

Proposal & Annotated Bibliography: Reevaluating the Civil Rights Movement: African-American Soldiers and Nazi Germany

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Proposal

I visited the Freedom Wall portion of the National World War II Memorial, which depicts one gold star for every one hundred American soldiers who lost their lives in the war. While looking at these thousands of stars, I couldn't help but wonder how many of these brave men and women were racial minorities. I recall learning in high school history classes that WWII set the groundwork for the civil rights movements because African-Americans were thrust into greater roles in society following the deployment of millions of Caucasians. I am unsure, however, how African-American soldiers were treated in the Armed Forces during this time period and whether this conduct was indicative of or influential in the protests for social justice that soon followed.

Currently, my working thesis is: To what extent did the treatment of African-American soldiers in World War II serve as a catalyst for the civil rights movement? In other words, I am curious as to whether the war fostered an environment in which all American soldiers worked together and discarded any previous racial prejudices. Perhaps the sacrifices made by black soldiers prompted Americans to realize that they deserved the same rights as whites. Or, on the contrary, maybe discriminatory treatment of black soldiers encouraged them to fight harder for equality and motivated WWII veterans to lead the civil rights movement. To be clear, I am referring to the United States Civil Rights Movement of 1954 to 1968 that resulted in African-American voting rights and other laws prohibiting segregation and racial discrimination.

I intend to answer this question by researching how African-Americans were utilized in the Armed Forces and received by their Caucasian counterparts. Relevant information I may uncover includes segregation of units by race or other harassment of African-American soldiers. To incorporate primary sources, I plan to analyze letters, articles,

and diary entries written by black soldiers in the war detailing their experiences, thoughts and feelings, and proposed solutions. In terms of secondary sources, I have already found a *Smithsonian Magazine* article that explains how soldiers retaliated against segregation in the Armed Forces and succeeded in enacting changes. Similarly, I have discovered pieces of scholarship published within the last decade in the *Journal of Negro Education* and the *American Academy of Political and Social Science* that further discuss the inferior positions assigned to African soldiers during WWII.

Annotated Bibliography

Delmont, M. (2017, August 24). Why African-American soldiers saw World War II as a two-front battle. *Smithsonian Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-african-american-soldiers-saw-world-war-ii-two-front-battle-80964616/>

1. Current magazine article
2. Delmont argues that black soldiers had trouble justifying why they should risk their lives defending America from Nazism when a lot of parallels existed between the two (i.e., blacks were treated under Jim Crow segregation similarly to Jews under Hitler). He includes numerous primary sources in the forms of related poems, letters, and articles.
3. Delmont's key points:
 - a. *The Pittsburgh Courier* along with black journalists and activists played a fundamental role in establishing and advocating for the Double Victory campaign.
 - b. Too many Americans pride themselves on defeating Hitler's racism yet forget that their own Armed Forces were segregated and black soldiers were seen as inferior.
 - c. Although the Double Victory campaign has had numerous successes, he believes that blacks are still not treated as perfect equals in modern American society.
3. This source is useful because it clearly establishes a link between the racism present in Nazi Germany and the Jim Crow laws that plagued the southern United States. It is also filled with primary sources in the form of poems and letters that I could find and use as

supporting evidence in my own argument. I could FORWARD Delmont by BORROWING his comparison and using it to argue that Double Victory was not just a choice, but a necessity for the continuation of the United States. I could COUNTER Delmont by ARGUING THE OTHER SIDE and showing that the inhumanity of slavery does not quite compare to the brutal extermination of over six million Jews.

4. This source is limited in the sense that it is concise and general, which means that it does not go into the same level of background knowledge and detail as scholarly sources. Furthermore, it focuses almost exclusively on the timeline of the Double Victory campaign but not on the conditions that forced it to come into existence in the first place.
5. Matthew Delmont is the director of and a professor in the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies at Arizona State University. The *Smithsonian Magazine* covers and chronicles developments in the fields of science, history, art, popular culture, and innovation to keep their diverse readership informed.
6. Quotations:
 - a. "There is a historical relationship between Nazism and white supremacy in the United States."
 - b. "When the United States entered WWII, African-Americans joined the fight to defeat fascism abroad. But meanwhile, the decades-long fight on the home front for equal access to employment, housing, education and voting rights continued."
 - c. "...the Double Victory campaign issued a challenge to America that remains unanswered."

Höhn, M. (2017, February 9). African-American GIs of WWII: Fighting for democracy abroad and at home. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/african-american-gis-of-wwii-fighting-for-democracy-abroad-and-at-home-71780>

1. Current news article
2. Höhn argues that the efforts of black soldiers in World War II were underappreciated, as evidenced by a lack of primary videos featuring them and celebration upon their return. However, she

believes this neglect actually motivated many black WWII veterans to join the NAACP and become influential leaders in the subsequent civil rights movement.

3. Höhn's key points:
 - a. Like the last source, she points out how many black soldiers detected hypocrisy in America's condemning Nazism while supporting Jim Crow segregation laws.
 - b. Many military personnel objected to the racial integration of troops on the grounds that it would be inefficient and lower the self-esteem of white soldiers.
 - c. Many black soldiers enjoyed serving in Post-Nazi Germany more than being home because they were freer to express their culture and not seen as so inferior.
4. This source is useful because it provides evidence for the claim that America has forgotten about the role of black soldiers in World War II. Furthermore, its unique value comes from the fact that it covers the treatment black WWII veterans received once back home and how they went on to shape the 1960s civil rights movement. I could FORWARD Höhn by EXTENDING her analysis of black WWII veterans to my own argument, in which I contend that white people were more likely to support the movement upon seeing how valiantly black people served their country. I could COUNTER Höhn by UNCOVERING VALUES and trying to pin down what exactly she means when she claims that Americans have "forgotten" the sacrifices of black soldiers.
5. This source is limited in the sense that it merely summarizes historical events without any inclusion of primary sources to include the perspectives of the time period. Additionally, it is a popular source written to be understood by the general public, which means that it lacks specific Armed Force and civil rights movement technicalities and vocabulary.
6. Maria Höhn is currently a professor and chair of history at Vassar College in New York. *The Conversation* is an independent publication that delivers academic research directly to the public. Their goal is to inform public debate with journalism that is fact-based, ethical, unbiased, and diverse.
7. Quotations:

- a. "Until the 21st century, the contributions of African-American soldiers in World War II barely registered in America's collective memory of that war."
- b. "90 percent of black troops were forced to serve in labor and supply units, rather than the more prestigious combat units."
- c. "White America was stunned to see how much black GIs enjoyed their time abroad, and how much they dreaded their return home to the U.S."
- d. "About one-third of the leaders in the civil rights movement were veterans of World War II."

Moore, C. (2011, May 23). African American legends: "Black soldiers: The unsung heroes of World War II." [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4FYIpnawHQ>

1. Recorded interview conducted by someone else
2. Moore emphasizes the heroic actions of African-American soldiers in World War II and details the trauma that they faced on a daily basis from their supposed peers. He concludes by highlighting that it is important for black people to learn the history of their ancestors because this knowledge can be used to help win the modern fight for equality.
3. Moore's key points:
 - a. Popular culture presents the notion that black servicemen were only tasked with "sweeping up," when in reality their work was critical for overall victory.
 - b. Black soldiers were sent to dangerous and unpleasant places like Australia and New Guinea first to carve out the jungles, set up docks, etc., for future use.
 - c. Many blacks saw enlisting in the Armed Forces as an opportunity to prove to white people that they are of equal ability and have equal love for their country.
4. This source is useful because it goes into great detail on specific military units and soldiers who had great achievements in World War II, yet received little acknowledgement. The value of this source being a recorded interview is that I get to hear Moore's motivation and methodology in writing the book. I could FORWARD Moore by AUTHORIZING him as an expert on the topic of black

soldiers' involvement in WWII. I could COUNTER Moore by once again DISSENTING and mustering up evidence to support the notion that black soldiers are recognized plentifully in literature.

5. This source is limited in the sense that Moore only talks about the process of making the book rather than reading and transferring the specific information in the book. It is also only a 26-minute interview, which means that many questions went unasked and Moore may have had to make his answers more concise than they actually are in reality.
6. Christopher Moore is a Senior Researcher for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and has published at least two books. Dr. Roscoe Brown, the interviewer, served in World War II as a Tuskegee airman and advocated for civil rights and better educational opportunities for people of color. He even received the NAACP Freedom Award and the Congressional Award for Service to the African-American community.
7. Quotations:
 - a. "Historians and Hollywood gave you the impression that these black soldiers were just sweeping up or something, but their work was far more crucial to the nation's cause in World War II."
 - b. "Black soldiers were stationed on New Guinea...and going there first to hack out the jungles, create airfields, create docks on the shorelines so that more ships can come...in other words, island hopping would not have occurred without the work of the [black] construction battalions"

Morrow, J. (2010). Black Africans in World War II: The soldiers' stories. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 632(1), 12-25. [doi: 10.1177/0002716210378831](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716210378831)

1. Scholarly article
2. This article's thesis is that British and French Armies also openly discriminated against African soldiers in World War II as a result of historical biases. Its methods include examining the changing role of African soldiers from WWI to WWII, comparing these trends with

America's, and then discussing the forgotten achievements of these soldiers.

3. Morrow's key points:
 - a. The preconceptions that Europeans held about the inferior abilities and intelligences of Africans were paralleled in the United States during this time.
 - b. Historians have overlooked the achievements of African soldiers in World War II for far too long while celebrating equal acts of bravery among white soldiers.
 - c. Victory in WWII instilled in many African soldiers the feeling that they deserved equality and gave them the confidence they needed to demand and fight for it.
4. This source is useful in the sense that it provides a more global context on the treatment of Africans in military apparatuses. These findings are also indicative of America's sentiment towards black people because it chose to ally with nations who treated them as inferior. I could FORWARD Morrow by EXTENDING his scrutiny of British and French Armies to my argument about the treatment of African-Americans in the United States Armed Forces. I could COUNTER Morrow by ARGUING THE OTHER SIDE and asserting that the accomplishments of black soldiers do receive their fair share of celebration in academic literature (with examples to assert this position).
5. A clear limitation of this source is that it mainly focuses on the treatment of Africans in the British and French Armies, which is largely irrelevant to my intended topic. Moreover, Morrow does not cite many of his sources, which leaves me unable to verify his claims and conduct further research on these issues for myself.
6. Dr. John Morrow, Jr., is currently a professor of modern European history at the University of Georgia. His areas of research expertise include European history, war and diplomacy, and World War I. The *American Academy of Political and Social Science* is headquartered at the University of Pennsylvania and publishes research on contemporary political, economic, and social issues in the hopes of informing public policy. This article contributes to the ongoing conversation about the role of racial minorities in global conflicts

by bringing to light a number of African soldier achievements that he feels have gone unnoticed in popular culture.

7. Quotations:

- a. "The British and French attempts to omit, diminish, or discredit the achievements of African soldiers stemmed from their intent to ignore or limit African demands for equality and independence, in the same fashion that white Americans' refusal to acknowledge the combat service of African-American soldiers was intended to keep the latter 'in their place' and forestall the granting of equal rights to black citizens under the law."
- b. "The African soldiers epitomize the 'forgotten soldiers' of that 'forgotten' struggle, just as their French African and African American counterparts became the "forgotten" soldiers of their armies. Historians are now in the process of rescuing these men from obscurity so that history might reflect their very real contributions to the allied war effort in the Second World War."

Rollins, J. (1944, August 13). Attack on Black WACs [Letter to the editor]. *The Pittsburgh Courier*. Retrieved from http://oberlinlibstaff.com/omeka_hist244/items/show/248

1. Primary source
2. James Rollins, Jr., seeks to notify the American public of the horribly degrading acts being committed against black servicewomen in Tennessee with the goal of inciting outrage that will bring punishment to the perpetrators and future protocols against such behavior.
3. Key points:
 - a. This letter was sent to the newspaper by James Rollins, Jr., but featured an account from one of his informants who was a member of the targeted group.
 - b. *The Pittsburgh Courier* previously published a similar story about discrimination in Kentucky, which prompted a demand for justice and rectified the situation.
 - c. White paratroopers repeatedly trespassed into female barracks and forcefully took black boys into the woods and abandoned

them. As a result, the female servicewomen were afraid to sleep and were constantly protecting themselves.

4. This source is useful in the sense that it grants me access into how African-American soldiers felt about being treated as inferior to whites. It provides details that no scholar could recreate, and the risk taken to make this information public illustrates the extent to which they were desperate for justice. I could FORWARD Rollins by AUTHORIZING him as someone who lived through World War II and saw the bigotry firsthand. I could COUNTER Rollins by ARGUING THE OTHER SIDE, which may contend that he exaggerated these accounts to garner more sympathy from the American people and expedite the granting of equal rights.
5. This source is limited in the sense that it only discusses the events that took place on a camp in Tennessee, which may not be indicative of the black experience in more historically tolerant U.S. locations. Additionally, this source was intended to be read by the public, which may have made it a bit more emotional than a diary entry, for example.
6. This letter was written in August of 1944, which is quite close to the end of World War II, so perhaps it cannot speak to the treatment of black soldiers throughout the entire war. Also, it was published in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, which was one of the most widely read and influential African-American newspapers in the United States during this time. I cannot find much information on Rollins himself or his alleged female informant.
7. Quotations:
 - a. "I am writing you in regard to the situation now existing in Camp Forrest, Tennessee; a situation which I think could be greatly relieved through the effort of your paper."
 - b. "My informant who is an enlisted member of the detachment, has written me in several letters about the situation there. I am certain that you will feel as I do; that the situation is intolerable for the women, and a disgrace to the Army."
 - c. "Well last night about 25 paratroopers came in our area and grabbed two colored boys and started dragging them down

the road... after that round we stayed up all night, piling our footlockers to the door and stood guard until morning."

Thompson, J. (1942, January 31). Should I sacrifice to live "half-American"? [Letter to the editor]. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 3. Retrieved from <http://blackquotidian.com/anvc/blackquotidian/media/PC%201-31-42%20-%20Thompson%20letter%20to%20Editor.pdf>

1. Primary source
2. Within this letter Thompson struggles with the notion of risking his life to defend a country that does not even grant him the most basic of civil liberties. He proposes the launch of a Double Victory campaign that pledges to fight against the evil overseas while simultaneously standing up for racial justice back on the home front.
3. Thompson's key points:
 - a. The same level of passion exerted in fighting foreign enemies should be channeled to fight the discrimination that African-Americans face at home.
 - b. America may not be a country worth defending if future generations of black people are subjected to the same racism that previous generations were.
 - c. Thompson encourages black soldiers to keep fighting for America because he believes that it will change for the better if enough people call for such change.
4. This source is useful in the sense that it grants a unique look into the innermost thoughts of a black soldier serving in World War II. This source shows me the struggle of a man who is discovering firsthand the hypocrisy of America and allows me to trace the Double Victory campaign back to its origins. I could FORWARD Thompson by BORROWING his term "half-American" and applying it to the ways many black soldiers were made to feel inferior to their white counterparts. I could COUNTER Thompson by ARGUING THE OTHER SIDE and asserting that fighting for equality undermined the fight for victory.
5. This source is limited in the sense that it does not specifically address the discrimination that black soldiers were facing or how the Double Victory campaign sought to achieve racial equality. It

was also created with the intent of being published in a major newspaper, which generates questions about its ulterior motives and accuracy.

6. This letter was published in *The Pittsburgh Courier* in 1942, which was during the heart of the war and soon after America's entry into it. The credentials of *The Pittsburgh Courier* are discussed above. This letter is considered the launch of the Double Victory campaign, which encouraged thousands of black soldiers to demand the same rights as whites.
7. Quotations:
 - a. "I suggest that while we keep defense and victory in the forefront that we don't lose sight of our fight for true democracy at home."
 - b. "The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies within."
 - c. "This should not and would not lessen our efforts to bring this conflict to a successful conclusion; but should and would make us stronger to resist these evil forces which threaten us. America could become united as never before and become truly the home of democracy."

White, G. (2012). "I am teaching some of the boys": Chaplain Robert Boston Dokes and Army testing of black soldiers in World War II. *Journal of Negro Education*, 81(3), 200-217. Retrieved from www.journalnegroed.org/

1. Scholarly article
2. White claims that Army Chaplain Robert Dokes is a hero for working to reform the institutional segregation that African-American soldiers experienced in World War II. His methods of research are multi-archival in the sense that he references numerous works of prior scholarship in conjunction with presenting personal letters from black soldiers.
3. White's key points:
 - a. With an emphasis on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT), he argues that Army assessments were used to deny benefits to African-American soldiers.

- b. He explains how Chaplain Dokes empowered black soldiers and overcame the systematic racism by giving classes to his battalions on how to pass the tests.
 - c. Lastly, White expands upon these anecdotes into the larger topic of institutionalized racism in the U.S. Armed Forces and the modern presence of standardized tests in education, which may carry hidden limitations.
4. This source is useful in the sense that it provides a concrete example of how the U.S. government and military were able to justify their discriminatory behavior towards African-Americans. It also focuses on the story and actions of one man in particular, which may allow me to narrow the focus of my essay rather than trying to comment on the experiences of every black soldier. I could FORWARD White by BORROWING his criticisms of the AGCT and using them to support my argument that racism against African-American soldiers was systematic rather than an unintended consequence. I could COUNTER White by UNCOVERING VALUES in regards to why he considers Chaplain Robert Dokes a hero (merely because of his efforts or because of his success?).
5. A limitation of this source is that it focuses too narrowly on the story of Chaplain Robert Dokes, whose story may be an anomaly from the majority of African-American soldiers. Furthermore, it makes several references to conflicts previous to World War II and to the development of the American eugenics movement, which are both irrelevant to my topic.
6. White is currently an associate professor in the department of history at the City University of New York. His areas of research expertise include African-American history and American law and society. *The Journal of Negro Education* is published by Howard University and analyzes the educational problems African Americans face in the United States, with the goal of inspiring solutions.
7. Quotations:
 - a. “As Table 1 demonstrates, the scores of White soldiers fell into a relatively symmetrical bell curve, with the largest proportion of White test-takers collecting in Category III. In contrast, the scores of Black soldiers represented a steep

downslope, with the largest proportion grouping in Category V.”

- b. “Rather than end racial segregation in order to efficiently use its limited resources, the military maintained racial segregation and responded to the dilemma by lowering the quota for Black inductees or disproportionately deferring Blacks for ‘mental deficiency.’”
- c. “[Dokes] provided supplementary training for his men and some of the soldiers went on to qualify for, and succeed in, Officers Candidate School, thereby proving that intelligence was dynamic and socially constructed. Because he operated from the presumption that Black and White soldiers were intellectual equals, Dokes likely saw in the test results the racial disparities in access to formal education, general societal knowledge, and quality of the educational environment that resulted from racial discrimination, segregation, and extralegal violence. His efforts whether preaching, teaching, or counseling seemed to indicate that Black soldiers needed more, not fewer resources in order to reach their potential precisely because of the overweening power of White privilege.”

The White House (1948, July 26). *Executive Order 9981: Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces*. Retrieved from <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=84>

1. Government website
2. This executive order requires that the Armed Forces begin integrating troops and treating each person equally regardless of their skin color, national origin, and so on. Additionally, it creates the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, which investigates the various policies of the Armed Forces to ensure that racial discrimination is not being hidden underneath bureaucracy.
3. President Truman's key points:

- a. The democratic practices that are valued on the American home front should be extended to the men and women who risk their lives to defend it.
 - b. Full cooperation between the federal government and the Committee is expected. This includes the various secretaries of Defense, Army, Navy, and Air Force.
 - c. This order and the Committee can only be terminated by another executive order.
4. This source is useful in the sense that it symbolizes a change in the stance of the federal government towards the treatment of African-Americans in the Armed Forces. I can use this document as evidence that the efforts of black soldiers in World War II did have some impact on the development of the civil rights movement that soon followed. Thus, I could FORWARD Truman by ILLUSTRATING that the resistance of black soldiers to institutionalized racism did enact substantial societal changes. I could COUNTER Truman by DISSENTING and asserting that this executive order was done for the sake of image or to appease African-Americans and prevent them from demanding total equality.
5. This source is limited in the sense that it only reflects the sentiment of President Harry Truman and not the entirety of the federal government or military complex. It was also signed three years after the completion of World War II, which means its impact can only be seen on subsequent wars rather than in the experiences of black soldiers in WWII.
6. Our Documents is an initiative that was launched by President Bush in 2002 with the goal of creating a publicly accessible digital archive of the country's top historical documents. The collection has been added to over time with a specific focus on creating outlines that can be used by teachers to educate students on the development of America's democracy.
7. Quotations:
 - a. "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the Armed Services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."

- b. “The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to examine into the rules, procedures and practices of the Armed Services in order to determine in what respect such rules, procedures and practices may be altered or improved with a view to carrying out the policy of this order.”

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This article discusses the often forgotten contributions of black African infantry to the French and British war efforts from Europe to Asia during the Second World War. It traces the relationship between black African soldiers and their imperial rulers as it evolved over the course of two global conflicts from 1914 to 1945. The article points out how racial preconceptions about the "inferior" abilities and intelligence of Africans paralleled white Americans' prejudices against African-Americans and how the British and French attempted to systematically omit, diminish, or discredit the achievements of African soldiers.

Keywords: African infantry; soldiers; King's African Rifles; Tirailleurs Sénégalais; Second World War

Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers' Stories

By JOHN H. MORROW JR.

Essays on the topic of Africa in the Second World War, such as those in Africa since 1933, the eighth volume (1991) of the UNESCO *General History of Africa* edited by Ali A. Mazrui, devote precious little space to the experience of the African soldiers who fought on the various battlefields of the costliest and most extensive conflict in human history. Yet the subject of infantry such as the famed *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* of French West Africa and the King's African Rifles of British East Africa, who fought valiantly in both the First and the Second World Wars, merits sharper focus. These soldiers shed their blood for the right to equal treatment under their respective colonial regimes and, later, for the independence of their respective African nations from the colonial yoke.

Their struggle, in fact, paralleled that of the African-American soldiers who fought in both world wars to prove that black Americans merited the equality that white Americans denied.

*John H. Morrow Jr. is Franklin Professor of History at the University of Georgia. He specializes in the history of modern Europe and of warfare and society. His most recent book is *The Great War, An Imperial History* (Routledge 2004). He is currently working on a manuscript on the Second World War.*

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The United States in World War II: Historical Debates about America at War

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ATTACK ON BLACK WACS: LETTER TO P. L. PRATTIS 8 JULY 1944

Title	Attack on Black WACS: Letter to P. L. Prattis 8 July 1944
Description	Letter to the editor of the Pittsburgh Courier, P. L. Prattis, from Rollins W. James, on the behalf of black WACS stationed near white paratroopers.
Creator	Rollins W. James, Jr.
Source	
Collection	Race Relations Group
Citation	Rollins W. James, Jr., "Attack on Black WACS: Letter to P. L. Prattis 8 July 1944." The United States in World War II: Historical Debates about America at War, accessed April 8, 2018, http://oberlinlibstaff.com/omeka_hist244/items/show/248 .

First Page of Source 6.

Should I Sacrifice To Live 'Half-American?': Suggest Double VV for ...
Thompson, James G
The Pittsburgh Courier (1911-1950); Jan 31, 1942; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Pittsburgh Courier
pg. 3

Should I Sacrifice To Live 'Half-American?'

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

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

DEAR EDITOR:

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

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

First Page of Source 7.

"I Am Teaching Some of The Boys:" Chaplain Robert Boston Dokes and Army Testing of Black Soldiers in World War II

George White, Jr. York College-CUNY

African Americans have served in the United States Armed Forces in nearly every conflict in the nation's history. However, the State—through official government policy, or the decisions of military commanders, or statements by prominent civilians—was rarely comfortable with Black military service. Throughout most of American history, the various branches of the military practiced racial segregation against Black troops. Despite the fact that more than one million Blacks served in the military during World War II, the practice of segregation persisted and channelled the overwhelming majority of Black service personnel into non-combat service units. "I Am Teaching Some of the Boys" is based on the experiences of an African American minister-turned Army Chaplain, Reverend Robert Boston Dokes, who defied this tradition.

During World War II, officials relied on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) to determine which soldiers served in which capacities. The AGCT provided consistent cause for an institution that was determined to find a rationalization for racial discrimination. The AGCT was part of a larger assessment environment that controlled promotions, pay grades, and other benefits of military service. Moreover, the frustration of White privilege through testing, especially in a war with Nazi Germany, served as an important means of refuting Black claims to full citizenship rights. This article, based on multi-archival research, will address the efforts of Chaplain Dokes and other reformers to help Black soldiers overcome these institutional limits. Dokes' experience with several Black battalions underscores the impact of the Army's testing regime on Black troops.

Keywords: racism, military, educational testing, African American history

Sitting in a small office under palm trees and anary skies, a Black minister made a long-distance confession to his spouse. Chaplain Robert Boston Dokes joined the Army in May 1941, months before the patriotic fervor in response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor because there were very few Black chaplains serving the spiritual needs of their brothers-in-arms. The shortage of Black chaplains throughout his service and, coupled with racial discrimination against Black service members, Dokes found himself performing tasks that would have been considered extraordinary for many of his peers. On the occasion of his confession, Robert's letter revealed to Carol Esther Dokes that, in addition to preaching, public speaking, and meeting with local townspeople, he was "teaching some of the boys a little English and spelling each Monday" (Dokes to CC, Dokes, March 25, 1943). Although his efforts met with some success, Dokes ended his tour of duty in a military hospital, recovering from exhaustion and hypertension likely caused by the extraordinary commitment he made to Black soldiers, regardless of whether or not they were in the units to which he had been assigned (Dokes, December 29, 1945).

During World War II, military officials relied on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) to determine which soldiers would serve in specific capacities. The AGCT was a descendant of the intelligence tests used by psychologists in World War I. The AGCT was part of a larger assessment environment that controlled promotions, pay grades, and other benefits of military service. Although the Army did not explicitly claim that the AGCT was a measure of innate intelligence, this article will show that the Army used the scores from the test in a way that reinforced social stratification and racial privilege. This article also will explain how the AGCT provided a justification for the continued racialized practices in the American Armed Forces. The

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The Journal of Negro Education, 2012, Vol. 41, No. 3

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Executive Order 9981: Desegregation of the Armed Forces (1948)

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