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A Glance in their Direction: The New York City Press and their Coverage of African Americans during World War II

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Preface

The sunny morning of Wednesday, April 21st, 1943 foreshadowed a pleasantly warm, spring day in New York City. Many were making their way from the subways or the streets to to work, maybe picking up the latest issue of the *New York Times* or the *New York Herald Tribune* at their local newsstand to check out the latest happenings in the Pacific Campaign or what was happening in the city. However one notable story that absent from the day's paper was that of the Savoy Ballroom, which on Wednesdays was normally reserved for the city's fraternal organization gatherings. But on this April 21st the club had its doors padlocked and officially closed by the New York police department.

The news of its closing would not be found in print until the *Times* printed the story in their voluminous Sunday edition. Normally over sixty pages in length a very small section of the fourteenth page held the headline: "Savoy Ballroom Closed." The three sentence article told in brief how "Harlem's haven for jitterbugs and jazz enthusiasts in the last seventeen years, has been closed to the public as a result of vice charges filed by the police department."[1] It went on to describe that the action was taken by Fourth Deputy Police Commissioner Cornelius O'Leary after evidence was presented by the Army and two New York City police detectives. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) called the closing "unjustified". This was the average amount of space the *Times* tended to commit to news concerning the opening and closing of Harlem nightclubs, if at all. These issues were normally handled by any number of the Negro newspapers which circulated throughout the city including the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *New York Age*, or other publications which addressed news of the city's African-American population.

[1] *New York Times,* "Savoy Ballroom Closed," April 25, 1943.

At this time news concerning African Americans, whether it be the discrimination they faced or the accomplishments they achieved, was normally not to be found in the major presses of New York. Aside from the socialist papers, the dominant newspapers, no matter how liberal, were careful with the amount of space they devoted to stories involving African Americans. They did not see enough appeal in stories solely about its African Americans, or those of the nation for that matter, to garner any substantial interest from their subscribers unless they had a certain angle. If the story involved a black figure of note (on a local or national level) it might receive space on middle section of the paper with maybe five to twenty lines of text in the center margins, if it was about legislation that would alter or affect an established institution it might occupy up to a tenth of the page and move up into the tens or even front pages of the issue, while a juicy criminal exploit or an incident that was simply too large to ignore like a riot had a much better chance of landing in the front pages. It was a criterion that had governed much of the dailies' coverage of African American affairs but had in the past few years begun to slightly give way as the number of incidents meeting said criteria had increased substantially and led to more interest by some writers and editors.

The Savoy Ballroom's closing would be a story that illustrates the presses abidance to its old rules of interest but with more attention paid to the incident as opposed to the racially incensed angle of the black press. Although the initial *Times* article made the Savoy Ballroom seem like just any other nightclub for the city's African American populace, it was certainly not just that. The piece does not mention the Savoy Ballroom's large size, occupying the entire second floor of the building which extended the whole block front on Lenox Avenue from 140th to 141st Street or how such acclaimed musicians as Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, and Erskine

Hawkins had made the ballroom's two bandstands and revolving floor their home.[2] It failed to note the club's grand history as a hotbed of creativity; how "the Susie-Q. Truckin, the Shim Sham, Pecking, the Scrontch and the Lindsay Hop all had their origin in the Savoy and were found there in their highest state of development," and how the wild rhythm of the ballroom was the incubus for the popular Chuck Webb song "Stompin' at the Savoy."[3] The paper was also very scant on information regarding the closing noting only that it was closed on "vice charges" which could lead most uninformed readers to believe it was just another seedy Harlem nightclub down when in fact the ballroom was in many ways the exemplum for proper conduct. Although it had a hard liquor license it did not serve any. It did not employ any dance hostesses for fear of grifting or other backdoor activity and raised the age of admission to eighteen over the allowed age of sixteen. In addition some of the city's prestigious institutions used the Savoy as a meeting place such as St. Ambrose's Roman Catholic Church.[4]Above all it was a place where, as former professional Norma Miller remembered, "you always dressed in your best… that was a must" and any hint of unruliness was not tolerated.[5]

Perhaps most importantly the *Times'* article completely left out how the Savoy was owned and operated by white men [Moe Gale and Charles Buchanan] and catered to a sizeable white clientele who "came uptown to hear superb music and witness "inexpressibly exotic and creative dancing." [6] On an average night about one in five persons at the Savoy were white and dancing by mixed couples was commonplace.[7] Prominent figures from Hollywood and

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[2] Brandt, Nat. In *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press (Sd), 1996. 169.
[3] *New York Daily News,* April 28, 1943.
[4] Bostic, Joe. "What's Behind Savoy Closing?" *People's Voice*, May 1, 1943.
[5] Ernie Smith, *Interview with Norma Miller,* Ernie Smith Jazz Collection, Jazz Oral History Project: "The Swing Era" (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American History, n.d.), 63.
[6]Domenic, Capeci. J. J. (1981). WALTER F. WHITE AND THE SAVOY BALLROOM CONTROVERSY OF 1943. Afro - Americans in New York Life and History (1977-1989), 5(2), 13. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/219940100?accountid=13793
[7] Brandt, Nat. In *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press (Sd), 1996. 170.

Washington were known to frequent the institution including James Cagney, Orson Welles, Marlene Dietrich, Edward G. Robinson, Ex-Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti, President of the City Council Newbold Morris, and some of the Rockefellers.[8] The Savoy Ballroom was one of the very few dance halls and nightclubs of New York City that was truly integrated as, unlike other institutions with African American musical groups or show acts the, dancers, musicians, and clientele of all races intermingled freely.

The *New York Times*' miniscule reporting on the subject would be rectified by the other papers as the NAACP's executive secretary Walter White[9] and several other figures petitioned Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia. Given the involvement of these men in the closing of the institution the dailies quickly took up the story. The *New York Herald Tribune* in particular wrote a comprehensive article which defended the club and extoled its reputation. The article tells, through the testimony of Buchanan, that the only specific charge was an allegation that "a washroom attendant introduced the detective to another man who, in turn agreed to introduce them to some girls."[1011] The paper applauded the fact that although frequented by some high class figures, reportedly including Winston Churchill on his 1931 tour of the USA[12], the establishment allowed anyone to dance the night away for the low cost of between seventy-five and a dollar and ten cents depending on the patron, as Buchanan wanted "to draw the ordinary person with time on his hands and only a few cents of money in his pocket." The article further

[8] *New York Amsterdam News, "Indignation Grows Over Savoy Case,"* May 15, 1943: 1.
[9] Walter White served as the Executive Chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People from 1931-1955 was instrumental in the plight of African Americans of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.
[10] *New York Herald Tribune*, April 28, 1943.
[11] This was a violation of the Administrative Code of New York City, established to preserve the moral character of the city, and moved on after Army, Navy and municipal health representatives complained that between June, 1942 and early March, 1943, one hundred and sixty-four soldiers and sailors allegedly contracted venereal disease from women met at the ballroom. Aside from the "immoral conduct" in their establishment, the management was cited for failing to observe municipal regulations requiring the names and addresses of all employees be filed with the Police Department.
[12] *New York Herald Tribune*, "Harlem to Fight For Reopening Of Dance Hall," April 21, 1943: 14.

stressed the stupidity of the closing citing Walter White's letter to LaGuardia in which White charged the closing stemmed from "discrimination against the citizens of Harlem." Evidenced in how "prior to closing the management had been requested by Deputy Commissioner O'Leary to stop advertising in white newspapers and was required to stop using white dance bands which might attract white people to the Savoy."

That week many white New York publications devoted sections of their paper to the incident and the highlight of the Savoy Ballroom's cultural significance. The *New York Daily News* wrote how "no night tour of New York was complete without a visit to the Savoy" with its guests comprised of some of the biggest people from Hollywood and Washington mixing with the local black residents of Harlem making the place "almost legendary."[13] Despite this attention the majority of newspapers, with the exception of the *Herald Tribune*, made light of the possible racial implications. They reported what they saw were the facts necessary to tell the story, but at the same time careful not to have too many stories and content about racism for fear of agitating the government, their sponsors, or the black populace.

It was up to the city's black publications to bring the racial matter to the forefront. The *New York Amsterdam News* told of the Savoy's closing in a style which made it seem as a slow strangulation on the part of the police department. The paper reported that "persons close to the Savoy management" claimed that police authorities had a long history of distaste for the mixed dancing at the Savoy and that "all kinds of pressure have been brought to bear on the management."[14] The establishment stopped advertising in the white newspapers and stopped booking white name bands in an effort to appease the white authorities and went a step further when they had to discharge their dance hostesses even though Broadway clubs continued to have

[13] *New York Daily News,* April 28, 1943.
[14] *New York Amsterdam News*, "Indignation Grows Over Savoy," May 15, 1943: 1.

them. The police closed the place with a solicitation charge; undone by a newly hired washroom attendant who was hired because their veteran attendant had been drafted. In their mind it was a clear case of racial oppression, a sentiment repeated in a number of the other Negro papers.

The *New York Age* described the closing as, "the darkest gloom over Easter Weekend." Adam Clayton Powell's *People's Voice* took the staunchest stance and provided the most extensive coverage on the closing. The paper went so far as to investigate several white dance halls and running an article on it titled a "PV Exposes Vice and Filth in Downtown Dance Halls." The article asserted that prostitution was rampant in several of the "better" dance halls with the reporter claiming that "after hours" dates were prevalent and dancing was "an excuse for a degenerate form of fornication right on the floor."[15] In conclusion the reporter felt the Savoy was "a Christian youth center" compared to those "flesh joints." Perhaps an exaggeration, but the general point still gets through: the night clubs still in operation were no more respectable than the Savoy.

In the following the week the closing and Walter White'scampaign to re-open the ballroom was followed in most Negro papers but had fallen out of the news with the few reporting LaGuardia's refusal to re-open the establishment and those that did giving it the same amount of space as the *Times* gave the news of the closing. It was not something to attract the sustained attention of the largely white, middle-class readership of the papers. To these papers the story's interest came more from the social standing and legacy of the club more than the racial attitudes at work in its closing. As Dominic Capeci notes "within New York City, the Savoy's significance and Harlem's image, as well as Buchanan's reputation among black spokesmen, sparked local response."[16]

[15] *People's Voice*, May 8, 1943.
[16] Capeci, D. J. J. (1981). WALTER F. WHITE AND THE SAVOY BALLROOM CONTROVERSY OF 1943. Afro -

The Savoy Ballroom's closing illustrates all the factors at play when reporting on matters of race during the war. With its history of illustrious patrons and air of scandal there was a nice hook to draw the unsuspecting reader in. The paper could then elucidate a position on the banality of prejudice within the larger context of the situation while still playing down the racial angle of the incident which could be left to the black press. The Second World War provided not only more incidents that met the "criteria" of stories concerning African Americans but also provided a new topic as discrimination and segregation could became an issue of the war effort. The war was integral in creating new standards as the questions on segregation and the place of discrimination invaded the Armed forces reached new heights among citizens in the states.

This thesis will examine how some of the major, white controlled daily newspapers of New York City reported on African American civil rights activity during World War II in the military and on the home front. I will analyze how these prominent influencers of public opinion perceived the plight at this time and gauge if there was any change in their manner of writing or attention given to African Americans. This will be accomplished through the examination of period newspapers of New York City's stories on African Americans during the war. I will first examine the place of the press at this time, both white and black, and their positions regarding stories of African Americans [Chapter 1]. This is done to provide a fuller understanding of the makeup of the papers used in this thesis and how these makeups can be factored into their manner of reporting the news and within what context African Americans were seen in the eyes of these papers. Next I will examine the African American view of the war in Europe and how the rising discontent over conditions besetting African Americans found an outlet in the new war production that was embodied in the proposed March on Washington culminating in Executive Order 8802 and the establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Committee [Chapter 2]. This

Americans in New York Life and History (1977-1989), 5(2), 6.

section will also examine the proposed march's effects and influence. Next I shall move onto the US entry into the war and how the newspapers addressed the discrimination which Negroes confronted in the draft, the training camps and overseas [Chapter 3]. The following section will examine the press's news campaign on the purported crime wave confronting the city then move to discuss the race riots that broke out across the country with emphasis on Detroit and Harlem and how the Press perceived these [Chapter 4]. The final section will search to see if there was any change in the press's reporting of African Americans after the riot and whether or not these were lasting or temporary until racial tensions were relieved [Chapter 5].

Works such as Neil Wynn's *The African American Experience During World War II* and Nat Brandt's *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII* provide information on the African American position and struggle for civil rights during the war as well as background on their place within the larger history of the US commitment to the war effort and in which this paper will highlight the role of the press. However the bulk of this work shall rely on various articles from newspapers coming out of New York City at this time; these include major papers such as *The New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* as well as the smaller but vital Negro newspapers of the city such as the *New York Amsterdam News* and the *New York Age*. Books illustrating the history of these newspapers and the place of the press during World War II will also be consulted for background information and a better sense of their standing within the society. Such works include Patrick S. Washburn's *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom* as well as his *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II.*

This paper will argue that the city's dailies, faced with a multitude of happenings among African American during the war, was drawn to do a greater amount of reporting on the

injustices faced by Negroes. However when they did write about events that held clear examples of racial prejudice they tried to downplay those aspects, in an attempt to ease anxieties. They printed more stories pertaining to African Americans but attempted to circumvent racial implications in stories of injustices committed towards them. They turned a blind eye on racial bias and discrimination instead tended to focus on printing articles on how the Negroes' dedication to aiding the war effort and how things were getting better for them in an attempt to excise feelings of discontent that could lead to riots or the re-emergence of riots. War was the best and the worst opportunity for African Americans to promote their fight for their civil rights as it was a time when America was in a compromised position. The war gave Americans with a belief that any disunity among its people was a sign of conspiracy and enemy support. The presses reflect this attitude as it was during the war African Americans were mentioned more in the major papers of the city than before but not always in the context or the place they desired to promote their fight.

I: New York City Press at the Onset of War

The newspaper industry in the United States on the eve of its entry into the Second World War was completing a shift begun in the twenties while acclimating itself to fervor of the times. Since the beginning of the twentieth century media outlets had become increasingly consolidated in the hands of a few wealthy owners who could claim numerous papers in various locations, Hearst and Pulitzer being perhaps the two most prominent examples. The financial crisis of the Great Depression had accelerated this by putting a great strain on many newspapers leading to increased buy-outs and mergers. As a result many cities which previously had many local publications to choose from now were left with few, if any, competing newspapers. Between 1909 and 1950 at least 559 dailies in the newspaper cities of America (Chicago, New York, San Francisco, etc.) disappeared through mergers and consolidation.[17]

In the midst of the industry's consolidation came a new sense of obligation. Newspaper editors and bureau chiefs had been fostering a stronger emphasis on professionalism among their reporters; stressing closer adherence to the ethics articulated in the Canons of Journalism adopted in 1923 by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE). Acclaimed American journalist Walter Lippmann, one of the foremost authorities on the principles of journalism during the period, felt that "the work of reporters has thus become confused with the work of preachers, revivalists, prophets and agitators." The public of a democracy, he insisted, needed instead a "steady supply of trustworthy and relevant news." But while reporters were urged to report facts accurately, "they faced an increasing challenge in dealing with divergent sets of 'facts'

[17] Royal H. Ray, "Concentration of Ownership and Control in the American Newspaper Industry" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1951), cited in Harvey J. Levin, "Competition Among Mass Media and the Public Interest," Public Opinion Quarterly 18 (1954): 62.

distributed by public relations agents seeking… to "manufacture" public opinion."[18] The solution many newspapers adopted, on the suggestion of Lippmann, was to bring a strong sense of honesty to their dailies. This was done through such practices as identifying the newspaper's staff and authors of articles, documenting articles, identifying more fully their sources of information, and providing better analysis of events.

At the same time the American Society of Newspaper Editors concluded that newspapers could best serve the "average reader" by presenting more "explanatory and interpretative news." This sanction of not only allowing but encouraging writers to interpret the news they reported was justified, the ASNE declared, because events were "complex" and "moving more rapidly than at any other period in the recent history of the world."[19] Although this decision was arguably made to validate an already progressing phenomenon, prominent, nationally syndicated papers were devoting more space for interpretive reporting and opinion journalism, albeit normally sequestered on clearly marked opinion pages.

In New York City the Depression had put a number of papers out of business and led to the merging of various others in an attempt to stay in business. Nonetheless there were still numerous papers in various languages and fonts fighting to catch the readers' eyes. Over forty newspapers were centered in and published daily in New York with numerous other weekly and monthly publications. The city had more tabloid papers and magazines than other American cities and newspapers in over ten languages.[20] However, in the city that never sleeps two dailies claimed the most prominence in news reporting within the city as well as holding the largest

[18] Leonard, Teel. *The Public Press, 1900-1945: The History of American Journalism*. New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006. 131.
[19] Schudson, Michael. *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*. New York: Basic, 1978. 148.
[20] "List of New York Newspapers". www.nysl.nysed.gov/nysnp/all/431.htm#NewYork

degree of prestige as a paper outside of New York. These were the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune*.

Employees of *The New York Times* in the late thirties believed it to be the pinnacle of journalism. In 1937 the paper had a daily circulation of over 500,000 with its Sunday edition selling almost 770,000, boasted some of the most prestigious names in its editorial and public opinion sections, and held a high degree of reporting in an objective but thoroughly informative fashion. Its competitors, although they would never admit it the best paper of the city, would seldom discount its ability to report the news. This was, in no small part, thanks to Adolph Ochs, owner of the *New York Times* from 1896 until his death in 1935. Although Ochs was not a magnate and did not control radio or film outlets, he contributed more to the *Times* layout, content, and style than any other publisher. Journalist and author Gay Talese notes in his history of *The Times* entitled *The Kingdom and the Power,* how under Ochs the *Times* would become a paper that would "give the news, all the news, in concise and attractive form, in language that is parliamentary in good society, and give it as early, if not earlier than it can be learned through any other reliable medium; to give the news partially, without fear or favor, regardless of any party, sect, or interest involved." He added sections addressing financial news, market information, and court proceedings as well as shunned a good deal of advertising to make room for more news to create a newspaper that was "impartial" and "complete." By the time of his death in 1935 the *New York Times* had gone from a daily circulation of around 9,000 in 1896 to over 465,000.[21]

Now under the command of Ochs' son-in-law Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the paper was completing a minor facelift. In his late forties Sulzberger was "a lean and well-tailored man with

[21] Talese, Gay. *The Kingdom and the Power: Behind the Scenes at the New York Times*. 1969. Reprint. New York: Random House, 2007. 6.

gray hair, alert blue eyes, wrinkles in the right places and finally in a position to make big decisions without having to first clear everything with his father-in-law."[22] Sulzberger promised to never depart from the principles of Ochs but began to initiate some changes, doing his best to keep his changes gradual and quiet to avoid any impression that the paper was moving away from its Ochsian tone. He raised the price of the daily edition from two cents to three cents in 1938, tried to negotiate more with the organized labor of the Newspaper's Guild, and began incorporating more photographs with the paper's articles. Still Sulzberger did not bring any major change to the paper, maintaining its identity as a thorough, accurate newspaper with a slight liberal persuasion. As Talese notes, Sulzberger was "not a monument builder, and he preferred making decisions quietly, taking into account the counsel of his colleagues, and then remaining in the background with the other shrine-keepers and paying homage to the memory of the departed patriarch."[23]

The Times continuing adherence to the principles of Ochs kept it as the paper that reported on as much happening in the world and the city as could fill the pages with a promise that the reader will get the fullest story. This was carried out by the *Times* staff of editors under most notably those of the "bullpen". These were a group of some of the paper's most senior editors who sat in "three or four desks arranged to form a right angle in the southeast corner of the newsroom," and from sundown to sunrise "read the news as it came in and then determined how much of it would be printed and where it would appear in the paper."[24] Guaranteeing that the paper kept with the ideals of Ochs and gave what their public expected of the *Times.*

[22] Talese, Gay, 11.
[23] Talese, Gay, 10.
[24] Talese, Gay, *The Kingdom and the Power: Behind the Scenes at the New York Times*. 1969. Reprint. New York: Random House, 2007. 56.

However this fundamentalism and dedication to being accurate and objective tended to stifle the writing style of its reporters. Their constant awareness of the weight of their patriarch made the articles "cautious", "rigid", and "dull" when compared to the lucidity of other papers. Yet dullness was not seen as a problem as it was "better to be a little dull than to dazzle and distort."[25] Richard Kluger, an authority on media history, claims that the paper's comprehensive but droll content worked in its favor, being "an indispensable tool for serious students of public affairs."[26] It was unspectacular but unmatched services in reporting the news with features like the annual index to the news and the Sunday Section summarizing and analyzing the past week's events helped to keep the *Times* ahead of the *New York Herald-Tribune* and other American newspapers in sales.

In contrast the *New York Herald Tribune* saw dullness as a "cardinal sin". They encouraged their reporters to experiment with "fresh phrases" and "lively verbs" but not be overly ambitious as it is a sign of an insecure craftsman. It gave their editors and reporters more freedom to exercise their craft and create a "well-edited and closely written paper." The *New York Herald Tribune* (or the *Tribune* for short) was a different breed than the Times, it was not as extensive (six pages shorter in its daily edition than the *Times*), was populated more by college-graduates in journalism (largely boys from the South due to the persuasion of its managing editor Stanley Walker) than the Times who had a stable of veterans that had never gone to college, and it was a paper dedicated to the new style of social journalism that "aimed at

[25] Talese, Gay, 6.
[26] Kluger, Richard, and Phyllis. *The Paper: The Life and Death of the New York Herald Tribune*. New York: Knopf, 1986. 281.

capturing the temper and feel of the city, its moods and fancies, changes or premonitions of change in its manners, customs, taste, and thought."[27]

Formed in 1924 after Ogden Reid bought the *New York Herald* and merged it with the New York Tribune the paper would run from 1924 until 1964 and fly under Reid's banner until 1958. Unlike Ochs and Sulzberger, Reid an alcoholic, played little part in the paper's affairs with his managing editor laying down the five basic assumptions he believed governed the owner's rule:"(1) The Republican Party was usually best for the country, (2) the national defense must be kept strong, (3) censorship was dangerous, (4) a first-rate newspaperman was the most admirable of God's works, and (5) there was no need to be ashamed of laughing."[28] Aside from these precepts the *Tribune* was primarily more a collective affair than other New York newspapers with a surprising amount of freedom allowed to its editors. Kluger identified his publication as an "editor's paper", the editors not only selected writers, made assignments, where each story would be placed, and how much space they would be allotted, but also "had to use its staff's wit and talent to the hilt to remain in the game against the leviathan *Times*."[29] Reporters and editors exercised less caution than the *Times* did in their manner of reporting in an attempt to draw more readers who wished to get to the heart of the news without wasting a day getting through the bulk of the *Times*.

The *Tribune* had Republican/conservative persuasion, being largely anti-Roosevelt and regularly supported Republican candidates; their orientation was not as strong as other papers such as the *Chicago Tribune*. "It wasn't a matter whether you were left or right in politics," recounted Richard Tobin, who joined the paper in 1932 after graduating from the University of

[27] Kluger Richard, and Phyllis. *The Paper: The Life and Death of the New York Herald Tribune*. New York: Knopf, 1986, 242.
[28] Kluger, 242.
[29] Kluger, Richard, and Phyllis. *The Paper: The Life and Death of the New York Herald Tribune*. New York: Knopf, 1986. 308.

Michigan, "the new college men who stayed on paper and a number of city-room veterans parted company politically with management." Articles in the paper on government matters could exhibit liberal sentiment. Their editorial section could also contain a mix of conservative and liberal sentiments having columns from figures of both sentiments; perhaps the most prominent contributor being Walter Lippmann, the mouth of the *Times* politics, whose acclaimed commentary column "Today and Tomorrow" would garner two Pulitzer Prizes (1958, 1961).

This is not to say that the newspapers grasped the full breadth of the news, only what they deemed most important. A number of subjects were neglected by the papers or given little space, Discrimination was one such subject. Although both mainstream newspapers reported on stories of African Americans, with the *Times* providing more coverage for a white paper, they allocated little attention to them. Stories involving African Americans were usually slighted by these mainstream papers and when they were reported upon they tended to be placed in the middle of the paper hidden amongst other articles. This could be attributed to a number of issues, among them the racial. This is not to say that the papers did not report African American news because of hatred for the race, but that "the segregation of the Negro in America, by law in the South and by neighborhood and social and economic stratification in the North, had engulfed the press as well as America's citizens."[30] The segregation extended beyond restaurants and hotels to include the place of African Americans in the white dailies. Their news seemed inconsequential to the largely white readership except in cases involving a celebrity figure, a well-known organization, or a juicy crime to story that would reinforce the established image of the African American. In addition African Americans of the city had their own newspapers to report on the happenings of their people like the Jewish, German, and the Italian peoples but on a larger scale.

[30] Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation*. New York: Knopf, 2006. 5.

Black newspapers had existed in the U.S. since the early nineteenth century, becoming increasingly popular after the Civil War. The nineteen-twenties in particular saw a huge surge in the readership and popularity of African American newspapers in accordance with the social, economic, and political needs of the people continuing the process of urbanization begun during the First World War. Thus as people continued to migrate to the North and settle in the cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit, and others more race weeklies found a footing with reporting "community news" that was almost entirely ignored by the white dailies.[31] Although many African Americans continued to read the white dailies of the New York City press (particularly the wealthier, more educated people) they had to turn to the black newspapers to learn what was happening to their people locally and nationally. As historian Patrick Washburn notes "by basically ignoring blacks except when they appeared in a negative light, the white press unwittingly strengthened black papers by encouraging [people] to read them if they wanted to know about themselves."[32] That is outside of Duke Ellington, the NAACP, and alleged criminals which could be found in the white dailies.

The bread and butter of the Negro newspapers," historians Gene Roberts and Hank Kilbanoff comment, "were stories touting some new achievements by Negroes in business, literature, the arts, or something much less momentous."[33] These papers also instilled a large dosage of reports about the brutality and deprivation caused to their race by the blatant racism and discrimination in the nation. They did not shy away from printing in graphic details reports and stories of lynching throughout the nation nor would they cede under threat of retaliation for

[31] Leonard, Teel. *The Public Press, 1900-1945: The History of American Journalism*. New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006. 110.
[32] Washburn, Patrick Scott. *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2006. 123.
[33] Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation*. New York: Knopf, 2006. 17.

doing so. The Negro press thus, "sought not to take its readers' minds off their troubles, as one analyst put it, but precisely to keep their minds on them."[34] Some papers like the *Pittsburgh Courier* even achieved circulation of well over 100,000.

Yet for all that these papers extolled their work was only beginning to be noticed by the major presses at the beginning of the 1940s. The black press had long ridiculed the white press for their neglect of news concerning the situation of African Americans or simply just mentioning them at all. But complain as they would the populace hardly gave it a thought until the publication Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* brought the issue to a wider readership than just those who read the African American newspapers. A Swedish economist and sociologist Myrdal had toured the United States from 1938 until 1941 on the sponsorship of the Carnegie Corporation to observe the place of African Americans in American society. The resulting work contained what he perceived to be the obstacles to full participation in American society that black Americans faced at the time and found the press to be integral to the situation. Myrdal cited Northern newspapers' negligence as a prominent factor in the discriminatory attitude with papers in the north succeeding "in forgetting about it [the issue of race] most of the time. The Northern newspapers help him by minimizing all Negro news."[35] A black journalist of the time confirmed Myrdal's conclusions in a 1999 interview, he described how to the white dailies, "we [African Americans] were neither born, we didn't get married, we didn't fight in any wars, we never participated in anything of a scientific achievement. We were truly invisible unless we committed a crime."[36] Modern

[34] Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The race beat: the press, the civil rights struggle, and the awakening of a nation*. New York: Knopf, 2006. 15.
[35] Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy.* New York: Harper and Bros., 1944. 48.
[36] Washburn, Patrick Scott. *The African American newspaper: voice of freedom*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2006. 123.

historians today have made a larger effort to highlight this negligence on part of the white press with Roberts and Kilbanoff citing how "only once between 1935 and 1940 in a story involving A. Phillip Randolph, the Negro labor leader, did the *Times* run a front-page story mentioning the name of any of the country's leading Negro racial reformists."[37]

However by the early 1940s the situation of the major, white newspapers reporting on Negro news was beginning to pick up, particularly among liberal newspapers. Newspapers began to devote space in their papers to prominent African Americans like musicians Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington as well as athletes like Joe Louis and the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Although most of this news was reported on the inside pages of the edition, the fact that they were reporting on African American achievements and, occasionally, struggles was a step in the right direction. Some black newspapers noted and even commended this subtle progress with the *New York Age* running an editorial on the matter. This piece reflected on how there was a time when *The New York Times* "would not publish a picture of a Negro and that the *Saturday Evening Post* would not publish anything about Negroes except those humorous and ridiculous stories as those written by Octavius Roy Couen," but stated this was no longer the case. *The New York Times* was publishing "an increasing amount of constructive news on Negroes and occasional pictures of Negroes in the news" while the *Saturday Evening Post* made the way for other magazines and dailies to print more African American news after running Walter White's study of discrimination against the African Americans in its pages. "The increasing publicity given Negroes," wrote the author, "generally is ample evidence that we have a better press."[38]

[37] Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The race beat: the press, the civil rights struggle, and the awakening of a nation*. New York: Knopf, 2006. 10.
[38] The *New York Age,* "A Better Press," Sept. 27, 1941: 6.

It may indeed have been a better press than it was fifty or even twenty years prior but still not the press African Americans wanted and certainly not the one they needed. African Americans were appearing more in the press but "almost entirely on the inside pages."[39] As noted above it was a rare case for news concerning African Americans to break into the prominent areas of the newspaper which garnered the readers' attention and when they did it normally was stories of black criminals and thugs rather than civil rights leaders. According to Myrdal this habit of the press resulted in "an astounding ignorance about the Negro on the part of the white public of the North" who do not understand the reality and effects of the discriminations they uphold because they do not have the knowledge of the full situation.[40] Occasionally something would come along to break the pattern and enlighten the white readership as in the case of House Representative Arthur W. Mitchell whose fight against the state of Arkansas for its discriminatory railroad policy made it to the Supreme Court and headlines of newspapers all over the nation and awakened the reader to the discrimination and abhorrent condition African Americans faced. But, as Brandt notes, "there were scores of others over the years – the appeals of convictions of blacks, by all-white juries, attempts to bring lynching mobs to justice, peonage like labor conditions – that went unheard."[41]

[39] Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. *The race beat: the press, the civil rights struggle, and the awakening of a nation*. New York: Knopf, 2006. 10.
[40] Myrdal, 1944. 48.
[41] Brandt, Nat. *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 77.

II: Preparation for War – March on Washington and the FEPC

When war broke out in Europe on September 1, 1939 the New York presses reported on the matter not as a shock but as a slow train finally arriving at its station. For years *the New York Times* and *New York Herald-Tribune's* foreign correspondents had picked up on the machinations towards war being made so this was just a cap on the matter. However whereas the preludes had made been only a marginal matter in those major papers the war now being fought was a subject of constant attention. The people were hungry to know what was happening, how much ground the Nazis were covering and which nations had fallen to the German war machine, and what would the US do.

After insuring his next term in office Roosevelt began slowly preparing the nation for participation in the Second World War. Measures such as the Lend-Lease policy and the Selective Service and Training Act (1940) garnered mixed responses among the press as they fell into isolationist or intervention positions. However, for African-Americans new opportunities and challenges presented themselves which would be both great opportunities as well as great tribulations. The first of these came with the Selective Service and Training Act, enacted through the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Bill. While this act was being put through Congress the press carefully monitored every play happening in the House and the Senate while the black press began to ponder whether and how African Americans would be included. Over thirty thousand African Americans had tried to enlist but were turned away and these stories littered the African-American papers of the nation in the prelude to selective service. Spokesmen of such papers as the *Pittsburgh Courier* as well as representatives of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) and Committee for the Participation of Negroes in National Defense (CPNND) tried to use the forthcoming presidential elections and the support of

their organizations as leverage to secure the inclusion of clauses prohibiting racial bias. Although Senator Robert Wagner of New York introduced anti-discrimination clauses to the bill it was Rayford Logan's proposals, submitted by Republican congressman Hamilton Fish, which were included into the bill when it passed on September 14, 1940.

When the bill was passed through Congress the press was quick to report on all the details of the new conscription law. *The New York Times* ran a lengthy first page article detailing the implications of Selective Service including the position of African-Americans with the sub-head "Call for 36,000 Negroes". The article told how "a short time before the president declared selective service in effect he announced by means of a White House statement that the Negroes constitute 9 per cent of the population, 36,000 of the first 400,000 men drafted will be Negroes," and would serve in all army units or "in new ones to be formed."[42] The article goes on to note that three National Guard units would also be formed with Negro enlistments but, perhaps most importantly, it takes space to note how "The Regular Army has Negroes serving in all branches except aviation, and this arm of the service also will be opened to them."

This article is the first instance of African-Americans making the front page of the *New York Times* in terms of civic advancement and military capacity in a great number of years, albeit in a subject that equally concerns Caucasians as well. But perhaps what is most interesting is how the article enlightens the reader that the African-Americans are members of all branches of the Armed forces except in aviation and how that was being remedied. Here is a small show of the newspaper's liberal character, which was normally concealed, as it is writing of this news as progress. Not only will Negroes be playing a role in this national program but they will be

[42] Hurd, Charles. "400,000 By JAN. 1: 16,500,00 Men Ages 21-35 to Be Put in 4 Classes by Local Boards; WORKINGS ARE EXPLAINED; Weapons to Be Ready by Time Troops Are Hardened - Call for 36,000 Negroes." *The New York Times* : 1.

allowed into all parts of America's military. It bears a welcoming, even progressive tone for a paper which normally attempts to only give the bare facts.

The other presses of the city responded in largely the same way with various degrees of space being devoted to the matter of Negro conscription. The more conservative presses such as the *New York Globe* gave very minimal space to the matter, posting it in a two or three sentence paragraph. Other papers gave it roughly the same amount of space as *The Times* with a few mentioning the matter on the front page; others addressed it in the later pages of the issue that the story continued on. However this was still major news and no paper fully neglected it.

The Negro newspapers of the city applauded the President's announcement of fair and proportionally equal conscription. The *New York Amsterdam News* also saw this event in a progressive light. A front page article on the event defined the measure as "fairness in draft certain" and praised how African Americans would not be "herded into labor battalions." Although the article does misquote the number of Negro draftees as 86,000 (actually 36,000) of the first 400,000 draftees it contains much of the same information regarding the general functions of conscription as well as specific information like how New York City's Negro population would contribute 2,160 draftees to the first wave of draftees. Although very positive in news and tone the article ends with something of an open interpretation. It cites how the president's announcement confirmed the claims of Lester A. Walton, U.S. Minister to the Republic of Liberia, who said that "not more than ten percent of Negro conscripts will be put in labor battalions," even though confirmation of that particular claim was not in the president's announcement or confirmed in the article. It follows this with the reminder that "during the World War labor troops were largely made up of Negro conscripts." Perhaps this was to emphasize how large an advancement this was or perhaps it could be a check on their readers

that this has happened to us before it may happen again.[43] Nonetheless the paper tried to persuade their readers to accept the draft and in subsequent issues printed articles detailing the process of conscription, how it could affect their readers, and how to situate themselves to it.

However the support of the African-American press for the draft policy withered quickly following the War Department's October 9th announcement about the place of race in the military in light of recent events. On September 27, 1940 Walter White of the NAACP, A. Phillip Randolph of the BSCP, and Arnold Hill of the National Youth Administration as well as acting Secretary of the National Urban League met with Roosevelt to present a seven-point program for furthering the position of African-Americans in the military. These points included such provisions as training for black officers, assignment of black officers according to ability not race, opening all branches of the Army Air Corps to African-Americans, admission of Negro Women as nurses, allowance for black administrators in the Selective Service, and a requirement that all army units accept personnel regardless of race. The War Department's announcement was something of an answer to that meeting. It reaffirmed the provisions of conscription in proportion to the entire population; service would be open in all branches of the army, combatant and non-combatant; officer training would be expanded; and black pilots would be trained and formed into a separate branch of the Air Corps. However, the announcement clearly stated it that "it was not the policy to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organizations," as it would "produce situations destructive to morale and detrimental to the preparation for national defense." [44]

The dailies of the city didn't see the importance of this announcement as most of what it stated had already been said in the release of the Burke-Wadsworth Bill. The newspaper editors

[43] *New York Amsterdam News,* "36,000 Negroes To Be Called In First Draft FAIRNESS IN DRAFT CERTAIN," Sept. 21, 1940: 1.
[44] Press release, October 9, 1940, 93:4, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

had probably subconsciously expected their readers to assume that the measure would not lead to integrated army units or any major shift in military practice. The white papers did not hold the same optimism as some black papers on the possible extent the Burke-Wadsworth Bill could have, being in tune with the discriminatory principles of the period. Whatever was not said about the possibility of incorporating whites and blacks into the same divisions was best left unsaid for the sake of their black readership and it was not worth devoting space to the clarification as it would seem to have always been such by the bulk of their readers.

Yet the news shattered African-American hopes of breaking down discrimination within the military and several black presses responded severely and quickly to the news. The *New York Age* scathingly wrote that "Jim Crow was given official approval by President Roosevelt," and that like "most of the recent New Deal statements the release starts with a seemingly broad program and ends with a joker which counteracts all the good features it might have." This is another false promise handed African-Americans by the Roosevelt administration that again is doing little to better their position in American society. "If Negroes in the army cannot intermingle with whites," the Age article asked, "will that same policy hold true in the event of duty on the field of war? Is the War Department going to refuse to send Negro soldiers into battle because they will be fighting alongside of or with white soldiers?" This sentiment was surely going through the minds of every Negro official reconsidering their perception by the military. It ends with claiming that through this Roosevelt had finally shown his "true colors" in regards to Jim Crow. The newspaper would support Wilkie in the year's presidential election.

The *Age's* article represents the sentiment felt by many in the black press as White, Randolph, and Hill furiously argued that the presidential aide made it seem as if the three endorsed this policy when they did not. The Republicans quickly seized this outrage for their

own advantage, using it as a point of embarrassment for the Democrats and a rallying cry for African-Americans to vote Republican. The administration responded to the outcry by launching a series of minor, yet significant initiatives; among these was the activation of the 99th Pursuit Squadron on March 19, 1941 (positioned at the Tuskegee Institute in June), the promotion of Col. Benjamin O. Davis as the first black general in U.S. history, and the appointments of Judge William H. Hastie, dean of Howard Law School, as civilian aid to the Secretary of War and Col. Campbell Johnson, executive secretary of the YMCA of Washington D.C., as the assistant to the director of Selective Service. These measures won enough support to guarantee Roosevelt the black vote as he went on to victory in the 1940 election. And on January 6th, 1941 Roosevelt, in his state of the union address, outlined how the United States would be the defender of democracy and its "four freedoms": freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. This pledge gave African Americans hope of further reform and equality in times to come as the nation would have to embody these ideals to combat the Axis powers, the perceived antithesis of these freedoms.[45]

The next hurdle faced by African Americans was one which would set a precedent against discrimination in the workplace for decades to come. As the U.S. began its mobilization for war the country saw a new boom in manufacturing. Vehicles, uniforms, weapons, training gear, and numerous other items needed to be produced as factories across the nation shifted their workload to meet the demand. For the first time in over a decade work was once again becoming plentiful throughout the cities of the nation as the previously illusory "Help Wanted" became an abundant term. Yet this did not technically extend to African Americans as well. As in the past African Americans continued to be the "last hired" and "first fired." Nearly all skilled labor positions were closed to them and they were not considered for any advanced placement training,

[45] Neil Wynn, *The African American Experience During WWII.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

leaving only janitorial or base menial jobs available at most of the plants. Lester B. Granger of the National Urban League estimated that "75 percent of the defense industry was closed to African Americans and of the 150,000 men placed in the defense industries between October 1940 and March 1941, only 4 percent were black."[46] In New York ten factories out of a combined workforce of 30,000 workers only 142 were black and in Los Angeles African Americans accounted for roughly a hundred of the city's eighty-five hundred shipyard workers.

Frustrated by the situation a number of organizations including the CPNND held mass meetings in various cities with further demonstrations to follow for National Negro Defense Sunday on February 9, 1941. But on January 15th A. Phillip Randolph called for ten thousand African Americans to March on Washington D.C. to demand their right to work in the defense industry of the nation. This call garnered a lukewarm reception in the black press, aside from *The New York Age* which held that Randolph "rightly observes that such a march would focus national attention on the conditions confronting the Negro in this country and the high percentage of unemployed in his ranks despite the billions our government is spending for national defense."[47] Other papers found the proposal to be overly optimistic if not utterly "crackpot." However by March, 1941 people were beginning to come around. When Walter White failed to get another meeting with the president on the matter of jobs he along with Rayford Logan, Lester B. Granger, and others joined Randolph in the formation of the March on Washington Committee. Branches were set up in eighteen cities across the nation and special trains were chartered to carry blacks to Washington from Chicago, Memphis and Cleveland for the July 1st marching date.

[46] Wynn, Neil. *The African American Experience during World War II*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. 31.
[47] *The New York Age,* "March on Washington," March 22, 1941: 6.

The march received the near universal blessing of the black press which ran articles explaining the necessity for a march and encouraging its readers to take part. The *New York Amsterdam News* covered its front page with the exclamation "100,000 IN MARCH TO CAPITAL", proclaiming that "Washington is preparing to accommodate more than 100,000 Negroes who will join in the pilgrimage to the Lincoln Monument on July 1st."[48] *The New York Age*, a champion of the march since its inception, praised the march and reported on its developments each week, all on the front page, with Randolph picking up his pen to write several articles justifying the march from April until June. In these he cited that, "the world and national crisis has created conditions and situations that require the Negro to pit his mass power against the forces that seek to elbow him aside and victimize him as a half-man in American life."[49]

With this announcement the president began to turn his attention towards the issue. A march would pose a major dilemma for Roosevelt, being both a sign of disarray in the face of his call for national unity and a magnet for violence in a capital where Jim Crow restrictions were openly practiced. His first measure was to appoint Black New Deal administrator and economist Robert C. Weaver in charge of Negro employment and training in the Office of Production Management (OPM) under heads William Knudsen and Sidney Hillman. When their findings were made public the press, white and black, took notice. *The New York Times* first ran the Office's findings in their standard, straightforward fashion that in this case bore not a hint of dullness. The article told the same story, that the majority of African-Americans looking for work in the defense industry were not allowed it. The reasons why African Americans could not find or be considered for jobs in the defense industry, notably the aircraft industry, was the result

[48] *New York Amsterdam News,* "100,000 IN MARCH TO CAPITAL: 100,000 to March in Protest," May 31, 1941:1.
[49] *New York Age,* "Negroes All Out to Change Government's Policies on Jobs And Justice In Defense," June 7, 1941:1.

of both the union and the employers shut outs. Nearly all affiliates of the American Federation of Labor through "constitutional provision", "custom", "license policy" or "otherwise" barred Negroes membership and their contracts with war jobs such as the airplane industry; yet the "C.I.O. unions which have contracts in some aircraft plants are not discriminating against Negro membership, while the A. F. of L. machinists' union is doing so." This was invariably due to the racist sentiments of many of their members and the fear among the union heads that if they allowed Negroes into their unions many white members would leave or even worse protest. But the article also states that employers are "about evenly" responsible for discrimination against Negroes in defense industries. When employers who sent in racially restricted work orders to the state employment service were asked why they did not wish to employ Negroes they would "invariably assert that they had no wish to discriminate but the 'the men in the shop objected to working with Negroes." The article ends with a warning from the WPA that they provide defense training courses for all races, but warns Negroes of the difficulties they will likely face and how "virtually none of those completing the courses had been placed."[50]

The article is indeed worthy of commendation for its display of the problems of discrimination found in the defense industry. It was one of the first by a major paper in the city to address the topic and show the dual nature of circumstances working against Negroes and why the unions were unable to aid them due to the employers and employers unable do anything because of the pressures of the workforce, all done without mentioning racism. This struggle would be the standard for the fight for good jobs within the defense and other industries throughout the war with more articles of industries refusing to hire or promote Negroes because of pressures of their workforce. Nonetheless this article, nestled on the 16th page (the middle

[50] *The New York Times*, "OPM Seeks to Lift Barriers to the Negroes," May 8, 1941.

page of the issue) informed at least some of its readers, likely enlightening them on the matter for the first time.

The piece also seemed to have a wider reception among the staff of the *Times* because on the following day the *Times* published another editorial addressing the same matter but with a slightly different slant. This article titled: "Justice for the Negro" speaks of the utter injustice facing African-Americans but does it with a sense of surprise and abhorrence rarely found in this paper. Among the "disturbing facts" it lays to the report of the Committee on Negro Employment in the Defense Industry is that "discrimination against opportunities for Negroes to learn and practice skilled trades is not confined to the south nor is it practiced only by employers." It is written to the effect that it had shattered long-held beliefs on the Negro's obstructions to progress. The author goes on to note how the problem of discrimination was found to be "evenly divided" between the employers and the unions and how "in either case the Negro is not getting his fair chance." Although the argument that racial or other groups that do not get along with one another should not have to work together is valid the author of the piece points out the seemingly apparent assumption that "so far as industry is concerned the Negro, or any other recognizable minority, is more likely to be a cause of friction when denied equal opportunity than when granted it." In the end unions and employers should take on African Americans out of "simple justice and loyalty to the democratic ideal."[51]

This was not the first instance of discrimination being addressed in the *Times* editorials but it is a unique instance nonetheless. What is particularly striking about this piece is the manner in which it is written along with the fact that it was based around a story that had been tucked away in the previous day's issue, unlisted in its table of contents. This attests to the genuine surprise felt by many white readers once learning of the position of the Negro and the

[51] *The New York* Times, "Justice for the Negro." May 9, 1941.

difficulties they were facing. This would be one of the facts that, as writer Thomas Sancton had noted, that "the white reader has got to gulp down and let it educate him."[52]

The press would, however, continue their coverage on the issue in a manner which emphasized the "steps" being taken to address these problems. The following week *The New York Times* printed another article on the OPM's Negro employment efforts with a focus on the positive. The article titled "Jobs for Negroes in Defense Spreads" illustrates the gains made by Hillman and the OPM in employing African Americans in the defense industry. Among the listed accomplishments was how the Curtiss-Wright Corporation, which produced military aircraft, would employ skilled Negro workers, with several already in training, and how the Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company of Chester, Pennsylvania counted ten percent of their employees to be African American. The article extoled the statements of company president John Pew who praised the work ethic of his black employees before going into the second half of the article which described how seventeen black leaders had sent an open letter to the president to "order the inclusion in all defense contracts of clauses forbidding discrimination against applicants for employment because of race, creed, or color."[53]

It is at first glance almost a whitewash of the report issued only days ago. Negroes were being hired and trained for skilled work in the aircraft industry and factories were hiring them in large capacity. The second half detailing a plea sent to the president by several prominent figures of the black community seemed in a way to bolster the resolve that things were looking up but at the same time implies something is still wrong. It seems to send a somewhat mixed message about the situation, trying to put a brighter outlook on something that was maybe too grim when

[52] Thorton, Thomas. *The New Republic*, "The Negro Press." April 26, 1943, p. 559.
[53] *The New York* Times, "Jobs for Negroes in Defense Spread." May 11, 1941.

first reported. Either way, being placed on the 38th page of the Times Sunday edition, did not mean it was at the center of the readers' attention.

On June 12 the president made public a memorandum sent by the heads of the OPM to defense contractors requiring them to use black workers and the following day White and Randolph sat down with NYC mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and Eleanor Roosevelt. Although Mrs. Roosevelt, a champion of minority causes, and Mayor LaGuardia, a close friend of White's, did their best to convince the men of the self-defeating nature a march would hold White and Randolph remained steadfast. White's repeated requests to meet with the president had been spurned and he would not relent on his mission to work over "the steadily worsening conditions" his people faced. What he wanted was a face to face talk with the president and he got it on Wednesday June 18, 1941.

The conference which took place in the Oval Office also included Mayor LaGaurdia and Anna Rosenberg of the Social Security Board of New York, Hillman and Knudsen of the OPM, Head of the National Youth Administration Aubrey Williams, Assistant Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. After discussing the problem African Americans were facing with enlisting and mistreatment by white officers with Patterson and Knox, with Patterson giving an open response and Knox a more begrudging one, Randolph turned the president's attention to the job situation. The president asked "what would happen if Irish and Jewish people were to march on Washington? It would create resentment among the American people because such a march could be considered as an effort to coerce the government to make it do certain things."[54] But Randolph did not waver on the matter. When the president inquired about the number of marchers Randolph responded "one hundred thousand, Mr. President". Roosevelt was likely skeptical of this number and asked White the same question

[54] Brandt, Nat. *Harlem at war: the Black experience in WWII*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 79.

and received the same response. Although it was unlikely just the possibility of a hundred thousand people flooding into the nation's capital, making speeches and denouncing the government was too big of a risk to gamble on. Roosevelt stared White in the eyes for a good period of time before asking his next question, "What do you want me to do?"

On June 25, 1941 a reluctant Roosevelt fulfilled the demand of Randolph and White and signed Executive Order No. 8802. The order stated unequivocally that "there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin." Every federal department and agency was to take "special measures to assure" that vocational and training programs were "administered without prejudice." Furthermore all government defense contracts would include a provision "obligating the contractor not to discriminate," and to ensure this a five member commission would be established to "investigate complaints" and "redress grievances which it finds to be valid": The Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC).

News of the measure flooded the front page of nearly every African-American newspaper in the nation but seems to have not been expected so soon. This can be seen in how The *New York Amsterdam News,* first among the papers to crack the story, proclaimed in large print on its front page "President Roosevelt Orders Jim Crow Ban Lifted On National Defense Jobs." But the following article described nothing of the sort, instead detailing the conference that had occurred on the 21st, claiming Roosevelt had "indicated a definite unwillingness to issue an executive order against discrimination in the defense program," and that "definite dissatisfaction with the results of both conferences was indicated on the faces and in the mood of each member of the march committee."[55] When the executive order was detailed in the paper's next issue it

[55] *New York Amsterdam News,* "President Roosevelt Orders Jim Crow Ban Lifted On National Defense Jobs," June 21, 1941:1.

was done in a "confused" fashion. The front page carried the large, bolded exclamation "President Issues Order" stirring the readers' excitement that the president has finally issued an order against discrimination. However a first page article of this issue titled "Roosevelt Won't Address Marchers to Washington" informed the reader that "the President has refused to speak to the thousands of Negroes who will march on the nation's capital, next Tuesday, in the interest of breaking down the discriminatory barriers in the national defense industries."[56] This was printed on the 28th of June despite the fact that the march had been called off on the 25th. Although the paper corrected this with an "*Extra Bulletin*" printed at the top of the first page in larger text which detailed the president's issuing of the executive order and Randolph canceling the march before launching into a separate article of Randolph's resolution to continue the march and gain the executive order.

The mishap makes the paper seem ill-informed and rushed with much of what was written in the front page articles no longer holding any standing. It is very likely that the *Amsterdam News* had just gotten the news of the executive order right before the printing. President Roosevelt was concerned about the possible uproar it could cause, particularly in the case of the southern congressman with whom he already had a tempestuous relationship. Thus he worked to downplay the news: unlike with previous executive orders Roosevelt did not announce the order on the radio, as he had done with several previous orders, nor did he hold a press conference as was his custom. Due to these and other efforts in Washington to minimize the matter many white publications did not initially pick up on it. *The New York Herald Tribune* did not publish a single article on the order in any of their week's issues. Even *The New York Times* hid this bit of news on the sports section of their Sunday edition, and did not devote as much space as expected for such news. Thus the notion that the Amsterdam News would not have been

[56] *New York Amsterdam News,* "Roosevelt Won't Address Marchers to Washington," June 28, 1941:1.

informed by that Saturday, two days after the motions passage, is not impossible and indeed likely.

However when the news did permeate a week or so afterwards the Negro papers welcomed the measure as a great advance. Liberal papers "considered it a second Emancipation Proclamation"[57] with Randolph declaring high praise in his *Age*, while the *New York Amsterdam News* called it "epochal to say the least" in its July 5th issue.[58] However other more conservative papers, although expressing praise for the order, noted "the order's shortcomings, particularly the absence of any reference to the armed forces."[59] Some African Americans, including many of the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) felt that the march should have gone on as planned to ensure their interests. One such figure, Bayard Rustin, who was very close to Randolph, shared these sentiments with the man who had called for and now called off the march but Randolph believed the gains attained to be significant and could be used as a stepping stone for more gains in the future. It would not be long before Randolph's sentiments were put to the test. A few months after the president issued executive order 8802 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

"December 7, 1941 - a day which will live in infamy" said President Roosevelt in his powerful, reassuring voice to millions of Americans the day after the most lethal surprise attack on America up to that time. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 claimed over 2,400 American lives, two battleships, one hundred and eighty-eight aircraft, and the peace the US had preserved for over twenty years. Roosevelt's speech over the radio was a declaration on behalf of the American people amidst the great collective trauma. His words worked to channel the sentiments of the nation into a collective response and resolve: a resolve to fight.

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[57] Wynn, Neil A. *The African American Experience during World War II*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. 35.
[58] *New York Amsterdam News,* "F.D.R.'s Executive Order," July 5, 1941: 14.
[59] Wynn, Neil A. *The African American Experience during World War II*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. 35.

Thirty-three minutes after Roosevelt had finished his speech Congress almost unanimously (with one representative voting against) declared war on Japan. Two days later Germany and Italy declared war on the United States and the country was fully submersed into World War II.

III: The Place of the Press and African Americans in the Military

After the attack on Pearl Harbor the government was in a state of frenzy. Washington scrambled to mobilize for war, this meant accelerating the shift of industries towards war production, preparing its citizens for living in a state of war, and finding ways to manage the nation's numerous outlets to assure that enemy sentiment would not infect the ranks of its armed forces. To address this latter issue Roosevelt "required American correspondents to agree to specific rules or be banned from combat theaters. Military censors also reviewed the copy written by correspondents, which had to be approved before it could be transmitted to their home offices."[6061] For domestic news, Roosevelt created the Office of Censorship with executive news editor of the *Associated Press* Byron Price its Director of Censorship on December 15, 1941.

Price, a devout liberal, believed that Americans did not want fascist like restrictions on what they could or could not report and instead wanted to be a part of the war effort. On January 15, 1942 Price acted on FBI Director Herbert Hoover's recommendation and established voluntary press censorship with a "wartime code of practices for newspapers, magazines, and periodicals." "Neither of the codes was very long, and the details were deliberately somewhat vague"[62] with the crux being a single sentence of the code which read: "a maximum of accomplishment will be attained if editors will ask themselves with respect to any given detail, 'is this information I would like to have if I were the enemy?' and then act accordingly."[63] With

[60] Manning, Martin J. *Encyclopedia of Media and Propaganda in Wartime America*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011. 505.
[61] Correspondents for the most part went along with this to such a degree that virtually the whole press corps in Sicily did not report on Patton's slapping of two soldiers.
[62] Manning, Martin J. *Encyclopedia of Media and Propaganda in Wartime America*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011. 505.
[63] Washburn, Patrick. *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 42.

this Price hoped that the government would not have to pursue any strict obstructions to the press and cause backlash due to abuse of power.

The government's fears of information slipping into the enemy's possession or a flush of anti-war literature proved superfluous as the American press viewed this voluntary censorship reverentially. In fact most publishers actively sought to tweak their content as expressed in a letter written by Press Secretary Stephen T. Early to the *Associated Press'* Kent Cooper in which he claimed the press and radio were "asking for rather than standing solidly against such a thing as censorship."[64] It is likely that many still remembered the troubles confronted due to the Espionage Act of 1917 and thought it better not to excite the government with anything deemed profane or disloyal. However it seems more likely that the papers were genuinely concerned. They saw that whatever was asked from them was their duty as citizens. Historian Martin J. Manning noted that, "the positive slant helped to keep morale high on the home front and proved ultimately to be good for sales as well."[65] Thus the government "generally ignored the mainline press in large part due to the publishers all around conservatism and support for the war."[66] Indeed the 15,000 employees of the Office of Censorship spent most of their time not battling the press but instead monitoring the large amount of letters and telephone calls that went overseas.

However, the black press was a different story. Although not pro-Axis many papers had a long history of criticizing government and its officials. The outbreak of war could be a big log to toss on the fire rather than a bucket of water to douse it. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover in particular was incensed by the writings of the African American papers finding the "preponderance of negative articles and editorials [in the black newspapers] – whether stories

[64] Stephen T. Early to Kent Cooper, December 21, 1941, *Stephen T. Early Papers,* Bryan Price folder, Roosevelt Library.
[65] Manning, Martin J. *Encyclopedia of Media and Propaganda in Wartime America*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011. 509.
[66] Washburn, 4.

dealing with instances of discrimination or editorials criticizing government policies – was proof that the black press was not just troublesome or radical but un-American."[67] The *New York Amsterdam News* was not too high on his list; being one of seven black newspapers the FBI did not find threatening, unlike the more radical *Age*, which was much higher. When the US entered the war Hoover strengthened his efforts to control the black press using whatever influence he held to sway officials into taking action against the papers and issuing indictments to its editors. He attempted to convince Postmaster General Frank Walter to cancel the second-class mailing privileges of black newspapers but to no avail. Hoover did convince Attorney General Francis Biddle, ordinarily sympathetic to the plight of African Americans, to call a conference for Negro editors in Washington during which he presented issues of several black publications that he deemed a disservice to the war effort and threatened to "shut them all up" for being seditious; although he never did this.[6869] In September of 1943 the FBI singled out forty-three black newspapers in a 714-page "Survey of Racial Conditions in the United States" as being the cause of discontent with thirteen having communists on their staffs.[70]

In actuality the black press's position on reporting during the Second World War was a complicated matter. The government's wish for them to tone down their content proved a dilemma for the publishers as their readers had come to expect the papers to attack injustices to blacks. If a paper were to halt their criticisms it would indubitably prove a death sentence to their circulation. They solved this issue by being less critical of the federal government and instead aiming their attacks at the injustices done by states, governors, and private businesses and by

[67] Brandt, Nat. *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 89.
[68] Brandt, Nat. *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 96.
[69] Biddle later mentioned the black press in a speech in Philadelphia in 1943. In it he stated that "throughout the country, although they very properly protest, and passionately, against the wrongs done to members of their race, are loyal to their government and are all for the war."
[70] Washburn, Patrick. *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006, 168.

increasing the space given to gains made by African Americans. The shift in coverage proved so subtle that their readers seemed not to notice.

Another reason the publishers began to tone down their work was that by the summer of 1942 a number of papers had garnered the business of national advertisers. For the first time in black press history papers such as the *New York Age* bore ads for products like Pepsi Cola and St. Joseph Aspirin in their pages. Previously advertisers had largely ignored African Americans as an advertising medium because they did not believe blacks made enough money to be potential long term buyers. However with the increase in employment and salaries among African Americans along with the excess profits tax of 1940 these corporations began to boost their advertising among the black communities with the increasing circulation of black papers being a great courier. In 1941 nineteen national advertisers appeared in the *Pittsburgh Courier* by 1944 the number had increased to fifty-one with the number of national ads rising from 402 to 709. With this new flush of income black publishers "would not have wanted to chance losing it by remaining critical and possibly being indicted under the espionage act."[71]

During the war the black press became slightly less scathing in its articles and editorials and devoted more emphasis to praising the gains made rather than those unattained. Nevertheless they remained vigilant on issues of racial injustice and would not hold their tongue on such matters. They could also follow up an article in the white press concerning African Americans and write about the racial implications the white papers missed or print stories of soldiers at camps being beaten or neglected by the inhabitants of the neighboring towns. As the war expanded with troops deployed into North Africa and the Pacific Isles with an increasing number

[71] Washburn, Patrick. *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 160.

of soldiers being shuttled through training the black and white presses would find many incidents and figures of race to report upon.

As the cloud of chaos lifted Americans could see those who survived, those who fought valiantly in the defense of their nation, and to be held as heroes for the public. As the war progressed and battles began to be fought more heroes would be cited to raise the morale at home and to have new figures around which war bonds could be advertised. In this task the press was instrumental; at the outset of the war little by little, week by week, they devoted space to figures that showed exceptional heroism and bravery. In this plethora of reporting was one of the few cases in which the white papers found a figure which the black presses would make a hero to both white and blacks. The *New York Times,* in its effort to find more stories from the Pearl Harbor, published an article detailing the eyewitness account of a Navy captain who had been onboard the USS Arizona before its sinking. In this recollection was a short segment about a "Negro mess attendant who never before had fired a gun manned a machine gun on the bridge until his ammunition was exhausted."[72] This single sentence of the lengthy article may have made little impact on the *Times* regular readership, aside from its illustration that African Americans were also at Pearl Harbor and served valiantly, but piqued the interest of several people in the black press. At the time the 4,000 African Americans among the 170,000 sailors in the US Navy were only allowed to serve as cooks, dishwashers, and busboys. "Because men live in such close quarters," one admiral explained, "we simply can't enlist negroes above the rank of messmen."[73] But this sailor who took up a machine gun in defense of his fellow men without any prior experience proved that blacks were just as able and just as heroic as the white sailors at Pearl Harbor; something the black press quickly made known.

[72] *New York Times,* "Torpedo Hit the Arizona First, Navy Men of Pearl Harbor Say," Dec. 22, 1941: 4.
[73] Cooper, Michael L. *The Double V Campaign: African Americans and World War II*. New York: Lodestar Books, 1998. 16.

Articles soon began to pop up in numerous black publications about this unnamed Negro hero of Pearl Harbor. *The New York Age* published a lengthy editorial by Emmett J. Scott who praised the unnamed Negro at Pearl Harbor in a story of how "this gallant unsung hero - whose name we have not been able to secure – had been refused enlistment by our Navy Department except as a mess attendant, as a flunky." But regardless "there flamed in his breast the same fires of patriotism and love of country as burned in the breasts of the gallant crew on the Arizona" and his story "will burn forever in Negro hearts as a living testimonial to courage and bravery of Negroes when given a chance – a chance to serve their country."[74] The *New York Amsterdam News* dubbed the figure "the first colored American hero of World War II" and wondered why he went unrewarded for his actions whose gallantry was equal to that of his white co-patriots.

For months this almost mythic figure was praised and acknowledged without any applauder knowing anything about the man except for his service. But after an extensive three month search the *Pittsburgh Courier* finally learned the identity of the sailor: twenty-two year-old son of a Texas sharecropper Dorie Miller. The paper proceeded to print several stories about the man and his upbringing which quickly caught fire among both the black weeklies and white dailies of New York. *The New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune* both published news of the soldier's identity on the seventh page of their respective daily editions. The articles also remind the reader of his "heroic" act and how he was anonymously cited last month on the Schomburg's honor roll of race relations.[75] It did not take long for naval officers to realize the good press this could generate for media relations and fundraising for the war and in May 1942 Miller was awarded the Navy Cross, an event that received front page attention in the *New York*

[74] Scott, Emmett. "A Negro at Pearl Harbor." *New York Age*, January 17, 1942: 3.
[75] *New York Times,* "NEGRO HERO IDENTIFIED: Messman Who Manned Gun at Pearl Harbor Is Honored," March 13, 1942: 1.
New York Herald Tribune, "Negro Hero Identified," March 13, 1942: 7.

Amsterdam News and third page attention in the *New York Herald Tribune* but, landed on the eighteenth page of the *Times*.

Miller represents both the most prolific African American serviceman during the Second World War and how the black press could expand upon a story reported in the white press and turn it into a sensation. Although in the beginning years of the war African Americans were used for little more than labor and support units the white press was keen to not exclude their contribution. The *New York Herald Tribune*'s piece from war correspondent John O'Reilly, then reporting on the battle of Tunisia, was one of the first to note the contribution of African Americans with a story about "Little Jesse" Williams a twenty three year old Georgia born African American who had "left the easy going life of his native state," and now found himself "at the wheel of a huge semi-trailer truck" driving through the mountains of Iran as part of the supply line from Iraq to Russia.[76]

This process was in part induced by a call from administrators in the Office of War Information (OWI) for the white press to pay more attention in covering African American achievements and downplay negative elements. They understood the necessity of African American participation and felt that "the very presence of black bodies and voices could demonstrate American liberalism, concentrating discussion on black achievements and steering the dialogue away from discrimination."[77] Officials even went so far as to suggest guidelines to the press "on ways to avoid racial stereotype and to "'preserve dignity'."[78] Thus more stories

[76] *New York Herald Tribune*, "Iran-to-Russia Truck Conroy Gives Thrill to U.S. Soldiers: Correspondent Tells How "Little Jesse," Georgia Negro, Piloted Load of War Supplies Over Twisting Roads Through Mountain Passes," April 30, 1943: 6.
[77] Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff. "Constructing G.I. Joe Louis: Cultural Solutions to the "Negro Problem" during World War II." *The Journal of American History* vol. 89, no. 3 (2002): 967-8.
[78] Sklaroff, 968.

concerning African Americans were printed by white dailies but instead of hooligans and gangsters they wrote of soldiers and sailors.

These articles highlighting African Americans commitment to the war helped to alleviate some of the stereotypical writings of African Americans in the dailies and showed the readers that blacks were doing their part. Yet these articles were designed to avoid the subjects of segregation, racism, and anything that could challenge the "racial status quo." Despite the suggestions of esteemed black lawyer and advisor to the OWI Theodore M. Berry that the increased inclusion of African Americans in the media "should accompany more overt political measures such as investigation and prosecution of the 'mistreatment of Negro soldiers," most white officials decided on more symbolic strategies that would "not address permanent material or political improvements for black Americans."[79] In addition, "picturing black men in uniform could serve as a positive function in the black press," but, "in the white press it could arouse anger," particularly among those who saw blacks succeeding in the military and talking out against their perception at home to be a breakdown of the "racial status quo."[80] These accusations and tempestuous situation of war mean that officials walked a very thin line when instructing the major media to run more stories of African Americans. The white dailies of New York had less fear of this perception given their size but nonetheless tried to play it safe when promoting unity through their papers. To maintain the "tenuous balance among the diverse range of interests," papers leaned more towards promoting popular black musicians, athletes, and war figures in their pages over officials and conditions that brought attention to the racial status quo. This meant that figures like Dorrie Miller and General Benjamin O. Davis were preferred news

[79] Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff. "Constructing G.I. Joe Louis: Cultural Solutions to the "Negro Problem" during World War II." *The Journal of American History* vol. 89, no. 3 (2002): 965-6.
[80] Sklaroff, 968.

subjects over Walter White and A. Philip Randolph. Yet the racial situation of the armed forces was not to be completely ignored, it was simply too arduous to be.

Outside of the major daily newspapers laurels for popular African American figures doing their part to win the war, the black presses were filled with reports of discrimination and violence in the military installations in the South. Most camps in the nation were located in the South, in large part due to their mild winters which facilitated training all year long, and over eighty percent of black soldiers were sent to these southern camps where they faced not only discrimination from the white officers but also from the surrounding towns. At base they were called "boy" and "nigger" by their sergeants and made to do grunt work without being allowed entry into the base recreation facilities after hours.[81] In the towns they were barred from restaurants, movie theaters, bars and clubs, and even public transport and townsfolk, dismayed with the large number of black soldiers entering their towns, would act out fiercely. Outbreaks of violence among the whites and blacks (whether soldiers or citizens of the neighboring towns), sometimes escalating to riots, thus broke out at numerous times and locations throughout the war. From August 1941 into July of 1943 there were outbreaks at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and Camp David in South Carolina as well as Fort Benning and Camp Stewart in Georgia.

This was nothing new as bigotry within the training camps had been existent since the Civil War. During World War I black men faced incredibly cruel conditions in the camps with their shelter consisting of tents with no flooring and ordered to work outdoors for long hours in any weather while white troops had indoor recreations.[82] Such stories were normally overlooked by the major papers so most of their readers knew little of it. However the dailies lack of

[81] Neil Wynn, *The African American Experience during World War II*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. 46.
[82] Barbeau, Arthur E. and Florette Henri. *The Unknown Soldiers; Black American Troops in World War I*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1974. 51

reporting on the matter seems not to be as much out of racism but out of fear for their security. During World War I the government enacted the Espionage Act of 1917 which declared it illegal to attempt to cause "insubordination, disloyalty mutiny, or refusal of duty" in the military and that publishing anything disloyal, disreputable, contumely, contemptible, and scurrilous about the armed forces punishable by jail time and the revocation of the papers' second-class mailing permit.[83] Many white papers decided not to risk such punishment and kept their eyes elsewhere when looking for stories to print.

The emerging black press on the other hand grew strong on stories of the terrible conditions confronting black soldiers and their constant presence on the black papers front pages elevated them to prominence. Black papers began to take new tone "modeled after William Randolph Hearst's and Joseph Pulitzer's newspapers," which put more emphasis on reporting discrimination and lambasting the society and government for not doing anything about it.[84] With the war a slew of new stories came and heightened the black presses appeal as they became a source for what was happening to their people in the military. Readers of the black community were awestruck by these indictments against the armed forces unequal treatment of black soldiers issued by the papers. The black press "came out of World War I reasserting its role as a crusader, muscling its way into the white political domain" with their circulation growing as quick as the black population in the North. The government did little to stop the black press then aside from a conference in Washington from June 19 to the 21, 1918 which ended with the outlook of less scathing criticism from the black press but resulted in little.

Like in the First World War the black press uniformly acted as the champion of their people and informed them of the injustice befalling them at the hands of the military. Problems

[83] Washburn, Patrick Scott. *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press during World War II*. New York: Oxford UP, 1986. 12-13.
[84] Washburn, 15.

in camps were "among the stories played up heavily on the front pages of the black newspapers," the kind that led to most black publications barred from military installations, but were barely noted in the white mainstream press, much less those of New York. Although it may have made for a juicy story for their readers the papers felt that such information would be a blow to the morale of the nation and decided to not print such stories or to hide them in the middle of their papers, keeping them as short as possible. Not under fear of indictment or revocation of their mailing privileges the white press still bowed to the concerns of the government.

But, when the outbreak of violence at a US military installation came closer to home the New York papers were compelled to take note. Such incident occurred at Fort Dix in New Jersey on the night of April 2, 1942 when a gunfight occurred between the black soldiers stationed at the camp and Military Police resulting in the death of three soldiers and the injury of an additional five. Both the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* gave the story front page attention in the next day's paper like the city's black publications.

Both told the same story: the action began at Gus Waldren's Sports Palace, a local watering hole for soldiers in Pointville with "bowling alleys and other fames"[85], where a black and a white soldier in line for the telephone got into a dispute which facilitated Military Policeman Prvt. Mannie Strouth to intervene. In attempting to break up the conflict one of the black soldiers lunged for Strouth's pistol but was struck down causing the bar to burst into a scuffle. Strouth vacated the tavern and outside the entrance fired bullets either into the air. He was then gunned down by rifle fire coming from the black barracks of the camp that led to an exchange of fire that lasted for minutes, killed three (including Strouth) and injuring 6 more.

What differed was the papers' manner in describing the incident. In their article the *New York Herald Tribune* aggrandized the event under the title "3 Soldiers Killed at Fort Dix in clash

[85] *New York Herald Tribune*, ""3 Soldiers Killed at Fort Dix In Clash of Whites and Negroes," April 3, 1942:1.

of Whites and Negroes" and emphasizing in the sub-header that one of the dead and one of the wounded were white leaving the reader assume the others were black. The article draws the Negro as the instigator of the event when after one of the two black soldiers "objected to his [the military policeman's] decision and snatched at the pistol in a holster at his belt." This paints the Negro as being quick tempered and violent, something bolstered by its description of how after the fugitive came racing into the barracks following Strouth's gunshot the building "hummed for a moment like an angry beehive" before the black soldiers "in various stages of undress" came pouring out clutching rifles, shot and killed the MP, and proceeded to fire upon rows of charging white soldiers flooding out of Waldron's Place, "all unarmed". The article also carries statements from the Major Woldyke, the post's public relations officer and main source for the paper, who claimed it to be the first incident of its kind at the fort with the cause being "some persons with a little too much race-consciousness getting off the track."[86]

On the other hand *The Times* report of the event tried to phase out much of the sway that gave the *Tribune* article its punch. First, the *Times* article carries the less stirring title: "3 Soldiers Killed in a Brawl at Fort Dix." The article counters the Tribune's assumption that this was the first instance of racial disharmony claiming that there had been "considerable tension in recent weeks between the white and the Negro soldiers at the camp, and arguments have been frequent." Also its description of the telephone booth incident is more detailed and carries a different sentiment. It cites the argument beginning between two soldiers who lunged for the recently vacated telephone booth (not identifying their race) and others joining in. The article is also less direct about the matter of the attempted pistol theft in its explanation that MP Strouth came to separate the combatants and "in the ensuing scuffle the Negro soldier made a lunge for

[86] *New York Herald Tribune, "3 Soldiers Killed at Fort Dix In Clash of Whites and Negroes," April 3, 1942: 1, 10.*

the M.P.'s service pistol".[87] Furthermore it did not explicitly identify those who fired the shots that killed the MP and downed two black soldiers as being African-Americans. Instead it implies that it was soldiers (no mention of race), as all the shots came from rifles and the troops had been on the firing range that day. In addition it claims the last shot of the night was fired from "behind buildings away from the reservation proper" suggesting that it was not only the soldiers from the barracks doing all of the shooting. This could be because the paper did not have all of the information on the matter to confirm the soldiers firing from the camp were African-American, being the first paper to print the news, however it is also likely that they intentionally did not print such information in an effort to avoid outrage.[88]

In these one can see each of the publications' persuasions with the *New York Herald Tribune* providing more of a narrative as opposed to the *Times* muted report. One paper wrote of the incident as a scandalous event; the other a simple instance of unrest with a racial dimension but not a racial conflict. However the *Tribune* must have noticed the powder keg they were flicking sparks upon because the following day they returned to the story of Fort Dix. Their second article contains a more in depth report on the matter by writer Homer Bigart. The article is more retrospective and appeals to racial order; apparent in its sub-title "Whites and Negro Soldiers mingle as Inquiry Opens on Battle with M.P.'s". It clarifies that all the casualties aside from Mannie Strouth were African-Americans in opposition to the previous day's article which made it seem as if only white soldiers were killed. It claims the camp now bore no sign of racial tension after the event as "tonight soldiers of both races went to the same post theaters, mingled in the same canteens, sat side by side in the buses to Trenton" and takes the statement of post commander Colonel Cassius M. Dowell that the fight was not provoked by racial tensions but

[87] *New York Times,* "3 Soldiers Killed in Brawl at Fort Dix," April 3, 1942: 1.
[88] *New York Times,* "3 Soldiers Killed in a Brawl at Fort Dix," April 3, 1942:1, 9.

was “merely a brawl which, if it had to happen, might just as well have occurred between members of the same race.” It even extols that in the year they have inhabited Fort Dix African Americans went from inhabiting a section of the camp near the far east of the reservation but with the arrival of more troops “buffer areas of grass and brush have vanished so that today a white regiment directly adjoins the Negro encampment” and no further segregation is practiced. It proceeds to tell a more detailed account of the incident but with some of the provoking language expunged.[89]

The second *Tribune* article seems like something of a whitewash on its previous piece to alleviate any tension that may have arisen in the area. An idea bolstered by the fact the *Times* did not print a second article on the incident. This second article is clearly an example of the press trying to put a better image on the violence than what had happened. It declares there is no racial animosity in the camp when that is obviously not the case and contradicts its previous article in its clarification of the death toll from the incident and that the matter was simply a brawl. It is but one example of the media turning a blind eye to the racial situation percolating within the military and the nation. However, where the white dailies felt a need to be careful and non-threatening the black newspapers continued the un-barred approach of its early war printings. The *New York Amsterdam News* printed several articles exposing another side to the incident. According to the paper the telephone incident was not “merely a brawl which… might just as well have occurred between members of the same race,” but a racially motivated affair. A white soldier waiting behind an African American in the line supposedly whispered “get out of the way nigger, if I had you back home you wouldn’t dare stand in front of me.” This led to an argument that signaled Strouth to grab the black man and pull him out of line. Prvt. L.C. Hayhoe, a white soldier from upper Michigan, intervened and insisted there was no need for aggression but

[89] Bigart, Homer. "Fort Dix Quiet After Gun Fight Fatal to Three." *New York Herald Tribune*, April 4, 1942:7.

Stroth disagreed saying, "I know how to handle these darkies, let me handle it my way." At that moment (9:25PM) a black soldier grabbed for Stroth's handgun that led to Stroth punching him and a fight. Stroth then ran outside not to pursue his assailant but to fire shots into the air to call for help. When the black troops noticed what was happening one picked up his rifle and fired three bullets into Stroth which prompted other white MPs to return fire at the African-American barracks and gunfire was exchanged. It was black MP Don Blackmon who is given credit for stopping the shooting by walking "into the line of fire and ordered the colored boys to cease firing," by fooling the black soldiers that he had a unit of armed MPs behind him.[90]

While the white papers downplayed the racial aspect of the incident the *Amsterdam News*, like most black papers, highlighted it. This can be seen in its presentation of the racist, southern MP and the peace minded soldier from Michigan. In addition how could the paper know the white soldier in line had whispered such racially aggressive things? But it does present several facts not found in any white publication as unlike the *Times* and the *Tribune* press the black papers got statements from the black soldiers on the camp and not simply white witnesses and officers. The most important contribution was elucidating the role of MP Blackmon in putting an end to the gun fight; he was never mentioned in either of the white publications. The article's explanation of the white MP's returning fire also explains the ambiguous shots from "behind buildings away from the reservation proper" mentioned in the *Times* showing that the white soldiers continued to feed into the outbreak. Whether or not their reporting was entirely accurate the work must be noted for identifying in full the racial element and showing that African Americans were not the only violent ones. It exposed the racial trouble that the white papers tried to suppress or worse failed to notice.

[90] *New York Amsterdam News*, "Bloody Clash in New Jersey Camp Alarms Nation," April 11, 1942:3.

Examination of both the white and black press of New York City presents a fuller picture of how white and black people read into the incident at Fort Dix. The readers of the white papers would initially see this as an outbreak of violence by some drunk, racially antagonistic blacks and then in the next day's issue as just a drunken squabble that got out of hand. While those who read the city's black newspapers would read of it as a case of racism and white oppression with the black soldiers firing their rifles in self-defense. The simple facts that a scuffle had broken out at Waldron's Sports Palace between a black soldier and a white soldier that led to a larger fight and black soldiers firing upon the pub remained the same the level of racial antagonism just fluctuated. We may never know what was said between the white MP and the black soldier at the Sport's Palace or what the soldier told to his comrades in the barracks that rallied them to take up arms but there can be no doubt that racial antagonism indubitably played a role in the lead up to the gunshots and cost the lives of several individuals.

After the incident the press claimed a peace came over the camp as things returned to a routine of normality during the investigation. Bigart's article commended and assured the credibility of this peace, however not everyone took it at face value. The *New York Age* likened the gun battle to "the quiet which usually precedes storms. For despite all outward appearances of calm, there is an undercurrent of restlessness among the Negro soldiers which is ominous."[91] It goes on to cite the biggest sources of unrest to be "the overwhelming manner of white southern military policemen who patrol the post area" and "the polity of the war department, as regards the assignment of white officers to the Negro unit here."[92] However the stories concerning Fort Dix in the black press shifted from that of shame and contempt to one of optimistic hope as

[91] *New York Age*, "Negro Soldiers Still Restless At Fort Dix As Probe Of Fatal Shootings Enters Its 2nd Week," April 18, 1942: 1.
[92] *New York Age*, "Negro Soldiers Still Restless At Fort Dix As Probe Of Fatal Shootings Enters Its 2nd Week," April 18, 1942: 1.

reports emerged of changes to be enacted to avoid any further conflict. The *Age* went on to note that because of the incident there are plans to appoint more black MPs and officers to the camp and limit the exposure of southern, white MPs to the black soldiers. One soldier told a correspondent "It's too bad those boys had to be killed, but the incident has gone a long way to clearing up the situation."[93] This would be one of a few initiatives the army made to lessen racism in their camps. Ultimately there would be no major change in policy or structure of military bases throughout the war and injustices towards black soldiers would continue in both northern and southern camps and the New York press would continue to it give pecuniary attention.

[93] Ibid. 1.

IV: The Riots of 1943

Many of the most startling aspects of the push for civil rights occurred on the home front, where it found some of the hardest won gains, and where startling outbreaks of dispute would happen. Neil Wynn notes how the fight for democracy and equality "encouraged some positive change in racial attitudes and values that found expression in public actions, statements, and publications, resistance and conflict also persisted on the shop floor, on public transport, over housing, and in the streets." At home new opportunities almost immediately presented themselves to African Americans both economically and socially. Between 1940 and 1945 the number of African Americans employed in industry increased by 135 percent and the number of unemployed fell from almost a million to 151,000.[94] The Pittsburgh Courier had also begun a new campaign for Civil Rights entitled the "Double V for Victory" (victory at home and abroad). By 1943 the campaign had created links with numerous anti-discrimination organizations such as San Francisco's Committee Against Discrimination and Segregation and the National Negro Congress, counted Paul Robeson, Orson Welles, and Lana Turner among its supporters, inspiring numerous other black papers including the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *California Eagle*, and the *Chicago Defender* to join in the push for civil rights. But "a negative reaction seemed to accompany every step forward, and just as wartime gains encouraged a sense of hope, setbacks created anger, bitterness, and despondency."[95] These would foster dissent among both races and eventually percolate into violence with the year 1943 being a centerpiece for it all.

In 1943 over 240 racial conflicts, ranging from 'hate strikes' to full-on riots, occurred in forty-seven towns and cities throughout the country.[96] Race riots in particular erupting in Detroit,

[94] Wynn, Neil A. *The African American Experience during World War II*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. 64.
[95] Wynn, 63.
[96] Wynn, 73.

Mobile, Beaumont, Newark, and New York costing millions of dollars in damages as well as taking dozens of lives and injuring hundreds. The riots would stem from varying frictions depending on the city, each hinged on racial conflict. Likewise each outbreak received different coverage by the press, with coverage becoming increasingly defensive and cautious as more outbreaks occurred. Yet each would be met with a mixture of shock and disgust from its citizens and the papers that reported them. This case can most largely been seen in the two most prominent riots of '43 the Detroit and New York riots. Their causes would stem from differing circumstances and garner varying responses from the black and white newspapers but were all imbued with a racial charge.

The Detroit Riot of June, 1943 could trace its causes to the imbalance caused by the mass Caucasian and African American migration from the South into the North during the war. Between 1940 and 1945 the proportion of all African Americans employed in manufacturing increased by 135 percent rising from 4.4 million in 1940 to 5.9 million in 1945, accounting for more than eight percent of all defense workers. These were largely in heavy industries of the cities such as shipbuilding and, in a smaller proportion, aircraft industries. Here the need for workers was normally critical enough that manufacturers began to hire African Americans but some still maintained segregated employment and most blocked promotions for African Americans. This provoked a massive move of peoples from differing regions of the US, with a large proportion from the South. Much as they had in the First World War African Americans uprooted their families and migrated to centers of industry in the hopes of finding new or higher paying employment opportunities. They came to the cities dotting California as well as Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Buffalo, New York. In total 1.5 million African Americans, the same amount as in the previous three decades, moved out of the American South between

1940 and 1950.[97] Detroit's population since 1940 had grown by between two and three hundred thousand, fifty thousand being black, with a total of almost two million by 1943 with one of ten being black.[98]

The majority of the other 1.8 million people who came to Detroit were white people from the Deep South and Appalachian regions. These southerners knew where they were going would not be the same as where they came but also expected a level of the racial separation that had characterized their homes. When they came they found themselves competing for jobs not just with African Americans but also with the city's large ethnic populations of Poles, Italians, and others. Aside from the workplace white migrants began to filter into the white neighborhoods and clamoring for use of housing and recreational facilities that had been given to white migrants. Detroit was unprepared for the massive population increase and many migrants were forced into the worst imaginable housing conditions with African Americans being sequestered into a neighborhood on the east side known as Paradise Valley which was only fit to house roughly a quarter of their total population. Although the National Housing Agency worked to provide housing for the migrants, assembling 44,607 war homes, African Americans only occupied about three thousand. The only housing project constructed and designated for African Americans, the Sojourner Truth housing project was an incredible hotbed situation due to its location at Nevada and Fenelon next to a white neighborhood. On February 27th, 1942, the day the black residents were supposed to move in, 1,200 armed protestors blocked the entrance to the housing project and the move in was postponed until Detroit Mayor Edward Jeffries could

[97] Wynn, Neil A. *The African American Experience during World War II*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. 69-70.
[98] Brandt, Nat. *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII,* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 144.

muster 1,100 Detroit police and 1,600 National Guard to escort those moving in on April 28, 1942.[99]

The local KKK fed on the large number of white migrants to the city from the Deep South to excite their racial bias and feed into the air of apprehension and prejudice pervading Detroit. The KKK had previously held a sizeable presence in Detroit during the "Great Migration" from 1917 into the twenties. Detroit became one of the most prominent cities of Klan activity with its membership in 1923 reaching 22,000 and 35,000 in 1925.[100] But their influence had faded since the outing of their backed local politicians in 1925 and the harsh economic conditions of the 1930s.[101] However with the new influx of racially biased migrants the Klan found numerous recruits and its membership in the city which soared to nearly 18,000. They preached their propaganda outside the factories and production facilities and distributed copies of their local publication "The Fiery Cross." "It's [the KKK's] members and other racists proclaimed white supremacy from soapboxes," writes Brandt, "sympathizers worked in every plant." By October 1942 Detroit was seen by officials, workers, and civil rights leaders such as Walter White as a "keg of dynamite with a short fuse."[102] In June of 1943 a strike of 25,000 white workers at the Packard Motor Company over the promotion of three African Americans and the prospect of working with these men side by side confirmed the tension with one striker

[99] "Detroit 1943 - A Riot There Will Be." Detroits Great Rebellions. January 1, 2012. Accessed October 1, 2014. http://www.detroits-great-rebellion.com/Detroit---1943.html.
[100] "The Clarence Darrow Collection." *The Clarence Darrow Collection*. University of Minnesota. Web. 6 Dec. 2014. <http://darrow.law.umn.edu/photo.php?pid=955>.
"Violence in the City." *Michigan Humanities*. Great Michigan Read. Web. 7 Dec. 2014. <http://michiganhumanities.org/programs/gmr_new/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/14-15.pdf>.
[101] The mayoral election on November 3, 1925, was a showdown of racial politics with Catholic incumbent Johnny Smith facing Charles Bowles, who the Klan supported. A cross-burning vigil in July 1925 drew a crowd of more than ten thousand. Smith won again by a vote of 140,000 to 110,000.
[102] "Erasing, Color Lines", *Negro Digest*, Dec. 1, 1942: 75.

exclaiming "I'd rather see Hitler and Hirohito win the war than work beside a nigger on the assembly line."[103]

The Sojourn Housing Project and the Packard walkout were thunder heard before the storm. The storm would begin on the "steaming hot" morning of June 20th on Detroit's Belle Island Park. Many had fled to the isle's shores in an attempt to find some relief from the scalding heat so traffic was bad. On the bridge that connected the isle to downtown Detroit a car accident occurred between a white and a black driver that led to a fistfight between the two men. Story of the fight morphed into various tales of inhumane racial antagonism. One tale had three white sailors throwing a black woman and her child off the bridge; another had a black soldier killing a white girl. It did not take long for a mob to form and for three days the city was plunged into a whirlpool of black and against white conflict until 6,000 National Guardsmen were called in. When it was over thirty-four were dead, 433 wounded, and over $2 million dollars[104] in property damage was accrued.

Word of the Detroit Riot was not necessarily a surprise to the New York City press. They had previously covered the racial conflicts leading up to the riot with both the *Times* and the *Amsterdam News* keeping a close watch on the events happening in Detroit almost as if they had a foreboding sense of things to come. The *New York Herald Tribune* even stated in their first article covering the riot that it was "not unexpected" as "conditions in Detroit had been pointing toward an outburst."[105] Nevertheless the news was burned into the lettering across the front page of nearly every New York daily and weekly, white and black, major and minor. Their coverage of the riot and its effects would extend into the year's end and be upfront on the matter racial

[103] Wilkins, Roy. *Standing Fast: The Autobiography of Roy Wilkins*. New York: Viking Press, 1982. 25.
[104] $2 million in 1943 is roughly equivalent to $27,579,763.31 in 2014
[105] *New York Herald Tribune*, "Ickes Sees Lewis, Fails to End Coal Strike, Mines May Be Federalized for Duration; Detroit Race Riots Kill 23; Army Arrives," June 22, 1943: 1.

relations, violence, and the uproar resulting over the discrimination and racism. As Brandt writes, no city "watched the events in Detroit with more concern than New York."

In its first reports of the riot the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *New York Times* ran the news on the front page with a keen reporter's eye on what was happening on the ground but little in questioning the causes of the riot.[106] Both portrayed Detroit as an unruly war zone with the *Tribune* going so far as to declare that the city had been put under martial law with the centerpiece being the "pitched battle at a Negro apartment hotel, where 200 police fired a thousand rounds of tear gas into the building as Negro snipers fired from windows," although the paper could not provide any information on how these "snipers" acquired their weapons.[107] There were also stories that "white mobsters set fire to the homes of two Negro families, and in a fight on a streetcar a negro slashed a white man," as "youthful mobsters entered the rioting, attacking whites and Negroes indiscriminately." The riot seemed like a self-inflicted wound that dug deep into the flesh of the African American neighborhood with the racial implication apparent in the "visible evidence of the savagery" including how "almost every store on Hastings Street, the boulevard of Detroit's Negro district, owned by a white person had been smashed open and looted by the mob." [108]

Although the picture of a frenzied, out of control battleground occupied the lion's share of both stories the *Tribune* made an attempt to provide some insight into the cause of the riot. Although, incorrectly declaring the city under military rule, it identified the spark that started the riot as a fistfight between two drivers, not mentioning their race. The *Times* was also coy to

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[106] Interestingly the article was mixed with other news stories and took prominence in the title heading which read: *Ickes Sees Lewis, Fails to End Coal Strike, Mines May Be Federalized for Duration; Detroit Race Riots Kill 23; Army Arrives*.

[107] The June 26th issue of the *Amsterdam News* identified the hotel as the Verner Hotel "one of Detroit's most widely… known Negro apartment houses," claimed that "fifty armed Negroes walked in and took over against the orders of the police" and it was these men who combated the police.

[108] *New York Times*, "Army Patrol Ends Detroit Rioting; Death Toll at 29," June 23, 1943:1,12.

name a cause for the riot. It then accurately describes how resentment spread, through impetus, with an "erroneous but widely believed report" of a white man killing a black woman and her child but then moves to a scene of angry white men trying to rip two black men out of a police scout car. Perhaps this was to veer the reader away from thinking that it was African Americans who began the violence. The writer was possibly alluding that it was the white people who began the violence. It also contains a passage at the end on the racial background to the riot under the subtitle "Detroit Riots Climax Three Years of Friction". It notes how the African American population had risen over the past fifteen years and during the Depression they were living "in poverty and degraded conditions that caused rumblings of rebellion among them." Similarly the recent three years of migration had caused a "steady mounting of racial tensions," with the federal housing dispute, the Packard walkout, and an incident at the Eastwood Amusement Park where 125 white youths blockaded the entrance to stop the entry of African Americans with the police ordering "several street cars full of Negroes coming to the park, to turn around without unloading," ten days before the riot. [109]

The white press ignored one aspect of the riot which outraged the black press: the conduct of the Detroit police. The dailies of the city did not write extensively on the police, only describing the situation they faced and their struggle to restore order, one reading the papers would probably draw the conclusion that the police approached the matter in most professional fashion possible. There was evidence of rampant police misconduct with reports of police aggression against African Americans during the havoc. With the exception of all but the most liberal papers like *PM* and the socialist *Daily Worker* New York's major publications were silent

[109] After Roosevelt's proclamation that the rioter's "disperse," on June 23 to help bring it to an end *Tribune* published a second article which contained the same information word for word with the exception of the news of Roosevelt's announcement and several title changes. For example the section "Detroit Riots Climax Three Years of Friction" was re-titled "Detroit Riots Result of Old Antagonisms".

on this matter, but not the black press. The black press told another story: the *Amsterdam News* wrote that "Behind the scarehead stories and 'white angle' pictures the daily press featured…eyewitnesses here say that without police intervention the results would probably have been different and the casualty toll (twenty five of the thirty four killed were African American and black people accounted for roughly seventy percent of those injured[110]) would not have been so one-sided."[111] The paper claimed that the cops "with black jacks waving and guns blazing," charged in and "unloosed their own reign of terror. The *Age* in turn reported there was "overwhelming evidence that the riot could have been stopped at its inception Sunday night had the police wanted to stop it." As evidence they cited how blacks made up only a tenth of Detroit's population but 88 percent of the 1,800 arrested were black."[112]

Overall, New York City's black press was outraged by the riot with their indignation bordering on "understandable sensationalism." The *New York Amsterdam News* headline for June 26th exclaimed "Hell Breaks Loose in Eight Cities," while the front page of the *Age* was packed with pictures of African Americans being beaten by white mobs.[113] The editors of these papers made their opinions known on the front pages of their respective papers. They were "infuriated by the national scope of race rioting, its similarity to German anti-Semitic tactics, and the government's failure to protect African Americans."[114] The *Age's* editor claimed that "the most horrible Nazi atrocity stories are no worse than these home front outrages."[115] While the

[110] Sitkoff, Harvard. "The Detroit Race Riot 1943," *Michigan History,* May 1969, Vol. 53 Issue 3, pp 183–206, reprinted in John Hollitz, ed. *Thinking Through The Past: Volume Two: since 1865* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005) ch 8.
[111] *New York Amsterdam News*, "Hell Breaks Loose in Eight Cities," June 26, 1943:1, 10.
[112] *New York Age,* "Investigation of Detroit Police Department Sought," July 3, 1943.
[113] *Amsterdam News*, "Hell Breaks Loose in Eight Cities," June 26, 1943:1 [refers to the cities of Chester (Pennsylvania), Collins (Mississippi), Beaumont (Texas), El Paso, Inkster (Michigan), Detroit, and Camp Stewart (Georgia); *New York Age*, June 26, 1943: 1.
[114] Domenic Capeci, *The Harlem Riot of 1943*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1977. 70.
[115] New York *Age*, June 26, 1943: 6.

editor of the *Amsterdam News* went so far as to urge his readers to fight: "It's far better… to die fighting as a man than to perish like a caged animal."[116]

The *Times* coverage of the aftermath of the riot included on site reports, which were daily for over a week after the outbreak, as well as covering the actions of various organizations and officials trying to come to a conclusion on what could have caused the riot. The theories seemed to be presented one day with a refutation of the hypothesis appearing in the same paper the following week. On the matter of the influx of workers the *Times* ran a report by a Dr. C.F. Ramsay, director of the Michigan Department of Social Welfare, who interviewed almost 500 people arrested during the riot, mostly black, claiming that the influx of workers from the South was "almost no factor" in the riot's outbreak with most of the participants having lived in Detroit for years and had experienced "no racial discrimination in their school or employment experiences."[117] This piece was in turn refuted by a report from the National Urban League, also printed in the *Times*, which found that the influx to be "the first contributing cause."[118]

The *New York Post* accused the KKK as being the instigator of the riot. Displaying a heading from the Klan's *The Fiery Cross* publication that exclaimed Michigan to have more Klan activity than any other state, the paper proceeded into a vigorous lashing of the KKK. Linking the Klan to enemy "organizations ranging from native Fascist movements to deliberately subversive groups have helped the Klan inflame whites against Negroes" the *Post* charged the KKK with deliberately escalating racial tensions with fights, killings, and rumors. Although the paper said the Klan did not create "the fundamental conditions under which the riot grew – the war did that," it claimed the Klan did heighten the racial animosity of the city during the war and

[116] *New York Amsterdam News*, June 26, 1943: 10.
[117] *New York Times*, "Detroit Riot Inquiry Discounts Migration," June 27, 1943: 13.
[118] *New York Times*, "Report Outlines Remedy for Riots," July 3, 1943: 16.

should be held responsible. The paper did what it could to vindicate its readers against the organization and racial intolerance. [119]

In the eyes of New York's daily newspapers what happened in Detroit made sense, the pressures of wartime buildup and migration went head to head with a racial antagonism nurtured by the KKK through disgruntled workers that eventually boiled over. The city, like many other northern cities had seen outbreaks of racial violence with each influx of African Americans to the city. The "Great Migration" of the First World War which saw southern blacks looking for better conditions and work in the northern cities while the southern white migrants sought to impose similar segregation barriers as those in the south. This led to resentment, aggression and the eruption of riots in East St. Louis (1917) and Chicago (1919) while the Ku Klux Klan saw its numbers reach new heights. The riot that occurred in Detroit was due in part to similar circumstances but also due to a larger problem of wartime work buildups, overcrowding, and the social problems that resulted. The papers ran the sentiment concerning the effects of the war buildup but seemed unwilling to grasp the whole of the racial dimension and racial history of the city. These papers' articles did not shun the racial frictions at play but did not pay them the attention they deserved in comparison. The white newspapers harbored such hesitancy on this that they tried to soften the severity of the nation's antagonism through the scapegoat of the KKK and Axis agents.

Although the Detroit Riot was largely laid upon friction caused by the influx and poor housing conditions with help from the KKK it was integral to alerting New Yorkers of the rampant racial unrest. The press flooded the news of the riot with photographs of blacks lying dead and wounded in the streets, running from white mobs, or lined up, hands above their heads, in surrender. These pictures excited antagonism and outrage from New Yorkers, black and white.

[119] *New York Post*, "Race Hating Native Fascists Blamed for Detroit Riots," June, 22, 1943.

More than African Americans of the city its Mayor and other officials were particularly put off in this matter as the question of whether it could happen there dangled over their head. As Nat Brandt noted the "disturbances at any installations of strikes in defense plant, and of the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles and the race riots in Beaumont, Texas, exacerbated tensions within New York City…But it was the violence two weeks later in Detroit, more than six hundred miles from New York that was the most frightening of all."[120]

Many Harlemites faced similar dilapidated living conditions as those in Detroit with cramped tenement living, lack of parks and places of recreation, as well as inferior schools. Furthermore New York did not experience the same war time economic boom as other cities with heavy industry so poverty and unemployment remained key concerns among Harlem residents who had been out of work since through the Depression. Many private citizens, black and white, worked to avert a riot. Religious figures, particularly Jewish rabbis, preached against racial injustice, saying that "no single act of domestic policy will so redound to the moral credit of the United States abroad… as the righting of the wrongs which have perpetrated upon our Negro fellow-citizens."[121] Organizations and officials took steps to promote racial harmony with Adam Clayton Powell co-chairing an "It Must Not Happen Again" rally at the Golden Gate Ballroom and Mayor LaGuardia preached to New Yorkers through radio and print (running statements in the *Times* and the *Amsterdam News*) how he would "not permit…any minor group to be abused by another group."[122] The liberal paper *PM* undertook a "unity pledge" campaign, in conjunction with actress Jean Muir, to "guard against provocation, to denounce all divisive rumors, to revisit 'every attempt to set me against my fellow-New Yorker.'"[123] The *Amsterdam*

[120]Nat Brandt. *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII,* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 172.
[121] *New York Times*, "Race Riot Menace the Topic of Sermons," June 27, 1943: 13.
[122] *New York Times*, June 28, 1943: 23.
[123] Domenic Capeci, *The Harlem Riot of 1943*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977. 85.

News printed an article recommending a bi-racial program to prevent riots and, like the major dailies, printed nearly every statement concerning racial tolerance and discouraging riotous behavior.[124]

Despite the city's efforts it did not alleviate the living conditions of those in Harlem and discrimination was still found throughout the city and the press. Although numerous measures of good will were preached in the press they themselves did little to lessen the conditions that led to the riot. Among those was the city's dailies hypocritical stance on the matter or race, preaching against violent outbursts over racial impropriety but doing little to affect the very things that led to such violence. Newspapers continued to run articles that presented African Americans in a stereotypical light. No more so than in the white dailies "crime wave" reports. Since the war's beginning the city's white dailies told of a crime wave engulfing Harlem and raised the fear that the muggings and armed robberies of Harlem could infiltrate white neighborhoods. This heightened the fears of white New Yorkers and promoted the image of African Americans as hoodlums. The outcry was so strong that over 300 police reinforcements were assigned to the entire area north of Central Park in late 1941. Yet the notion of a crime wave was an incredible exaggeration on the part of the city's dailies looking to push their papers. As Nat Brandt points out: "periodically whenever a coincident number of crimes occurred in Harlem, the threat of a crime wave resurfaced."[125] In truth major crimes had decreased exponentially throughout the city since the war began. A citizens' committee found that in 1942 New York had the best record of

[124] *New York Amsterdam News*, July 10, 1943: 10.
[125] Nat Brandt, *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII,* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 167.

crime prevention in the city's history with the incidence of eight "standard"[126] crimes being lower than the combined average for large cities.[127]

The "crime wave" was a case of the white press being manipulative with their words and crafty in playing upon the fears of their readers. It could be seen in the tabloids like the *New York Post* and the *New York Daily News* but also in the *Times*. Although the crime stories they told were true they were played up in their wording and highlighted within the paper giving credence to the moniker "if it bleeds, it leads". But what offended most African American officials was how the words "Negro" and "mugging," "assault", "robbery", or "crime" became synonymous with these stories. They gave the reader the wrong idea on the conditions within Harlem as these tales had a better chance of making the front pages than other news regarding African Americans. For example, an article which confirmed the crime wave with its charge that incoming black Southerners "whom came to get on relief, were responsible for the muggings and stabbings" was given better placement than Benjamin O. Davis Jr.'s refutation of the crime wave which was hidden in the back.[128] Although the papers, particularly the *Times*, printed stories that aimed to dismiss the notion of a crime wave, such as one detailing the findings of a conference of ministers and the NYPD, this was not what people were reading.[129] The readers were instead drawn to the story of Frederick Teichmann, son of a Lutheran Pastor, stabbed while trying to protect and young girl, by a gang of black males.[130] Readers were treated to stories of an

[126] The eight standard crimes were: murder, manslaughter by negligence, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and automobile theft.

[127] *New York Times*, "1942 Crime Record Held the City's Best," Nov. 8, 1943:1.
The combined rate for thirty-six large cities with a population in excess of 250,000 each was 1,597.2 as opposed to New York's 432.5.

[128] *New York Times*, "Muggings Are Laid To New Arrivals," March 27, 1943:7. "'Mugging' Held Term To Slander Negros," March 28, 1943: 27.

[129] *New York Times*, "Wave of Crime in Harlem Denied," March 23, 1943: 21.

[130] *New York Times*, "Pastor's Son Stabbed by Muggers As He Protects Girls Against Gang," March 15, 1943:1.

expanding crime, spreading to the Bronx with the stabbing of a woman by two young black men[131]; both stories made the front page.

The matter was so prominent that after the Detroit Riot a city magistrate J. Roland Sala "proposed enjoining 'any newspaper or news agency from identifying a defendant according to race, creed, or color unless the identification is an essential part of the story."[132] Adam Clayton Powell also tried to break the bind that held the words "crime" and "Negro" together by introducing a resolution in the city council which would have had local newspaper publishers omit words that described the race of those involved in a crime from every news story.[133] The black press echoed this sentiment in their coverage. The *Age* said "many of the stories published and arrests made were unjustifiable was shown by the court records when these cases were brought to trial."[134] The *Amsterdam News* claimed that papers "blew up hold ups into a sudden crime-wave and alarmed the white populace with scare headlines which crowded the war news off the front page." Furthermore the article cited how "unreasoning white readers fall like lead for this suggestion. And so Negroes may expect a loss of hard won gains in fair play and justice."[135] But these words seemed to fall on deaf ears as papers continued associating muggings by Negroes with the crime wave. Yet when the vandalism of the riot came to pass the press, white and black would both be filling their headlines with the words "hoodlums" and "muggings" as culprits for what had happened.

The "crime wave" reports along with the closing of the Savoy Ballroom, and the continuing difficult conditions for blacks in the city in regards to work and living situations built up the tempestuous atmosphere spawning the riot. The incident which began the riot occurred on

[131] *New York Times*, "Mugger Stabs Woman on Bronx St.," March 16, 1943:1.
[132] Nat Brandt, *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII,* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 168.
[133] Ibid, 168.
[134] *New York Age*, "Harlem's Crime Wave," Jan. 31, 1942: 6.
[135] *New York Amsterdam News*, "Flay White Press for Harlem Smear," Aug. 10, 1943: 11.

August 1st at the Braddock Hotel where Pvt. Robert Bandy, of the 730th Military Police Battalion, was escorting his mother with her luggage in leaving the hotel. As they approached the front desk a fight was raging between police officer James Collins and a woman named Marjorie Polite. Although the reason for this fight is uncertain[136] Bandy intervened and in the scuffle took Collins's nightstick and struck the officer to the floor. As Bandy attempted to leave Collins drew his service revolver and fired at Bandy, striking him in the shoulder.

A small crowd had witnessed the incident and as word began to spread it became increasingly "exaggerated, blown up, and distorted" into a tale of a white policeman shooting a black soldier in front of his mother with the intent to kill. The combination of the heat, hubris, and anger over their squalor living conditions and unfair job opportunities that kept the people there made African Americans of the city all the more susceptible to this kind of gossip. As night fell and a crowd of three thousand gathered around Sydenham Hospital the tensions were unspeakably high when a bottle was thrown and shattered against the hospital wall and the crowd began to erupt in a fervent frenzy spreading the rumor that Bandy was dead. Soon chaos erupted in the street as African Americans began a series of lootings and robberies that savaged the neighborhood and took the city by surprise.

In their August 1st paper it was clear the *Herald Tribune* knew about the disorder and gave it first page attention. However the paper did not want to call it a riot, writing instead "Harlem beset by Disorder" as "sporadic disorders spread throughout Harlem."[137] It also devoted only a small amount of space to it on the front page with the majority of it being told on page 22

[136] One account claims Polite had checked into the hotel earlier and was unhappy with her room and the argument broke out when the front desk refused her an new room. Another story holds that Polite was irate at the elevator operator who refused to return a dollar tip she had mistakenly given him. A third tale, which Brandt claims is more credible, is that Polite had left a party at the hotel drunk and got into a dispute with Collins while leaving.

[137] *New York Herald Tribune*, "Harlem Beset by Disorders; One Man Killed: Shooting of Negro Soldier Calls Out 500 Policemen; Mayor Appeals for Calm," August 1, 1943:1

of the paper. However their next day's paper realized the full extent of the havoc happening in Harlem as it declares the outbreak to be a riot on top of the front page but in extreme right hand corner with Headline: "Dewey Mobilizes Guard to Prevent New Harlem Riots," with the continuation and other articles appearing on the six and seventh pages. Although telling how Dewey had sent in the National Guard and carrying the subtitle "Stores Are Looted" the piece stressed that the streets were once again quiet and that the guard being sent was a precautionary measure. Still conditions must have been extremely fragile for later that day the paper printed a new edition of the news bearing the new title "Harlem Peaceful Again After Riots; Guard Mobilized." The subtext "Disorders Subside" was replaced with "Quiet is Restored" and the first paragraph altered to read that the guard was being called for fear of a resurgence to "Order and quiet" being restored under LaGuardia with the news of Dewey sending in the guardsmen being moved further down in the article. Also, despite the term "Riot" appearing in bold in the headline the article notes LaGuardia's sentiment that this was not a race riot.[138]

The Harlem Riot ended up lasting a little less than two days' time and cost the city between $225,000 and $500,000[139] in monetary damages, six lives (all black), and over 185 of its citizens injured. As aggressions cooled and order was restored in the streets the New York press took a uniform stance that what happened in Harlem was not a riot like in Detroit but an outburst. White officials, like La Guardia, "did not want to underscore the racial aspect of the riot for fear it would fuel an already explosive situation." Black leaders, on the other hand, "did not want to prejudice any progress or advances they could obtain by calling the outbreak a black-white confrontation."[140] Officials and newsmen alike saw an importance in keeping the notion of

[138] *New York Herald Tribune*, "Dewey Mobilizes Guard to Prevent New Harlem Riot"; "Harlem Peaceful Again After Riots; Guard Mobilized," August 2, 1943: 1.
[139] Roughly between $3,000,000 and $7,000,000 in 2014.
[140] Nat Brandt, *Harlem at War: The Black Experience in WWII,* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996. 213.

racial conflict to a minimum and instead of embracing it in its horrific reality they sought to minimize it by claiming that the riot was not actually a race riot. In each of the white papers the tale of the riot's start with Private Bandy, an African American serviceman, who got into a fight with a police officer after he tried to intervene in an argument, was told in a similar fashion with the officer justified in shooting Bandy and Bandy wishing for the restoration of order. The *New York Post* reported how "there were very few cases of whites being attacked by Negroes and there was no effort by white men to form gangs and enter Harlem." A later editorial affirmed that the paper stood by African Americans in their fight against discrimination but wanted to point out that: "Our Town under Mayor LaGuardia, has become the most decent, least Jim Crow city in the nation… No white mobs fought Negroes or molested Negroes, or even appeared on the scene."[141] Likewise *Times* acclaimed columnist Arthur Krock wrote in his *In The Nation* column, "when two groups of different ethnical origins come together in violence, that, strictly speaking, is a race riot… By this definition, the Sunday disturbances in Harlem were not – as Mayor LaGuardia said – 'race riots.'"[142] The *Age* insisted that teenage hoodlums off the cusp of the spike in juvenile delinquency, "fanned the flames of mob spirit" and "dragged… the innocent thousands of their fellow Negroes" into the flames of the fire.[143] Marvel Cooke of the *People's Voice* insisted that the riot in Harlem was not a race riot but "a violent and terrible expression of the community against unjustified discrimination in the armed forces at a time when national unity is virtually necessary for America's win-the-war program."[144] "Newspapers, white dailies and black weeklies alike," wrote Brandt, "made it clear that the rioting was unlike Detroit. No

[141] *New York Post,* "No Race Riots In New York," Aug. 6, 1943.
[142] *New York Times*, "In The Nation," Aug. 3, 1943.
[143] *New York Age*, Aug. 7, 1943.
[144] *People's Voice*, Aug. 7, 1943.

gangs of whites had hunted down blacks, and the police had not stood by or aggravated the situation."

The sentiment of the riot not being another Detroit was given validation in the community of Harlem who felt deep remorse over the riot with a correspondent for the *Amsterdam News* deriding how those "irresponsible and misguided individuals" who provoked the fighting and looting were "a disgrace to their race, a disgrace to the city, and a shame to the nation of which they are citizens." The *Herald Tribune* accentuated this with stories which displayed the ethic of the police and the disgust of the black community, including one which told how "a crowd of Harlem residents applauded Patrolman Joseph Cavano" when he arrested a 61 year-old Negro for throwing a box through a plate glass window of a vegetable store, yelling in approval "that's right officer. Take him away."[145] Several other publications including the *Times*, *Age*, and *Post* directly praised the police for their conduct with Jack Trotter of the *People's Voice* being one of the few who vindicated the NYPD.[146]

The emphasis on this not being a racial riot extended to the attempt to pinpoint a cause for the riot. In this the *Times* was perhaps the largest mouthpiece, publishing numerous articles and editorials each with a different perception. One editorial said "sinister agitators: had spread "lies" throughout the neighborhood to enflame Harlemites.[147] Another article cited the Rev. Dr. Samuel Prince who claimed the events in Harlem were the result of the "herd instinct" as humans "like stampeding cattle may sometimes run as wild."[148] Acclaimed *Times* columnist Arthur Krock pointed the finger at politicians who made promises to African Americans in their

[145] *New York Herald Tribune,* "Harlem Throngs Cheers As Vandal is Arrested," August 6, 1943.
[146] In the People's Voice Trotter declared: "There is something askew in a situation in which… not a single cop gets so much as a bullet wound, because the victims have not guns. There is no excuse for marauding hoodlums, I admit, but neither is there any excuse for itchy gun fingered cops." *People's Voice*, Aug. 7, 1943.
[147] *New York Times*, "Harlem's Tragedy," Aug. 3, 1943. 18.
[148] *New York Times,* "Harlem Riot Laid to Herd Instinct," Aug. 9, 1943. 9.

campaigns "they did not intend to, and were unable to, fulfill. He cites that many politicians, "instead of pledging themselves to help assure that Negroes should receive, as rightfully they should, as good facilities of living education, employment, and recreation as the white man," they pandered to black leaders who wished for racially mixed facilities. Since the majority of the United States was opposed to this "Negroes have found the promises hollow, and this fact has been used to stir up resentment among them."[149]

Even though officials and black authorities claimed the Harlem Riot was not a racist riot it was indubitably a racial one. Numerous papers, white and black, acknowledged how the riot resulted from the restrictions placed on the race and once again turned their attention to the seldom reported constraints and conditions faced by African Americans. Turner Catledge of the Times wrote how behind the riot was "an impatient, irresistible drive of the Negroes on the one hand for a fuller realization of the equality which has long been promised to them but just as long denied. And in some places broadening, resistance of the whites to that very aim." Special correspondent Russell Porter for the paper wrote how, "The Harlem problem is a racial one, rooted in the Negro's dissatisfaction with his racial status not only in Harlem but all over the country… a reflection of a nationwide attitude."[150] Roy Wilkins of the *Amsterdam News* sympathized in describing the riot as "the boiling over of pent-up resentment in the breasts of millions of American Negroes all over this country."[151] These articles were, not given the same front page attention as those which described the destruction and actions being taken to prevent further violence and mayhem but nevertheless show an evolving press beginning to acknowledge in fuller detail how the needs of war had accentuated a previously flustered racial condition to a new breaking point.

[149] *New York Times*, "Harlem's Tragedy," Aug. 3, 1943. 18.
[150] *New York Times,* "Harlem Unrest Traced to Long-Standing Ills," Aug. 8, 1943.
[151] Domenic Capeci, *The Harlem Riot of 1943*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977. 121.

The riot in Harlem could have been a quagmire for the New York press given its history to incense the role of race. But instead of admitting fault or taking further gauge of the racial inequities prevalent in the city they buried their heads for interest of saving face and not risking the possibility of provoking a new outbreak. Instead of writing of the robberies and arson that befell Harlem as they would have written their "crime wave" stories they were very careful to treat the matter as tragedy for which their city should mourn. It was an occasion to celebrate the work of their magnificent, fearless mayor and police and to respect the people whose neighborhood had been violated by some hoodlums. Yet the consciousness and careful treading was not to last for most papers. Little more than a week after the riots occurrence the makeup of the Herald Tribune's pages was back to normal with the only mention of African Americans being a very short one on page eleven entitled: "3 accused of Receiving Goods Stolen in Harlem."[152] Likewise the black press did not hesitate to incite its wrath on injustices committed on behalf of the government or armed services with the *People's Voice* printing "People Want a New Harlem" which bluntly laid out its grievances:

> No More Jim-Crow in the Armed Forces.
>
> No More Second-Class Citizens.
>
> Equal Job Opportunities.
>
> No More Riots.
>
> Enforcement of Price Control.
>
> Unity for Victory at Home and Abroad.[153]

In these reports is found the anguish and weariness towards the old Jim Crow system that would come to full in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s.

[152] *New York Herald Tribune*, Aug. 9, 1943.
[153] *People's Voice*, Aug. 14, 1943.

But overall the riots did an incredible feat in displaying the conditions in which the black populace of the nation lived in the front pages of the white dailies. Hidden amongst the writings of chaos and destruction and claims of hoodlum terror and KKK influence was true sentiment and contemplation on the racial situation the nation faced. If for nothing else the riots made some white newspapers print more accurate news stories on the lower class citizenship in which African Americans lived.

VI: Analysis of a Racial Crisis

The riots of 1943 sent a shockwave throughout the nation. In many cities the authorities were on constant alert and numerous city officials pressed for measures to monitor or regulate any perceived racial antagonism. In Washington talk emerged again on an anti-lynching bill while the capital began to survey its own racial situation. A fear among many of the nation's city dwellers, feeding an already shaky racial situation, perforated into the countryside as Americans from all walks of life read the news with disgust for those willing to start a fight in the midst of a war. The white dailies were affected by the shock of the riots and, to an extent, took steps to further diffuse the situation. Some sought to change the perceptions of African Americans in their papers as unpatriotic criminals into patriots fighting for democracy and examine the frustrations African Americans felt by showing the conditions they faced in Jim-Crow America, North or South.[154]

In the wake of the riots came a slew of publications by the New York dailies on a level not seen since perhaps in the days of the Civil War. Although there was some level of similar inquiry after the Harlem Riot of 1935 and the racial uprising in Chicago of 1919, but the multitude of outbreaks in 1943 from coast to coast spurred the efforts of columnists, editors, and reporters of the dailies of New York City. These huge displays of racial unrest served as invitations for the press writers to look deeper into the situation and led to some of the most pensive, illuminating works on the dark underbelly of discrimination in America. Some of the most respected writers for the *Times* and other papers would turn their pen to analyzing the race situation that had led to riots and papers devoted more room to surveys and thoughts of academics to reveal a more definitive view of the matter. This set the stage for Swedish

[154] The black press, by and large, did not reduce their output of reports on racial injustice and discrimination after the riots.

economist and sociologist Gunmar Myrdal's seminal work *An American Dilemma* (1944), a painstakingly detailed study of obstacles that African Americans faced in gaining full participation in American society.[155]

It was after Detroit that the flurry began. Although the bulk of press coverage on the matter was more interested in the steps taken by government, the destruction on the ground, and the response by New Yorkers on the inside pages of many papers were pieces that tried to get to the heart of the matter. In reporting on Detroit Mayor Edward Jeffries' twelve member, interracial fact-finding commission of the riot's cause which Times reporter Turner Catledge called it "an answer to those who have been trying since Monday to find a simple answer and a plan for the riots," with the KKK and Southern migrant workers. He was quick to cite how although each was present in the riot situation, "how they were divided as to cause and effect when applied to developments leading up to the late riots is a question that defies a simple answer." "Hatred between the whites and the Negroes," Catledge wrote, "has grown in this community since the dawn of its industrial era," with roots dating as far back as the "underground railroad" before the Civil War when an influx of African Americans made their way north. However the racial antagonism had "grown high during the last twenty-five years, even to the point of Sunday night's explosion, in crowded conditions in which the Negro was always 'out of place'," accentuated by the recent "influx of both Negroes and whites from the South." The article ends with the declaration that "there have been few if any observers in Detroit official or otherwise who were surprised at what happened."[156]

[155]Researched from 1938 and 1940 for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; the foundation chose Myrdal because it thought that as a European outsider, he could present a more unbiased opinion of the subject matter.

[156] *New York Times*, "Detroit Head Sets Inquiry in Motion," June 26, 1943: 28.

Catledge's sentiment was bolstered by journalist/historian Frank B. Woodford of Detroit who wrote with a grim satirist prose on the racial situation in the city. In an article for the *Times* Woodford wrote how "there is one thing the police are not overlooking. That is the possibility that the riots may have been an incident arising out of a subversive groundwork made over a long period of time." With the police looking into the work of Japanese Socialists from eight years back, labor groups were inciting the KKK, and many locals pointing the finger to the mass influx. Yet they were not the cause of the frictions that "had their genesis nearly eighty years ago." Under the section title "A Negro's View" Woodford quoted Negro leaders and told how the root of racial resentment stemmed from nearly a century ago when white immigrants from Europe began to harbor a fear of cheap labor competition from freed slaves in the South. The automobile industry's boom in business during the early 1900s led to a massive importation of black workers and created "noticeable ill feeling between the two races between the two peoples over a period of twenty years" with African Americans confined to the worst slum areas and race troubles "played down" but still present. In the end Frank Woodford, acting as an interpreter of history, says that nothing is being done to remedy the situation except for "getting Detroit back to a somewhat normal condition." The governor's fact finding committee "only of a preliminary nature and will be largely concerned with immediate occurrences." The need for "tangible" plans for the future including recognition of equal job skills and seniority to black workers, an "adequate program of housing, park, and recreation construction," and "the creation of a permanent city bi-racial committee to make further recommendations" is being neglected. [157]

The Harlem Riot in August reinforced the efforts of the press to further investigate the racial strife. One of the most comprehensive articles on the racial issue after the riots appeared in the *Times* from the pen of one of its most admired writers and future managing editor Turner

[157] *New York Times*, "Detroit Uncertain Over Riot's Cause," June 27, 1943: E12.

Catledge. Catledge, the "tall haired, dark eyed charmer from Mississippi," with a degree from Old Miss had come to the *Times* in 1929 after stints with the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Memphis Press*, and the *Tunica Times* where he wrote articles designed to make local blacks feel at home and not want to move to the North as well as a series of articles denouncing the KKK. A Washington correspondent for the paper for over ten years Catledge had a mind for what made the nation tick. Although a lifelong Democrat from before it became the party of the Progressives, Catledge tried to be impartial in his writing and claimed to have "thought very little about the plight of Negroes during my early newspaper career," according to his autobiography: *My Life and the Times*, which was published in 1971. "Separate but equal was the law of the land, and it did not occur to me to challenge it. My thinking changed slowly, as did the nation's," a change that may have begun during his return to the Times in early 1943.[158]

After a brief stint as editor and chief for the *Chicago Sun* Catledge returned to the *Times* as a national correspondent and found the riots a true national issue. Having reported on Detroit the continued outbreaks of racial violence seemed to awaken something within the socially conscious newspaperman. At the end of 1943 Catledge penned a powerful distillation of the racial problems in confronting wartime America under the title "Our Greatest Social Problem." In this piece Catledge digs deep into the issue of racial animosity in America citing it as the foremost concern for the nation's future. "The race problem in the United States is essentially one of integrating the Negro into American life," with riots of 1943 being not an a cry of ill feeling or the work of crazed hoodlums but a "mild foretaste of what may be in store unless men of good-will in both races take the situation in hand, draw off as much of the venom as possible and get down to a factual, practical, work-a-day, give and take means for handling it."[159]

[158] *New York Times,* "Turner Catledge Dies At 82; Former Editor Of The Times," April 28, 1983.
[159] *New York Times*, "Our Greatest Social Problem," Dec. 19, 1943: SM10.

Catledge's perceptive and penetrating analysis echoes his conclusion in his earlier piece on the Detroit riot, that "it would be simpler to deal with them [race riots] if they could be traced in any substantial part to Axis agitation and subversion," but the truth is the causes "go back to before the Civil War" and is both "general and specific." Much like Woodward, Catledge points out the people's search for a scapegoat in the face of a painful situation is dangerous and asserts the idea that in order to move forward and face the problem we must recognize all the factors involved. Catledge covers every issue previously reported as being a factor for the riots: from the migration of southern white and black Americans, to the discrimination of the workplace, to the cramped living situations, to the poor use of black troops. He understands each point but also finds some to have been played up, such as neglecting the work of the FEPC in the workplace and how most of the white aggressors in Detroit were of European origin. Catledge comes to the logical conclusion that the one common denominator in each case, in every city in which violence prevailed was "Negro resentment against their lot." African Americans, excited by the new need for their service, resolved to embark on a drive "for the place they think they are entitled to in the community… both bodily and spiritually." This arouses whites whose "weight of custom and a fear, whether justified or not, of taking any revolutionary step toward full social emancipation of the Negro," despite his claim that most believe in their democratic rights "when you pin them down." Catledge speaks with a good degree of experience but one could still find this a lofty assumption, possibly confirmed or denied in the vitriol against the Civil Rights movement of the sixties.

Catledge however takes things further in his analysis by directly asking his readers what will happen when the war ends and thousands of black soldiers return home "indoctrinated with the practical aspirations, as well as the ideals, of democracy." He holds no reservations about the

likely "explosions" to come and states that proposed measures towards better housing a transport are good first steps towards a solution but not the answer. Catledge does not have the space to cover all the steps to a "fundamental solution", or perhaps he does not know himself, and instead explains the feelings of several Negro groups extending from complete, immediate decimation of Jim Crow to acceptance of their racial status leaving his reader to ponder the viability of each. He ends his article with his belief that "a narrowing of the areas of friction between them [races] is not only possible; it is indispensable to the internal piece of the United States."

Catledge's work achieved a great deal in citing the complexities of the racial animosity within the nation and noted several truths that were long known but seldom recognized in print. He found the bonds that tied the "explosions" together and realized the true severity of the situation at hand in a language that readers of the paper could understand. Furthermore his name was one the *Times* readers knew and trusted and gave the article a validation that a statement of Walter White printed in the *Times* did not have. Although the *Times*, like other white dailies, continued to play into the Harlem Crime Wave with more articles on theft and muggings in the neighborhood in their juicy spectrum of crime reports the Catledge article and others that followed showed that the paper was taking a big step in fully recognizing "America's greatest social problem" and tried to make their readers see it as such.

But perhaps the most illuminating piece on the subject of "The Negro and the War" to appear in the *Herald Tribune* was a series of three articles written by Agnes Meyer, wife of *Washington Post* publisher Eugene Meyer, after a yearlong tour of the nation's defense industries and military installations. Black reporters of the Negro press were turned away, but Meyer had the connections to enter and fully observe the situation within a number of the country's military installations and informed thousands on the reality of the situation. Her work was held so highly

that the paper went in with the *Washington Post* to print it simultaneously in their Sunday March 19th and March 26th editions.[160]

In her articles Meyer presented the evidence of mass discrimination that beset African Americans in the Armed Forces as well as those in the factories and shipyards. She is taken aback by how "the Negro himself is aware that he lives in a nation within a nation," as he is subject to second class citizenship if not utter oppression at a time when "the problem of the Negro been as important to every American, black and white. And yet the white population knows dangerously little." Her article helped to change this, at least in the matter of the Negro in the military with full expositions of African American lives in the armed forces, their service, and the discriminatory statuettes they confront.

Meyer begins with the black view of World War I, finding this a primary component of shaping the African American's perception of war and the military. She notes the optimism among blacks in taking part in President Woodrow Wilson's call for the spread of democracy, highlighted by W.E.B. DuBois famous "close the ranks" manifesto. They performed well as soldiers with four black regiments receiving the Croix De Guerre but at home the white perception followed along the lines of: "He had done what he could to make the world safe for democracy, but after his return we took care to prove to him that he need expect no change in his status at home." Thus African Americans had entered World War II with the bad taste of being snubbed in the previous war. Meyer, however, goes on to note how the military policies in this war show more accommodation of blacks than previously. Although still segregated into separate units she notes how unlike the last war "Negroes hold every rank up to and including that of brigadier general." She also cites their service in Sicily, the incorporation of African Americans in the military Specialized Training Program which sent some to college; the

[160] *New York Amsterdam News*, "Negro in Uniform Infuriates the South," April 1, 1944.

Tuskegee Institute's training of black pilots, and the Army's war film *The Negro Soldier* specifically made to rally black morale.

However in the second part of her story she unearths the "shadows over this picture which has darkened all its brightness in the Negro's mind." Meyer notes how blacks were the subject of constant racial slurs and plagued by racist white southern police and a military authority that refuses to act. First are the shocking number of murders on the part of white police and state constabulary with killings at Alexandria, Louisiana; El Paso, Texas; and Columbia, South Carolina where murders, not for lack of evidence, escaped conviction. In the camps black soldiers' feelings are disregarded and their punishment more severe for offenses than white soldiers. One particular example is that of Prison Camp McCain in Mississippi where "the facilities, toilets, and drinking fountains were labeled 'For whites only'," with the Germans and white Americans in one class and the blacks in another. It seems only logical that this treatment would lead to much impertinent behavior on the part of African Americans, which Meyer claims "are the only news items about Negroes in the white press." As for the black press Meyer finds them to be "the only outlet Negroes have for voicing their feelings" as they were the only outlet that published the day to day abuses. Although occasionally getting the news "out of balance, as they are bound to emphasize every discrimination, however slight," with competition leading editors to try to "outdo each other in sensationalism, she notes their service to outweigh such handicaps.[161]

Meyer also extols how at home, in every war center of the north "the Southern Negro crowded into the already overcrowded Negro quarters," the mass migration of illiterate migrants causing dismay among the white and black inhabitants alike with "the rational attitude which once characterized Northern behavior toward the Negro… largely gone and gone with it was the

[161] *New York Herald Tribune*, "THE NEGRO AND THE ARMY: A Critical Problem in Race Relations," March 26, 1944.

chief solvent of racial problems which the country possessed."[162] "A great chasm seemed to yawn between the two races" as race solidarity was forced among each with whites pulling back from fear and blacks from necessity. The social problems at home and in the military illustrate the sentiment of how when African Americans begin to push for equality they encounter a natural defense on the part of white Americans so entrenched in their discriminatory ways they will not allow change.

Yet Meyer still finds progress in the military with many African Americans being educated through training and some even reviewing advanced training in officer school. This education could be used to advance their employment opportunities at home after the war while on the home front the employment gains of African Americans placed them in a new economic position that they will fight to maintain. However in this progress Meyer finds a problem looming over the nation as black soldiers begin to return home they will have a heightened expectation of what they can do and how they will not stand by the discriminatory model in place. "Unless the Negro soldier becomes more adjusted to military life [from army concessions to their pleas], the period of demobilization will be a dangerous moment for both races."[163] She calls upon the North to "examine critically the reasons for its growing impatience with the Negro," and "become more militant in its demands that the backward Southern communities begin to practice better relationships," or else the returning troops will be "focal point of racial disorder." Meyer also asks the people to reassure African Americans that they will retain at least some of the economic progress during the war for "practical proof that the moral conscience of

[162] *New York Herald Tribune*, "Conditions Improving Yet Bitterness Mounts," March 26, 1944.
[163] *New York Herald Tribune*, "THE NEGRO AND THE ARMY: A Critical Problem in Race Relations," March 19, 1944.

America is genuinely aroused and that our democratic war aims are not the eye wash they seemed to him after the First World War."[164]

Meyer's work received unanimous praise upon publication by the black press as a seminal piece of journalism for the white dailies. The *Amsterdam News* praised it as something that "may be considered a piece of journalism in the United States." However the author remained measured in his praise. The reporter was enamored enough to devote an article to the work but found that the article contributed nothing new to the "overall discussion of the negro question," and that the "materials of discussion" had already been published in every major African-American newspaper throughout the nation for some time. The author concluded that the work was not necessarily revolutionary in its content but rather for "the wide circle of intelligent and thoughtful white readers that such an attempt might reach." [165]

Indeed, Meyer's work is significant not for its content but for the fact that it was printed in a major white publication. However to say that it contributes nothing new to conversation is dismissive. Meyer's article held a more progressive position on blacks in the military than many black publications. It put more emphasis on how the benefits of serving in the armed forces outweigh the negatives of the discrimination one may face. The positives of military pay, bettering one's body and mind, as well as showing the nation what they can do in its service made it a much better prospect than the hotbed of racism and abuse that the majority of the black press made it out to be. In addition Meyer's work deserves commendation for its scope; covering how the changing racial attitude at home (becoming more race conscious and fearful) changed the social landscape for blacks when everyone returned home.

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[164] *New York Herald Tribune*, "Conditions Improving Yet Bitterness Mounts," March 26, 1944.
[165] *New York Amsterdam News,* "Story of Negro and War Widely Circulated In Daily Newspaper," March 25, 1944: 22.

Yet as another article for the *Amsterdam News* points out Meyer's article had limitations on par with the limitations of white dailies in regard to racial matters. "There has grown up a certain community understanding among reporters and the lesser editors of the big dailies," the author of the piece claimed, "they just take it for granted that Negro news, no matter how important, if it is of a certain decent human character, is not wanted." Although the author believes Meyers "deserves the gratitude of all Negroes" for her articles she and her husband could do more good by "insisting that Negroes be given the benefit of straight news coverage."[166]

After the riots things, in large part, went back to normal for the city's newspapers. News pertaining to African Americans still rarely broke out of the inside pages and many white dailies still played into the notion of a Harlem Crime Wave throughout 1943 and even into 1944. Nevertheless articles such as those by Catledge and Meyer, although relatively few, began to make headway into the liberal papers, as well as some conservative papers, in Chicago, Los Angeles, and especially New York. The men of these papers witnessed something terrible happening within their nation that was undermining the war effort. As they began to dig deeper than the obligatory survey of conditions they began to draw better conclusions on the racial unrest abuzz in the US. Although tabloids were still run afoul with how these riots were cultivating hearty propaganda material for the Axis some white publications were beginning to truly question the nature of racial disharmony across America. White readers began to garner a better understanding of the racial inequity of the nation without having to read a newspaper from the black press.

It was not only in print that people found a more complete picture of the racial situation within the nation. The issue also came on the radio, a sector of the media which previously had

[166] *New York Amsterdam News*, "Dailies' Dilemma," June 3, 1944: 6.

almost no part in the plight of African Americans. The riots led to a number of stations creating programs to address the outbreaks as well as the discrimination from which they emerged. The riots that erupt in 1943 led to several programs aimed at calming the mounting tensions and promoting racial accord. After the Detroit Riot Walter White embarked on a new initiative to sway public opinion and tried to sell a nationwide appeal for racial tolerance to radio stations through the Emergency Committee of the Entertainment Industry which was composed of white and black entertainers who sponsored the proposed event. CBS executive William Paley not only agreed to give the committee thirty minutes of free national airtime but also had CBS officially sponsor the race conscious program, an unprecedented action at the time.[167] For the broadcast CBS had the respected radio producer, director, and scriptwriter William Robson come onboard to craft what the project would become. Although supported by the station Robson said he and his colleagues had to be extremely careful in crafting a script that would "throw the light of truth on the Detroit incident without inciting either whites or Negroes to riot elsewhere." To do this Robson formatted a dramatic re-enactment of the riot in order to emphasize the "positive aspects of person helping person, rather than the destructive aspects of the disturbance."[168]

"Open Letter on Racial Hatred" was broadcast on July 27, 1943. The reenactment of the Detroit Riot began with the opening narration:

> Dear Fellow Americans. What you are about to hear may anger you. What you are about to hear may sound incredible to you. You may doubt that such things can happen today in this supposedly united nation. But we assure you, everything you are about to hear is true. And so, we ask you to spend thirty minutes with us, facing quietly without passion or

[167] Unlike NBC which, according to Barbara Savage, was routinely more cautious about programming on race relations or African Americans, CBS took on the cause of calming racial tensions as its own.
[168] Savage, Barbara Dianne. *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 1999. 178.

> prejudice, a danger which threatens all of us – a danger so great that if it is not met and conquered now, even though we win this war, we shall be defeated in victory and the peach which follows will for us be a horror of chaos, lawlessness and bloodshed. This danger is race hatred.[169]

The program proceeded to dramatize how "the arrival of waves of wartime immigrants from Appalachia and the rural South, crowded housing, the efforts of 'subversive' organizers and native Nazi orators all combined to create conditions in which misunderstandings and rumors could start a race riot," while emphasizing the courage of individual whites and blacks in preventing more violence from breaking out. And through a bit of radio magic projected radio reports of the riot as if they were German and Japanese radio propaganda.[170] It concluded with a straightforward attack on the idea of white superiority and an argument for extending full rights to African Americans from former Republican presidential candidate Wendell Wilkie.

CBS, a national broadcaster, and several devoted writers, entertainers, and the former presidential candidate took on the risk of fashioning a radio response to the mass outbreak of racial violence. It was a move that seemed to pay off as the broadcast "drew praise and national media attention." *Time* magazine wrote plaudits of the program in their review and it was the "talk of the town" for days afterward. But according to Robson the general public's reaction was "as varied and violent as the point of view of the listener," with "indiscriminate applause and vile condemnation" coming from the same locality."[171] The program did seem to be aimed largely at whites, who the broadcast referred to as "decent law-abiding citizens… who will pay the final

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[169] Savage, Barbara Dianne. *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 1999. 178.
[170] Savage, Barbara Dianne. *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 1999. 179.
[171] Edmerson, Estelle. "Descriptive Study of the American Negro in the United States Professional Radio." Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles. 167.

bill for race hatred of fellow Americans," and contained the admonition "we've got too tough an enemy to beat overseas to fight each other here at home."[172]

The reaction to the broadcast proved both the power radio had in spreading a message and "the controversy that met attempts to use radio as a forum to discuss local racial tensions." It was one of the first of its kind in directly addressing the harm of racial hatred and that African Americans deserved the basic rights allotted to American citizens on a national level. Savage notes the significance of this broadcast, claiming that "the race riots finally had inspired the type of radio show that Theodore Berry and other African American federal officials repeatedly had urged the Office of War Information to air: one that targeted the racist attitudes of white Americans."[173] However the broadcast would prove to be the only national broadcast of its kind during the war. As Savage points out, "with a few exceptions, national radio programming remained under the control of powerful whites who, even if they were opposed to racial injustice, remained unwilling to permit African Americans to speak freely for themselves on the medium."[174]

[172]Savage, Barbara Dianne. *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 1999. 179.
[173] Savage, 179.
[174] Savage, 183-4.

XI: The End of the War

From the end of 1943 until the end of the war the press would continue to report on African Americans at a slightly higher level of attention than previously done. Their coverage still barred most news of African American life in America and when they did run news of noteworthy peoples and events detailing the work of government or black organizations fighting for equality it was rarely printed in the front pages of the paper, instead given space in the middle like in the past. However articles that came out during the final two years of the war could be written with a higher degree of reverence for African Americans service and plight.

When America entered the war in Europe the press was keen to pick out articles detailing the work of black divisions. Although their stories were strong potions of racial alleviation, particularly after the riots, the deeds of individual African American soldiers on the battlefield equated to maybe a hundredth of the coverage given to white soldiers. White newspapers, the ones that did write of black troops, instead choose to focus on the work and contributions of whole units of black troops to create a more general endowment of praise or scorn. One article in the *Times* applauded the good will of the black troops at Fort Benning, Georgia who came up with new songs and variations to keep the pace of their march "to relieve the rigors and tedium of Army life and to enhance the part they play in it" and writes how they are so well conditioned that their salute "is like a blow."[175] Many white publications were also flush with praise for the all Negro 99th Pursuit Squadron of the 392nd Fighter Group better known today as the Tuskegee Airmen with one article bearing the title "Negroes Praised as Air Fighters" and extoling how "the Negro pilots of the Ninety-ninth Fighter Squadron… more than proved their qualifications for aerial combat by shooting down seventeen enemy planes."[176] Although it was not all

[175] *New York Times*, "Negro GI's Set War To Swing Tempo," March, 19, 1944: X4.
[176] *New York Times*, "Negroes Praised as Air Fighters," June 25, 1944: 13.

harmonious commendation with the retreat of the Ninety-Second Division in Italy eliciting some criticism in the press after initial praise for its victories only months before. Some saw this as proof that black soldiers were not prepared for combat but the majority kept their cool and tried to report the simple facts of the situation with *Times* correspondent Milton Bracker, who traveled with the division, penning a rousing defense. Additionally Walter White, leader of the NAACP, was hired as a war correspondent for the *New York Post* in late 1944 and again in early 1945 where he reported on the conditions for blacks in the installations in the UK and the pacific. In his view the camps in Britain seemed to have segregation forced upon them with some whites coming to black centers of recreation to fraternize. The Pacific was a different story as White encountered strong discrimination in the camps which he predicted would culminate into violent outbreaks that he wrote about, although his work was edited by the army censors before being allowed publication.[177]

On the home front, however there seemed little more to attract the attention of the white presses. Papers continued to feed articles of gains made by African Americans in jobs and education because of the war to appease their black readers. They also continued to report on the continued discrimination in the work place and how little seemed to be able to be done to amend the situation. Although campaigns continued to push for the guarantee of equal working opportunities they received miniscule space in the presses. The attention getting fight between the FEPC and the railways was keenly followed in the press and seemed to be one of the last great attention grabbers regarding African Americans that broke into the front pages.[178] However

[177] White later wrote about his experiences while working as a correspondent for the *New York Post* and what he saw with the place of African Americans in the military in his book *A Rising Wind.*

[178] The FEPC had begun hearings into discrimination on the southern railroad industry in 1942 but was sidelined by death threats and its transfer to the War Manpower Commission under Paul McNutt who postponed the hearings indefinitely in January 1943. Resurrected under the restructured FEPC the hearings in September 1943 of 20 companies and 7 unions received wide media coverage. They were given cease and desist orders on barring blacks

the papers reports did not produce articles questioning the conditions in which African Americans lived and worked or the antagonism they faced in the workplace, as the riots had done. Instead the reports and eventual outcome of the matter turned the papers on to the ineffectual powers of the FEPC as it failed to enact any significant change in the railways hiring practices and riding regulations.

By the war's end African Americans had done an incredible amount in service to their nation (both in combat and at home) and could be said to have gained some recognition for their service by various officials and military leaders. However World War II proved to be too tumultuous a time for African Americans to affect their goals in civil rights and equal opportunities. Civil Rights was not a national priority with the country having to commit its full attention to winning the war with any movement hindering this, although maybe for the best of reasons, could be seen as counterproductive or unpatriotic. In 1945 they came home to largely the same conditions they had found before the war, the job market was again closed to them, the FEPC, now under the control of Congress had its budget slashed and it would be dissolved in early 1946 following a filibuster that prevented further funding. Thus blacks continued to struggle with segregation and further racism for years to come in the job market and social landscape. In the press the story remained the same. Although the war had yielded some news stories on African Americans in the white dailies, coverage of them changed little after the war. Their news continued to only be found on the inside pages of voluminous newspapers with the same criteria for such news to make it to print with it either affecting white citizens, being too

from promotion. Sixteen companies and three unions refused and nothing was done. - *The African American Experience during World War II*

big to overlook, or were stories about "those who were sports heroes, entertainment stars, or criminals."[179]

This could be attributed to a number of things with perhaps the most prominent being that the war was over. World War II provided a broad canvas for stories as nearly every concern of the nation was tied to the conflict. In that atmosphere stories concerning Americans of different races and religions valiant efforts on the battlefield, in the training camps and military installations abroad, or at the factories and bond drives at home could be turned in moral raising stories for the press. It was under the banner of "to win the war" that more articles concerning African Americans were printed. On the other hand events from the proposed July 1941 March on Washington, D.C. to the backlash from the riots of 1943, all large scale events that were a product of the war, demanded the attention of the press to an extent not seen until roughly nine years after the war with the Brown vs. Board of Education decision that made the seminal change in the institution of segregation and the conduct of the nation's populace. Thus the war proved to be the prime engine behind the increased printing of African American stories with articles detailing black servicemen, statistics of job gains among African Americans, and other tales bearing at least a fragmentary connection to the war.

With the war's end things began to change. Industries began to cut back as the orders died down and thus the black job gains came to a halt. There were no longer reports of job gains to line the newspapers only layoffs that went with the reduction of war jobs and work opportunities for African Americans. Likewise all news of black servicemen's valor ceased with the war's end as the fighting was over, the war won, and the nation no longer in need of keeping the flames of unity a roar in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. As African Americans

[179] Patrick Washburn. *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom,* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006, 190.

began to return home and start to move into cities and take advantage of opportunities provided by the government such as the G.I. Bill, the fact that they were black was not enough for the press to report on it separately from the similar moves of other returning white veterans. Granted some stories still made ruffles in the liberal presses including attacks on former soldiers returning home to the South and the new fight they waged for justice, the most prominent being the case of former Sergeant Isaac Woodard whose blinding at the hands of a lynch mob in South Carolina brought a massive public campaign for justice that attracted the support of such celebrities as Paul Robeson, Billie Holiday, Woody Guthrie, and Orson Welles and went all the way to the president.[180] But without the war the white press did not have the large banner of "war activity" to draw their readers in without the overly depressing them. Also there was a financial consideration as many of the white publications saw how African Americans were once again largely lacking the income to afford subscriptions thus saw little need to print more stories about those of their race as they probably couldn't afford to read them. Much like America hadn't fully integrated African Americans after the Second World War neither had the white press, even in the vastness of the New York City media.

However that is not to say that the war had no effect on the press's reporting of African Americans at all. The war itself gave a new platform to examining the race topic, a way that was able to truly place it as a matter of national importance. The racial discrimination observed was not only a matter concerning African Americans but every American trying to do their service in the war effort. If there is war at home, how could America win the fight abroad? The war

[180] In February of 1946 Isaac Woodword was travelling by bus from Georgia, still in uniform, when we got involved in an altercation that that ended with the local police of Batesburg, South Carolina beating him with clubs and leaving him permanently blind. The NAACP took his case and launched a national campaign and in September Walter White met with President Truman and in a separate meeting Paul Robeson warned Truman that if the government would not act they would. Although angered at this sentiment the attorney general was instructed to conduct an investigation. The sheriff was brought to trial but acquitted by an all-white jury.

provided an outlet for discrimination (in the military and war industries) but also allowed the democratic, liberal papers like the *Times* as well as Republican, liberal papers like the *Tribune* a new opportunity to explore racial discrimination on a new level. The papers were somewhat less cautious about printing stories about African Americans and these stories illustrated how African Americans were participants of the nation's struggle to win the war or presenting how the discrimination they faced served to sabotage America's victory or at least the perceived ideological underpinnings behind it.

The push of African Americans to be allowed an equal chance at jobs in the aircraft and shipbuilding depots and the success they found showed they could do the work when given the chance and that depriving them of this was a fallacy. The New York press' stance on the situation and their continuing coverage of integrated factories, walkouts over race employment, and discrimination faced in the workplace helped illustrate the situation confronting the African Americans in industry and the difficulties they faced. Furthermore it presented how in many places discriminatory hiring practices and promotional opportunities were a product of several levels: union, administration, and individual; all based on the fear of that the other harbored scorn for the race and would invoke havoc if action was taken to aid the Negro's situation. Reports of the Fair Employment Practices Committee's work, which steadily gained more space in the press particularly after the riots, helped to illustrate the struggle of having industry accept Negroes. The FEPC was not always presented positively with articles carrying such titles as "FEPC Caused Strike" and printing and politicians' verbal lambasting the committee's work, including Senator Richard Russell of Georgia who said the FEPC accomplished its mission of having the Philadelphia Transportation Company hire Negroes as engineers and conductors "with full knowledge of the evil consequences its action was certain to cause. Although the

maniacal ramblings of southern senators against the FEPC were seldom illustrated to their full extent the articles on African Americans in the factories nevertheless presented the struggle to give all people of the nation the basic right work and earn a living; one of the principles that Americans had prided their nation for most.

The city's dailies' work on African Americans in the military was more mixed. Given the tumultuous times the white dailies were more reserved about reporting on discrimination in the armed forces. But there was a gradual appraisal of the service and effort put forth by African Americans in some papers. In the first year of the war when it was hard to find an article about African Americans and the military with the injustice faced in the training camps where they suffered under southern officers and racist locals reported regularly in the black press of the city but hardly in the white dailies. When events like the outbreak at Fort Dix occurred it proved that the unrest was not just confined to the South and the white papers began to take notice, although mostly in a toned down, racially restricted manner. These reports continued, with equal caution throughout the war alongside of articles noting the work of black soldiers as they were given the opportunity to fight with the white press working alongside the black to make a hero of sailor Dorrie Miller. The papers took an active role in noting the contribution of black as well as white soldiers on a larger scale than had been done for any previous war of the US. At the war's conclusion several papers, including the *Times* and the *Herald Tribune* published statements of military officials commending the contribution of African American soldiers. Even though there continued to be a barrier in the major dailies of giving too much attention to African American soldiers it was a barrier that would go away with time, aided in no small part by the abolition of segregation within the military by President Harry S. Truman in 1948 as black soldiers served

with white ones in the same unit and the ingenuity, heroism, or cowardice shown by a unit of troops could no longer be highlighted by race.

Then with the riots of 1943 came articles centered more on the struggles of African Americans than their role in the war. The violent outbreak in protest of the situation most African Americans lived under numerous cities across America opened the wound of the nation that had become infected and forced Americans to take note of the issue. The newspapers acknowledgement and commenting of the matter, not only through statements and statistics but through actual editorials from their writers was integral. Their work was not the comprehensive effort of recognition that Myrdal would put forth but it was a beginning, a precedent from which other works would follow. Works which examined the problem from the societal and the social level and allowed for the white reader to take note of what was always a previously accepted notion of the place the black race had in America, in the North as well as in the South.

Overall the slight increase in articles on African Americans during the war, although not giving it the attention it should have deserved, put them within the reader's line of sight much more than before the war. Their blunt, matter of a fact description of discrimination and segregation educated the reader on how entrenched it had truly become within society, even in the North and the West. In short the war provided a plethora of news stories involving African Americans that the press began to pick up. Although their place within the papers may not have largely changed the volume of which they were printed increased. As such articles began to appear more, occasionally on the front pages of various papers; it began to become a more tolerable notion to the readers.

Thus the New York City's white dailies did see their view of African Americans change during the World War II because the position of African Americans was changed by World War

II. African Americans, like other ethnicities and peoples that made up the nation, were seen in a light outside of the stereotype perpetuated by the public and instead as Americans fighting for the chance to prove their dedication to their nation and its ideals, even though it did not live up to those ideals. The press played a role in spreading this image of the Negro as an American citizen and one who continued to be wronged. Although there was no major shift in the press' reporting about African Americans with their news still found largely on the inside pages and never receiving the normalcy of articles as white new stories would it was during the war that a larger number of articles concerning African Americans ran in the white dailies of New York. These were war stories but also stories of struggle, stories of neglect and short handedness, and occasionally stories of victory that showed openness among papers to break from exclusively stories about criminals and celebrities and report the black news if the story had a punch or impacted what was happening in the community or the nation. It can be seen as the start of the stories to alert the nation of the depth discrimination had reached and that it had to be dealt with.

But perhaps more importantly the war provided the impetus for the media's coverage of the Civil Rights campaign of the future. The white presses more diverse reports on African Americans put aside of the inside pages no doubt helped to set the stage for when blacks would again move to assert their rights as Americans. Thus the press' investigative look into the condition of African Americans and the their role in the nation would be resurrected in greater force as the press gave the movements of the 1950s and 1960s more than just a glance but instead a deep querying stare. Patrick Washburn reflects how the Civil Rights movement grew into "the country's top domestic news story" and "when it occurred it attracted the attention of the white press"[181] on a greater level than had ever been seen. In the sixties and seventies African

[181] Patrick Washburn. *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom,* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006. 190.

Americans would finally gain their respective rights as citizens and an equal place in the white media.

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