

Primary Source:

The Pittsburgh Courier, February 14, 1942

"The Courier's Double 'V' For a Double Victory Campaign Gets Country-Wide Support."

Last week, without any public announcement or fanfare, the editors of *The Courier* introduced its war slogan- a double "V" for a double victory to colored America. We did this advisedly because we wanted to test the response and popularity of such a slogan with our readers. The response has been overwhelming. Our office has been inundated with hundreds of telegrams and letters of congratulations proving that without any explanation, this slogan represents the true battle cry of colored America. This week we gratefully acknowledge this voluntary response and offer the following explanation: Americans all, are involved in a gigantic war effort to assure the victory for the cause of freedom- the four freedoms that have been so nobly expressed by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. We, as colored Americans, are determined to protect our country, our form of government and the freedoms which we cherish for ourselves and the rest of the world, therefore we have adopted the Double "V" war cry- victory over our enemies on the battlefields abroad. Thus in our fight for freedom we wage a two-pronged attack against our enslaves at home and those abroad who would enslave us. WE HAVE A STAKE IN THIS FIGHT....WE ARE AMERICANS TOO!"

Questions:

1. What was goal of the "Double V Campaign"?
2. What argument was used to justify the goal of this campaign?
3. How might this campaign have had an impact on professional baseball?

Secondary Source: Double V Campaign, Clarence Taylor

The *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the nation's largest black newspapers, stepped to the forefront in the struggle for racial equality by launching its "Double V" campaign. Responding to a January 31, 1942 letter to the editor by James G. Thompson of Wichita, Kansas, urging for a double V campaign, the paper published two interlocking Vs with the theme "Democracy: Victory at home, Victory Abroad," in its February 7, 1942 edition of the paper. The major objective of the campaign was to encourage blacks to support the war effort but fight for civil rights. The *Courier's* advocacy of patriotism was in part to prevent critics of accusing it of pushing its own agenda ahead of the nation's objective.

According to the *Courier* the response to the introduction of its campaign was "overwhelming." Its office had been swamped with telegrams and letters of support proving that its slogan represented the "true battle cry of Colored Americans" and that they were determined to protect their nation and the freedoms which they cherished. It argued that African Americans would wage a "two-pronged attack" against those who would enslave us "at home and those who abroad would enslave us. WE HAVE A STAKE IN THIS FIGHT....WE ARE AMERICANS TOO!"

The Double V campaign became intertwined with popular culture. During the war, pinup models, usually glamorous movie stars considered sex symbols, were featured in magazines, postcards and newspapers. In its February 14, 1943 edition, the *Courier* also began to feature photos of pretty young women. Labeled the "Double V girl," the young women were college educated, were usually artistically talented, and were in support of the campaign. In addition to using glamorous women to attract supporters for its campaign, the paper also had photos of people dressed in the Double V fashion wear such as Double V dresses and Double V hats.

Besides the photos of the Double V Girls and Double V fashion, the *Courier* used numerous photos of whites standing alongside African Americans, emphasizing the point that the struggle for democracy was not a black issue but one that benefited the nation. The photos of blacks and whites flashing the Double V were to drive home the point that a unified country was essential for winning the war. Therefore, it urged the country not only preach democracy to the world but to practice it at home.

The Double V campaign was eventually adopted by other black newspapers, including the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the *Washington Tribune*, and the *Challenger* of Columbus, Ohio. Despite the *Courier's* effort, by 1943, the paper provided less space in promoting the campaign and by September 1945 the paper stopped using Double V. Although the *Courier* could not claim any concrete accomplishments, the Double V campaign helped provide a voice to Americans who wanted to protest racial discrimination and contribute to the war effort.

Source:

Patriotism Crosses the Color Line: African Americans in World War II, by Clarence Taylor. *History Now*, Issue 14, December 2007

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