



Double V: The Civil Rights Struggle of the Tuskegee Airmen

Lawrence P. Scott, William M. Womack

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On April 12, 1945, the United States Army Air Force arrested 101 of its African American officers. They were charged with disobeying a direct order from a superior officer—a charge that could carry the death penalty upon conviction. They were accused of refusing to sign an order that would have placed them in segregated housing and recreational facilities. Their plight was virtually ignored by the press at the time, and books written about the subject did not detail the struggle these aviators underwent to win recognition of their civil rights.

The central theme of *Double V* is the promise held out to African American military personnel that service in World War II would deliver to them a double victory—a "double V"—over tyranny abroad and racial prejudice at home. The book's authors, Lawrence P. Scott and William M. Womack Sr., chronicle for the first time, in detail, one of America's most dramatic failures to deliver on that promise. In the course of their narrative, the authors demonstrate how the Tuskegee airmen suffered as second-class citizens while risking their lives to serve their country. Among the contributions made by this work is a detailed examination of how 101 Tuskegee airmen, by refusing to live in segregated quarters, triggered one of the most significant judicial proceedings in U.S. military history. *Double V* uses oral accounts and heretofore unused government documents to portray this little-known struggle by one of America's most celebrated flying units.

In addition to providing background material about African American aviators before World War II, the authors also demonstrate how the Tuskegee airmen's struggle foretold dilemmas faced by the civil rights movement in the second half of the 20th century. *Double V* is destined to become an important contribution in the rapidly growing body of civil rights literature.

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