

# Jim Crow and Uncle Sam: The Tuskegee Flying Units and the US Army Air Forces in Europe during World War II.

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## **Jim Crow and Uncle Sam: The Tuskegee Flying Units and the U.S. Army Air Forces in Europe During World War II**

William Alexander Percy

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### Abstract

This article discusses the nature of race relations in the U.S. Army Air Forces during the Second World War. America's first all-black flying units, the 99th Fighter Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group, trained at segregated Tuskegee Army Air Field in Tuskegee, Alabama, carried out tactical and strategic missions over North Africa and southern Europe in the last two years of the war. While overseas, the black airmen experienced both positive and negative racial relationships with other fighter and bomber units of the Army Air Forces, relationships which often affected the morale and combat effectiveness of the 99th and 332nd. The wartime success of the "Tuskegee Experiment" gave impetus to President Harry S. Truman's integration

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**A**s he toured the Mediterranean in the early months of 1944 in his role as Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Walter White witnessed a very strange phenomenon for that day and age—racial harmony within the United States military. He was in Foggia, Italy, assessing the combat efficiency and general well-being of America's first all-black combat flying unit, the 99th Fighter Squadron, trained at the segregated Tuskegee Army Air Field and currently under the command of Captain George "Spanky" Roberts. This unit of pilots and technicians, commonly referred to as the Tuskegee Airmen, consisted solely of African Ameri-

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William Alexander Percy received his Master's degree in history from the University of Georgia and currently teaches history at the John F. Kennedy School in Berlin, Germany.



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