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## ***2. What was the effect of the Black Press on the military?***

The Black Press really showed itself approved between World War I and World War II when various papers vowed to take on the opportunity to accurately report what was happening both overseas and back on the home front. While not everyone was completely thrilled with this, it provided insight to the families back home with relatives on the line and to the soldiers on the line who worried about their families back home. The goal with the Black Press was never to sugar coat things, but to give a voice to the voiceless and to provide insight for their black audience.

By 1920, there were nearly 200 black-run papers thriving in various parts of the the US, actively working to supply black people with hope and pride. Once World War I began, editors took it upon themselves to tackle the issue of segregation. After the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which ruled that it was completely legal to house separate facilities, as long as they were equal in quality, the world, for black people, began to change. Reporters began writing advice to help their brothers and sisters prepare for a segregated world. They included things like where to shop without being publicly humiliated by whites and where they could apply for jobs without the risk of discrimination. This saddened black soldiers who began to see that no matter how hard they were fighting, their was still a whole other war to fight once they got back home--A war on racism.

By World War II in the 40s, the Black Press was confident enough to take on the government addressing issues of the war that directly affected black people--both soldiers in the effort, and families back home. At first, the articles were positive. The Black Press is responsible for “The Double V [Victory]”. Similar to the modern-day “Hands Up Don’t Shoot” pose to protest police brutality, this acted as a visual way for black people to express how they felt about an issue. In this case, it was undying support for a victory abroad, but it was also hope for victory in the battle for equal treatment and the end of racism in the US. Black papers all over featured pictures of beautiful, black faces and their peace signs to symbolize a double victory. This served as a kind reminder to the soldiers that they had support, and it rallied black people back home to keep them positive. However, not every article was as pleasant. The Black Press also took it upon itself to report how many people were dying abroad which stiffened the backs of those back home. Black editors would sneak photographers into military camps to capture images for the papers and not every image was encouraging, but they were all real. The papers also accurately reported on their treatment back home which let people know that while America was fighting racism overseas, it was cultivating it back home. This didn’t sit so well with the government who accused the Black Press as a whole of sedition and threatened to take everyone to court if they didn’t stop. After a while, generals didn’t even want their black soldiers reading the papers anymore because it affected them so heavily. One article could shift the entire mood of a unit. Nelson (1998).

As said before, the goal of the Black Press was never to sugar coat things, but to give a voice to the voiceless and to provide insight for their black audience. The Black Press acted as a catalyst for civil rights without ever mentioning it.

## WORKS CITED

Nelson, S. (Producer, Director). (1998). *The Black press: Soldiers without swords* [DVD]. San Francisco: California Newsreel.