

Double V Campaign

Civil Rights in the United States, 2000
From U.S. History in Context

The African-American struggle for full citizenship took heightened form during the World War II years. The slogan "Double V"--"victory abroad over Nazism and victory at home over racism and inequality"--enabled African-American leaders to build coalitions and garner public support for an ongoing civil rights campaign. Double V was, however, more than a slogan; it was an ideology that invoked the necessity of a vigilant fight for democracy. Organizations and individuals across the political and programmatic spectrum found common ground under the ideological umbrella of the Double V.

The slogan "Double V" was coined officially by Robert Vann's *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1942, but the campaign for Double V emerged, in part, from the "rising wind" of black internationalism in the late 1930s. As early as Benito Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and Adolf Hitler's snubbing of black athletes at the 1936 Olympic games, African-American leaders connected the African-American struggle for justice at home to the battle against fascism overseas. By 1941, while the United States contemplated entry into the Second World War, African-American leaders crafted a language and program in support of U.S. involvement in the war that linked the advancement of democracy abroad to justice for African Americans at home.

A. Philip Randolph's 1941 proposed March on Washington symbolized the possibilities of the Double V campaign. The threat of 100,000 united African Americans marching on Washington to demand equal rights moved President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 banning discrimination in defense industries. The proposed March on Washington sent a powerful message that victory for democracy in the world required the full extension of democracy to African Americans.

Further Readings

Bibliography

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