### HIGH SCHOOL U.S. HISTORY

#### ASSESSMENT PART 2

**ISSUES FACING AFRICAN AMERICANS DURING WORLD WAR II**

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In this assessment you will be asked to complete a history reading task about the issues African Americans confronted on the home front during World War II. This is an assessment of your reading in history. You will have one class period to complete the assessment.

Thinking ahead: In Assessment Part 3, half of the class will go on to write an essay in response to the documents in this assessment, while the other half will complete additional reading tasks.

Please carefully read the following 4 excerpts from documents written about African Americans during WWII. As you read the documents, consider each one individually, as well as how they relate to one another and build a picture of the African American experience.

Show your thinking by taking notes in the margins or on the texts. These notes will be scored as part of the assessment on your reading.

Next, respond to the multiple choice and short answer questions after each document. You will be asked about each document and also how the document relate.
DOCUMENT 1: Read carefully, record your thinking, and answer the questions that follow.
The following document is an excerpt from a newspaper article published less than one year before the United States entered World War II.

A. Philip Randolph, international president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, this week called upon President Roosevelt to issue an executive order immediately to abolish discrimination in the Army, Navy, Air Corps, Marine, and in all industries working on defense contracts awarded by the federal government....

President Roosevelt should order protective clauses inserted in defense contracts to protect minority groups, stated Randolph, but, he added, “As the President of the United States and as a statesman and a politician, he will grant no more to anybody, regardless of race or color, than he is compelled to grant. No government administration will do more for any group of citizens.”

Therefore, Randolph urged, Negroes should organize into strong pressure groups to secure the maximum results for the benefit of the Negro in the national defense program.

“It is the growing opinion of the Negro today that he must fight for his rightful place in national defense with everything he has got,” declared Randolph.

“Hence,” he continued, “in order effectively to grapple with this problem, plans for an all-out march of 10,000 Negroes on Washington is in the making, and a call will be issued in the next few weeks to Negroes everywhere to keep in their minds night and day the idea that all roads lead to Washington, D.C.

“There we shall go by every means possible and present our demands that the President issue an executive order to abolish discrimination in all departments of the government and on all government jobs for national defense.”

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DOCUMENT 1 QUESTIONS:

1. What did Phillip Randolph believe President Roosevelt would be likely to do regarding discrimination without being pressured?
   A. Issue an executive order to abolish discrimination in the military
   B. As little as possible
   C. Support a march on Washington
   D. Fight for African Americans’ rightful place in national defense

2. How did Randolph view politicians?
   A. As a proven allies in the fight against racism
   B. As enemies that must be ignored
   C. As self-interested, but potential agents of change
   D. As immovable

3. Why was 1941 an opportune time for the march?
   A. Because African Americans were already a central part of the U.S. military in Europe
   B. Because of the recent passage of the Civil Rights Act
   C. Because of the need to improve military readiness
   D. Because the African American population was now over 10,000 in Washington
“Like all true Americans, my greatest desire at this time...is for a complete victory over the forces of evil which threaten our existence today. Behind that desire is also a desire to serve this, my country, in the most advantageous way.

“Most of our leaders are suggesting that we sacrifice every other ambition to the paramount one, victory. With this I agree, but I also wonder if another victory could not be achieved at the same time....

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

“I suggest that while we keep defense and victory in the forefront that we don’t lose sight of our fight for true democracy at home.

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

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DOCUMENT 2 QUESTIONS:

1. What “forces of evil” did Thompson believe faced the United States in 1942?
   A. War and ambition
   B. Racial discrimination and violence, at home and abroad
   C. Aggression and the anti-democratic nature of our allies
   D. Japan, The Soviet Union, and Germany

2. What do you think Thompson means by the phrase, “victory over our enemies from within?”
   A. Defeating communism in the United States
   B. Overcoming our personal demons
   C. The expulsion or imprisonment of Nazi sympathizers
   D. Victory over racism in the United States

3. How would Thompson have felt about the march on Washington that Randolph discussed in
   Document 1?
   A. He would have opposed it, because he thought African Americans should not participate in the
      war under any circumstances.
   B. He would have supported it, because he supported the Axis forces.
   C. He would have supported it, since he wanted to win WWII and the fight for equality.
   D. He would have opposed it, because winning the war was his top priority.

4. Parts of this document were complex. What did you do as you were reading to improve your
   understanding? Please be as detailed as possible.
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   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
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   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
The more than 240 racial incidents in 47 different towns and cities during 1943 ranged from full-scale riots in Detroit, Harlem, and Los Angeles, through to industrial conflicts, ‘hate strikes,’ in places such as Mobile, Alabama, and lynchings in a number of different states. While some riots predominantly involved whites attacking blacks, in others, such as Harlem, African Americans focused their anger and frustration on property. Each outbreak had its unique causes, but underlying them all was the sense of change brought about by the war. As black Americans demanded more, whites called for less. These tensions were exacerbated by wartime migrations, overcrowding in [defense] areas, competition for jobs, and conflict over housing.


**DOCUMENT 3 QUESTIONS:**

1. According to the document, what is meant by “wartime migrations?"
   A. The flight to safety  
   B. Movement of people to cities  
   C. Draft-dodging  
   D. Illegal immigration

2. Racial conflicts took all of the following forms in 1943, EXCEPT
   A. White people attacking black people  
   B. Emigration to Africa  
   C. Destruction of property  
   D. Housing disputes
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3. How does the racial violence described in this document relate to the call for “the double V V for a double victory” in Document 2?
   A. It proves that the United States could not win both wars
   B. It explains why black Americans and white Americans could not fight together
   C. It suggests that the war effort may have intensified racial problems at home
   D. It describes 47 towns and cities that would need to be defeated to win the struggle for equal rights at home

4. What did you think about as you were answering question number 3 on this page? Please be as detailed as possible.

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**DOCUMENT 4: Read carefully, record your thinking, and answer the questions that follow.**

The following document is a table describing the greater Los Angeles area’s population data from 1940-1950, including information about race and nationality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Los Angeles and adjacent area population in 1940 and 1950</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (including Hispanic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (U.S. born)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (foreign born)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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**DOCUMENT 4 QUESTIONS:**

1. Which group made up the largest number of people in Los Angeles in 1940?
   A. White (foreign born)
   B. White (U.S. born)
   C. African-American
   D. Other non-White
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2. Based on the table, which one of the following statements is correct?
   A. African Americans experienced the largest population growth in Los Angeles from 1940-1950
   B. The foreign born white population decreased from 1940 to 1950
   C. Hispanics were the second fastest growing group in Los Angeles from 1940-1950
   D. Non-White residents made up a majority of the population in Los Angeles in 1950

3. Based on the information in the table, all of the following might be used to explain some of the racial incidents described in Document 3 EXCEPT
   A. Hispanics and Whites combined forces to compete with African Americans
   B. The rapid rate of growth of the African American population may have made them the target of racial aggression in Los Angeles
   C. The overall increase in the population may have caused job competition
   D. The more than doubling of the non-white population could have contributed to housing shortages