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Black Response to World War II

World War II, like the Depression and New Deal, served as a catalyst to accelerate the struggle for racial justice. Both the rhetoric and circumstance of war offered black Americans unprecedented opportunities for protest. Responding to the crisis as blacks and as Americans, their attitudes and actions were far more complex than those of whites. Moreover, their energies were divided between the struggle abroad and the one at home. Only belatedly included in the war economy, blacks found their patriotism related to—and often in conflict with—the fight for equality.

Like other citizens, AfroAmericans foresaw United States involvement in World War II and reacted similarly. In 1940 and early 1941, most black leaders advocated armed neutrality and aid to England, but opposed America's direct intervention. Columnist Alfred A. Duckett wrote, "I would like to see the folks in this house stay home, lock the windows, tighten the shutters, man the doors and look so tough that no one will come around our way."¹ Although some blacks opposed any government role in the war, black leaders sought full participation in the nation's defense. On June 5, 1940, a spokesman for the Greater New York Coordinating Committee for Employ-

ment requested AfroAmerican representation on Sidney Hillman's Advisory Commission to the Council for National Defense.² By late 1941, the *Republican Age* and the Democratic *Amsterdam News* called for black support if the anticipated war should occur.³

Four days after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States was officially at war with all the Axis powers. "Harlemites Rush to Aid Country at War," read the *Age* headlines, as scores of men volunteered for duty as air raid wardens and soldiers.⁴ To Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, America was home. This did not mean that the nation was perfect, but "that for better or worse . . . no one is going to shoot at her or bomb her and get away with it if we can help it."⁵ Both before and after Pearl Harbor, Afro-Americans made significant contributions to the war effort. They volunteered for war-related projects and contributed finances to relief agencies and war expenditures. "If our country suffers," explained a Harlem graduate of the Lincoln Hospital Nurses Training School, "we suffer, too."⁶ Perhaps for this reason Charles Noble, black chairman of the Harlem Riverside Defense Council, raised \$70,000 during the Third War Bond Drive.⁷ Even before passage of the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Training and Service Act of September 16, 1940, blacks volunteered for armed service in record numbers.⁸ Nor did their enlistments slacken after the fighting began. On Armistice Day, 1942, Harlemites honored the 25,000 members of the community who were serving in the armed services.⁹ Although the local press tended to exaggerate the total number of black men in uniform, Afro-Americans served valiantly and in proportion to their population.

Blacks were among the loyalest of American citizens. Mary McLeod Bethune of the National Youth Administration declared, "We are proud of our record of loyalty and . . . recognize our responsibility and duty to share in all of the expanded activities which defense planning entails."¹⁰ Two-and-a-half years later, in December 1942, four Harlemites associated with the Ethiopian Pacific

Movement, a pro-Japanese organization, were convicted of subversive activities. The *Amsterdam News* contended that they were the first blacks to be convicted in the 150 years since the sedition law had been enacted.¹¹ Black and white authorities assured the public that the incident was an exception to the unquestioned loyalty of AfroAmericans. One columnist reminded his readers of the many white villains in the nation's history and reasoned that "the existence of a Hitler" in no way lowered "the dignity and prestige of the white race."¹²

Nevertheless, AfroAmericans were dissatisfied with the war effort. Early in the preparedness program Harlem leaders contended that black support was unenthusiastic.¹³ "If I was drafted," remarked one New York porter, who no doubt spoke for many, "I'd be given a menial job. . . . If I was killed it's just another 'black boy' gone to meet his maker."¹⁴ The situation worsened during the first year of American involvement, when black citizens were asked to share in the sacrifices but not the benefits of war. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, several major black leaders met in New York City to establish a united front for the war crisis. "We believe," read a resolution submitted by William H. Hastie, civilian aide to the Secretary of War, "the colored people are not wholeheartedly and unreservedly all-out in support of the present war effort."¹⁵ By a vote of thirty-six to five, the resolution was adopted by the National Coordinating Committee. A few blacks challenged the resolution's validity, but most leaders verified it. Certainly the morale of New York City's black population was low.

The depressed morale of AfroAmericans resulted from both traditional and war grievances. Their major complaint, however, was with the contradiction of denouncing race superiority, second-class citizenship, and authoritarian rule abroad while ignoring it at home. Given southern lynch law and northern discrimination, a black Brooklynite asked Roosevelt in 1940: "What is the Negro expected to defend?"¹⁶ After Pearl Harbor, another New Yorker told the President that if his people were too black to go to beaches,

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restaurants, and hotels with white people, then they were "too black to go to the battlefields and fight and shed [their] blood."¹⁷ For this reason, a scattering of the city's black draftees refused induction into the armed services.¹⁸ Others deliberately avoided the draft. Malcolm X, then Malcolm Little, donned a loud zoot suit, brushed his hair into "a reddish bush of conk," and appeared for induction.¹⁹ After role-playing as a misfit and telling the Army psychiatrist of a desire to organize black soldiers in the south to "kill . . . crackers," he received a 4-F classification. It is not possible to ascertain how many blacks reluctantly served in the armed forces. "I'm not a spy or a saboteur," remarked a Harlem youth awaiting induction, "but I don't like goin' over there fightin' for the white man."²⁰ While most of New York's black population did not go to the lengths Malcolm X did, resentment was widespread.²¹

Most objectionable was discrimination in the armed forces. Every branch of the military practiced segregation and discrimination; some, like the Marine Corps, excluded blacks completely. State militias followed similar traditions. Despite the drive for recruits and the Selective Service Act's antidiscrimination clauses, AfroAmerican volunteers were turned away, draftees deferred until separate accommodations were available, and discrimination practiced by some draft board officials.²² Moreover, discrimination in rank and treatment increased black resentment. It was typical for white physicians, instead of black doctors with reserve commissions, to be paid \$15 a day to examine the men of New York's famous all-black 369th State Guard Unit.²³ More intolerable was the harassment and beatings of AfroAmerican soldiers by white police and civilians. Except for officers, commented a Harlem reporter, "I haven't found a single black soldier who is convinced that he's fighting for democracy."²⁴

Discrimination in the defense industries also bred despair. In 1941, a prominent Harlemite declared that New York's black citizens were frustrated because "our sincerest and most earnest efforts to become a part of the . . .

defense program have met with evasion and even forthright rejection."²⁵ Nor was he exaggerating the frustration, which several residents expressed to *La Guardia*. As late as 1942, Olzaria Blackburn informed the Mayor that she had been filling out applications for defense work for three months without results. How could she be a true American "if I can't even get a defense job or a job to buy bonds to help win the war?"²⁶ Was she to think that "Democracy" was like an overcoat, either worn or discarded as it suited white men?

Next to discrimination in the arsenals of democracy, morale was most affected by the treatment black people received in the South. Every AfroAmerican was aware of southern exploitation and violence. With good reason, black expatriates who witnessed Nazi-occupied Germany compared it with life in the south, and black editors constantly compared southern leadership and justice to Hitler and Nazism. Blacks were especially distressed by the reports of vigilante law. In 1941 and 1942, lynchings were reported in Florida, Texas, Missouri, Arizona, and Mississippi.²⁷ Black New Yorkers protested the well-publicized lynchings.²⁸ A depressing cartoon in the *Amsterdam News* perhaps represented the sentiment of all blacks: Hitler, reading about the lynching and murder of blacks in the south, exclaims, "And they've got the nerve to tell me how to run my business!"²⁹

A few blacks, probably remembering their own experiences as newcomers, were disturbed by the treatment of southern migrants.³⁰ Foreign refugees were well-received in New York City, but black migrants, whose flight from the South was analogous to that of the European Jews, were not similarly welcomed. "Do you suppose," Roy Wilkins asked in reference to a fund-raising campaign for refugee youngsters, "that you or I . . . could get the schools of the United States to set aside any period in which we might collect money for the aid of Negro children?"³¹ Others contended that refugees were pushing black residents out of employment, that the city would be unable to absorb AfroAmerican

migrants.³² Many blacks, including Wilkins, nonetheless believed in and contributed to the relief of refugees. It was when black migrants were not treated the same as white refugees that blacks were indignant.³³

Morale was also dampened by other reminders to Afro-Americans of their "place." The American Red Cross refused to accept plasma from blacks, and even after protest changed this policy, the donations were separated according to race.³⁴ These policies were especially insulting because the plasma discoveries of a black physician, Charles R. Drew, had made the blood bank concept possible. Nor did the racial slurs of Allied propaganda reduce resentment. "All these radio announcers talking about yellow this, yellow that," complained a Harlemit shortly after Pearl Harbor.³⁵ Did the broadcasters think the Chinese, Filipinos, and other Allies were "all blondes." In New York City, blacks experienced humiliation daily. "The Birth of a Nation," perhaps the most racist motion picture, was scheduled to be shown as a means of raising money for Britain!³⁶ Most degrading, however, was the discrimination that some Afro-Americans incurred when they sought to participate in the war effort. Three Brooklyn women, who volunteered for emergency first aid training, were informed by a WPA instructor that they would treat only black patients.³⁷

Many blacks remembered that during World War I they had shelved racial grievances and, in W. E. B. DuBois' words, "closed ranks" behind the war effort only to be abused and insulted during the conflict and the reactionary postwar period. For this reason Malcolm S. MacLean, president of Hampton Institute, informed Roosevelt during the presidential campaign of 1941 that "the majority of Negro opinion about defense is colored by their bitter experiences of the last war."³⁸ Indeed, black leaders pressed for civil rights throughout World War II. "Once burnt, twice careful," summarized a Harlem columnist.³⁹

Disillusioned blacks were patriotic, but they also found ironic satisfaction in certain aspects of the war. By chal-

lenging European colonial powers, and later America, the Axis exposed the flaws in democracy. In mid-1940, military necessity forced England to abolish discrimination in her armed services. *Crisis*, the NAACP's official publication, judged it ironic that "Hitler, the bitterest enemy of the democracies, is forcing a democracy to be democratic."⁴⁰ Perhaps more important was the shattering effect that Japanese victories had on the myth of white supremacy. "One thing you've got to give those Japs," declared an admiring black cab driver in New York City, "they showed the white man that a brown hand could handle a plane and a machine gun too."⁴¹ World War II provided black, brown, and yellow people with the military experience that bolstered their confidence and their demands for a share of the peacetime benefits. Walter White contended that it would be "exceedingly dangerous" for white men to assume that the postwar world would be determined and directed exclusively by themselves.⁴² The seeds for America's black revolution and for African and Asian nationalism and independence were permanently sown.

AfroAmericans, nonetheless, had little use for the Axis powers. During the Battle for Britain, an editorial in A. Philip Randolph's *Black Worker* warned that if Nazism won, "a new slavery and barbarism, terrorism and darkness will triumph."⁴³ Most blacks probably had heard or read of Hitler's refusal to honor Olympian Jesse Owens, his alleged order to sterilize 15,000 blacks, his reference to black people as half apes, and his treatment of black prisoners. Certainly such information was available in articles by G. G. M. James and Hans Habe, and brought to the attention of Harlemites by the local press.⁴⁴ Firsthand reports by AfroAmericans who experienced Nazi rule were also publicized periodically. "I'd rather be lynched any day," declared musician Johnny Russell, "than go through with what Jews are faced with in Europe."⁴⁵ After American entry into the war, this view was held by most blacks, who considered Hitler just "another poor cracker who got into power."⁴⁶ In 1942, a cross-section of New York City's

black population was asked by government interviewers if they would be "treated better under German Rule?" Only 1 percent of the respondents answered "yes."⁴⁷

In contrast, blacks viewed Japan with considerably less anxiety and some admiration. Certainly the efficiency of Japanese propaganda does not account completely for the affinity that some blacks felt for Japan. Since the black press warned of Japan's evil intentions as it did of Germany's,⁴⁸ racial sympathies probably account for the difference. As self-declared champion of all peoples of color, Japan played the major role in destroying the myth of white supremacy. In New York City, better-educated blacks were offered scholarships in Japan, while average residents were attracted to street-corner rallies conducted by pro-Japanese organizations.⁴⁹ In response to black questioners from the Office of Facts and Figures, 18 percent of New York City blacks questioned stated they would be treated better under Japanese rule, 31 percent declared treatment would be the same, 28 percent said it would be worse, and 23 percent did not know.⁵⁰ "The Japanese are colored," remarked many respondents, "and would not discriminate against dark people." Indeed, white New Yorkers who were interviewed believed blacks would fare better under the Japanese than under the Germans.

But most blacks did not want to live under any Axis power or, for that matter, under any Allied power other than the United States. Totalitarianism was not an alternative. "The very fact that I, a Negro in America, can fight against the evils in America is worth fighting for," summarized author J. Saunders Redding.⁵¹ In New York City, local leader Frank Crosswaith referred to the "growth of democracy," columnist Layle Lane to complete equality with "no ifs, ands, buts, or whens," and sponsors of the Eastern Seaboard Conference to "freedom from oppression."⁵² Regardless of the phraseology, blacks sought first-class citizenship.

Black society now fought, simultaneously, for a democratic victory at home and abroad.⁵³ This Double V cam-

campaign took advantage of the crisis to play up the discrepancy between Allied war aims and practices. "If we don't fight for our rights . . . while the government needs us," reasoned one black New Yorker, "it will be too late after the war."⁵⁴ The Double V campaign also permitted black leaders to channel the frustration of their followers into positive outlets that linked patriotism and protest. The point was not how black men were "doing according to Hitler's standards," but according to American standards.⁵⁵ Immediately following Pearl Harbor, Walter White declared support for the war but contended that the treatment of black people must continue as "the acid test of democracy in the United States."⁵⁶ Succinctly, Powell reasoned, "You can't whip Hitler abroad without whipping Hitlerism at home"; poet Langston Hughes wrote:

Freedom's not just
To be won Over there
It means Freedom at home, too—
Now—right here!⁵⁷

Almost unanimously, black leaders endorsed the Double V campaign, refusing to declare a moratorium on the struggle for racial equality.

National and local gatherings were held before and during the war. Essentially they sought the full participation of blacks in defense industries and the armed forces, the extension of civil rights legislation, and the establishment of price and rent controls. The aim was to increase the government's role in the struggle for civil rights. A feeling of unity among black people emerged. The fight to end racial injustice and violence in the south was waged by northern as well as southern blacks: in New York City, the Eastern Seaboard Conference proposed legislation against lynching and against poll taxes; Powell sought the City Council's support for such laws; editors condemned southern lawlessness; and, most important, numerous black residents protested the beating of tenor Roland Hayes in Georgia and other incidents of southern violence.⁵⁸

Black Americans also empathized with the peoples of color of other countries. Beginning in the 1930s and increasingly throughout the war, New York blacks read about African history, especially Ethiopia's, and heard pleas for international racial solidarity.⁵⁹ To peoples of color everywhere, freedom and a universal sociopolitical change seemed to be in the offing. In New York City, black editors and columnists considered the war "a world revolution."⁶⁰ Some black residents associated their freedom with that of colonial peoples and advocated the end of imperialism as a war aim consistent with the Atlantic Charter and Four Freedoms. The Allies could best counter Japan's racial propaganda, contended the *Age* editor, "by granting the peoples of India the full benefits of democracy, by changing their policy towards the natives of Africa and . . . by tearing down the bars of discrimination which . . . restrict Negro Americans."⁶¹

In order to retain advances made during the war and to press for future gains, AfroAmericans were concerned with the role they would play in the peace conferences. This concern was expressed relatively early in the war and increased after Pearl Harbor. Hence in early 1942, a black asked:

When this war is over
Where will the Negro be?
Basking in the clover,
Or down beneath the sea?⁶²

A year later, Walter White reflected a similar concern by requesting that Roosevelt give careful consideration to black representation on the American peace delegation.⁶³

Before the postwar world was considered, however, the war experience accelerated black protest. The inconsistencies between Allied rhetoric and practices promoted, in the words of the National Urban League's general secretary, a "righteous indignation" and an "impressive militancy" among black people.⁶⁴ These inconsistencies provided organizations for racial advancement with mass fol-

lowings.⁶⁵ Blacks, declared Walter White, knew that "if the concept of the Negro as a second-class citizen is to be changed, the major part of the work . . . must be done by the Negro himself."⁶⁶ No doubt the desertion of civil rights by numerous white liberals, who associated the Double V campaign with internal strife, reinforced White's contention.⁶⁷

An impressive example of militant black protest occurred in New York City. In 1941, a coalition of organizations formed the Harlem Bus Strike Committee.⁶⁸ Using boycott and picketing tactics, strikers refused to ride the privately owned bus lines until the Fifth Avenue Coach Company, the New York Omnibus Corporation, and the Transportation Workers Union (TWU) agreed to employ blacks as drivers and mechanics. Adverse publicity, loss of revenue, Powell's leadership, and TWU cooperation resulted in an unprecedented victory: nearly two hundred blacks were to be hired as jobs became available.

After Pearl Harbor, however, the frustration and militancy was increasingly channeled into rhetoric. In the context of the times, blacks were militant; some, like Walter White, vowed to agitate "even if it meant prison."⁶⁹ Certainly, many whites believed blacks were more aggressive than ever before.⁷⁰ But since black leaders feared whites would consider interference with the war effort unpatriotic, they carefully avoided opening black society to the charge of treason and possible repression. Powell accurately predicted that "the hour of destiny" for black protest existed only until the United States entered the war, and then "all strikes and . . . picket lines" would be illegal.⁷¹

After United States entry into the war limited black protest, the media played an important role in the Double V campaign. "The Negro press," wrote a government researcher, "became more politically alert and devoted more space to the symbolic and material deprivations of the Negro in the defense industry."⁷² In New York City, the *Age*, the *Amsterdam News*, and the *People's Voice* supported

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the campaign.⁷³ Radio programs were also widely used to promote black participation in the war and to educate whites on race relations. As part of the National Urban League's vocational opportunity campaign, eight programs were broadcast in New York City by prominent local residents. Justice Jane M. Bolin, for example, delivered a talk entitled "Womanpower Is Vital to Victory."⁷⁴

Though numerous AfroAmericans participated in protest, a large majority did not. Black New Yorkers who evaded questions about the war when posed by white interviewers were tactful but not typical of the "New Negro," who Channing Tobias contended "would not lie about conditions and what is in his own heart."⁷⁵ And despite the large turnouts for mass meetings, black leaders often had to goad their followers into action. Concerned with the meager showing at an antilynching rally held on the steps of City Hall in 1942, Powell warned against apathy: "We can blow so very hot one minute and so icily cold the next."⁷⁶ Most black people, however, were neither the "New Negro" that their leaders presented them as nor the subservient "nigger" that their enemies wished they were.

War economics partly affected the numbers of blacks participating in protest. Day-to-day efforts to maintain a livelihood left little time for social action, especially before 1942. By then, blacks had become more fully integrated into the war effort and physical protest could prompt the charge of treason. No doubt some blacks, convinced that changes of substance were impossible, scorned protest as a hollow ritual. Others were probably pacified by AfroAmerican participation in war production.

Like its predecessor, World War II sparked migration from farms and towns to industrial centers of the northeast, midwest, and west. Black southerners constituted a disproportionately large number of these migrants. The National Urban League estimated that between 1940 and 1944, 750,000 AfroAmericans, comprising one-sixth of the total migratory movement, crossed state lines.⁷⁷ Blacks started

their trek in mid 1942, after manpower needs and white labor shortages necessitated their employment in war industries; their migration reached its peak in early 1945, over a year after that of the total migration.⁷⁸ For all migrants the primary motive was economic, but for blacks discrimination in defense training and war employment in the South was the major influence on their proportionally higher interstate and interregional movement.

Because of its labor surplus and its lack of war contracts, New York City was not a major migratory target. Unlike several old industrial centers, it atypically registered no net in-migration for the period.⁷⁹ Early in 1941, the *Age* warned that the city would be unable to absorb southern black migrants.⁸⁰ Two years later, a Brooklyn Urban League official urged black residents to consider going elsewhere to find employment.⁸¹ Apparently some did. Sociologist Charles S. Johnson estimated that between 1940 and 1943 the city's black population was reduced by 25,000 persons.⁸²

To say that New York City's teeming black population remained about the same is not to say it remained stable. As ever, migrants constantly entered the metropolitan area. Finding employment opportunities scarce, they departed, only to be replaced by other migrants who repeated the process. Even in 1943, the significant increase in the number of black women seeking employment was attributed to "recent migrants from the South."⁸³ Nor did the city's population patterns change. Before World War II, Harlem was overcrowded and expansion had already begun into Manhattan's Washington Heights, Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant, and scattered areas of the Bronx. This process was accelerated during the war. As a result, interracial border conflicts continued.⁸⁴

The Bronx, however, offered AfroAmericans a new safety-valve. Late in the 1930s, several Harlem residents began crossing the East River. Small in numbers, they experienced neither slum conditions nor residential segregation, though they tended to congregate in certain areas.

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But by 1943, when their numbers reached an estimated 35,000 to 60,000, the patterns of racism and ghetto living had emerged.⁸⁵ One black, who moved to the Bronx "to escape high rents and the growing vandalism of a certain Harlem element," soon found that his "social gains" were imaginary.⁸⁶ In the wake of summer riot, he requested mayoral aid to combat "the growth of conditions comparable to . . . Harlem's" and warned of "the explosive qualities of this fast growing Negro center."

Although New York City's net in-migration was far below that of industrial war centers, the problems each faced were similar. Because the city had already made adjustments for its large, long-standing black population, interracial competition was not as acute as elsewhere. The socioeconomic problems that arose from migration, however, were comparable in kind to those in Detroit or Los Angeles. For the most part, discrimination and slum conditions continued throughout the war. Several of the city's largest cafeterias and hotels violated state law by segregating or refusing to serve blacks.⁸⁷ Social contact verging on personal intimacy was also taboo. Black drivers were quickly removed whenever white women assisted the Sanitation Department in its collection of tin cans for use in the war effort.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the vicious cycle of slum living continued almost unabated.⁸⁹

Everyone except black people benefited from the immediate prosperity the war brought. By the end of 1940, 40 percent of New York City's black population was on relief or dependent upon federal monies for temporary jobs.⁹⁰ No wonder the New York Urban League contended that blacks were being "frozen on relief rolls." Equally significant, they were excluded from the very defense work that provided justification for reducing relief expenditures. Caught in this tightening economic position, blacks opposed reductions in relief-recovery programs.⁹¹

Excluded from defense employment, especially before 1942, blacks sought work in positions that whites were now leaving for the lucrative war industries. In addition to

regaining the menial and unskilled positions they held before 1929, blacks made some headway in new areas. When New York City gained control and ownership of the rapid transit subway system in 1940, the NAACP prompted La Guardia to forbid discrimination in the employment of mechanics and operators—positions previously closed to blacks.⁹² The following year, the Harlem Bus Strike Committee negotiated its impressive agreement.

Progress was slower in defense work. Beginning with the first government contracts of July 1940, the NAACP received complaints of discrimination in employment.⁹³ Soon blacks sought government action. Since their taxes financed the defense program and since they fought and died for democracy, they argued, they should share in its benefits. Representative of this position, Harlem Assemblyman William T. Andrews introduced into the state assembly several bills prohibiting racial discrimination in employment.⁹⁴

White liberals supported the aims of black citizens. In the United States Senate, Robert F. Wagner of New York and others introduced Resolution 75, which called for an investigation of black participation in "the national defense program."⁹⁵ Shortly thereafter, the Committee on Negro Americans in Defense Industries, chaired by the Reverend Anson Phelps Stokes and including La Guardia and Lehman, along with sixty other prominent national figures, supported the integration of defense employment. "Our concern for democracy in Europe or elsewhere," the Committee asserted in Double V jargon, "lacks reality and sincerity if our plans and policies disregard the rights of minorities in our own country."⁹⁶ Aggressive blacks and concerned whites eventually achieved some government intervention in defense employment. In New York State, Governor Lehman acted decisively. Early in 1941, he requested legislation to prohibit "discrimination in employment . . . in all businesses affected with a public interest."⁹⁷ After complaints of discriminatory hiring practices increased, he created the Governor's Committee on Dis-

crimination in Employment "to consider ways and means for dealing with the problem of discrimination in employment on defense contracts."⁹⁸ Biracial and chaired by State Industrial Commissioner Frieda S. Miller, the Governor's Committee was established on March 21, 1941. Most important, it was formed without fanfare or pressure,⁹⁹ and predated Roosevelt's Fair Employment Practices Committee by three months. In essence, Lehman's action culminated a civil rights drive that underlined his gubernatorial administrations and set the stage for additional progress in the postwar period.

At the national level, it was A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Committee that pressured Roosevelt into creating a similar body. On June 25, 1941, the President issued Executive Order 8802, creating a Fair Employment Practices Committee to investigate discrimination in defense employment. Ironically, Roosevelt, who was close to Lehman and was informed of the Governor's Committee on Discrimination in Employment, did not seek his former Lieutenant governor's advice on this matter.¹⁰⁰

In spite of unprecedented committees, concerned local officials, and manpower needs, employment opportunities for black New Yorkers were limited. Unlike the expanding heavy industries in Buffalo, Detroit, or Los Angeles, which received an abundance of government orders, the small manufacturing businesses in the New York City area acquired few. In 1941, a year after preparedness had begun, Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti urged upstate defense manufacturers to hire some of the city's 375,000 unemployed persons.¹⁰¹ Six months later, *La Guardia* feared that the curtailment of materials for nondefense industries would further reduce employment.¹⁰² Outside the war production zone, but not considered a distress area, New York City was in a tenuous economic position, receiving few government contracts and little federal aid. "This outlook," a Brooklyn Urban League official contended in May 1942, "presents a dark picture at best and to the Negro . . . somewhat of a total eclipse."¹⁰³

By that time, La Guardia and Lehman had acquired presidential assistance. Early in June, Roosevelt instructed several federal officials to confer with them about "the use of plant and manpower facilities in New York City."¹⁰⁴ Donald Nelson, head of the War Production Board, Paul McNutt, director of the War Manpower Commission, Leon Henderson, administrator of the Office of Price Administration, and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, along with several others, were assigned to the conference, clearly reflecting Roosevelt's concern.

Indeed, the city's employment situation was desperate. Unemployment figures for July were 368,000, an increase of 21 percent over the previous three months and 50,000 more than the same period in 1939, a depression year.¹⁰⁵ "I know," Roosevelt cautioned, "that . . . the solution of this problem will not be an easy one," but he assured La Guardia that the steps being planned would "assist in alleviating this situation."¹⁰⁶ La Guardia attempted to hasten the employment process by proposing a plan to assist the city's numerous but limited enterprises.¹⁰⁷ Although his Small War Plants Corporation was not adopted, government action began to record progress. A regional WMC director estimated that 200,000 of those unemployed in July were employed by October.¹⁰⁸

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Roosevelt's intervention was the major reason for this success. For example, 12 percent, or nearly \$832,000, of all Navy contracts distributed between July and October went to New York City firms.¹⁰⁹ These statistics, Undersecretary James Forrestal told La Guardia, reflected the Navy's desire "to deal positively with what we all recognize to be a serious unemployment situation in the New York City area."¹¹⁰ On November 10, New York governor-elect Thomas E. Dewey appointed a committee to study the city's unemployment, but Roosevelt left no doubt about who deserved credit for the recent progress.¹¹¹ Roosevelt told David K. Niles that "Fiorello" and the federal government had reduced the unemployed from 400,000 to 280,000 and were progressing rapidly. "I think," he elaborated,

well aware that Dewey could be the next Republican presidential candidate, "we can show Dewey up in this first attempt of his to make political Kudos."¹¹²

As 1943 began, the city's unemployment problem was far from solved, but positive steps continued. Between July 1942 and March 1943, unemployment had been halved, though New York's "vast reservoir of labor" did not "seem likely to run dry" before the year's end.¹¹³ Black morale was bolstered by increased employment opportunities. "Baby," columnist Carl Lawrence predicted, "'43 will bring us more dough than we've ever handled before."¹¹⁴ By midyear, increasing labor demands led one Brooklyn Urban League official to contend that "normal full employment in New York City should be realized before 1944."¹¹⁵ Six months later, nearly full employment caused his organization to shift its emphasis from placing black workers in jobs to counseling them on how to ensure economic security in the postwar period.¹¹⁶ Although the jobs and incomes of many black residents were still below standard, they were better, higher paying, and enjoyed by more people than ever before.¹¹⁷

Inroads, slower but no less encouraging, were also made in the types of employment given to blacks. In 1941, the NYSE placed numerous AfroAmericans in custodial jobs.¹¹⁸ Yet only 1.3 percent of all defense production workers in the state were black, and those mostly unskilled.¹¹⁹ By mid-1943, blacks were getting more jobs in fields previously closed to them, but most of these were "the white man's leavings."¹²⁰ Gradually, some advances were made, particularly by black women, in defense industries and in occupational categories.¹²¹

Black efforts and government intervention alone, however, could not have increased employment. Activities of private organizations such as the Urban League were important but limited, while those of the Governor's Committee and the FEPC were meaningful but retarded by their emphasis on gradualism, education, and persuasion.¹²² Occasionally, private and public organizations

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worked together. For example, the Atlantic Basin Iron Works Company—a shipyard engaged in “essential war work” in New York City—refused to hire blacks even while asking for federal assistance in filling certain jobs.¹²³ Information provided by the Brooklyn Urban League and the War Manpower Commission resulted in FEPC action, causing the shipyard to hire most of those who had been denied employment earlier. It was, nonetheless, labor shortages caused by industrial and military demands rather than moral suasion that placed most blacks in “white” jobs. In early 1942, a mayoral aide hoped that as labor needs increased racial discrimination would be “broken down, never again to occur.”¹²⁴ Similarly Jonathan Daniels, presidential assistant on race relations, admitted that black employment was largely “a fortuitous result of the necessity of [black] labor in wartime.”¹²⁵

Blacks also found themselves victimized by an inflationary economy. Since New York City was not considered a typical war industry center, federal price and rent controls were absent. Already paying unreasonable prices for inferior foods and inadequate housing while being the least employed, blacks suffered the most during much of the war prosperity. Throughout the war, efforts were made to bring the city under some form of government regulations. Early in 1941, La Guardia (who believed he lacked authority to enact a local measure) and the City Council supported state legislation for rent control.¹²⁶ A year later, when it appeared that such a bill would be adopted, the Office of Price Administration requested the state legislature to recall the measure.¹²⁷ Federal authorities feared the bill would impair a national policy. The legislature complied with the OPA, but since the city was not designated a war industry district, government regulation was not forthcoming.

In price-regulating, the situation was comparable. Between 1940 and 1943, prices in the black communities were higher and increased more rapidly than elsewhere in New York City. A survey conducted by the NAACP and

released in August 1942 disclosed that Harlemites paid 6 percent more for food than did residents in other sections of the city.¹²⁸ Hence Walter White requested Roosevelt to extend OPA authority to eliminate price differentials in black neighborhoods.¹²⁹ No action was taken. Nor did the situation improve in the coming year.

Other important areas were also influenced by the war. Construction of the State Housing Program's first project, the Fort Greene Houses in Brooklyn, was delayed because materials were unavailable. Materials were finally obtained on "the condition that defense workers would be considered for . . . these houses."¹³⁰ Still, Fort Greene Houses were not completed until 1944. Unlike that project, most slums, particularly in the Harlem area, were not located in a war production zone and, therefore, not in a position to obtain building materials even if such were available.

Despite fourteen low-rent public housing projects built for 17,000 families by the New York Housing Authority between 1935 and 1943, housing was inadequate.¹³¹ Such was true especially in black communities, even though 15 percent of all NYCHA tenants were AfroAmerican. Some black workers benefiting from the war economy were even evicted from municipal projects for earning more than the prescribed maximum income.¹³²

Black health and education continued to lag behind the overall advances of white citizens, and complaints of discrimination in Harlem Hospital recurred periodically. Advances, however, were made in certain areas. A new Out-patient Department for Harlem Hospital was dedicated in 1942, and a year later the Health Center was opened to care for the children of working mothers.¹³³ Private plans were also made to integrate Sydenham Hospital's patients and staffs.¹³⁴ Labor needs, meanwhile, forced an end to discrimination in the training of nurses by the Department of Hospitals.¹³⁵ The armed services' demand for physicians also accelerated the internship program at Harlem Hospital.¹³⁶

NEXT PARA RESET

Less was achieved in education. Community pressure compelled the city administration to construct the long-awaited annex to Harlem's West 135th Street branch of the Public Library.¹³⁷ Financial limitations and material shortages, nevertheless, forced La Guardia to reduce drastically the number of teachers and curtail school construction. Five new schools seating 9,100 students had been built in Harlem between 1938 and 1942, while another was near completion; but the construction of three others was suspended.¹³⁸ Nor would the municipal budget permit special education for children in poverty areas such as Harlem.¹³⁹ Overcrowded classrooms, segregated school districts, occupational rather than academic curriculums, unsympathetic white teachers, and textbook contents continued to be criticized, though less frequently than before the war.¹⁴⁰

Interracial cooperation emerged in some quarters. The City-Wide Citizens' Committee on Harlem, which had been formed as a result of the alleged crime wave in November 1941, constantly goaded private and public action toward improving the living conditions and morale of black residents.¹⁴¹ Cochaired by Algernon D. Black and the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., the committee was comprised of three hundred prominent black and white citizens. Although major tangible gains were difficult to obtain during the war, the committee did make some inroads. Most significant was its Race Discrimination Amendment, which prohibited municipal courts and departments from assigning delinquent children to discriminatory child care institutions.

In general, blacks in New York City experienced some gains during the war, albeit slower, less dynamic, and less significant than those of white residents. The democratic spirit of the Allied cause, the ideology of Nazism, and the nation's manpower needs offered black citizens the opportunity to accentuate their grievances and participate in the war in such a way that longstanding progress might result. Partly because AfroAmericans were deserted by some

white liberals, who disagreed with the Double V or were absorbed in the defense effort, and partly because Third World peoples experienced a racial awakening, black awareness reached a new dimension during the war. As a result, black Americans and war circumstances largely accounted for the progress made.

Certainly, black society suffered most from the exorbitantly high rents, unreasonable prices, and uncertain employment that resulted from New York City's peculiar economic position and the federal government's slow response to it. Black residents also had poorer education, health, housing, and recreation facilities, and although inadequate finances also curtailed the improvement of the facilities in white communities, it was in the black neighborhoods that they were needed most. In time, blacks achieved more and better jobs, and by 1943 they were more completely integrated into the nation's economy than ever before, and more hopeful of remaining there after the war. Yet the racial atmosphere was not completely harmonious.

NEXT PARA RESET

Black Americans in
World War II

A. Russell Buchanan

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1977

Black Americans in World War II

A. Russell Buchanan

The struggle of black Americans for equality coalesced during the period of World War II, but the commitment of the government to winning the war left little time for social protest or the breaking of racial barriers. As a result, blacks advanced considerably in momentum, but were given little legislation to support these gains.

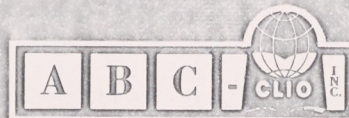
Dr. Buchanan, who began this work because there "has been little effort to cover this period of black history," examines the role of blacks in the military, advances made by the blacks through the judicial system, the status of black women during the war, periods of racial violence, and the relationship of blacks to organized labor.

An invaluable reference to an otherwise sparsely documented area, *Black Americans in World War II* is intended as a reader for courses in Afro-American history, ethnic history, and sociology.

*

A. RUSSELL BUCHANAN is professor emeritus, department of history, University of California, Santa Barbara. His publications include: *The United States and World War II*; *David S. Terry of California: Dueling Judge*; and *The United States and World War II: Military and Diplomatic Documents*.

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Port Chicago

In the administration of naval personnel no *differentiation shall be made because of race or color*. This applies also to authorized personnel in all the armed forces of this country aboard Navy ships or at Navy stations and activities.

The navy ended segregation on February 27, 1946, by ordering that any restrictions "governing types of assignments for which Negro naval personnel are eligible are hereby lifted." The order further stated, "In the utilization of housing, nursing and other facilities, no special or unusual provisions will be made for the accommodation of Negroes."³²

This brief summary of the evolution toward equal treatment should not obscure the fact that the navy practiced segregation throughout the war. Segregation complicated training in the navy as it did in the army, and the problems which developed in the two services were strikingly similar. Negro sailors were frustrated by segregation and the feeling that they were second class. One historian blamed the commanding officer of the Great Lakes Negro Training Program for using insensitive and archaic methods including "slacker" squads and harsh treatment of recalcitrants. That officer insisted that Negroes sing spirituals on Sunday evenings—a practice that evoked objections from northern Negroes.³³ The commander's techniques, including his insistence that Negro History Week be observed in Negro camps, were an attempt to increase the Negro's pride. The program, however, resulted mainly in irritation.

Many Negroes in the navy were poorly equipped for training. For example, almost 31 percent of those in training at the Great Lakes Training Center in 1944-45 were either illiterate or could not meet the minimum educational standards. The navy's special training unit for illiterates at Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia, found that over 60 percent of the illiterates came from a dozen southern states. The unit provided a minimum education to many Negroes who otherwise would not have had that opportunity. Similarly, Negroes with better educational backgrounds profited from the technical training they received. The school for aviation metalsmiths was one of the most successful.

The Negro in the navy often experienced difficulty despite the training offered. One serious incident occurred on July 17, 1944, at Port Chicago in San Francisco Bay. Two ships loading ammu-

³² "Circular Letter 48-46," Chief of Naval Operations, cited in Nelson, *Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy*, pp. 219-20.

³³ Nelson, *Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy*, pp. 28-35.

losion at the docks exploded and more than 300 people were killed and 100 injured. The dead included about 250 Negroes who were working under the guidance of white officers. Most of the injured were Negroes in barracks a mile from the docks.³⁴

Survivors were ordered to nearby Vallejo early in August to resume loading ships with ammunition. About 260 Negroes were still unnerved by the Port Chicago explosion and were reluctant to accept another hazardous assignment. Yet all but 44 agreed to go back to work; 6 of these refused to continue after a few days. The navy charged the 50 recalcitrants with mutiny and the ensuing courts-martial found them guilty. They were sentenced to fifteen years hard labor and dishonorable discharge. On review, the commandant of the naval district reduced some of the sentences to eight years on grounds of the men's youth, short service, and otherwise clear records.

Negro leaders and the Negro press strongly objected to the sentences and generally contended that there had been no mutiny. Thurgood Marshall, at that time a leading attorney for the NAACP, asserted:³⁵

The men actually didn't know what happened. Had they been given a direct order to load ammunition, and had then refused to obey that order, then the charges would have been legitimate. But they said no direct order to resume loading was issued them.

Thurgood Marshall subsequently presented a brief personally before the navy's board of review, which finally held that the trial had been fair. The pressure to reverse the court-martial findings continued, and Lester B. Granger, the navy's Negro special aide and adviser to the secretary of the navy, argued for reversal. The navy announced that the convictions had been set aside and the men restored to duty on probation in January 1946. After the Port Chicago incident navy units more carefully selected personnel for ammunition and supply stations formerly "dumping grounds for substandard men," including "illiterates, malcontents, chronic disciplinary cases."³⁶

³⁴ See Nelson, *Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy*, pp. 77-82.

³⁵ As quoted in Nelson, *Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy*, p. 79.

³⁶ Nelson, *Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy*, pp. 80-81. Another incident occurred in Oxnard, California, where Negro members of a Navy Construction Battalion, or "Scabees," staged a brief hunger strike to protest being passed over for advancement to petty officer ratings. The NAACP took up the cause and forwarded a report to Secretary Forrestal. NAACP Board of Directors Minutes, March 12, 1942, p. 8. In NAACP Files, Series A, Box 12.

Despite the signs of change and responses to pressure, the navy adamantly maintained a racial bias during World War II. The Naval Academy did not have a Negro graduate until 1949. The naval reserve, however, produced significant advances. Young non-commissioned Negro recruiting specialists (chiefs and first-class petty officers) were assigned to recruiting stations in large cities. Many of them were schoolteachers and athletic coaches. The navy also started a training program for Negro officers in January 1944, and sixteen men were selected from the 160,000 Negroes in the navy at that time. The morale of the group was shattered when it was announced that only twelve of the sixteen would be commissioned despite the records, which showed that none was failing at the time.

Many Negroes were subsequently commissioned and most saw active and overseas duty. Generally, Negro naval officers felt they lacked equality of opportunity for advancement, that their assignments were inferior, and that they were the object of discrimination. The commanding officers of the units to which Negro officers were assigned were largely responsible for these conditions. Nevertheless, in the final analysis neither the navy nor the army offered much real opportunity for the development of Negro leaders.

The marine corps, which traditionally had few Negroes, began training the first all-Negro battalion in the summer of 1942 at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. The always vigilant NAACP publicly protested that the marine corps quota system was unfair to Negroes, especially those on the West Coast. The training class at Camp Lejeune was a success and its graduates were placed in charge of the program—only 10 percent of the class fell into Grade V of the AGCT. The marine corps subsequently increased the proportion of Negro enlistments and began assigning Negroes to its units. The marine corps, however, did not accept, train, or use Negro officers. The first Negro lieutenant in the marine corps was commissioned a few months after World War II.

The coast guard accepted Negroes for service and removed restrictions on officer and enlisted service ratings early in the war. Members of both races were trained together and served together. The first Negro coast guard ensign was commissioned in April 1942. The coast guard was comparatively small and the number of Negroes was correspondingly small. Nevertheless, the coast guard's racial policies were considerably more liberal than those of the other armed services.

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GEORGE R. MOSCONE

CITIZEN ASSISTANCE CENTER
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June 3, 1977

Glory Bevien
Business Manager
The Black Scholar
Post Office Box 908
Sausalito, California 94965

Dear Ms. Bevien:

Glory
While trying to come up with some justification for contacting you, I heard a newscast on KPOO describing a research grant upon which Robert Allen is embarking.

Enclosed is a copy of a paper which I wrote while at San Francisco State College. I'm not sending it to you because I think it is scholarly, but because of the fact that I, too, was very interested in the treatment of Blacks in the military.

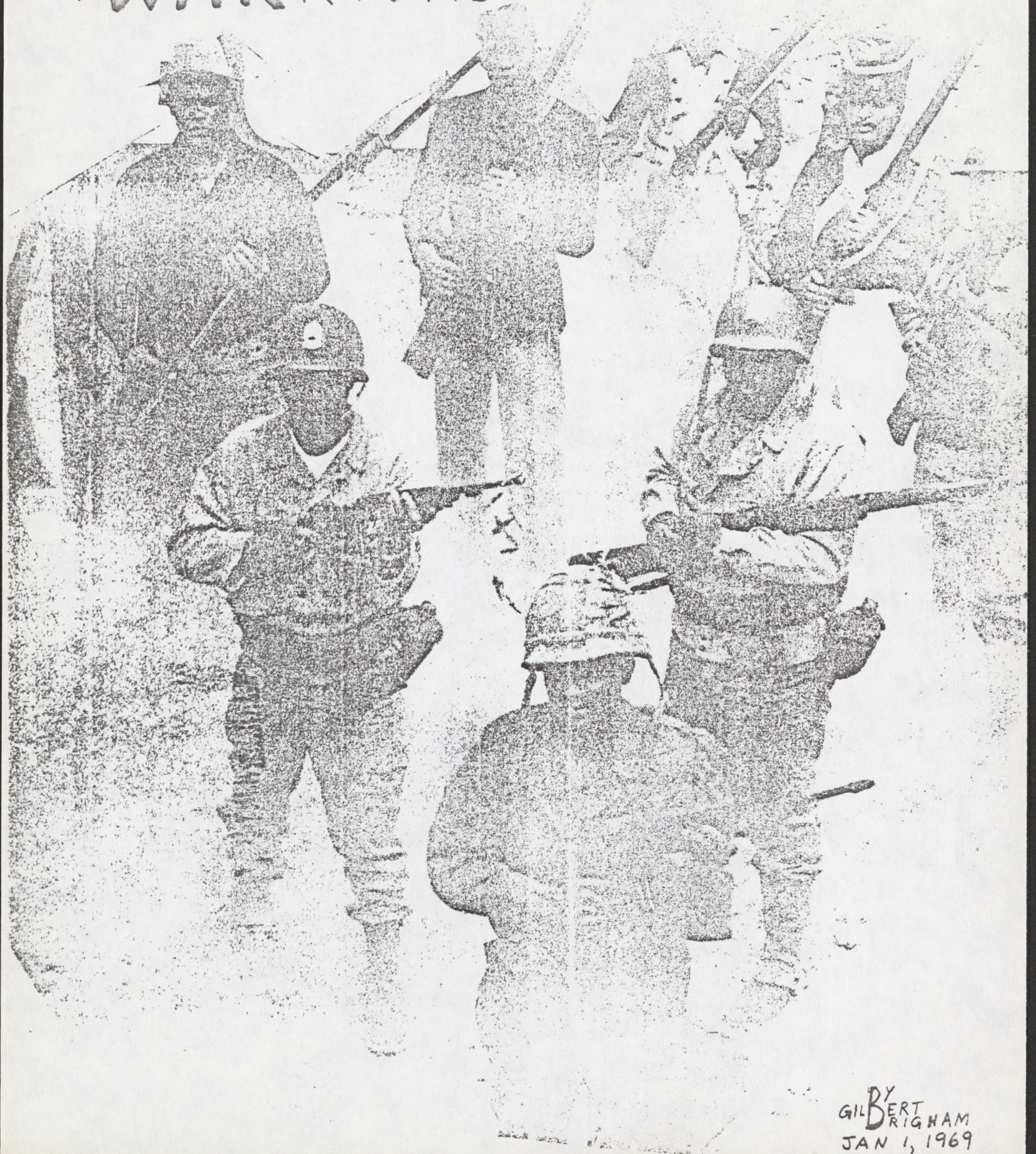
Do anything you might feel is appropriate with the paper, but contact me if you know of a good cha-cha session where I can dance with you again.

Sincerely,

GB
Gil Brigham
Director

GB/cm

BLACK WARRIORS



GILBERT
BRIGHAM
JAN 1, 1969

BLACK WARRIORS

by: G. E. Brigham

About a dozen years ago the crew of the USS Nautilus, the first atomic submarine, was honored in a New York ticker-tape parade. The leading Negro magazine had a feature article about the one, black crew member - a Stewardmate. This year, the same magazine featured an article about a black sailor aboard the USS Ray, a nuclear submarine. He was a Chief Machinist's Mate.¹ These two incidents reflect the Navy's emerging response to the Military Desegregation Order of 1948. Negroes now have more naval job opportunities than they previously enjoyed.

A careful study of black troopers and their relationship to the military should reveal some valuable insights concerning the relationship between black people and the American society. I say this because it is often easier to correctly analyze a relatively simple situation and properly apply these findings to more complex ones. It is also worthwhile to note that the military has had twenty years of experience with desegregation and therefore offers one of the best models as to the limits of this social panacea called integration. Furthermore, although it should not be necessary to state this, it must be pointed out that the highest price that can be placed on any object results from the sacrifice of one's own life. Deaths in behalf of a nation necessarily place compensatory claims upon the nation.

1 "Guardian of Silent Atom Power", Ebony Magazine August 1968, p.152.

Black men have played a long and significant role in the composition of the United States military. Crispus Attucks, a Negro, has been acknowledged by scholars as being one of the first Americans killed in the Boston Massacre prelude to the War of Independence. His participation has been recently downgraded by the Daughters of the American Revolution, that rich, conservative, biased group of self-righteous "patriots". They say Attucks "actually took part in a riot".² Not content with this disparagement, they further deride him by saying, "He was just a boy" despite the fact that records show he was almost fifty years old when killed.

At the National Council for Social Studies, Mark M. Krug, professor of both History and Education at the University of Chicago, lectured on the "invisible people" in American history. He disclosed that George Washington banned Negroes from the Continental Army until the British made freedom overtures to the slaves.³

There were more than 170,000 members of the U.S. Colored Troops who fought on the Union side during the Civil War. They battled gallantly even though there was some pay disparity between white and black soldiers. The whites received \$13.00 per month plus \$3.00 for uniform expenses. The blacks, on the other hand, received only \$10.00 per month from which \$3.00 was deducted for uniforms.⁴

2. The San Francisco Examiner, April 14, 1968 p.8, sect. B, col. 5.
3. The San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 4, 1968, p.3E, col. 3.
4. Charles H. Wesley and Patricia W. Romero, Negro Americans in the Civil War (New York, 1967) p. 7.

Some 200,000 black men served overseas during World War I. One week after the President declared that the U.S. would "Make the World Safe for Democracy," the quota of Negroes had been filled by volunteers. They all served as soldiers or as Navy stewards since neither the Marines, Coast Guard nor Air Force were accepting blacks at that time.⁵

One of the most important men who contributed to the Allied victory in World War II was Dr. Charles Drew. He was the Director of the American Red Cross Blood Bank and he organized and improved the system which saved thousands of lives.

It was a sad commentary on this nation's racial affairs when, at first, Dr. Drew's own blood was unacceptable because he was a Negro. The government retreated from this untenable position by subsequently allowing Negro blood to be stored but used only by Negro troops. The final insult to his humanity came as a result of an automobile accident. Dr. Drew bled to death because he was turned away from a nearby "white" hospital.⁶

In 1944 when the Nazis counterattacked during the Battle of the Bulge, Negroes still were in segregated, non-combative units. The emergency situation called for drastic action, therefore, Negro GI's were asked to volunteer for combat duty. They did, and successfully defended the Allies position. Segregation was restored though after the Nazi surrender.⁷

5. Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer, A Pictorial History of the Negro in America (New York, 1963) p. 262.
6. William L. Katz Eyewitness: The Negro in American History (New York, 1967) p. 449.
7. Ibid., p. 452.

*Rearrangement read since item is out of context due to corrected chronological sequence
JTB
8/3*

Full integration of the U.S. Armed Forces did not occur until 1951. It was the Korean War which first allowed black men the privilege of being killed indiscriminately. This did not prevent the services from reserving certain undesirable jobs for Negroes. One of the most pitifully, dramatic examples of this came bursting to light in the summer of 1944. Off the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, two ammunition ships exploded. Three hundred sailors were killed and the majority of these were black. They specifically had been assigned to this duty because of their race and the ever-present dangers involved. When fifty black survivors of this tragedy refused to return to this assignment, they were sentenced, for mutiny, to long term imprisonment.⁸

Of the more than sixty-five job specialties in the Navy, it seems to me that the Steward rating has the most spurious justification for its continued existence. Stewards perform cooking, cleaning and related servant-type functions for officers. An equivalent civilian occupation would be a houseboy. If officers require catering, there is no reason why Commissarymen and other ratings could not perform these functions just as efficiently as the Stewards.

What are the qualifications to become a Steward? According to the Navy occupational handbook: "Stewards should have an interest in food preparation and possess high standards of honesty and personal cleanliness.

8. Dwight MacDonald, "The Responsibility of Peoples," in Philip Levine and Henri Coulette, ed., Character and Crisis (New York, 1966) p. 18.

Stewards should have average learning ability and be able to use numbers in solving practical problems. School courses in arithmetic and home economics are desirable. Previous experience in cooking or baking or as a hobby along similar lines is helpful."⁹

This candy-coated job description fails to point out the essential requirement. To be a Steward is to be non-white! Black men have traditionally and involuntarily had a monopoly on this job. To describe Dorie Miller, the first American hero of World War II, as a Steward was equivalent to saying he was black. And conversely, saying he was a black sailor automatically described him as a Steward.

To what lengths will the Navy go to change its "southern gentlemen's club" image? It will publish a slick, ten-paged recruiting pamphlet subtitled "Future of the Negro in the United States Navy."¹⁰ It will send a Negro Chaplain around the country who will put on a ludicrous performance by extolling Black Panthers to enlist because of their qualities of cohesiveness and esprit de corps.¹¹ It will enlist 2,000 Filipinos annually to serve as Stewards.¹² This whirlwind of activity has the objective of increasing black enlisted participation from 5% to 10% and officer participation from 4/10 of 1% to a less embarrassing figure.¹³

⁹ Occupations in the U.S. Navy, O-234-517 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967) p. 90.

¹⁰ The Navy Challenge, RAD 66115.

¹¹ The San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 14, 1968, p.12, col. 4.

¹² Agreement on Enlistment of Philippine Citizens in the United States Navy, December 13, 1953, summarized in C. Hoyt Price, Country Director Philippine Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State letter of March 21, 1968.

¹³ Alex Poinsett, "The Negro Officer", Ebony Magazine, Aug. 1968, p. 138.

The black warrior has served valiantly in the armed services of this country. In Viet Nam he represents 20% of the U.S. front line forces. His killed-in-action rate is now down to 14% from a 1965 high of 25%.¹⁴

In the volunteer Airborne units he appears to be in the majority. He constitutes 11% of the Marines even though he was not allowed to join until 1943.¹⁵ He is "gung ho" and his reenlistment rate has always been about double that of his white counterpart.

The major racial weakness in the service is the lack of black officers. The Army only has 4%; the Air Force 2%; and the Marines have come up to the 1% level.¹⁶

The first Negro Army general Benjamin O. Davis Sr., was appointed in 1940, twelve years after he had retired from service! His son, who avows his neutrality and noninvolvement with civil rights, is now the nation's first and only Negro Air Force general.¹⁷ The third, and to-date last, Negro to attain generalship rank is the Army's Frederic Davison. He is the possessor of two master's degrees and the son of a college educated man who worked all his life in menial labor.¹⁸ One of the three Negroes who has achieved the rank of Navy captain is Samuel L. Gravely Jr. He has the distinction of being the first Negro to command a naval vessel since the Civil War.¹⁹

¹⁴ Thomas A. Johnson, "Negroes In 'The Nam'", Ebony Magazine, Aug. 1968, p.33.

¹⁵ The San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 4, 1968, p. 46, col. 1.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 139.

¹⁷ "Lt. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Jr." Ebony Magazine, Aug. 1968, p. 57.

¹⁸ "A New Negro General", Sepia Magazine, Nov. 1968, p. 24.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

Aside from obvious economic advantages, what attracts a black man to fight and die for a nation that has not treated him fairly? I think that Psychiatrist Alvin F. Poussaint astutely reveals the depths of the dilemma. He said: "Superior prowess in combat is one of the most primitive ways of achieving a sense of manhood. The black man in combat is ready to trade his life for psychological manhood, status and self-esteem."²⁰

But black men can not be depended upon to behave in this unusual manner over a prolonged time period. The Congress of Racial Equality was founded by black and white Second World War veterans for the purpose of promoting democracy in America. The militant leaders of CORE recently announced a departure from the traditional civil rights position. They declared: "We have deluded ourselves into thinking that America can become one homogeneous group. We (now) think a heterogeneous model would be more acceptable to the white society...."²¹ CORE now expounds Separatism.

These attitudes, in my opinion, typify the black warriors' alternatives. Their choice depends on how they are received as part of the army of returning veterans. Eric Sevareid, the noted news commentator, addressed himself to this problem when he wrote, in a spirited defense of "the American Dream: "...America is struggling to rid itself of one old curse and one new one. The old curse is the Negro slavery.....The new curse has come with America's new military power."²² It is fitting that black warriors will probably be instrumental in effecting the cures for these curses.

20 David Llorens, "Why Negroes Re-Enlist," Ebony Magazine, Aug. 1968. p. 58.

21 The San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 21, 1968, p. 5, col. 2.

22 Eric Sevareid, "The World Still Moves Our Way", Look Magazine, July 9, 1968, p.28.

Overall, the military service has been beneficial to black men. Because of its relative absence of discrimination, it provided black warriors with the means of developing self-pride and a sense of accomplishment by competing with white men. I believe that another important revelation that the services discloses, though, is that integration does not mean love and brotherhood. Integration has been proven to mean that mutual respect and tolerance, alone, are quite acceptable goals for our society.

The foregoing words should not be misinterpreted as evidence of a successful pacification of black troops. On Guard, America! You can no longer afford to remain unresponsive to the contributions of these gallant men. You must march forward from the security of your ranch-style and split-level foxholes to combat the forces of our enemy - racism. You must close ranks and embark on this search -and-destroy mission because the military has unintentionally taught your black brothers a truth which is potentially more devastating than the Bomb, and that is:

"The Negro has found in his nation's most
totalitarian society - the military - the
greatest degree of functional democracy that
this nation has granted to black people."²³
Attention America! Pay attention!

²³ Thomas A Johnson, "Negroes in 'The Nam'", Ebony Magazine, August 1968,
p. 40.

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ERRATUM

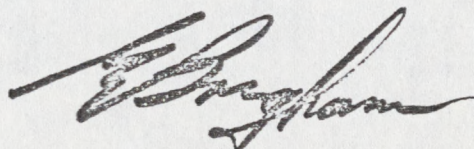
January 17, 1969

Dr. Baker,

This message is an admission of an error in my paper entitled "Black Warriors". I had erroneously deduced that the explosions of the vessels occurred in 1956 because the referenced article bore a 1957 copyright and the author wrote that it happened "last summer". This error was brought to my attention by a co-employee who said I must have made a typographical error because he "was just a kid at that time, so it must have been in 1946".

Since I was well aware that a historical inaccuracy could cast a shadow on the credibility of my entire paper, I sought to resolve this question by spending several hours in the library, searching through the annual Indexes of the New York Times, and looking at microfilms of newspapers. This diligent investigation paid off when I uncovered the fact that the disaster actually took place on July 18, 1944!

This rather embarrassing discovery has not only forced me to rearrange the facts in my paper but it has also taught me not to place too much reliance on secondary sources of information. This effort, on the other hand, has reaffirmed my belief that if one does not personally witness an incident, the San Francisco Chronicle or any other reputable newspaper account can be considered as valid, primary source.



NEW PERSPECTIVES IN AMERICAN HISTORY

UNDER THE EDITORSHIP OF
James P. Shenton

John M. Dobson, POLITICS IN THE GILDED AGE:
A New Perspective on Reform

Gerald Sorin, ABOLITIONISM: *A New Perspective*

William L. Barney, THE ROAD TO SECESSION:
A New Perspective on the Old South

George Dargo, ROOTS OF THE REPUBLIC:
A New Perspective on Early American Constitutionalism

*Blacks and the Military
in American History*

A New Perspective

Jack D. Foner

FOREWORD AND CONCLUSION
BY JAMES P. SHENTON

19.74



PRAEGER PUBLISHERS
New York • Washington

There were 19,477 naval commissioned and warrant officers, not one of them black.

As World War II loomed, the American armed forces faithfully reflected the worst racist excesses of American society. It was a mirror reflection that contained ominous portents. Writing in *The Crisis* on "Jim Crow in Uniform" in March 1939, one perceptive observer warned:

Judging from prevailing Jim Crow practices in the armed forces of the United States today, the next war . . . will see the same gross maltreatment of the Negro soldiers seen in the World War. For today Negroes are barred from the newer arms of service, including aviation and other branches; Negroes may serve in the U.S. Navy only as menials; . . . Negro regular army soldiers are kept out of active service. . . . These are but a few of the many discriminations.

Now, such a policy is contrary, not only to decency, but to the security and well-being of the American government.

7

World War II and Black Servicemen

During World War II, in a struggle presumably being waged against the twin scourges of fascism and racism, black men were asked to risk and sacrifice their lives, even as they were subjected to flagrant discrimination and segregation. In September 1945 Harry Loren Binsee noted in *Commonweal* magazine:

Perhaps the sorriest chapter in the story of the war which has just come to an end is the treatment accorded Negroes in the American armed forces. In a war ostensibly fought against a racist ideology we ourselves have practiced precisely the same ideology. Yet thanks to various pressures brought to bear in this connection and thanks to the need for efficient utilization of all our available manpower, there has been considerable improvement in the status of the Negro both in the Army and Navy.

Binsee was accurate on two counts—there had been improvement, and it came about as a result of necessity and unremitting pressure, protests, and demonstrations. The changes, however were not "considerable."

At first the navy accepted a few blacks only as mess attendants, while the army sharply restricted the number of black enlistees recruited and selectees inducted and assigned most of them to non-combat menial jobs. The other branches of the armed forces excluded blacks altogether.

Gradually and reluctantly, the Roosevelt Administration and the armed services found themselves compelled, by both mounting

pressure from the black community and the urgent need for military manpower, to take steps to reduce discrimination and remedy some of the indignities suffered by black military personnel. The black press and such organizations as the NAACP, the National Urban League, the newly established March on Washington Movement, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE, founded in 1942) played an important role in mobilizing the support of large sections of the black community.

More than a million black men and women, half of whom served overseas, ultimately entered the armed forces during World War II. Furthermore, black men and women participated in more branches and services and in higher capacities than previously. For the first time they were admitted into the Air Force, flew as pilots, and served as commissioned officers in the navy. The army integrated its officer-training schools; the Marine Corps inducted blacks again after a long lapse. Many blacks also found encouragement in the successful integration of a merchant ship crew during the war and in an integrated canteen for the entertainment of GIs in New York City.

Yet the fact remains that only limited concessions were granted to black military personnel and that these were prompted more by the desire to silence the clamor against discrimination and to forestall black political reprisals than out of a genuine commitment to integration. Small wonder that John H. Burma wrote in *Opportunity*, the official organ of the Urban League:

labor use
 The Negro was in all branches of the armed forces, but it was a token representation only. Ninety per cent of Negro soldiers were engaged in some sort of labor; 10 per cent were in combat units; less than half of them actually were in combat. There were Negro officers: one general, a few colonels, a handful of majors and captains, and half a million enlisted men. A USO entertaining both Negroes and whites was enough of a rarity to make the headlines. Negro blood plasma, contrary to unanimous scientific opinion, was segregated from white. Infractions of military law by white officers or MPs against Negro soldiers were four times as great as against whites. Negro officers were subjected by force to racial etiquette in the South. Since the place of the Negro in the war effort was not determined solely by his numbers, his ability, and his willingness, he is a second-class citizen.

Clearly, policy toward blacks of the army and other military branches had changed only marginally by the end of the war. Nevertheless, the war did provide a fascinating social laboratory in which to observe a nation's schizophrenic behavior when its professed ideals conflicted with its treatment of one-tenth of its citizenry.

After the Nazis successfully blitzed the Low Countries and France in the spring of 1940, the United States hastily expanded both its defense industries and its armed forces. Blacks seeking to participate in the national defense effort met with repeated rebuffs. They were prevented by discriminatory hiring practices from working in defense plants, while those who tried to volunteer for military service found the armed forces virtually closed to them.

In July 1940 the navy issued a call for 4,700 volunteers, including 200 blacks needed to work as mess attendants, cooks, and stewards. When several blacks sought to enter naval service in other capacities, Rear Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, acting for the Secretary of the Navy, succinctly stated the official position: "After many years of experience, the policy of not enlisting men of the colored race for any branch of the naval service except the Messmen's branch was adopted to meet the best interests of general ship efficiency."

The navy's announcement that it would continue to accept blacks only as mess attendants prompted an angry editorial response in *The Crisis*:

We hope American Negro citizens appreciate fully what this policy means to them. . . . Our taxes help keep up the Naval Academy at Annapolis where our boys may not attend. They help to maintain the numerous naval bases, Navy Yards, and naval air bases from which we are excluded. . . . The training in numerous trades and skills which thousands of whites receive and use later in civilian life is not for us! The health care . . . the travel and education—all at the expense of the taxpayers—are for whites only! This is the price we pay for being classified, as a race, as mess attendants only! At the same time we are supposed to be able to appreciate what our white fellow citizens declare to be the "vast difference" between American Democracy and Hitlerism.

Blacks were permitted to enlist in the army only to fill the limited number of vacancies in the two infantry and two cavalry regiments provided by law and in an authorized quartermaster unit.

Once these were filled, recruiting stations turned away the many black volunteers seeking enlistment. In addition, black volunteers faced insults, humiliation, and physical violence. In many communities they were bluntly told that "Negroes aren't wanted." A black high school teacher in Charlotte, North Carolina, accompanied four of his students to the army recruiting office but was informed that the recruiting station was for "whites only." When the teacher asked for an explanation, men in uniform broke his jaw as they threw him out of the office. "Negroes cannot help but feel that their country does not want them to defend it," the New York newspaper *PM* observed. Meanwhile, recruiting officers were "beating the bushes for white soldiers." Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg angrily exclaimed: "Negro patriots do not have equality of approach to military service. It is unfair. It should be corrected."

In the summer of 1940 Congress was considering a peacetime conscription measure that contained the recommendations of the army and navy for a year's compulsory service. The black community was fearful that, if the armed forces had their way, blacks would again be forced into labor battalions and compelled to endure other discriminatory restrictions. As a result of these fears, the Committee on Participation of Negroes in the National Defense Program, founded in Washington in May 1938, largely at the instigation of the Pittsburgh *Courier*, other black organizations, and the black press launched a vigorous campaign to end the exclusionary practices of the armed services and to open every branch of the armed forces to blacks. Judge William H. Hastie, Dean of the Howard University Law School and the first black to be appointed a federal judge, leveled a sharp attack at the practice of relegating black servicemen to supply units. He vowed: "We will be American soldiers. We will be American aviators. We will be American laborers. We will be anything that any other American should be in this whole program of national defense. But we won't be black auxiliaries."

This campaign succeeded in securing the inclusion of antidiscrimination language in the draft bill. On September 14, 1940, Congress passed the Burke-Wadsworth bill, providing for the first peacetime draft in American history. Two days later, the President signed it into law as the Selective Service and Training Act, which called for the registration of all men between the ages of twenty-

one and thirty-five and the induction of 800,000 draftees. Section 4(a) of the law stated that "there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race or color" in the selection and training of men inducted under the act. However, there was no express provision against segregation. Moreover, Section 3(a) limited induction to those who were acceptable to the land and naval services for training and service, and a corollary provision vested "unlimited discretion" in the military and naval authorities. Still another provision stated that no man should be inducted until sanitary and other facilities were available.

Black leaders immediately identified these provisions as seriously undermining the safeguard against discrimination. Their concern was intensified when, two days after the bill was signed, the War Department announced that black aviation units would be established as soon as the necessary personnel could be trained. It was clear that the basic pattern of segregation was to be continued. Black leaders attacked the administration and demanded that there be no discrimination or segregation in the fighting forces whose responsibility was to defend American democracy. Under growing pressure from the black community as the election approached, and at the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt, the President agreed to meet with Walter White of the NAACP, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, T. Arnold Hill, adviser on Negro affairs for the National Youth Administration, and representatives of the army and navy to discuss the participation of blacks in the armed services.

The meeting took place at the White House on September 27, with Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox and Assistant Secretary of War Robert R. Patterson representing the services. The three black leaders submitted a seven-point program designed to eliminate segregation and discrimination in the armed forces. The main point in the statement was that black officers and enlisted men should be used throughout the services, subject only to the limits of their ability. Another major demand was that existing units of the army and subsequently formed units be staffed with officers and enlisted men without regard to race. The newly reappointed Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, who had held that post in the Taft Administration, commenting on the meeting in his diary, made it clear that he did not favor the proposals of "the Negro

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politicians" for "colored officers and various other things." He then added:

I saw the same thing happen twenty-three years ago when Woodrow Wilson yielded to the same sort of demand and appointed colored officers to several of the Divisions that went over to France, and the poor fellows made perfect fools of themselves and one at least of the Divisions behaved very badly. The others were turned into labor battalions.

President Roosevelt had promised to get in touch with the black leaders, but nothing happened until October 9, when White House Press Secretary Steve Early released a statement prepared by the War Department and initiated by the President himself, defining the Army's policy "in respect to Negro participation" in national defense. The statement specified that the number of blacks in the army should correspond to the proportion of blacks in the total population. Black combat and noncombat units were to be established in all branches of the service. Blacks were to be eligible for admission to the proposed officer candidate schools, but, except for the three established black National Guard units, black units would be officered by whites. It was further announced that black pilots were being trained and that, when their numbers were sufficient, black aviation units would be formed. Finally, the statement reaffirmed the policy of "not integrating colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organizations." The separation of the races, it said, had proved satisfactory "over a long period of years, and changes would produce situations destructive to morale and detrimental to the preparations for national defense." For similar reasons, the existing regular black units, which were officered by whites, would receive no black reserve officers other than medical officers and chaplains. The statement concluded: "These regular units are going concerns, accustomed through many years to the present system. Their morale is splendid . . . and their field training is well advanced."

The clear implication was that the statement released by the White House had the approval of White, Randolph, and Hill. Indeed, newspapers, in reporting the press release, stated that "the segregation policy was approved after Mr. Roosevelt had conferred" with the three black leaders. They immediately and vehemently denied endorsing the White House statement, noting that

Policy of segregation affirmed

they had specifically repudiated the army's policy of segregation in their memorandum to the President. And they firmly challenged the army's contention that morale in the existing black units was high, adding that enlisted men in these units had repeatedly protested against being compelled to serve "as hostlers and servants to white Army officers." They concluded that the army's Jim Crow policy "has never been satisfactory nor is it now to Negro Americans. Such segregation has been destructive of morale and has permitted prejudiced superiors to exercise their bigotry on defenseless Negro regiments."

The NAACP charged that under this army plan only the most limited use would be made of black officers; black regulars and draftees would have white officers exclusively. "The highest Army officials," it went on, "are solidly behind the policy of 'no Negro officers.'" The organization called on its 600 branches, youth councils, and college chapters to protest the War Department's plan and to do so before the 1940 Election Day "to make the protests of Negro Americans most effective." Others joined in the protest. *The Nation* said that experience had proved that separate units meant "discrimination of the most flagrant kind." The Catholic publication *America* declared in an editorial headed "Our Jim Crow Army" that "what the country needs today is not separation, but unity."

These protests, coming as they did in the weeks immediately preceding the 1940 Presidential election, caused considerable concern in Democratic ranks about the black vote. President Roosevelt was reaching for an unprecedented third term. The administration feared that unless steps were taken to placate the blacks, their support might be lost. Early wrote to White expressing regret over the embarrassment caused to the black leaders. Roosevelt did the same and assured White that blacks would be put in all branches of the service and be given training in aviation, that black reserve officers would be called to active service and "given appropriate commands," and that they would be given "the same opportunity to qualify for officers' commissions as will be given to others."

On October 15 the War Department publicly reaffirmed its intention to establish black aviation units and soon thereafter announced the formation of new black combat units. In the week before the election, three more steps were taken. Judge Hastie was

appointed as a civilian aide to Secretary Stimson to coordinate policy on black troops; Major Campbell C. Johnson, another black, was made adviser to the Director of Selective Service on all matters relating to racial minorities; and Colonel Benjamin Davis, the senior black officer in the army, was made a brigadier general, the first black to attain that rank in the U.S. Army. The promotion of Davis was widely covered in the press, but not all the reaction was favorable. It failed to impress many black Americans, who viewed it as merely a political device to allay black pressure. The Baltimore *Afro-American* complained: "We asked Mr. Roosevelt to change the rules of the game and he countered by giving us some new uniforms. That is what it amounts to and we have called it appeasement." And Milton R. Konvitz wrote in the *Guild Lawyer*: "The promotion of Davis . . . is another instance of our traditional practice, to single out an individual for honors, at the same time to keep the mass of Negroes in inferior status or suppressed."

But black support for the President was overwhelming. The large Northern urban black electorate voted heavily for Roosevelt. Where Roosevelt had previously captured four of the nineteen black wards in nine Northern cities in 1932, and nine in 1936, he succeeded in winning fourteen of them in 1940. But whether or not the steps taken on the eve of the election mollified blacks, they left unaltered the military's basic policy of segregation.

The Red Cross, in response to pressure from the army and navy, refused to accept blood plasma from blacks for blood banks "on the score that white men in the service would refuse blood plasma if they knew it came from Negro veins." The irony of the situation was that Dr. Charles R. Drew, the pioneer researcher in blood preservation and Medical Director of the Red Cross blood program, was a black. Drew resigned from the Red Cross upon learning that the armed services refused to accept blacks' blood.

The United States Maritime Service adopted a policy of gradually excluding black seamen from jobs as firemen and coal passers on government transport ships. In November, eighteen blacks on the SS *Philadelphia* complained in a letter to the *Pittsburgh Courier* that their work was limited to "waiting on tables and making beds for the officers" and that within the past six months nine blacks had been placed in solitary confinement on bread and water. "We sincerely hope," they continued, "to discourage any other

colored boys who had planned on joining the Navy and making the same mistake that we did and become seagoing bellhops, chambermaids, dishwashers, in other words mess attendants, the one and only rating any Negro can enlist under."

Three of the signers were imprisoned and the others received "undesirable discharges for unfitness." On December 13 the NAACP protested to the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, calling the action of the navy "a denial of the very rights which our country professes to uphold."

In the December issue of *The Crisis* a black enlisted man reported that he found the army to be, "for the Negro, a place impregnated with suppression and racial prejudice." The Army Air Corps still refused applications from black youths, and the NAACP instituted a suit in behalf of Yancey Williams, a student at Howard University, and on behalf of all blacks "similarly situated," for an injunction to require War Department officials to consider his application for enlistment in the Army Air Corps as a flying cadet.

In January 1941 A. Philip Randolph issued a call for a March on Washington to be held on July 1. It was projected that 50,000 to 100,000 black Americans would march to protest the exclusion of blacks "from defense industries and their humiliation in the armed services." The March on Washington Movement (MOWM), whose membership was restricted to blacks, received an enthusiastic response from the masses of the black community. Worried government officials worked to have the march called off. Only when President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order banning racial discrimination in defense industries and the government was the scheduled demonstration canceled.

While this militant black challenge was ultimately successful in helping to place many blacks in war industry jobs, the armed forces remained unchanged. On December 1, 1941, six days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war, General George C. Marshall responded to Judge Hastie's proposal to employ soldiers without racial separation by declaring that "the settlement of vexing racial problems cannot be permitted to complicate the tremendous task of the War Department." Even after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the walls of prejudice stood firm in many areas of American life, particularly in the armed forces. Shortly after Pearl Harbor a black journalist commented: "In the

last war, in spite of the acknowledged bravery of the Negro troops, they suffered all forms of Jim Crow, humiliation, discrimination, and indeed slander—a pattern being followed today." Not long afterward, a black college student angrily declared: "The Army jim-crows us. The Navy lets us serve only as messmen. The Red Cross refuses our blood. Employers and labor unions shut us out. Lynchings continue. We are disfranchised, jim-crowed, spat upon. What more could Hitler do than that?"

Typical of the prevalent discrimination was the manner in which the Selective Service Act was administered. Under it 1,765,917 blacks registered for service—almost 11 per cent of the total registration. In the whole population, the 1940 census reported 9.8 as the black percentage. Blacks were grossly underrepresented in the selection apparatus. A few blacks were appointed to administrative posts at high levels. Local board members, however, were nominated by governors of the states, and in 1942 only 250 blacks served as members of local draft boards in seventeen states—a little over 1 per cent of the total. Most Southern governors refused to provide any black representation on the local level. Indeed, of the Southern states only Virginia with ten, North Carolina with four, and Kentucky with three had blacks serving as members of local boards. They had no authority over white draftees. Several governors were canvassed to discover why more blacks were not nominated. It was found that the attitudes of the governors "were based entirely upon the probability of racial friction should Negroes be placed in positions where they might hold the balance in determining what might be life or death decisions regarding white registrants." They expressed no concern over granting whites life and death decisions over blacks.

Blacks did not receive a proportionate share of the occupational, dependency, and similar types of deferment. By 1945, blacks held only 4.4 per cent of the deferments for defense employment, 5.4 per cent for occupations essential to national health or safety, 11.8 per cent of the deferments in agriculture, and 7 per cent of the ministerial exemptions. There were practically no blacks among the public officials deferred by law. In contrast to World War I, when blacks were overrepresented in the draft, the rejection rate of blacks in World War II was substantially higher than that of whites. No fewer than 33 per cent of the black registrants were

*Draft
Administration*

rejected in contrast to only 16 per cent of the whites, with "mental deficiency" being cited most often as the cause of black rejections.

At the outset, no specific educational requirements were set by the armed forces. In the first year of mobilization, more than 13 per cent of those classified 1-A (available for immediate induction) were blacks. Nevertheless, throughout 1941 blacks were largely excluded from the draft. Local draft boards called up only a small number of black selectees. Until 1943 the navy met its manpower needs without the draft. Although the army drew the bulk of its manpower from Selective Service, throughout 1941 it refused to accept a proportionate number of draft-eligible blacks, citing unavailability of units and facilities needed for the separate housing and training of black soldiers. But one historian suggests that "adequate units and housing were not furnished because Army planners and commanders viewed Negroes as undesirable soldier material, and they wanted to induct as few as possible."

The War Department would call on Selective Service from time to time for so many white inductees and so many black inductees. Selective Service complied with these requests by establishing and maintaining separate draft quotas for the induction of blacks and whites instead of calling up men as their names appeared on the local selective service rolls. Selective Service carefully specified the racial components when they sent quota requisitions to local boards. Instead of asking a local draft board for the first 124 men available for induction, for example, Selective Service asked for the first 120 eligible white men and the first four eligible blacks. This practice resulted in the induction of white fathers and married men even though large numbers of eligible single blacks were available.

By early 1943, approximately 300,000 blacks had been passed over. In addition, the army adopted a literacy standard that further reduced the proportion of blacks inducted. Beginning in May 1941 the ability to read, write, and compute on the fourth-grade level became the standard for induction. The army maintained that the new standard was adopted because military commanders had complained that too many illiterates were being inducted and that these men impaired the quality of their units. But a historian asserts that here too the motive was "primarily to reduce the number of black soldiers it [the army] would have to accept." In any event, the new standard served to reduce substantially the number of

blacks eligible for the draft. In the first four months after the new standard was instituted, 12 per cent of the blacks examined were rejected for illiteracy, as compared with 1 per cent of the whites.

The Georgia director of Selective Service probably expressed the sentiments of the other state directors when he complained: "The rejection rate is exceedingly high, and it is very difficult for Georgia to fill calls for Negroes—they simply do not want them." Louisiana Representative Charles E. McKenzie also noted that "a deliberate attempt is being made to keep Negroes, single Negroes, out of the service while white fathers are being drafted. . . . Has it actually come to pass in America," he asked plaintively, "that the color of a man's skin is the basis for his being deferred?" The ludicrousness of this situation was not lost on the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In an editorial entitled "Wail from the South," it pointed out: "The irony is that the cause of this maladministration of the Selective Service Act is the government's eagerness to comply with the wishes of the white South, which demands that there must be segregation of the so-called races in every endeavor, including the defense of the country."

In time, protests from blacks and influential whites, combined with the rising need for additional military manpower, led to increasing acceptance of blacks in the services. In March 1942 the Air Corps began to accept applications from some black youths. A month later the navy, yielding to pressure from President Roosevelt, announced that a limited number of blacks would be accepted for general service. The Coast Guard began accepting blacks for various jobs in May 1942. Breaking a tradition of 167 years, the Marine Corps began the enlistment of blacks on June 1, 1942, and formed them into separate units. In October 1942 ratings were opened to black seamen in the navy's SeaBees (construction battalions).

Meanwhile, the war emergency led to an acceleration in the rate of call of black registrants. By the end of 1942 the army's black enlisted strength had risen to 467,883. In December President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order making it impossible to volunteer for any of the armed forces. All the services now had to recruit their men through the draft and accept blacks on an equal basis. A deepening shortage of manpower during 1943 and complaints from whites who had been drafted while eligible blacks

remained at home brought about further reversals of previous policies. The army finally reversed its policy of limiting the number of all-black units. Beginning in June 1943 inductees who had previously been rejected as illiterate were sent to Special Training Units established within the army, generally connected to reception centers, for eight to twelve weeks of remedial instruction in elementary reading and writing. When they reached a fourth-grade level of literacy they were sent on to regular basic training. Men who were unable to meet this minimal standard in twelve weeks were discharged. Of the 136,000 black soldiers assigned to the Special Training Units, 85.1 per cent completed the course successfully. This compared with the 81.7 per cent of the 160,000 white soldiers assigned to the remedial course.

During the last years of the war, the number of black inductees steadily increased. By August 1, 1945, a total of 1,030,255 blacks had been inducted—approximately 9 per cent of all draftees. This number was still below the announced goal of 10.6 per cent of total military strength, the percentage of blacks in the general population.

In World War II, but not in World War I, a number of blacks refused to serve in the armed forces for a variety of reasons. As a protest against separate calls and segregated units in the army, several black registrants declined to appear when called up for induction, or accepted jail sentences rather than serve in a Jim Crow army. The case of Winfred W. Lynn attracted national attention in September 1942, when he refused to report for induction on the ground that, though willing to fight for his country, he would do so only in a unit which was not segregated by race. Court action was instituted in his behalf in New York to test the legality of racial quotas and separate calls. When the court ruled that in order to have a case, Lynn must have submitted himself for induction, Lynn agreed to do so, at the same time as he continued to seek legal redress. When the case was scheduled for a hearing by the Supreme Court, Lynn was overseas as a member of the armed forces, and the petition for a writ of certiorari was denied on the technical ground that he was not in the jurisdiction of the commander named in the petition. A petition for rehearing was also denied.

A number of blacks resisted the draft on religious grounds. Dur-

ing World War II members of religious groups, recognized by Selective Service as legitimate claimants for conscientious objector status—such predominantly white religious groups as Quakers, Mennonites, and so on—were assigned to Civilian Public Service Camps. Others who refused to serve on religious grounds were imprisoned. By the end of 1943, 219 blacks were classified as conscientious objectors. But draft officials denied deferment to the disciples of the Nation of Islam—the Black Muslims. Elijah Muhammad, the Muslim leader, was sentenced to five years in prison, and fifty of his followers were sentenced to three years for refusing to register for the draft. On February 3, 1943, the General Messenger of a group of Black Hebrews in New Orleans was sentenced to fifteen years for persuading members of his group to avoid military service on religious grounds. This was probably the most severe sentence given to a draft law violator during World War II. Indeed, the heaviest and most numerous sentences for Selective Service law violations were given to black religious objectors. As one academic sums up the treatment blacks received in the draft: "Although the record of Selective Service during World War II was not as blatantly racist as was the World War I draft system, the virtual exclusion of blacks from Southern boards, the discriminatory deferment criteria, the separate induction calls, and the treatment of black nationalists prove that racism had not been eliminated."

Once inducted, the black recruit's life conformed to the army's policy of rigid segregation. At the reception center, he was assigned to a "special company," tested, interviewed, and classified separately. Along with other black recruits, he was shipped out for basic training in his assigned branch of the service. Despite War Department pronouncements to the contrary, black soldiers were concentrated in the Service Forces branches and small service detachments on the racist assumption that was succinctly stated in an army staff memorandum, which read: "There is a consensus that colored units are inferior to the performance of white troops, except for service duties."

The tendency to concentrate black soldiers disproportionately in the service branches intensified during the war, increasing from 48 per cent in 1942 to 75 per cent by mid-1945. The primary functions of these branches were associated with such unskilled jobs as road-building, stevedoring, laundry, and fumigating.

labor
in
use
army

The army justified its assignments by pointing to the low test scores registered by black enlisted men in the Army General Classification Test (AGCT). This test was given to inductees at the reception center for the purpose of determining their ability to absorb training and to separate the fast learners from the slow. What the AGCT scores really reflected, however, was the extent and quality of a man's schooling. Nevertheless, the army viewed the scores as reliable indicators of a recruit's native intelligence and employed the AGCT as a screening device. Four-fifths of the black soldiers scored in the two lowest grades—grades IV and V—from which the army planned to draw its semiskilled soldiers and laborers. By far the largest number of low-scoring black and white soldiers came from the South, the region that spent the least money on education, and especially on the schooling of blacks.

In 1942, the army activated three combat units composed of black enlisted men and white and black officers—the 92d and 93d Infantry divisions and the 2d Cavalry Division. In the same year, black troops, mostly engineer and quartermaster units, were among the first to be sent overseas. But as the number of black inductees increased, the War Department, ignoring their qualifications, assigned them to noncombat units, in which they performed house-keeping chores or general service duties.

A black biochemist was originally sent after induction to Camp A for training and then assigned to a position in the biological laboratory. Before he could start work, he was shipped to Camp B and enrolled for technical training as an armorer. He passed this course with high honors and was promptly shipped to Camp C, where he was graded as a corporal and assigned to the Army Air Corps. A week later, he found himself at Camp D, assigned to a labor detail and demoted to private. At the conclusion of this ordeal, he wrote to his wife: "It is a mockery, let no one tell you differently, this sudden opening of the so-called exclusive branches of the services to Negroes. We are trained, become skilled—and then the oblivion of common labor."

Upon arrival at the assigned training camp, located most probably in the South or Southwest, the black recruit inhabited a separate area in the most remote and inaccessible section of the post, with living and recreation facilities generally inferior to those provided for his white comrade-in-arms. Racial separation on army

posts encompassed theaters, post exchanges, service and enlisted men's clubs, buses, and even chapels. The sign at one post listing the schedules of religious services read: "Catholics, Jews, Protestants, and Negroes." Another black at an air base stated: "It is not like being in a soldier camp. It is more like being in a prison." And a white private wrote from Camp Upton, New York, that white soldiers there were directed by their commanding officers not to "drink with niggers" or "shake hands." He went on: "Of course the Negro draftees are segregated from the minute they come into the camp. . . . The whole picture is a very raw and ugly one. It looks, smells, and tastes like Fascism."

In some localities, the army actually introduced Jim Crow practices where they had not previously existed. "In Cheyenne, Wyoming, where I was stationed," wrote Ulysses S. Keyes, a black soldier from Chicago, "the few Negroes of the town were free to go about as they pleased. But when the Army moved in, signs appeared all over town barring Negroes from certain bars, hotels and movies." Practically all the volunteer groups associated with the armed forces fell into line with the segregation policy. In most places, blacks utilized separate USO and Red Cross buildings and facilities. After much protest, the Red Cross revised its policy and accepted plasma from blacks for blood banks but still kept the blood of blacks segregated.

From time to time throughout the war, black leaders pressed the War Department for an integrated volunteer division. Although widely endorsed by blacks and whites, the proposal was repeatedly rejected. Army spokesmen insisted that segregation was an established American custom and that the military had no responsibility to tamper with the social customs of the country or to conduct experiments within the army for the solution of social problems. Its only task, they maintained, was to create an efficient fighting machine in the shortest possible time.

The segregation policy intensified friction between black and white soldiers. Whites who entered the army without bias against blacks frequently acquired a prejudiced attitude during their military life. "The sight of masses of Negro soldiers constantly blocked off into separate groups and assigned to menial jobs," wrote a white officer, "generates in the mind of the average soldier a powerful feeling of superiority and of being 'different.'"

white skin,
quality of

The army clung to the old and discredited belief that only white officers, particularly Southern officers, knew how to command black troops, and that the black soldiers actually preferred such men for commanders. As a consequence, most of the officers assigned to black units were white, not infrequently men whom the army commanders regarded as "incompetent or deserving of mild punishment." Many of them held to the prevailing stereotype of black inferiority and made no effort to hide their prejudice from their men. A black enlisted man wrote of one officer that "his obvious dislike for Negroes seemed to be a prime qualification for his assignment with Negro troops." Not surprisingly, a survey of black troops in February 1945 found an overwhelming preference for black officers over white officers and for Northern white officers over Southern whites, contrary to the army's prevailing conception.

The black national press actively publicized the discrimination and abuse suffered by black soldiers. As a result, many commanding officers blamed these newspapers for inciting dissatisfaction among their troops. They banned the reading of black newspapers or excluded particular issues from post libraries or from sale in post exchanges. In some instances the papers were taken from newsboys or soldiers and burned.

Prejudiced white officers were accused of "throwing the book" at black soldiers for acts they would ignore or punish lightly if done by whites. One journalist has noted: "When whites contracted venereal disease they received medical treatment. Blacks received courts-martial." Many black soldiers were unjustly convicted by courts-martial, either because their officers assumed their guilt regardless of the evidence or because they wanted to "set an example" for other black soldiers. Walter White of the NAACP, who visited every major war theater as a correspondent, found court-martial procedures used repeatedly to intimidate blacks, particularly those who knew their rights and insisted on exercising them. These men, he wrote, "were considered 'bad Negroes' who were to be assigned the most unpleasant and humiliating tasks to break their spirit and to be court-martialed if other methods failed." A black officer who wrote directly to General Dwight D. Eisenhower to protest certain court-martial sentences imposed on blacks was himself sentenced to six months in the stockade for correspondence out of channels.

Punishment
imposed by
court-martial

Black Officers

During World War II, the army abandoned segregation at all officer candidate schools except those training Air Force pilots. At the peak, there were about twenty camps where white and black officer candidates slept, ate, and trained together with a minimum of friction. Earl Brown, a black newspaperman, in 1942 described these camps as "little islands of free men in an army where the color of a man's skin sets him apart as a different human being." However, there was a problem in getting commanding officers at the various camps to recommend qualified black candidates for officer training. In the first six months of the program, fewer than thirty blacks were selected for officer candidate schools. Subsequently after many protests from black leaders, Secretary Stimson ordered a redoubled effort to secure black candidates for officer training. Commanders were also required to account for their failure to send black soldiers to these schools, an order that produced speedy results. By the war's end, 7,768 black officers had been commissioned. Nevertheless, the opportunities for blacks to become commissioned officers in the army remained quite limited. By March 1945, 11 per cent of white servicemen were commissioned, as compared to less than 1 per cent among blacks. "Negroes, even those of equal education and AGCT level," one analysis stated, "had much less chance than whites to become commissioned officers."

Upon graduation from the officer candidate schools, blacks faced severe limits on their opportunities for assignment and subsequent promotion. At the beginning of the war, army policy restricted black officers to certain designated units and grades and specified that no white officer could be outranked by a black officer in his unit. This meant that, whenever a white officer received assignment to a unit with black officers, a wholesale shifting of officers followed to prevent him from being commanded by a black officer. It effectively prevented all but the few blacks in all-black officered units from gaining command functions or from advancing above the rank of lieutenant. As a result, there were only seven blacks among 5,220 colonels, and Benjamin O. Davis remained the only black among the 776 generals throughout the war. One critic wrote: "The Negro officer always sees before him a cleverly created wall of white seniority which he is not expected to scale. In far the larger number of cases, he is kept a junior officer while whites, no

better fitted, are promoted. . . . This practice does not build morale."

Black officers were regularly criticized, abused, and humiliated in the presence of their men by their unit commanders. One black officer recalled briefing sessions in which "white commanders . . . would act as if the Negro officers were not present, punctuating their briefings with off-color, humiliating racial jokes." When a black colonel was unable to find a place to eat on the post at Fort Bragg, an entire barracks was opened for his sole occupancy.

Black officers were required to sit in the back row of an army theater where front seats were reserved for white officers and Italian prisoners. Black officers were assessed dues to support white officers' clubs from which they were barred. Black officers on the battle line in Italy with the 92d Division "were humiliated by being barred from a 'white' officers club set up by men in their own outfit!"

When Judge Hastie inquired about the army's position on the use of facilities by black officers, he received the following reply: "The Army has always regarded the officers' quarters and the officers' mess as the home and private dining room of the officers who reside and eat there. . . . For a variety of reasons, the problems in the officers' home cannot be solved by fiat." This strict segregation policy was deeply resented by black officers, and they demonstrated their resentment by frequent acts of defiance.

When, in March 1945, some of the black officers of the 477th Bomber Group, an all-black outfit except for white command, tried to use the facilities of the white officers' club at Freeman Field, Indiana, instead of the former noncommissioned officers' club reserved for blacks, they were refused service and threatened with arrest if they persisted in entering the club house. In addition, the commanding officer issued a regulation requiring black officers to sign a statement in effect agreeing to their own segregation. One hundred one black officers declined to endorse the regulation. Thereupon the commanding officer created a board of six officers, and the officers who had failed to sign the regulation were summoned before the board. When they still refused to sign they were placed under arrest. Roy Wilkins, writing in *The Crisis*, observed: "The 101 young Negro officers arrested at Freeman Field . . . are determined to be treated as officers, not as Negroes. If there is a

club for officers, then they intend to use it. If attempting to use it means arrest, then they choose arrest."

The NAACP wrote to Secretary of War Stimson requesting an investigation, release of the arrested officers, and dismissal of charges against them. On April 26 the War Department dismissed the charges and the 101 black flying officers, after being held for almost a month, were released.

In these circumstances, numerous black officers broke down. Many sought transfers and even discharges. One young officer, requesting permission to resign his commission wrote:

I am unable to adjust myself to the handicap of being a Negro Officer in the United States Army. . . . Prolonged observation reveals that inconsistencies over and above a reasonable amount are rampant. Sins of omission, sins of commission, humiliations, insults—injustices, all—are mounted one upon another until one's zest is chilled and spirit broken.

Black enlisted men in Army

For the black enlisted men, army life was even more frustrating. Both their letters and the reports of correspondents reported countless instances of discrimination and endless troubles with Jim Crow practices, especially the overt inconveniences, discomforts, and friction associated with segregation on public transportation facilities. At Fort Bragg black soldiers could not board regular buses, although black civilians were permitted to do so. The soldiers had to wait for infrequent buses marked simply "colored troops," with no destination indicated. White civilian drivers operating buses with segregated seating arrangements between army camps and nearby towns frequently refused to transport black soldiers to and from their bases even when they had plenty of room. As a result, black soldiers were delayed for hours in reporting back to camp. When homeward bound on furlough, they were forced to wait as long as twelve hours in railroad stations before ticket agents would sell them tickets. And when the train pulled into the station, they often found the segregated coach reserved for them too crowded to board. "Last Christmas," a reporter wrote, "hundreds of Negro soldiers spent their entire furlough waiting, waiting in vain. They never got home."

Innumerable accounts report the difficulties experienced by black military personnel with segregation on the Jim Crow rail-

road system, even when they were traveling under government orders. Station restaurants often refused them service, leaving them hungry for hours. Most galling was the denial of the facilities and hospitality that were extended to German prisoners of war. In March 1945 *The Crisis* declared: "Nothing so lowers Negro morale as the frequent preferential treatment of Axis prisoners of war in contrast with deprecatory Army policy toward American troops who happen to be Negro."

On one occasion, a group of German prisoners of war traveling under guard to the West Coast ate with the white passengers in the main section of the dining car, but the black soldiers assigned to guard them were fed behind a curtain at the far end of the car. The poet Wittner Bynner recorded the incident in the following rhyme:

On a train in Texas German prisoners eat
With white American soldiers, seat by seat,
While black American soldiers sit apart—
The white men eating meat, the black men heart.

This situation prevailed throughout the country. In Salina, Kansas, just outside the Air Force base Camp Phillips, "For whites only" signs were on display all over the town. Even the five and ten cent store had a sign in the window reading, "We do not solicit colored patrons." Here too restaurants routinely served German prisoners of war while refusing service to black airmen. "The people of Salina," recalled the black author Lloyd L. Brown, who was an airman in World War II, "would serve these enemy soldiers and turn away black American GIs."

Especially outrageous were the numerous incidents of humiliating treatment, harassment, and violence on the part of white MPs. "Backed by the city police," a black reporter wrote after touring several camps, the MPs "do not hesitate to beat up and kill Negroes in the streets and in the jails." A black officer complained bitterly of the "arrogance and bodily assault" regularly imposed on himself and his colleagues by the military police.

Typical was a situation that developed in and near Gurdon, Arkansas. One evening some 200 to 300 black soldiers of the 94th Engineer Battalion, recently transferred from Fort Custer, Michi-

Black
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gan, visited the town in search of recreation. Their reception by the local whites was extremely hostile. Racial epithets and other defamatory comments were frequent. As the atmosphere worsened the soldiers armed themselves with clubs, marched in a group through the town, and returned to their bivouac area. There was no violence. The next day the commanding officer declared the town off-limits and directed the battalion to move to a new bivouac area several miles away. As elements of the battalion were moving along a highway to their new area, state police and armed civilians approached the unarmed soldiers and ordered them off the road and into the ditches and woods. When the unit's white officers protested, they were threatened and insulted, and one of them was struck by a state policeman. Because of these incidents, more than forty soldiers left the battalion and made their way back to Fort Custer, where they turned themselves in. One soldier wrote: "Some of our men began to talk about returning to Camp Custer for protection. That night they left by bus, train, and walking. Three of us hopped freight trains after walking forty-two miles to avoid white people, who we felt would attack us because of our uniforms." Six soldiers were tried by court-martial, and some black officers were relieved of their command for this incident.

At a conference of black editors with War Department officials in December 1941, a colonel in the adjutant general's office responded to protests against the mistreatment of black soldiers by stating: "The Army cannot change civilian ideas on the Negro. . . . The responsibility is upon the complainants in racial friction and clashes."

Early in 1943, the black press carried almost weekly accounts of insults, violence, and homicide directed at black soldiers in the towns surrounding Southern army camps. A black sergeant was killed in March by a city policeman in the streets of Little Rock, Arkansas. On Memorial Day, the town sheriff in Centerville, Mississippi, intervened in a fracas between a white MP and a black soldier. When the MP began getting the worst of it, he yelled, "Shoot the nigger!" The sheriff fired point blank at the soldier's chest and then asked the MP, "Any more niggers you want killed?"

In June 1943 the National Lawyers Guild submitted a report on violence against black soldiers to the War and Justice departments. The report stated in part:

Civilian violence against the Negro in uniform is a recurrent phenomenon. It continues unabated. It may well be the greatest factor now operating to make 13 million Negroes bitter and resentful and to undermine the fighting spirit of three-quarters of a million Negroes in arms. Yet no effective steps are being taken . . . by state or federal authorities to stamp out this evil.

The black soldiers reacted with cynical disillusionment to the discrimination, harassment, and terror. A black sergeant wrote from the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations:

I have a very clear idea of what we are *not* fighting for. We certainly are not fighting for the four freedoms. . . . The list of insults and discriminations to which we have been subjected because of race since donning the khaki is too long for detailed discussion here, but it is pertinent to state that it has been long and disgusting enough to make the writer indifferent and apathetic with regard to this war and to tempt him on more than one occasion to request imprisonment rather than continue to accept the indignities to which the Army insists on subjecting him.

Other black soldiers responded by fighting back. During the summer of 1943, racial tension in the army erupted into serious disturbances as black soldiers fought white soldiers and police at many bases in the country and in Australia, the South Pacific, and England. Walter White gave the following report of a visit with black soldiers stationed in England:

As we talked, I was puzzled at the frequency, despondency, and bitterness of the use of the phrase "the enemy." I soon learned that Negro soldiers referred not to the Nazis across the Channel but to their white fellow-Americans. One of them, his face clouded with disillusion and anger, asked me, "What are we fighting for over here? Are we sent to the ETO to fight the Nazis—or our white soldiers?" Having then listened for four hours or more to recitals of transplanted American race prejudice, I had no answer to give him.

Racial conflict within the military was paralleled by similar unrest in the civilian communities. As jobs increasingly opened for them, the influx of blacks into industries and localities where they had not previously been welcome aggravated tensions and led to disputes and outbursts of violence. During the same summer of 1943 serious disturbances occurred in Los Angeles, Detroit, New

York, and Beaumont, Texas. Detroit seethed with racism and hatred—"a keg of powder with short fuse." On June 20 it exploded into a two-day riot that resulted in thirty-four dead, more than seven hundred injured, more than \$2 million in property losses, and 100 million man-hours lost in war production.

The Harlem riots that same summer were triggered by a rumor that a black soldier had been killed by a white policeman. Even though it was untrue—the soldier was slightly wounded—the rumor set off an explosion. In a letter to Secretary Stimson, Walter White described it as "fury born of repeated unrebuked, unpunished . . . shooting, maiming of Negro troops, particularly in the southern states, which started the disorders." The *New Republic* commented:

A growing number of Negro soldiers have been beaten or murdered in the vicinity of Southern training camps. . . . It is inconceivable that a white soldier could have been shot for the same reasons, or that wanton slayings of white personnel would be ignored by the federal government as they have been ignored in the case of Negro troops.

In an address to a group of black lawyers in November 1943, Attorney General Francis Biddle blamed the racial unrest in the country on "the poor treatment of black servicemen, and the contradiction between our profession of faith in democracy and our acts." A year later he warned President Roosevelt: "The situation among the Negro voters is still serious. The greatest resentment comes from Negroes in the armed forces, particularly those who have been in southern camps, and they are writing home about it."

The War Department was slow to acknowledge the low morale of black troops, but it could not ignore the events of the summer of 1943. It issued a directive urging all white officers to treat black troops with the utmost care and diplomacy. Although there was an attempt to conceal evidence of black resistance by calling deaths that resulted from racial battles either combat fatalities or "motor vehicle accidents," army statisticians were compelled to report an unusually high number of casualties among white officers of black troops. In spite of this, the war was almost over before the War Department called upon Congress, unsuccessfully, to make it a federal offense to attack or assault men in uniform.

Judge Hastie resigned in January 1943 as civilian aide to the Secretary of War to protest over-all War Department policies and specifically "the reactionary policies of the Army Air Forces in matters affecting Negroes." The effectiveness of his office had been seriously weakened by failure to consult him on policy matters until after they had been developed and formulated. Indeed, it became clear early in his tenure that, as the *Chicago Defender* put it, "Mr. Hastie, though a very capable man, has no appreciable authority and scarcely any influence with the bigwigs of the War Department." "The truth of the matter," said *The Crisis*, "is that Hastie has been unable to do little or nothing to correct the obvious and glaring mistreatment of Negroes in the Army."

At a press conference when he left office at the end of January, Hastie said: "It is difficult to see how a Negro in this position, with all his superiors maintaining or inaugurating racial segregation, can accomplish anything of value."

Hastie's resignation produced several changes in the army's racial policy. Plans for a segregated Air Force school were abandoned. Training in aviation medicine was made available to black doctors. Opportunities for black troops to obtain technical training in the Air Force were broadened. Over a year later, in February 1944, the War Department issued a pamphlet entitled "Command of Negro Troops," in which it refuted the notion of racial superiority or inferiority and acknowledged the right of blacks to the same military opportunities accorded any other soldier. The army also made the film *The Negro Soldier* detailing the contributions made by blacks in wars past and current. The film was shown in training camps and commercial theaters in this country and overseas. The general response of both black and white soldiers was quite favorable; nine-tenths of the blacks and two-thirds of the whites questioned said they "liked it very much."

In the summer of 1944 a directive was issued that presumably banned segregation in theaters, post exchanges, and buses operating within army camps. But the desegregation order had no significant effect. Most post commandants continued their segregation practices, but with subtle variations. The Colored Service Club was now designated "Service Club No. 2," and the Colored Area Exchange now received a branch number or a named area designation. Camps that had only one theater often set aside sections of seats

for different units. Black soldiers who demanded equal treatment in compliance with the order were denied service in post exchanges and theaters. An Assistant Secretary of War's ruling that the language of the antisegregation order must be construed to include officers' clubs was almost totally disregarded.

One historian argues that many of the changes in 1944 were influenced by the imminence of the Presidential election. In June 1944 representatives of twenty-five black organizations met in New York and resolved that the support of parties and candidates by black voters would be determined by the candidates' stand on the issue of discrimination and segregation in the armed forces. In the same month, the Republican Party pledged in its campaign platform an immediate Congressional inquiry to determine whether "mistreatment, segregation and discrimination against Negroes in the armed forces are impairing morale and efficiency" and to consider the adoption of corrective legislation. The Roosevelt Administration hoped that its reform measures would have an effect on black voters. In September the President acted to amend War Department plans for segregated rest centers for returning combat veterans.

In response to the urgent need for service troops abroad, the number of black troops overseas had been rapidly increased beginning in the summer of 1943, and several black combat units were transferred to service duties; overseas commanders were more willing to accept black service troops than black combat troops. For example, the 2d Cavalry Division, which included among its regiments "the old and revered 9th and 10th Cavalry," was shipped to North Africa after two years of combat training. The men were informed that after further training in North Africa they would be sent into action. The division landed in North Africa early in 1944 and was immediately broken up into various service units. Instead of further training for combat, the men were assigned to "unloading ships, repairing roads, and driving trucks." To make matters worse, the switch was shrouded in secrecy; the men were forbidden to write home about it, and censorship of mail enforced the order. Nevertheless, the news reached the United States and provoked indignant protest in the black community, which charged that a deliberate policy had been instituted of barring blacks from combat. The *Christian Century* noted that "there is a widespread re-

sentment throughout the Negro community at the belief . . . that Negro troops which have been trained for front-line service have been denied such service and shunted into labor battalions."

The breaking up of the division also strengthened the suspicion among black soldiers that the army meant to keep them "from reaching any of the front lines where they may gain glory and prestige for themselves and their race." One member of the division declared that the black combat unit had been activated because

someone had to be a stevedore, longshoreman, etc. It was a simple matter—give it to the colored man. After the war is over demands couldn't be so great, didn't his white brother (?) die on the front line, while he was comparatively safe in the rear echelon; that's right, isn't it?

It was about this time that General Davis bluntly told the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policy, headed by Assistant Secretary of Defense John J. McCloy: "The colored soldier had lost confidence in the fairness of the Army to Negro troops."

When Secretary of War Stimson admitted to a Congressman that black units had indeed been converted into service troops, the controversy worsened. He insisted, however, that efficiency, not race, had determined the War Department's selection of units for conversion: "It so happens that a relatively large percentage of the Negroes inducted in the Army have fallen within the lower educational classifications, and many of the Negro units accordingly have been unable to master efficiently the techniques of modern weapons." Publication of this letter raised a new storm of protest. The black press angrily accused Stimson of saying that blacks were "too dumb to master modern weapons of war" and called for his immediate resignation. Republican political workers immediately undertook to make capital of this issue by convincing black voters that the Roosevelt Administration was responsible for army policy. Democrats, on the other hand, blamed the army and the War Department. Representative William L. Dawson of Chicago, the only black member of the House, told a group of black Democrats that "the failure to use Negro Americans to the fullest in this war is the diabolical work of a reactionary and prejudiced clique within the Military Establishment."

election
year

Responding to the public and political reaction to this issue, the General Staff decided early in 1944 to commit the black 92d Division and elements of the black 93d Division to combat. Shortly thereafter John J. McCloy declared in a newspaper interview that, although the army had not found it easy to make blacks "into efficient combat troops" because of their educational handicaps, it would give the black soldiers every opportunity "to make good on the field of battle." He urged black leaders to cooperate in the army's efforts to improve the morale of black troops: "It is a pity . . . that complete equality in the Army has taken such a hold of the Negro mind as to become their predominating thought. For our first aim, whether Negro or white, should be the winning of the war."

A year later, another statement by a War Department official evoked a new public controversy over "the army's Negro policy." In March 1945 Truman Gibson, Jr., who had replaced Judge Hastie as black civilian aide to the Secretary of War, spoke of the controversial combat record of the 92d Infantry Division—the "Black Buffaloes"—the only large black unit to engage in extensive front-line fighting during World War II. The division had arrived in Italy in June 1944 and had had several successful actions. But counterbalancing the more than 7,000 awards to individual members of the division were reports of "trigger happy" men and of the "melting away" of units under enemy pressure. *Newsweek* magazine commented on "The Luckless 92d": "The most extensive and wholehearted effort by the United States Army to give American Negro troops a role in the war equal to that of white troops has so far been more productive of disappointment and failure than of anything else."

High-ranking officers reported the alleged failures of the black officers and men of the outfit to the War Department and requested that it be withdrawn from further front-line action. When Gibson went to Italy to investigate these reports, he discovered alarmingly low morale among the division's blacks. White officers, he decided, were quick to blame the black division's lack of combat success on supposed racial deficiencies, despite the contradictory evidence of many individual acts of bravery as well as the number of casualties suffered by blacks in the division. He concluded that the underlying reasons for the division's poor performance included

the frequency with which black officers were bypassed for promotion by white officers, the "whites-only" officers' clubs that abounded throughout the division, and the instances in which black company commanders had been arbitrarily removed from command and replaced by whites. He found a widespread feeling among black enlisted men that the division's white officers were totally indifferent to the success or failure of the unit and were preoccupied with vilifying the black officers and men. Finally, he found that the situation was aggravated by the presence in the division of an unusually high percentage of uneducated and illiterate men in AGCT grades IV and V (43.7 and 29.4 per cent, respectively), although military authorities had already determined that operational efficiency was unlikely in any unit with more than 10 per cent of grade V men. Gibson left more convinced than ever that segregation led inevitably to unsatisfactory military results.

When Gibson presented these views at a press conference, the correspondents' dispatches emphasized his acceptance of the reports that some black units had "melted away" in battle and his admission that most of the black troops were low in literacy. Milton Bracker of the *New York Times* said that Gibson's judgment "must be taken most seriously because he is the official representative of the War Department and is a Negro." He added: "To understand the situation it must be realized that the generalization that 'Negro troops can't fight' has been depressingly prevalent on and behind the Italian front virtually since the 92d Division arrived."

These press reports aroused vociferous protest from black leaders. Gibson was accused of providing support for those in and out of the armed services who had long contended that blacks were suited only for labor units. "It is enough our boys have to fight Nazis and Dixie race hunters," said the *Chicago Defender*, "without having to face the venom and scorn of 'Uncle Toms.'"

Whatever the conditions in Italy, on the Western Front the demand for infantry replacements sharply increased following the Battle of the Bulge. It was therefore decided to draw men from supply and service units, retrain them as riflemen, and place them in the line. Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee obtained permission from General Eisenhower to allow black enlisted men from service units within his command to volunteer for duty as infan-

trymen. In his appeal for volunteers, General Lee emphasized that they would serve as individual replacements and would fight alongside whites on a fully integrated basis. However, Eisenhower subsequently countermanded Lee's plan when General Walter Bedell Smith, his chief of staff, convinced him that individual integration was contrary to War Department policy and would precipitate trouble. It was then decided that black volunteers would be organized into platoons assigned to white units. "The army," reported the Associated Press, "has moved cautiously in breaking its long-established tradition of keeping white and Negro units separated."

Black enlisted men responded so enthusiastically (many accepted a reduction in grade from noncommissioned officer to private in order to get into the fighting) that a limit of 2,500 had to be set. This resulted in the exclusion of thousands of disappointed volunteers. After six weeks of training, the platoons of black volunteers were assigned to various white units, and black and white platoons fought side by side as they moved across Germany from the end of March to V-E Day. The black volunteers received commendations for their combat performance from General Eisenhower and from their division commanding officers. "I have never seen any soldiers who have performed better in combat than you," Brigadier General Charles T. Lanham told the volunteers. The War Department added that the blacks had "established themselves as fighting men no less courageous or aggressive than their white comrades."

An experiment conducted by the Army Research Bureau revealed that white soldiers with whom the blacks had served in combat had undergone a significant change in their radical attitudes. The majority of soldiers in previously all-white combat units had at first resented the plan and seriously doubted whether it would work. After serving with blacks, however, most of those who had been skeptical agreed that the 2,500 black volunteers had fought "very well." Three out of every four of the white soldiers also confirmed that, as a result of their common experience in combat, "their regard and respect for the Negro had risen." However, the results of this survey were not made public. Nor were the black volunteers, who had been given to understand that they would remain with the divisions to which they were assigned, permitted to do so. Instead, "as soon as the war in Europe came to an end," one historian reported, "the Negro platoons were unceremoniously

detached from their white units and either returned to all-Negro service units or discharged."

Outside the infantry, many other black units "made an indisputable contribution to the war effort." Black artillery, anti-aircraft, and armored units fought in the Pacific as well as in Europe and achieved good combat records and commendations. Major General John P. Lucas, commanding general of the III Corps, Italian Theater, commended the black soldiers of an anti-aircraft unit for capturing a German patrol on its way to blow up a bridge and for shooting down two German planes: "I recommend the whole crew for a Legion of Merit and hope they get it. . . . I have never seen greater enthusiasm and excitement than was evidenced by my colored gun crew. Their chests stuck out at least four feet, their eyes were shining, and they looked the part of the heroes they were."

The 600 Airmen trained at Tuskegee as pilots carried the war from Africa to France, Italy, Poland, Rumania, and Germany. The two major black combat air units overseas were the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first all-black flying unit, and the 332d Fighter Group, both of which saw combat over Europe, escorting bombers and flying strafing and other missions. In more than 200 missions in the European theater not one U.S. bomber escorted by the "Black 99th" was lost to enemy fighters. The black flying units, together with the 447th Bomber Group, were credited with destroying 111 enemy planes in the air and 150 others on the ground while flying a total of 15,533 sorties.

Black service and supply outfits, particularly the engineer and quartermaster units, provided invaluable support for the Allied armies. In every part of the globe, black soldiers built roads, unloaded ships, drove supply trucks to the front lines, and performed innumerable other vital tasks. The "Red Ball Express," manned mostly by 1,500 black truck drivers provided the supply backbone for the Normandy drive in 1944. Black troops made up 60 per cent of the 15,000 American soldiers who carved the Ledo Road out of "some of the world's densest jungle," and then drove convoys across it to China. Some 3,700 black soldiers—one-third of the GIs sent to Alaska—also helped build and service the Alcan Highway. Press accounts about the linking of the white engineers building from the south with the black engineers from the north stirred the nation in the fall of 1942. *Yank*, the Army weekly, viewed the

link-up as "symbolic not alone of the completion of the road to Alaska but also of the manner of its construction. The first land route in history linking America with its largest territory has been a product of black and white troops of the U.S. Army."

Many units received Presidential citations. The 969th Field Artillery won a Distinguished Unit citation for "outstanding courage and resourcefulness and undaunted determination." Five blacks received the Distinguished Service Cross. First Lieutenant Vernon Baker of Cheyenne, Wyoming, won that award for "extraordinary heroism in action" when he knocked out three Nazi machine gun nests and killed or wounded nine Germans. Private Ernest Jenkins of New York City won a Silver Star for knocking out an enemy gun position and capturing fifteen Germans. Black pilots won 88 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 800 Air Medals and clusters. Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., Commander of the 99th, who flew 60 missions himself, won a Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, and Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters. Several black GIs won foreign decorations. Macon H. Johnson was awarded the "Order of the Soviet Union" by a Russian general and William Green won the "Partisan Medal for Heroism" from Marshal Tito's Yugoslav government.

Just as in World War I, however, no black received the Congressional Medal of Honor. The *Crisis* commented bitterly in December 1945 that it was indeed strange that out of a million blacks in the armed services, not one merited the nation's highest award. Two months later, Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas of California paid tribute to the black soldier, who "fought and shed his blood for a freedom which he has not been permitted fully to share":

Despite the Selective Service and Training Act, which established a basic policy of non-discrimination because of race or color in building up our army, and in spite of improvement during the course of the war, it must not be forgotten that segregation, discrimination, and race prejudice in all of its varied forms placed an added burden on the Negro in the armed forces and dogged his steps from the induction center to the front line.

Mrs. Douglas's evaluation applied with equal accuracy to the experience of black servicewomen during World War II. In their case, however, the discrimination was even more galling than the

hardships and frustrations experienced by their black brothers-in-arms, since all the women were volunteers. As Jesse Johnson wrote in his autobiography, *Ebony Brass*, the army had "two types of segregation—race and sex."

The largest of the women's services was the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), later renamed the Women's Army Corps (WAC). From its inception in 1942, it paralleled the army in its treatment of black personnel. When the first officer training center opened at Des Moines, Iowa, thirty-nine of the 440 women enrolled were black. Although all the candidates attended class together, the black women ate at separate tables, were lodged in separate quarters, and had different swimming pool hours. Upon graduation, the black WAAC officers were assigned to command black WAAC troops or to serve in administrative capacities on "colored posts." Two exceptions were Major Charity Adams, who became supervisor of plans and training at the Des Moines training center, and Major Harriet West, who was chief of the planning bureau control division at WAAC headquarters in Washington.

By the summer of 1945 there were 120 black officers and 3,961 black enlisted women on duty with the corps. Thirty black WAC units were assigned to the Army Service Forces, and thirteen to the Army Air Forces. The commanding officer of Fort Huachuca wrote: "These young women are showing marked ability in taking over essential jobs. . . . The performance of the WACs has been very satisfactory in every respect." The commanding officer of Douglas Army Airfield said: "I've found them cooperative at all times, and their enthusiasm, industry, attention to duty and conduct make them a real asset to the post."

However, the black WACs made the same charges of discrimination in assignments as those made by blacks in other branches of the army. In September 1943 the civilian aide to the Secretary of War complained that black women were being sent only to cooks' and bakers' school instead of to higher technical schools, and that "white women were being assigned to field jobs while Negro women were not." At Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky, five black WACs described as "well-educated" were assigned to sweep warehouses, while fifteen others were employed in the service club and thirty in a civilian-operated laundry.

The most highly publicized instance of discrimination against

black WACs took place at Lovell General Hospital at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. In March 1945 approximately 100 black WACs stationed at the hospital staged a sit-down strike, charging that only white WACs were assigned to technical duties while they were restricted to kitchen police (KP). They also accused the commanding officer of the hospital, Colonel Walter M. Crandall, of having stated that he did not want black WACs as ambulance drivers or as medical technicians: "They are here to mop walls, scrub floors, and do all the dirty work."

In response to personal pleas from high-ranking military officers, all but four of the WACs involved in the strike returned to work. The four refused to carry out the order of their superior officer because they said it was discriminatory. Roy Wilkins commented: "They did not believe that just because they were black they should have to do all the dirty work. . . . One girl is quoted as saying she'd rather die than be treated as she was. She was through, orders or no orders, Army or no Army." The four blacks underwent court-martial on charges of having disobeyed a superior officer, were found guilty, and were sentenced to dishonorable discharge and one year at hard labor. The conviction was reversed by the Judge Advocate General, who ruled that the court had been improperly convened, and the women were released and restored to duty. Colonel Crandall was removed from his post.

The only black WAC unit assigned to overseas duty was the 688th Central Postal Battalion commanded by Major Adams, which landed in England in February 1945. The War Department acceded to the unit's overseas assignment after receiving hundreds of protests from individuals and organizations against the restrictive WAC policy.

The Army Nurse Corps limited its acceptance of blacks; with rare exceptions, black nurses were assigned to hospitals that served only black troops. In July 1944 the army removed all limitations on black nurses, but by V-J Day a total of only 479 black nurses had been accepted by the army, constituting about 1 per cent of the Army Nurse Corps.

Although the navy had opened enlistments for general service to blacks instead of limiting them, as formerly, to the role of mess attendants, the Secretary of the Navy made it clear that these volunteers would receive basic and advanced training in separate

Navy

from exclusion to segregation

protest

camps and schools, would be grouped in separate units, and would not be placed on seagoing combat vessels. Instead, they would be limited in assignment to shore installations and harbor craft, construction crews, and labor battalions based outside the continental United States. White petty officers were to be in command of the black units until black petty officers could be trained. There would be no black commissioned officers. Secretary Knox termed the new policy an experiment.

The actual recruiting of blacks began in June 1942. A separate area with facilities to accommodate 1,000 black recruits per month was set up at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois. The recruits, all apprentice seamen, were under the command of Lieutenant Commander Daniel W. Armstrong, a Naval Academy graduate and son of the founder of Hampton Institute. Two other camps—Camps Moffett and Lawrence—were eventually set up at Great Lakes for the exclusive use of black naval recruits. Two segregated advanced training schools were also operated for black seamen at Camp Robert Smalls and at Hampton Institute, Virginia. At these schools black recruits who successfully completed eight weeks of basic training and qualified for advanced instruction were trained as technical specialists. Recruits who did not qualify for naval vocational schools were assigned to sea duty, naval ammunition depots, or the Great Lakes Training Center operating center.

The navy contended that its assignment policy ensured that individual jobs would be filled solely on the basis of rating and ability. But black critics complained that, in practice, race rather than ability was the determining factor in job assignments and other areas as well. They noted that very few blacks held jobs at sea except as stewards. The navy refused to assign blacks to gun crews and battle stations. Advancement for black naval personnel was extremely slow—in most cases nonexistent. Petty officer ratings were systematically withheld from blacks, and blacks were not trained to become commissioned officers. White men from a biracial faculty were commissioned, while the navy passed up equally qualified blacks from the same faculty. There were no black chaplains and no blacks at the Naval Academy, nor had any blacks been admitted to the Naval Aviation branch except as service workers and mess attendants at aviation shore installations. Finally, very

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few blacks who had successfully completed their courses in the training schools were permitted to work in their specialties.

The navy's policy was to assign almost all blacks to segregated jobs as construction workers or as laborers and stevedores at magazine, ammunition, and supply depots, where they worked in gangs handling ammunition and loading and unloading ships, largely under the supervision of white petty officers. The organization of all-black construction and labor battalions resulted in mass protests over segregation and lack of opportunity. One critic bitterly observed that blacks in the navy had swapped the waiter's apron for the stevedore's hook.

During World War II a number of widely publicized incidents occurred involving black naval personnel who sought "to remedy or to openly resist in one form or another" conditions and treatment that they regarded as unjust. In October 1943 twelve black SeaBees stationed in the West Indies were encouraged by their commanding officer to express themselves freely concerning racial conditions at the base. Assured that the meeting was off the record, they aired their grievances with candor, charging discrimination in camp facilities and in promotions. Although 80 per cent of the battalion was black, not one was rated above second-class petty officer, while all of the remaining 20 per cent, the white personnel in the unit, rated higher in rank. The commanding officer assured the men that similar meetings would be held in the future and that a committee on interracial matters would be formed by the chaplain. But the next day the commanding officer again summoned the men. Upbraiding them for "griping," he announced that he was calling a halt to the meetings. Several days later, the twelve men and seven others were discharged, sixteen as "undesirable" and three for "unfitness." The latter three, upon appeal, were given honorable discharges.

The black press and civilian organization publicized the case of the black SeaBees and agitated for their reinstatement or honorable discharge, but without success. In June 1944 Congress passed the Bill of Rights for Servicemen, which, among other things, established a reviewing procedure for persons discharged from the armed forces. Fifteen of the sixteen men petitioned for a review of their cases. Early in 1945 the Navy Department's Board of Review announced that fourteen of the men had been granted discharges

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"under honorable conditions." One petitioner was refused because his record prior to discharge was considered bad.

Following a huge ammunition explosion on July 17, 1944, on two ships at the Port Chicago Ammunition Depot in California, in which about 250 black seamen engaged in loading the ships were killed and several hundred were wounded, a detachment of 258 of the survivors, assigned to resume the loading and extremely fearful of a similar disaster, expressed extreme reluctance to return to work, claiming inadequate training and safety provisions for the hazardous job. After repeated urging by the chaplain and other officers, all but forty-four resumed loading. The forty-four, plus six others who balked after working for a few days, were charged with mutiny and tried by court-martial. The fifty "mutineers," were found guilty and sentenced to long prison terms at hard labor and dishonorable discharge. Thurgood Marshall, who acted as an NAACP observer at the trial, commented:

The men actually didn't know what happened. Had they been given a direct order to load ammunition, and had they refused to obey that order, then the charges would have been legitimate. But they said no direct order to resume loading was issued them. They were asked whether they would load, and they replied that they were afraid. . . . They had no idea that verbal expression of their fear constituted mutiny.

In January 1946, after numerous petitions and appeals for clemency, the conviction was set aside, and the men were restored to duty on probation.

In response to continuing pressure from black organizations and press and mounting protests from black seamen, a number of steps were taken to improve the status of blacks in the navy. These changes were carried forward under the direction of Admiral Randall Jacobs, Chief of Naval Personnel, and later by Admiral Louis Denfield, his successor. The number of blacks to be assigned to naval ammunition depots was limited to 30 per cent of the black enlisted men in the navy. In the early months of 1944 a special training unit for black illiterate recruits was organized at Camp Robert Smalls. Fifteen thousand men successfully passed through this school, an achievement since characterized as "unprecedented and unmatched." On February 2 "A Guide to the Command of

Negro Personnel" was issued by the navy. It stated that individual performance, not race, should be the basis for navy employment. "The Navy accepts no theories of racial differences in inborn ability, but expects that every man wearing its uniform be trained and used in accordance with his maximum individual capacity on the basis of individual performance." Concurrently, the navy took a "timid step away from racial exclusiveness," when it announced that two ships, a destroyer and a patrol craft, would be manned with predominantly black crews under white officers. Experienced white petty officers were to serve as instructors at first. As soon as blacks reached a level of competence at sea, the white petty officers were to be transferred and replaced by qualified blacks. On March 20, 1944, the destroyer escort USS *Mason* was placed in commission with 160 blacks and 44 whites as crew. In April of the same year a 173-foot submarine chaser, USS *PC-1264*, was commissioned with a crew of fifty-three blacks commanded by thirteen whites. The destroyer escort did not complete the first stage of the experiment with the replacement of the white petty officers with blacks, but seven months after commissioning the eight white petty officers on *PC-1264* were replaced by blacks, and the black company was complete.

Meanwhile, in October 1943 it was officially announced that a number of blacks would be selected to be trained for officer commissions. Staff officers—physicians, dentists, chaplains, and so on—were to be chosen from civilian life, and line officers from existing black enlisted personnel. On January 1, 1944, sixteen men selected from the enlisted ranks of 160,000 black men in the navy, began their officer training on a segregated basis at a special class at Great Lakes. At the end of ten weeks of training, twelve of the original sixteen were commissioned as ensigns. The selection of the twelve men seems to have been arbitrary; none of the original sixteen had failed the course. None of the twelve line officers was assigned to duty outside the continental United States. Six were stationed in Boston, New York Harbor, and Treasure Island in San Francisco aboard patrol craft or tug boats, and six remained at Great Lakes performing unimportant jobs in the recruit training section at Camp Robert Smalls. They were kept segregated and strictly forbidden to use the station's officers' club by order of Commander Armstrong, who claimed he feared racial tension if socializing with

white officers were permitted. Armstrong did not hesitate to humiliate the black officers in the presence of white officers.

After six months the black officers at Camp Robert Smalls submitted a request for membership in the officers' club. Armstrong rejected the application, contending that he was acting under the order of the base commandant, Commodore Robert R. Emmet. After Armstrong was transferred from the Great Lakes, a request was again submitted to his successor who forwarded it to Emmet, who granted unconditional permission for the black officers and opened the club facilities to them.

In time, other line officers graduated from the Navy's V-12 officer candidate schools, where they were trained in mixed groups. Upon being commissioned they were assigned to the Navy Department in Washington, D.C., and aboard small craft. When integration finally spread to the wardroom of *PC-1264*, the black officer assigned to the ship was Ensign Samuel Gravely, Jr., who in 1971 would be promoted to the rank of rear admiral, the navy's first black flag officer. By September 1945 the number of black male commissioned officers had increased from twelve to fifty-two—fifteen line and thirty-seven staff officers—as compared with more than 70,000 white officers. These black officers, who constituted .0013 per cent of all naval officers, held their commissions in the Naval Reserve Corps and not the regular navy.

All but five of the black officers eventually saw overseas duty. With but one exception, they had no real authority and were given jobs that did not correspond to their experience and training. The exception was Ensign Dennis D. Nelson, who commanded a logistics support unit, including white and black officers at Eniwetok. Promotions for black officers were few and far between. Only one black line reserve officer reached the rank of full lieutenant by the end of the war. And only one black was admitted to the Naval Academy in wartime, two months before the Japanese surrender.

On April 28, 1944, Secretary of the Navy Knox died and was succeeded by James A. Forrestal of New York. Forrestal was aware of the current trends in race relations, and during his administration the pace toward change accelerated. In July 1944 the navy abandoned its segregated advanced training schools for blacks, declaring that it did not "consider practical the establishment of separate facilities and quotas for Negroes who qualified for ad-

vanced training." Recruit training, however, remained segregated. One month later, blacks were assigned to twenty-five auxiliary ships on which they were to be integrated with whites but limited to 10 per cent of the total crew. In April 1945 the navy announced that blacks were now to be eligible for assignment to all auxiliary fleet vessels, although the 10 per cent quota for each ship would still be observed. In the spring of 1945 Lester B. Granger of the National Urban League was appointed to provide special advisory service to Secretary Forrestal.

In July 1945 a program of recruit training integration by companies was undertaken by Captain Richard J. Penny at Great Lakes. Two black companies were placed in the same battalion as four white companies. The results were gratifying. In a short time a black company won battalion honors. In August 1945 Penny moved on to racially mixed companies. Eight to ten blacks were assigned to the same company as whites, shared the same barracks and mess, and trained together with them. Not long after the program of complete integration was inaugurated, a mixed company voted a black sailor the honor man at the conclusion of its training program. Just before the end of the war Captain Charles Alonzo Bond, commandant of the service schools, said: "Segregation was an egregious error. It was un-American and inefficient—a waste of money and manpower." On the other hand, one commentator contends, some high navy officials believed that Jim Crow units were a mistake because concentrating blacks in groups of their own facilitated collective action on their part, which "would be less likely if Negroes were mixed in with whites and generally dispersed. Idealism and realism, thus, were joining together to nurture a will to make the Navy jimcrow free." A total of 166,915 blacks saw service in the navy. However, more than 90 per cent of the blacks in the navy were still messmen in 1945.

The blacks who received the Navy Cross and other awards for gallantry during World War II were all members of the messman's branch. On December 7, 1941, the day Pearl Harbor was attacked, Doris "Dorie" Miller, mess attendant second class on the USS *West Virginia*, dashed to the bridge and helped drag the seriously wounded captain out of the direct line of fire to a more sheltered spot. Then, although he had received no battle training and was unfamiliar with heavy weapons, he took a machine gun from a wounded sailor and brought down at least four attacking Japanese

planes before the sinking ship had to be abandoned. Miller's identity was not disclosed until several weeks later after much pressure from black and liberal white groups had been brought to bear. And it was not until nearly a year later, upon the stubborn insistence of various civil rights groups, that the navy awarded to the sharecropper's son from Texas the Navy Cross, a historic first for blacks, "for distinguished devotion to duty, extraordinary courage, and disregard for his own personal safety." Concurrently, the navy "promoted" Miller to mess attendant first class. Three years later Dorie Miller, still a messman, was lost at sea when his new ship, the light aircraft carrier *Liscombe Bay*, was attacked by a Japanese submarine and sunk.

On June 1, 1942, the Marine Corps opened its enlistment rolls to blacks but did not begin to accept them until the end of August of that year, when separate training facilities for black recruits were set up at Montford Point, adjacent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Upon completion of basic training, all but those who served as stewards were assigned to all-black service units. One infantry battalion was formed during the war but was used only for training. The majority of the black units served overseas as depot companies and ammunition companies, as part of beach parties in amphibious landings. Their main duty was to unload ammunition onto beaches and to move it inland to the front lines, usually carrying out the wounded as they returned. After the 3d Marine Ammunition Company won high praise for its handling of ammunition during the invasion of Saipan on June 15, 1944, the commander of the corps said: "Negro Marines are no longer on trial. They are Marines." Approximately 17,000 blacks served in the Marine Corps, 12,000 of them overseas, during World War II. In the aviation branch there were 600 stewards but no other blacks. There were no black Marine officers in World War II.

Almost 4,000 blacks served in the Coast Guard during World War II. Most black Coast Guard recruits were trained at Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, where they studied in the same classes with whites under black and white instructors. The Coast Guard's first black officer, Ensign Joseph C. Jenkins, was commissioned in April 1942 and assigned as an engineering officer in Boston, where he directed a mixed unit of seamen. In September 1945 the Coast Guard had four black commissioned officers.

Approximately 24,000 blacks served in the Merchant Marine

during World War II and worked in every capacity aboard ship. On September 29, 1942, Hugh Mulzac became the first black master of a United States Merchant Marine ship. The SS *Booker T. Washington* had a racially mixed crew, which had volunteered "to demonstrate the feasibility of . . . interracial cooperation." After the war, the purser of the vessel, John Beecher, published a war chronicle entitled *All Brave Sailors*. The black writer, Ralph Ellison, in a review of the book appearing in the *New Republic* under the caption "*The Booker T.*," called it "one of the more interesting war books" and added: "Beecher saw the ship . . . as a symbol of a type of democracy in which value rests not upon skin color but upon human quality, intelligence, and ability, and where black and white men work and play together in harmony."

Unlike the WACs, the WAVES and the SPARS, the women's contingents of the navy and the Coast Guard, accepted blacks only late in the war, and then in token numbers. When the two contingents were organized in 1942, both excluded black applicants. Pressure for a reversal of this policy came from many black organizations, especially the nonpartisan lobby of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. However, Secretary Knox remained adamant, contending that since the navy "lacked any substantial body of colored men available or qualified for general service at sea" there was no need for women to relieve black sailors on land, which was the primary task of the WAVES. Asked whether black women might not relieve landlocked navy men of any color in noncombatant jobs, the Secretary simply replied "no." The AKA continued its campaign until in October 1944, just prior to the Presidential election, the WAVES announced that they would admit black women. On October 20 the Coast Guard declared that it too would accept black women in the SPARS. On November 13 the first two black women reported to Smith College for WAVE officer training, and late the following month the first contingent of forty enlisted WAVES arrived at Hunter College for basic training. On July 23, 1945, the navy announced that there were two black commissioned officers and fifty-four black enlisted women in the WAVES, among the enlisted complement of 78,000 and the officer corps of 8,000. In September 1945 there were five black SPARS in the Coast Guard. Although the Marine Women's Reserve, called Marinettes, eventually reached a strength of 19,000, at no time during World War

II did it accept black women. Out of a total of 10,914 nurses in the navy during World War II, there were never more than four black nurses in that service.

All told, the experience of black servicemen and women during World War II—the segregation, discrimination, and mistreatment—gave evidence, even in the course of a struggle presumably fought to wipe out a monstrous racism overseas, of the racism that pervaded the society as a whole. Said James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time*: "The treatment accorded the Negro during the Second World War marks for me a turning point in the Negro's relation to America: to put it briefly, and somewhat too simply, a certain hope died, a certain respect for white Americans faded."

THE INTEGRATION OF THE
NEGRO INTO THE U. S. NAVY

Dennis D. Nelson

FARRAR, STRAUS AND YOUNG NEW YORK

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NEGRO PERSONNEL PROBLEMS IN WORLD WAR II

During World War II, as in previous wars, the Navy experienced but few instances of serious disciplinary problems among its Negro personnel. Historically, the Navy never had cause to question the loyalty of Negroes nor was there any organized collective resistance against conditions and treatment in naval service. The few major disturbances experienced during World War II grew out of what the participants regarded as intolerable social conditions and unfair treatment—conditions which they sought to remedy or to openly resist in one form or another. Most of these disturbances might be better described as “breaches of tranquillity,” but a few were of such proportions as to be considered as mutinies or riots under Navy interpretation.

Most of the disciplinary cases among Negro personnel were based on charges of disobedience or insubordination, which, although the accused probably were not aware of it, were classed among the more serious offenses of Navy Regulations. None of the mutinies were accompanied by violence typical of those occasionally experienced by the U.S. Army.

The Navy's early policy of segregation and “special

treatment” and the narrow interpretations of directives and regulations by commanding officers and their subordinates were largely responsible for most of these difficulties. However, causation of the “riots” was in most of these cases complex, and represented a combination of many factors rather than any single predominate influence. Some were due to organizational problems, living conditions, lack of advancement; others were due largely to social conditions and limitation in work assignments; still others were due to the attitudes shown by white personnel in their objections to Negro personnel intermingling with the local populace, and so forth. The outstanding cases which illustrate this argument show both cause and effect of these attitudes:

The Port Chicago “Mutiny”

During the early years of the war, for reasons outlined earlier in this book, Negro general service men, both class “A” school graduates and illiterates, were predominant in the personnel of ammunition depots and naval magazines. On July 17, 1944, two ships loading ammunition exploded at the docks at Port Chicago, a small town on San Francisco Bay. Over 300 persons were killed outright, and several hundred injured. About 250 of the men killed were Negro seamen loading the ships. Nine white officers in charge of the loading, 70 members of the mixed crews of the two ships, 15 Coast Guardsmen, and numerous civilians were also killed. Most of the injured were Negro stevedores in their barracks a mile from the dock at the time of the explosion.

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On August 9, 1944, the survivors, who were scattered about the various camps, were assembled at Vallejo, a few miles from Port Chicago, with the view to resuming the loading. The men, however, were reluctant to return to work. Various reasons were cited but the principal cause was fear of another disaster.

After three days of persuasion and urging, the commandant of the naval district was called in, but his efforts in appealing to the men were largely unavailing. Of the 400 men at hand, 258 were definitely unable to calm their fears, and they were put in virtual confinement on a barge at the docks.

The chaplain and others continued for several days to persuade and interview the men, with the result that all but 44 of the 258 expressed willingness to resume the loading. These 44, plus 6 others who balked after a few days at work, were formally charged with mutiny.

On September 14, 1944, the "mutineers" were put on trial before a naval courts martial. The trial lasted approximately six weeks, ending on October 24, 1944, with a verdict of guilty for all: Three weeks later they were sentenced from eight to fifteen years at hard labor, plus dishonorable discharge from the service. The initial sentence in each case was fifteen years, but Rear Admiral Carleton Wright, commandant of the district, ruled that 40 of the men were entitled, because of mitigating circumstances, to reductions of the sentences. Because of their youth, previous clear records or short duration of service, terms were reduced to eight years for 5 men, ten for 11 men, and twelve for 24 men.



TOP

Lt. Comdr. William M. Blackford, USNR, and his crew assuming command of the destroyer-escort Mason. The ship was commissioned at the Boston Navy Yard in 1944, during a driving snowstorm.

BOTTOM

Melvin Hogan, Hospital Corpsman 3/c (with casualty tag around neck), being helped from jeep by fellow corpsmen. Hogan, although wounded by a Communist grenade, helped care for two other casualties in the jeep.



Oregon State NROTC men await a flight aboard a Navy patrol plane.

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The Negro press and other civilian organizations aiding and investigating the case took exceptions to the mutiny charges. It was contended that officers of two of the three divisions to which the men were attached did not give direct and explicit orders that the men return to work; that in one division which received such direct orders there were no recalcitrants.

A prominent Negro attorney, Thurgood Marshall, representing the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples, who was an observer at the trial, stated:

The men actually didn't know what happened. Had they been given a direct order to load ammunition, and had they refused to obey that order, then the charges would have been legitimate. But they said no direct order to resume loading was issued them. They were asked whether they would load, and they had replied that they were afraid.

They have told me that they were willing to go to jail to get a change of duty, because of their terrific fear of the explosives, but they had no idea that verbal expression of their fear constituted mutiny.

The accused men were ably defended by white naval officers appointed by the court. They sought to establish that under the circumstances the men were in no mental condition to make sound and considered decisions and statements.

Following the announced sentences, efforts were made to have the reviewing body set aside the convictions or reduce the penalties. Mr. Marshall asked for per-

mission to file a brief, and personally appeared before the Navy's Board of Review on April 3, 1945.

On July 13, 1945, the Navy Department, through acting Secretary Ralph A. Bard, announced that it had been determined that the sentences were legal and that the trial had been fair and impartial.

Request was made by Mr. Marshall for permission to file additional briefs, and for the opportunity for personal presentation of the case before Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal.

Petitions and appeals for clemency were sent from many sources including the daily press, the Negro press, interested organizations and Lester Granger—then on loan to the Navy Department from the National Urban League as Special Aide and Advisor to the Secretary of the Navy. In January 1946, it was announced that the convictions had been set aside, and that the men involved were to be restored to active duty on probation, and were then "presumably overseas."

Personnel at the wartime naval magazines, ammunition and supply depots was predominantly Negro; moreover, these stations were dumping grounds for substandard men. Among these were illiterates, malcontents, chronic disciplinary cases, recalcitrants, and those who met the disfavor of administrative heads and officers of other units and bases. In numerous instances, either inadvertently or intentionally, Negro personnel from class "A" schools were to be found, and these were assigned menial or laborious jobs far removed from their training special-

ties. Much of the work at these depots was of the common-labor, stevedore type, and often extremely dangerous. White personnel, for the most part, held the ratings and performed most of the technical work. Advancements for Negro personnel were extremely slow—in many cases nonexistent—and particularly slow for those service school graduates whose rates and training could not or was not utilized in the base and station complements. It is obvious that these conditions, plus inadequate living conditions and the limited social intercourse of the stations, were conducive to extreme low morale and dangerous tension among the men. It is surprising that there was not considerably more discontent and disorder at these depots.

The Navy soon began to realize that men trained in technical skills, especially those men trained by the Navy, should not be continued in assignments which did not make use of their abilities. It was in the best interest of the service to see that trained men be allowed to make the most of their opportunities.

Following the Port Chicago incident and other similar experiences of lesser magnitude, three pertinent directives were distributed by the Navy's Bureau of Personnel to all districts, stations, depots and bases, calling for a more effective utilization of Negro military personnel, the elimination of the practice of maintaining predominantly Negro units at naval magazines, ammunition and supply depots, as well as the practice of dumping wholesale lots of substandard Negro personnel at these places. These directives appear in the Appendix. Subsequent

compliance with these directives tended to alleviate many of the glaring problems of Negro personnel facing the Navy.

The Guam Disorders

These disorders, tantamount to mutiny and riot, were disturbances in which Negro naval personnel on the Island of Guam claimed they suffered frequent unprovoked annoyances and assaults by white Marines based on the island, beginning the summer of 1944 and reaching a climax with an unsuccessful venture at retaliation by a group of Negro sailors on Christmas night of the same year. Negro personnel considered work conditions untenable, for although this was an active theater of war, only whites were armed during work hours in danger zones. They also complained of the lack of reasonable promotions and the failure to place class "A" school graduates in fields for which they were trained. Added to these conditions were the numerous instances of violence suffered at the hands of white Marines who objected to the attentions shown native girls in the village of Agana and about the island by Negro personnel of the base.

On July 7, 1945, publication was made of the matter in the States by Walter White, Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in a surprise radio broadcast. Forty-five Negro Navy men had been convicted by court martial and given stiff sentences ranging from four months to four years for participating in the "uprising."

It was reported that on Christmas Eve, 1944, a group of white Marines had fired on a group of Negro sailors and had run them out of the main town of the island, mainly because of their attention to local Guamanian girls. That same evening a truckload of white Marines invaded the Negro camp, making threats and charging that one of their number had been struck by a stone thrown by a Negro seaman.

Rumor had it also that a Negro sailor had been killed and another shot by a white Marine on Christmas Day. That brought matters to a head, and Christmas night about forty Negro Navy men left the depot without permission in three commandeered military vehicles, presumably to wreak vengeance upon the Marine Corps camp. They were reported upon departure by the Negro master-at-arms, intercepted and apprehended by white Marine Corps Military Police, who found arms and ammunition in the unauthorized vehicles.

Walter White represented the group as counsel at the Guam trials. The charges included "riot" and unlawful possession and use of United States property, and additional lesser offenses. Three men received terms of less than two years, 33 received sentences of two years, the others twenty-six months to four years.

Efforts in behalf of the men were begun at once by numerous organizations in the States, and continued through 1945. Early in January 1946, it was announced by the Navy Department that the 36 men remaining in confinement at that time would be released and cleared.

Many of the men who served the shorter sentences,

and others suspected as having participated or fomented the trouble, were scattered in groups to other island bases and branded as undesirables and troublemakers. Some reached Manana Barracks, Oahu, and were placed in companies of stevedores and general service men. All proved worthy of trust, did an excellent job at this base and were soon restored to full privileges and duty. Many earned changes of duty in keeping with their service training.

Following this fiasco, directives reached Guam that tended to iron out many of the personnel problems that had beset ammunition and supply depots. Negro chaplains and personnel officers were assigned to the base, and no further difficulties of such magnitude were encountered.

The SeaBees Hunger Strike:

A two-day hunger strike by a Navy Construction Battalion was staged at Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California, in March 1945, by Negro seamen in mass protest against Jim Crow practices and the lack of promotions. There was no violence and the thousand men involved continued to work during the strike. After the first day, the station commandant ordered them to the chow hall. The men complied with the order, but refused to touch food while there.

Numerous complaints reached the Bureau of Naval Personnel, over a two-month period, aimed mainly at the commander of the unit, Mississippian P. J. McBean. There were charges of unwarranted segregation and dis-

crimination. The charges of segregation included inequalities in food and quarters, and, above all, of continued injustices and wanton discrimination in matters of promotions.

The outfit had served for twenty-one months overseas, and had made an outstanding record at Tulagi and Guadalcanal, which even their allegedly prejudiced commander had praised.

Prior to the strike, the Navy Department had submitted to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples a denial by Commander McBean, and by the commandant of the base, who had commended McBean for having "an enlightened and fair attitude toward the colored race" and for being "genuinely interested in their welfare." Nevertheless, he was removed from his command; and after a period of rest and rehabilitation the outfit went overseas again.

The SeaBees Discharge Case:

On April 5, 1945, the OWI announced that the Secretary of the Navy had approved the decision of the Department's Board of Review that the discharges of 14 of the 15 Negro SeaBees who were discharged as "undesirable by reason of unfitness" or because of "inaptitude" be changed to "discharged under honorable conditions."

Thus ended a case that had been agitated by the press and many organizations for over a year, and had aroused an unusual amount of interest on the part of the public. The case grew out of the discharge in October 1943 of 19 men who were members of the 80th SeaBee Battalion.

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At the time of the discharge no specific grounds for the action were made public, but certain occurrences that had preceded the action were regarded as the cause.

Shortly before the multiple discharge, 12 members of the battalion were urged to air their grievances concerning race conditions at the base. These men later testified that they were encouraged to talk "straight from the shoulder" in the presence of their commanding officer, and were also told the meeting was off the record. Thus assured, they did not hesitate to state their views on conditions they felt were discriminatory, particularly the battalion's promotion policy.

Eighty percent of the battalion was Negro, they pointed out, yet none were rated above petty officer, second class, whereas the remaining 20 percent—the white personnel—were without exception rated higher in rank.

The commanding officer promised further meetings on the subject and the formation of a committee on race matters, to be organized by the chaplain. But on the day following, the commanding officer called the men together, dressed them down for "griping" and announced there would be no more meetings. A few days later the 12 men and 7 others not present at the original conference were discharged. Of these 19 men, 16 were discharged as "undesirables" and 3 for "unfitness and inaptitude." The latter men were eventually given "honorable" discharges.

There was much protest when the case became known to the public. The matter was taken to Secretary Knox,

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who decided that there were no grounds for relief. An appeal for reconsideration met no favor. The efforts and agitation of many organizations continued.

In June 1944, the Bill of Rights for Servicemen had been made law by Congress. A provision in the law stated that persons discharged from the armed forces could have their discharges reviewed by a reviewing board. Fifteen of the 16 men discharged as "undesirable" joined in a petition for the review of their cases.

The review was granted and a hearing set for December 1944. Fourteen of the 15 men were given discharges that stated "under honorable conditions." One petitioner was refused because of a bad record prior to the incident preceding his discharge.

The announcement of the decision of the reviewing body in the case of the 16 Seabees in April 1945, and the Seabees' hunger strike in March of the same year stimulated the Navy Department to clarify its policies. The following directive was sent to all commanding officers handling Negro personnel:

Directive (CNO) June 1945

Negro Enlisted Personnel—Expanded Assignment of to Commands and Activities in the Pacific Ocean Area

In order that there be a uniform interpretation of the policy of the Navy Department in regard to the utilization of Negro personnel, it may be helpful to point out that it is the Navy's policy to:

1. Assign and utilize Negro personnel on exactly the same basis as white personnel, in the same type of work.

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2. Assure that Negroes are given the same opportunity as whites to qualify for all rates and rating branches.
3. Assure that Negroes are afforded the same opportunity for advancement in pay grades on the same basis as whites, in accordance with existing regulations.
4. Avoid the issuance of orders, or use of signs, restricting the use of facilities, such as "heads," Ship's Service, sleeping quarters, mess, etc., to one or the other of the races.

And so by the costly process of trial and error and hit and miss, the headaches of segregation gradually began to give way to total integration.

Clarification of Racial Designators

Racial discrimination is often rationalized by descriptive terminology in "official" forms and records. There are sound reasons for mentioning a man's religion on enlistment forms, service record and other armed forces paraphernalia, but designation of race serves only to remind the underprivileged of their inferior position. Until the latter part of 1949, many Navy forms listed personnel in the following manner:

(Applicant)

John Doe		John Brown	
White, Caucasian		Negro	
Eyes	Gray	Eyes	Negro
Hair	Blond	Hair	Negro
Complexion	Ruddy	Complexion	Negro
Build	Stocky	Build	Negro

Differences can be observed in all people, but there are many who refuse—because of ingrained habit or

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opportunism—to make any distinction other than the general one of white and Negro. When the general designation of "Negro" is used in paperwork it tends to fortify and confirm a stereotype that sometimes needs re-enforcement in the face of realities. Racial distinction, repeated over and over again in forms and records, confirms a policy, makes it binding and traditional.

The influx of Negroes into the Navy during World War II brought about increasing criticism of this practice, which was at variance to even the fumbling racial policy of 1944. But as recently as August 1945, a discharged veteran stated: "The only items on my records that I could recognize as being me was my name and address—and even the latter was wrong. I was described as having 'hair—Negro,' 'eyes—Negro,' 'nose—Negro,' etc."

BuPers forwarded instructions in November 1949 to all naval installations regarding the future use of racial designators on enlistment and shipping papers, medical and personnel records as follows:

Extreme care shall be exercised that racial nomenclature as approved by the Navy Department shall be used only. In no case shall racial descriptive terms be used in physical descriptive forms such as "color of eyes, hair or complexion—Negro," etc.

Since this date many of the application and personnel forms have omitted racial designators completely—others using such terminology to indicate race are at a minimum.

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For many years the Navy listed racial groups according to general or specific nationalities, such as:

Puerto Rican (Negro)
Puerto Rican (White)
Chinese
Japanese
Korean
American Indian
Negro
Filipino
Samoan
Chamorro
Hawaiian

By order of the Personnel Policy Board of the Secretary of Defense (April 5, 1950) all racial entries and designators in records and forms of the armed forces were to be incorporated in the following categories:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| a. Caucasian | White
Puerto Rican (White) |
| b. Negroid | Negro
Puerto Rican (Negro) |
| c. Mongolian | Chinese
Japanese
Korean |
| d. Indian | American Indian |
| e. Malayan | Filipino
Samoan
Chamorro
Hawaiian |

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The question arises, what is "race"? UNESCO stated that "A race is any group of people whom others choose to describe as a 'race.'" In drawing up the above classification, the Office of the Secretary of Defense has stepped in where ethnologists fear to tread. The classification is arbitrary and tends to fit the man to the pattern. It is generally accepted that there are but three ethnic groups of man: Mongoloids, Negroids and Caucasians. The American Indians are not a race per se but are true Mongoloids. The word "Negroid," as listed, is objectionable, and the category "Puerto Rican (Negro)" is not a scientific determination but a misconception, pure and simple. In New York City, Puerto Ricans have in some instances refused to enlist because of this situation. Puerto Ricans are being enlisted as "Caucasian" or "Negroid" depending on skin color or admission of the prospective recruit. One instance stands out where two brothers—one dark and the other fair—were enlisted according to the official classification. When it was discovered the two men were brothers, the fair one was then listed as "Negroid"—and he immediately terminated his enlistment.

Racial designators could well be entirely eliminated, and experience has shown that such elimination would be preferable to the unintelligible manner in which such matters are now handled. The Navy no longer classifies race except on medical forms. In 1949 Judge Charles Fahy, Chairman of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, sent the following letter to Louis Johnson, at that time Secretary of Defense.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

30 November 1949

It has been brought to my attention that the Chairman of the Personnel Policy Board has approved a policy directing that whenever entries regarding race are required on enlistment records and shipping articles, recruits shall be identified in the following racial categories:

1. Caucasian
2. Negroid
3. Mongolian
4. Indian (American)
5. Malayan

I understand that the Chairman of the Personnel Policy Board has ordered the three Service Secretaries to place this policy into effect as soon as practicable.

While I can see no positive harm in this policy, it seems to me that it unnecessarily multiplies racial distinctions at a time when the whole trend is to get away from emphasis on race. As you know, the Navy now indicates race only on its medical records, and the Army and Air Force employ only two racial categories—white and Negro.

Furthermore, this multiplication of racial categories, it seems to me, is capable of causing much confusion and may result in misunderstanding which could be unpleasant and troublesome. Even anthropologists are not in complete agreement on racial categories, and I think it is asking a good deal of a recruiting sergeant that he be called upon to classify recruits into five distinct groups when it is often impossible so to classify them because of a mixture of racial and national antecedents.

I realize that it is advantageous to have personnel classifications uniform in the three services, but I did want to indicate to you my doubts about the wisdom of increasing racial distinctions.

Charles Fahy
Chairman

The Navy has taken the initial and most far-reaching steps toward integration and the elimination of such classifications. The United Nations, the State Department, UNESCO, Selective Service and civilian agencies and organizations are likewise working toward the same objectives. The restrictions thus imposed on the military services and in variance to existing racial policies are backward steps.