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# The Pittsburgh Courier: Advocate for Integration of the U.S. Armed Forces (1934-1940)

Shelly Lynette Watson  
*San Jose State University*

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*THE PITTSBURGH COURIER:*  
ADVOCATE FOR INTEGRATION OF THE U. S. ARMED FORCES (1934-1940)

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications

San Jose State University

In Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Shelly L. Watson

May 2013

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

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ADVOCATE FOR INTEGRATION OF THE U. S. ARMED FORCES (1934-1940)

by

Shelly L. Watson

APPROVED FOR THE  
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS,  
SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2013

Dr. Diana Stover                      School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Dr. William Tillinghast              School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Dr. Scott Fosdick                      School of Journalism and Mass Communications

## ABSTRACT

*THE PITTSBURGH COURIER:*  
ADVOCATE FOR INTEGRATION OF THE U. S. ARMED FORCES  
(1934-1940)

by Shelly L. Watson

This study is a quantitative and qualitative content analysis designed to determine how the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported the issue of African-American military participation and integration of the U.S. Armed Forces prior to World War II and how that news coverage changed over time. The researcher analyzed 368 news items from 312 weekly editions of the *Courier* published between September 1, 1934, and September 21, 1940. The researcher compared news content across two periods within the time range specified for the study. The researcher found that the *Courier* consistently and extensively reported on the issue during the time period. The *Courier* portrayed the issue of racial discrimination in the military and the argument for integration differently at different periods. An analysis of the major themes showed that racial discrimination as an argument for integration was the dominant theme throughout both periods as compared to the argument of civil rights or African-American military capability, heroism, and patriotism. There was no significant difference between sources by race in articles that discussed the issue. Both African-American and Caucasian sources were attributed equally throughout both time periods. The major contribution of this study to the literature is that it provides a view of what was occurring regarding the political battle to end segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces prior to World War II.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Second, I very much appreciate Dr. David Bruck, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, for his support in completing this thesis. Dr. Bruck's involvement in this process was paramount, and I will be forever grateful for his patience and support.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the U.C. Berkeley Doe Library, Newspaper and Magazine Collections, my family for their support, and the God of my understanding. The completion of this study has withstood many challenges. The research materials, 78-year-old newspapers, were only available at U.C. Berkeley. It was the only repository on the West Coast that had a collection of the *Pittsburgh Courier* that went back 80-plus years. A second challenge was being unable to access the collection for a year and a half as the material was being used for a separate and unrelated research project funded by the university. It is through adversity that one can grow, and this process has provided me a sense of perseverance that I previously never thought possible. Additional thanks to all who have helped me and other students to succeed.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this study to my parents Milford H. Watson and Frankie L. Woodard-Watson in appreciation for their emphasis on education and unwavering support of my academic pursuits throughout my life.

My mother was a teacher for 46 years. She instilled in me a love of learning. As an educational consultant and ambassador for our nation in the later years of her career, her stories of the struggle for the right to an education in many other countries reminded me to be ever grateful for the educational opportunities available to me.

I would like to share my personal inspiration for initiating this study. My father was born at the onset of World War II, and early in life he wanted to be an airplane pilot. He was discouraged from this dream because, at that time, he was told that “little colored boys can’t fly airplanes.” Unfortunately, during the 1940s many African-Americans had no knowledge of the U.S.-subsidized Negro pilot schools or the heroics of the Tuskegee Airmen. The *Pittsburgh Courier* was one of the only sources of that information at the time. It wasn’t until many years later that any widespread public knowledge of the African-American servicemen was widely known. It was from this story that I became interested in the subject of this study and the advocacy of the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

The work I have done on this study inspired me to do something else in dedication to all “little colored boys” who were told they couldn’t fly airplanes. I purchased beginning flight lessons for my dad at a local flight school. Subsequently, on my father’s 71<sup>st</sup> birthday, on a beautiful, sunny day, he flew me around the San Francisco Bay (over the San Mateo Bridge, the Bay Bridge, and the Golden Gate Bridge)!



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## Chapter I

### Introduction

The study provides an examination of the role spearheaded by the *Pittsburgh Courier* in advocating for racial integration of the U.S. Armed Forces. It relates how the newspaper used its editorials and news stories to mobilize Americans, Black and White, in these advocacy efforts to end racial segregation and discrimination in the military. The study provides evidence that the newspaper played a central role in bringing the issue to prominence and legitimacy through its news coverage and editorial commentary, and examines how that news coverage changed over time.

African-Americans were restricted by War Department policy to service in the Army and Navy only prior to World War II. Participation in other branches of military service was strictly prohibited. Black servicemen were further marginalized within those branches of service to menial labor or domestic roles. There were no African-American combat troops, as combat training for African-Americans was also prohibited. There were only five African-American military officers in the period between the World Wars. Three were Army chaplains and two were ROTC instructors. White officers from the racially segregated South were routinely assigned to Black units based on the claim that they were more qualified to keep Blacks in line, having more experience in maintaining racial segregation.

The *Pittsburgh Courier* was originally considered a local newspaper involved in campaigning against poverty and promoting the social advancement of African-Americans in Pittsburgh, PA. It became a national weekly newspaper, and later

championed the cause against segregation in the military with circulations totaling nearly 200,000 by 1938. It became known as the most influential African-American newspaper in the nation due to its integrated readership and quality news reporting, and was the first African-American newspaper to publish both national and local editions (21 editions circulated coast to coast).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Most of the literature on racial integration of the U.S. military discusses events following the onset of World War II. No literature was found for the period *prior* to World War II that focuses neither specifically on desegregating the military nor on the *Pittsburgh Courier's* advocacy for integration of the military through its news coverage. No information regarding such efforts prior to 1940 was found as the main subject of any literature, but was interwoven within literature focused on the World War II period or other subjects. The question of how the newspaper covered the issue prior to World War II and how its news coverage changed over time has not been thoroughly addressed. The purpose of this thesis is to fill in the gaps found in the literature.

The *Courier* began advocating for more African-American participation and training in the U.S. Armed Forces following World War I. It had encouraged African-American men to enlist in the military as a means of proving their love for democracy and the country in the hopes that it would better their economic and social conditions. Those who did enlist were often met with severe bigotry and violence upon their return from the war. As other African-American newspapers were reporting incidents of racial violence following the war, the *Courier* began to report on the contradictions between

government propaganda on preserving democracy and the reality of the lack of democratic freedoms afforded to African-Americans.

The newspaper began to focus on the issue of racial restrictions on military participation in its editorials as early as 1925. That year the Army War College issued a report titled “The Use of Negro Manpower in War” that concluded that Blacks were inferior by nature and that racial segregation was the only means of including African-Americans in military service.

The *Courier* also advocated for legislation in 1925 that called for the erection of a monument to honor African-American servicemen who died during World War I. Under the editorship of Robert L. Vann, the paper reported on the heroics of the Negro soldiers of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division who had died in France during combat in 1917-1918. The newspaper’s editorials were critical of the stereotypical manner in which mainstream newspapers represented African-American soldiers in their news stories.

The Great Depression of the 1930s heavily affected the American press as a whole. African-American newspapers were no exception. The issue of integrating the Armed Forces lost momentum. However, the *Courier* continued to expand and integrate its readership due to its reputation for accurate and meticulous reporting and lower subscription costs.

A 1934 report on African-American participation in the Army indicated that less than 2% of enlisted soldiers were African-American. The following year the newspaper responded to the lack of African-American soldiers by advocating for legislation that would equip two Black infantry units. The newspaper continued to bring the issue of

limited African-American participation and segregation of the military to prominence for the remainder of the decade by drafting and promoting proposed legislation that addressed these issues. The newspaper consistently reported statistics on enlisted African-Americans in the Army and Navy as well as established discriminatory military practices.

The issue of integration of the Armed Forces became the focal point of advocacy for the African-American press as a whole by 1940. The *Courier* had been at the forefront of these efforts, helping to report not only on the African-American community's response to military policies, but by also bringing the issue to prominence among many Caucasian newspaper editors, civic leaders, academics, politicians, and businessmen. As the issue became increasingly salient during World War II, the paper was at the forefront by reporting every event, policy, and public reaction related to the issue. This resulted in the signing of Executive Order 9981 by President Harry S. Truman in 1948 that provided for equal treatment and opportunity for African-American men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The literature review provides an overview of the history of the newspaper and a context for the analysis. It relates how the newspaper used its editorials and news stories to mobilize Americans, Black and White, to advocate for racial integration of the military. The literature review begins with a discussion of the social climate and state of the African-American press at the onset of World War I (1915-1919). As previously stated, Vann used the newspaper to encourage African-American men to enlist in the Army during World War I.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

The literature review provides an examination of how the issue of integration of the military was reported on and advocated for by the leading African-American national newspaper prior to and during World War II. Interestingly, no analyses have solely examined the *Pittsburgh Courier* specifically regarding its advocacy through its news coverage of this issue *prior to World War II*. The *Pittsburgh Courier's* efforts were unparalleled in the social and political movement that eventually led to President Harry S. Truman's signing of Executive Order 9981 on July, 26 1948.

Many academics treat the Civil Rights Movement as the first and foremost legal challenge to segregation in U.S. history. This literature review provides documentation that a prior movement for equal citizenship and opportunity preceded the Civil Rights Movement, and that the movement was initiated by the efforts of the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

Advocacy for integration of the U.S. Armed Forces became an issue of debate during World War I. There were several African-American leaders who advocated against segregation and limited Negro participation in the U.S. Armed Forces. The *Pittsburgh Courier* had great influence on the issues facing African-Americans and the African-American press' role in advocating for equal opportunity during this period. The editorial emphasis of the Black press began to shift during World War I. The strategy was to point out the contradictions between government propaganda and the actual reality for African-Americans in America.



African-American loyalty to the United States would become a central issue for the U.S. Department of War and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) during World War I. Several factors contributed to this, including the 1916 premiere of the film *Birth of a Nation*, which had been endorsed by President Woodrow Wilson. Additionally, the slogan, “make the world safe for democracy,” the cornerstone of government war propaganda during World War I, would fuel a climate of patriotic paranoia. By the onset of World War II, several African-American editors would be investigated by the FBI for having suspected alliances with the Communist Party, which was attempting to recruit discontented African-Americans (Brooks, 1959).

The African-American press wrestled with whether to encourage Blacks to fight overseas for the democracy that they did not experience at home. African-American editors decided that they would use their publications to expose to the world the inconsistencies in the application of democracy in America. As African-American newspapers began to vehemently oppose the ill treatment of Black soldiers during World War I, the U.S. government began to increasingly view these editorials as signs of disloyalty. Many African-American leaders determined that the African-American press should retreat from exposing such contradictions. This sentiment was expressed following threats of sedition charges against several African-American editors if they did not modify their editorial views.

The U.S. Army had had no plans to utilize its Black servicemen at the onset of World War I. The nation entered into the conflict in April of 1917, with no plans to recruit Blacks. The majority of Black troops were assigned to the Services of Supply

with the exception of two infantry divisions that saw combat in France. Although the efforts of these divisions were central to the Allied victory, their effectiveness was questioned following the war. According to Slonaker (1971) and later supported by Gropman (1978), a 1922 study conducted by 10 Army War College classes concluded: “To follow the policy of exempting the Negro population of this country from combat service means that the white population on which the future of this country depends, would suffer the brunt of the loss, the Negro none” (Gropman, p. 2; Slonaker, p. 12-13). The military study stated that African-Americans were full citizens of the nation and subject to the same “obligations” of citizenship, but Black officers should not be allowed to command a White officer. The study concluded that the four historically Negro combat regiments, the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalries and the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantries, be recommended for use in the regular army. Additionally, segregated National Guard units would be maintained. These findings were in alignment with the recommendations of Gen. John J. Pershing, the Army chief of staff. The study recognized the need for Black combat troops, but neglected to outline plans for training Black soldiers.

The Army War College continued to publish additional studies and memorandums regarding Black servicemen. A 1925 report titled “The Use of Negro Manpower in War” concluded that Blacks were subservient by nature, lacked courage, and the initiative and resourcefulness to be anything but laborers. Blacks were considered inferior technicians and combat fighters. The report additionally stated that “the cranial activity of the Negro is smaller than the white; his brain weighing 35 ounces contrasted with 45 for the white” (Office of the Commandant, Memorandum, 1925).

African-Americans who scored high on intelligence tests were reasoned to have done so because they must have a “heavy strain of white blood.” Although these assertions were published, there is no scientific documentation to support this study’s findings.

The memorandum argued that racial segregation was the only solution to address the inherent inferiority of Blacks. Ironically, the exception to such policy was “Negro concubines who have sometimes attracted men who, except for their associations, were considered high class” (Office of the Commandant, Memorandum, 1925). The study concluded that military efficiency was fair in its treatment of Black and White soldiers.

African-American service and heroism in previous wars acquired little attention. The study made no mention of the contributions of Black soldiers in the history of U.S. military conflicts. According to Hanna (2002), African-American service in the Union Army during the Civil War, as well as during the Indian Wars, the Spanish American War, and World War I resulted in a total of 50 Medals of Honor awarded to Black soldiers between 1863 and 1918. Additionally, the Medal of Honor had been awarded to eight African-Americans, all sailors, during peacetime years from 1866-1898.

The government study reflected the racial views held by many Americans during the 1920s. According to Litwack and Jordan (1991), following World War I there was an increase in all racial violence beginning with the Red Summer of 1919, as it came to be known, due to numerous race riots across the country. African-American servicemen were specifically targeted after the war for fear of Black competition for jobs including major incidents in East St. Louis, Houston, and Chicago. As Gropman (1978) stated in his monograph on the integration of the Air Force, it was against the backdrop of the

racial climate of the 1920s that the military came to many of its conclusions regarding Black servicemen. American fear of non-European and non-Christian races reached a new level. Such xenophobia produced discriminatory immigration legislation and the Ku Klux Klan achieved public acceptance to parade in full regalia down Pennsylvania Avenue in the nation's capital. By 1924, membership in the Klan had risen to a peak of 4.5 million, and had spread geographically and ideologically.

Blacks had not been permitted to join the American air service during World War I. Entrance into the Marine Corps and the U.S. Coast Guard was also prohibited. Military leadership held onto these beliefs well into World War II when political pressure initiated by the *Pittsburgh Courier's* news coverage forced modification of its policies. It should be noted that an African-American, Eugene Jacque Bullard, did fly in combat during World War I under the Lafayette Flying Corps of France.

Robert L. Vann, publisher of *The Pittsburgh Courier*, was central in organizing the Black press to advocate for integration of the military. According to Buni (1974) and Simmons (1998), the newspaper under Vann's leadership became a driving force in bringing the issue to prominence in the Black community and to the U.S. government. Vann was a conservative businessman and attorney. He had an established law practice in Pittsburgh, PA before becoming an investor in a local newspaper, *A Toiler's Life*. The newspaper was originally founded in 1907 by Edwin Nathaniel Harleston, a security guard with a passion for publishing poetry. Vann bought the newspaper in 1910, and took over editorship.

The newspaper was renamed *The Pittsburgh Courier* and transformed its identity under Vann's direction. Originally, it was considered a vehicle for social and economic change at the local level. According to Simmons (1998), Vann's philosophy was "to recognize and attack the cause of problems at the source" (p. 40). By attacking what he saw as a "victim mentality" in the African-American community, Vann hoped to motivate the community to become more assertive through the newspaper's editorials and news articles. The paper achieved success as a national weekly newspaper, and by 1938 its circulation totaled almost 200,000. It was the first Black newspaper to publish both national and local editions. There were as many as 21 editions circulated coast to coast. At its peak during World War II, the Courier had a national circulation of between 350,000 to 480,000 with more than 400 full-time employees and hundreds more part-time workers, in 14 to 21 cities.

The *Courier* fashioned itself as a moderate newspaper. According to Eugene Gordon, an African-American newspaper analyst, the *Courier* had become the top (African-American) newspaper regarding its editorial page, features, and best all-around news coverage (Simmons, 1998). Vann had used the newspaper to encourage Black men to enlist in the Army at the onset of World War I. As the war progressed, Vann's editorials demonstrated his love of country and what he believed to be an opportunity for Blacks to improve their position in America. Simmons (1998) stated:

Vann reported that if Negro soldiers went off to war, then, "When this war shall have ceased THE NEGRO WILL HAVE ASSUMED HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE OPINIONS OF AMERICANS. He could then ASSERT HIMSELF AS A MAN – not as a black man – AS A MAN." (p. 46)

Vann avoided criticism by the government and threats of sedition during World War I because many government officials considered him a moderate. However, he was highly critical of the stereotypical manner in which mainstream newspapers presented African-Americans in their media. He became one of the most vocal advocates for equal rights in the Armed Forces following World War I. In 1926, Vann advocated for the erection of a monument in France to honor the African-American soldiers of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (the 369<sup>th</sup>, 370<sup>th</sup>, 371<sup>st</sup>, and 372<sup>nd</sup> regiments). These soldiers had died in France during the war. Buni (1974) quoted Vann as writing:

The service they rendered is so distinct and unparalleled in the war records, that they deserve mention because of the peculiar circumstances under which they fought and died. If they had been white men, several monuments would have been mentioned for them long ago, but somebody wants to forget about them and I am determined that these boys will not be forgotten. (p. 299)

Vann urged Congressman Hamilton J. Fish of New York to introduce a bill for such a monument. According to Buni (1974), Fish had been the white officer of the 15<sup>th</sup> New York Colored Volunteers, and was among the first white politicians to advocate for equal rights for African-American servicemen. Fish introduced the bill that was later defeated in the Senate. Ironically, the leading opponent was Senator David Reed of Pennsylvania, a member of the Military Affairs Committee, whom Vann had supported for re-election. Reed opposed the bill on the grounds that it implied segregation. The measure was reintroduced in 1927, and was again defeated in the Senate. The *Courier* reported extensively on the controversial proposed legislation, but the story was overlooked completely or minimized by many mainstream newspapers. The issue of African-American military participation was not addressed at all by the mainstream

media, with the exception of the *New York Times* that ran a 60-word paragraph on the topic. Many African-American newspapers were cautious about running the story since several editors had been silenced during and after World War I.

The movement for integration and equal opportunity in the Armed Forces lost momentum as the country entered into the Great Depression of the 1930s. The African-American press was heavily affected. Circulation and subscription figures had dwindled for the printed media in general. The *Courier* maintained much of its readership, which had become increasingly integrated, presumably because of its reputation for accurate reporting and its lower subscription price. Vann once again encouraged increased Black participation in the Armed Forces through his editorials following War Department reports in 1934 that indicated that less than 2% of the 118,000 soldiers enlisted were Black, with the majority being re-enlistees.

Vann assigned reporter Edgar T. Rouzeau to conduct a survey of duty assignments given to Blacks in the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry at West Point. The survey concluded that Blacks were assigned to grooming white officers' horses or shoveling manure. Further reports indicated that Blacks stationed at Fort Benning, GA were assigned exclusively to routine garrison duty or as orderlies.

The *Courier* then pushed for legislation to organize and equip two Negro infantry units in Pennsylvania. State Representative Samuel B. Hart, a former white commanding officer of a Negro regiment in the Pennsylvania National Guard during the Spanish American War, pushed the bill through the U.S. House of Representatives in 1935. Although the bill passed unanimously and was signed by Pennsylvania Governor Earle,

the federal government would not fund the proposed Negro units. By 1937, Vann had become increasingly disillusioned by the federal government's responses.

The *Courier* reported that only 250 Blacks in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces had been given military training in any given period per a 1937 War Department report. Other reports indicated that there were only five African-American officers in the entire U.S. Army. Three of these were chaplains, and the remaining two were the only combat-trained Black officers in the nation. The newspaper further reported that, of the 500 African-American officers listed in the Army Reserves, most were ROTC program participants from Howard University, one of the most distinguished traditional Black universities and medical schools in the nation. Buni (1974) noted that Black ROTC participants from other colleges were "almost none" (p. 300).

Willa Beatrice Brown became the first African-American woman to be issued a commercial pilot's license in 1937. She and her flight instructor, Cornelius R. Coffey, co-founded the National Airmen's Association of America to promote African-Americans in aviation. The Army and Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) selected the school to "conduct the experiments" that would eventually lead to the establishment of African-Americans into the Army Air Corps. Ninety-five percent of the African-Americans who participated in the program graduated, but the Army Air Corps would not employ them. Many of these graduates would later become known as the famed Tuskegee Airmen and Red Tails air unit during World War II.



The issue of African-American military participation became a major social issue by 1938. Blacks were still excluded from the Army Air Corps, the Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, the Artillery, and the Corps of Engineers (MacGregor, 1985). Vann found that governmental policies excluded African-Americans from the officer corps, and that the Navy used Blacks only as cooks, dishwashers, and laundrymen. Having endorsed African-American enlistment in World War I, he began to mobilize support for an end to military segregationist policies. For example, Vann sought to correct policies such as assigning Black troops to Southern white officers who were thought to be better able to keep African-American soldiers “in line.”

Buni (1974) noted that Vann saw military preparedness as self-preservation and knew this would also help to increase the newspaper’s circulation. By 1938, after Nazi Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, there were fears that the United States would be drawn into the war. Vann believed that African-American men should be prepared to defend their community and their country if America went to war. Vann called for the establishment of an all-Black army division and proper training for Black officers that would lead it. Vann’s crusade was reignited with an open letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt that appeared on the front-page of the *Courier* on February 16, 1938. The letter outlined 10 reasons why Blacks deserved equal treatment and opportunity in the Army and Navy:

1. **WE DESERVE JOBS IN THE SERVICE**

Of the approximately 165,000 jobs in our regular Army and Navy, the Negro at present had about 5,000 or one thirty-third. The Negroes compose one-tenth of the nation’s population. This is manifest discrimination.

2. **WE PAY FOR JOBS IN THE SERVICE**

The Negro helps to pay for the upkeep of the Army and Navy, for the jobs and opportunities each offers. We believe he deserves to receive some return on his contribution.

3. **OUR FIGHTING RECORD SHOULD BE REWARDED**

Cripus Attucks shed the first blood for American independence on Boston Common, March 5, 1775. Negro fighters brought glory to America in the Revolution, in the War of 1812, in the Mexican and Indian wars, in the World War. The fighting record should be rewarded.

4. **WE SEEK THE TEST TO PROVE OUR MERIT**

Open the doors of the Army and Navy so that the black man can show America his ability to toe the mark.

5. **WE NEED EDUCATION JUST AS THE WHITES**

The Army and Navy are vast educational laboratories. Black America wants its youth to share the benefits of service.

6. **WE SEEK THE CHANCE TO SHATTER PREJUDICE**

Black soldiers in heroic and exemplary service of their country can help to dissipate this prejudice. Black America seeks this opportunity to help draw all Americans together.

7. **OUR LOYALTY IS AN AMERICAN TRADITION**

There has never been a black traitor to America's cause, in war or peace. America cannot, without a sense of shame, continue to ignore these loyal millions. Our defense needs them.

8. **AMERICANISM IS TEST OF OUR FIGHTING MEN**

What, in the final analysis, do we ask? We plead, 'Let us die for America if need be!'

9. **WE WANT TO GLORIFY AMERICA BEFORE THE WORLD**

We are AMERICANS. This is our country which we would glorify before the entire world.

10. **WE WANT TO INSPIRE FUTURE BLACK AMERICA**

The record of the black fighting men of the past is a source of inspiration to our race today. We seek the opportunity to make a new record to inspire black Americans of the future to greater and greater contributions to their country. (Vann, 1938)

Military officials cited the poor fighting performance of the all-Negro 92<sup>nd</sup> Infantry during World War I as the reason for its policy of limited military responsibility for African-Americans (MacGregor, 1985). The Negro unit under American command had been charged with cowardice after fleeing from the Germans in the Meuse-Argonne offensive of September 26-30, 1918, according to the War Department report. The *Courier* replied to the report, contending that the unit's poor performance could have been avoided if they had been properly trained for combat. The newspaper then responded to War Department officials by reporting that the 93<sup>rd</sup> Division, under the French allied command, had been properly trained and treated equally, resulting in the regiment being awarded the Croix de Guerre, the highest military honor awarded by the French government. The *Courier* continued to publish editorials that stressed African-Americans' desire to prove their loyalty and willingness to fight bravely for democracy.

Vann delegated *Courier* city editor Percival L. Prattis, a veteran infantryman, to survey congressmen, newspaper editors, religious and civic leaders, and college presidents about their opinions on the mounting controversy in the Armed Forces. Prattis was selected because he had experienced racial prejudice and segregation in the military. According to Buni (1974, p. 304), Prattis drafted a letter stating the following:

Although colored citizens have participated with honor and distinction in every war the United States has fought in and died by the thousands that this grand Republic might live, they are today barred from virtually all service in our army and navy which they help to support.

Our army and navy are honeycombed with spies of alien extraction and connections who are easily enabled to enlist in our most vital services merely because they are white. No American Negro, soldier or civilian, has ever been suspected or convicted of betraying this country.

Do you believe that all branches of the army and naval service should be opened to Negroes (they are over 99 per cent native born)? Or do you think there should be an entire Negro division, including all arms of the service and officered, at least in line, by educated colored men, in the army; and a squadron manned by Negroes in the navy?

We feel that this question is important at this time when the whole matter of national defense is uppermost in our minds and the dangers of fascism, Nazism, and communism are more real than ever before.

We shall appreciate a brief reply embodying your candid opinion on this question.

There were numerous responses to the letter regarding equal opportunity in the military. The responses varied according to where the respondents lived. Vann published many of these responses in the *Courier*. Northern politicians favored immediate integration with no discrimination or segregation clauses. Several Southern politicians refused to reply on the issue, many stating that it was a matter for Congress to determine. According to Vann's personal papers (Buni, 1974), he got a letter from John Fremmar, a white editor at the *Harrison Daily Times* (Arkansas), who stated that, although he supported advancement by the "colored race," he felt "they make a mistake if they push themselves on the white race too fast" (p. 305).

The general consensus of the replies encouraged a separate Black division to be developed in the Army. However, implementation of an all-Black unit in the Navy would pose difficulty in gaining white acceptance. Immediate full integration was almost dismissed entirely by the majority of the surveyed white public figures, but encouraged as the long-term ideal.

Vann then began to garner political support for a separate all-Negro Army division. These responses assured him that Southerners would not oppose a bill for a separate all-Negro division, and he agreed there would be no interracial mix of soldiers. Vann approached long-time supporter Hamilton J. Fish once again to introduce three bills as follows: (1) to end discrimination by opening all branches of military service to Negroes, (2) an annual appointment by the President of two Negroes to the military academy at West Point, and (3) provisions for the formation and maintenance of an all-Black Army division. Vann labeled the bills the *Pittsburgh Courier* "Army & Navy Bills." On April 26, 1938, Vann got a letter from President Roosevelt regarding the issue. The President was sympathetic to learn of the status of African-American servicemen, and was also surprised that Vann had published evidence that many whites favored more Negro participation in the military. The President suggested that he might be able to accomplish small steps towards integrating the military by executive order rather than by having the *Courier* bills introduced into Congress (Buni, 1974).

Vann's enthusiasm for the proposed bills was not matched by other African-American leaders and organizations that were now on the bandwagon. NAACP leaders began to call for total and immediate integration of the Armed Forces. NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White vehemently opposed Vann's proposals. Roy Wilkins, assistant executive secretary, pointed out to White that the *Courier's* actions had brought the issue to prominence among African-Americans and the rest of the nation (White, 1970). There was much debate regarding whether white politicians would want credit for endorsing the bills to get African-American votes in return. After several months

following the initial invitation, Vann met with the President on October 28, 1938. Buni (1974) noted that Roosevelt would not have backed the measure, if he favored the proposed legislation at all, because Hamilton J. Fish, a Republican, had introduced it. Subsequently, the bills died in the Senate. Congressman Fish reintroduced the *Courier* bills again in 1939 emphasizing the demand for presidential appointments to West Point and the end of discrimination against Blacks in the appointment of officers and the promotion of enlisted men. NAACP legal consul Thurgood Marshall urged Walter White to cooperate with Vann and support the revised bills, but the proposed legislation never reached the House of Representatives floor for discussion (White, 1970). It was defeated in the House Military Affairs Committee. Buni (1974) noted: “The nation was apparently little interested in the fate of the Fish bills; the *New York Times*, for example, limited its coverage of them during 1938 and 1939 to a single 61-word article on April 27, 1938” (p. 310).

The bills had not reached the House of Representatives floor in an apparent major defeat. However, the public campaign for increased African-American troops in the *Courier* was gaining momentum. Ulysses Lee (1966) noted:

In 1938, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, then the largest and one of the most influential Negro papers of national circulation, opened a campaign for the extension of opportunities for Negroes in the military services. The paper published an open letter to President Roosevelt, organized a Committee for Negro Participation in the National Defense, and encouraged its readers to send letters, telegrams, and delegations to congressmen and other national political leaders asking for an opinion on the wisdom of forming an all Negro division in the peacetime Army.

Many of these letters, especially those to congressmen, were forwarded to the War Department for information. As the campaign spread to other papers and to local organizations, similar letters arrived from other sources. This campaign was

well organized and well publicized. Quantities of correspondence poured into the War Department. When the department did not commit itself, the Negro press, having obtained no positive information, became even more cynical and critical. (p. 52)

Vann organized the Committee for the Participation of Negroes in National Defense in 1939. The organization was funded by Vann and headed by noted historian Professor Rayford W. Logan of Howard University. Logan served as acting committee chair, and helped Vann draft the nondiscrimination clauses, which were later introduced into Congress by Hamilton J. Fish and written into law.

Congress approved the inclusion of Blacks as pilots in the Civilian Pilot Training Program with passage of the Civilian Pilot Training Act and the Air Corps Expansion Act in 1939. Several aviation schools began to enroll Blacks in flight training, but the Army Air Corps continued to deny them employment. In October of 1938, the *Courier* reported that there was not a single Negro Marine; this led to the introduction of a separate bill to authorize the commission of African-American cadets in the Marine Corps on May 12, 1939 (MacGregor, 1985; Nalty, 2011).

Britain and France declared war on Germany after Hitler's army invaded Poland on September 3, 1939. America continued to remain neutral. Meanwhile, Vann continued his political and journalistic advocacy mission after being named a member of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce in December of 1939. The group was one of the most influential chambers of commerce in America (Buni, 1974).

The Army began to reform its policy regarding Black soldiers when war erupted in Europe. There was much debate within the ranks and in the War Department regarding increasing the number of Black regiments. As the *Courier* increased its editorial and lobbying crusade, the national African-American community began to criticize the Army's lack of action on the matter. The Army issued a statement indicating that its primary objective was only to maintain its fighting numbers. The military was not interested in social change. Gropman (1978, p. 4) and Lee (1966, p. 49) quoted the Army chief of personnel's rebuttal, stating:

The War Department is not an agency which can solve national questions relating to the social or economic position of the various racial groups composing our Nation. The War Department administers the laws affecting the military establishment; it cannot act outside the law, nor contrary to the will of the majority of the citizens of the nation.

Military officials did not consider segregation discriminatory citing numerous U.S. Supreme Court rulings that upheld *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Therefore, the U.S. Army's policy was to maintain segregated military facilities as established through the "separate, but equal" doctrine.

Public and political pressure as a result of the *Courier's* campaign led to the addition of nondiscrimination clauses being written into the Selective Training and Service Act on September 16, 1940. Senator Robert Wagner and Representative Hamilton J. Fish revised the previous draft of the *Courier* bills to include an amendment to the 1937 Mobilization Act, which specified the utilization of African-American soldiers. The clauses provided for no discrimination in the selection and training of draftees, and abolished "discrimination against any person on account of race or color"



(*U.S. Statues at Large*, 1941, p. 885). This signified a major turning point, as the U.S. Army would now recruit African-Americans to expand its numbers. Negro units would be established in each major branch of the Army, and African-American officers would be able to attend Officers Candidate School for the first time. Additionally, Congress forced the Army Air Corps to establish its own pilot schools for Blacks. The *Courier* staff published the following statement on the front page of the September 21, 1940, edition:

The *Courier* takes pardonable pride this week in calling the attention of its readers and many friends to the fact that PARTIAL success has been won in the fight to secure participation of Negroes in national defense. Those who have followed the fight will recall that the first shot was fired by the *Courier* in an open letter to President Roosevelt on February 16, 1938.

The African-American press became one of the most active organizations keeping watch on the government during World War II. The press had now earned a reputation for its credibility and crusading efforts. It now had to face a major problem that had undermined its effectiveness in the past: the need for an organized united front on racial issues (Wolseley, 1990). To address the new issues facing the African-American press, the National Negro Publishing Association (NNPA) was founded in February of 1940. John Stengstacke, nephew of Robert Abbott publisher of the *Chicago Defender*, became its first president (Ottley, 1955). The approach of war resulted in new problems regarding segregation within the U.S. Armed Forces. The NNPA outlined these issues in its platform, which included: exclusion of Blacks from the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard, limited induction into the Navy, discrimination and abuse in U.S. Army camps, the need to prepare for allegations of sedition and disloyalty, employment discrimination,

and the need to encourage African-Americans to support the war effort in the process.

On September 17, 1940, Black news editors met with the Secretary of the Navy and the Assistant Secretary of War to present a 7-point platform for the mobilization of African-Americans in the military. Interestingly, the platform included the admission of African-American women into the Red Cross and military training units.

The editors of the African-American press were also facing the same old issues of editorial survival at this time. According to Simmons (1998), the problems arising from the approach of war only added to their struggle to stay alive and to avoid a backlash from the government. The use of militancy in their editorials had made them reputable opinion leaders, but they needed to be ready to face sedition and disloyalty charges which was a technique used to silence the African-American press during World War I. Although mainstream newspapers began to cover some of the same news stories, they presented the news from an often blatantly biased point of view (Newkirk, 2000). This aided the *Courier* in particular, and helped to increase its White readership as it had a reputable image as a newspaper with credible investigative reporting.

The African-American community was dissatisfied with the legislation that had been enacted in 1940. Vann and the *Courier* staff were equally discontented. Vann became so disenchanted with the president's empty promises that he began to use the *Courier* to campaign for the Republican presidential candidate, Wendell Willkie, another self-made man who had risen from very humble circumstances. Many had predicted that the election would be a close one, and emphasis on garnering the Black vote gave many African-American leaders bargaining power regarding the issue of full integration of the

U.S. Armed Forces. Vann then wrote a scathing editorial regarding the Navy's treatment of African-American seamen. In the editorial titled "Used Men As Seagoing Chambermaids, Bellhops, Dishwashers," Vann criticized the Navy for not allowing its Black enlistees to participate in combat training following the nondiscriminatory mandate (Simmons, 1998; Vann, 1940).

Vann got a quick response to his comments. The White House responded to Vann's editorial on October 9, 1940, issuing a statement that declared: "the policy of the War Department is not to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organizations" (Simmons, 1998, p. 71). President Roosevelt argued against full integration, reasoning that it would adversely affect national defense. Although Roosevelt had made minor concessions and many promises to support full integration, he basically continued the War Department's segregationist policies. The African-American community was outraged by the White House's claims that Black leaders had approved the president's statement.

Public and political pressure forced President Roosevelt to eventually make concessions. However, Robert L. Vann did not live to see the realization of the objectives he so diligently advocated for over a period of more than 25 years. He died on October 24, 1940, after battling cancer and falling into a coma. Ironically, hours after he died, President Roosevelt announced the nomination of Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Sr. for promotion to Brigadier General, the first African-American to be nominated for the position. Davis was promoted to the position the following day. His promotion was made possible through the efforts of Vann.

P. L. Prattis was pushed to the forefront of the military integration issue after assuming editorship of the *Courier* upon Vann's death. In November of 1940, 13 Black sailors aboard the *U.S.S. Philadelphia* wrote the *Courier* regarding the Navy's discriminatory policy. The paper printed the letter, and the men were subsequently arrested and scheduled for court martial. The African-American community responded with outrage at their arrest. Prattis was able to help free the men, but they were released from duty with dishonorable or undesirable discharges.

The *Courier* extensively covered another incident that exposed racial discrimination in the Navy. Doris "Dorie" Miller, an African-American mess hall attendant, heroically saved his wounded captain and solely manned a deck machine gun during the initial attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He shot down six Japanese bombers by himself as the ship burned, and he eventually ran out of ammunition. The African-American press called for the appointment of the Medal of Honor for Miller, as he had no prior formal training in weaponry since Black sailors were not allowed to serve in combat positions.

Prattis was optimistic that efforts to get the Navy to allow Blacks to engage in combat would now be successful. He continued Vann's legacy of advocacy by adamantly lobbying for the Medal of Honor for Miller through the newspaper. Six months later, the government issued only a Navy Cross, explaining that, since Blacks were not eligible for combat, they were ineligible for the nation's highest military honor. Prattis then called for Miller's return from duty in his editorials, as was the custom for white servicemen who were awarded similar medals.

The Miller incident initiated the government's renewed interest in the activities of the African-American press. Circulation figures for the *Courier* continued to increase, forcing the Navy and War Department to take notice as its readership further expanded to the white audience. According to Washburn (1986), the FBI became very interested in what the *Courier* was reporting, and began making visits to the newsroom in 1940 after receiving reports that the editors were "holding America up to ridicule" (p. 53). In January of 1941, the Military Intelligence Department reported that John Stengstacke, publisher of the Chicago *Defender* and chairman of the NNPA, was encouraging African-Americans to avoid the draft and become conscientious objectors.

By the spring of 1941, the *Courier* began publishing a series of exposes about African-American soldiers written by executive editor Percival Prattis. He wrote about brutality against African-American soldiers by white military police and the frequent transfers of soldiers who protested abuses to remote areas. Military post officials, mainly at southern installations, urged officials to investigate Prattis. The War Department demanded that the FBI increase its investigation of the *Courier* and other African-American newspapers when the Army stated that it could not control Prattis or the African-American press because of First Amendment protections. The FBI responded to the War Department demands on November 29, 1941, stating that its investigation failed to show cause for indictment of the *Courier*.

The African-American press continued to face increasing government backlash as their circulations continued to rise. Some mainstream newspapers began publishing articles exposing the inequalities faced by Southern Blacks as America went to war to

fight for democracy overseas. The *New York Daily News* ran full-page photos of Black sharecroppers and the Ku Klux Klan with captions stating “Should We Fight to Save the World . . . While These Things Continue At Home?” and urged its readers to demand that the President and Congress work towards democracy at home before war abroad. Consequently, government and military officials felt that the African-American press could no longer be ignored and action was necessary. The critical editorials in such publications were seen as dangerous and inappropriate press comment. The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, meant that many government officials would no longer tolerate such criticism.

The *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, the *Atlanta Daily World*, and the *Birmingham World* were all investigated following the publication of articles after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The *Afro-American* had surveyed several Black Virginians asking how they thought the Japanese would treat Blacks if they won the war (Farrar, 1998). The paper printed a summary of their responses, which stated: “The colored races as a whole would benefit . . . This would be the first step in the darker races coming back into their own” (Simmons, 1998, p. 74). Three out of the five respondents agreed with the comment, which enraged FBI head J. Edgar Hoover who vowed to bring sedition charges against the newspapers.

The Justice Department’s reply to Hoover’s request was that the newspapers were not in violation of any federal statutes for printing the responses of African-American citizens. The comments were expressions of public opinion, not “false statements” in violation of the Sedition Act. Clear evidence of the newspapers’ intent to affect

recruitment, enlistment, or harm to the armed forces was lacking. However, in a memorandum to Hoover, Wendell Berge of the Justice Department encouraged further investigation of the African-American press to determine if they were involved with “hostile or subversive sources” (Memorandum, Wendell Berge to J. Edgar Hoover; file 100-63963, FBI, Washington, DC). This memorandum gave Hoover the opportunity to add credibility to the accusation that the African-American press had become a vehicle for enemy propaganda. The FBI continued to suspect that the Japanese or Communists were influencing the African-American press and banned the sale or distribution of these newspapers on or near military bases in the South. The *Birmingham World* was officially investigated after it ran an editorial that criticized Hoover for not employing African-American FBI agents.

The *Courier* countered these allegations against the African-American press by printing calls for African-American support for the war. However, despite its efforts, treatment of Blacks in the military did not change much, particularly at military bases in the South. On January 17, 1942, the *Courier* ran a front-page story outlining the African-American community’s discontent with support for the war effort. Prattis reported that African-American sentiment was lukewarm at best. Simmons (1998) quoted the editor:

Black Americans are loyal Americans, but let there be no mistake about that loyalty. It is loyalty to the democratic ideal as enunciated by America and our British ally, it is not loyalty to many of the practices which have been – and are still – in vogue here and in the British Empire. (p. 75)

Government investigation increased after the *Courier* began its famous *Double V Campaign* on February 7, 1942. The newspaper published a letter from James Thompson, an African-American cafeteria worker, regarding the war overseas as an opportunity to advocate for change in America. Thompson suggested that African-Americans adopt the double “VV” symbol for victory over fascism abroad and victory over discrimination at home. The *Courier* would officially spearhead the campaign, even designing a recognizable symbol to promote the idea.

The *Courier* continued to be heavily investigated by the War Department. The press responded by continuing to cover various complaints of racial discrimination in the Army and Navy. For example, several African-American newspapers gave front-page coverage to the War Department’s withdrawal of an order which stated that “any association between the colored soldiers and white women, whether voluntary or not, would be considered rape.” Additionally, it announced that African-American nurses would be restricted to caring for Negro soldiers only. Both orders were eventually withdrawn following pressure from the NAACP.

Two additional agencies also became involved in investigating the African-American press. Post Office Solicitor Vincent Miles recommended that postmasters exercise their ability to revoke the postage permits of any publication that they felt violated the Espionage Act. If in question, they were directed to send the publication to Washington, DC immediately. Consequently, early on in the war, the majority of German and Japanese foreign and English language publications were immediately classified as unmailable. Several African-American publications were submitted as well,



but there was no evidence to support any suppression of the distribution of these publications.

The Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) was another agency that investigated the African-American press and the *Courier* in particular. The OFF was created by President Roosevelt in July of 1941 as part of the Office of Civilian Defense, originally developed to sustain civilian morale during the war. The OFF conducted and analyzed public opinion surveys and the news media. A survey titled “Negro Attitudes towards the War” was conducted in January of 1942. It would be the first of a series of reports on the African-American press that year. These reports would be used to justify J. Edgar Hoover’s plans to suppress the African-American press that year. The *Courier* had become viewed as a national security threat.

A subsequent FBI report stated that the activities of the *Pittsburgh Courier* and other African-American newspapers were responsible for low morale among Blacks during the war. It charged that the published editorials and news articles followed Communist press policies. Government suppression efforts intensified, and several African-American newspapers were blacklisted after renouncing the internment of Japanese Americans. The *Courier*, the *Defender*, and three other African-American newspapers were reported to print pro-Japanese material. However, the *Courier’s* circulation continued to increase as the *Double V Campaign* expanded across the country.

Discussion of indicting the African-American press began during a Presidential Cabinet meeting on May 22, 1942. According to Washburn, this was probably the only time suppression of the African-American press was ever formally discussed (Washburn,

1986). Two reports from the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) on African-American attitudes towards the war, an intelligence report on the Black press, and Hoover's continued allegations led to the President's conclusion that the African-American press needed to be stopped. The *Courier* was one of the four African-American newspapers specifically targeted. The president encouraged Attorney General Francis J. Biddle and Postmaster General Frank Walker to talk with African-American editors about toning down their articles. This was the way the President interacted with the African-American press. Since Black reporters were not allowed at his press conferences until 1944, he sent representatives to talk to the editors. Large numbers of African-Americans had helped to reelect the President and he did not want to completely alienate them. This led to Biddle's meeting with John H. Sengstacke, chairman of the National Negro Publishers Association, in June 1942. Biddle and Sengstacke discovered that they both shared libertarian values. Sengstacke told Biddle that the African-American press would not tone down its news coverage as it had done during World War I, and that the war was not going to stop the press' duty to represent the causes of the African-American community (Biddle, 1962).

Concurrently, the FBI increased its investigation of the African-American press by sending agents to visit various press offices on a daily basis. Many African-American journalists felt this amounted to unofficial censorship by intimidation. According to Buni, the *Courier* blasted the FBI for its visit to the *California Eagle* news offices in Los Angeles, calling it "an obvious effort to cow the Negro press into soft-pedaling its criticism" (Prattis, 1942, p. 6). The African-American press, particularly the *Courier*, ran

consistent news coverage to this effect. Additionally, there were allegations that some African-American newspapers would lose their second-class mailing permits if the government could not persuade them to stop such criticism of the government's actions in their articles. According to Washburn, at the time that Biddle and Sengstacke had reached an agreement on freedom of the press, African-American publishers and editors realized that Hoover was not their only immediate threat as the Post Office was now seriously examining their publications (Washburn, 1986). Several *Courier* vendors complained that their weekly editions of the newspaper were never delivered or had articles cut out.

J. Edgar Hoover compiled a 714 page report on the FBI's investigation of the African-American press in September 1943. The report concluded that numerous African-American publications and journalists were linked to the Communist Party. It suggested that such alleged associations were questionable enough to justify sedition indictments. Hoover then submitted the report to the Department of Justice. The Attorney General would have to approve any sedition arrests or suppressions. No information found in the literature indicates if Attorney General Biddle ever read the report. He immediately replied to Hoover that no sedition charges against the African-American journalists would be made (Biddle, 1962).

Several of the agencies involved in investigation of the African-American press at the onset of World War II began to end such investigations following Attorney General Biddle's announcement. The African-American press had proved its loyalty to many government officials who also realized that the country needed African-American support

to win the war. The government needed to forge positive relationships with the African-American press, which had become increasingly politically powerful and well-respected, in order to obtain continued African-American support (Finkle, 1975).

Several government agencies that had actively investigated the *Courier* during World War II began to end such investigations. The Army had improved its relations with African-American journalists by agreeing to allow African-American war correspondents overseas. President Roosevelt had appointed Colonel Benjamin O. Davis to Brigadier General. The War Department ended censorship of African-American publications at army camps in the fall of 1943 although some unofficial suppression continued at bases in the South until August 1944. The Post Office continued to examine African-American publications throughout the war, but efforts to classify them as unmailable proved futile. The Office of Censorship ended inspections of African-American publications in early 1944 although several issues mailed to overseas vendors were disallowed. Interestingly, President Roosevelt reiterated his orders to Hoover to broaden investigation of “subversive activities” (including the news coverage of the *Courier*) by the end of 1943. According to O’Reilly, the president quickly lost support of many government officials who felt that he had given the FBI too much power to investigate American citizens (O’Reilly, 1982).

The war ended with no indictments of sedition or espionage against the *Courier* staff or any other African-American journalists. The researcher could not find what, if any, information Biddle had acquired to support making a serious claim for indictments of sedition against the Black press or whether he even reported this to the President.

Biddle continually made the case for the necessity of upholding First Amendment rights—even during wartime. Biddle stated in a 1943 annual report: “Subversive doctrines cannot flourish on free speech. The sedition laws have been vindicated in appropriate cases though the Department has guided the broadest conception of freedom of speech and freedom of the press ever embraced by the government in time of war” (Biddle, 1943).

Attorney General Biddle had previously sent a federal prosecution case to the Supreme Court for review. He had expected the convictions to be overturned (Biddle, 1962). The case, *Dunne et al v. United States* (1943), had originally resulted in a conviction under the Smith Act, which made it unlawful to propose military insubordination or to advocate violent overthrow of the U.S. government. The Court refused to hear the case, and the convictions were upheld to Biddle’s dismay. The Court’s refusal furthered Biddle’s decision not to indict targeted African-American journalists because he feared that they would inevitably be convicted in the racially charged social climate of the times.

Hoover continued to request that indictments be made against targeted African-American journalists until the end of the war. Hoover’s investigation lost credibility when the Court, in an opinion by Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy, reversed the conviction of Elmer Hartzel under the Espionage Act on June 12, 1944.

Hartzel wrote and distributed 600 pamphlets that called for the country’s abandonment of its allies and mandated turning the war into a racial conflict. Justice Murphy noted that there was insufficient evidence to support the conviction and to

determine if insubordination, disloyalty, or mutiny of the armed forces had occurred as a result. Murphy stated: “An American citizen has the right to discuss these matters either by tempered reasoning or by immoderate and vicious invective without running afoul of the Espionage Act of 1917” (*Hartzel v. United States*, 1944).

The *Courier* was investigated until late 1944. The newspaper continued to advocate for full integration of the Armed Forces following the many heroic accomplishments of African-American troops in combat during the war. Hoover sent his last report to the Department of Justice requesting charges of sedition to be filed against *Courier* news reporters on February 22, 1945. Hoover’s campaign against the African-American press would abruptly fail again when Assistant Attorney General Tom C. Clark cited the *Hartzel* decision in a memorandum that dismissed the allegations. Attorney General Francis J. Biddle had remained steadfast his belief in a free press, and the *Courier* continued its advocacy through its news coverage for integration of the armed forces and equal rights for African-Americans.

The *Courier* as well as other African-American publications condemned those arrested for sedition and draft evasion. This was predictable given that the press had stressed African-American loyalty in wartime even as it criticized the government’s stand on civil rights issues.

The United States Army and Navy became integrated during World War II. However, full integration of the United States Armed Forces as a whole was not completed until 1948. Achieving total integration following the war mainly involved integrating the Army Air Corps (a small specialized group that would later become the

U.S. Air Force). On July 26, 1948, President Harry S. Truman's signed Executive Order 9981 that fully integrated all branches of the Armed Forces. However, the period from 1941-1948 is not addressed in this study.

### **Overview**

The *Pittsburgh Courier* was officially launched under the editorship of Robert L. Vann in 1910 as a local newspaper in Pittsburgh, PA. The newspaper reached a level of excellence equated with major mainstream white newspapers by 1927. It grew into a national weekly publication by the 1930s, and became known as the African-American newspaper that best exemplified mainstream journalistic standards with particular regard to its editorial page and feature stories.

The *Pittsburgh Courier* fashioned itself as a more moderate newspaper than the other well-known African-American weekly, the *Chicago Defender*. It did so by reporting the news with meticulous accuracy and avoiding sensationalistic reporting following World War I. The newspaper had encouraged local African-American men to enlist in the Armed Forces during the war as a means of improving their economic condition. Publisher and Chief Editor Robert L. Vann saw the newspaper as a means to bring about economic and social improvements in the African-American community. The *Chicago Defender* encouraged Black migration to the North, and Vann used his newspaper to help teach the African-American community how to better themselves when they arrived in Northern cities. The newspaper regularly reported the need for African-American health care workers, teachers, and military servicemen. Education and

military training as a means of improving one's condition was stressed in Vann's editorials.

The literature review discussed how limited Black military participation became a prominent social issue among many African-American academics and journalists during World War I. The newspaper began to transition into political lobbying in 1926 by drafting legislation for a monument honoring African-American servicemen who had died in France during the war. The bill was defeated in the Senate. Representative Hamilton J. Fish (Republican-New York) reintroduced the bill in 1927, but it was defeated in the Senate again.

Vann and his staff began to bring the issue of segregation and racial discrimination in the U.S. Armed Forces to national attention through the pages of the *Courier* following a 1934 War Department report. Not only did the *Courier* organize the African-American community regarding the issue, but it was successful in rallying Caucasian support as well.



**Overall Research Question and Hypotheses.** How did the *Pittsburgh Courier* cover the issue of African-American military participation and integration of the U.S. Armed Forces from 1934 to 1940? More specifically, how did news coverage change from Period 1 (September 1, 1934 through April 30, 1938) as compared to Period 2 (May 1, 1938 through September 21, 1940)?

Hypothesis 1: The *Pittsburgh Courier* will have a significantly higher number of stories that present arguments for greater African-American military participation and racial integration of the Armed Forces in Period 2 than in Period 1.

Hypothesis 2: The tone of news content in the *Pittsburgh Courier* will be significantly more critical in Period 2 than the tone of news content in Period 1.

Hypothesis 3: The number of stories in the *Pittsburgh Courier* that discuss African-American military capability/heroism/patriotism as an argument for greater African-American military participation and integration of the Armed Forces will be significantly higher in Period 1 than in Period 2.

Hypothesis 4: The number of African-American sources found in articles that discuss African-American military participation and integration of the Armed Forces will be significantly higher in Period 1 than in Period 2.

## Chapter III

### Method

This study was a content analysis of news items in the *Pittsburgh Courier* that discussed the issue of African-American military participation and the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces between 1934 and 1940. These items included news and editorials regarding proposed legislation towards full integration of the military and the government response to events that fueled the issue during that period. The study was designed to examine how the *Pittsburgh Courier* covered the issue and how its news coverage of the issue changed over time.

The content analysis, which was both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis, included all news content in the *Pittsburgh Courier* related to the issue of African-American military participation and the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces for each year in the time period specified.

The content analysis period was from September 1, 1934 to September 21, 1940. The start date was chosen because the Army released a study on African-American military participation in that year, and the *Courier* began directly responding to the results of the study as well as other War Department and government statements. In the fall of 1934, the newspaper responded to the study, which provided data that showed that less than 2% of enlisted soldiers were African-American. The *Courier* responded by openly advocating for legislation that would equip two Black infantry units for combat.

The date of September 21, 1940, was chosen as the end date. On this date, the weekly *Courier* provided coverage of nondiscrimination clauses that were added to the Selective Training and Service Act, which was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Sept 16, 1940. As noted earlier, we did not examine the years following the declaration of war in 1941 or the U.S. Armed Forces activities after the war. All branches of the military were fully integrated by the end of World War II in 1945, except the Army Air Corps that was not fully integrated until 1948.

### **Data Collection**

The content analysis provided an examination of all related newspaper content for each year in the specified period. Newspaper coverage regarding African-American military participation and integration of the Armed Forces during the two designated periods was compared. News content from Period 1 (September 1, 1934 through April 30, 1938), the pre-war period, was compared to news content from Period 2 (May 1, 1938 through September 21, 1940), in which the *Courier's* "Army and Navy Equality Campaign" began gaining national and international attention. Two tailed *t*-tests and *chi-square* analyses were conducted.

### **Measures**

News content was coded according to the following categories: (1) article number, (2) time period (Period 1 or Period 2), (3) date (per week), (4) type of article, (5) critical events during Period 1, (6) critical events during Period 2, (7) secondary critical events (dominant or subordinate mention), (8) major themes to support racial integration of the Armed Forces in news coverage during both Period 1 and Period 2, (9) all themes

found in news article (to determine whether there were other identified themes present in an article in addition to the major theme), (10) tone, (11) sources by race, and (12) sources by organization. *It should be noted that, if newspaper article titles or page numbers are not included in the in-text citations or Reference section, it is because the article titles or page numbers were obscured or cut off on the microfiche examined.* Please see Appendix A for a detailed description of each category.

In this study, the terms African-American, Black, and Negro were used synonymously. The terms Caucasian and white were also used synonymously. Such terms were used to illustrate racial differentiation. The researcher acknowledges that such terminology has many different negative connotations. However, for the purpose of the study, the terms were used interchangeably.

### **Analysis**

The researcher was the primary coder. To determine reliability, the researcher trained a second coder who coded a random sample of 41 articles or 11% of all of the articles used in the study. To determine the intercoder reliability, the following formula was used:

$$\text{Krippendorff's } \alpha = 1 - \frac{\text{Observed D (disagreement)}}{\text{Expected D (disagreement)}}$$

The overall reliability scores ranged from an *alpha* of .85 to 1.0 for the variable items measured at the nominal level, and an *alpha* of .85 for the interval measure of tone. See Appendix A for a listing of the reliability scores for each variable.

## Chapter IV

### Results

The primary objective of the content analysis was to identify patterns of reporting on the issue of African-American participation and integration of the U.S. Armed Forces from 1934-1940. How did the *Pittsburgh Courier* cover the issue of African-American military participation and integration of the U.S. Armed Forces from Period 1 (September 1, 1934 through April 30, 1938) through Period 2 (May 1, 1938 to September 21, 1940)? What were the major themes dominant in the *Courier's* news coverage of the issue? How did news content change over time?

#### **Overview: Descriptive Statistics**

This section provides a descriptive overview of the content analysis of the *Pittsburgh Courier* for the period from September 1, 1934 to September 21, 1940. The researcher developed 12 measures for the analysis of the news and editorial content. Appendix A includes a listing and description of each of the variables. Table 1 in Appendix B shows the frequency results for all the variables examined for both time periods. Table 2 in Appendix B shows the frequency results for the critical events variable for both Period 1 and Period 2. The researcher analyzed a total of 368 news content items. There were 148 in Period 1 and 220 in Period 2.

The critical events category included 18 critical events for both periods, with 9 in each time period. Slightly less than half of all articles examined contained a critical event ( $n = 181$ ) as shown in Table 2 in Appendix B. There were 116 news items during

Period 1 that contained an identified critical event, but there were only 62 in Period 2. Three of the 18 critical events resulted in the majority of the overall coverage: (1) the 1938 introduction of the “The *Pittsburgh Courier* Army & Navy Bills” into Congress (34.3%), (2) *Courier* editor Robert Vann’s open letter on February 19, 1938 to President Roosevelt outlining why Negroes deserve equal treatment in the military (15.5%), and (3) the amendment to the National Defense Bill approved by Congress on May 29, 1939 that authorized provisions for the training of Negro aviators (13.8%). None of the other critical events resulted in more than 5.5% of the coverage. These data provides evidence that the events of 1938 and 1939 were high on the *Pittsburgh Courier*’s news agenda.

Many of the news items contained secondary critical events, which were defined as events that were not the main topic of the article. Period 1, 47 articles contained a secondary critical event; in Period 2, 188 articles contained a secondary critical event. The data show that the issue of racial discrimination and integration of the U.S. military was receiving more news coverage and readership responses in Period 2.

The analysis of major themes indicated that racial discrimination in the U.S. military was the predominant theme in all of the articles analyzed. It accounted for the major theme in 53.1% of all articles examined in both time periods. The variable of “other” themes that included efforts towards racial integration, economic opportunity, and African-American inclusion accounted for less than a quarter of all articles examined (20.4%). African-American military capability/heroism/patriotism was the major theme in 13.9% of all articles examined.

## Qualitative Analysis

**Discussion of Articles in Period 1.** The *Courier's* coverage of African-American military participation and integration of the U.S. Armed Forces at the beginning of Period 1 (September 1, 1934 to April 30, 1938) began in response to a published scientific report that concluded that Negroes were incompetent for military service. At this time, the newspaper was covering the following local, state, and national news topics: President Roosevelt's proposed New Deal reforms, labor discrimination, Pennsylvania state elections, the Scottsboro Boys trial, Communist organizing of Negro laborers in the South, the shift in the African-American community from the Republican to the Democratic political party, the heavyweight boxing title championships of Joe Louis, and the lack of federal anti-lynching laws.

An editorial series written by George Schuyler in September of 1934 examined the munitions industry and the increase of sales by American munitions companies to other nations, in particular to Japan. It discussed the implications of such actions on the future of foreign relations. Schuyler discussed the irony that America was selling its munitions technology to other nations, while the government enforced policies in its own military that discriminated against African-Americans by prohibiting them from being trained in armed warfare.

Charles H. Houston, Dean of Howard University School of Law and a member of the NAACP legal committee, subsequently, took issue with the military's "Jim Crow" laws. Houston was outraged following a contradictory public statement by U.S. Army

Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur in which he denied racial prejudice existed in enlistments, the lack of combat training for Black reserve officers, and segregation of regiments. Dean Houston enlisted the assistance of *Courier* publisher and Chief Editor Robert Vann to provide news coverage of discrimination in the military as another area in which African-Americans were being denied their civil rights. Houston was aware that Vann had previously advocated for more recognition of Black servicemen following World War I. Robert Vann was a political moderate involved in local and state politics in Pittsburgh, PA. He was considered a prominent leader, attorney, and businessman in the African-American community locally, regionally, and nationally (Buni, 1974). Vann utilized his public reputation and the *Courier's* growing moderate and integrated readership to begin mobilizing the newspaper to bring this issue out into the open for public scrutiny.

The newspaper began to regularly report on the activities of the War Department. A small article was published in "The World This Week" section on the front page of the December 8, 1934, edition that discussed the proposed soldiers' bonus that was being debated in Congress. The small article stated that the 380,000 servicemen who served during World War I would benefit from the bonus being paid to military veterans, including African-Americans (Vann, 1934). The article was not very noticeable as there was a larger story on the search for the infamous bank robber "Babyface" Nelson and his gang that included an African-American. One week later in an annual report to the President, Secretary of War George H. Dern recommended increasing the commissioned officer ranks to 14,000 and the enlisted ranks to 165,000. Vann responded by urging



readers to begin organizing to demand that African-Americans be included in the proposed increase in enlistments and military officers:

With the recommended increase of the army to 165,000 enlisted men, the number of colored soldiers should be no more than 16,000. These 16,000 or more Negro soldiers should be in all branches of the service and not confined to the infantry and cavalry, as at present. They should be accepted without discrimination or segregation based on color. . . . Organize! Insist! Persist! (Vann, 1934)

Articles and editorials frequently published at this time concerned the “Army Increase” legislation, which *Courier* editors felt would be an economic opportunity for Black servicemen. Additionally, the enactment of the bill to increase recruits for the artillery, engineer, chemical warfare, air and signal corps of the U.S. Army resulted in numerous articles. Discriminatory practices of Army recruiters who accepted whites only despite the need for increased recruitments were also reported. The “Army Increase” bill was passed, and the largest national defense program in the nation’s history was allocated. The newspaper published the following editorial following the enactment on March 2, 1935 that stated:

Unless colored people get busy immediately with their senators and congressmen, the race will derive no benefit whatever from this huge expenditure, which partly comes out of their pockets! There are now less than 4,000 colored soldiers in the army and less than a third of them are real combatant troops. The others are camouflaged servants. Negroes are barred from the artillery, engineers, tank corps, signal corps, coast artillery and other auxiliary services. They will be expected to do their part when another war comes, and yet they are denied the training for their part. (Vann, 1935)

Vann increased his editorial pieces on the subject of segregation in the military following reported events of Negro military heroism. The New Jersey Colored National Guard troops were heralded for an emergency response to a tragic fire that destroyed the

Morro Castle steam liner and killed 133 passengers. The state of New Jersey had organized an all-Negro National Guard regiment in 1931 and had been among the first state governments to enact such laws. After federal government officials reluctantly issued a statement that the heroic troops who responded to the crisis were Negroes, the city editor of the *Philadelphia Independent* reported that the African-American servicemen had saved 425 survivors. This resulted in public support in New Jersey for increasing Negro enlistments in the overall U.S. Armed Forces. Vann commented in a subsequent editorial that it was ironic that the African-American guardsmen were restricted by law from boarding or purchasing travel on the vessel that they had saved. The newspaper then became involved in the push for a Negro National Guard unit in Pennsylvania. By the end of October 1935, the newspaper reported that only six Negro National Guard units and four regular Negro Army units were federally recognized according to the War Department. Subsequent articles urged readers to get involved in demanding that federal laws be passed to establish other Negro units in other states including Pennsylvania, Michigan, California, and Indiana.

Another scathing article was published shortly after the Morro incident that reported on the current duties of the famous 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry regiments and the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Although these regiments were heralded during World War I, after the war they were limited to duties such as cleaning up after white officers and cadets at West Point. They were seldom able to handle a rifle or ride the horses they cared for. The article discussed the War Department's response to an inquiry from the N.A.A.C.P. regarding the matter stating: "The letter dodged the question as to why men of the machine gun

troop of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry were used as grooms on private polo ponies in Washington” (Rouzeau, 1935). A following editorial called for African-Americans to break down the color barrier in the military by voting carefully in the upcoming Congressional elections and urged readers to send a “hundred thousand letters” to President Roosevelt demanding a change in the nation’s protocol of segregation as military policy.

The *Courier* also published an article from an entry copied from the diary of an African-American veteran regarding his service in the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. The article titled “Our Soldier Heroes of Yesterday Now Reduced to Servants of Today” described the unit that became known as the “Rough Riders” who rescued Lt. Col. Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt during the Spanish-American War. Theodore Roosevelt would later become the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States (1901-1909). The article discussed how such heroic soldiers were now, “. . . being used principally as grooms and domestic servants for that part of the regular Army who display their skills at polo” (Vann, 1935). Consequently, Vann became increasingly critical of the Army’s policy that limited national Negro regiments to menial labor.

The *Courier* followed up the article with another entry from the “Old Veteran’s Diary” titled “Deprived of The Justice We Fought For, Race Needs a Stimulant, Says Reader.” The entry stated the following:

The Negro’s patriotic blood pressure is low. He needs a stimulant! He is leaning toward the political party now in power – hoping – trusting, but dubious. The Negro is not eccentric and he’s “Nobody’s Fool”! He realizes very seriously that he is human and mortal. He loves his home and will die for its protection. He appreciates the privileges he enjoys. But just now he’s at the crossroads and he hardly knows whether to turn to the right or left. Will he get a break in the proposed increase in the army? (Andrews, 1935)

Other related news articles during this period focused on the opportunity for disabled Black veterans to apply for the Homestead Program, segregationist practices in the American Legion and other veterans' organizations, and equal treatment of Negroes in the French and Canadian military.

The *Courier* also provided extensive coverage of the Ethiopian-Italian conflict beginning in July 1935, and throughout that war. The newspaper covered the volunteering of African-American veterans and airplane pilots for the Ethiopian Royal Air Force. It was the only African-American newspaper to have a foreign correspondent on Ethiopian soil during the conflict. Every edition of the *Courier* throughout the war included multiple news articles regarding Ethiopia's fight to remain the last sovereign African nation. These articles almost always included photos of the Royal Army and Air Force as well as pictures of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, his cabinet, and the royal family. Editor George Schuyler also wrote numerous feature articles regarding the history and customs of the Ethiopian people.

This coverage provides evidence that Vann and his staff used what was happening in Ethiopia to illustrate the military capability, heroism, and patriotism of people of African descent. The newspaper's heavy use of photos created a visual image of African-American military capability. Many Caucasian readers wrote letters to the editor that encouraged and showed support for African-American assistance in defending Ethiopia. In general, American sentiment was in favor of the African country's fight against a major world power. The *Courier* was also very critical of the U.S. government's refusal to sell arms to Ethiopia and its stance of neutrality in these articles. Reporter Floyd J.

Calvin wrote an article titled “Ethiopian Crisis Gives Race Stake in Internationalism,” which discussed American citizens showing a “burning” interest in international policy and the fear that racial prejudice had invaded the Fraternity (League) of Nations. Calvin wrote:

Negro soldiers who lie buried in France, where they died for “world democracy”, must turn in their graves when they hear that their own country, which sent them to their death, has abandoned a small, independent, black country to be gobbled up by a white country which admits its only reason is the need for more land for colonizing its white immigrants. America refuses those immigrants on its own shores, and virtually aids them in taking the black country that is a member of the “world peace organization”, founded by an American president. Such irony! (Calvin, 1935)

Once Japan declared support of Italy’s aggression to take over Ethiopia, the newspaper began receiving numerous letters to the editor from African-American and Caucasian readers volunteering for service in the Ethiopian armed forces.

Following the Presidential Election of 1936, the newspaper began running an increasing number of news articles on the push for the establishment of Negro National Guard units in various states, including Michigan, Indiana, and California. Additionally, conflicting reports regarding tensions developing in Europe and the beginnings of an alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan (later known as the Three Axis Powers), gave the public and the newspaper indications that the U.S. military was preparing for another world war. Vann hoped this would include more African-Americans although no information regarding integrating the military was mentioned by the War Department. Additionally, the newspaper began using wire stories from ANP in which France was asking African-American organizations to adopt resolutions to “oppose any proposal to

turn over any mandated territory” to Hitler’s Germany and to send such resolutions to the League of Nations (*ANP newswire*, October 26, 1936).

Getting public support for legislation to reverse the military’s segregationist policy was now gaining some momentum. Vann wrote a template letter for all readers to use to write their congressmen prior to the convening of the 75<sup>th</sup> Congress in his December 26, 1936, editorial “Season’s Greetings to Congressmen.” The editorial illustrates the newspaper’s position on issues of importance to the African-American community, which stated:

We take this occasion to point out that important legislation to colored people will shortly come up for consideration in the session of the 75<sup>th</sup> Congress, and we urge you, in voting on that legislation to vote in a manner that will commend you to the colored voters in this (district) and State when you again seek office. We are hoping that you will vote “Yes” on the federal anti-lynching bill. We are hoping that you will contend and vote for extension of social security provisions to cover farm laborers and domestic servants (more than half of all Negro workers).

We shall certainly expect you to bestir yourself about the disgraceful and unconstitutional jim crow system and studied racial discrimination in the United States army and navy. Over a billion dollars, much of it out of our pockets, will be spent on these two arms of the service this year. (Vann, 1936)

Much of the newspaper’s national news coverage for the remainder of 1937 focused on the attempt to persuade Congress to pass a federal anti-lynching law such as the article titled “Anti-Lynching Bill before Special Session.” The article discussed the upcoming special session in November, which was predicted to bring about a filibuster in the Senate by southern Democrats, but also thought likely to pass as Mississippi Senator Pat Harrison was backing the legislation. The article also discussed the appointment of Justice Hugo L. Black to the Supreme Court, and the dismay of many African-American

voters when it was revealed that he was a member of the Ku Klux Klan: “They believe the anti-lynching bill will receive some left-handed assistance from the revelation because administration voters will be forced to take definitive action to reassure the large blocs of Negro voters in Northern States” (Cunard, 1937).

However, the *Courier* continued to keep the issue of African-American participation and integration of the U.S. military in the minds of readers by focusing on the Navy and other branches of military service. The newspaper published an article and an editorial in the July 3, 1937, edition regarding individuals and organizations protesting the assignment of a Caucasian officer to head the Pea Island Coast Guard station at Manteo, NC. Vann stated (1937): “Mr. Morgenthau (Secretary of the Treasury) says that the appointment of a white officer is only temporary and that a competent colored officer will be appointed as soon as one is found. But where is one to be found?” The coast guard station had traditionally been an African-American unit with an African-American officer for 58 years. The lack of African-American participation and racial discrimination in service assignments in the Navy became the paper’s focus in August of 1937. Vann stated: “The United States Navy is practically a jim crow institution, with Negroes relegated rigidly to the role of waiters and kitchen boys” (Vann, 1937).

By February of 1938, Vann appears to have become more determined to use the *Courier* to lobby for an end to discriminatory practices in the military. This marked a turning point in the *Courier’s* history. The newspaper became the most prominent advocate of this issue while other African-American organizations were focusing on ending discriminatory practices in labor, housing, and education. Vann published his

open letter to President Franklin Roosevelt on the front page of the February 19, 1938, edition that outlined four arguments for the integration of the military as follows:

The *Pittsburgh Courier* proposes to you, as the commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy:

1. That provision be made for increased enlistment of Negro citizens in the United States navy and that the color bar against Negro seamen be destroyed.
2. That openings be made for Negroes in the air corps of the Army and Navy. The Negro is as daring a soldier as any man.
3. That steps be taken at this time for the formulation of an entire division of Negro combat troops, composed of all the customary services.
4. That opportunities be provided for the training of Negro officers of such division. (Vann, 1938, p. 1)

Vann then surveyed Caucasian university presidents, civic leaders, newspaper editors, politicians, and religious leaders on their opinions on the issue of integration of the U.S. military. Despite death threats, he published the responders' opinions in the Letters to the Editor section of the newspaper from February 23, 1938, to May 7, 1938. The responses of surveyed newspaper editors were published each week according to the region of the country of their publication (e. g., Eastern editors, Midwest editors, etc.). The responses indicated that a growing number of Caucasian professionals were viewing the issue as a great American injustice, but expressed little hope towards a practical solution. Vann's strategy of advocacy through news coverage appears to have been successful as the newspaper's circulations began to increase, and the issue of integrating the military was now receiving even more public attention. . The responses of university and college presidents were run on the front page and continued in the Letters to the Editor section of the March 19, 1938, edition. The article stated:



I am in complete agreement with your ideal of the relation of our colored citizens to the military and naval services. I should like to agree that all branches of the Army and Navy open to colored youth on precisely the same terms as young white men have.” – Joseph H. M. Gray, Chancellor, The American University, Washington, D.C.

Of the 31 replies, which are published, five come from the South, two of these are evasive. The three direct answers are favorable. One, an excerpt from which is reproduced above, is opposed to segregation. (Prattis, 1938, p. 2)

The *Courier* introduced its formal campaign titled the “Army & Navy Equality Campaign” in its March 5, 1938, edition just weeks prior to the beginning of Period 2 (May 1, 1938). This can be seen as a turning point in the newspaper’s objective of focusing much of its news coverage on stories and issues that exemplified the unequal treatment of Blacks in military service, recruitment, and veterans’ programs. The official campaign announcement got formal endorsement from the American Legion of Ohio as reported on the front page of the March 12, 1938, edition, which ran under the headline “White Legion Posts Black *Courier* Fight” (Vann, 1938, p. 1).

Two weeks later on March 28, 1938, the newspaper published its “Ten Cardinal Points in the Fight for Army & Navy Equality” on its front page. Consequently, Robert Vann was invited to meet with President Franklin D. Roosevelt on April 26, 1938. In the invitation, the President agreed to end racial discrimination and segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces in the invitation. However, the President did not take immediate action, and the actual face to face meeting did not take place until October 28, 1938. The newspaper began increasing its news coverage on the issue following the empty promises of the President.

The newspaper published an alarming article in the April 30, 1938, edition based on the War Department's official figures. The article determined there was a grave inconsistency regarding African-American participation in the military:

Negroes constitute approximately 10 percent of the nation's population. BUT IN THE REGULAR ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES THEY CONSTITUTE LESS THAN TWO AND A HALF PER CENT OF THE TOTAL!! (1,208 Negro Soldiers in the U.S. Army! *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 30, 1938)

Congressman Hamilton J. Fish volunteered to assist Vann with drafting and proposing legislation based on the *Courier's* "Ten Cardinal Points" campaign. Fish introduced the legislation into the U.S. Congress for discussion, and the N.A.A.C.P. finally formally endorsed the *Courier* "Army Bills" as reported in Vann's editorial in the same edition. General public support of the *Courier's* campaign to end racial discrimination in the military continued to gain support, and the *Courier's* circulation rose from a net paid circulation of 147,847, as determined by the Audit Bureau of Circulations in June of 1937, to almost 200,000 by the end of the period.

**Discussion of Articles in Period 2.** In Period 2, which began on May 1, 1938, the newspaper garnered support from several Caucasian politicians in its "Army & Navy Equality Campaign." The *Courier* summarized the responses of prominent white Americans who were unaware of racial discrimination in the Army and Navy. The consistent publishing of the survey responses appears to have influenced the President's decision to agree to meet with Vann to discuss the issue. A week before the editorial "President Roosevelt Says 'Yes'" was published, Vann had been formally invited to meet with the President. In the editorial, Vann stated:

This drive was launched in February and has been swiftly, intelligently, and consistently prosecuted. Not only have we stimulated the drive editorially and in our news columns, but we have written personally to every United States Senator and Representative, every college president, every politician of prominence, every State governor, and every newspaper editor in the country asking their opinion and support.

The response has been surprisingly gratifying as the replies carried in this paper each week have indicated. Most prominent white Americans were entirely unaware of the discrimination in the army and navy, but at least 90 per cent of them favor its immediate end. (Vann, 1938)

That month the newspaper also focused its news coverage on the U.S. Senate

authorized increase in the allotment of enlisted men to the Army Air Corps.

Additionally, there were numerous articles published regarding the appointment of Col.

Benjamin O. Davis, an African-American, to commander of the 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the New

York National Guard. The newspaper also ran the headline “‘Army Bill Fight Just

Begun’ – Hamilton Fish” on the front page of its May 21, 1938, edition that discussed

Representative Hamilton Fish’s reading of the *Courier* bills into the Congressional

Record, which stated:

Congressman Fish indicated his belief that The *Courier*’s bills will be passed by the Congress, by stating in the Record that the balance of political power is held by Negroes in several focal States, provided “the colored people in the North, and in such states as New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, make their wishes known.” He also declared that: “The fight has just begun to enact them into law and will not stop until the objectives have been accomplished! (Schuyler, 1938)

Articles and editorials were also published on the Wages and Hours Bill and its eventual

enactment into federal law later in June 1938. In such articles, the *Courier* staff

discussed how the passage of the law had the potential to increase African-American

earning power.

Vann again promoted the military as an economically viable career for African-Americans. The newspaper shifted to reporting on African-American employment including discrimination in wages, hiring, and promotion practices, and emphasized the political struggle for the passage of anti-lynching legislation throughout much of the summer of 1938. The article “Only Two Colored Have Standard Military Corps” (Lautier, 1938) reported that there were only two institutions that had programs to prepare African-American reserve officers for a career in the military service. The institutions were reported as Howard University and Wilberforce University where the trainees earned a wage of 72 cents per day. The article written by reporter Louis Lautier was one in a series of articles specifically on the military in terms of career training during July and August 1938. The series also included the articles “32,000 Get Military Training in U.S., But Only 250 Are Colored, Lautier Proves” and “If Navy Adds to Personnel, Race Must Ask ‘Break’” (Lautier, 1938).

The *Courier's* coverage shifted again by the fall of 1938 as more international news was being reported by all news organizations. The threat of another world war became prominently exemplified when the newspaper ran the headline “French, British Feared Black Troops Loyalty” on October 8, 1938. The lead article discussed both European nations’ use of Black colonials playing a significant role in their military operations against the rising German threat. The following week, the newspaper ran the article “There Is Not a Negro Marine Anywhere” that discussed the War Department’s rigidly guarded policy of racial discrimination within other branches of the military:

While the naval expansion program is being carried out to provide adequate defense for national security, the Marine Corps, the naval land force, rigidly maintains a policy of racial discrimination with respect to personnel.

Colored persons are as effectively barred from holding a commission or enlisting in the Marine Corps, as if they were prohibited from doing so by law.  
NO "BLACK" MARINE. (Lautier, 1938)

Ironically, although Blacks were being recognized for their military capabilities in Europe, at the same time it was reported that the Oklahoma Supreme Court had upheld a ruling regarding the use of the word "nigger" in October 1938. The Court stated that the word was constitutionally acceptable and should not be viewed as an insult. Editor Vann would then meet with President Roosevelt on October 28, 1938, regarding racial discrimination in the military although no immediate action on the issue would be initiated by the President ("Courier Editor, Discusses Farm Bill, Negro Division with President Roosevelt," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1938, p. 1).

The examination of articles published at beginning of 1939 indicates that the newspaper began to focus on the New Deal reforms. The *Courier* ran many articles on the inconsistencies in how the new federal policies and programs were being applied to the American public. Once thought to be of assistance to African-Americans, the *Courier* cited such reforms as another example of segregationist policy by the government (Vann, 1938). A new anti-lynching bill was drafted and introduced into Congress after several African-American newspapers (including the *Courier*) ran articles on the hypocrisy of Americans who were outraged and dismayed at news of the hangings of European Jews by the Nazi regimen.

The *Courier* published a draft of new legislation to be introduced into Congress. The proposed legislation would amend the Civilian Pilot Training bill. The newspaper ran a front page article titled “Pilot Training Bill Amended in House, 71-53” in its April 29, 1939, edition. The article reported the adoption of an amendment to the Civilian Pilot Training bill, which prohibited racial discrimination in aviation training. This was heralded as a legislative victory that had eliminated the “whites only” policy regarding aviation training (Lautier, 1939). On May 12, 1939, the *Courier* then demanded integration of the Marine Corps in addition to the Army and Navy, and influenced the introduction of a separate bill to authorize commission of African-American cadets in the Marine Corps on May 12, 1939. The newspaper’s advocacy resulted in small gains to its initial 10-point platform on integration of the military when Congress agreed to provide federal money to fund military aviation training programs at a selection of historic Negro colleges and universities. The newspaper began to gain more endorsements from political leaders and civic organizations, both Black and Caucasian, as a result of its relentless coverage of the issue. See previous Discussion of Articles in Period 1.

The *Courier* refocused some of its news on lighter subjects in the summer of 1939. The possibility of Major League Baseball opening its doors to African-American baseball players and the national public debate on the issue became the central subject of much of its coverage. In addition, the paper ran stories on the World’s Fair that opened in July of 1939 in New York City—the first world’s fair to be desegregated. However, on August 5, 1939, Vann ran an editorial on August 5, 1939, that criticized and openly challenged the African-American clergy and their churches for not getting more involved

in the efforts to end racial discrimination in the military. However, by the end of the summer all news coverage became targeted towards international news and the growing conflict in Europe.

The *Courier* published numerous articles on the issue of greater African-American participation and integration of the Armed Forces prior to the onset of the predicted world war. Vann's editorials became less critical in tone as he saw the opportunity it presented to achieve potential compromise on integration of the military. Following Britain and France's declaration of war against Germany on September 3, 1939, Vann and the newspaper staff regarded the announcement as a sign of probable U.S. involvement and an optimistic opportunity to force the issue of integration of the military. The newspaper ran several articles in its September 9, 1939, edition regarding the war, including a front-page story titled "France uses Black soldiers in trenches, on sea, in air; millions called to colors:"

Black citizens of France, treated and regarded as equals in the French Republic, trained in every way for service in the army and navy and air corps of their country, with the door of opportunity open from the bottom to the top, from the position of private to that of general, leap to the defense of their country.

Black Americans have the same sense and feeling of loyalty to their country. But, unlike France, America refuses to open the doors of opportunity to the black American in the army, navy, and air corps . . .

Is the United States going to continue to keep the door closed with black men clamoring to give all that they have of brains and brawn to their country?  
(Schuyler, 1939, p. 1)

Weeks after the announcement of war in Europe, the newspaper ran an article, which reported that the Civil Aeronautics Authority named two Negro universities, North Carolina A & T and West Virginia State College and Institute, to participate in its military aviation training program (Lautier, 1939). By November 1939, government funded pilot training programs were expanded to other traditionally African-American universities including Tuskegee University as reported in the article “Historic Tuskegee Sprouts Wings” on November 18, 1939 (Washington, 1939). Tuskegee later became the premier aviation training program for African-Americans. Consequently, as small gains were being made towards integration in aviation training, the *Courier's* articles and editorials became more critical of Congress and President Roosevelt's inaction to immediately integrate all branches of the military through legislation or by executive order.

Vann's editorial “It Can Happen Here” in the December 9, 1939, edition of the newspaper outlined the *Courier's* strategy of reporting that resulted in the desegregation of military training. Yet, Vann expressed the urgency to continue to advocate for nothing less than full integration of the entire military. Vann's editorial summarized the paper's efforts to end racial discrimination in the military up to that time:

If five years ago anyone had said that in five years young Negroes would be getting training as air pilots by the United States Army Air Corps, there would have been an immediate demand that his head be examined. . . . And yet such training is now available to young Negroes.

This did not happen because white people suddenly became conscience stricken and decided to make a place for Negroes. It happened primarily because of the fight launched several years ago by this newspaper and continued ever since.



We do not contend that the problem is solved because many young Negroes are to be trained as air pilots by the U.S. Army, but we do contend that it is a good beginning.

We are going to keep up the fight because the nation's defense expenditures are costing every man, woman, and child, regardless of color or creed, fourteen (\$14) dollars a year, and we cannot see why Negroes should spend \$14 a year to support an organization they cannot join and which they have no opportunity to rise.

We believe that if we can get enough Negroes and liberal white folks to back us in this fight for the next five years, there will be young colored men serving in all branches of the military and naval service by the end of that period.

The victory over the training of Negro pilots demonstrates that "It Can Happen Here." (Vann, 1939)

The other noted articles in that edition reported promising advances in the Army and Navy towards full integration. The article "Rumor Intensive: Training of Negro Units Used For Regular Army Officers" reported ". . . the purpose of Negro military organizations 'back to training camps' is to develop officers for all-Negro units to serve in the army" (*ANP newswire*, December 9, 1939). Next to this article was another titled "Removal of Unwritten Racial Restrictions in U.S. Naval Code Urged" regarding advances to remove racial restrictions in the Navy that stated:

If colored Americans are to play a part in the navy comparable to that played by colored troops in the army, the removal of unwritten racial restrictions will be necessary. A move in that direction may be made when the 1941 naval appropriation bill is under consideration in the House Appropriations Committee. (Lautier, 1939)

The *Courier* "Army & Navy Bills" became the platform for the National Negro Publishing Association, which was founded in February 1940. Additionally at this time, Congress and President Roosevelt were being pressured by increasing public demands for U.S. involvement in the European conflict. The newspaper began to increase its coverage

of the issue of integration of the Armed Forces following a War Department report that the country was not prepared for another world war and needed to increase its military ranks

The Army then issued a statement regarding its policy of segregation citing *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) in June 1940. This was met with national and international outrage. The *Courier* published numerous articles throughout the summer of 1940 that provided arguments against the Court's "separate but equal" doctrine. The African-American and international communities' reaction to the Army's statement, along with President Roosevelt's lack of action on the issue, became the final catalyst for a full political debate on total integration of the military by July 1940. The discussion centered on the addition of nondiscrimination clauses to be written into the Selective Training and Service Act during a special session of Congress in August 1940.

Senator Robert Wagner and Representative Hamilton Fish called for the absolute abolishment of "discrimination against any person on account of race or color" as they introduced a revised version of "Army & Navy Bill" into Congress. The revised legislation stated that Negroes would be allowed in every branch of the military, Negro reserve officers would be eligible for combat duty, and that training of Negro pilots would be allowed. The amendment built upon the original 1937 Mobilization Act that specified the utilization of African-Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces, but extended such utilization to areas of service previously restricted to "whites only." In his September 14, 1940, editorial, Vann discussed the recent announcement of the establishment of Negroes in the coast artillery, anti-aircraft, field artillery, engineer, and

quartermaster regiments in the Army. He also discussed the 15-year struggle to end racial discrimination in all branches of the military by publishing excerpts from his editorial titled “A National Disgrace” that had been originally published in the August 5, 1926, edition of the newspaper:

The *Pittsburgh Courier* began nearly fifteen years ago to BUILD SENTIMENT among Negroes to demand a square deal for Negro youth in the armed forces of the Republic.

On August 5, 1926, in an editorial entitled “A National Disgrace,” this newspaper fired the opening gun in its long campaign for justice for Negroes in the armed forces, saying:

“It is exceedingly doubtful whether in all modern history there has been a single instance of more studied insult and discrimination than that of the War and Navy Departments toward the Negroes in the two services . . . .”

Editorially The *Pittsburgh Courier* repeated this indictment from time to time, keeping the issue FRESH in the minds of the people.

Each year INCREASING SPACE was devoted to this issue; more time and money expended on arousing colored and white opinion to the viciousness and enormity of this discrimination, until it became a NATIONAL ISSUE.

The *Pittsburgh Courier* was not satisfied with mere editorial expressions and feature articles.

It interrogated every editor, educator, and politician of prominence in the United States; drew up LEGISLATION designated to rid the Army and the Navy of the incubus of Negrophobism and discrimination, and had these bills INTRODUCED IN CONGRESS, started the people writing letters to their Congressmen and Senators in Washington; interested several legislators in CHAMPIONING the cause. (Vann, 1940)

The Selective Training and Service Act became law on September 16, 1940. It established the protocol for drafting and training all eligible males regardless of race into all branches of the United States Armed Forces. Although the law technically excluded

the Army Air Corps and other specialized branches of the military in its formal language, it did eliminate official policies that specifically prohibited African-Americans from training opportunities in most areas of service. More importantly, it laid the groundwork for the eventual full integration of all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces.

### **Hypothesis Tests**

The researcher examined how the *Pittsburgh Courier* covered the issue of African-American military participation and integration of the U.S. Armed Forces from 1934 to 1940 and how that coverage changed from Period 1 to Period 2. Two-tailed *t*-tests and *chi-square* tests were conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between number of articles, tone of the articles, major themes, sources by race, and type of articles in Period 1 and Period 2.

**Hypothesis 1.** The *Pittsburgh Courier* will have a significantly higher number of stories that present arguments for greater African-American military participation and integration of the Armed Forces in Period 2 than in Period 1.

Table 1 shows that in Period 2 (May 1, 1938 – Sept 21, 1940) significantly more stories focused on military participation and integration than in Period 1 (Sept 1, 1934 – April 30, 1938). The researcher analyzed a total of 368 news items focused on the issue of African-American military participation and integration of the Armed Forces. News items examined in period 1 totaled 148 or 40.2% of all articles. Analysis of news items examined in Period 2 totaled 220 or 59.8% of all articles. Table 1 shows that the number of articles focused on the issue of African-American military participation and integration

of the U.S. Armed Forces was significantly higher in Period 2 than in Period 1.

Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

**Table 1**

*Two-tailed t-test for Number of Articles Urging Integration of the U.S. Armed Forces in Period 1 and Period 2*

<u>Period 1</u>	<u>Period 2</u>			
( <i>n</i> = 148)	( <i>n</i> = 220)	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>			
74.50	184.50	218	-20.59	< .001

**Hypothesis 2.** The tone of news content in the *Pittsburgh Courier* will be significantly more critical in Period 2 than the tone of news content in Period 1.

The category of tone was found to have an almost equal percentage of articles that were “critical” in tone (37.4%) and “neither critical nor uncritical” in tone (35%) for both periods combined. Other variables for tone were excluded as the *n* for these variables was too small.

A two-tailed *t*-test was conducted to analyze the effect of tone for Period 1 as compared to Period 2. The *t*-test indicated that there was no significant difference in the tone of the articles that were “critical” or “neither critical nor uncritical” in tone in Period 1 as compared to Period 2 [ $t = .166$ ,  $df = 364$ ,  $p$  (2-tailed) < .001]. The Means for Period 1 ( $M = 2.59$ ) and Period 2 ( $M = 2.57$ ) are within .02 of each other. This supported the *Courier’s* reputation for its objective news reporting. Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

**Hypothesis 3.** The number of stories in the *Pittsburgh Courier* that discuss African-American military capability/heroism/patriotism as an argument for greater African-American military participation and integration of the Armed Forces will be significantly higher in Period 1 than in Period 2.

The category of major themes to support the argument of racial integration of the Armed Forces were denoted as African-American military capability/heroism, African-American patriotism, racial discrimination, segregation as military policy, civil rights, democratic principles, and other themes. The variables of African-American military capability/heroism and African-American patriotism were combined into one category noted as African-American capability/heroism/patriotism for the purpose of analysis. Additionally, the variables of segregation as military policy, civil rights, and democratic principles were combined into one variable noted as civil rights. The variable of other themes was excluded.

A *chi-square* test was conducted on the major themes that had a significant *n* comparing Period 1 and Period 2. The test compared the following three variables: (1) African-American capability/heroism/patriotism, (2) racial discrimination, and (3) civil rights. The test indicates a significant overall change in which news items on racial discrimination increased significantly in Period 2 while the major themes of civil rights and African-American military capability/heroism/patriotism declined. The shift is evident in an editorial that discussed a War Department report regarding espionage charges that were brought against several servicemen who were naturalized citizens, having emigrated from other countries. The editorial highly criticized the War

Department as these individuals had been afforded all the opportunities of military service, yet the military upheld and enforced discriminatory policies against African-American citizens based on their race. Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

**Table 2**

***A Comparison of Presenting Arguments for Integration of the U.S. Armed Forces in Period 1 and Period 2***

Major Themes	Period 1 ( <i>n</i> = 117) %	Period 2 ( <i>n</i> = 175) %	Total ( <i>N</i> = 292)
African-American capability/heroism/patriotism	22.2	14.3	
Racial Discrimination	50.4	77.7	
Civil Rights	27.4	8.0	

$\chi^2 (2, N = 292) = 27.01, p \leq .001$

**Hypothesis 4.** The number of African-American sources found in articles that discuss African-American military participation and integration of the Armed Forces will be significantly higher in Period 1 than in Period 2.

The researcher identified the news sources by race. The use of only African-American sources and the use of both African-American and White (Caucasian) sources in a story was tied at 42.3% in both periods combined. The newspaper used only white (Caucasian) sources in 8.2% of all articles during both time periods.

Sources by race included the following variables for analysis: African-American sources only, both African-American and white (Caucasian) sources, white (Caucasian) sources only, racial unidentifiable sources, and non-African-American/non-white (Caucasian) sources. Frequency tests indicated that the variable of African-American sources only ( $n = 158$ ) and the variable of both African-American and white (Caucasian) sources ( $n = 158$ ) were equal in frequency for both periods. A *chi-square* test was conducted on the category of sources by race comparing Period 1 and Period 2. The variables of white (Caucasian) sources only, racial unidentifiable sources, and non-African-American/non-white (Caucasian) sources were combined into the variable of white (Caucasian) sources for analysis.

The test indicated some significance regarding the variables of African-American sources and both African-American and white (Caucasian) sources. Each of these variables was found in a significantly greater number of articles in Period 2 than in Period 1. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was rejected.

**Table 3**

***A Comparison of Sources by Race in Period 1 and Period 2***

Sources by Race	Period 1 ( $n = 148$ ) %	Period 2 ( $n = 220$ ) %	Total ( $n = 368$ )
African-American sources	44.5	41.8	
Both African-American and Caucasian sources	36.5	47.3	
White (Caucasian) sources	19.0	10.9	

$\chi^2 (2, N = 368) = 6.57, p \leq .05$



The researcher also examined the type of article category. The researcher found that only two types of articles were significant for analysis, which accounted for 92.1% of all news items examined. Traditional news articles resulted in 70.6% and editorial pieces resulted 21.5% of all articles examined across both periods. The researcher analyzed these types of article variables comparing Period 1 and Period 2, and found that there were significantly more news articles in Period 2. This was anticipated as earlier tests indicated a greater number of news items in Period 2. The editorial pieces examined did not increase nor decrease in number or significance when comparing both periods because the editorial page was published once per week. The number of editorial commentary pieces in Period 1 ( $n = 40$ ) is statistically equivalent when comparing the number of editorials in Period 2 ( $n = 39$ ).

**Table 4**

***A Comparison of Type of Article in Period 1 and Period 2***

Type of Article	Period 1 ( $n = 131$ ) %	Period 2 ( $n = 207$ ) %	Total ( $n = 338$ )
Traditional news article	69.5%	81.2%	
Editorial commentary	30.5	18.8	

$\chi^2 (1, N = 368) = 6.13, p \leq .05$

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to analyze the news content of the *Pittsburgh Courier* from 1934-1940 to determine how the issue of the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces was covered and advocated for by the leading African-American national weekly newspaper.

Journalism history is often understood in terms of Euro-centric media traditions. The multicultural or ethnic press is often excluded or limited in such discussions, denying it its proper place in American journalism tradition. The study provided an overview of the newspaper's function as an important institution in American journalism and American history. The findings of this study included evidence of how the *Pittsburgh Courier* covered segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The study brings attention to the *Pittsburgh Courier's* central role in changing the history of the United States military and the nation by tracing the significant events heralded by the newspaper. It also illustrates the less known contributions that the newspaper made towards integration, equal treatment, and opportunity for African-American servicemen and women. The *Courier's* news coverage, editorials, and advocacy efforts eventually led to President Harry S. Truman's signing of Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948, providing for equal treatment and opportunity for African-Americans in all branches of military service.

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States has been called the political, legal, and social struggle by African-Americans to gain full citizenship rights and equal access. It has been stated that this was the first and foremost challenge to segregation in U.S. history. This study provided evidence that a prior movement for equal citizenship and opportunity preceded the Civil Rights Movement.

The *Courier's* early efforts towards recognition of African-American military servicemen were outlined in detail. The important events following World War I were illustrated. The publisher and staff of the *Courier* utilized its pages to advocate for social change during a very racially charged social climate. This was during a time in American history when "separate, but equal" laws governed the nation and racial unrest prevailed.

### **Discussion**

This study provided a perspective on how the *Pittsburgh Courier* utilized its news coverage to document racial discrimination in the military and advocate for integration of all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. It analyzed the newspaper's efforts to bring public attention to this injustice and how it garnered public support for change of the U.S. military's policies of segregation and racial discrimination.

A major finding is that this issue was covered consistently and extensively by the *Pittsburgh Courier* during the Great Depression and the pre-World War II years. The newspaper's advocacy effort to end racial discrimination in the military was unparalleled.

The researcher examined each weekly edition of the *Pittsburgh Courier* for a six-year time period. A total of 312 editions of the newspaper were examined resulting in 368 articles relating to the issue of African-American military participation and

integration of the Armed Forces. News content from Period 1 (September 1, 1934, through April 30, 1938), the Great Depression pre-war period, was compared to news content from Period 2 (May 1, 1938, through September 21, 1940), the beginning of the *Courier's* "Army & Navy Campaign for Equality". Two tailed *t*-tests and *chi-square* analyses were performed.

The news content examined was primarily placed on the front page, national news section, and editorial page. Interestingly, the researcher also analyzed news items related to the issue in other sections of the newspaper including the "Church News" and "Woman's World" sections during the pre-war era. The researcher found that Period 2 contained significantly more news content on the issue.

Another major finding of this study was that the *Pittsburgh Courier* was critical in its coverage of the issue throughout the time period examined. The newspaper was especially critical of the U.S. War Department, Congress, and the President. News articles and editorials related to the issue were consistently critical from 1934 (following the War Department's release of a study that determined that African-Americans were intellectually inferior and incapable of most military duties) until nondiscrimination clauses were added to the Selective Training and Service Act in 1940. The newspaper editorials also encouraged readers to petition political leaders regarding the matter and to consider the issue when electing officials.

Criticism of the military's racially discriminatory and segregationist policies was more frequent during politically decisive moments and less frequent at other times. The researcher found that *Courier* Publisher Robert Vann was very strategic in determining

when to run articles and editorials that were more critical and when to publish objective facts to illustrate his criticisms. For example, fewer news items on the military's desegregation were published during periods when there were critical points in legislative battles on other issues of importance to the African-American community, such as the Congressional debate to enact a federal anti-lynching law that peaked in the late-1930s. More critical news coverage of the issue was published prior to state and national election periods.

The researcher found that the *Courier* conducted a vigorous campaign to end racial discrimination and to integrate the military. The newspaper's goal was to influence its readers' evaluations of the issue. For example, Vann deliberately published an open letter to survey Caucasian journalists, civic and religious leaders, businessmen, and politicians regarding their opinions on the issue after its introduction of the "Army & Navy Campaign for Equality." This served to influence how both African-American and Caucasian readers evaluated the issue by publishing the considerations and evaluations of prominent public figures.

The researcher found that the *Courier* portrayed the issue of racial discrimination in the military and the argument for integration differently at different periods. For example, the analysis of major themes showed that news coverage emphasized African-American military capability, heroism, and patriotism almost evenly throughout both periods examined. A review of these news articles indicates that this theme was emphasized in the *Courier* when reports were published that negated African-American military capability, when there was mention of the performance of African-American

troops in World War I, or when mainstream news organizations (specifically news wires) published articles regarding the heroism and military capability of people of African descent in other countries. Examples of this include: the Morro Castle steam liner incident, the combat performance of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry regiments and the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry in World War I, coverage of the Ethiopian-Italian conflict, and news reports on the performance of Black servicemen in the French, British, and Canadian militaries. The issue was characterized as an injustice to African-Americans as there was evidence that people of African descent were highly capable to engage in military combat and should not be denied adequate training in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The research also showed that there was a connection between the concepts of racial discrimination in general and integration of the military as a residual benefit. The tying of these concepts is highly evident in the content analysis. What this suggests is that *Courier* readers did not need to be familiar with the presence of segregation policies in the military because the newspaper's coverage of the issue consistently connected the concept with overall racial discrimination against African-Americans in the United States.

### **Contributions to the Literature**

The study has made a contribution to mass communication research as there have been few content studies on the African-American press. Additionally, there have been few studies on the issue of racial discrimination in the military and integration of the U.S. Armed Forces before World War II. This study is the first to specifically analyze how this issue was reported in the African-American press and advocated for during the

period between the two World Wars. There is also little literature that completely illustrates the history of how this issue was reported in the press prior to World War II. It provides scholars with a view of what was happening regarding the political struggle to end segregation in the military after World War I. It also illustrates how small gains towards full integration of the U.S. Armed Forces were achieved prior to the *Courier Double V Campaign for Equality* in 1941.

It is important to examine how the press can be a catalyst of social advocacy and public policy change. This study provides empirical evidence of how the issue of segregation and racial discrimination in the military was covered by the *Pittsburgh Courier* and how such news coverage contributed to historic social, legal, and policy change in the United States.

The African-American press was originated to create a space where news, public views, and issues of importance to the African-American community could be disseminated. Such news was often excluded in mainstream newspapers. Thus, from its beginnings under Robert Vann's ownership in 1910, the *Courier* provided coverage and commentary to fill in the gaps often left by mainstream local, national, and international news organizations. It must be noted that what made the *Pittsburgh Courier* distinctive from other African-American newspapers is that it had a significant integrated readership. Although other African-American newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* and the *Amsterdam News* also had integrated audiences, the *Courier* was known as "the *New York Times* of Negro news" because of its investigative news reporting and editorial standards.

The newspaper began publishing articles regarding the integration of the U.S. military following World War I. However, it began to focus particularly on this issue following public statements made by War Department officials regarding African-American servicemen in 1934. At the suggestion of Howard University School of Law Dean Charles H. Houston, Publisher Vann took on the effort to bring salience to this issue through his newspaper's coverage. The unequalled efforts of the *Pittsburgh Courier* ultimately led to historic social, legal and military policy changes.



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## Appendix A

### Thesis Codebook

This codebook will provide a listing and definitions of the categories used in the content analysis research for this thesis.

The categories are as follows:

#### **Article #**

Each article containing subject-related content was assigned a number in sequential order beginning with “1.”

#### **Time (Krippendorff’s *alpha* reliability coefficient = 100%)**

This category is defined by two (2) time periods that will be observed. Period 1 will begin September 1, 1934 and end April 30, 1938. Period 2 will begin May 1, 1938 and end September 21, 1940.

01 – Period 1

02 – Period 2

#### **Date**

Dates were categorized according to the day, month, and year (e.g. February 16, 1938 will be listed as 16/2/38). The date category begins with the newspaper containing subject-related content that was published closest to the start and end dates of the time period observed.

#### **Type of Article (Krippendorff’s *alpha* reliability coefficient = 100%)**

01 – News story (any article reporting news that does not analyze the story nor is an editorial/commentary piece)

02 – New analysis (an article that breaks an issue down into several parts for thorough examination)

03 – Editorial/commentary (an article in a publication expressing the opinion of its editors or publishers)

04 – Published reports (a formal account of the proceedings or transactions of a group that submits or relates the results of the group's considerations concerning the issue of African-Americans and military service.)

05 – Letters to the editor (letters written by readers in response to the issue of African-Americans and military service)

**Critical Events – Period 1 (Krippendorff’s *alpha* reliability coefficient = 100%)**

- 01 – Response to 1934 report on statistics of Blacks in Army
- 02 – 1935 proposed legislation for two Black infantry units in Pennsylvania
- 03 – Legislation introduced to Congress re the Army Bonus payment to veterans of armed services
- 04 – 1938 *Courier* attacks exclusion of Blacks from all officer corps and several branches of military with call for an all-Black Army division and Black officers to lead it
- 05 – Proposed armament increase by President Roosevelt due to Chinese-Sino War and Germany’s propaganda campaign publicly viewed as a possibility of US involvement in another world war
- 06 – Open letter to President Roosevelt outlining why Blacks deserve equal treatment in the military February 16, 1938
- 07 – 1938 response to War Department claims that Blacks had poor combat performance during World War I
- 08 – 1938 *Courier* surveys congressmen, newspaper editors, religious and civic leaders, and university presidents both Black and white on the issue of integration of military
- 09 – 1938 introduction of the “The *Pittsburgh Courier* Army Bills” into Congress

**Critical Events - Period 2 (Krippendorff’s *alpha* reliability coefficient = 100%)**

- 10 – Appointment of Col. Benjamin O. Davis Sr. to Commander of the 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry regiment in May 1938 to take effect July 1, 1938
- 11 – Vann meets with President Roosevelt on October 28, 1938
- 12 – April 1939 *Courier* demands integration of the Marine Corps in addition to the Army and Navy Bills, and influences the introduction of a separate bill to authorize commission cadets in Marine Corps May 12, 1939
- 13 – Amendment to the National Defense Bill approved by Senate and House May 29, 1939 to authorize provision for the training of Negro aviators
- 14 – Britain and France declare war on Germany beginning World War II on September 3, 1939
- 15 – National Negro Publishing Association founded in February 1940, and outlines issue of segregation in military in its platform
- 16 - Army issues statement regarding its policy of segregation citing *Plessy v. Ferguson* June 1940
- 17 – African-American community’s reaction to 1940 legislation and Roosevelt’s lack of action on the issue July 1940
- 18 – September 16, 1940 nondiscrimination clauses written into the Selective Service Act

**Secondary Critical Events (Krippendorff's *alpha* reliability coefficient = 85%)**

This category determines whether additional critical events are discussed in an article other than the main critical event.

- 01 – Dominant mention (defined as an event discussed in at least 50% in the article)
- 02 – Subordinate (secondary event mentioned but not discussed in detail)

**Major Themes to support racial integration of the Armed Forces during both Period 1 and Period 2 (Krippendorff's *alpha* reliability coefficient = 88%)**

This category consists of various arguments to support the integration of the Armed Forces. The major theme of each coded article is listed in this category.

- 01 – African-American military capability/heroism
- 02 – African-American patriotism
- 03 – Racial discrimination
- 04 – Segregation as military policy
- 05 – Civil rights (including voting, rights of citizenship)
- 06 - Democratic principles (including freedom of speech, petitioning Congress, organizing, etc.)
- 07 – Other themes (including efforts towards racial integration, economic opportunity, African-American inclusion/participation)

**All Themes Found in News Article**

This category determines whether there were other themes present in an article in addition to the major theme. Each theme category listed in the above mentioned “Major Themes” section of this Codebook is categorized by “yes” or “no” to determine if that theme was also found in the news article. The cell numbered for the additional theme that corresponds with the major theme of each article is left blank, noting that that the theme corresponding with that column was in fact the “major theme” of the article.

- 01 – Yes
- 02 – No

**Tone of Article (Krippendorff's *alpha* (interval) reliability coefficient = 0.85)**

- 01 – Very critical
- 02 – Critical
- 03 – Neither critical nor uncritical
- 04 – Uncritical
- 05 – Very uncritical



**Sources by Race (Krippendorff's *alpha* reliability coefficient = 100%)**

- 01 – African-American sources
- 02 – White (Caucasian) sources
- 03 – Racially unidentifiable sources
- 04 – Both African-American and White (Caucasian) sources
- 05 – Non African-American or White (Caucasian) sources

**Sources by Organization**

- 01 – President Roosevelt and his Cabinet
- 02 – Governmental officials/politicians/depts.
- 03 – War Department/military sources
- 04 – Former government officials
- 05 – Academic sources
- 06 – Journalistic sources
- 07 – Civil rights advocates
- 08 – Veterans/Veterans groups/associations
- 09 – Other Sources (including civic, business, and religious leaders/organizations, fraternities/sororities, and private individuals)
- 10 – No identifiable source

## Appendix B

Table 1

**Content Analysis Categories in the *Pittsburgh Courier* Sept 1, 1934 to Sept 21, 1940**

<u>Categories</u>	(n=386)	%
<u>Time Period</u>		
Period 1 (Sept 1, 1934 – April 30, 1938)	148	40.2
Period 2 (May 1, 1938 – Sept 21, 1938)	220	59.8
<u>Type of Article</u>		
News story	259	70.6
New analysis	1	.3
Editorial/commentary	79	21.5
Published reports	4	1.1
Letters to the editor	24	6.5
<u>Critical Events</u>		
<b>(See Table 2)</b>		
<u>Secondary Critical Event(s) Present/Mentioned</u>		
Secondary Event(s) present/mentioned – Period 1	47	12.8
Secondary Event(s) present/mentioned – Period 2	188	51.2
No Secondary Event(s) present/mentioned	133	36.0
<u>Major Theme</u>		
African-American military capability/heroism/patriotism	51	3.9
Racial discrimination	195	53.1
Segregation as military policy	32	8.7
Civil rights (including voting, political participation)	13	3.5
Democratic principles (including freedom of speech, petitioning Congress, organizing, etc.)	2	.3
Other themes including efforts towards racial integration, economic opportunity, Negro inclusion and participation	75	20.4
<u>Tone</u>		
Very critical	50	13.7
Critical	137	37.4
Neither critical nor uncritical	128	35.0
Uncritical	23	6.2
Very uncritical	30	8.2
<u>Sources by Race</u>		
African-American sources	158	43.2
White (Caucasian) sources	31	8.2
Racially unidentifiable sources	20	6.8
Both African-American and White (Caucasian) sources	158	42.1
Non-African-American /non-white (Caucasian) sources	1	.3

**Appendix B Table 2**  
**Content Analysis of Critical Events Category in the *Pittsburgh Courier* Sept 1, 1934 to Sept 21, 1940**

<b>Category</b>	<b>(n=181)</b>	<b>%</b>
<u>Critical Events – Period 1</u>		
Response to 1934 report on statistics of Blacks in Army	0	0.0
1935 proposed legislation for two Black infantry units in Pennsylvania	8	4.4
Legislation introduced to Congress re the Army Bonus payment to veterans of armed services	3	1.7
1938 <i>Courier</i> attacks exclusion of Blacks from all officer corps and several branches of military with call for an all-Black Army division and Black officers to lead it	1	0.6
Proposed armament increase by President Roosevelt due to Japanese-Sino War and Germany's propaganda campaign publicly viewed as a possibility of US involvement in another world war	3	1.7
Open letter to President Roosevelt outlining why Blacks deserve equal treatment in the military	28	15.5
1938 response to War Department claims that Blacks had poor combat performance during World War I	1	0.6
1938 <i>Courier</i> surveys congressmen, newspaper editors, religious, civic leaders, and university presidents both Black and white on the issue of integration of military	10	5.5
1938 introduction of the "The <i>Pittsburgh Courier</i> Army Bills" into Congress	62	34.3

**(Table 2---continued on page 89)**

(Table 2---continued from page 88)

Category	(n=181)	%
<u>Critical Events – Period 2</u>		
Appointment of Col. Benjamin O. Davis Sr. to Commander of the 369 <sup>th</sup> Infantry regiment in May 1938 to take effect July 1, 1938	10	5.5
Vann meets with President Roosevelt on October 28, 1938	2	1.1
April 1939 <i>Courier</i> demands integration of the Marine Corps in addition to the Army and Navy Bills, and influences the introduction of a separate bill to authorize commission cadets in Marine Corps May 12, 1939	10	5.5
Amendment to the National Defense Bill approved by Senate and House May 29, 1939 to authorize provision for the training of Negro aviators	25	13.8
Britain and France declare war on Germany beginning World War II on September 3, 1939	6	3.3
National Negro Publishing Association founded in February 1940, and outlines issue of segregation in military in its platform	1	.6
Army issues statement regarding its policy of segregation citing <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> June 1940	2	1.1
African-American community's reaction to 1940 legislation and Roosevelt's lack of action on the issue July 1940	2	1.1
September 16, 1940 nondiscrimination clauses written into the Selective Service Act	7	3.9