

Institution: University of Gloucestershire
Unit of Assessment: History
Title of case study: WAR, RACE, AND CULTURE: THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON AFRICAN AMERICANS
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Neil Wynn's research on America and African Americans during World War II has made a particular contribution to the public understanding of the impact of the war on race relations, both at home and abroad. Wynn's work has reached general members of the public, minority group members, librarians, school teachers and pupils, documentary film and radio producers, and those with a personal interest in the subject area through publications, public speaking and broadcasting. Bringing together American history with British national and local history, and placing US race relations within the transatlantic frame, he has enhanced the understanding and awareness of the role of African Americans and West Indians in World War II, expanded the range and quality of evidence available for public debate, widened appreciation and enhanced public understanding of black American and black British history and culture.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research in this field (which continues) first began while Wynn was at the Open University and University of Glamorgan with (re)considerations of the impact of World War II on American society generally and the African American experience specifically. These developed more fully after his appointment as Professor of Twentieth Century American History at the University of Gloucestershire in 2003 and with the University's acquisition of the Paul Oliver Archive of African American Music and Related Traditions. Wynn's work dealt with American society and politics during the war years, leading to a detailed introduction and many entries in the <i>Historical Dictionary of the Roosevelt-Truman Era</i> (2008), commissioned by Scarecrow Press. Wynn's research focussed specifically on the African American Experience during World War II, which led in 2010 to the publication of a book of the same title commissioned by Rowman and Littlefield, and to journal articles and papers on the impact of black Americans and Jamaicans in Britain on race relations and cultural expression, before and during the war. His research, drawing on American and British sources in both national archives and in other unpublished materials, as well as oral history, pointed up: the role of African Americans in American defence industries and the social consequences of internal migration; the impact of war on civil rights and government policy; the impact of military service and the effects of military service overseas on both the US army and host nation, Britain, in terms of racial attitudes and practices. His work locates the war years in the longer history of the civil rights movement and also serves to question notions of the 'Good War' and 'People's War' through examination of the complexity of social change and particularly of race relations during the war.</p> <p>The wartime cultural impact of the American/African American presence was expanded into a broader consideration of transatlantic cultural exchange via international conferences, articles and edited collections, most notably in <i>Transatlantic Roots Music</i> (2012). The Paul Oliver Archive provided the impetus for this research and related conferences. Wynn's contributions revealed the significant impact of African Americans and African American culture in Britain (and beyond) before, during and after World War II. Most recently his work on black female singers has brought a 'forgotten' aspect of transatlantic cultural exchange to public attention, establishing lines of</p>

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cultural continuity and shedding light on racial attitudes. Wynn's work is cross-disciplinary, drawing upon history, cultural studies and musicology, and thus appeals to both academic and non-academic audiences among the general public, history teaching in schools and those interested in popular culture and race relations. As such, it adds considerably to individual and community memory.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The main historical outputs of this research are:

Wynn, *The African American Experience during World War II* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 163 pp.

Wynn, *Historical Dictionary of the Roosevelt-Truman Era* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 498 pp., reprinted in paperback as *The A to Z of the Roosevelt-Truman Era* (2009).

“Race War”: Black American GIs in Bristol and Gloucestershire During World War II’, in *The Regional Historian*, no. 14, Autumn/Winter, 2005-6, pp. 23-31; reprinted in *Bristol Radical Pamphleteer* series, no. 7 (Bristol: Bristol Radical History Group, 2008) 16 pp. See www.brh.org.uk

Cultural aspects are dealt with in the chapters and edited collections:

N. Wynn and Jill Terry (University of Worcester) ‘The Historical and Social Background of Transatlantic Roots Music Revivals’, pp. 3-19, in Wynn and Terry, eds, *Transatlantic Roots Music: Folk, Blues and National Identities* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 278 pp.

And additionally in:

Wynn, “Race War”: Black American GIs and West Indians in Britain during the Second World War’, in *Immigrants and Minorities*, no. 3, vol. 24, November 2006, pp. 324-46, (2007).

DOI:10.1080/02619280701337146

Wynn, “Why I sing the Blues”: African American Culture in the Transatlantic World’, pp. 3-23, in Wynn, ed., *Cross the Water Blues’: African American Music in Europe*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 289 pp.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The reach and significance of Wynn's research is evident through its local, national and international dissemination, in books, dictionaries, articles, radio broadcasts, film and presentations to different audiences ranging from school teachers and pupils, local historians, librarians, film and radio producers, interested members of local communities and the general public. His work has encouraged a greater understanding of Black History in the US and Britain, has enhanced educational resources, and has aided the development of racial awareness and understanding.

The African American Experience during World War II (2010) has sold over 2,240 copies in hardback, paperback, and e-book editions to-date. Following its publication, Wynn was invited to speak as one of 12 contributors at the annual Roosevelt Reading Festival, Roosevelt Library and Centre, Hyde Park, NY, 18 June 2011.

An aspect of Wynn's work, on Black GIs and their impact in Britain, led to the nomination for the Bryan Jerrard Award for the best article published on local history in Gloucestershire for "Race War": Black American GIs in Bristol and Gloucestershire During World War II', in *The Regional Historian*, no. 14, Autumn/Winter, 2005-6, re-printed in the *Bristol Radical Pamphleteer* series, no. 7 (Bristol Radical History Group) in 2008. Over 400 copies of this have been distributed locally and also in the USA. The significance of this research was evidenced by Wynn's participation as advisor and contributor on both American and British aspects in the making of a documentary film, *Choc'late Soldiers from the USA*, produced by Gregory Cooke and Noel Izon. Cooke states: Wynn made a 'significant contribution to my documentary...' and 'his participation in the documentary ...[helped] toward moving African American participation in World War II from the margins of history to its main pages'. The film was shown at the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations in Virginia in 2009, at the 60th Anniversary Celebrations of Truman's Desegregation of the Armed Forces at Morgan State University in 2008, and to over 300 politicians, educators and war veterans in an official premiere at the Smithsonian Hirshhorn Gallery, Washington, DC, on 10 November 2009, the GI film Festival, Washington, DC, 6-12 May 2013, and in various locations in Britain to schools and members of the public, including the Bamber Bridge Commemoration event at UCLAN, Preston, 21-23 June 2013, where Wynn gave a keynote lecture to an audience including members of the Preston Black History Group and representatives of the Department of Justice.

Wynn contributed to BBC Radio 4's two-part series 'GI Britain' broadcast 3 November 2012. The series was 'warmly received' by the estimated audience of 1.5 million and nominated by Radio 4 for a Sony award. This led to two contributions to Paul Moss in conversation on BBC Radio Gloucestershire, 2 and 9 December 2012, and participation in *Tiger Brides*, a film made by Dr. Valerie Jackson, Fulbright scholar at Cardiff University, on GI war brides, shown to a sizeable audience from the mainly black local community on 20 July 2013. Dr Jackson commented: 'Wynn's book *The African American Experience During World War II* provided critical understanding, a barrage of credible research, and deep insight into the US military culture that defined the segregationists practices of the Black GIs who served in the United Kingdom during the mid to late 1940s' and 'the impact of Dr. Wynn's support cannot be understated'. This expertise was further applied when Wynn provided the programme notes on African American airmen and WWII for *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Old Vic, London, September-November 2013. He has also been consulted about two proposed TV programmes, and periodically receives communications about the black American presence in the UK during WWII from individuals with a personal interest, local historians and film/radio researchers.

Wynn presented findings on the cultural impact of his research to audiences of students, academics and educators from the UK, USA and Europe at: the Maastricht (later Middleburg) Centre for Transatlantic Studies at bi-annual academic conferences, two of which (2002, 2009) Wynn co-organised; the conference he organised on European Perspectives on African American Music, University of Gloucestershire, 23-26 July 2004, (the resulting publication '*Cross the Water Blues*': *African American Music in Europe* was awarded a Certificate of Merit in 2008 by the Association for Recorded Sound Collections *Award for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research*); and a similar conference organized with Dr. Jill Terry at Worcester University in September 2009 led to *Transatlantic Roots Music: Folk, Blues and National Identities*. These activities added to the growing awareness of historical/cultural continuities and racial interchange in local, national and transatlantic contexts.

The broad scope of Wynn's public engagement is evidenced by the diversity of invited public and

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other lectures given since 1998 on his own research and related subjects, including: several talks on the black American presence in Britain and the Civil Rights Movement at Cirencester FE College (audiences 30 to 40+) in 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012 (where, according to the History lecturer, the lectures were 'hugely beneficial in contextualising race relations, and related controversies, for students and adding extra depth to their subject knowledge which they can then directly apply in examinations'); to branches of the Historical Association (Cheltenham and Gloucester 2008/2010 to 24+, and Coventry and Warwick 2011 to 24+); Tewkesbury Historical Society 2008 (40+) ('a splendid talk appreciated by non-professional historians as well'); the inaugural lecture of the Middleburg Centre for Transatlantic Studies, Roosevelt Academy, 2008 (40+), Cheltenham College 2009/2009 (50+), Newent Community School (2010), Cheltenham Ladies' College 2011/2012 (30+), the American Museum in Bath (2013), and over 12 radio broadcasts or discussions since 2008.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Contributions to *Choc'late Soldier from the USA*: 16 September 2013

Film producer, Gregory S. Cooke, Charlie Horse Productions

<http://apanews.si.edu/2009/11/10/chocolate-soldiers-from-the-usasex-race-and-rhythm/>

<http://aacvr-germany.org/AACVR.ORG/images/stories/Chocolate.pdf>;

<http://qifilmfestival.com/2013/qiff-news/movie-news/2013-films/showing-at-130pm-chocolate-soldiers-from-the-usa/#.UbYAucBwblU>

BBC Radio 4 broadcast: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01nnw7y>

Corroboration: Manging Director, Whistledown Productions

see also <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20160819>

Contributions to *Tiger Brides* : Fulbright Scholar, Cardiff University and Texas A and M University

Cirencester College, History Lecturer / Executive School Liaison / Marketing Manager, 15 September 2013

Roosevelt Reading Festival, 2011,

<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/publicprograms/pdfs/rrfagenda2011.pdf>

Nomination for Bryan Jerrard Award listed in *Gloucestershire History*, 21, 2007, published by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council.

BBC Radio Gloucestershire, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0115rd7#programme-broadcasts>

Email from the President of Tewkesbury Historical Society, 14 March 2008