Encouraged by activists who came before them, African American soldiers began fighting for a double victory during World War II. The term “Double V” was first seen in an African American newspaper in 1942 and refers to defeating tyranny abroad and racism at home. The Pittsburgh Courier continued publishing information about the Double V Campaign until it became a nationwide effort. African American veterans celebrated the desegregation of military troops in 1948, but the fight for civil rights at the federal level had only just begun.

Students will define the Double V Campaign and understand the movements connection to World Wars I and II and the Civil Rights Movement.

The student will:

- Analyze a visual and lyrics from a 1919 song to establish context.
- Read and annotate the newspaper editorial whose author coined the term “Double V.”
- Discuss Executive Order No. 9981 and its impact on the military and the United States as a whole.
- Analyze a cartoon to understand the role that race played in 1960 America.
- Create a newspaper article to summarize the importance of the Double V Campaign to the larger civil rights movement.

What impact did the Double V Campaign have on the struggle for civil rights in America?
Primary Sources
- [Are they equal in the eyes of the law?](#) [1919]
- [U.S. Air Force Recruiting video](#) [2016]
- [The Pittsburgh Courier is widely read in the Negro section of Chicago, Illinois](#) [Apr. 1941]
- [James G. Thompson, letter to the editor, Pittsburgh Courier](#) originally printed January 31, 1942; reprinted April 11, 1942, page 5.
- [Executive Order No. 9981](#) [July 26, 1948]
- [Dark laughter. "My Daddy said...](#) [Apr. 2 1960]

Materials
- [James G. Thompson, letter to the editor, Pittsburgh Courier](#)
- [Newspaper Template](#)
- Colored pencils/pens or computers

### DAY 1

<table>
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<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td><strong>Begin class by projecting this visual publicizing Sergeant Allen Griggs’ and Lucie Campbell’s song “Are They Equal in the Eyes of the Law?”</strong> Ask students to analyze the pictures shown. When was this song published? What do you notice about the soldiers? What does the woman represent? Why is she blindfolded? Have students predict what the song’s lyrics might say before reading the chorus aloud.</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
<td><strong>Discuss how “Are They Equal in the Eyes of the Law?” promotes racial equality for World War I veterans. Relate this example to World War II. Explain to students that though minority groups were drafted and paid equally in the armed forces, they were often subject to discrimination and prohibited from certain career opportunities.</strong></td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td><strong>Play this U.S. Air Force Recruiting video</strong> and discuss how being in the military might have encouraged minority groups to become active in the fight for civil rights. Tell students to pay special attention to the video’s introduction, which defines the Double V Campaign as a fight “against oppression abroad and racism at home.”</td>
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<td>Step 4</td>
<td><strong>As a class, read this 1942 editorial from the Pittsburgh Courier, a leading African American newspaper. Have students annotate the document to highlight author James Thompson's argument. Discuss Thompson’s intent in writing to the Pittsburgh Courier. How can America improve according to Thompson? How would you describe the author’s patriotism? Has Thompson’s desire for change in America been fulfilled?</strong></td>
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<td>Step 5</td>
<td><strong>Although much work remained, a portion of the Double V Campaign was accomplished on July 26, 1948 when President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 desegregating the military. Summarize the major points for the class and discuss Truman’s reasoning for the order. The new policy was to be put into effect “as rapidly as possible.” What are the implications of this verbiage? What was the purpose of the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services? Why was such a committee deemed necessary by Truman?</strong></td>
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Step 6  Ask students to predict how the lives of soldiers and other Americans might have been impacted by this executive order. What was positive about the order? How do you think the American people reacted to Truman’s decision? In terms of racial equality, what problems still need(ed) to be addressed?

Step 7  Have students analyze this cartoon and discuss its meaning. (*Note: An enlarged version can be found at the bottom of this page or accessed through the Library of Congress’s African American Odyssey exhibition.) To what are the children in the cartoon referring? What is significant about the name of the inn? What does the cartoon’s 1960 publication date suggest about post-war life for African Americans at home?

Step 8  Once students have an understanding of the Double V Campaign’s mission, how Executive Order 9981 affected minorities and the military at large, and the struggles that minorities in America continued to face after World War II, ask them to create a newspaper article about the topic. Students may create their article on the computer or by using this newspaper template.

Directions: Use the newspaper template to summarize the lasting effects of the Double V Campaign.
- Focus Question: What impact did the Double V Campaign have on the struggle for civil rights in America?
- Create a name for your newspaper, a headline, and title for your article.
- Be sure that your article answers the “5 Ws and How.”
- Include two colored pictures that illustrate your article’s major points.
- Make sure to caption your pictures.
- Write your name on the bottom of the article.

**EVALUATION**

- Participation in class discussion-20 pts.
- Annotations on the James G. Thompson editorial—10 pts.
- Newspaper—70 pts.

**EXTENSION**

- Have students further research individuals who played a role in the Double V Campaign:
  - African Americans in World War II
  - What Was Black America’s Double War?
  - “Two Wars to Win”
- Have students write a biography exploring Medgar Evers and how his role in the Civil Rights Movement is an example of how the Double V Campaign impacted activists.
- Ask students to read a classmate’s newspaper article and respond with an editorial.

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Dark laughter. "My Daddy said they didn’t seem to mind servin’ him on the Anzio beach-head. But I guess they wasn’t gettin’ along so good with them Nazis then!" [Apr. 2 1960]
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 upset the equilibrium of nations internally, states, counties, cities, homes and even the individual.

Being an American of dark complexion and some 26 years, these questions flash through my mind: "Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?" "Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?" "Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life?" "Is the kind of America I know worth defending?" "Will America be a true and pure democracy after this war?" "Will colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past?"

These and other questions need answering; I want to know, and I believe every colored American, who is thinking, wants to know.

This may be the wrong time to broach such subjects, but haven't all good things obtained by men been secured through sacrifice during just such times of strife?

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.

The "V for Victory" sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory; The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are working to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.

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.

In way of an answer to the foregoing questions in a preceding paragraph, I might say that there is no doubt that this country is worth defending; things will be different for the next generation; colored Americans will come into their own, and America will eventually become the true democracy it was designed to be. These things will become a reality in time; but not through any relaxation of the efforts to secure them.

In conclusion let me say that though these questions often permeate my mind, I love American and am willing to die for the America I know will someday become a reality.

JAMES G. THOMPSON.
Dark laughter. "My Daddy said they didn't seem to mind servin' him on the Anzio beach-head. But I guess they wasn't gettin' along so good with them Nazis then!" [Apr. 2 1960]
Press Release for Executive Order No. 9981 [July 26, 1948]

EXECUTIVE ORDER

JULY 26, 1948

ESTABLISHING THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON
EQUALITY OF TREATMENT AND OPPORTUNITY IN
THE ARMED SERVICES

WHEREAS it is essential that there be maintained in the
armed services of the United States the highest standards of
democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all
those who serve in our country's defense;

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in
me as President of the United States, by the Constitution and
the statutes of the United States, and as Commander in Chief of
the armed services, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. 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. This policy shall be put into effect
as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required
to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency
or morale.

2. There shall be created in the National Military
Establishment an advisory committee to be known as the President's
Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed
Services, which shall be composed of seven members to be design-
ated by the President.

3. 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, pro-
cedures and practices may be altered or improved with a view
to carrying out the policy of this order. The Committee shall
confer and advise with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary
of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of
the Air Force, and shall make such recommendations to the
President and to said Secretaries as in the judgment of the
Committee will effectuate the policy hereof.

4. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal
Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the
Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such in-
formation of the services of such persons as the Committee may
require in the performance of its duties.

5. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons
in the armed services or in any of the executive departments
and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before
the Committee and shall make available for the use of the
Committee such documents and other information as the Com-
mittee may require.

6. The Committee shall continue to exist until such
time as the President shall terminate its existence by Execu-
tive order.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

THE WHITE HOUSE

July 26, 1948