“Asked for equality, we got integration”

The right to fight
World War II
I. WHY BLACKS SHOULD FIGHT

- Common argument around idea of fighting to show deserve rights
- January 1942 James Thompson (26 year old African-American)
  - “Like all Americans, my greatest desire at this time...is a desire to serve...my country in the most advantageous way.”
  - “I love America and am willing to die for the America I know will someday become a reality.”
- Propaganda promoted idea of Blacks doing their part
Keep him flying!
BUY WAR BONDS

Keep us flying!
BUY WAR BONDS
II. JIM CROW IN U.S. ARMED FORCES

- John Hope Franklin not wanted despite supposed need by military
- Many examples from all branches of segregation and discrimination
- Truman Committee failed to look into reports of Jim Crow in U.S. Armed Forces
III. BLACK GIs RESPOND TO JIM CROW

● Black GIs responded in many different ways
● **Winfred Lynn** (June 1942 letter)
  ○ Stated was ready to serve but unless assured would be in a non-segregated unit he would refuse to report for induction
● **Tuskegee Airmen at Freeman Field** (April 1945)
  ○ 57 officers arrested for organizing a non-violent demonstration against segregated officers’ clubs

IV. IMPACT
LESSON IDEAS

● 1 day on Jim Crow in Armed Forces and/or 1 day on Responses to Jim Crow in Armed Forces
  ○ Ask students to brainstorm possible responses and obstacles to responding
● Use sources to create DBQ, stations, groups (jigsaw)
  ○ Pick one or more sources to analyze (see NARA)
  ○ *The Crisis* articles can be used to show conditions in Army & Navy, any change over time?
● Tie to today with discussion of inclusion in military today
  ○ See session from Symposium ("The Future of Inclusion")
    ■ Start at 39:40
OTHER RESOURCES

- *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America’s World War II Military* by Thomas A. Guglielmo
  - especially Chapter 6
- *The Double V: How Wars, Protest, and Harry Truman Desegregated America’s Military* by Rawn James, Jr.
- *The Watchdog: How the Truman Committee Battled Corruption and Helped Win World War Two* by Steve Drummond
- Truman Civil Rights Symposium ("Black Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces")
Korean War
Korean War: Integration (1950-1954)

- **U.S. Air Force:** Newly formed
  - Integrated units/policies reflected from the beginning.
  - Ignored Jim Crow laws on base.
- **U.S. Navy:**
  - Many restricted to stewards/messmen
- **U.S. Marines:**
  - Encouraged retirement/Stewards following World War II
  - 1952-integrated offset Korean War losses
- **U.S. Army:** Last to integrate-resistant
  - 1950-100,000 African-American soldiers/14 All-Black units
    - Ended enlistment cap in 1950 (10%)
Integrating the U.S. Army

- General MacArthur-impeded integration movement (1950-1951)
- General Matthew Ridgeway-integrated Far East Command (1951-1953)
- All-Black 24th Infantry Regiment “Buffalo Soldiers” (Act of Congress, 1866)
  - Major Gen. William B. Kean request Army to disband
    - Based on claims: untrustworthy & incapable/racial prejudice
    - Majority Officers were white
  - Inactivated Oct. 1, 1951: reassigned to integrated units
    - “It took the Chinese to integrate the American Army.”
  - 8th Army integrated the All-Black 3rd Battalion, 9th Infantry & 64th Tank Battalion
Integrating the U.S. Army

Captain Alvin Vincent Blount, Jr.

- 1st black physician 825th M.A.S.H., Fort Bragg
  - 10 miles from the 38th Parallel
  - 1,936 admissions/11 deaths (99.5% survival rate)
    - 90 surgical cases a week
  - Chief of Surgery

- Simkins vs. Moses H. Cone Hospital (Greensboro, N.C.)
  - Challenged public federal funds used in segregated hospitals
  - 1st surgeon to operate at Moses H. Cone Hospital (1964)
Integration the U.S. Navy

- **Ensign Jesse L. Brown-Aviator**
  - 1st African-American Navy Aviator-1948**
  - Flew F4U Corsair
  - Battle of Chosin Reservoir, North Korea
    - Killed in Action
    - “Devotion”

- **Inspired Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen** to pursue career in aviation
  - 1st African-American Marine Corp Aviator
  - 1st African-American General of Marine Corp
Lesson Ideas & Resources

Studying history through various viewpoints:

- Biography/letters/V-mail are great tools.
- Review a specific time period/event
- Selecting 2-3 biographies of individuals within a similar timeline, regions, or event.
- Students study the individual paths and compare experiences in relation to surrounding events.
Vietnam War
Vietnam War - the first “integrated” war

- Vietnam was a testing ground for E.O. #9981
- Disproportionate minority numbers in draft boards and casualties in the beginning
  - Grand Dragon of KKK, Jack Helms, led Louisiana's largest draft board - inequities abound!
- Frontlines = full integration (fighting common enemy)
- Rear bases shows a more segregated societal dynamic
Vietnam War - the first “integrated” war

Failures of EO #9981

- Latinos drafted in high numbers & died in high numbers
  - No Spanish language training
  - Desire to prove themselves & take the most dangerous jobs
- African-Americans = 11% of the total population, but were only 1.3% of draft board members
- Native Americans faced obstacles also - sent ahead to be point men
- Asian-Americans were expected to think like the Viet Cong

Vietnam War - the first “integrated” war

Successes of EO #9981

- Idea that service = equality
- Prejudice rarely survives experience
- “Vietnam caused a major reevaluation of the organization [Army] and its goals and procedures and created a different ...institution of an all-volunteer military that helped engineer and overwhelming victory in the First Persian Gulf War...” (Longley, 156)
Lesson ideas

Primary Source

Use excerpt of MLK’s speech “Beyond Vietnam speech - transcript [here](#)
Audio [recording](#)

Begin with the paragraph

“I come to this platform tonight to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation.”

Speech is a mix of civil rights and the inequities of the Vietnam War

Secondary Source

Book excerpts of *Grunts*, specifically Chapter 4 pages 127-133 (*A Racial Divide Widens*)

Have students read this section and discuss how each minority group explained their experience in serving in an integrated military.