilots Cited for Heroic Service to Country*. Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, LLC, 2007. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Freports%2Fworld-war-ii-african-american-airmen-receive%2Fdocview%2F189974451%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

“Negro Enlisted Personnel - Authorized Strength: Army of U.S., as of October 30, 1941,” The George C. Marshall Foundation, October 30, 1941. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15699.

"Negro Group Excepts: Report on Military Training Held 'Entirely Unwarranted'." *New York Times*, December 12, 1945. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-group-excepts%2Fdocview%2F107116592%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

"Negro Soldiers." *The Washington Post*, July 20, 1943. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-soldiers%2Fdocview%2F151640939%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

"Negro Tank Force, Cut Off, Mauls Nazis for 18 Hours." *The Sun*, March 5, 1945. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-tank-force-cut-off-mauls-nazis-18-hours%2Fdocview%2F537436999%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

"Negro Tank Outfit Stages Own 'Bastogne'." *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1945. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fnegro-tank-outfit-stages-own-bastogne%2Fdocview%2F151768231%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Overton, Winfield S. “The Negro in the American Army,” *The George C. Marshall Foundation*, August 31, 1941. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15698.

Patterson, Robert P. “Negroes in the National Defense Program,” *The George C. Marshall Foundation*, June 13, 1941. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15701.

Rasmussen, Frederick N. "Harts M. Brown: World War II Vet and Management Consultant Led the Way in Preservation of Howard County’s African-American Past." *The Baltimore Sun*, July 6, 2011. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fharts-m-brown%2Fdocview%2F875255655%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Reed, Robert, interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, “Interview with Robert Reed,” *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1432.

Rolfe, Leroy, interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, “Interview with Leroy Rolfe,” *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1433.

Ross, Merrill, interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with Merrill Ross," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1434.

Shear, Michael D. "They Fought on Two Fronts: Tuskegee Airmen Recall War with Hitler--and Jim Crow." *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1995. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fthey-fought-on-two-fronts%2Fdocview%2F903442071%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Smith, Walter B. "Allocation of Negro Units," The George C. Marshall Foundation, November 25, 1941. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15694.

Swanson, Patricia. "Vet Recalls 'a Wonderful Experience' Despite the Constant Danger, War Gave Him a Chance to See the World Series: Faces that Won the War this is One in a Series of Profiles of Area World War II Veterans the Courier & Press Will Publish each Day Until the May 29 Dedication of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.: [Final Edition]." *Evansville Courier & Press*, May 25, 2004, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fvet-recalls-wonderful-experience-despite-constant%2Fdocview%2F331091257%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Tape 17 - Demobilization problems; 1945; African-American soldiers; relations with FDR, *George C. Marshall: Interviews and Reminiscences for Forrest C. Pogue*.

Tarlton, William, interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with William Tarlton," *World War II: The African American Experience*. https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1435.

Temple, Frederick C., interviewee and Dandridge, Deborah, interviewer, "Interview with Frederick C. Temple," *World War II: The African American Experience.* https://wwii.lib.ku.edu/items/show/1436.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 3, *"The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941 – May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 9 – 10.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 3, *"The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941 - May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 406 – 407.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3, *"The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941 - May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 504 – 505.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3, *"The Right Man for the Job," December 7, 1941 - May 31, 1943* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 522.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 151.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 155.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 162–163.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 354–355.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 355–356.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 543–544.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 4, *"Aggressive and Determined Leadership," June 1, 1943–December 31, 1944* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 639–640.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 49–50.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 288–289.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 289–290.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 322–323.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 330–331.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 297–298.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981–). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 306.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 448 – 449.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 449.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 490 – 492.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, "*We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 518 – 519.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2, *"We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 525 – 526.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2*, "We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 526 – 527.

The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, ed. Larry I. Bland, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Lexington, Va.: The George C. Marshall Foundation, 1981 –). Electronic version based on *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 2*, "We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 666.

Twaddle, Harry L. "Negro Army Personnel," The George C. Marshall Foundation, January 2, 1942. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15693.

Twaddle, Harry L. “Negro Army Personnel,” The George C. Marshall Foundation, February 4, 1942. https://library.marshallfoundation.org/Portal/Default/en-US/RecordView/Index/15691.

U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee on Post-War Military Police. *Universal Military Training, Part 1: Hearings Before the Select Committee on Postwar Military Policy, 79th Cong.* 1st sess., June 4-9, 11-16, 19, 1945. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1945-pmp-0001?accountid=12085.

U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Military Affairs. *Manpower (National War Service Bill), Part 2: Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs, 78th Cong.* 1st sess., March 4, 1943. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1943-mas-0031?accountid=12085.

U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Military Affairs. *Manpower (National War Service Bill), Part 16: Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs, 78th Cong.* 1st sess., April 1, 1943. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/congressional/docview/t29.d30.hrg-1943-mas-0045?accountid=12085.

"Valor and Faith Breaking Racial Barriers: Edgar Law Recalls Life as One of the First Black Marines and Role in World War II." *Daily News*, July 30, 2012. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fvalor-faith-breaking-racial-barriers-edgar-law%2Fdocview%2F1030144585%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Secondary Sources

Articles

Bailey, Beth, and David Farber. “The ‘Double-V’ Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power.” *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (1993): 817–43. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3788782.

Barksdale, Sarah Ayako. "Prelude to a Revolution: African-American World War II Veterans, Double Consciousness, and Civil Rights 1940-1955." PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Caver, Joseph D., Jerome A. Ennels, and Wesley Phillips Newton. “Setting the Record Straight Regarding Lieutenants White and McCullin, Tuskegee Airmen.” *Air Power History* 55, no. 3 (2008): 4–11. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275019.

Cunningham, Roger. “761st Tank Battalion.” *On Point* 9, no. 3 (2004): 16. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44610265.

Haulman, Daniel L. “Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., as a Tuskegee Airman.” *Air Power History* 65, no. 3 (2018): 27–32. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26571141.

Haulman, Daniel L. “Ivory and Ebony: White Officer Foes and Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen.” *Air Power History* 62, no. 3 (2015): 42–49. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276635.

Haulman, Daniel L. “The Tuskegee Airmen in Combat.” *Air Power History* 57, no. 3 (2010): 14–21. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275921.

Jefferson, Robert F. “‘Enabled Courage’: Race, Disability, and Black World War II Veterans in Postwar America.” The Historian 65, no. 5 (2003): 1102–24. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24452485.

Jones, Kaffia. "The Experiences of World War II U.S. American Expatriate Veterans of African Descent." PhD diss., Pasadena, Saybrook University, 2010. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fexperiences-world-war-ii-u-s-american-expatriate%2Fdocview%2F753321372%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

Kersten, Andrew E. “African Americans and World War II.” *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 3 (2002): 13–17. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163520.

Leiker, James N. “Freedom, Equality, and Justice for All?: The U.S. Army and the Reassessment of Race Relations in World War II.” *Army History*, no. 82 (2012): 30–41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26296201.

Morrow, John H. “Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers’ Stories.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (2010): 12–25. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27895945.

Neverdon-Morton, Cynthia. “African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay.” *Negro History Bulletin* 51/57, no. 1/12 (1993): 6–14. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44177225.

Reiss, Matthias. “Solidarity among ‘Fellow Sufferers’: African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II.” *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 531–61. doi:10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.4.0531.

U.S. Army Airborne & Special Operations Museum. “Jackie Robinson’s Career in the Army.” Accessed June 1, 2022. https://www.asomf.org/jackie-robinsons-career-in-the-army/.

Vaughan, David K. “The World War II Training Experiences of the Tuskegee Airmen at Oscoda Army Air Field.” *Air Power History* 63, no. 4 (2016): 25–40. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26276812.

Weil, Frank E. G. “The Negro in the Armed Forces.” *Social Forces* 26, no. 1 (1947): 95–98. https://doi.org/10.2307/2572611.

Wilson, Dale E. “The Army’s Segregated Tank Battalions in World War II.” *Army History*, no. 32 (1994): 14–17. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26304245.

Woods, Louis Lee, II. "Messmen no More: African -American Sailors on the USS Mason in World War II." PhD diss., Washington, D.C., Howard University, 2006. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Books

Bielakowski, Alexander M. *Proud Warriors: African American Combat Units in World War II*. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021.

Child, Robert. *Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2022.

DiNicolo, Gina M. *The Black Panthers: A Story of Race, War, and Courage: the 761st Tank Battalion in World War II*. Yardley: Westholme, 2014.

German, Kathleen M. *Promises of Citizenship: Film Recruitment of African Americans in World War II.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017.

Guglielmo, Thomas A. *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America’s World War II Military*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Handleman, Philip, and Harry T. Stewart Jr. *Soaring to Glory: A Tuskegee Airman’s Firsthand Account of World War II*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2019.

Jacobs, Benjamin. *Jim Crow Goes to War: The African-American Military Experience in the Second World War*. Monee: Benjamin Jacobs, 2017.

Moore, Brenda L. *To Serve My Country, to Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACS Stationed Overseas During World War II*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

Moye, J. Todd. *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Willie, Clarence E. *African American Voices from Iwo Jima: Personal Accounts of the Battle*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010.

Wilson, Jr., Joe. *The 758th Tank Battalion in World War II: The U.S. Army’s First All African American Tank Unit*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018.

Wilson, Jr., Joe. *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007.

Wynn, Neil A. *The African American Experience During World War II*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.