

## Educators-in-Residence Spring 2021



### African Americans in Europe During First Half of 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Jon Rehm, Alachua County Public Schools  
World History/US History, 9-12

Time Needed: 2-3 (50) minute class periods

#### Objectives/Essential Questions

- Students will understand and analyze the African American Wartime experience in Europe during WWI and WWII.  
  
Students will understand and analyze the African American experience during the interwar years in Europe.
- Students will understand and analyze the African American experience during the post WWII/Early Cold War years in Europe.
- Students will understand and analyze the African American Experience in Europe's effect on Civil Rights in the U.S.

#### Standards/Benchmarks

SS.912.W.7.2- Describe the changing nature of warfare during World War I.

SS.912.W.7.3- Summarize significant effects of World War I.

SS.912.W.7.4- Describe the causes and effects of the German economic crisis of the 1920s and the global depression of the 1930s, and analyze how governments responded to the Great Depression.

SS.912.W.7.11- Describe the effects of World War II.

SS.912.A.4.8- Compare the experiences Americans (African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, women, conscientious objectors) had while serving in Europe.

SS.912.A.4.9- Compare how the war impacted German Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Jewish Americans, Native Americans, women and dissenters in the United States.

SS.912.A.5.7- Examine the freedom movements that advocated civil rights for African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and women.

SS.912.A.5.10-Analyze support for and resistance to civil rights for women, African Americans, Native Americans, and other minorities.

SS.912.A.6.4- Examine efforts to expand or contract rights for various populations during World War II.

SS.912.A.6.10-Examine causes, course, and consequences of the early years of the Cold War (Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, NATO, Warsaw Pact).

## Background

African American soldiers in Europe during World Wars I and II fought in segregated units, but the segregation ended there. These men and women interacted with European soldiers and civilians. The African American presence during both wars elicited gratitude. They still faced racial bias in Europe, but it was less than what they faced at home in the US where racism was institutionalized. Between the wars, and even during the Great Depression, African Americans remained in Europe and spread African American art such as paintings, drawings, classical music, jazz, blues, poetry, novels, plays, and dance, spreading the ideas of the Harlem Renaissance. In WWII and post WWII Europe, African American soldiers brought art, music, and food with them to Europe. They took back with them memories of greater freedom and societal acceptance and helped to expand the civil rights movement taking place in the U.S.

## Key Terminology:

- Segregation
- Integration

## Activities

1. If necessary, review WWI and WWII
  - a. Remind students that the U.S. army was not integrated
2. Students are to read excerpt from *GIs and Frauleins* (pg. 90-93)
  - a. Discuss attitudinal differences between Europe and U.S. during this time frame. Some suggested questions include:
    - i. What were race relations like in the U.S. from WWI until WWII
    - ii. What were race relations like in Europe?
    - iii. How were these different? What similarities existed?
    - iv. Why do you think these differences occurred?
3. Pass out to each student the [SHEG Historical Thinking Chart](#). Go over the chart with students.
4. Divide the class into 6 groups Each group will get one primary source image. Make sure to have one copy for each individual in each group. Have students

use the [SHEG Historical Thinking Chart](#) to analyze each picture. Make sure each picture is also analyzed in terms of the excerpt from GIs and Frauleins. Students can use the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) as a worksheet to record their observations.

5. Switch students into new groups so that 1 student from each of the original groups are in the new groups. Each student will share their Primary source and analysis with their new groups. Make sure that each person has time to share and hear reactions/ additional analysis from their new group members.
6. Students will return to their original groups and discuss the following prompt. "Compare and contrast racial attitudes towards African American soldiers in Europe and America."
7. Allow students additional time for research using the following websites:
  - a. [National World War II Museum: African Americans Fought for Freedom at Home and Abroad during World War II](#)
  - b. [Black Military History: African-American GIs of WWII: Fighting for democracy abroad and at home](#)
  - c. [African American Odyssey: World War I and Post War Society](#)
  - d. [Public Square: How the U.S. Military Brought Soul Food to the World](#)
8. Students are to write an essay "Compare and contrast racial attitudes towards African American soldiers in Europe and America." Students must make reference to at least 2 of the primary sources provided and 2 of the provided websites.

## Assessment

Essay "Compare and contrast racial attitudes towards African American soldiers in Europe and America."

## Materials

[SHEG Historical Thinking Chart](#)

[Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Analysis tool](#)

Primary Source Documents (see attachments)

## References

### Books

CAMPT, T. (2004). *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich*. ANN ARBOR: University of Michigan Press.

Höhn, M. (2002). *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American encounter in 1950s West Germany*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

POIGER, U. (2000). *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*. University of California Press.

### *Journals*

-LEE, S. (2011). A Forgotten Legacy of the Second World War: GI children in post-war Britain and Germany. *Contemporary European History*, 20(2), 157-181.

Schindler, D., & Westcott, M. (2021). Shocking racial attitudes: black GIs in Europe. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 88(1), 489-520.

### *Web-*

[National World War II Museum: African Americans Fought for Freedom at Home and Abroad during World War II](#)

[Black Military History: African-American GIs of WWII: Fighting for democracy abroad and at home](#)

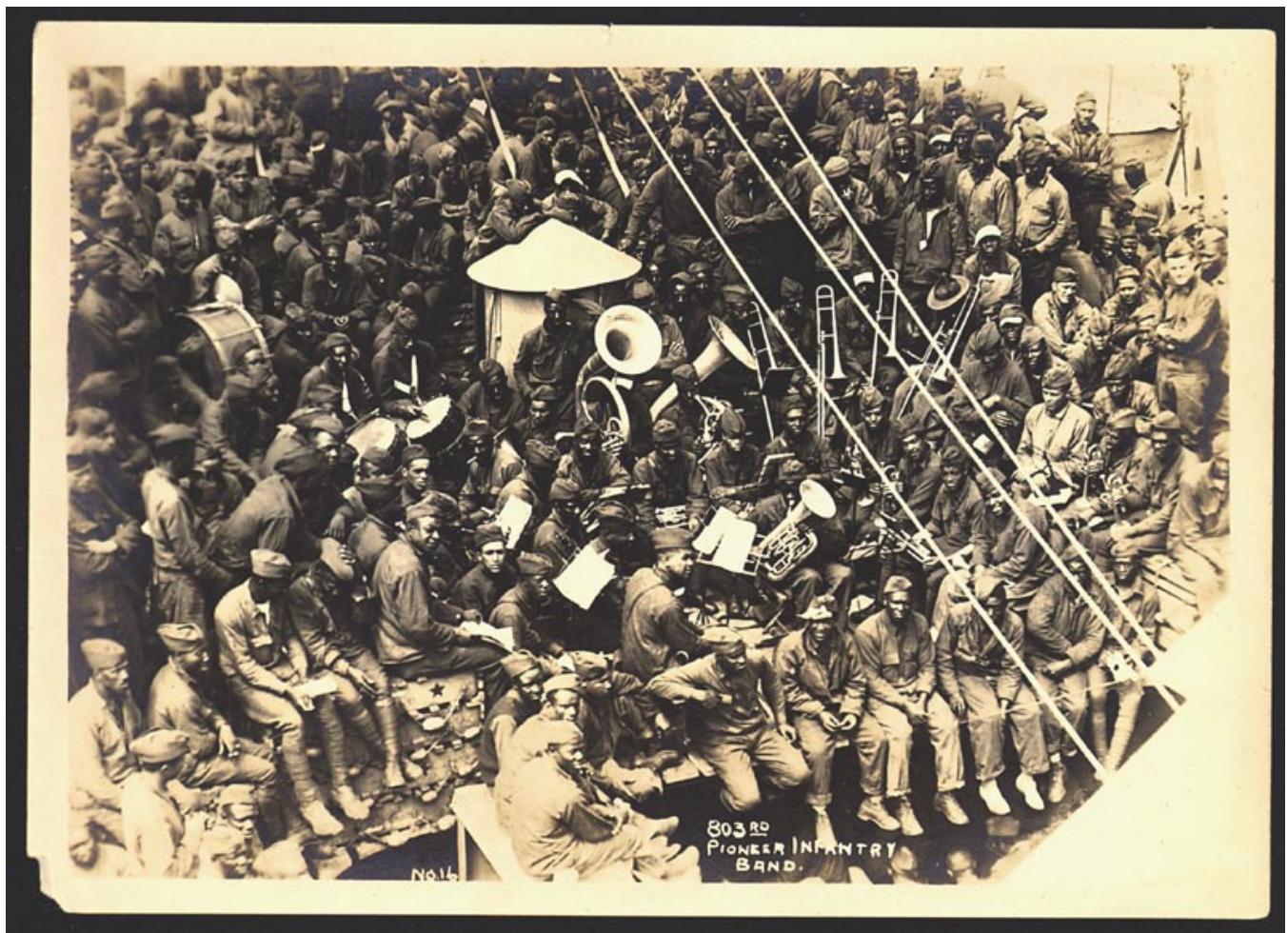
[African American Odyssey: World War I and Post War Society](#)

[Public Square: How the U.S. Military Brought Soul Food to the World](#)

Attachments:



African American Soldiers during WWI



"803rd Pioneer Infantry Band, No. 16" 803rd Pioneer Infantry to Battalion on the *U.S.S. Philippines* (troop ship) from Brest, France, July 18, 1919. Photograph. Gladstone Collection, [Prints and Photographs Division](#). Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-6163 (7-5)



U.S. African American troops in Bristol, England, during World War II. Photo courtesy of Paul Townsend/Flickr.

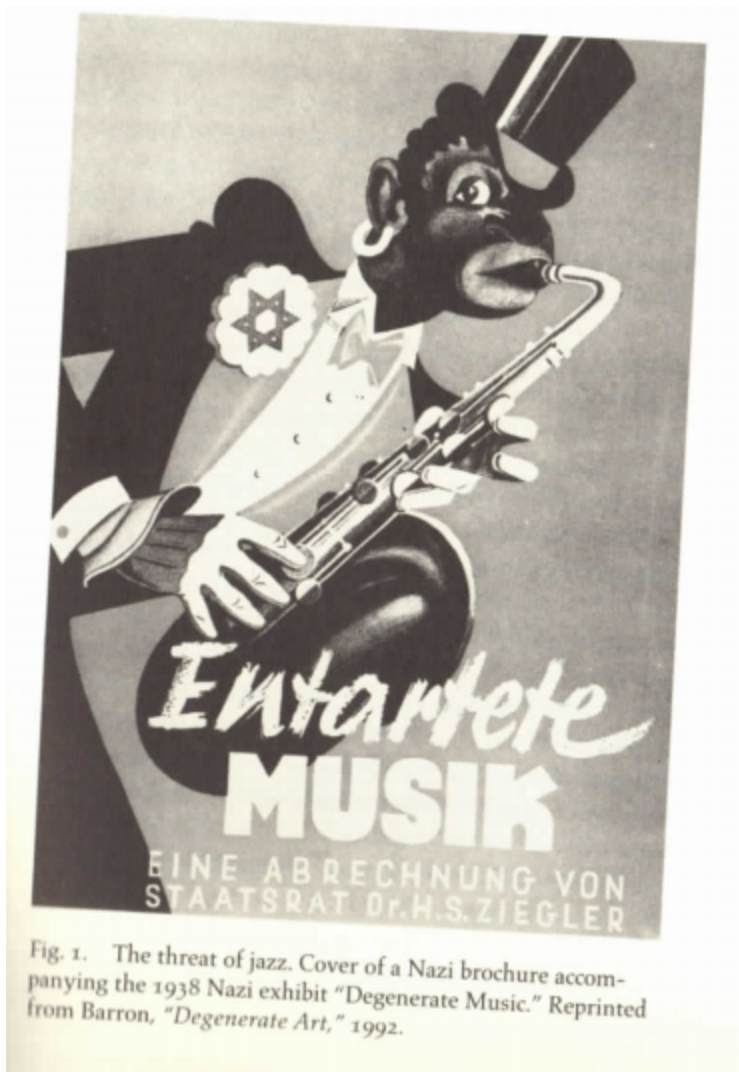


Fig. 1. The threat of jazz. Cover of a Nazi brochure accompanying the 1938 Nazi exhibit "Degenerate Music." Reprinted from Barron, "Degenerate Art," 1992.

From Jazz Rock and Rebels





The editor was so appalled by the openly affectionate behavior of this “Veronika” and her GI boyfriend from “Hell on Wheels” that he disguised their identities. Photo from 1954 *Neue Revue*; courtesy of Stefan Moses, photographer

From GIs and Frauleins



Cartoon of the Kohlenkeller bar in Baumholder. Germans and white Americans assumed that black-only bars were places of sexual excess and violence. From *Der Fröhliche Westrich*, 1956; courtesy of Stadtverwaltung Baumholder

From GIs and Frauleins