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Jeorgann Lo Monaco

PHONE | MOBILE

AREA CODE | NUMBER | EXTENSION

(516) 979-6347

MESSAGE

Would like to know if there is a specific person to write letter to for the survivors of the Port Jervis.

WANTS TO SEE YOU

SIGNED

[Handwritten Signature]
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### 2-24-99

**Robert A.**

**Revolution Entertainment**

(301) 394-3131

**Phoned**

**Message:**

Please call. Will call again.

Came to see you.

Wants to see you.

Signed

### 3-24

**Robert A.**

**Georgano Lomangico**

(516) 979-6347

**Phoned**

**Message:**

You may call (516) 979-6347. She can be reached.

Re: Port Chicago, you may call (516) 979-6347. She is part of a group at ATT, would like to start some kind of petition or something for the survivors.

Signed
KTVU
From: Carolyn
will be there until
1:30 P.M.
After 1:30 P.M. call Jay
874-0242
J. Kone Rasinski

(202) 467-6670

Local Charlie Joe man par

929-8000 X 16168

Willie Monroe

(510) 451-4772

Dale W.

921-7276

مراسلة

سلام
New chapter
Tribune
20 v-6439

John Dalton
May 7 (703) 545-6700
Cole Noble
Chronicle
(415) 777-7140
Ms. B. Davis
561-8961

Evelyn White from the Chronicle said they will contact you. Carolyn Coker and Carl Nolte will call you.

John McManus
CNN
San Fran
415-434-1661
If there was not racism, black men would not have been killed and black men would not have been charged with mutiny. They would not have been convicted of any 50 minutes of battalion.

Why am I alive? Why not die?

Why did the Navy not change convictions?

Although the admiral racism existed but said it did not affect mutiny trial proceedings.

Like saying: We convicted them but they didn’t really do it. Why not over-convict?

Secy. of Navy signed the

John Dalton

(916) 765-3262 (Phone)

3 Civilians on panel, 28/14

(207) 225-5065
ALICE SCOTT
REPORTER
(916) 325-3313

3 TELEVISION CIRCLE  SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
(916) 444-7300
Norman Hall
221-738
Charles
City 522-1934

Ham

Harri

M. 10.28.84
Jim Cohan
Pearl Harbor September 15, 1944
F30-4176
MD in Oakland
June 1944
1/11/94 "Manny" Simon
Joseph Simon
San Rafael
(415) 485-1587

PC survivor
at PC after explosion
(mentioned in 86 clubs)

Col. Shaffner

John Henry Stacks
was Director of
Equal Opportunity Program in Deming in 1972
He helped get the Brownsville case
reversed

(415) 259-8340
FAX 259-8359

Write TBS
PCM article
due by 1/23
Flat due
by 3/7
brought to base

to give appearance
of internation
al treatment
say "like prisoners"
by
white marines
Abhishek --

It was good to hear from you and read your remarks about the pardon granted by Pres. Clinton to Freddie Meeks. I agree fully with your assessment of the situation. I think it is most important to redress the situation in full, rather than limiting it to one survivor. I believe the president has the power to do this if he so wishes. In my statements to the press I have called on him to exonerate all of the men and grant them (or their families) any benefits or back pay they lost as a result of the unjust imprisonment. Jack Crittenden, another survivor (who refused a pardon, by the way) has also called for restoration of full death benefits to families that lost a loved one in the explosion. This demand has been taken up by at least one newspaper (San Francisco Examiner) in an editorial they wrote on the case. So the case is far from closed, but I think the Freddie Meeks pardon sets a precedent for other action to be taken.

Thanks again for your letter. I hope all is well with you, and I send my Best Wishes for the New Year.

Robert Allen
Professer Allen,

Hey there, I hope you remember me, it's Abhishek from your 195 class last spring. I was reading this morning's edition of the S.F. Chronicle and was surprised to find an article on the front page regarding the Port Chicago "mutiny." The article reports that President Clinton has granted a formal presidential pardon to Freddie Meeks, one of the 50 black sailors who were tried and convicted. I believe this to be an important moment in this country's history. That the President would attempt to rectify an historical injustice is a landmark achievement, yet for some reason, I feel as if not enough has been done. Supposedly Meeks was granted pardon as he was the only one who applied for it, and though I am unaware of the neccessary procedures surrounding such an action, I believe it would behoove the president to grant a unilateral pardon to all involved. Only then could true redress take place. Were the president to take full note of the events at Port Chicago, shouldn't Clinton then be moved to address the African American community as a whole for the injustice? Mutiny carries with it national disgrace, and has obviously affected these people and their families for many years. As internment had caused similar social and psychological trauma within the Japanese American community, the emotional trauma of being convicted as a deserter must be addressed for the African American community involved in the incident. Maybe the healing begins with one person, and yes it is a step in the right direction, but one victory alone cannot stand in the face of years of miscarried justice. The article further points out that only three people are still alive from the incident. What is important to observe here is that it is not only the individual affected, but his family and community as well.
reparations, I believe should be paid to surviving family members, as knowingly or unknowingly they have been affected by the actions taken against the men serving at Port Chicago.

Here is yet another chapter in this country's history of racism. I would appreciate your thoughts on the matter. For the time being, I hope all is well with you. It was my pleasure to have had you as a professor, and more importantly, a teacher. I wish you a Merry Christmas, and hope the New Year brings you good fortune.

Your student always,

Abhishek Chakrabarti
Hi ROBERT,

Enclosed is a copy of letter responding to MR. LARRY V. SMITH's letter to the president 7/21/98. See attached copy.

Sincerely,

Percy Robinson
Port Chicago Survivor

9/7/98
MR LARRY V SMITH
NUM 115
2460 N LAKE AVE
ALTADENA CA  91001

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for your letter to President Clinton concerning the Port Chicago incident. I am answering on behalf of the President.

I certainly understand your interest in this matter and I know it would mean a great deal to you for the President to personally intervene on behalf of the men who were involved at Port Chicago. However, the Department of the Navy has completed a comprehensive and thorough review of all the Port Chicago cases and has no plans to review these cases in the near future.

In the initial review conducted by the Navy, the Secretary of the Navy directed the Navy's Judge Advocate General (JAG) to review all 258 cases to determine the validity of the court-martial convictions and to assess whether racial prejudice or other improper factors tainted the original investigations and trials. The JAG concluded that 256 of the 258 cases were legally sufficient and that those convictions were supported by evidence of the guilt of the accused beyond a reasonable doubt.

After review by the JAG, the Port Chicago cases were referred to the Board for Correction of Naval Records (BCNR) to examine all aspects of the allegations of racial prejudice and discrimination. A special panel of the BCNR, consisting of three senior career Navy Department civilians, including two African-Americans, was appointed for the purpose of reviewing and making recommendations to the Secretary on the disposition of the Port Chicago cases.

The BCNR panel carefully considered the effect of racial discrimination on the cases. The panel concluded that racial discrimination at the time did play a part in the assignment policies that resulted in African-American Sailors being assigned unskilled work, such as loading ammunition. However, the BCNR further found that racial prejudice and discrimination played no part in the court-martial convictions or sentences.
In reaching the conclusion that the convictions were not tainted by prejudice, the BCNR panel acknowledged that the Sailors who refused to load ammunition after the explosion had a reasonable basis for fear. The panel noted, however, that the danger to them was no greater than that faced by Sailors in combat and that seventy other Sailors assigned to their divisions followed orders to load ammunition after the explosion. The BCNR panel also considered whether the racial prejudice in assignments and living conditions which existed at the time could provide a basis for leniency. The panel concluded that in this case, leniency had already been granted as a result of the post-trial review which suspended the discharge of those convicted and provided each servicemember with the opportunity to complete their enlistments. Furthermore, no Sailor received a discharge under other than honorable conditions solely as a result of the Port Chicago court-martial convictions.

Although I understand your concern for these men, the incident was fully and completely investigated. I regret that I cannot give you a more favorable response.

Again, thank you for writing to the President.

Sincerely,

BERNARD V. SHINAL
Director, White House Liaison Office
Office of the Secretary of the Navy
July 21, 1998

Honorable William J. Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We join with the Black Hollywood Education and Resource Center requesting that you expunge the records of the Black seamen who served in Port Chicago during World War II and received dishonorable discharges and/or court-martial convictions. Further, we call on you to recognize these men for their outstanding contributions to the war effort.

Port Chicago is one of America’s darkest and long forgotten secrets. These Black sailors, who served their country under horrific conditions, deserve to be honored for their dedication and perseverance in the admittedly segregated Navy during World War II.


P.S. First combat unit officially deployed to Viet Nam (Mar. 1965)

Your Kind attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Larry V. Smith
Executive Director
July 27, 1985

Charles (Harris, Amistad Press)

Marie asked me to send you the enclosed clippings on Port Chicago. The TNT film is supposed to go into production over the summer. Hope all is well with you.

Robert

Robert Allen
1034 Vallejo St.
San Francisco, CA 94133

(415) 771-0455
Dear Senator Boxer:

I am writing to ask your help in bringing the plight of the Port Chicago survivors to the attention of President Clinton.

My hope is that Mr. Clinton will see fit to issue a Presidential Order expunging convictions from the records of a group of 258 African American sailors who were court martialed in 1944. Fifty of the sailors were unjustly convicted of mutiny. All of these men had taken part in a work stoppage following a terrible explosion at the Port Chicago naval ammunition depot on July 17, 1944. They were distressed by the unsafe working conditions, inadequate training and racial discrimination at the base. The Navy subsequently desegregated the base and instituted safety procedures and appropriate training for sailors assigned to handling ammunition.

Research presented in my book, The Port Chicago Mutiny, and confirmed by others, demonstrated that racial discrimination was rampant at the base and that the trial took place in racially poisoned atmosphere which affected its outcome. The surviving sailors are now old men, and have borne the stigma of mutiny for more than 50 years. It is my hope that in the interest of bridging the racial divide in our society the President will make a decision to set aside the convictions of all 258 sailors. This would go far toward healing a still festering wound from World War II.

I deeply appreciate any assistance you can offer in this effort.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Allen, Ph.D.
(Home address:
1034 Vallejo Street
San Francisco, CA 94133
[415] 771-0455)
February 1998 developments re Port Chicago

After Los Angeles and Sacramento events and related news coverage (see files) the following happened:

2/24 Call from Richard North Patterson saying that he is a friend of Secretary of Defense William Cohn (whose wife is African American) and did I think it would be helpful if Ric contacted Cohn about the Port Chicago situation. I replied certainly, please go ahead.

2/26 Call from Senator Barbara Boxer's office asking if they could do anything to help with the PC situation. Specifically, her assistant Jamie Henderson said Sen. Boxer could write a letter to Pres. Clinton asking him to act. Again I said certainly, please go ahead. They asked me to send her a letter asking for her help.

2/26 — Call from John Diaz of San Francisco Chronicle Editorial Page who informed me that the Chronicle will be running a major editorial in the Sunday paper (3/1) asking Clinton to set aside the convictions.

News coverage: See Los Angeles Times 2/20/98
Oakland Tribune 2/21 & 2/24/98
S.F. Chronicle 2/24/98
Contra Costa Times 2/24 (front page)
and 2/26 (editorial)
FAX RECORD

TO: Scott Harvy
   C/O Congressman Major Owens Office

From: Robert Allen

DATE: 5/25/94
No. of Pages (inc. this sheet): 4

RE: Port Chicago Update
   Additional Port Chicago Info

MESSAGE:
FAX RECORD

TO:       John Garcia  247-2510

From:    Robert Allen

DATE:    2/1/94  No. of Pages (incl. this sheet):

RE:      Revised version of letter for Congressman Stokely's file

MESSAGE: and also Box: 100, 10th floor.
FAX RECORD

TO: Marie Brown

From: Robert Allen

DATE: 1/25/94  No. of Pages (incl this sheet):

RE: Port Chicago Clippings

MESSAGE:
FAX RECORD

TO: Kay Radtke
    Amistad Pres
    (212) 522-7282

From: Robert Allen

DATE: 1/20/94 No. of Pages (incl. this sheet): 15

RE: Post Chicago clippings

MESSAGE:
FAX RECORD

TO: Charles Harris
    Amistad (212) 522-7282

From: Robert Allen

DATE: 1/1/94  No. of Pages (inc. this sheet): 12

RE: Port Chicago Coverage

MESSAGE:

Charles
Perhaps Amistad might want to send out a press release on these new developments to the book trade press.

Robert
TO: David Pitchard  
(213) 850-3936  

FROM: Robert Allen  

DATE: 1/11/94  
No. of Pages (inc. this sheet): 5  

RE: Additional Part Chicago Coverage  

MESSAGE:  
Have not yet received revise P.C. script.
TO:       David Mitchell
          (213) 850-3936

From:    Robert Allen

DATE:    1/10/94

RE:      Chicago Coverage

MESSAGE: This is op ed piece I write will be published
12 S.F. Chronicle tomorrow
FAX RECORD

TO: Robert Chrisman

(313) 971-3557

FROM: R. Allen

DATE: 1/7/94

No. of Pages (incl. this sheet): 12

RE: Nat Chicago Coverage

MESSAGE:
Enclosed are clips from S.F. Chronicle and other papers. (Nothing in my times)
Also dr. ed. piece Chronicle asked me to submit.
Major TV coverage on KROW (ch 4), KPIX (ch 2), KG6 (ch 7) & KTVU (ch 2) Also NBC-TV National News This Morning and ABC News Radio.
I did interviews with KROW, NBC & ABC. Also doing shows with KPFA and WHUR.
A luta continua!
TO: Marcia Vander Kong
Open Forum Editor
(415) 512-8196

From: Robert Allen

DATE: 1/7/94
No. of Pages (incl. this sheet): 5

RE: Part Chicago open forum

MESSAGE:

advise if this will be used
please if any editing
needed. Thanks

(510) 547-6633
(FAX 547-6679)

Home: (510) 893-7914
FAX RECORD

TO: John Garcia

From: Robert Allen

DATE: 1/7/94


FAX 247-2310

No. of Pages (incl this sheet): 5

MESSAGE:
COVER SHEET FOR TELECOPIER TRANSMISSION
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

TO:  Peter Allen
      510-541-6679

FROM:  Martha MacDonald

DATE:  June

NUMBER OF PAGES TOTAL INCLUDING THIS SHEET:  __

In case of transmission difficulties, call (415) 777-7150 for assistance.

Peter,

Please review that edited version it's been trimmed for space.

You can reach me 777-6033 before 2:30pm
Right Wrongs Inflicted
Port Chicago Case

As we approach the anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr., it is appropriate to consider the legacy of the struggle for racial equality in this country. Some gave their lives and others suffered imprisonment to end racial segregation.

Of those who suffered for the cause of justice, some have been honored but others still are labeled as criminals even though their action compelled change for the better.

Last week’s ruling by the Navy regarding the so-called mutiny at Port Chicago, reminds us that the fight for racial justice is far from finished. A Navy review board confirmed the convictions of 50 men who were charged with mutiny when they participated in a work stoppage by 58 black sailors following a terrible explosion at Port Chicago during World War II.

The explosion cost the lives of 320 men - most of them black sailors. It was the worst home-front disaster of the war.

Like all Navy bases at the time, Port Chicago was racially segregated. Most of the protesters were in their teens, and for those from northern cities it was in the Navy that they first encountered segregation. The work stoppage was a protest against racism and unsafe working conditions at the base.

The review board was charged with investigating whether racism or other improper factors tainted the trials. The board admitted that racism existed at the base but it concluded that “racial prejudice and discrimination did not affect the Port Chicago court martial proceedings” against the 50 men and 208 others convicted of lesser charges.

It reached this conclusion despite the fact that the charge of mutiny was not justified. Some of the men may have been guilty of disobeying an order but, as the defense argued at the time, this does not constitute mutiny. Moreover, since the men were tried en masse, the guilt or innocence of individuals was lost in the prosecution’s efforts to convict the men as a group.

All 50 men were found guilty of mutiny after only 80 minutes deliberation by the court, which consisted of senior Navy officers (all white). Indeed, the unseemly haste of this decision suggests that the outcome was decided before the trial ended.

Ironically, although the black sailors were convicted of mutiny, their action changed the Navy. In my research, I found Navy department memoranda expressing concern “to avoid any semblance of discrimination” against black sailors at Port Chicago by – for the first time – assigning white sailors to ammunition-handling at the base.

This was a first step toward desegregation. But the issue of discrimination could not be avoided, and there was a
public outcry when the black sailors were convicted. The public reaction - and a hard-hitting appeal by then NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall - strengthened the hand of liberals in the Navy who supported desegregation, while conservatives were persuaded that segregation was a bankrupt policy if only because it grouped black sailors together and made collective action possible.

Less than a year after the Port Chicago work stoppage, the Navy desegregated its training facilities, followed by its shore facilities and ships.

Just as early civil rights activists were treated as common criminals by southern sheriffs, so were the Port Chicago protesters labeled as criminals by the Navy in 1944.

It is a sad commentary on the present mentality of the Navy that it refuses to recognize racial prejudice and other improprieties in the mutiny court martial proceedings. Perhaps because to do so would be to admit that the Navy was wrong, and that a bunch of black teenagers played a part in compelling the U.S. Navy to change its policies.

As the recalcitrance of southern states in the 1950s and 1960s required intervention by Washington to insure black rights, so does the present recalcitrance of the Navy in the Port Chicago situation cry out for intervention by the commander-in-chief.

President Clinton should set aside the Port Chicago convictions and clear the names of the black men who by standing up to injustice, helped end a segregationist system that all Americans would now agree was evil.

Robert I. Allen is author of 'The Port Chicago Mutiny' and senior editor of 'The Black Scholar' journal in Oakland.
Statement on Navy Board’s refusal to overturn Port Chicago mutiny convictions


The Board admitted that racist practices existed at Port Chicago during WWII, but claims that racial prejudice did not affect the mutiny court martial proceedings. This is ludicrous. Anyone who has studied the situation knows that racism affected practically everything the Navy did with regard to black sailors during WWII, so how could it not have affected this case? It did.

Specifics:

1. The black sailors were tried EN MASSE for conspiracy to mutiny, which means the guilt or innocence of INDIVIDUALS was virtually impossible to distinguish. If any were guilty, then ALL were guilty.

2. The charge of mutiny was not justified by the events. During the course of the mutiny proceedings it came out that not all of the men were given direct orders to load ammunition, but they were on trial as though all were so ordered. Even so, refusal to obey an order does not constitute mutiny. As Thurgood Marshall said at the time, “I can’t understand why whenever one Negro disobeys an order it is considered mutiny.” Mutiny means an attempt to usurp, subvert, or override the authority of the officers. This the Port Chicago men never did. With the exception of loading ammunition, they obeyed all orders and were orderly in their behaviour. The work stoppage was a non-violent protest against racism and unsafe working conditions. (THE PORT CHICAGO MUTINY, pp. 94-98).

3. All the accused men were found guilty after only 80 minutes of deliberation, which amounts to one and one-half minutes per defendant. This does not suggest that careful consideration of the evidence was made during the deliberations of the court. On the contrary, it suggests a prejudgment of the outcome. Indeed, Defense Attorney Veltmann has stated that Admiral Osterhaus, the senior Court officer, blatantly remarked: “We’re going to find them guilty.” (KRON-TV documentary, 1990).

4. The the prosecutor in the case, James F. Coakley, had a major conflict of interest in that his sister, Alice, was married to a chief prosecution witness, Lt. Ernest Delucchi. Had this fact been known at the time it could have provided the basis for a mistrial. (KRON-TV documentary, 1990).

The continuing refusal of the U.S. Navy and the review Board to admit that this trial was tainted by racism and legal errors is a travesty of justice. It is outrageous that 50 years later the Navy cannot admit that a miscarriage of justice occurred which cries out to be corrected. The Port Chicago men and their families have suffered long enough. I urge Congress and the President to set aside this finding and clear the names of these men who were unjustly convicted of mutiny.
As we approach the anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr., it is appropriate to consider the legacy of the struggle for racial equality in this country. Some gave their lives and many others suffered imprisonment to bring an end to racial segregation. Of those who suffered for the cause of justice, some have been honored but others are still labelled as criminals, though their action compelled change for the better.

Last week's ruling by the Navy regarding the so-called mutiny at Port Chicago, reminds us that the fight for racial justice is far from finished. A Navy review board confirmed the convictions of 50 men who were charged with mutiny when they participated in a work stoppage by 258 black sailors following a terrible explosion at Port Chicago during World War II. The explosion cost the lives of 320 men -- most of them black sailors. It was the worst home-front disaster of the war.

Like all Navy bases at the time, Port Chicago was racially segregated. Most of the protesters were in their teens, and for those from northern cities it was in the Navy that they first encountered segregation. The work stoppage was a protest against racism and unsafe working conditions at the base.

The review board was charged with investigating whether racism or other improper factors tainted the trials. The board admitted that racism existed at the base but it concluded that "racial
prejudice and discrimination did not affect the Port Chicago court-martial proceedings" against the 50 men and 208 others convicted of lesser charges.

It reached this conclusion despite the fact that the charge of mutiny was not justified. Some of the men may have been guilty of disobeying an order but, as the defense argued at the time, this does not constitute mutiny. Moreover, since the men were tried en masse, the guilt or innocence of individuals was lost in the prosecution's efforts to convict the men as a group.

All 50 men were found guilty of mutiny after only 80 minutes deliberation by the court, which consisted of senior Navy officers (all white). That amounts to less than one and one-half minutes of deliberation per defendant. The unseemly haste of this decision suggests that the outcome was decided before the trial ended.

Indeed, the defense attorney (also white) has alleged that he heard the president of the military court remark, "We're going to find them all guilty."

As if that were not enough, a recent documentary by KRON-TV established that the prosecutor in the case, James F. Coakley, had a major conflict of interest in that his sister, Alice, was married to a chief prosecution witness, Lt. Ernest Delucchi. This alone could be grounds for a mistrial.

Ironically, although the black sailors were convicted of mutiny, their action changed the Navy. In my research I found Navy department memoranda expressing concern "to avoid any semblance of discrimination" against black sailors at Port Chicago by, for the

(\text{more})
first time, assigning white sailors to ammunition handling at the base. This was a first step toward desegregation.

But the issue of discrimination could not be avoided, and there was a public outcry when the black sailors were convicted. The public reaction, and a hard-hitting appeal by Thurgood Marshall, then a NAACP attorney, strengthened the hand of liberals in the Navy who supported desegregation, while conservatives were persuaded that segregation was a bankrupt policy if only because it grouped black sailors together and made collective action possible.

Less than a year after the Port Chicago work stoppage the Navy desegregated its training facilities, and this was followed by desegregation of its shore facilities and ships.

We have the Port Chicago "mutineers" to thank for precipitating the process of racial change in the U.S. Navy.

Just as early civil rights activists were treated as common criminals by southern sheriffs, so were the Port Chicago protesters labelled as criminals by the Navy in 1944. It is a sad commentary on the present mentality of the Navy that it refuses to recognize racial prejudice and other improprieties in the mutiny court martial proceedings. Perhaps because to do so would be to admit that the Navy was wrong, and that a bunch of black teenagers played a part in compelling the U.S. Navy to change its policies.

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We have the Port Chicago "mutineers" to thank for precipitating the process of racial change in the U.S. Navy.

Just as early civil rights activists were treated as common criminals by southern sheriffs, so were the Port Chicago protesters labelled as criminals by the Navy in 1944. It is a sad commentary on the present mentality of the Navy that it refuses to recognize racial prejudice and other improprieties in the mutiny court martial proceedings. Perhaps because to do so would be to admit that the Navy was wrong, and that a bunch of black teenagers played a part in compelling the U.S. Navy to change its policies.

As the recalcitrance of southern states in the 1950s and 1960s required intervention by the Congress and the President to insure black rights, so does the present recalcitrance of the Navy in the Port Chicago situation cry out for intervention by the Commander-in-Chief. President Clinton should set aside the Port Chicago convictions.
and clear the names of the black men who, by standing up to injustice, helped end a segregationist system that all Americans would now agree was evil.

Robert L. Allen is author of The Port Chicago Mutiny, and senior editor of The Black Scholar journal in Oakland.
As we approach the anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr., it is appropriate to consider the legacy of the struggle for racial equality in this country. Some gave their lives and many others suffered imprisonment to bring an end to racial segregation. Of those who suffered for the cause of justice, some have been honored but others are still labelled as criminals, though their action compelled change for the better.

Last week's ruling by the Navy regarding the so-called mutiny at Port Chicago, reminds us that the fight for racial justice is far from finished. A Navy review board confirmed the convictions of 50 men who were charged with mutiny when they participated in a work stoppage by 258 black sailors following a terrible explosion at Port Chicago during World War II. The explosion cost the lives of 320 men -- most of them black sailors. It was the worst home-front disaster of the war.

Like all Navy bases at the time, Port Chicago was racially segregated. Most of the protesters were in their teens, and for those from northern cities it was in the Navy that they first encountered segregation. The work stoppage was a protest against racism and unsafe working conditions at the base.

The review board was charged with investigating whether racism or other improper factors tainted the trials. The board
admitted that racism existed at the base but it concluded that "racial prejudice and discrimination did not affect the Port Chicago court-martial proceedings" against the 50 men and 208 others convicted of lesser charges.

It reached this conclusion despite the fact that the charge of mutiny was not justified. Some of the men may have been guilty of disobeying an order but, as the defense argued at the time, this does not constitute mutiny. Moreover, since the men were tried en masse, the guilt or innocence of individuals was lost in the prosecution's efforts to convict the men as a group.

All 50 men were found guilty of mutiny after only 80 minutes deliberation by the court, which consisted of senior Navy officers (all white). That amounts to less than one and one-half minutes of deliberation per defendant. The unseemly haste of this decision suggests that the outcome was decided before the trial ended. Indeed, the defense attorney (also white) has alleged that he heard the president of the military court remark, "We're going to find them all guilty."

As if that were not enough, a recent documentary by KRON-TV established that the prosecutor in the case, James F. Coakley, had a major conflict of interest in that his sister, Alice, was married to a chief prosecution witness, Lt. Ernest Delucchi. This alone could be grounds for a mistrial.

Ironically, although the black sailors were convicted of mutiny, their action changed the Navy. In my research I found Navy department memoranda expressing concern "to avoid any semblance of discrimination" against black sailors at Port Chicago by, for the
first time, assigning white sailors to ammunition handling at the base. This was a first step toward desegregation.

But the issue of discrimination could not be avoided, and there was a public outcry when the black sailors were convicted of mutiny. The public reaction, and a hard-hitting appeal by Thurgood Marshall, then a NAACP attorney, strengthened the hand of liberals in the Navy who supported desegregation, while conservatives were persuaded that segregation was a bankrupt policy if only because it grouped black sailors together and made collective action possible.

Less than a year after the Port Chicago work stoppage the Navy desegregated its training facilities, and this was following by desegregation of its shore facilities and ships.

We have the Port Chicago "mutineers" to thank for precipitating the process of racial change in the U.S. Navy.

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and clear the names of the black men who, by standing up to injustice, helped end a segregationist system that all Americans would now agree was evil.
EPILOG TO THE PORT CHICAGO MUTINY (Draft 11/5/92)
by Robert L. Allen

After a three-year struggle to secure a review of the Port Chicago mutiny cases, the Navy Department--

Efforts to get the Navy Department to review the Port Chicago cases began shortly after the original publication of The Port Chicago Mutiny in 1969. Thomas Turcotte, an attorney with the Veterans Assistance Center, a non-profit group in Berkeley, Calif., contacted me and offered the Center's services in obtaining a review. In December 1989 Turcotte sent a letter to then Secretary of the Navy H. Lawrence Garrett calling for a blanket review of the cases by the Navy's Board for Correction of Naval Records on the grounds that the Port Chicago sailors had been victims of racial discrimination in the mutiny trial. The following month Garrett's office replied that the Navy board had no power under its procedures to make a blanket review of the cases, although applications for review of individual cases could be considered. Turcotte objected to this reading of the Board's regulations, but to no avail. (Turcotte continued to provide valuable support and advice in subsequent efforts to overturn the convictions.)

Meanwhile, in February 1990 San Francisco television station KRON-TV aired an hour-long documentary based on The Port Chicago Mutiny, featuring actor Danny Glover as narrator. The documentary included interviews with men who took part in the work stoppage, and scenes from the mutiny trial were reenacted. Importantly, the film also revealed that chief prosecutor Coakley's sister, Alice, was the wife of chief prosecution witness Lt. DeLucchi. Had this fact come out during the mutiny trial defense attorney Veltmann could have asked for a mistrial, or at least used it to press for removal of Coakley as prosecutor.
In an unusual move the documentary, which would later win an Emmy award, was premiered in a benefit showing at Oakland’s Calvin Simmons Theater. Present the night of the premier were more than a dozen men who had served at Port Chicago, including Joe Small, Robert Routh, Percy Robinson and Gerald Veltmann. The men were given a standing ovation by an appreciative audience of 2,000 persons.

The publication of the book and airing of the television documentary had a major impact on the lives of some of the accused mutineers. Men for whom Port Chicago was a traumatic, even shameful episode, now viewed it in a new light as a result of changed perceptions of its meaning. The men learned for the first time that their action was important in compelling the desegregation of the U.S. Navy as well as the development of more adequate safety procedures for ammunition handling. Those who took part in the work stoppage were forced to bear a heavy burden of blame for their resistance, but their action ultimately brought about change for the better. For some this realization liberated them from a painful silence. A Port Chicago survivor who had never discussed his experience with his adult son could now do so, knowing the changes his action helped bring about in the Navy.

Airing of the KRON documentary greatly increased public interest in the Port Chicago case. It also brought the matter to the attention of Northern California congressional representatives George Miller, Ron Dellums, Fortney Stark and Don Edwards. In May Miller, whose district includes Port Chicago, and 23 members of Congress (including 20 members of the Congressional Black Caucus) sent a petition to Navy Secretary Garrett appealing for a review of the cases. “We believe that a full review of the circumstances surrounding the original convictions and penalties is warranted in light of
new information and heightened sensitivity about the racial policies and attitudes of the Navy,” the legislators wrote in their letter. In a separate statement Congressman Miller pointed out that “Recent publications and a television documentary have demonstrated how untrained black sailors were required to work under enormous stress and extremely dangerous circumstances loading and unloading bombs and other explosive material. New evidence indicates that the officers often compelled the sailors to complete their tasks without adequate regard for their safety. After the explosion, the black sailors were denied survivors’ leave and other services offered to typical trauma victims. Instead, they were ordered back to loading munitions at Mare Island under conditions similar to those that had existed at Port Chicago and arrested when they refused.”

The legislators sent their petition to the Navy with a plea that “The review we seek could ultimately help ameliorate an unsavory chapter in the history of the segregated Navy, accru[ing] to the benefit not only of the Port Chicago sailors and the Navy itself, but also help[ing] honor the memory of the 320 men, black and white, who lost their lives in the service of their country on July 17, 1944.”

In a one-page letter on August 15th Garrett rejected the congressional petition, arguing that the Uniform Code of Military Justice adopted in 1950 allowed only a one year period for review of World War II court martial cases, and this had long since passed. Garrett suggested instead that individual Port Chicago survivors might apply for presidential pardons. Upon learning of Garrett’s letter Joe Small testily responded: “We don’t want a pardon because that means, ‘you’re guilty but we forgive you.’ We want the decisions set aside, and reimbursement of all lost pay.”

Port Chicago Epilog/ Page 3
Congressman Miller called the Secretary's decision "regrettable" and announced that: "We will continue to examine all possible routes, including legislation, to provide the impartial review that was denied in 1944, and that, unfortunately, the Navy continues to resist today."

Despite this setback, the story was gaining widespread national attention with lengthy articles appearing in the New York Times and Los Angeles Times and other print media, as well as national television coverage.

In January 1991, as President George Bush was launching the Desert Storm assault against Iraqi forces in the Middle East, Miller proposed a formal congressional resolution calling on the Secretary of the Navy to review the Port Chicago convictions. "At a time when black Americans are again, in disproportionate numbers, facing combat and death to defend our nation, we owe the veterans of the last World War assurances of justice from their own government," Miller said. With strong support from representatives Ron Dellums, Barbara Boxer, Fortney Stark, and nearly 40 other members of congress, Miller in February introduced a resolution for consideration by the House of representatives. The same resolution was introduced in the Senate by California Senator Alan Cranston. (Miller also introduced a bill, which was passed by Congress in October 1992, to create a permanent national memorial to the 320 men who died at Port Chicago. A temporary wooden marker had been placed at the site by the Navy in 1990 and a memorial chapel dedicated in 1991.)

The resolution was brought before the powerful House Armed Services Committee, and in May a revised version of the resolution was attached as an amendment to the Department of Defense authorization bill by Representative Ron Dellums. The amendment, Section 511 of the bill, declared: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law or regulation, the

Port Chicago Epilog/ Page 4
Secretary of the Navy shall initiate without delay a thorough review of the cases of all 258 individuals convicted in the courts-martial arising from the explosion at the Port Chicago (California) Naval Magazine on July 17, 1944. The purpose of the review shall be to determine the validity of the original findings and sentences and the extent to which racial prejudice or other improper factors now known may have tainted the original investigations and trials. If the Secretary determines that any such conviction was in error, he may take such action as he considers necessary to rectify any error or injustice.

The House passed the authorization bill with the Port Chicago amendment, and in August the Senate passed the bill with a similar amendment offered by Senator Cranston. After the House and Senate versions of the bill were reconciled, President Bush signed the bill (with amendment) into law in December 1991.

Over the course of the next nine months the Navy undertook its review, interrupted by a sexual harassment scandal that resulted in the firing of Secretary of the Navy Garrett and the Navy's Judge Advocate General, John Gordon.
Robert L. Allen, Senior Editor
The Black Scholar
475-65th Street
Oakland, Calif. 94609

Dear Mr. Allen:

In view of your interest in the case, you might also be interested to know that shortly before the Fort Chicago explosion, some San Francisco longshoremen were bussed to the Fort to work for the Navy. Having already had some experience on the San Francisco waterfront with Navy methods, they took a careful look at what was going on. Then they got back in the bus and went back to the union hall.

I do not know if any of them are still alive. The one who told me some years ago lives in Marin County now. His phone number is 1 (415) 492-8090. His name is Aubrey Mac Dermott.

Clifton Ensbury
768 Anador Street
Richmond, Calif. 94805
1/25/94

Aubrey McDermott
(415) 492-8090
Sausalito

2-Y mos before I will send 3-Y will go
to PC. Saw bombs being loaded down a wooden chute. IKNU reports what they saw to Washington D.C. were told to "mind our own business." Union wrote letters to congressmen. Union responsibilities refused. Work at PC.
Robert L. Allen Jr. Editor
The Black Scholar
485-65th Street
Oakland
Calif. 94607
January 13, 1994

Ms. Gail Buckland
626 Boulevard
Westfield, NJ 07090

Dear Ms. Buckland;

Per our conversation today, please find enclosed a set of clippings on recent developments in the Port Chicago mutiny cases. I think this material will be useful in preparing notes for the entry in "The American Century" by Harold Evans.

If I can be of further assistance please contact me.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Robert L. Allen
Senior Editor
HARRY W. BROOKS, JR.
MAJOR GENERAL, USA (RETIRED)

1633 Bayshore Highway, Suite 338
Burlingame, CA 94010-1515
(415) 259-8340

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

1985 to Date
ADVANCED CONSUMER MARKETING CORPORATION
Chairman & CEO (1992 Revenue of $15,000,000)
Subsidiary:
ACMC COMPUTER SYSTEMS, INC.
Chairman

1982 to 1984
AMFAC, INC.
Executive Vice President & Chairman of the Horticulture Group (Annual Revenue of $100,000,000)

1977 to 1982
AMFAC, INC.
Senior Vice President & Director of Public Affairs

MILITARY HISTORY

1974 to 1976
UNITED STATES ARMY
Commanding General (CEO), 25th Infantry Division, Hawaii

1947 to 1976
UNITED STATES ARMY
Private to Major General

AFFILIATIONS

National Minority Supplier Development Council, Director
The Freedom Forum Foundation, Trustee, Finance and Executive Committees
The Freedom Forum Media Studies, Advisory Board
Occupational Medical Corporation of America, Director
33° Mason, Shriner
San Francisco Opera, Director
PAST AFFILIATIONS

Bay Area Urban League, Director
Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Trustee
Hawaii State Chamber of Commerce
Veterans Administration, Committee for Employer Support of Veteran Employment, Member
Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute Board of Visitors, Director; Chairman, Audit Committee
U.S. Representative Cecil Heftel Campaign, Executive Committee Chairman
Jerry Lewis Telethon, Hawaii Chairman

AWARDS & HONORS

Black Enterprise Magazine's 1990 Company of the Year
MBDA National Minority Supplier/Distributor of the Year Award
Institute of American Business Community Service
Who's Who in America & Who's Who in Black America
Community Leaders & Noteworthy Americans
Kiwanis International Distinguished Service Award
NAACP Meritorious Service Award
NAACP Leonard H. Carter Award (Region 1)
Distinguished Hoosier - Indiana Distinguished Service Medal
Legion of Merit (Two awards)
Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry
Bronze Star Medal (Two awards)
Hawaii State Resolution
U.S. Congressional Records - Commendations - Representatives Heftel, Stark and Lantos

EDUCATION

University of Nebraska
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
U.S. Army Management School (Systems Analysis)
U.S. Army War College
University of Oklahoma, M.A.
Stanford Graduate School of Business, Executive Program
Dear Editor:

For the past several years I have been involved in an effort to get the 1944 Port Chicago court martial cases re-opened, and to secure justice for the 50 black sailors who were wrongfully convicted of mutiny.

Reports in the Peoples World, both in 1944 and recently, have called attention to this travesty of justice.

There has been an important new development in the case with the introduction in Congress of a resolution by Congressman George Miller (who represents the district in which Port Chicago is located) that would require the Secretary of the Navy to review the cases and take appropriate corrective action (copy enclosed).

The Resolution is now before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the House Armed Services Committee. I urge all those who support justice in this case to write letters to the subcommittee chairperson asking for positive and timely consideration of the Resolution.

Letters should be addressed to:

Honorable Beverly Byron, Chairperson
House Subcommittee on Military Personnel
2343 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Sincerely,
March 18, 1991

Honorable Beverly Byron
Chairperson
House Subcommittee on Military Personnel
2343 Rayburn House Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Honorable Beverly Byron:

I am writing to express support for a resolution (H.J. Res 162) introduced by Congressman George Miller requesting the Secretary of the Navy to review the Port Chicago cases of 1944.

As the author of a book (The Port Chicago Mutiny) on this terrible tragedy I have had the opportunity to study the trial transcript and other pertinent documents, as well as interview survivors. It is my opinion that the black sailors who were accused of mutiny were victims of racially discriminatory treatment on at least two counts:

1. The Navy base at Port Chicago was racially segregated. All the men assigned to performing the heavy labor of loading ammunition onto ships were black; all the officers were white. No black man could become an officer. The white officers commonly engaged their black loading divisions in competitions and other unsafe practices to speed up the loading process. Before the explosion of July 17, 1944, some of the black sailors had complained about the racial discrimination and unsafe work practices, but to no avail.

2. The mutiny trial itself was racially motivated. There was no basis for the charge of mutiny. (The men engaged in a non-violent work stoppage. There was no attempt to take over the base or usurp the power of the officers. At most, the men were guilty of disobeying an order, not mutiny.) The court, composed of senior naval officers, deliberated its verdict for only 80 minutes before finding all 50 defendants guilty of mutiny. This works out to about one and a half minutes of deliberation per defendant -- suggesting that the outcome was a foregone conclusion and that the men's defense was not seriously considered.
There were other defects and improprieties in the trial. Hearsay was admitted into evidence. Suspect witnesses were called to testify against the defendants -- witnesses who were themselves under summary court martial for their part in the work stoppage. Unknown to the court, the chief prosecutor, J.F. Coakley, was the brother-in-law of a major prosecution witness, Lt. Ernest Delucchi.

All of the above factors (and others mentioned in my book) point up the racially discriminatory and unjust treatment these men received.

I think it is urgent that this situation be rectified. The survivors are all elderly men. For nearly 47 years they, their families and the families of their deceased colleagues have unjustly borne the stigma of conviction for mutiny. The interest of justice demands that the Port Chicago cases be reviewed.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Allen
RELATING TO THE NAVAL FACILITY EXPLOSION AT PORT CHICAGO, CALIFORNIA, ON JULY 17, 1944.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 28, 1991

Mr. Miller of California (for himself, Mrs. Boxer, Mr. Ackerman, Mrs. Schroeder, Mr. Stark, Ms. Pelosi, Mr. Serrano, Mr. Savage, Mr. Conyers, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Frank of Massachusetts, Mr. Clay, Mr. Feighan, Mr. Rangel, Mr. Evans, Mr. Bryant, Mr. Mrazek, Mr. Gray, Mr. Spratt, Mr. Kostmayer, Mr. Frost, Mr. Espy, Mr. Towns, Mr. Payne of New Jersey, Mr. Lipinski, Mr. Levine of California, Mr. Vento, Mr. Mfume, Mr. Roe, Mr. Owens of Utah, Mr. Berman, Mr. Dellums, Mr. Stokes, Mr. Ford of Tennessee, Mr. Fazio, Mr. Edwards of California, Mr. Mineta, Mr. Lehman of California, Mr. Waxman, Mr. Brown, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Wheat, Mr. de Lugo, and Mr. Andrews of Maine) introduced the following joint resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

JOINT RESOLUTION

Relating to the naval facility explosion at Port Chicago, California, on July 17, 1944.

Whereas, on July 17, 1944, an explosion of unknown origins at the Port Chicago, California, naval facility killed 320 men;

Whereas several survivors subsequently refused to resume the loading and unloading of ammunition, citing inadequate training and the use of unsafe practices, at the insistence of their supervisors;
Whereas 50 sailors, all black men, ultimately were tried and convicted for failing to obey orders to resume loading activities;

Whereas recent research has established the use of unsafe loading methods and a pervasive racial prejudice in the operations of the Navy;

Whereas similar prejudicial conduct has been documented in the conduct of the trial that resulted in the courts martial of the sailors at Port Chicago;

Whereas Secretary of the Navy Lawrence Garrett has repeatedly refused to utilize his powers under article 69(b) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice to reopen or reexamine the Port Chicago courts martial despite the opinions of Congressional and private attorneys that he already possesses such authority; and

Whereas many of the affected sailors are elderly and wish for a review to be concluded during their lifetimes: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

That—

(1) notwithstanding any other provision of law or any rule or regulation, the Secretary of the Navy shall initiate without further delay a thorough review of the cases of the individuals convicted in the Port Chicago courts martial to determine the validity of the original judgments and the extent to which racial prejudice may have impeded the impartial investigation and trial of the cases;

(2) if the Secretary of the Navy determines that the convictions were in error, the Secretary of the Navy shall issue appropriate discharges and benefits to any of the surviving individuals or their eligible survivors; and

(3) the Secretary of the Navy shall submit recommendations to the President and the Congress regarding any additional actions that, in the opinion of the Secretary of the Navy, should be considered with respect to the resolution of the Port Chicago cases.
Dear

As you know, for the past several years I have been involved in an effort to get the Port Chicago court martial cases re-opened, and to secure justice for the 50 black sailors who were convicted of mutiny.

Recently there has been an important new development in the case with the introduction in Congress of a resolution by Congressman George Miller (who represents the district in which Port Chicago is located) that would require the Secretary of the Navy to review the cases and take appropriate corrective action (copy enclosed).

The Resolution is now before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the House Armed Services Committee. I am urging all those who support action in this case to write letters to the subcommittee chairperson asking for positive and timely consideration of the Resolution.

Letters should be addressed to:

Honorable Beverly Byron, Chairperson
House Subcommittee on Military Personnel and Compensation
2343 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Thanks for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Allen
Letter on P.C. Resolution

Editor, People Daily World
Marie Brown
Charles Henry
David Bishard
Gloria Steinem
Joe Small
Robert Routh
Percy Robinson
St. Clair Rewlin
Selva Davis
Rush Goodman
Charles Jones
Charles Tillater
Daphne & David
John & Ed

Mom
Alice
Robert Christian
Leon Sampolinsky
Basticky
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Robert L. Allen
H. J. RES. 162

Relating to the naval facility explosion at Port Chicago, California, on July 17, 1944.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 28, 1991

Mr. Miller of California (for himself, Mrs. Boxer, Mr. Ackerman, Mrs. Schroeder, Mr. Stark, Ms. Pelosi, Mr. Serrano, Mr. Savage, Mr. Conyers, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Frank of Massachusetts, Mr. Clay, Mr. Feighan, Mr. Rangel, Mr. Evans, Mr. Bryant, Mr. Metax, Mr. Gray, Mr. Spratt, Mr. Kostmayer, Mr. Frost, Mr. Espy, Mr. Towns, Mr. Payne of New Jersey, Mr. Lipinski, Mr. Levine of California, Mr. Vento, Mr. Mfume, Mr. Roe, Mr. Owens of Utah, Mr. Berman, Mr. Delums, Mr. Stokes, Mr. Ford of Tennessee, Mr. Fazio, Mr. Edwards of California, Mr. Mineta, Mr. Lehm of California, Mr. Waxman, Mr. Brown, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Wheat, Mr. de Lugo, and Mr. Andrews of Maine) introduced the following joint resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

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Whereas recent research has established the use of unsafe loading methods and a pervasive racial prejudice in the operations of the Navy;

Whereas similar prejudicial conduct has been documented in the conduct of the trial that resulted in the courts martial of the sailors at Port Chicago;

Whereas Secretary of the Navy Lawrence Garrett has repeatedly refused to utilize his powers under article 69(b) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice to reopen or reexamine the Port Chicago courts martial despite the opinions of Congressional and private attorneys that he already possesses such authority; and

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 28, 1991

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Whereas similar prejudicial conduct has been documented in the conduct of the trial that resulted in the courts martial of the sailors at Port Chicago;

Whereas Secretary of the Navy Lawrence Garrett has repeatedly refused to utilize his powers under article 69(b) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice to reopen or reexamine the Port Chicago courts martial despite the opinions of Congressional and private attorneys that he already possesses such authority; and

Whereas many of the affected sailors are elderly and wish for a review to be concluded during their lifetimes: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That—

1 (1) notwithstanding any other provision of law or any rule or regulation, the Secretary of the Navy shall initiate without further delay a thorough review of the cases of the individuals convicted in the Port Chicago courts martial to determine the validity of the original judgments and the extent to which racial prejudice
may have impeded the impartial investigation and trial of the cases;

(2) if the Secretary of the Navy determines that the convictions were in error, the Secretary of the Navy shall issue appropriate discharges and benefits to any of the surviving individuals or their eligible survivors; and

(3) the Secretary of the Navy shall submit recommendations to the President and the Congress regarding any additional actions that, in the opinion of the Secretary of the Navy, should be considered with respect to the resolution of the Port Chicago cases.
H. J. RES. 162

Relating to the naval facility explosion at Port Chicago, California, on July 17, 1944.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 28, 1991

Mr. Miller of California (for himself, Mrs. Boxer, Mr. Ackerman, Mrs. Schroeder, Mr. Stark, Ms. Pelosi, Mr. Serrano, Mr. Savage, Mr. Conyers, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Frank of Massachusetts, Mr. Clay, Mr. Feighan, Mr. Rangel, Mr. Evans, Mr. Bryant, Mr. Mrazek, Mr. Gray, Mr. Spratt, Mr. Kostmayer, Mr. Frost, Mr. Espy, Mr. Towns, Mr. Payne of New Jersey, Mr. Lipinski, Mr. Levine of California, Mr. Vento, Mr. Mfume, Mr. Roe, Mr. Owens of Utah, Mr. Berman, Mr. Dellums, Mr. Stokes, Mr. Ford of Tennessee, Mr. Fazio, Mr. Edwards of California, Mr. Mineta, Mr. Lehman of California, Mr. Waxman, Mr. Brown, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Wheat, Mr. de Lugo, and Mr. Andrews of Maine) introduced the following joint resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

JOINT RESOLUTION

Relating to the naval facility explosion at Port Chicago, California, on July 17, 1944.

Whereas, on July 17, 1944, an explosion of unknown origins at the Port Chicago, California, naval facility killed 320 men;

Whereas several survivors subsequently refused to resume the loading and unloading of ammunition, citing inadequate training and the use of unsafe practices, at the insistence of their supervisors;
Whereas 50 sailors, all black men, ultimately were tried and convicted for failing to obey orders to resume loading activities;

Whereas recent research has established the use of unsafe loading methods and a pervasive racial prejudice in the operations of the Navy;

Whereas similar prejudicial conduct has been documented in the conduct of the trial that resulted in the courts martial of the sailors at Port Chicago;

Whereas Secretary of the Navy Lawrence Garrett has repeatedly refused to utilize his powers under article 69(b) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice to reopen or reexamine the Port Chicago courts martial despite the opinions of Congressional and private attorneys that he already possesses such authority; and

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(3) the Secretary of the Navy shall submit recommendations to the President and the Congress regarding any additional actions that, in the opinion of the Secretary of the Navy, should be considered with respect to the resolution of the Port Chicago cases.
Dear Dr. Allen:

Peace.

I am about finished reading The Port Chicago Mutiny. I still have the social-psychological part to finish but I want to get this letter off to you as soon as possible.

I send to you hearty congratulations for your beautifully written, heart-felt book. I am moved and inspired by it.

I happened upon it at the library quite by accident the other day. One wonders, however, whether or not this was merely circumstantial since just the day before I had heard about the Port Chicago event on public radio!

Considering the renewed interest in the case, is there something I can do? Write letters or such? Would it be possible for me to write to Mr. Small?

My son James was in the Navy for six and a half years on various nuclear subs. It was an experience for all of us and one from which he learned but does not care to repeat. (Like Mr. Small!) He was ineligible for service in the mid-east conflict due to the fact that he had had his share of hazardous duty. But he has said he would go c.o. before he would contribute to the war effort.

I have lived through my share of wars. (A friend and I were talking this morning about the mementous times we have weathered.) I was a little girl at the time of the Port Chicago event. I don’t recall that incident but I do recall my amazement at discrimination. At the time, I felt it was only a temporary situation. The key was education - that’s what I thought. I was confident that all we had to do was inform people of the injustice of prejudice. Well, here we are - still working away at it.

The ironic thing is that even among my children there is a young man with a blue-collar mentality. So often I say to him, "You weren’t brought up that way!" Mr. Small and I have that in common.

Best wishes:

Theresa C. Lorbiecki

Theresa C. Lorbiecki
May 14

Dear Bob,

Thank you so much for The Port Chicago Mutiny. I am enclosing a review I wrote for the newsletter of Workers Against Toxic Chemical Hazards (WATCH). WATCH was formed by four chemically-disabled workers from the GM Lordstown plant. One of the four, Prentis Taylor, is a Black Navy veteran with two sons in the Navy, like Joe Small. He was also strongly opposed to the Gulf War and went to the Jan. 26 demonstration.

I believe the book is a work of art, particularly in its use of oral history. You suggest the drama of the research at pp. xvii - xxi. The historian in me would like to see a fully-footnoted 2d (possibly paperback?) edition. I think footnotes would open the door to reviews by academic history periodicals.

Altho I am not a criminal lawyer I have some comments and questions about legal issues:

1. Am I right in thinking that after the administrative appeal (p. 133) the NAACP did not
appeal to Federal court? If so I wonder why. The transcript should have definitively established which defendants received direct orders to work and under the trial court's own ruling (p. 104) all others should have been acquitted.

2. The issue of the statements is heavy. The court correctly ruled against their introduction into evidence (pp. 106-107). I do not agree that under all the circumstances they should have been considered "admissions" but anything in writing can be used to impeach a witness' credibility.

3. The prosecution's summation suggests 2 things (pp. 122-123). First, the Armed Forces are to this day far more repressive toward anything suggesting group resistance than to e.g. an individual CO application. Thus a service person can possess one copy of a pamphlet whereas possession of 2 copies gives rise to an inference of intent to circulate. Second, the issue of fear suggests the possibility of a "necessity defense" even in the military, since all the elements of a legitimate refusal to do civilian work threatening imminent danger to life were present.

Thanks again for sharing. It was wonderful to see you.

Slaughton
BOOK REVIEW


Reviewed by Staughton Lynd

This book is about an explosion that took place in Port Chicago, California, during World War II. The explosion took place during the loading of ammunition (bombs of different kinds) onto ships. Although the persons killed were service men in the United States Navy, it was really an industrial accident.

The Navy had no manual to guide persons engaged in handling high explosives. There was no organized system to ensure that officers at Port Chicago were familiar with existing safety regulations. Safety regulations were not posted in the enlisted men's barracks, because the commanding officer did not believe that black seamen were capable of comprehending the regulations. Existing policy required that Coast Guard personnel be present to ensure that safe handling procedures were followed. But when the Coast Guard objected to the practice of moving bombs by dropping and rolling them a short distance, the Navy told the Coast Guard not to come back. Officers made bets as to whose men could load most tons.

On the night of July 17, 1944, the Bryan and Quinault Victory were being loaded at pierside. Most bombs handled at Port Chicago were not activated but on this night incendiary bombs weighing 650 pounds each were being loaded with their activating mechanisms, or fuses, installed. At 10:18 PM the two ships and the surrounding area blew up. 320 men were killed, including 202 black enlisted men.
Three weeks after the explosion, the Navy personnel who had survived the explosion were ordered to resume loading ammunition. As before all the men who did the actual loading were black and all the officers (other than petty officers) who gave them orders were white.

The men refused to do the work. An admiral addressed them and said that this was "mutiny" which in time of war carried the death sentence. Of 258 men who had refused, 208 now expressed their willingness to do the work. The 50 who still refused went on trial for mutiny in September 1944.

Thurgood Marshall (now a Supreme Court Justice) represented the men. He challenged the following:

1. The policy of the 12th Naval District which, with only a few minor exceptions, restricts the use of Negro seamen, regardless of their training and qualifications, to shore duty in the capacity of laborers and in segregated outfits.

2. The inefficient and unsafe manner in which ammunition was handled at Port Chicago prior to the explosion, and the fact that Negroes working on it are given absolutely no kind of instruction or training in the proper handling of it.

All those on trial were convicted. Then something interesting happened. There was a nationwide protest. Not only were the convicted men released, but during the course of 1945 the Navy announced that it would voluntarily integrate all its programs.

The author, Robert Allen, is a friend of mine from the early 1960s. To write the book he not only read the transcript of the trial and other documents but painstakingly located a number of the mutineers, including their alleged ringleader, Joe Small.

The book teaches once again that those who have the courage to say "No," even at great personal risk, are the ones who get things changed.
Wesley H
Hawesby St
817
699-1326

314 669-6259

St. Louis, MO

Brother: Napoleon,
Killed in explosion
“Sorry I’m late...”
Y - 13 - 91

Dear Robert,

It was gratifying for me to read in the paper about the Congregational decision to review the Port Chicago case. Your book surely contributed so that decision - I hope you feel as proud about it as I wish it for you.

Sincerely,

Herb
6220 N. 102nd Street
Milwaukee, Wisc., 53225
May 2, 1991

Dear Mr. Allen:

Peace.

Just a note to tell you that I sent a letter off to Chairman Byron concerning the Port Chicago Resolution. I count it a privilege to do so.

I passed the your letter and the resolution on to several interested people, including my son, James. (I may or may not have told you that he was a nuke submariner).

If I hadn’t read your book, I would have missed this opportunity. The power of the written word!

Best wishes and with hopes for justice for the Port Chicago sailors:

[Signature]

terry Lorbiecki
The death penalty is WRONG!
Dear RC

As you know, for the past several years I have been involved in an effort to get the Port Chicago court martial cases re-opened, and to secure justice for the 50 black sailors who were convicted of mutiny.

Recently there has been an important new development in the case with the introduction in Congress of a resolution by Congressman George Miller (who represents the district in which Port Chicago is located) that would require the Secretary of the Navy to review the cases and take appropriate corrective action (copy enclosed).

The Resolution is now before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the House Armed Services Committee. I am urging all those who support action in this case to write letters to the subcommittee chairperson asking for positive and timely consideration of the Resolution.

Letters should be addressed to:

Honorable Beverly Byron, Chairperson
House Subcommittee on Military Personnel and Compensation
2343 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Thanks for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Allen
April 9, 1991

The Honorable Beverly Byron, Chairperson
House Subcommittee on Military Personnel
and Compensation
2343 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Bryon,

I am writing to you on behalf of two (2) of my parishioners who were, in 1944, involved in the Port Chicago court martial. Their names are: Mr. Percy Robinson and Mr. Robert Routh. Both men are very active in the life and ministry of our church, and are excellent role models for our younger men and boys.

I strongly request positive and immediate consideration of H. J. Resolution #162 presently pending before the subcommittee on Military Personnel of the House Armed Services Committee.

Thank you for your attention to this important request.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Higginbotham, Sr.

cc: Robert Routh
    Percy Robinson
    Robert Allen
June 5, 1991

Dear Mr. Allen:

When I first bought your book on the PortChicago Mutiny, I was sure that I would write to you so that we might share thoughts on a common experience.

After reading the book, which I found immensely interesting, I could see that we had no common ground for acquaintance after all, since I was almost totally unaware of the events and attitudes which you describe.

True, I was in PortChicago on the night of "The Explosion", but I was a naive fifteen year old, with a very limited social background. It made great changes in my life, too, but without the implications that followed the navy personnel---be they black, white, members of the accused or not.

Since your book came out, bits of information have come through the media, about the explosion itself, as well as the resulting legal action. I missed being able to see the TV documentary, since it was on a channel that we don't receive, and a friend in Berkeley who had promised to tape it for me, forgot---just plain forgot!

Did you see an interview show with the present Base Commander, their wildlife preservation expert, and the base's PR person? They skipped the mutiny completely, and only touched on the explosion, preferring to talk about Tule Elk instead. They added one bit of misinformation about the one existing building in what was the town of Port Chicago, calling it the "high school"---ah, but you see, Port Chicago never has its own high school. The building he was thinking of is probably what was the "Bay Point Elementary School", since that was its title. My father was the Chief Observer of the Aircraft Warning Service, and I think the observation post was on the roof of the school. Needless to say, all the civilian volunteers worked hard that night.

Finally, I applaud your work in getting the case reopened---I am supposing that you instigated this action, which was reported within the last month. It occurs to me that, if I was 15 at the and am therefore 62 now, a number of the navy men who would have been older would have died by now. More power to you and them that survive. A friend who lives in Orange County and has now retired from the Chevron pipeline department, told me that when he was working, he became acquainted with a man who had survived the explosion as a member of the working personnel at the Base. I often hope that our mutual friend would give us a chance to meet, but that never happened! Since this man is still working, he must have been pretty young in 1944----I suspect from what my parents said that a number of the navy men were very young then. Did you find this to be true?

Sincerely, 

[Signature]
Port Chicago mutineers may get charges reviewed

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Fifty sailors court-martialed for mutiny may receive a review of their cases, 47 years after they refused to return to work following a deadly explosion at Port Chicago.

“When you examine the record of that action and the court-martial, it screams out of an injustice,” Rep. George Miller said in a telephone interview from Washington, D.C., on Wednesday. He will introduce a resolution in Congress today calling for a review.

Most of the sailors were Black, and some have suggested they may not have received a fair trial because of racial bias.

The sailors were convicted and given less-than-honorable discharges from the Navy in 1944. The massive blast three weeks earlier took the lives of 320 men, 202 of them Black.

The incident started on July 17, 1944, when an accident of unknown origin touched off a massive explosion at the Port Chicago loading dock, at what is now the Concord Naval Weapons Station pier. The explosion destroyed two Liberty ships, a munitions train and was felt as far away as Nevada.

The survivors and other Black sailors were sent to nearby Mare Island to continue their work of loading munitions onto Liberty ships. On Aug. 9, 1944, 258 Black sailors refused to go back to work. Eventually, 208 returned to work, although they were subjected to disciplinary action.

Fifty refused, were court-martialed and spent about 16 months in prison before being released from the Navy.

A book written by Oakland author Robert Allen described racial segregation and bias in the Navy at the time. Two television documentaries followed in 1990, in which some of the sailors repeated the claims of bias.

Miller, D-Martinez, and about 20 other members of Congress signed a letter in May asking the Secretary of the Navy, H. Lawrence Garrett, to reopen the court-martial to determine whether the men received fair trials.

In September, Garrett announced he would not reopen the cases because the Uniform Code of Military Justice did not allow it.

The Congressional Research Service’s legal branch, meanwhile, studied the case and concluded the Navy secretary does have the power to review the cases.

“At a time when Black Americans are again, in disproportionate numbers, willingly accepting the risks of defending our nation, we owe it to the veterans of Port Chicago to assure that they receive justice and the timely attention of their government to a possible wrong committed over four decades ago,” Miller said.
Mr. Robert Allen
1310 Turk Street #603
San Francisco,
California
94101