



THE AFRO-AMERICAN AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

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## ABSTRACT

The second World War had a great impact on the black American population. The issues of military participation and the aims expressed in Allied propaganda were seized upon by Afro-Americans in order to press their claims for equality at home. This war on two fronts, as it was called, found expression in black newspapers, in literature, and in song and the common theme was that service in the armed forces or in defence industries would, or at least should, be rewarded with equal citizenship rights.

The militant campaigns launched by blacks at this time, particularly the March on Washington Movement, resulted in 'guided' changes: changes resulting from government actions to reduce discrimination in industry and the armed forces. More important, however, were the 'unguided' changes which came about as a result of the war itself. Manpower shortages in industry after 1942 led to increased employment of blacks and in a greater variety of jobs than previously experienced. Similar shortages in the Army in 1944 led to a successful experiment in integration which undermined the basis of segregation in the forces.

Such changes did not go unresisted and the massive migration of Afro-Americans to centres of war production, and their own belligerence, led to conflict with whites over employment and housing. In 1943 a number of cities were disrupted by race riots, the largest of which took place in Detroit. More sympathetic whites urged their countrymen to practice what they preached abroad in their own country, a message which was taken up by President Truman when he acted in the field of civil rights after the war. The riots and

race conflict of the 1940s demonstrated the importance race relations had achieved during and because of the war: they were also a foretaste of the things to come when black hopes and expectations were crushed in the 1950s.

Abbreviations.

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| FDRL | Franklin D. Roosevelt Library            |
| FEPC | Fair Employment Practices Committee      |
| HHFA | Housing and Home Finance Agency          |
| NARG | National Archives Record Group           |
| OASW | Office of the Assistant Secretary of War |
| OE   | Office of Education                      |
| OFF  | Office of Facts and Figures              |
| OPA  | Office of Price Administration           |
| OWI  | Office of War Information                |
| WD   | War Department                           |

## Chapter I

### War, Society, and the Afro-American

Attitudes toward war and toward studies of war change with the times. The long American involvement in Viet Nam has produced an antipathy not only towards militaristic involvements, but also towards research concerning such activities. This return to what has aptly been called the 'liberal' view of war inhibits valuable historical and sociological examinations of the causes and effects of armed aggression.<sup>1</sup>

Historians, by the very nature of their profession, must, while deploring all acts of violence whether past or present, continue to examine previous conflicts and discuss their effects on society. The value of such work has been demonstrated in a variety of publications dealing with the history of several countries.<sup>2</sup> Out of this body of scholarship can be drawn several ideas relevant to the examination of Afro-American history. One in particular is the concept of a military participation ratio, first suggested by the sociologist Andreski, and later refined and applied to history by

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1. Alan S. Milward, The Economic Effects of the World Wars on Britain, London 1970, page 11. Those historians who neglected war because they saw in it nothing but death, disaster, and the rise of totalitarianism, were first referred to by Arthur Marwick as 'whigs', their opposites, those who saw war solely in terms of political and military history, he called 'tories', in 'The Impact of the First World War on British Society', Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 3, no. 1, January 1968.
  2. Richard M. Titmuss, Essays on 'the Welfare State', London 1958; Philip Abrams, 'The Failure of Social Reform 1918-1920', Past and Present, April 1963; Marwick, Britain in the Century of Total War: War, Peace, and Social Change, London 1968; Angus Calder, The People's War: Britain 1939-45, London 1971; Gordon Wright, The Ordeal of Total War, 1939-1945, New York 1968; Richard Polenberg, editor, America at War: The Home Front, 1941-1945, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968; Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945, New York 1970; Stanislaw Andreski, Military Organization and Society, London 1954.



Titmuss, Abrams, and Marwick. In its simplified form, the theory states that as the proportion of the total population in the armed forces increases, that is, the larger the military participation ratio, the greater is the extent of social levelling.<sup>3</sup> In times of total war, involving civilian populations as well as the military, the theory applies to all who take part in the defence effort, whether in the armed forces, government, or industry: 'war needs someone to do the fighting, and someone to furnish the weapons and food: those who participate in the war effort have to be rewarded....'<sup>4</sup> Thus the extension of the franchise to women, both in Britain and the United States, after the first World War can be seen in part as a 'reward' for their services during the war.

A second theory relevant to this particular study was enunciated by Arthur Marwick, who suggested that total war provides a test or challenge to existing institutions.<sup>5</sup> These institutions either prove able to meet the threat or adapt to do so: those that do not suffer defeat and, like Russia in 1917, some times collapse. Segregation and discrimination have always been a part of America's institutions, and as such were subject to the test of war. The response to war, and the effects of war, need not, as Marwick pointed out, be the result of definite government actions, but could also be spontaneous or 'unguided'.<sup>6</sup>

More basic to the study of Afro-American history, is the

3. Andreski, Military Organization and Society, 33.
4. Marwick, Britain in the Century of Total War, 12.
5. Ibid., 13.
6. Ibid., 13.

relationship between citizenship and the defence of the state. In the modern democratic body politic, it is taken for granted that it is the duty of the citizen to defend his (and in more recent times, her) country, if need be, with his life.<sup>7</sup> Nowhere has this been more clearly demonstrated than in the United States, where it was taken to some extremes. In 1863, during the Civil War, U.S. officials required that any alien who had formally declared his intention of becoming a citizen and had exercised political rights under state law, was subject to conscription. Those that claimed exemption as foreigners had to leave the country within sixty-five days. In 1941, no resident alien was excluded, and although exemption could be requested, to do so meant forswearing American citizenship. In return for armed service, the individual is guaranteed the rights of citizenship; a say in government, protection of the laws, and so on. The military service of those under the age of consent, both in Britain and America, was one of the arguments for the recent lowering of the voting age to eighteen. It follows that members of a minority group called upon to serve their country in time of war can expect the rights and status of first-class citizens as a result. This is no less true for the Afro-American than it is for members of a particular social class, women, or those under the age of twenty-one, a fact long recognized yet never clearly defined or accepted in the United States.

This issue arose in every war which America fought, and

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7. The obligations of the citizen are discussed in depth and more philosophically in Michael Walzer, Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship, New York 1970.



black service in those wars challenged institutionalized racial prejudice but rarely received much reward. The war for independence was just such a war although the situation was further complicated by the revolutionary philosophies of the time.<sup>8</sup> The position of the colonists as oppressed subjects and slaveholders created a considerable dilemma. While some argued that the 'inalienable rights of man' applied equally to blacks and whites, others avoided the issue and laid full responsibility for slavery at the door of King George III. The question of black participation in the armed forces was solved by George Washington when he took command of the Continental Army in 1775: ignoring the active part already played by blacks at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, he forbade the enlistment of black soldiers.

The situation would probably have remained unchanged but for the proclamation issued by the deposed governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, and the necessities of war. Dunmore offered freedom to 'all indentured servants, Negroes, or others'<sup>9</sup>, that took up arms with the loyalists. Here was an invitation to the slaves to rise against their masters, the very thing the colonists feared. To counter this offer, they liberalized their own policies to allow first free blacks and later slaves, to enlist in the army, on the understanding that slaves would be freed after their service. This change in policy was further encouraged by the increasing

8. The Afro-American and the Revolutionary period is dealt with fully in Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the American Revolution, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1961, and in Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812, Baltimore, Maryland 1969.
9. Quoted in John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans, New York 1969, 133.

shortage of men due to the reluctance of many colonists to serve outside of their own state, or to serve at all in a war which, after the disastrous winter spent in Valley Forge, seemed without end or victory. While Georgia and South Carolina refused to countenance the use of black soldiers, the other states were glad to do so: of the 300,000 men who fought the British, approximately 5,000 were black, and several thousand of these received their freedom as a result.

Those who secured their liberty in that way were fortunate for, despite the loyalty of the blacks and the pleas of anti-slavery campaigners, slavery was firmly entrenched in the South and recognized in the constitution of the newly independent states, and any ruling on the slave trade prior to 1808 was prohibited. Although the war, the rights of man, and economic circumstances led to the end of slavery in the North, even there participation in the war did not win equal membership in society for blacks. Once the emergency was over, blacks were not only excluded from the militias, but also gradually separated from the white community by law and custom. The troublesome contradiction between the revolutionary philosophies and the subordination of the Africans was solved by the commonly accepted view that the black was less than a man.

Not until the Civil War did the question of black participation again reach any serious proportions. In the war of 1812 with Britain, both sides offered freedom to slaves who joined their forces, and many fought in both armies and navies.<sup>10</sup> However,

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10. See Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 168-71.

the active part played by Afro-Americans in the defence of the republic did not deter the growth of slavery. Although the Civil war was fought to prevent the disintegration of the Union, slavery and the position of the Afro-American was a central issue. Lincoln attempted to prevent it from becoming the issue, firstly by refusing to speak out against the institution, and secondly, by declining to use free, black volunteers in the Union forces, for fear of jeopardizing the loyalty of the border states. He was supported in this by many white Northerners, including military officials, who felt besides that Afro-Americans would make poor soldiers.

Again it was military necessity and outside pressure that led to a change in policy. Union defeats, heavy casualties, and the campaign of black and white abolitionists led to the authorization by Congress in July 1862, of the use of black troops. A year later the national call for black volunteers came with the Emancipation Proclamation, itself declared as a war necessity, and from then on Afro-Americans, both free and former slaves, served in the Union armies.

Patterns of service which were established for black troops during the war were to remain intact until the 1940s.<sup>11</sup> The 178,975 black soldiers saw service in segregated regiments, were led largely by white officers, and subjected to discrimination at the hands of the government and white fellow soldiers. The worst example of this treatment was the difference in pay scales for

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11. Black participation in the Civil war is dealt with in Dudley Cornish, The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865, New York 1956; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment, New York 1969; Lerone Bennett, Jr, Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America, Chicago 1969, 160-183; and From Slavery to Freedom, 271-296.



whites and blacks which continued until 1864. The war did, though, guarantee future black participation in the military: the Army Reorganization Act of 1866 established four segregated, regular army units, the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 24th and 25th Infantry. The war, and more especially the period of Reconstruction which followed, also resulted in the end of slavery, the extension of the rights of citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and the extension of voting rights to blacks. Unfortunately, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, these rights were ignored, set aside by states' laws, and overruled by violence and terrorism. When America entered the first World War in 1917, the Afro-American was no more than a second-class citizen.

In many ways, World War I was a repeat of the Civil War and a prelude to the second. Black volunteers for armed service were again at first turned away, and when finally accepted were put into segregated regiments where their duties were largely of a menial and labouring nature: of the 400,000 black soldiers, 380,000 were in the services of supply branches of the army.<sup>12</sup> The majority of their officers were white, and the question of training for black officers aroused some controversy. Finally, a segregated camp at Fort Des Moines, Iowa was set up which the Afro-Americans accepted as better than nothing. In all, only 1,400 blacks served as commissioned officers.

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12. Black military service during World War I is described in, Florette Henri, Bitter Victory: A History of Black Soldiers in World War I, Garden City, New York 1970; Chester D. Heywood, Negro Combat Troops in the World War: The Story of the 371st Infantry, New York 1928; Arthur W. Little, From Harlem to the Rhine: The Story of New York's Colored Volunteers, New York 1936.

The few black combat regiments that saw action in Europe fought beside French rather than American troops and although they performed well and earned considerable distinction, they were still subject to the prejudices of their white countrymen.<sup>13</sup> The now infamous official order from the headquarters of General Pershing summed up the attitudes, and the fears, of white soldiers and officers.<sup>14</sup> Not only were the whites alarmed by the fraternization which took place between Afro-Americans and French male and female civilians, they also resented the attitudes of French military officials and soldiers towards 'les enfants perdus'.<sup>15</sup> These prejudices resulted in a lack of rest areas for Afro-Americans, their exclusion from the Paris victory parades, and their hasty return home once the war had ended.

If the war brought little change in terms of military service, it did affect black life in the United States. The pressures of war forced the federal government to recognize the importance of the black population. The appointment of Emmett J. Scott as special assistant to the Secretary of War, and of George E. Haynes as Director of Negro Economics, was a considerable departure from the Wilson administration's previous lily-white policy.<sup>16</sup> Although

13. The 369th Infantry Regiment of the Ninety Third Division, served 191 days at the front, was the first American regiment to reach the Rhine, was, as a unit, awarded the Croix de Guerre, and several of its members were decorated for valour.
14. See W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Documents of the War', Crisis, XVIII, May 1919.
15. Quoted in Bennett, Before the Mayflower, 292-293.
16. Jane Lang Scheiber and Harry N. Scheiber argue unconvincingly that a far greater change in government attitudes than this took place during the war, in 'The Wilson Administration and the Wartime Mobilization of Black Americans, 1917-18', Labor History, X, 3, 1969.



a break with past practices, both positions were entirely war-oriented, designed to ease the 'Negro problem', boost black morale, and aid mobilization. The changes that took place during the war were almost entirely 'unguided', that is, not the result of government action.

The increased industrial activity in the North, at a time when European immigration was cut off, opened enough economic opportunities for black men and women to leave the South. Encouraged by friends and relatives, helped by the Chicago Defender and northern industrial labour agents, between 300,000 and 1 million blacks left the South in search of employment in Northern war industries.<sup>17</sup> This 'mass exodus' led to a large increase in black urban populations: in Chicago the number rose from 44,103 in 1910 to 109,594 in 1920; in New York from 91,709 to 152,467; and in Detroit from 5,741 to 40,838.<sup>18</sup> These increases in population did not result in any great expansion of black housing areas, but instead the new immigrants were forced to find accommodation in the existing black sections. Thus urbanization meant overcrowding, insanitary conditions, disease and ill-health. It also led to friction with neighbouring whites as Afro-Americans tried to escape the confines of the ghetto. Conflicts over housing and competition

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17. The history of the migrations is the subject of U.S. Department of Labor, Division of Negro Economics, Negro Migration in 1916-17, Washington, D.C., 1919; Emmett J. Scott, Negro Migration During the War, New York 1920; the pages of the Chicago Defender, and Reynolds Farley, 'The Urbanization of Negroes in the United States', Journal of Social History, Vol. I, Spring 1968.
18. Figures taken from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932, Washington, D.C., 1935.



in employment caused racial violence like the bombings in Chicago and the riot in East St. Louis, Illinois, in 1917.<sup>19</sup> Despite these considerable drawbacks, the move North did bring certain benefits. Wages were much higher than those paid in the South, even in the unskilled jobs to which Afro-Americans were largely restricted. Life in the North also presented better educational opportunities, and a slightly greater degree of freedom. More important was the sense of community and increased sophistication which was the natural result of urbanization.

Perhaps the most important change which resulted from the war was the change in black attitudes. When America entered the war the Afro-American view was expressed by W. E. B. DuBois's famous 'Close Ranks' editorial in The Crisis, the organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, (NAACP). DuBois felt that if the Afro-Americans put aside their grievances and served loyally, their contribution would be recognized by white America.<sup>20</sup> Although some members of the NAACP disagreed with him, other blacks, including the editor of the Chicago Defender, Robert S. Abbott, agreed: 'If we again demonstrate our loyalty and devotion to our country in the face of injustices..., those injustices will disappear and the grounds for complaint will no longer exist.'<sup>21</sup> That these sentiments were shared by the

19. See map in J. G. St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City, New York 1970 ed., 64.

20. The Crisis, XVI, 3, July 1918. DuBois wrote in The Crisis XVI, 2, June 1918, 'Out of this war will rise, too, an American Negro, with the right to vote and the right to work and the right to live without insult.'

21. Chicago Defender, April 27, 1918.

majority of black people was demonstrated by their eagerness to participate in the war effort.

However, once the war had ended, it became apparent that the expected rewards would not be forthcoming. In fact the situation of the Afro-American was positively threatened by the wave of violence directed against members of ethnic groups in the post-war years. The xenophobia always present below the surface of American life was revealed during the war in the persecution suffered by German-Americans despite their evident loyalty. Once hostilities had ceased however, the attack became a more general one on all minority groups. In 1920 the Ku Klux Klan was revived and it attacked all foreign born sections of the population, including blacks, Japanese, Jews and Catholics. In part this was no more than an attack on foreigners, but it was also aimed at real and imaginary Bolsheviks. The Russian Revolution, the wave of post-war strikes, and a number of bomb scares and explosions led to a 'red scare', which was further encouraged by the alarmist statements and actions of the Attorney-General, A. Mitchell Palmer. Palmer embarked upon a campaign which resulted in the arrest and deportation of many persons, few of whom had committed any crime. He also labelled several black publications as subversive, and accused Afro-American leaders of stirring-up racial strife.<sup>22</sup>.

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22. A. Mitchell Palmer, Radicalism and Sedition Among the Negroes as Reflected in Their Publications, Exhibit Number 10, Senate Documents, Vol. 12, 66th Congress, 1st Session, 1919, Washington D.c., 1919. See also, Langston Hughes, Fight For Freedom: The Story of the NAACP, New York 1962, 38-48. One black leader, the young A. Philip Randolph, was arrested in 1918 for his seditious speeches. He was released after a few days. His paper, The Messenger, was among those condemned by Palmer.

His own actions contributed to the racial violence of 1919 when more than 70 blacks, including ten soldiers, some still in uniform, were lynched. In the summer of that year twenty-five race riots of varying proportions disrupted American towns and cities as white Americans turned on their black countrymen. The worst of these took place in Chicago where, during thirteen days of fighting, 23 blacks and 15 whites were killed and a total of 537 persons injured. Well might a young Afro-American veteran ask:<sup>23</sup>

Had the ten months I spent in France been all in vain?  
 Were those white crosses over the dead bodies of those  
 dark skinned boys lying in Flanders fields for naught?  
 Was democracy merely a hollow sentiment?

It was not surprising, therefore, that the tone of DuBois's later editorials should change, nor that many blacks should share his militance. The man who had urged black participation in the war effort now encouraged his readers to fight for democracy at home:<sup>24</sup>

But by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.

The new mood of the Afro-Americans was revealed in the number of white casualties in the riots. In Chicago 15 were killed, and 178 injured: in Washington, D.C., during the riot in which black

23. Chicago Commission on Race Relations, The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot, Chicago 1923, 483. Other descriptions of the Chicago riot are in Carl Sandburg, The Chicago Race Riots, July 1919, New York 1919.
24. The Crisis, XVIII, I, May 1919.



veterans were conspicuously active, 11 whites were killed compared to five blacks.<sup>25</sup> In many cases, the Afro-Americans were not merely prepared to defend themselves but also to retaliate. The attitude of the Afro-Americans, so different from that before 1917, was expressed in many writings of the time, but none so well as in the well-known poem by Claude McKay, 'If We Must Die'.<sup>26</sup> Despite this militancy, the underlying feeling was of despair and disillusionment, and it was this which enabled Marcus Garvey to gain support for his nationalist-separatist movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association.<sup>27</sup> Sadly, financial ineptitude, corruption, and harassment from the government led to his downfall in 1925 and deportation in 1927. Although Garvey's movement effectively collapsed without him, some of his former supporters were to re-emerge in the 1940s. In that period too, black militance was also to reappear on a scale never seen before, but which was to lay the foundation for the 'Negro Revolt' of the 1960s.

Clearly, black participation in the military was long a cause for concern in American society. When black military service was accepted it was for the duration of a particular emergency only and; although those past wars challenged institutionalized racial prejudice, the challenge had always been temporary

25. Arthur I. Waskow, From Race Riot to Sit-In: 1919 and the 1960s, New York 1967, 21-28.
26. See The Negro in Chicago, 481, 489, the Chicago Defender, February 22, 1919, August 2, 1919, and the letter from Stanley B. Norvell to Victor Lawson in William M. Tuttle jr., 'Views of A Negro During "The Red Summer" of 1919', Journal of Negro History, Vol. 51, 1966.
27. E. David Cronon, Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Madison and London 1969, 3 and 21-22.

and seldom was it sufficient to produce permanent gains or recognition. The first World War obviously affected black life, but brought little acknowledgement for active service. The second World War was to have a much more substantial impact and brought direct government action on behalf of the Afro-American.

If World War II did bring greater benefits for blacks than any other previous conflict, it was because it, more than any other, was a total war which had a greater effect on the whole of American society.<sup>28</sup> Although not subject to direct attack by enemies, apart from Pearl Harbor and a few harmless bombing raids on the mainland, the people of America still felt the impact of the war. This was largely due to the scale of the war which cost 330 billion dollars compared to the 32 billion of World War I. By 1945, a total of 14,493,300 persons had served in the armed forces including women who entered the new auxiliary branches, the WACs, WAVES, and SPARS, and thus freed men for combat duty.<sup>29</sup> Just as important was the total mobilization of the industrial strength of the country.

Almost the entire productive capacity became geared to the war effort, and even before America joined the conflict, large

28. The impact of the second World War is dealt with fully in the following books: Jack Goodman, editor, While You were Gone: A Report on Wartime Life in the United States, New York 1946; Francis E. Merrill, Social Problems on the Home Front: A Study of Wartime Influences, New York and London 1948; Richard Polenberg, editor, America at War: The Home Front 1941-1945, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968; Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front 1941-1945, New York 1970.
29. Harvey Wish, Contemporary America: The National Scene Since 1900. New York 1955, 570-596.



sections of her industry acted as the 'Arsenal of Democracy'.<sup>30</sup>

The urgent demand for armaments, machinery and supplies which grew as the war spread, came at a particularly crucial period in American affairs. The Depression which had hit industry in 1929, and agriculture even earlier, had made 13 million men jobless, and even after the ameliorative action of the New Deal, this figure was still nine and a half million, or 17 per cent of the labour force.

The wartime effort provided the necessary cure. By 1943 only 800,000 were without work, and those employed were earning wages substantially higher than they had before. To meet the manpower shortages which arose as more and more men joined the forces, approximately three million women who would otherwise have stayed at home joined the work force.<sup>31</sup> The demands for labour also encouraged the movement from the country to the city as 5,500,000 people moved into urban areas in search of employment. The greatest proportion of these went to the shipyards and aeroplane and munitions factories on the West coast and far West.

This growth of industry did not go unchecked or unaided by the government. The necessity for efficient production led to increased federal intervention in the economy. The Depression had already brought about the formation of various agencies to meet the crisis, but not the number of committees and boards which were introduced in the 1940s. The War Production Board, War Labor

30. 'We must be the great arsenal of democracy', F. D. Roosevelt, Fireside chat December 29, 1940.

31. Margaret Mead, 'The Women in the War', in Goodman, While You Were Gone, 274-281.



Board, Manpower Commission, Office of Price Administration, Office of War Information: these were the most important amid a list of others which governed American life throughout the period. Bodies such as these not only did their utmost to bring about full and efficient employment, they also acted on behalf of the workers, especially as the unions had agreed to, and on the whole did, hold their right to strike in abeyance.<sup>32</sup> The labour force increased from 54 million to 64 million during the war and the average individual's annual income rose by more than fifty per cent.<sup>33</sup> The War Labor Board also insisted that women who did the work of men should get the pay of men. The trade union movement benefited from these actions and from the rise in employment: its membership rose from 8,900,000 to 14,800,000 during the war. It was also represented at the highest level of government concerned with labour policy making, and wartime necessities encouraged consultation between employers and employees which led to the growth of labor-management committees and further strengthened the negotiating position of the working man.

The war caused considerable disruption of established patterns of life. The effect of the 1,066,938 dead and wounded cannot be gauged, but the results of parental absence due to armed service or war work, or both, can. It was surely no coincidence

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32. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Labor Review, March 1945.

33. Wish, Contemporary America, 649, and Harold Underwood Faulkner, American Economic History, New York 1966, 706.

that the rates of juvenile crime rose during the '40s or that there was a relaxation of moral standards among young people.<sup>34</sup> The departures of young men, drafted and sent overseas, may have had some connection with the increase in the number of marriages and births, both of which had been in decline since the 1920s.<sup>35</sup> Material life was also disrupted by wartime shortages and rationing of petrol, rubber, coffee, sugar, and other food stuffs:

It can be seen from the above that the war did have many immediate effects on America as the whole population was mobilized in the war effort. It remains to ask what were the rewards to be for this exertion and sacrifice? What were the inducements to fight and to die in the Pacific, in Asia, in Africa, and eventually, in Europe?

Of course, the greatest spur was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the desire for revenge, but more than this was involved. As early as January 6, 1941, in his 'Four Freedoms' speech before Congress, Roosevelt had indicated that the second World War was a war for democracy in which America was directly concerned. The conservative nature of this appeal to defend existing institutions against totalitarianism was coupled with a vision of the future founded on the four freedoms of which he spoke.<sup>36</sup>

34. Merrill, Social Problems on the Home Front; Katherine F. Lenroot, 'Juvenile Delinquency', in Polenberg, America at War; and Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On?, 90-92.
35. Lingeman, 93-96. Similar developments took place in Britain during the war. See Calder, The People's War, 360, Marwick, Britain in the Century of Total War, 358-59.
36. Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

Such high sounding statements of principle were not new to Americans. They had heard similar pronouncements in 1917 and 1918 which had not prevented the Depression. Clearly people were sceptical of such idealistic declarations, and rightly so. However, there was apparent a feeling that the war effort would be wasted if the situation of the 1930s returned once the fighting had ceased. What was hoped for was a period of peace, security, and comfort. Thus plans for the future were more than welcomed. Forty thousand copies of the British Beveridge Report were sold in America and Wendell Willkie's One World was bought by two million over a two year period. A more comprehensive and specific blueprint for the future was laid down by the National Resources Planning Board in 1943.<sup>37</sup> The 'New Bill of Rights' it formulated contained precisely the provisions people wanted: full employment, fair pay, medical care, security in old age and sickness, equality before the law, and educational opportunities. Many of these same principles were detailed in Roosevelt's Economic Bill of Rights which was part of his State of the Union Message in January 1944. Unfortunately the plan of the National Resources Planning Board was given a cold reception in Congress, southern Democrats and Republicans blocked F.D.R.'s measures, 'and the end of the war

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37. National Resources Planning Board, Report for 1942, Part I: Post-war Plan and Program, Washington, D.C., 1943. Other writings on this subject are: Evans Clark, Wartime Facts and Postwar Problems: A Study and Discussion Manual, New York 1943; and Stuart Chase, For This We Fought, New York 1946, which contains polls on people's attitudes to these various plans.

would unleash powerful pressures for laissez-faire long repressed by the New Deal and the war.<sup>38</sup>

The majority of gains were made due to indirect action and the war; full employment, high wages, and off-shoots of war-oriented scientific research and innovation. Although minimum hourly wages were raised, a national Housing Act passed in 1949, and Social Security extended in 1950, further reforms were thwarted by the conservative, Republican-dominated Congress. Only those in the armed forces received any specific reward for their service in the Serviceman's Readjustment Act or G.I. Bill of 1943. It made provision for loans for houses, funds for education, and financial support while the veteran found new employment.

Minority groups also felt the effects of the war on America, and shared some of the benefits, no matter how small.

Unlike the first World War, there was no hysterical attack on Germans during the 1940s. Neither they nor Italian-Americans suffered persecution and only 3,000 German and 85 Italian aliens were considered dangerous enough to warrant detention. If anything, the war served to integrate them further into American society. Participation in the forces demonstrated their loyalty and work in war industries brought financial security and middle-class respectability. Despite the activities of the German Bund, a fascist organization, the majority of Germans desired to disassociate themselves from the government of their former country. They were aided by the war which cut off foreign news and advertizing

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38. Wish, Contemporary America, 583.



which led to a decline in foreign language newspapers.<sup>39</sup>

Much less fortunate than the German and Italian Americans were those of Japanese origin who were concentrated on the West coast. Rumours of espionage, prejudice, and economic envy led to pressure from the people and local authorities of California on the federal government to remove their Japanese neighbours. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 which authorized the army to designate military areas from which any person might be excluded. Thereafter, more than 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were transferred under Army supervision to relocation centres in deserted parts of the country. The fact that two-thirds of these were American citizens, or that 12,000 fought in American combat units, did nothing to alter official policy. Finally, in December 1944 the government declared the West coast to be no longer a war zone and the Japanese were free to return. Several thousand did so, to face open hostility and prejudice which only began to diminish later in the 1940s.<sup>40</sup>

Mexican-Americans had long suffered discrimination on the West coast and in the South-west. Like the Afro-Americans, they were segregated, insulted, and kept in menial jobs. Also like the Afro-American, the war affected their situation.<sup>41</sup> Primarily,

39. Maldwyn Allen Jones, American Immigration, Chicago 1960, 299-306, and Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On?; 347-48.
40. See, Morton Grodzins, Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese Evacuation, Chicago 1949; Harry H. L. Kitano, Japanese Americans, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1969.
41. Stan Steiner, La Raza: Mexican Americans, New York 1969; Manuel P. Servin, editor, The Mexican Americans: An Awakening Minority, Beverly Hills, California, 1970; John H. Burma, editor, Mexican Americans in the United States, Cambridge, Mass., 1970.

this was due to the need for labour in war industries. Job opportunities were opened up and the Fair Employment Practices Committee set up in 1941 did its best to ensure that there was no discrimination against those of Mexican extraction: by 1944 there were 17,000 Mexican workers in the shipyards of Los Angeles; in 1941 there had been none. The Mexican-Americans also benefited from the importation of workers from their former country by agreement between the governments of America and Mexico, which enabled the federal government to regulate wages and conditions, and guarantee the Mexican minimum American standards.<sup>42</sup>

Armed service by members of the Mexican community also secured some recognition from the government and people of America.<sup>43</sup> More important, it gave the Mexican some self-confidence and respect, and made him reluctant to accept discrimination at home. The G.I. Bill enabled many to secure an education after the war, and many of the post-war leaders in the Mexican community were veterans.

Although these various changes and increased social and geographic mobility tended to break caste barriers, discrimination against people of Mexican origin did not vanish either during or after the war. Indeed, the riot of 1943 in Los Angeles was largely an attack by white sailors and civilians on Mexican youths. These children, caught between an old way of life and a new, subject to prejudice and yet aware of their Americanness, adopted an outlandish mode of dress and behaviour which antagonized many

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42. Files of Fair Employment Practices Committee, 'Mexican Americans', National Archives, Record Group 228.
43. Office of Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs, Spanish Speaking Americans in the War, n.d., n.p., in files of F.E.P.C., National Archives Record Group 228.



white people. The phenomenon of the 'zoot suit' (also worn by black teenagers), which distracted attention from military performances, was partially a result of the wartime breakdown of established Mexican-American communities and a loosening of family ties as parents moved to find employment in war industries or left to serve in the armed forces. It was also the reaction of underprivileged children to a society which, by and large, continued to discriminate against them.<sup>44</sup>

The impact of the war was also felt by the 13 million black Americans. So much so that when asked by a white reporter whether he felt any white man had ever done anything for the Afro-American, the late Malcolm X replied,<sup>45</sup>

Yes, I can think of two. Hitler and Stalin. The black man in America couldn't get a decent factory job until Hitler put so much pressure on the white man. And then Stalin kept up the pressure.

This is, in effect, a simplified version of the Military Participation Ratio theory as it applies to modern total war. The pressures of World War II forced white Americans to accept the participation of their black countrymen in both the military and industrial aspects of the war effort. But as well as these direct economic and social gains, the war also brought the Afro-American gains in self-

44. Kenneth B. Clark and James Barker, 'The Zoot Effect in Personality: A Race Riot Participant', Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 40, 1945, deals with a New York black, but is equally applicable to Mexican-Americans. See Fritz Redl, 'Zoot Suits: An Interpretation', in Polenberg, America at War, 148-152.
45. The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1968, 344.

consciousness and political awareness, for the black American recognized that the war provided a crisis in which rights could be fought for and won. As the author Chester Himes expressed it, 'Now is the Time! Here is the Place!'<sup>46</sup>

Just as British women had demanded 'the right to serve' in World War I, so Afro-Americans in the 1940s fought for 'the Right to Fight for Democracy.'<sup>47</sup> While black newspapers and organizations campaigned for equal treatment in the segregated forces, a number of black men refused to serve until they were integrated. They, and the more disillusioned group who refused to participate altogether in the white man's war, were jailed as a result. A. Philip Randolph, the black trade union leader, planned a March on Washington to protest about discrimination in the defence industries. Together with the forces of war, these demands succeeded in bringing at least partial changes in both the military and industrial institutions of America.

By 1945, of the 13 million Afro-Americans, approximately one million had served in the armed forces and another one million had worked in the defence factories. Shortages of manpower led to the disruption of traditional patterns. The Marine Corps accepted black servicemen for the first time in its history in 1942 and black participation in the Navy, other than as messmen, was accepted at the same time. The first Afro-American Air Corps

46. Opportunity, XX, 9, September 1942.

47. The suffragettes are referred to in A. J. P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945, Oxford, 1965, 38. The black slogan was the theme of the 1943 NAACP Conference, see The Crisis, May and July 1943. A. Philip Randolph had urged Afro-Americans to 'Demand the Right to Work and Fight for Our Country' in 1941, Pittsburgh Courier, January 25, 1941.

training camp was established in 1941 and the 99th Pursuit Squadron became the first all-black fighter group. Protest and racial violence led to the desegregation of Army recreational facilities and bus services and forced the Army to consider the morale of black troops. Crucial shortages of men during the Battle of the Bulge in Europe led to the temporary integration of black volunteer platoons in larger white units. The success of that experiment strengthened arguments in favour of full integration of the forces. Moves in that direction begun during the war were hastened after President Truman ordered the equality of opportunity and treatment of men in the armed forces in 1948. The Executive Order was the result of another threat from A. Philip Randolph of a militant protest campaign, this time in the form of civil disobedience.<sup>48</sup>

Randolph's March on Washington Movement of 1941 had forced President Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 forbidding discrimination in defence industries. Although a Fair Employment Practices Committee was established to see that the Order was carried out, the integration of blacks in industry was due as much, if not more, to the exigencies of war. Despite the publicity attached to FEPC hearings, manufacturers and trade unions persisted in refusing to accept black workers. In 1943, 16 railroad companies and three unions successfully ignored the Committee's demands to cease and desist in acts of discrimination.<sup>49</sup> There were also several strikes in a number of different industries after the

48. The history of the desegregation of the U.S. armed forces is dealt with by Richard M. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, Columbia, Missouri, 1969.

49. Louis Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics: The Story of FEPC, New York 1953, 69.



employment or upgrading of Afro-American workers. In 1944 the Philadelphia Transport Company was disrupted by a strike over the up-grading of eight Afro-Americans. The strike ended only after the Army had intervened and Roosevelt had threatened to draft the strikers.<sup>50</sup> In Mobile, Alabama, a strike for similar reasons turned into a riot. Gains in employment made by Afro-Americans came largely after 1942, and were generally in areas of acute labour shortage. Even so, the number of blacks unemployed dropped from approximately one million in 1940, to 151,000 in 1944.<sup>51</sup> The war had succeeded where the New Deal had failed.

The quality, as well as the quantity, of jobs open to Afro-Americans improved during the war. As Robert C. Weaver, a black official in the War Production Board, said in 1942, 'janitors and laborers yesterday - skilled workers in war production today.'<sup>52</sup> His statement was borne out by the statistics which showed an increase in the number of Afro-Americans in skilled and semi-skilled employment. More and better jobs meant higher and better pay, and Afro-Americans benefited from the general rise in real wages. One survey of black families in two housing projects in Atlanta, Georgia, found that their incomes had increased by as much as 65 per cent during the war.<sup>53</sup> Although by 1945 black incomes were

50. American Council on Race Relations, Negro Platform Workers, Chicago 1945.
51. Florence Murray, Negro Handbook, 1942, New York 1942, 147, and President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, First Report: July 1943-December 1944, Washington, D.C., 1945, 94.
52. Quoted in Opportunity, XX, 3, March 1942.
53. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 'Annual Family and Occupational Earnings of Residents of Two Negro Housing Projects in Atlanta, 1937-44', Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 61, No. 6, December 1945.



higher than ever before, they were still far below those of whites. Because of their concentration in war-related jobs, blacks also feared that many jobs would be lost once the war had ended. However, although there were some losses in the immediate, post-war period, the economic buoyancy continued during the Cold War. It was not until the 1950s that the recessions anticipated in the 40s became a reality, providing the economic background for the 'Negro Revolt'.

The increased opportunities for employment encouraged one of the most important 'unguided' or spontaneous changes of the 1940s - the migration of large numbers of Afro-Americans from rural to urban areas. Despite the mass movements during and following World War I, in 1940 only 48.6 per cent of Afro-Americans lived in urban areas; by 1950 this had increased to 62.4 per cent.<sup>54</sup> The wartime black migrations followed the patterns of white migrants and was mainly to the smaller cities of the North and mid-West, and to the Pacific coast. Those cities which experienced the greatest increases in black population were all major centres for war production. In San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver, Milwaukee, Detroit, Pontiac, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Rochester, those increases were over 100 per cent.<sup>55</sup> Although 68 per cent of all Afro-Americans still lived in the South in 1950, the 'Negro problem' was no longer peculiar to that area, but had become a national one.

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54. Reynolds Farley, 'The Urbanization of Negroes in the United States', Journal of Social History, Vol. I, Spring 1968.

55. Department of Labor, Negroes in the United States: Their Employment and Economic Status, Bulletin 1119, Washington, D.C., 1952.

The migration of people of both races must, I think, be regarded as one of the disruptive consequences of the war. The influx of large numbers of Afro-Americans into already over-crowded ghettos intensified many existing problems, but especially that of housing. The war ended almost all building developments apart from temporary projects for war workers. The prejudices of white populations not only prevented the expansion of existing black areas, but also limited the number of government-built homes available to Afro-Americans. In Buffalo, New York, the Catholic priests encouraged their white congregations to oppose black housing projects; in Detroit, black families moved into new homes only under the protection of the National Guard.<sup>56</sup> Poor and over-crowded accommodation added to the anger of Afro-Americans, many of whom could now afford better homes, and conflicts over housing increased racial tensions. It was not surprising that Detroit, which experienced a large increase in its black population and which suffered a chronic shortage of houses, was the scene of a major riot in 1943.

Racial tensions were especially high in Detroit during the war. Symptomatic was the clash in 1942 over the Sojourner Truth Housing project, where the entry of black families was only made possible by the intervention of the National Guard. In June 1943, a riot broke out which was only quelled after Federal troops had moved in. By that time 34 people, 25 of them black, were dead,

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56. William L. Evans, Race Fear and Housing in a Typical American Community, National Urban League, New York 1946, deals with Buffalo. Detroit is described in Walter White, A Man Called White, New York 1948, 224-32.



800 injured, and considerable damage done.<sup>57</sup> The following August, another riot disrupted New York city. Unlike the clash in Detroit, the riot in Harlem was an implosion rather than an explosion, and was largely an indication of black anger and frustration. The only whites involved were those trying to put a stop to the disorder. In Detroit, as the death toll shows, whites were engaged in attack on Afro-Americans.

The attitudes of Afro-Americans during the war were expressed in literature and in song. John Oliver Killens, himself a soldier during the 40s, described exactly the feelings of black soldiers in his book published in 1962.<sup>58</sup> Other books dealt with the situation on the home front.<sup>59</sup> Poetry too, described the emotions of black soldiers and civilians and the many poems of Langston Hughes captured all the moods of Afro-Americans as well as the misery and sadness which war could bring regardless of race. Popular songs such as Defense Blues, Win the War Blues, and Pearl Harbor Blues, caught the irony of fighting for democracy abroad while being denied it at home. Their message was summed up by Josh White when he sang,<sup>60</sup>

My father died, died fighting 'cross the sea,  
 Mama said his dying never helped her or me,  
 I will tell you, brother, well it sho' don'  
 make no sense,  
 When a Negro can't work in the National Defense.

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57. Harvard Sitkoff, 'The Detroit Riot of 1943', Michigan History, LIII,3, 1969.
58. And Then We Heard the Thunder, New York 1962.
59. For example, Chester Himes, If He Hollers Let Him Go, New York 1945.
60. 'Defense Factory Blues', quoted in Opportunity, XXII,3, July-September, 1944.

White Americans were well aware of the black anger and besides could hardly ignore it after the riots of 1943. Government surveys, newspaper and magazine articles, and publications of all types, dealt with black morale and militancy. Indeed there was a plethora of writing on the subject, ranging from Myrdal's survey of the 'American Dilemma', to Lillian Smith's best-selling story of an interracial love affair.<sup>61</sup> While blacks demanded their just rewards for their participation in the war effort, many whites too spoke of the contradiction between fighting fascism abroad and denying equal citizenship rights to 10 per cent of the American population. Chief among these were Wendell Willkie, the Republican presidential candidate of 1940, Henry Wallace, the vice-president, and Pearl S. Buck, the newspaper columnist and writer. The 200 or so national, regional, state, and local race relations committees and organizations formed after the riots of 1943, although concerned primarily with the prevention of further rioting, also drew attention to the problem of racial discrimination.

Some progress was made during the war as a result of guided as well as unguided change. Executive Order 8802 was the first such presidential action on behalf of blacks since Reconstruction and although The Fair Employment Practices Committee may have had little effect, it did set an example. A number of cities and states passed laws against discrimination in employment and in education and housing. The Supreme Court outlawed white primaries and poll taxes, both of which had been designed to disenfranchise the Afro-American. It also ruled against discrimination in

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61. Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, New York 1944, and Lillian Smith, Strange Fruit, New York 1944.



inter-state travel and forced several southern colleges to admit black students. Horrified by the lynching of a black soldier after the war, and conscious of black militancy, President Truman did what his predecessor had steadfastly refused to do, and established a Commission on Civil Rights in 1946. In 1947 that body recommended wide-sweeping legislation to eliminate discrimination in American life and Truman included most of them in his Civil Rights Message to Congress in February 1948.<sup>62</sup> For the first time since the end of the Civil War federal policy was clearly stated as being opposed to racial discrimination. Together with the definite economic and social gains made during the war, these policy statements marked a considerable advance and encouraged black expectations of further progress.

However, the war also intensified the opposition to changes in the racial status quo. Riots and violence during the war, and the outbreak of lynching, particularly of black servicemen, in the immediate post-war years, seemed designed to keep the Afro-American 'in his place'. Despite attacks upon it by the federal government, the Ku Klux Klan reappeared in the 1940s in opposition to FEPC and later to intimidate would-be black voters. The Fair Employment Practices Committee had been subject to attacks in government during its operation and was finally starved of funds in 1946 by southern Democrats and extreme Republicans. In 1948 the southern wing of the Democratic Party broke away in opposition

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62. President's Committee on Civil Rights, To Secure These Rights, Washington, D.C., 1947. Civil Rights Message, February 2, 1948, 80th Congress, 2nd Session, House Document 516.

to its civil rights platform. The Dixiecrats as they were called formed a States Rights Party which stood 'for the segregation of the races and the racial integrity of each race.'<sup>63</sup> In the election, they received 22 per cent of the popular vote in the South. Together with the right wing of the Republican party, this group delayed the passing of any civil rights legislation until 1957. Their stance on race relations, the frustrated expectations of Afro-Americans, and the economic recession of the 1950s, made a clash of interests inevitable. It came in 1954 following the Supreme Court's ruling on segregated schooling. It was only in the crisis which followed that the blacks' hopes of the 1940s were realized.

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63. Kirk H. Porter and Donald B. Johnson, National Party Platforms, 1840-1964, London 1966, 468.

## Chapter 2

### The Black Response to the American War Effort

Afro-Americans in the 1940s were not as prepared to accept limitations on their service as they had been in the 1917-18 war. The exclusion of black people from the industrial 'Arsenal of Democracy' and the likelihood of similar treatment in the armed forces aroused them to a new militancy even before America officially entered the war. The traditional civil rights organizations, the NAACP and the National Urban League, were joined in a vigorous campaign for equal participation by bodies formed early in the period, and this campaign was kept up, in various ways, throughout the war. Participation in the war effort and more especially equal participation, was important not merely for the economic gains to be made from the increased industrial activity, but because it would buttress demands for civil rights with proof of black patriotism and loyalty. Moreover, it would effectively demonstrate that Afro-Americans performed all the duties of first-class citizens and so were entitled to the same rights as their white compatriots.

The Committee for Participation of Negroes in National Defense was one of the first organizations created specifically to ensure black participation in the war effort. Founded in Washington, D.C., in May 1939, largely at the instigation of the Pittsburgh Courier, the Committee was led by the historian, and veteran of World War I, Rayford W. Logan.<sup>1</sup> Aiming to co-ordinate

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1. Pittsburgh Courier, December 7 1940. There seems to be some confusion about the date of the Committee's formation: Dalfiume puts it at 1938, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 26; Garfinkel, When Negroes March, 33, says 1940; the ad. for the Committee in the Courier clearly says May 1939..



the efforts of all individuals and organizations in the fight for a place in the national defence, the Committee organized local branches, held conferences and meetings, and lobbied the relevant government departments. It supported measures designed to ensure an end to discrimination both in industry and the armed forces, but the latter was the more emotional and vital subject. As an appeal for the Committee pointed out,<sup>2</sup>

The War Department and the Navy Department plans for the coming war DEGRADE you. They would make war without you if they could. They would challenge your right to citizenship.

Similar opinions were voiced by the Committee on Negro Americans in Defense Industries, whose members included the mayor of New York, La Guardia, and the governor of the state, Lehman.<sup>3</sup> A later organization, the National Negro Defense Program, combined demands for equal participation openly with demands for civil rights legislation.<sup>4</sup> On the very same day that the views of these pressure groups were heard at a government-sponsored conference in Washington, D.C., President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 which authorized a Fair Employment Practices Committee to see that discrimination in defence industries was ended.

This presidential action was the result of the threat of dramatic protest made by A. Philip Randolph, the founder and leader

2. Pittsburgh Courier, December 14, 1940. See Chapter III.
3. Statement of the Committee to the Special Committee of the Senate, May 7, 1941, National Archives Record Group 46.
4. Chicago Defender, March 14, 21, and 28, 1942.

of the March on Washington Movement. His call for a march of 10,000 black people on the national capital was taken up by other Afro-Americans and a March on Washington Committee was formed. It was still Randolph who originated the idea, supplied the drive, and kept the MOWM in being after 1941.<sup>5</sup> The national campaign was received with enthusiasm amongst Afro-Americans, and by June the number of marchers called for was 50,000. The date of the demonstration was set for July 1, 1941. After heated consultations with Roosevelt and his advisors, which resulted in the Executive Order, the leaders called the march off.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that not all their demands had been met, Randolph and the MOWM, plus its results, were given considerable acclaim. The Chicago Defender, hailed the Executive Order as 'one of the most significant pronouncements that has been made in the interests of the Negro for more than a century,'<sup>7</sup> and according to some, Randolph had revealed himself 'as the man to lead the masses toward the new freedom.'<sup>8</sup> Doubt remains about the turn-out the MOWM would have achieved in the event of the protest taking place, but rallies in Chicago, New York, and St. Louis during 1942 attracted crowds of over 10,000,<sup>9</sup> and the organization continued

5. Pittsburgh Courier, January 25 1941; The Black Worker, March 1941, May 1941; Garfinkel, When Negroes March,.
6. Walter White, A Man Called White, 186-192. The MOWM is treated in more detail in chapter IV.
7. Chicago Defender, July 12, 1941.
8. Baltimore Afro-American, July 25, 1942. The Defender called Randolph 'Our New Leader', July 11, 1942. The Pittsburgh Courier was less enthusiastic, see June 27, 1942, October 17, 1942.
9. Pittsburgh Courier, June 27, 1942, July 4, 1942, and Garfinkel, When Negroes March, 95.

in existence, without the support of the NAACP and National Urban League, until 1946. Although its membership declined as economic opportunities for blacks increased and as wartime necessities ruled out the feasibility of a March ever taking place, the MOWM had shown that, 'effective protest during emergency is infinitely more productive of results than ten times the effort during periods of comparative normalcy.'<sup>10</sup> The logic of this governed black attitudes during the war, for, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the dilemma of whether or not to fight abroad under existing conditions or to fight at home for equality, still remained.

For most Afro-Americans, that dilemma was resolved, as the sociologist Charles S. Johnson pointed out, in the slogans of the popular black newspapers.<sup>11</sup> While the Chicago Defender urged, 'Remember Pearl Harbor and Sikeston, too,'<sup>12</sup> a reference to Sikeston, Missouri, where a young Afro-American was lynched in January 1941, the Pittsburgh Courier adopted the 'Double V' campaign suggested by one of its readers.<sup>13</sup> The 'Double V' - for victory at home and abroad - was immensely popular. The symbol was displayed throughout the newspaper, in texts, in photographs, and even in advertisements for the NAACP, and the

10. Chicago Defender, July 19, 1941.

11. Charles S. Johnson, 'The Impact of the War Upon Negro-White Relations in the United States,' Johnson Papers, 164, F4, Fisk University. The line taken by black newspapers during the war is dealt with in Ralph N. Davis, 'The Negro Newspapers and the War', Sociology and Social Research, XXVII, May-June 1943, and Lester M. Jones, 'The Editorial Policy of Negro Newspapers of 1917-18 as Compared with That of 1941-42,' Journal of Negro History, XXIX, January 1944.

12. Chicago Defender, February 28, 1942, and March 14, 1942.

13. Pittsburgh Courier, February 7, 1942, and April 18, 1942.



public requested 'Double V' buttons, stickers, and pins.<sup>14</sup>

According to Roi Ottley, the black journalist and writer, the campaign had the support of 'nearly every newspaper and pulpit.'<sup>15</sup>

The statement of the Negro Newspaper Publishers Association seemed to bear Ottley out. They declared that, while deploring 'any and all forms of disunity that threaten the winning of victory for Democracy', it was their 'duty and obligation to fight for every right guaranteed by the Constitution to all people, for to refrain from doing so would impair our Democracy at home and abroad by weakening the principles on which it is founded.'<sup>16</sup>

The attitude of the NAACP was not dissimilar to that of the press: Walter White had previously declared, 'We will fight for our country, but at the same time, demand the right to fight as equals in every branch of our country's military, naval, and aviation service.'<sup>17</sup> The NAACP publication, The Crisis, editorialized, 'With our country at war for little more than a month, the CRISIS would emphasize with all its strength that now is the time not to be silent about the breaches of democracy here in our own land.'<sup>18</sup>

14. Pittsburgh Courier, March 28, 1942, August 8, 1942.

15. Ottley, New World A'Coming, New York, 1969 ed., 287.

16. Statement of Negro War Aims, submitted by Negro Newspaper Publishers Association, undated, Official file 93, box 9, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. See too, Chicago Defender, December 20, 1941 and Pittsburgh Courier, December 13, 1941. (The Statement of Negro War Aims was probably presented to Roosevelt at a meeting held on February 5, 1944, reported in the Pittsburgh Courier, February 12, 1944).

17. Pittsburgh Courier, December 13, 1941.

18. The Crisis, January, 1942. See too, Opportunity, XX, 1, January 1942 for the view of the more conservative National Urban League.

This was far removed from the position of W. E. B. DuBois who, as editor of The Crisis during the first World War, had urged black people to close ranks and forget their their special grievances.<sup>19</sup>

These unusually belligerent attitudes were not peculiar to the black leadership alone: a variety of surveys found a new militancy amongst blacks in general on questions of civil rights. One commentator said, 'The war has brought about a new stage in the Negro psychology where aggressiveness in behalf of rights and privileges is given full-hearted support by the masses while compromise is scorned'<sup>20</sup> [*italics his*]. A poll reported in the Courier found that 88.7 per cent of those asked felt that the Negro should 'not soft pedal his demands for complete freedom and citizenship and await the development of the educational processes.'<sup>21</sup> Government efforts to test the temper of Afro-Americans also reported considerable militancy. Of 1,008 blacks interviewed in New York, 42 per cent felt that it was more important to make democracy work at home than to defeat Germany and Japan when questioned by a black interviewer. This figure dropped to 34 per cent when the interviewer was a white man.<sup>22</sup> The degree of aggressiveness also

19. The Crisis, July 1918. See Horace R. Cayton, 'Negro Morale', Opportunity, XIX, 12, December 1941.
20. R. A. Schermerhorn, These Our People, Boston, Mass., 1949, 167.
21. Pittsburgh Courier, October 24, 1942. Among the other black writers who spoke of a new militancy were, Ellen Tarry, The Third Door, London 1956, 176; H. C. Brearley, 'The Negro's New Belligerency', Phylon, V, 4, 1944; Horace R. Cayton, 'The Negro's Challenge', The Nation, July 3, 1943; Kenneth B. Clark, 'Morale of the Negro on the Home Front: World Wars I and II', Journal of Negro Education, XII, 3, Summer 1943.
22. Office of Facts and Figures, The Negro Looks at the War: Attitudes of New York Negroes Toward Discrimination Against Negroes and a Comparison of Negro and Poor White Attitudes Toward War-related Issues, n.p., 1942, in Schomburg Collection.

varied from one locality to another. A survey requested by William Hastie, the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, found that,<sup>23</sup>

The militance which was widespread in Harlem was conspicuously absent in Memphis. Memphis Negroes were fearful of expressing their views, and were more ignorant about war issues and more apathetic about them than New York respondents.

In view of these attitudes, it is not surprizing that Afro-Americans resisted attempts to relegate them to a second-class role in the war effort. Nor is it remarkable that they should object to any abuse either at the hands of the government or of white individuals. White oppression against black troops led to retaliation.<sup>24</sup> News of such incidents added to the anger of black civilians who were themselves subject to prejudice in the cities. The increased urbanization which occurred during the war led to conflicts with whites over housing, employment, and recreational facilities. Added to this were the day-to-day humiliations and insults which contributed enormously to wartime racial tensions. These tensions finally exploded in 1943 in the riots which disrupted Harlem, Detroit, Los Angeles, and other places.<sup>25</sup> As Sitkoff has pointed out, these clashes were directly

23. Office of War Information, Survey of Intelligence Materials, Supplement to Survey No. 25, 'Negroes in a Democracy at War,' 1942, OASW, 226, National Archives Record Group 107.
24. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 348-79; Chicago Defender, June 19, 1943; Pittsburgh Courier, June 19, 1943.
25. New York Times, August 2, 8, 1943; Baltimore Afro-American, June 26, 1943; Pittsburgh Courier, June 26, July 3, August 7, 1943; Harvard Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War', Journal of American History, LVIII, 3, December 1971.



related to the war and the issue of black participation in the war effort.<sup>26</sup>

Equal involvement in all avenues of the war effort was imperative to the black struggle for civil rights. It was both means and end. Not only did Afro-Americans 'see in war an opportunity to prove their patriotism and thus lay the nation under obligation to them'<sup>27</sup>: the war also provided a chance to demonstrate that blacks were in fact first-class citizens. The situation was aptly summed-up by Lester Granger of the National Urban League. 'The quest of the Negro for full partnership in the war is', he said 'an expression of his desire to assume full citizenship responsibilities.'<sup>28</sup> In this, of course, military service was of paramount importance, and any restriction in the armed forces was seen as a denial of the black's citizenship.<sup>29</sup> Because of this, segregation in the forces was abhorrent to Afro-Americans as the men who refused to serve in a racially divided army made clear.

Not surprizingly, this small group of brave men won considerable support from their fellow Afro-Americans, for their argument, that segregation contradicted the democratic tenets of the country and its war aims, denied them their rights as American citizens, and was contrary to the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940, was one which was being voiced by prominent blacks

26 Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy...', 669-671.

27. Cayton and Drake, Black Metropolis, 748.

28. Opportunity, XXI, 2, April 1943.

29. See above, page 2.

throughout the country.

The first case of this nature arose in January 1941 when Ernest Calloway, the educational director of the Chicago local of the Transport Employees of America, wrote to his draft board, 'I cannot accept the responsibility of taking the oath upon induction into military service under the present anti-democratic structure of the United States Army and ask to be exempted from military training until such time that my contribution and participation in the defense of my country be made on a basis of complete equality.'<sup>30</sup> Calloway was a member of Conscientious Objectors Against Jim Crow, a small Chicago group, led by J. G. St. Clair Drake, which planned to 'establish the right of Negroes to claim exemption from military service on the grounds of conscientious objections because of the jim crow policy of the armed forces.'<sup>31</sup> When Calloway failed to win his case and was sentenced to jail, the movement evidently collapsed. However, he had won the support of the local NAACP and from the black press. The usually conservative columnist George Schuyler, wrote, 'All praise to young Mr. Calloway', and he urged others to follow the young man's example.<sup>32</sup> The Chicago Defender suggested that Calloway expressed the feeling 'of a substantial number of Negroes.'<sup>33</sup>

The stance of Lewis Jones of New York also won much approval. Like Calloway, Jones objected to the racial practices

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30. Pittsburgh Courier, January 11, 1941.

31. Chicago Defender, January 11, 1941. See too, January 18 and 25, 1941.

32. Pittsburgh Courier, January 18, 1941.

33. Chicago Defender, January 18, 1941.

of the armed forces: 'I am not a pacifist, nor a conscientious objector on any religious grounds,' he wrote in 1942. 'I am simply a colored American who insists on his constitutional rights to serve his country as a citizen unsegregated and unhumiliated in a jim crow army.'<sup>34</sup> Jones was hopeful that his action would result in his assignment to a mixed unit, but it was not to be. He refused to change his plea, despite the arguments of the judge and of John P. Lewis, editor of P.M.<sup>35</sup> As a result, he was sentenced by a 'reluctant' court to three years imprisonment, with the proviso that he could be released after three months if he would submit to the draft: he remained in prison until 1945.<sup>36</sup> As the editorial in the Baltimore Afro-American pointed out, jailing Jones did not answer the questions he raised.<sup>37</sup>

Equally firm in their stand, despite the powers of persuasion of the courts, were Donald W. Sullivan of New Jersey, and George L. Haney of Chicago. Sullivan was sentenced, again by a 'reluctant' judge, to three years, and Haney to one year and a day.<sup>38</sup> Bayard Rustin, a Quaker and one of the founding members of the Congress of Racial Equality, objected to military service on both religious and

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34. Baltimore Afro-American, October 10, 1942.
35. Baltimore Afro-American, October 31 and November 7, 1942. The October 10 issue reprinted the editorial from P.M., 'Why Colored Men Should Serve in the U.S. Army', in which John Lewis argued that the military front was more urgent than the fight for equality at home.
36. Florence Murray, 'The Negro and Civil Liberties during World War II', Social Forces, December 1945.
37. Baltimore Afro-American, November 14, 1942.
38. Florence Murray, editor, The Negro Handbook, 1946-47, New York 1947, 359-60.



racial grounds and he, too, received a three-year sentence.<sup>39</sup>

(Information on other blacks who objected to service on purely religious grounds is scarce. At least one, a Jehovah's Witness, was jailed during the war and it is reasonable to suppose that there were more.<sup>40</sup>) By far the most tragic method of escaping the draft was that taken by Willie Harris, of Gary, Indiana. He committed suicide in 1942, a few hours before he was due to appear for induction, because he felt 'there was no future for Negro soldiers.'<sup>41</sup> The Director of Selective Service recognized the connection between Harris's death and induction and reported that there was an attempted suicide for the same reason.<sup>42</sup>

The most important and the longest legal battle against service in segregated forces was put up by Winfred William Lynn, a 36 year-old market gardener from New York. Lynn contended that his induction 'as a member of a "Negro quota" was in violation of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940', which had stated that there should be no discrimination in the selection and training of men for armed service.<sup>43</sup> In June 1942, the federal judge of the district court refused to hear the case until Lynn submitted for induction, which he did, entering the army in December that year. His brother, Conrad, and Arthur Garfield Hays, of the American Civil Liberties Union, supported by A. Philip

39. Chicago Defender, March 4, 1944.

40. Chicago Defender, November 13, 1943.

41. Chicago Defender, January 24, 1942.

42. Selective Service in Wartime: Second Report, Washington, D.C., 1943, 292.

43. Social Service Review, XVIII, 3, September 1944, 369-70; Baltimore Afro-American, December 5, 1942, January 2, 1943.

Randolph and by the NAACP, then applied for a writ of habeas corpus and named Lynn's commanding officer, Colonel Downer, as respondent.<sup>44</sup> Their motion was denied in February 1944 by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New York. That court ruled, in a two-to-one verdict, that section 4(a) of the Selective Service Act prohibited discrimination but not necessarily segregation. Moreover, the court said, Lynn was inducted separately as a delinquent and therefore not as part of the 'Negro quota'.<sup>45</sup>

Randolph and the March on Washington Movement, which despite its decline in support and prestige, lingered on, mobilized backing for Lynn and were responsible for the formation of the National Committee for Winfred Lynn.<sup>46</sup> The one major publication of the MOWM was a pamphlet attacking Jim Crow in the forces and they saw Lynn's fight as the '20th Century Dred Scott Case'.<sup>47</sup> They evidently succeeded in securing moral and financial aid, for Lynn was defended before the Supreme Court in 1944 by Hays, with the NAACP lawyers Hastie, Marshall, and Konvitz appearing as amici curiae.<sup>48</sup>

44. See letter appealing for funds in The Nation, December 18, 1943 and report of the NAACP Detroit convention in The Crisis, July 1943.
45. Murray, editor, The Negro Handbook, 1944, New York, 1944, 131-32; Selective Service System; Special Groups: Special Monograph No. 10, Washington, D.C., 1953, 49-50.
46. 'The Story of Winfred Lynn', File on Lynn, Schomburg Collection.
47. Nancy MacDonald and Dwight MacDonald, The War's Greatest Scandal: The Story of Jim Crow in Uniform, New York, n.d.; press release, National Committee for Winfred Lynn, Lynn file, Schomburg collection.
48. U.S. ex rel Lynn vs. Downer, U.S. Supreme Court Reports, Law Ed., 88 1585, and papers in Lynn file.

The Supreme Court ruled that, 'since the soldier was serving in the South Pacific, no one in the Eastern District of New York, where the case arose, nor any War Department official, could produce him in court or order his release.' The case was therefore declared moot and a later appeal was also denied.<sup>49</sup> The whole process was seen by many blacks as a legal trick to avoid ruling on military racial practices in a case 'too hot to handle.'<sup>50</sup> The Lynn Committee felt that had the court ruled, it would have been in the defendant's favour, an opinion shared by some members of the Selective Service System and the Judge Advocate's Office.<sup>51</sup>

The attack on segregation in the armed forces continued despite this legal set-back. The Committee for Winfred Lynn became the Lynn Committee to Abolish Segregation in the Armed Forces and was joined by Lynn after his honourable discharge in 1945.<sup>52</sup> It was not until after the war, however, that any progress was made, and again it was the result of a threat of dramatic action from A. Philip Randolph. In 1947, he and former army chaplain, Grant Reynolds, suggested and then prepared to lead, a civil disobedience campaign against jim crow in the forces. The support the campaign received and Randolph's evident determination to carry out his threat helped to persuade President Truman

49. Murray, Negro Handbook, 1946-47, 359.

50. The Nation, July 1, 1944, 13; release, National Committee for Winfred Lynn, June 1, 1944; and Jean Byers, A Study of the Negro in Military Service, Dept. of Defense, Washington, D.C., 1947, mimeographed, in Moorland Collection, Howard University, 10-11.

51. Special Groups: Special Monograph No. 10, 50.

52. Releases of the Lynn Committee to Abolish Segregation in the Armed Forces, Lynn file, Schomburg Collection.



to issue Executive Order 9981 which began the process of military desegregation.<sup>53</sup>

Along with this overwhelming desire to fight for equal rights was the feeling that participation in the war effort would be rewarded: in fact the two ideas were inextricably interwoven.

George Rouzeau, one of the Courier's war correspondents, urged black soldiers to 'insist on combat duty', and asked, 'is it not true that only those who spill their blood are in a position to demand rights?'<sup>54</sup> A black soldier, in a letter to the Baltimore Afro-American, said that black soldiers 'fight because of the opportunities it will make possible for them after the war.'<sup>55</sup>

The mutual obligations of the citizen and the state were also spelt out. For a man to enter the forces, risk life and limb was 'just and reasonable' if the nation was 'fighting for the purpose of providing a better life for the people who compose the citizenry.'<sup>56</sup> Forty-six per cent of the blacks polled in the New York survey felt that they would be treated better once the war was won. Of that number, 14 per cent expected better treatment because of the part they played in the war effort, while another ten per cent thought it would be due to black initiative in demanding rights.<sup>57</sup>

53. New York Times, April 1, June 27, 1948; Pittsburgh Courier, April 10, July 3, 1948; and Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 163-66, see chpt. 3.
54. Pittsburgh Courier, January 1, 1944. The same point was made in the editorial, Pittsburgh Courier, June 10, 1944.
55. Afro-American, May 20, 1944.
56. Dwight Holmes, Baltimore Afro-American, July 8, 1944.
57. Office of Facts and Figures, The Negro Looks at the War, III. Other indications of black expectations are apparent in, Chicago Defender, February 27, 1943; Pittsburgh Courier, December 4, 1943; Spencer Logan, A Negro's Faith in America, New York, 1946, 72. See Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy', 661.

Another important reason for rising expectations was the feeling that the war was a revolutionary force capable of transforming society. 'War', said Robert C. Weaver, '- and a global war in particular - is a social revolution.'<sup>58</sup> His opinion, that unsolved social issues would come to the fore and demand attention was shared by other people. Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist, spoke of a 'revitalization of the American Creed of Democracy.'<sup>59</sup> Some Afro-Americans even went as far as to say that the longer the war, the more blacks would benefit. George Schuyler was one of these as was Joseph D. Bibbs who said, 'war may be hell for some, but it bids fair to open up the portals of heaven for us.'<sup>60</sup> There were arguments against this point of view: Benjamin Mays, the president of Morehouse College, argued that 'a world crisis does not destroy customs, mores, and prejudices, that have their roots anchored in centuries.'<sup>61</sup> A similar case, based on historical precedents, was put by the historian, Benjamin Quarles, who saw the possibility of economic gains, but no reason to expect that participation and valour would be rewarded. Moreover, he reminded Afro-Americans that the war might 'create a national psychosis which would indefinitely delay a solution to the American

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58. Weaver, Negro Labor, vii.

59. Myrdal, An American Dilemma, xliii.

60. Bibbs, Pittsburgh Courier, October 10, 1942. Schuyler argued, very much as I have, that previous wars had not provided a sufficient test to American institutions to bring dramatic changes, in Courier, September 14, 1940, and The Crisis, November 1943.

61. Mays, 'The Negro and the Present War', The Crisis, May 1942.



race problem.<sup>62</sup>

While the editors of Crisis, and others, disagreed with this view, Quarles' pessimism was shared by some Afro-Americans.<sup>63</sup> Thirty-eight per cent of the respondents in the New York survey expected to be treated just the same after the war as before and five per cent actually thought they would be worse off.<sup>64</sup> Only a third of those asked in Memphis felt that a United Nations' victory would bring any improvement in their lot.<sup>65</sup> The continued maltreatment of black soldiers and civilians throughout the country encouraged this mood of despair. The sociologist Horace R. Cayton, the journalist Roi Ottley, and the politician Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., all asked their fellow Afro-Americans if they were 'Fighting for White Folks?' and the now well-known epitaph for black soldiers, 'Here lies a black man killed fighting a yellow man for the protection of a white man', originated during this period.<sup>66</sup>

More extreme reactions have generally been ignored by historians who have concentrated on the positive role black people played in the American war effort.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps this was due to an

62. Quarles, 'Will a Long War Aid the Negro?', The Crisis, September 1943.
63. The editors printed their own view with Quarles', The Crisis, September 1943, 268.
64. Office of Facts and Figures, The Negro Looks at the War, III.
65. Supplement to Survey No. 25, 'Negroes in a Democracy at War',.
66. Cayton, The Nation, September 26, 1942; Ottley, Common Ground, Spring 1942; Powell, Common Sense, April 1942. The epitaph is quoted by Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 1006-7.
67. John Hope Franklin, for example, wrote that 'As a matter of course, [italics mine] Negroes gave generous support to the war effort on the home front.' From Slavery to Freedom, 595. Even Sitkoff skips over the subject lightly, 'Racial Militancy', 664-65.



unconscious desire to prove Afro-American patriotism and loyalty and thus buttress demands for civil rights: a point of view which might eschew discussion of conscientious objection and draft evasion amongst blacks in the 1940s. However, in the present time when draft evasion in America is quite common, and black opposition to participation in the U.S. armed forces not uncommon and included in the programmes of two prominent movements, the Black Muslims and the Black Panthers, it is of interest and value to examine some of their antecedents.

Although important as representatives of the extremist view among Afro-Americans, the number of blacks who openly and actively opposed participation in the war effort was very small. In 1941 there were only 33 black conscientious objectors or 2.6 per cent of the total number of C.O.s.<sup>68</sup> In the period 1941-46, there were 2,208 black violators of the Selective Service and Training Act. Of these, 166 were classed as conscientious objectors, the remainder were people who failed to appear before their draft boards either deliberately or because of mis-information, lack of knowledge, or carelessness.<sup>69</sup>

One group which initially encouraged opposition to the war and American entry into it was the Communist Party of the United States and its black socialist sympathisers. One prominent socialist, A. Philip Randolph, was, as we have seen, intent on

68. Selective Service System, Selective Service in Peace Time: First Report of the Director of Selective Service, Washington, D.C., 1942, 259.

69. Selective Service System, Special Groups: Special Monograph No. 10, 83, and press release, Department of Justice in FEPC file 413, National Archives Record Group 228.

ensuring a black role in the war effort. His view, that America had more to offer to the black man than Hitler did, was shared by his friend and former fellow editor of the old socialist publication, the Messenger, Chandler Owen.<sup>70</sup> In the 1940s Owen wrote the text of the morale-boosting Office of War Information pamphlet, Negroes and the War.<sup>71</sup> Their activities were opposed by the C.P.U.S.A., which was following the Moscow line and therefore, after the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939, opposed to American support for the Allies.<sup>72</sup>

The Communists urged Afro-Americans to concentrate on the struggle at home and said, 'you can't defend Negro rights without fighting against this war.'<sup>73</sup> When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, American Communists and socialist sympathisers performed a volte face and called for complete support for the war effort and a halt to protests which might hinder it. Thus, the author Richard Wright, a former opponent of the war, could in December 1941 offer his literary services to the government for 'the national democratic cause.'<sup>74</sup> No doubt because his political

70. Randolph quoted in Pittsburgh Courier, December 20, 1941, from 'The Negro and the War', The Black Worker, November 1941.
71. Negroes and the War, Washington, D.C., nd.
72. J. R. Johnson, Why Negroes Should Oppose the War, New York 1939 (?); John Henry Williams, A Negro Looks at War, New York 1940; and Wilson Record, Race and Radicalism: The NAACP and the Communist Party in Conflict, New York 1964, 118-133.
73. Daily Worker, May 16, 1941.
74. Letter Wright to MacLeish, December 21, 1941, Office of Facts and Figures, National Archives Record Group 208; William A. Nolan, Communism Vs the Negro, Chicago 1951, 143. Other examples of this change in time are James W. Ford, The War and the Negro People, New York 1942, and Pettis Perry, The Negro Stake in this War, San Fransisco, 1942 (?).



affiliations were known, his offer was not accepted.<sup>75</sup>

It does not appear that these political adversaries of the war supported or encouraged draft evasion. The groups which did so were almost entirely nationalist-separatist sects which had their origins in the period of disillusionment following World War I and during the Depression. To them America was a white man's country in which they had no stake and therefore no obligations. The war was a white man's war from which nothing could be gained for blacks. Although Frederick Douglass wrote of similar sentiments being expressed during the Civil War, these attitudes were a comparatively new expression of black despair.<sup>76</sup>

To the majority of their fellow black Americans, these people were no more than, 'Foolish Fanatics', 'crackpots and starryeyed cultists', or members of 'obscure religious sects.'<sup>77</sup> If not foolish, they were, like the black conscientious objectors, certainly brave, for the F.B.I. attempted to prove that most of those concerned were, if not the tools of enemy agents, at least pro-Axis. As such they would be liable to a maximum of forty years in prison. Luckily for them, these charges were hard to

75. Memo from Milton Starr to Ulric Bell, Ass. Director, Office of Facts and Figures, February 12 1942, National Archives Record Group 208. Wright wrote Twelve Million Black Voices, London 1947, as his contribution to the war effort.
76. Frederick Douglass, 'Men of Color, To Arms!', in Herbert Aptheker, editor, A Documentary History of The Negro People in the United States, New York 1968, Vol. I, 478.
77. Joseph D. Bibbs, Pittsburgh Courier, October 3, 1942; Louis Martin, 'Fifth Column Among Negroes', Opportunity, December 1942; and Murray, 'The Negro and Civil Liberties during World War II', Social Forces, December 1945; A. Philip Randolph, 'Pro-Japanese Activities Among Negroes', The Black Worker, September 1942.



substantiate, and the majority of people accused of sedition were instead convicted of draft evasion.

The largest group charged with sedition were the followers of the Temple of Islam, (Black Muslims), 63 of whom, including their leader Elijah Muhammad, were arrested in the Chicago round-up of September 1942.<sup>78</sup> Although the Muslims were sympathetic to the Japanese (because they were also coloured), no acts of sedition were proven. Indeed, 'observers felt that the charges of draft evasion cleared the defendants...of any connection with Japanese espionage. The government's case of sedition against them evidently collapsed.'<sup>79</sup> On the convictions of draft evasion the Muslims were jailed for three years and their leader for five. Muhammad was released from Milan, Michigan, in 1946, and returned to a movement which had grown during, perhaps because of, his imprisonment.<sup>80</sup> Gulam Bogans, (Elijah Mohamed), the leader of another sect of Muslims which had temples and universities in Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Milwaukee, and 'several hundreds' of his followers, also refused to register for the draft: fifty of them were given three-year prison sentences.<sup>81</sup> A sole Muslim, James Barnes was jailed in Mississippi - but for breaking the jim crow laws of the state rather than for evading the draft. He was,

78. Baltimore Afro-American, September 26, 1942; Chicago Defender, October 3, 1942; C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America, Boston, Mass., 1969, 188.

79. Defender, October 10, 1942.

80. Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America, 188. In view of the now known recruiting success of the Muslims in prisons, this is not surprizing. There was, too, the element of martyrdom.

81. Chicago Defender, December 5, 1942; and Ottley, New World A'Coming, 332.

however, sentenced to ten years or for the duration of the war.<sup>82</sup>

The remainder of those arrested in the Chicago round-up of 1942 were members of the Peace Movement of Ethiopia, (formed in 1932, an off-shoot of Garvey's U.N.I.A. supporting massive resettlement in Africa), and the Brotherhood of Liberty for Black People in America. The members of the Peace Movement of Ethiopia were treated fairly leniently, perhaps because they were led by a woman, Mrs. M. L. Gordon. While she was sentenced to two years in prison, her followers were released on probation.<sup>83</sup>

A tiny number of Afro-Americans were found guilty of sedition. Five supporters of the Ethiopian Pacific Movement in New York, led by a former Garveyite, Robert O. Jordan, were indicted for sedition in 1942. Known in the black, and the white, press as the 'Black Hitler', Jordan's pro-Axis sympathies were common knowledge.<sup>84</sup> He and his followers were accused of 'urging soldiers and others to resist service in the armed forces of the United States and to support Japan, holding that Japan was going to liberate the darker races.'<sup>85</sup> The Chicago Defender referred to them as 'agents of fascism' and urged 'convict them all.'<sup>86</sup> Although convicted they were not given the maximum forty-year sentence - the court held that their activities had been ineffective - but were jailed for

82. Baltimore Afro-American, May 23, 1942.

83. Baltimore Afro-American, September 26, 1942; Murray, Negro Handbook, 1944, 133; E. David Cronon, Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey, Madison, Wisconsin, 1969, 166, and Harry Haywood, Negro Liberation, New York 1948, 203.

84. Baltimore Afro-American and Chicago Defender September 19, 1942, New York Times, January 15, 1943.

85. Murray, Negro Handbook, 1944, 134.

86. Chicago Defender, January 16, 1943.

periods of four to ten years, with an additional \$10,000 fine for Jordan.<sup>87</sup>

Still another off-shoot of Garveyism, the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, was supposed to be 'sponsored by Japanese agents ... to spread confusion and dissension and disrupt America's war effort.'<sup>88</sup> Only two of its members, in St. Louis, were found guilty of both sedition and draft evasion: one was given four year sentences on both charges, the terms to run concurrently, and the other two two-year sentences.<sup>89</sup> Seven followers of the House of Israel from Newark, New Jersey, were sentenced to three years in jail for evading the draft, although they had 'been inciting other Negroes ... not to fight the Japanese because they are another colored race.'<sup>90</sup> The local F.B.I. director said that their violations of the Selective Service Act were not based on their religion but on 'an almost fanatical conviction that they had nothing to fight for in this war.'<sup>91</sup>

A variety of other groups throughout the country faced similar charges to these after refusing to participate in the war for a mixture of racial and religious reasons. Twenty-one members of the International Reassembly of the Church of Freedom League who

87. New York Times, January 15, 1943, Chicago Defender, January 23, 1943.
88. Chicago Defender, March 14, 1942, Haywood, Negro Liberation, 203, and E. U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism: The Rise of the Black Muslims in the U.S.A., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1966, 56.
89. Murray, Negro Handbook, 1944, 134.
90. New York Times, January 14, 1943.
91. Baltimore Afro-American, January 23, 1943.



refused to serve overseas were imprisoned in New Orleans for draft evasion.<sup>92</sup> Other movements included the Ethiopian Women's Work Association and the African Nationalist Pioneering Movement.<sup>93</sup> Individuals as far away from the East coast as San Diego, California, were convicted of charges 'of a subversive nature.'<sup>94</sup> The F.B.I. attempted to relate such beliefs to Japanese agents and propaganda, and in some instances this alleged relationship was given credence by fellow blacks such as Randolph and Ottley.<sup>95</sup> Ottley devoted an entire chapter of his book, New World A'Coming, to such charges, but he failed to point out that indictments for draft evasion were generally substituted for those of sedition.

Rather than the subjects of Japanese espionage agents, it seems more likely that, given their ideological backgrounds, the defendants were, in the words of the American Civil Liberties Union, 'the victims of over-zealous race consciousness, while others were religious zealots.'<sup>96</sup> Alternatively, their actions could be, and were, described as 'passive resistance to the American war effort as a protest at racial discrimination in the United States.'<sup>97</sup>

Although these people obviously represent the extreme minority of Afro-Americans, the fact remains that a number of

92. Chicago Defender, November 7, 1942; Baltimore Afro-American, January 2, 1943.
93. Ottley, New World A'Coming, 333,334.
94. Chicago Defender, August 23, 1941.
95. Randolph in Chicago Defender, October 3, 1942, and Ottley, New World A'Coming, 327-343.
96. Murray, 'The Negro and Civil Liberties', 211.
97. Chicago Defender, October 3, 1942.

blacks shared their sympathy for the Japanese. The government surveys found that in New York 18 per cent of those interviewed thought they would be better treated by the Japanese than by the Americans, and in Memphis the proportion was higher.<sup>98</sup> Few of those asked thought they would be any better off under German rule. The interviewers attributed these attitudes to apathy or lack of knowledge about the comparative war aims of the Axis and the Allies. Just as likely is the fact that the attack by the coloured Japanese on white men awakened the racial consciousness of Afro-Americans. The best explanation was offered by Richard Wright when he wrote:<sup>99</sup>

I've even heard Negroes, in moments of anger and bitterness, praise what Japan is doing in China, not because they believe in oppression..., but because they would suddenly sense how empty their lives were when looking at the dark faces of Japanese generals in the rotogravure supplements of the Sunday newspapers. They would dream of what it would be like to live in a country where they could forget their color and play a responsible role in the vital processes of the nation's life.

The struggle to achieve a responsible place in the life of the country was heightened by the war emergency and participation in the armed forces was of prime importance. The fight was both for equality and proof of equality, for Afro-Americans were clearly aware of the relationship between military service and citizenship. This connection was openly stated by men like

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98. Office of Facts and Figures, The Negro Looks at the War, and Supplement to Survey No. 25, 'Negroes in a Democracy at War.'
99. 'How "Bigger" was Born', The Saturday Review of Literature, June 1, 1940, included as an introduction to Native Son, New York 1966ed. xiv.

Calloway, Jones, and Lynn, and was inherent in the actions of groups like the Muslims. Randolph, the March on Washington Movement, the black press, the NAACP, and even the National Urban League, were all aggressively demanding to play a part in the war effort. Set-backs and rebuffs encouraged the frustration and despair which led to riots: they also confirmed the views of the black nationalists. No matter how much they suffered from doubts, however, the majority of Afro-Americans experienced a rise in expectations during the war. Just as white Americans anticipated and hoped for an improvement in their lot, so did Afro-Americans. If anything their hopes were greater for they did, after all, have more to gain.



Chapter 3Afro-Americans and the Armed Forces, 1940-48

For Afro-Americans, military participation during World War II was crucial to their struggle for equal rights. If they could fight as equals then they could expect to be rewarded as equals, or at least given the same rights and privileges as other American citizens. This logic in itself, impelled Afro-Americans to demand equal opportunities within the armed services and their argument was further strengthened by the democratic creed which was, supposedly, being fought for. As Allied propaganda continually emphasised, World War II was a clear-cut struggle between right and wrong, democracy and totalitarianism, freedom and subjugation, racism and tolerance. Black protest coupled with the need to live up to these ideals might itself have produced changes in America's military racial practices, but a more powerful and urgent force for change was the total nature of the war. As a post-war writer remarked, 'the lesson of total war, so belatedly learned, was that we must rigorously apply the principals of economy of means in the utilization of all resources for war - human as well as material.'<sup>1</sup>

Together the three forces, protest, the need to live up to one's own propaganda, and war, began the break-up of segregation, and led in the post-war years to the total integration, of the American armed forces. This process, from segregation to integration, has been more than adequately dealt with by other

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1. Paul C. Davis, 'The Negro in the Armed Forces,' Virginia Quarterly Review, XXIV, 4, 1948, 499.

historians.<sup>2</sup> It will only be necessary for me to recount the details here and to give new emphasis. More important to this study is the effect of military service on the attitudes of soldiers and the implications of their wartime experiences.

The fight for equal rights in the forces began with American mobilization prior to Pearl Harbor. The situation of the black soldier in 1940 was little different from that of 1918. World War I had served to reinforce racialism and its stereotypes rather than test or destroy prejudices, and the feeling still common among white soldiers and their officers was that Afro-Americans made poor troops. Although slight changes were made in military racial policies during the inter-war years, old misconceptions prevented their becoming practice.<sup>3</sup> After the first World War, the four black regular Army units had been run down in strength (in line with general military policy at that time), and Afro-Americans could only enter them as vacancies occurred. The result was that by 1939 there were only 3,640 black regular soldiers and only five black officers, three of whom were chaplains.<sup>4</sup> During the same period, the Navy, which had limited black participation to service in the galleys, reduced the numbers

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2. Lee Nichols, Breakthrough on the Color Front, New York, 1954; Ulysses S. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, U.S. Army in World War II, Special Studies, 8, Washington, D.C., 1966; Richard J. Stillman, Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces, New York, 1968; Richard M. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, Columbia, Missouri, 1969.
  3. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 32-38, Dalfiume, Desegregation of the US Armed Forces, 22-23.
  4. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 29; Charles C. Moskos, The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today's Military, New York 1970, 109.

employed even in that capacity.<sup>5</sup> On top of this, Afro-Americans were excluded entirely from the Marine Corps, the Coastguard, and the Army Air Corps. With war imminent, Afro-Americans began to demand that greater opportunities in the military establishment be opened to them.

In May 1939, the traditional voices of black protest were joined by the newly-formed Committee for Participation of Negroes in National Defense led by Rayford W. Logan. Under his leadership, the Committee quickly began to play an influential part in the campaign for greater black involvement in the forces. On August 14, 1940, Logan and the representatives of other organizations appeared before the House of Representatives' Committee on Military Affairs to ask for an increase in the number of black military personnel and full utilization of Afro-Americans in all branches of the armed forces.<sup>6</sup> To achieve their aims, Logan and his Committee, persuaded the Republican Representative of New York, Hamilton Fish, to introduce an amendment to the Selective Training and Service Bill, then under debate.<sup>7</sup> When the bill was passed on September 14, 1940, the amendment was included as section 3(a) which required

5. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 584; Laurence D. Reddick, 'The Negro in the Navy in World War II', Journal of Negro History, XXXII, April, 1947; John W. Davis, 'The Negro in the United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coastguard', Journal of Negro Education, XII, 3, Summer 1943.
6. Selective Service System, Special Groups: Special Monograph No. 10, Washington, D.C., 1953, 41; Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 72.
7. Special Groups: Special Monograph No. 10, 44; Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 72-73; Nichols, Breakthrough on the Color Front, 39.



that draftees be selected in an impartial manner, and as section 4(a) which stated that there would be no discrimination in either the selection or training of men.<sup>8</sup> During the debate Southern politicians made it clear that they did not expect this to mean the end of segregation but any hopes that black people had to the contrary were finally crushed by a statement issued from the White House in October, 1940.

The President's release was the result of a meeting he held on September 27 with Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, A. Philip Randolph, of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and T. Arnold Hill, adviser on Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration and acting-secretary of the National Urban League.<sup>9</sup> At the meeting the black spokesmen made their wishes clear in a seven-point programme. They asked that black officers and men be assigned to duties according to their abilities; that provision be made for the training of black officers; that Afro-Americans be allowed full participation in all branches of the Army Air Corps; that blacks take part in the administration and operation of the Selective Service System; that the services of black seamen be expanded beyond the level of cooks and messmen; that black women be permitted to serve as nurses in the Army and Navy as well as in the Red Cross. Most important of all, the black leaders asked that existing units of the Army and units to be established should be required to accept and select officers and enlisted personnel

8. Special Groups: Special Monograph No. 10, 44.

9. Memo. on basis of conference, Official File 93, box 4, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (hereafter 93:4, FDRL). Details of the meeting are also described in Walter White, A Man Called White, New York 1948, 186-187.

without regard to race.'<sup>10</sup>

President Roosevelt agreed to consider these points and to refer back to the black representatives at a later date.<sup>11</sup>

However, without further discussion he signed the statement on military racial policy released to the press on October 9, 1940, which accepted only a few of the black proposals. While it promised the use of Afro-Americans in the Army 'on the general basis of the proportion of the Negro population of the country' and in 'each major branch of the service, combatant as well as non-combatant', the statement included important reservations. Increased opportunities were to be given to blacks to qualify for commissions but black officers would only be assigned to all-black units. Moreover, the general policy of segregation was to be maintained as it had 'been proved satisfactory over a long period of years.' Changes 'would produce situations destructive to morale and detrimental to the preparation for national defense.'<sup>12</sup> Afro-Americans reacted angrily to the statement, the more so when they heard that White, Randolph, and Hill, had not, as was implied by the President's press secretary, Stephen Early, approved.<sup>13</sup> The general response was summed up by the headlines of The Crisis: 'White House Blesses

10. The full text was published in The Crisis, November, 1940. It is also quoted by Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 74-75.

11. White, A Man Called White, 187.

12. Press release, October 9, 1940, 93:4, FDRL; Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 75; and Special Groups: Special Monograph No. 10, 45-46.

13. White to Early, October 21, 1940, 93:4, FDRL; Chicago Defender, October 19, 1940; Pittsburgh Courier, October 19, 1940.



Jim Crow.<sup>14</sup>

Government embarrassment was increased by the Republicans who made the most of the issue in an effort to capture crucial black votes for the forthcoming presidential elections.<sup>15</sup> A retraction by Early of his statement involving the black spokesmen was insufficient to repair the damage done and on October 16 further concessions were made.<sup>16</sup> Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, a soldier since the Spanish-American War, was promoted to the rank of general, the first black general in U.S. history. Plans for the formation of black aviation units were announced and more black combat groups in the Army were promised. More significant was the appointment of William H. Hastie, Dean of Howard University Law School and a legal representative of the NAACP, as civilian aide to the Secretary of War. Colonel Campbell C. Johnson was made Negro Adviser to the Director of Selective Service.<sup>17</sup> Roosevelt also wrote to White, Randolph, and Hill, and promised that 'further developments of policy will be forthcoming to insure that Negroes are given fair treatment on a non-discriminatory basis.'<sup>18</sup>

Despite these actions, the White House release remained the basis of wartime military racial policies and was regarded as a

14. The Crisis, November 1940.

15. Republicans had already included a liberal plank in their party platform for 1940 and now followed it up with an advertising campaign - Baltimore Afro-American, October 12, 19, 1940. Also see White, A Man Called White, 187-88.

16. Early to White, October 25, 1940, 93:4, FDRL.

17. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 41-42; Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 79. The Pittsburgh Courier had called for an appointment such as Hastie's on September 28, 1940.

18. F.D.R. to White, Hill, and Randolph, October 25, 1940, 93:4, FDRL.



presidential sanction of segregation.<sup>19</sup> That little had really changed was revealed at a conference of black newspaper editors and publishers called for by Hastie and held in Washington, D.C., on December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor. Those present were told by Colonel Eugene Householder, of the Adjutant General's Office, that the Army could not take a stand on race relations which would antagonize the majority of American people. He went on to say,<sup>20</sup>

The Army is not a sociological laboratory; to be effective it must be organized and trained according to the principles which will ensure success. Experiments to meet the wishes and demands of the champions of every race and creed for the solution of their problems are a danger to efficiency, discipline, and morale, and would result in ultimate defeat.

The Committee for Participation of Negroes in National Defense could still feel that blacks were being excluded from the military war effort.<sup>21</sup>

The black newspaper men were not impressed by Householder's argument for the maintenance of the status quo. Far from wishing either to hinder or impede America's war efforts, they only wanted 'the opportunity to serve their country to the full measure of their capacity and devotion.'<sup>22</sup> As such, they would continue to fight for equal opportunity of participation in the war and

19. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 76.

20. Remarks of Col. E. R. Householder at the Conference of Negro Newspaper Representatives, Munitions Building, Washington, D.C., December 8 1941, OASW, 273, NARG 107.

21. Pittsburgh Courier, December 14, 1940.

22. Chicago Defender, December 13, 1941. See 'Statement of Negro War Aims', submitted by Negro Newspaper Publishers Association, 93:9 FDRL.

oppose any abridgement of the constitutional guarantees which gave meaning and substance to their citizenship.<sup>23</sup> This continuing protest and the increasing strains of war were to demonstrate that segregation in the forces was compatible with neither efficiency nor morale.

Some progress did follow the furore of 1940: an Army Air Corps training base was established at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in 1941 and the all-black 99th Pursuit Squadron flew its first combat mission in 1943. A considerable advance was made in 1942 when Afro-Americans were accepted for general service in both the Navy and the Marine Corps, if still on a segregated basis. Black army officers, from the beginning of the training programme, were taught with whites in fully integrated camps. Black enlisted strength in the Army rose rapidly from 97,725 in November, 1941, to 467,883 in December, 1942.<sup>24</sup> However, that number did not bring the proportion of black soldiers up to the ratio of blacks in the population, nor were they equally represented in all branches of the service.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from the training of black officers, segregation remained intact throughout the forces. Integration on a basis of one black to every nine whites in Army units was suggested by a planning group of the Army General Staff in an effort to prevent a waste of manpower, but the suggestion was rejected on the usual

23. Opportunity, XX, I, January 1942; Pittsburgh Courier, December 13, 1941; and Chicago Defender, December 20, 1941.

24. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 88.

25. Dalfiame, Desegregation of the US Armed Forces, 88.

grounds of efficiency.<sup>26</sup> The question of the adequate use of black manpower, and continued pressure from Afro-Americans, did lead to the formation in August 1942 of an Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies (the McCloy Committee), but that body, at least initially, saw little reason to call for change.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the actions and attitudes of the McCloy Committee contributed to the resignation of Hastie, the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, in January 1943.

Hastie had threatened to resign before then, but had always been persuaded to remain in office in the interests of morale.<sup>28</sup> The fact that he had not been informed, prior to the event, of the formation of the McCloy Committee and had then been excluded from its membership, only added to his frustration. This was further increased by the obvious disagreements he had with McCloy, the Committee chairman, over the importance of the full, unsegregated use of black troops.<sup>29</sup> The final straw was the Air Corps' plan to set up a segregated black Air Officer Training School, contrary to the practices of all the other services. Again the plan had been drawn up without Hastie's knowledge and without any attempt being made to consult him.<sup>30</sup> His resignation had some effect:

26. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 83-84.
27. Ibidem.
28. Chicago Defender, January 31, 1942, reported that Hastie had tried to resign three times by then; see too, Pittsburgh Courier, January 31, and October 3, 1942.
29. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 83.
30. Letter of resignation to Secretary of War, Stimson, January 5, 1943, OASW, 243, NARG 107. Hastie explained his resignation fully in the press, Baltimore Afro-American, Chicago Defender, and Pittsburgh Courier, February 6, 1943.



the plan for the separate training school was dropped and the Air Corps generally relaxed its racial restrictions. Moreover, Truman Gibson, Hastie's successor, regularly attended meetings of the McCloy Committee.

The pressure of events brought other changes in Army policy. The Army reaped what Lee described as 'a harvest of disorder' in 1943, as racial violence disrupted life in and around military camps in the North and South.<sup>31</sup> However, the riots which occurred that summer were not confined to soldiers, for several major cities suffered considerable disorders. The outbreaks of violence within the Army were symptomatic of the general mood of Afro-Americans.<sup>32</sup>

Basically, the cause of friction was the segregation and discrimination in the forces which applied even to on-base facilities such as theatres, post-exchanges, and canteens. The situation was worsened by the prejudices of white soldiers, officers, and military policemen. In the South, Afro-American troops also had to suffer the local jim crow laws and were subject to attack from members of the local white population. Quite frequently the two elements, prejudice within the Army and amongst civilians, were combined in conflicts over bus services between army camps and neighbouring towns. The segregation of those services was strictly enforced by both military and civil police forces and it was usual for blacks to give precedence to whites. Generally, this meant that blacks waited until all whites had boarded the vehicle; often it meant that they had to stand because white passengers had taken all the seats; sometimes it even meant that they missed the bus

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31. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 348-379.

32. Harvard Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence', Journal of American History, LVIII, 3, 1971.

altogether because it was filled entirely with whites. To refuse to accept such local laws led at least to jail, often to a beating-up, and occasionally to death.<sup>33</sup> This was in spite of the assurance given by the Assistant Secretary of War, Patterson, 'that the War Department can and will maintain the dignity of the uniform and the personnel which wears it.'<sup>34</sup>

Given the discrimination and segregation faced by Afro-Americans in the forces, it was not surprising that their morale was low. Soldiers wrote to the President, and to black organizations and newspapers complaining of their treatment. Not only did these letters deal with particular acts of discrimination, but also a great many discussed the underlying moral contradiction of segregation within the army of a democracy. In a letter to the President, urging him to live up to the Allies' war aims, a black soldier said that,<sup>35</sup>

the picture in our country is marred by one of the strangest paradoxes in our whole fight against world fascism. The very instrument which our government had organized and built, the United States Armed Forces, to fight for world Democracy, is within itself undemocratic. The undemocratic policy of jim-crow and segregation is practiced by our Armed Forces against its Negro members.

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33. Descriptions of the hardships faced by black soldiers are provided in: Jean Byers, A Study of the Negro in Military Service, Dept. of Defense, Washington, D.C., 1947, mimeographed copy in Moorland Collection, Howard University, 64-68; Ruth Danenhower Wilson, Jim Crow Joins Up: A Study of Negroes in the Armed Forces of the United States, New York, 1944; Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in Black and White, London 1965, 63-65. A fictional, but nonetheless typical, incident is described in John Oliver Killens, And Then We Heard the Thunder, New York 1971 edition, 122-30.
34. Patterson to Walter White, September 18, 1941, OASW 221, NARG 107.
35. Private Charles F. Wilson to F.D.R., May 9, 1944, in OASW 230, NARG 107. There are literally hundreds of such letters in 93:12 and 93:9, FDRL; in OASW files 221,230, NARG 107: and in the NAACP files, box 279, Library of Congress. Some letters are quoted in Lucille B. Milner, 'Jim Crow in the Army,' New Republic, Vol. 110, 11, March 13, 1944.

There was of course a tendency for Afro-Americans to see everything in a racial context and therefore to take offence at what was quite often no more than common military practice. To a certain extent their civilian life had conditioned them to expect the worst from white authority, but segregation encouraged these feelings because it prevented blacks from seeing that white soldiers suffered many, if not all, of the same hardships. One black soldier complained of being treated like a dog, 'laying in the hot sun' with water 'very scarce.'<sup>36</sup> What he failed to point out was that he and his comrades were in a desert training centre.<sup>37</sup>

Although it is clear that black soldiers were subject to prejudice and discrimination both in and out of the military establishment, not all Afro-Americans did object to their treatment in the Army. For many black service men life in the Army, even with its racial restrictions, was better than life as a civilian. The uniform did give a measure of self-respect and an amount of authority. More important, black soldiers were taught skills and trades, given a certain degree of education, as well as being fed, clothed, and payed. For a good number it was 'the first semblance of economic security they had ever known.'<sup>38</sup>

A war department survey found that only one-fifth 'of all

36. Private John S. Banks to NAACP, July 28, 1943, forwarded to Truman Gibson, OASW 221, NARG 107.
37. Gibson to Milton Konvitz, Special Counsel for NAACP, OASW 221, NARG 107.
38. Jessie Parkhurst Guzman, Negro Year Book: A Review of Events Affecting Negro Life, 1941-1946, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1947, 151.



Negro soldiers' thought the Army unfair, three-fifths had mixed attitudes, and the remaining fifth thought it fair.<sup>39</sup> The same survey reported that not all Afro-Americans in the Army were opposed to segregation either. Forty per cent thought separate post-exchanges were a good idea, 48 per cent thought them a poor idea, and 12 per cent were undecided. Thirty-eight per cent of those questioned favoured racially separate units, 36 per cent wanted integrated ones, and 26 per cent were undecided.<sup>40</sup> It is impossible to decide how many of these soldiers were given what they thought to be 'safe' answers to the authorities but it seem obvious that black opinion was divided. Still, one could hardly agree with the view held by the majority of white soldiers, that their black comrades were satisfied with their lot.<sup>41</sup>

As commentators at the time pointed out, the attitude of the Afro-American was an amalgam. On the one hand he responded as an American with patriotism and loyalty in the hope that his participation would be rewarded; on the other hand, he resented his treatment both in and out of the forces and was inclined to feel he had nothing to fight for.<sup>42</sup> Thus it was that only 66 per cent of blacks, compared with 89 per cent of whites, asked in another survey, thought that the war was as much their affair as anybody

39. War Department, Special Service Division, Research Branch, What the Soldier Thinks, No. 2, August 1943, 14-15, in War Department files, NARG 330.

40. *Ibid.*, 58-59.

41. Samuel A. Stouffer, et al, The American Soldier, Princeton, 1949, Vol. 1, 506. Some indication of how black opinion varied with the colour of the interviewer is given in the preceding chapter.

42. P. L. Prattis, 'The Morale of the Negro in the Armed Services of the United States', Journal of Negro Education, XII, 1, 1943, and Stouffer, The American Soldier, 507.

else's. Twenty-one per cent felt it was not as much their affair, and 13 per cent could not decide.<sup>43</sup> Of the same group of soldiers, given a choice of questions they would ask the President, 50 per cent of the blacks asked about discrimination, 23 per cent about the progress and duration of the war, and 13 per cent about conditions in the Army.<sup>44</sup> The main concern appeared to be how the war would affect conditions at home vis-a-vis race relations. Yet expectations among the Afro-Americans were higher than among their white counter-parts. When asked, 'After the war do you think that you yourself will have more than you had before the war?', 43 per cent of the blacks said more, 38 per cent said they would have just the same, and six per cent said less. The corresponding figures for whites were, 19 per cent, 55 per cent, and 19 per cent.<sup>45</sup>

Such attitudes could change after experience of life in the Army. One soldier wrote,<sup>46</sup>

When inducted I honestly believed that as a Negro [sic], I comprised an important part of the nation and it was my patriotic duty to avail myself when my country was in peril. My attitude now is really changed. I'm indifferent to the whole affair.

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43. Stouffer, The American Soldier, 508.
44. Stouffer, The American Soldier, 504.
45. Stouffer, The American Soldier, 514.
46. Private Bert B. Barbero to Truman Gibson, February 13, 1944, OASW 230, NARG 107. For similar expressions see, Howard Long, 'The Negro in the Army of the United States', Journal of Negro Education, XII, 1, 1943, and Grant Reynolds, 'What the Negro Thinks of This War', The Crisis, September 1944.



Discrimination and prejudice in the Army led not merely to disillusionment but also to an aggressive desire to bring about change. The NAACP was sent money as well as angry letters, and in 1943 received over \$5,000 from servicemen.<sup>47</sup> By the end of the war donations from soldiers amounted to \$25,000 and 15,000 had joined the organization.<sup>48</sup> While many soldiers spoke of returning to demand their rights once the war was over, others suggested that if they were to fight and to die for democracy they would be as well to start in the U.S.A.<sup>49</sup> Rather than quietly suffer violence and humiliation, they fought back.

From the start of the war, there were incidents of fighting between black and white soldiers, blacks and civilians, or blacks and policemen. A typical incident was that described in the New York Times in April 1942, when three soldiers were killed and five others wounded, after an argument between black and white soldiers over precedence at a telephone booth.<sup>50</sup> Although the War Department attempted to play them down, such outbreaks were conspicuous in the black press.<sup>51</sup> The stories of riots, of blacks destroying segregated

47. The Crisis, February 1944, 51.

48. The Crisis, October 1944, 322, and February 1945, 53.

49. George B. Nesbitt, 'The Negro Soldier Speaks', Opportunity, XXII, 3, July-September, 1944; Milner, 'Jim Crow in the Army'; and letters to the Pittsburgh Courier, August 30, 1941, November 13 and 20, 1943, and May 19, 1945.

50. New York Times, April 3, 1942.

51. Harvard Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War', Journal of American History, LVIII, 3, December 1971; Silberman, Crisis in Black and White, 63; Pittsburgh Courier, July 26, August 16, 1941; 'The Pattern of Race Riots Involving Negro Soldiers', Race Relations: A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends, II, 1-2 August-September 1944.



facilities or battling with police officers, increased dramatically during 1943. In June, the Chicago Defender reported four killed and 16 wounded in five 'Dixie Clashes' and the Pittsburgh Courier suggested that riots were 'sweeping the nation.'<sup>52</sup> War Department officials were aware of the 'general unrest' among Afro-American soldiers and of the fact that 'most Negro soldiers have secreted ammunition.'<sup>53</sup>

Civilian aide, Gibson, reporting on the disaffection and discontent at Forts Huachuca, Bliss, and Clark, found that local jim crow laws were the main bone of contention and that black troops resented being denied the rights and privileges given to others in military uniform. While he recommended that the segregation of officers' messes and base theatres be discontinued, he felt that commanders should withhold furlough passes from those men who refused to accept local laws and customs.<sup>54</sup> The Negro Troop Policy Committee, the McCloy Committee, did suggest that the policy of segregation could be reviewed and a 'clear cut policy be formulated and made known to all.'<sup>55</sup>

The Army did, finally, recognise the lack of morale amongst black soldiers and made some changes. A manual, 'Leadership and

52. Chicago Defender, June 19, 1943; Pittsburgh Courier, June 26, 1943. Also see Thomas Sancton, 'The Race Riots', New Republic, July 5, 1943.
53. Unheaded Memorandum on black attitudes, OASW 230, NARG 107.
54. Gibson to Assistant Secretary of War, Patterson, August 23, 1943, OASW 39, NARG 107.
55. Memo., J. S. Leonard, Negro Troops Policy Committee, to Patterson, December 17, 1943, OASW 39, NARG 107.

the Negro Soldier', produced in 1944, offered careful guidance to the officers of Afro-American troops, as well as a brief history of black military participation in past wars.<sup>56</sup> Also in 1944, following the example of the enterprising commanding officer of Camp Lee in Virginia, it became Army policy to arrange bus services between camps and neighbouring towns solely for the use of military personnel. The services operated on a basis of first come, first served, with no segregation.<sup>57</sup> The same year, all on-base facilities were ordered to be desegregated, and if there was some failure on the part of officers to implement the command, the order still marked a distinct change in policy.<sup>58</sup>

The need 'for morale building information on the stake and role of the Negro in the war' was also realised, and in 1943 an educational programme first suggested by Hastie was implemented to alleviate racial tensions.<sup>59</sup> Part of it was the film, 'The Negro Soldier', which was previewed by an audience of 439 black and 510 white soldiers in 1944. The film, which stressed black military participation in previous wars as well as in World War II, was considered to be very good by the majority of both groups.<sup>60</sup> Only

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56. Army Forces Manual, MS, 'Leadership and the Negro Soldier', October 1944, War Department, Planning Survey, NARG 330.
57. Chicago Defender, June 3, 1944; Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 315-324.
58. Chicago Defender, August 12, 1944; Pittsburgh Courier, September 2, 1944; Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 397.
59. Military Policy Implications of Report by Research Branch, Special Service Division, on 'Attitudes of the Negro Soldier' July 31, 1943, OASW 230, NARG 107.
60. 'The Negro Soldier', Signal Corps, 1944, National Archives, NA IIIIOF-51; War Dept., Morale Services Division, Report No. B-102, 'Reactions of Negro and White Soldiers to the film, "The Negro Soldier"', War Department, NARG 330.

three per cent of the black soldiers felt it was untrue, and only four per cent of the whites agreed, for reasons which were much the same in content, but utterly different in emphasis. The blacks (rightly) thought that the film over-glamourized the treatment they received in the Army and their role in it - the whites thought that 'it exaggerated the importance of the Negro soldier, showed too close contact between Negroes and whites, and suggested too ideal a picture of Negro treatment by the whites.'<sup>61</sup> About 80 per cent of the whole audience, blacks and whites, thought that the film ought to be given a wide showing and, following distribution in 1944, it was seen in more than 300 theatres in New York alone.<sup>62</sup> Following this success, the Army went on to make several more films including the more emotive, if less exact, 'Teamwork', which was based on the black role in the European offensive.<sup>63</sup>

The extremely popular Afro-American boxer, Joe Louis, was also used to boost black morale. After he had entered the Army in 1942, he spent most of his time touring Army bases and camps giving talks and performing exhibition bouts. He also took part in the War Department film, 'This is the Army'. For his services he was made sergeant and awarded the Legion of Merit in 1945.<sup>64</sup>

61. Report No. B-102, 'Reactions of Negro and White Soldiers to the film, "The Negro Soldier"'.
62. Ibid. and Florence Murray, The Negro Handbook, 1946-47, New York 1947, 265.
63. 'Teamwork', Signal Corps, 1946, National Archives, NA 111-OF-14; Byers, A Study of the Negro in Military Service, 46; and Peter Noble, The Negro in Films, London 1949, 108.
64. Joe Louis, My Life Story, London 1947, 145-74; also see Signal Corps film, 'Teamwork', and film of Louis at air base in England, 1944, Sherman Grinberg Library, No. C-5121.



His own attitude to discrimination in the forces was summed up when he said,<sup>65</sup>

I knew that the Navy at that time didn't give our boys much of a chance. But I didn't hold that against them. I just hoped that some day things would be better.

In 1943 the concentration of black troops in service units and the reluctance of the War Department to send black soldiers overseas created another crisis. While various war zones suffered manpower shortages, 425,000 of the 504,000 Afro-Americans in the Army were still stationed in the United States.<sup>66</sup> This was due in part to objections raised by foreign governments who feared that Afro-American troops might cause unrest amongst either local black populations or, as in the case of Australia, among the local whites.<sup>67</sup> An additional reason was that many overseas commanders refused to accept black troops on grounds of morale and efficiency. Abandoning altogether the attempt to achieve proportional representation of blacks in every branch of the service, the Army began to convert black combat units to service units (which were more acceptable to objectors) for posting abroad.

Early in 1944, the black 2nd Cavalry Division, which included the 9th and 10th Cavalry, regiments created by Congress in 1866, was converted into a service unit after having two years of combat training. A former officer of the black 369th Infantry,

65. Louis, My Life Story, 45.

66. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 450; Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 92.

67. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 428-29; Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 92.

Republican Representative Hamilton Fish, wrote to the Secretary of War, Stimson, deploring the failure to use black combat soldiers and questioning the authority of this particular conversion.<sup>68</sup> In a now infamous reply, Stimson said,<sup>69</sup>

In converting combat units to service units, the War Department's selection of units has been based solely on the relative abilities, capabilities, and status of training of the personnel in the units available 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 have accordingly been unable to master the techniques of modern weapons.

After struggling to achieve a greater degree of participation, Afro-Americans now saw their military role being even further reduced and, quite naturally, were furious. They fully agreed with Truman Gibson's comment, that Stimson's statement was 'one of the most stupid' ever to come from the War Department.<sup>70</sup> The Pittsburgh Courier described the Secretary of War as 'a stubborn man...determined to continue color discrimination and segregation in the Army, war or no war,' and demanded his resignation.<sup>71</sup> The

68. Fish to Stimson, February 1, and again on March 31, 1944, OASW 190, NARG 107.
69. Stimson to Fish, February 19, 1944, OASW 190, NARG 107. He expressed similar views in a letter to William Hastie, March 31, 1944, same file.
70. Gibson to Claude Barnett, March 20, 1944, OASW 190 NARG 107. In an earlier letter to Patterson, Gibson had remarked on the waste of manpower entailed in keeping black troops at home and had sarcastically suggested that some of America's Allies could use them, OASW 230, NARG 107.
71. Pittsburgh Courier March 11 and 18, 1944. See also Baltimore, Afro-American, March 18.



reaction of the black people, black newspapers, and of several politicians, forced the Army to make concessions and black troops of the 92nd and 93rd Infantry were sent into combat, the former in Italy, the latter in the Pacific.<sup>72</sup>

Paul McNutt, the chairman of the War Manpower Commission added his voice to the protests over wasted manpower. In a letter to the Secretary of War, Stimson, and the Secretary of the Navy, Knox, he pointed out that separate calls for black and white registrants and the 'Negro quota' had led to only six per cent of the armed forces being black.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, married whites were being inducted while many single Afro-Americans were passed over. He therefore ordered that men be selected for armed service 'without regard to race or color.' The Navy and Marine Corps complied with the order and increased the number of blacks in their ranks. The Army continued to drag its heels and was helped by the general shortage of black manpower which arose as a result of the high rejection rates among Afro-Americans eligible for the draft because of educational deficiencies. In view of McNutt's order and the manpower shortages, the Army was forced to abandon its rigid literacy standards and to establish Special Training Units to give draftees a basic education. As a result, 'approximately 136,000 Negro soldiers received literacy training during World War II.'<sup>74</sup> Another reversal in policy was due directly to the test of war, which produced manpower shortages

72. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 96.

73. McNutt to Stimson and Knox, February 17, 1943, 93:5 FDRL.

74. Byers, A Study of the Negro in Military Service, 37.



in the European theatre of operations.

In December 1944, the Germans launched a last desperate offensive in the Ardennes and succeeded in pushing a huge salient into the Allied lines. In the ensuing battle of the Bulge, the American Army found itself critically short of infantry replacements and as a result white combat units were undermanned. In order to fill the gap, General Eisenhower was persuaded to accept volunteers from black service regiments by the Commander of the Communications Zone, General John Lee. In his original appeal to the black soldiers, Lee proposed complete integration but this was altered in order not to contradict War Department policy. Instead, black platoons of 40 men were assigned to white companies of 200.<sup>75</sup> The main elements of Lee's original call for volunteers were retained and some of them were quite remarkable. Non-commissioned officers were given the opportunity to accept a reduction in rank in order to enjoy 'the privilege of joining our veteran units at the front.' Lee also promised that volunteers would be able 'to share the glory of victory' and pointed out that this had been one of the black demands throughout the war.<sup>76</sup>

This document and the response it received from Afro-Americans clearly revealed the importance attached to military participation. Over 5,000 blacks, many of them former N.C.O.s, volunteered and the Army finally had to set a limit of 2,500. After six weeks of intensive training, 37 platoons were attached to white units where

75. Moskos, The American Enlisted Man, 110-111; Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 689-695.

76. The full text of the appeal is quoted in Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 689.

they fought throughout 1945. Sadly, these platoons were either returned to their former duties or discharged from the Army once the war in Europe was won. However, their performance and the success of the experiment could not be ignored. Not only had Afro-Americans proved to be capable soldiers, they had also been accepted by their white colleagues.<sup>77</sup>

The Army's contention, that integration would be detrimental to morale, had been supported by various surveys of white opinion in the forces. Although some men, like Sergeant Alton Levy, might be in favour of integration and object to the Army's discriminatory treatment of blacks, they were in the minority.<sup>78</sup> A survey of the attitudes of 2,360 men to sharing facilities with black troops, taken in 1942, found that the majority favoured segregation.<sup>79</sup> This was further borne out by polls on the attitudes of whites toward the use of Afro-Americans in the Air Force. While 65 per cent of those questioned were agreeable to the placing of blacks in the Air Force, (26 per cent were indifferent, nine per cent were opposed to it), all but a few wanted separate facilities to be provided. Nor was this prejudice purely sectional: 75 per cent of Northerners and 86 per cent of Southerners wanted segregation

77. Byers, A Study of the Negro in Military Service, 167-79; Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 696-702; Arnold Rose, 'Army Policies Toward Negro Soldiers: A Report on a Success and a Failure', Journal of Social Issues, 111,4, 1947
78. For his troubles, Levy was courtmartialled, reduced to the rank of private, and given four months hard labour; see The Nation, September 18 and November 6, 1943, and Pittsburgh Courier, September 18 and November 20, 1943.
79. War Department, Special Service Division, Research Branch, Report 18, 'Attitudes of White Enlisted Men Toward Sharing Facilities With Negro Troops', July 30, 1942, War Department, Planning Survey 47, NARG 330.

of the races.<sup>80</sup> Later opinion polls found little change. While about two out of five white enlisted men viewed plans for the greater use of black troops favourably, four out of five were opposed to the idea of having blacks and whites in the same unit even if they did not eat in the same mess or sleep in the same barracks.<sup>81</sup>

The survey of the units to which black platoons were attached, although only of the attitudes of white officers and N.C.O.s, indicated that experience of integration in wartime could bring radical changes in men's feelings.<sup>82</sup> Over 60 per cent of the 250 men questioned had viewed integration unfavourably prior to the event. After serving with the black soldiers over 70 per cent had changed their minds and now favoured the experiment. More than 80 per cent thought the black men had performed very well in combat, 17 per cent said fairly well, and only one per cent said not so well. Equally important was the opinion of the 73 per cent of the officers and 60 per cent of the N.C.O.s that the black and white soldiers had got along together very well. Seven

80. War Department, Special Service Division, Research Branch, Report 43, 'Attitudes of Enlisted Men toward Negroes for Air Force Duty', November 30, 1942, and Report 46, 'What the Soldier Thinks', 1943, p.30, both in War Department 47, NARG 330.
81. War Dept., Troop Information and Education Division, Troop Attitudes Research Branch, Special memo 21-309C, July 14, 1947, 'Attitudes of Officers and Enlisted Men Toward Certain Minority Groups'; Dept. of Army, Office of Chief of Staff, Attitude Research Branch, Special Memo. 40-309C, April 14, 1949, 'Supplementary Report on Attitudes of White Enlisted Men Toward Serving with Negro Enlisted Men', both in War Dept. 47, NARG 330.
82. All the information which follows is from War Dept., Troop Information and Education Division, Report B-157, July 3, 1945, 'Opinions About Negro Infantry Platoons in White Companies of 7 Divisions', War Dept. 47, NARG 330.



per cent of the officers and 36 per cent of the sergeants said fairly well. (The lesser degree of enthusiasm among N.C.O.s was presumably due to their closer contact with the enlisted men.) The survey also found that those in closest contact with the black platoons, serving in the same company or regiment, viewed the experiment much more favourable than those with no contact at all.

While it is impossible to say how permanent such changes of attitude were or how the experience had effected soldiers' views on race relations in general, the polls of opinion in the mixed companies seemed to show that white soldiers found integration less objectionable than they might previously have imagined. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that the Afro-Americans were sharing with them all the hazards of combat: misery likes company. Certainly it was not as easy for the Army to maintain segregation on grounds of morale or efficiency after the Battle of the Bulge.

Surprisingly, in view of its policies at the beginning of the war, the Navy provided another case in favour of integration. Although the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, had accepted a wider use of black personnel in 1942, he did so reluctantly and he remained a firm advocate of segregation.<sup>83</sup> However, there were individuals within the Navy Department who were committed to full and equal utilization of black manpower. The only way this could be achieved within a segregated naval force was to crew ships entirely with blacks. In 1944 Navy Department officials persuaded Knox to accept just this and two ships, the U.S.S. Mason and the submarine chaser PC 1264, were manned with all-black

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83. Dalziume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 53-55.

complements.<sup>84</sup> This policy was carried further when Knox died in 1944 and was replaced by the more liberal James Forrestal. Forrestal immediately accepted the programme for integrating the crews of 25 auxiliary vessels and later, the integration of the whole auxiliary fleet.<sup>85</sup> In 1945 he appointed Lester B. Granger, the head of the National Urban League, as adviser on policies regarding the use of black sailors. Granger found that his opinions were not only listened to, but acted upon, and in 1947 all restrictions on naval assignments for Afro-Americans were lifted on all ships. The policy of total integration was confirmed in 1949.<sup>86</sup>

While the Navy had the most progressive policy at the end of the war, the Air Force began to move along similar lines as soon as it became an independent service in September 1947. The new Secretary of the Air Force, Stuart Symington, was aware of the waste of man-power resulting from segregation and supported employment by merit alone. He authorized members of his staff to draw up plans for integration which were finalised in 1949.<sup>87</sup>

The Army alone clung to its wartime policies. On October 4,

84. Nichols, Breakthrough on the Color Front, 54-58; Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 588; Reddick, 'The Negro in the U.S. Navy during World War II'.
85. Nichols, Breakthrough on the Color Front, 58-59; Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 101-3.
86. Lester B. Granger, 'Racial Democracy - The Navy Way', Common Ground, Winter 1947; Nichols, Breakthrough on the Color Front, 63; President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, Freedom to Serve, Washington, D.C., 1950, 5-16.
87. Nichols, Breakthrough on the Color Front, 74-77; Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 177-78.

1945, a board of officers chaired by General Alvan C. Gillem, was directed to prepare a broad policy statement on the use of black troops. In its report presented in 1946, the Gillem Board recognized 'that there is a limit to the amount of manpower available in the nation to form a modern military organization capable of prosecuting a major war' and recommended 'that every effort be expended to utilize efficiently every qualified available individual in a position in the military structure for which he is best suited.'<sup>88</sup> The report, somewhat optimistically, went on to say that the Afro-American was 'a bona fide citizen enjoying the privileges conferred by citizenship under the Constitution': as such he was obliged to defend his country in time of peril.

After spelling out the links between citizenship and armed service and acknowledging the Afro-American's equality, the Gillem Board did not suggest the end of segregation, at least not in so many words. It did, however, rescind the 1940 statement of policy, call for greater numbers of black officers and N.C.Os, maintain the policy of integrated recreational facilities, and suggested that the use of black platoons with larger white units be continued. The Board still insisted on a ten per cent quota of blacks in the Army although that had already proved to be an obstacle in the way of full utilization of black manpower.

The report received a mixed reception from Afro-Americans.

Some felt that the Army was at least moving in the right direction, others that the new policies were little more than diluted jim

88. The full text of the Report, War Department circular No. 124, April 27, 1946, was quoted by the Chicago Defender, March 9, 1946. It is summarized in Paul C. Davis, 'The Negro in the Armed Forces', Virginia Quarterly Review, XXIV, 4, 1948.



crow.<sup>89</sup> However, they all agreed with President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights, established in 1946, which said that, 'prejudice in any area is an ugly, undemocratic phenomena; in the armed services, where all men run the risk of death, it is particularly repugnant.'<sup>90</sup> Truman incorporated the Committee's attack on discrimination in the forces in his Civil Rights Message on February 2, 1948, but faced with an unresponsive Congress and the threat of a militant civil disobedience campaign, he was forced to take further action.<sup>91</sup>

The civil disobedience campaign was led by the black trade unionist, A. Philip Randolph, and a black former army chaplain, Grant Reynolds. Both had fought for the end of segregation in the forces during the war, but their appeal to young Afro-Americans to resist the draft was much more radical than anything they had done previously.<sup>92</sup> Although they were described as extremists and were advised that Afro-Americans who refused to serve in the Army sacrificed their right 'to demand the abolition of the evils that keep him a second-class citizen', their appeal had some success.<sup>93</sup> An NAACP poll among black students found that 71 per cent supported

89. Baltimore Afro-American, March 9, 1946 and Chicago Defender, March 23, 1946.

90. President's Committee on Civil Rights, To Secure These Rights, Washington, D.C., 1947, 41.

91. Civil Rights Message, 80th Congress, 2nd Session, House Document 516.

92. See previous chapter.

93. Pittsburgh Courier, April 10, 1948; The Crisis, May 1948.

the campaign.<sup>94</sup> At an angry meeting with Truman in March, Randolph told the President that throughout the country he had met blacks 'not wanting to shoulder a gun to fight for democracy abroad unless democracy was obtained at home.'<sup>95</sup>

Randolph re-iterated his position clearly and forcefully before the Senate Armed Service Committee later the same month. When warned at those hearings that his actions could lead to a charge of treason, Randolph replied that he was prepared to accept that. He also expected 'country-wide terrorism against Negroes who refused to participate in the armed forces' but he felt both were the price one had to pay for democracy.<sup>96</sup> Although the NAACP opposed the civil disobedience campaign, Walter White re-affirmed the Association's opposition to discrimination and segregation in the forces in a telegram to the Senate Committee.<sup>97</sup> Other black leaders, including Lester B. Granger, warned that they would no longer advise the government on troop policies so long as segregation continued.<sup>98</sup>

This mounting pressure prior to the 1948 presidential election persuaded Truman to issue an Executive Order, the third relating to civil rights in seven years, which declared that 'there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in

94. Murray, The Negro Handbook, 1946-47, 206.

95. New York Times, March 23, 1948.

96. 80th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate, Congressional Record, Vol. 94, 66, 4416-4422; New York Times, April 1, 1948; Pittsburgh Courier, April 10, 1948.

97. Congressional Record, Vol. 94, 66, 4421; New York Times, August 8, 1948.

98. New York Times, April 27, 1948.

the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.'<sup>99</sup> The Order authorized a Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, (the Fahy Committee), to see that this policy was implemented. The civil disobedience campaign was then called off.<sup>100</sup>

The Executive Order has been described as 'an excellent political move by Truman to gain Negro votes on Election Day' which did not promise integration but an ill-defined generality.<sup>101</sup> However, it is clear from the statements made by Truman prior to July 26, and from his instructions to the Fahy Committee, that he saw no difference between discrimination and segregation and intended to end both.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, any political gains he made amongst Afro-Americans were more than off-set by losses amongst Southern Democrats. This latter point became quite evident later in the year when the 'Dixiecrats' broke away from the main Democratic Party. The States' Rights Party they formed stood for 'the segregation of the races and the racial integrity of each

99. Executive Order 9981, July 26, 1948. The full text is quoted in the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, Freedom to Serve, Washington, D.C., 1950.
100. New York Times, July 27, 1948; Pittsburgh Courier, August 28, 1948; The Crisis, September 1948.
101. Stillman, Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces, 43.
102. New York Times, May 27, 1948; Freedom to Serve; Dalfiume, 'The Fahy Committee and Desegregation of the Armed Forces', The Historian, XXXI, 1, November 1968; and Monroe Billington, 'Freedom to Serve: The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, 1949-1950', Journal of Negro History, LI, 4, October 1966.



race.<sup>103</sup> Truman was, of course, re-elected in 1948, but only just.

Rather than a piece of political opportunism, Truman's Executive Order was the culmination of the process which had begun in 1940. The second World War had tested American military institutions and had found them lacking. Not only had segregation in the forces hampered the full utilization of all available manpower, together with open prejudice it had also threatened the morale of that ten per cent of the population which was black and had tarnished America's democratic pretensions. Changes in policy and practice had been brought about as a result of wartime experiences and the move towards integration had begun. The Navy and the Air Force had both accepted integration in the immediate post-war years, the Executive Order made sure that their plans were carried out. Although the Army continued to be reluctant, the presidential directive and the Fahy Committee forced it to accept change. Even so the final impetus was again supplied by war in 1950 when America entered the Korean struggle.

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103. States' Rights Party Platform, quoted in Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, National Party Platforms, London 1966, 468.

Chapter 4The Impact of World War II on the Economic Situation of the Afro-American

'The war years,' wrote Robert C. Weaver in 1946, 'have been unique in the Negro's economic history.'<sup>1</sup> During that period a number of forces combined to bring about greater industrial and occupational opportunities than Afro-Americans had previously experienced. Black protest and the necessities of war forced the federal government to order the full utilization of all available manpower and an end to discrimination in employment. While such action brought about some economic gains for blacks, the greatest force for change was the general expansion of industry and the shortage of labour which arose as more men and women entered the armed forces. These manpower shortages gradually forced white employers and workers to forget their prejudices, if only temporarily, and to accept black employees. By the end of the war the quantity and quality of jobs open to Afro-Americans had increased dramatically. However, the war emergency did not root out all discrimination and there was every indication that the blacks would lose the gains they had made once the war had ended.

When America began to prepare for war in 1940, the situation for Afro-Americans in industry, as in the armed services, was far from promising. Because of their second-class status in society, which meant that they were last hired and first fired,

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1. Negro Labor: A National Problem, New York 1946, 236.

black Americans had been hit particularly hard by the Depression. This was especially true in the industrial North where many Afro-Americans were comparative newcomers. In 1937 the percentage of blacks in the North who were unemployed was 38.9 while for whites the figure was 18.1. In the South, where the majority of blacks still worked on farms, the percentages were 18 and 16 respectively.<sup>2</sup> Even in the South, however, the situation of Afro-Americans could be appalling. In Norfolk, Virginia, in 1935, 80 per cent of the black work force were on relief and in Atlanta, Georgia, 65 per cent were in the same position.<sup>3</sup>

Roosevelt's New Deal, by virtue of its general libertarian and humanitarian policies, did help many people irrespective of colour. Yet, as Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., pointed out, 'Roosevelt's actual commitments to the American Negro were slim.'<sup>4</sup> Conscious of his need of Southern Democratic support, F.D.R. left the plight of the Afro-American to the crusading zeal of his wife, Eleanor, and to the heads of various government agencies. Men like Harold Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior, Will Alexander, head of the Farm Security Administration, and Harry Hopkins, of the Works

2. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States, New York 1969 edition, 599, and Richard Sterner, The Negro's Share: A Study of Income, Consumption, Housing and Public Assistance, New York 1943, 39-45.
3. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 496, and Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 300.
4. Fishel, 'The Negro in the New Deal Era', in Bernard Sternsher ed., The Negro in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution, 1930-1945, Chicago 1969, 8.



Progress Administration, were able to lay special emphasis within their own departments on the needs of the Afro-American. They also persuaded the President to break with tradition and to appoint a number of black advisers, the 'Black Cabinet'.<sup>5</sup> The participation in government of Robert C. Weaver, William H. Hastie, Mary McCleod Bethune, and many others guaranteed that blacks were considered in at least some of the government policies. It was one thing to formulate policies at the federal level but quite another to implement them in local areas where even those agencies headed by men sympathetic to Afro-Americans were administered in accordance with regional racial practices.

The National Recovery Administration had no sympathetic person at its head nor any adviser on black affairs. Thus it laid down no minimum wage codes for domestic workers, an occupational area dominated by Afro-Americans. Some officials of the agency even applied a dual industrial wage code with one minimum for whites and another, lower one, for blacks. In any event, many employers discovered that 'the codes could be evaded and ignored with impunity.'<sup>6</sup> The Agricultural Adjustment Administration also ran foul of local racial prejudices, and black farmers, particularly in the South, did not receive their fair share of the AAA benefits. In the 1930s approximately 192,000 black farmers were 'displaced'

5. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 530-34; Allan Morrison, 'The Secret Papers of FDR', in Sternsher, The Negro in Depression and War, 66-77; and Samuel Krislov, The Negro in Federal Employment: The Quest for Equal Opportunity, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1967, 23-24.

6. Raymond Wolters, Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problems of Economic Recovery, Westport, Connecticut, 1970, 213.

but the Farm Security Administration only resettled 1,400.<sup>7</sup> Even agencies such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the National Youth Administration, which operated with a minimum of discrimination, normally conformed to local customs.<sup>8</sup>

If the New Deal had been free of prejudice and discrimination, it is still unlikely that it could have helped all Afro-Americans, for it had not fully succeeded in easing the plight of whites. In January 1940 there were still seven million white, and one million black Americans unemployed.<sup>9</sup> The large pool of white labour meant that in the early mobilization for war, black job applicants could be, and were, overlooked. When manpower shortages did arise in areas of concentrated black population, some employers still refused to employ them and instead imported white workers from other localities. Because of this, from April to October 1940, the rate of unemployment amongst whites dropped from 17.7 to 13.0 per cent while among blacks it remained static at 22 per cent.<sup>10</sup> The proportion of blacks in the ranks of the unemployed rose as whites found new work: in Philadelphia in April 1940, 24.8 per

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7. Wolters, Negroes and the Great Depression, 78-79.
  8. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 534-39; John A. Salmond, 'The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro', in Sternsher, The Negro in Depression and War, 78-93.
  9. Bureau of Employment Security, Social Security Board, Employment Security Review, IX, 7, July 1942, 4; Florence Murray, The Negro Handbook, 1942, New York 1942, 147; Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On?, 141-42.
  10. Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 606; Social Security Agency, Negro Workers and the National Defense Program, Washington, D.C., September 1941; President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, Minorities in Defense, Washington, D.C., 1941.



cent of the total unemployed were black; by April the next year this had risen to 29.8 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

Far from discouraging such trends, the United States Employment Service actually encouraged them. Like many other government bodies, although it did have a Negro Placement Service Unit, the Employment Service had no clear-cut policy with regard to blacks. As a result regional offices largely followed local racial patterns. Not only did they accept requests from employers which specified 'whites only' but often they also classified black workers in 'traditional' occupations regardless of the individual's skills or training.<sup>12</sup> A young black man, qualified as a mechanic, told his wife that there was no point in registering for work because 'they don't hire colored people in factories for National Defense.'<sup>13</sup> As well as discrimination in the Employment Service, discrimination in defence training also helped to reduce the opportunities for employment open to blacks. In the 18 states with separate school systems where blacks made up 22.3 per cent of the population, only 6.6 per cent of the \$6,591,741 allotted for defence training was used in equipping black schools and as late as 1942 only four per cent of those who benefited

11. Negro Workers and the National Defense Program, 14.
12. 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', Chapter IX of the unpublished and incomplete History of the Mobilization of Labor for War Production, prepared by William J. Schuck, 1946, Manuscript in War Manpower Commission, National Archives Record Group 211, 16-20, 25-26.
13. Letter to Eric Seberite, April 1, 1941, with regard to his radio programmes on labour problems in the national emergency from wife of the man in question, War Manpower Commission, NARG 211.



from the training programme were black.<sup>14</sup> Those jobs which Afro-Americans were lucky enough to get were, therefore, largely of the unskilled, hot, and heavy variety. From October 1940 to March 1941 the greatest numbers of Afro-Americans placed in jobs by the Employment Service were in chemical industries, ship-building, and iron and steel works. The smallest number, a mere 68, were found work in the aircraft industry.<sup>15</sup>

The aircraft companies provided a good example of the obstacles faced by Afro-Americans at the beginning of the war. The industry was a comparatively new one which had not used blacks in any great numbers prior to 1940. The work was of the type not generally given to Afro-Americans, being clean and light, and requiring skilled or semi-skilled labour. The policies of the aircraft corporations also limited the possibilities of employment for blacks. They were summed up by the head of industrial relations of the Vultee Aircraft company when, in response to a query from the National Negro Congress, he said,<sup>16</sup>

I regret to say that it is not the policy of this company to employ people other than of the Caucasian race. Consequently, we are not in a position to offer your people employment at this time.

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14. Memo., John W. Studebaker, Commissioner of Office of Education, to Paul V. McNutt, Chairman, War Manpower Commission, September 1942, and copy of Fair Employment Practices Committee hearings on discrimination in defense training, April 13, 1942, both in Office of Education, file 40, NARG 12.
15. Murray, Negro Handbook, 1942, 88.
16. W. Gerard Tuttle to National Negro Congress, August 2, 1940, in Special Committee of the Senate to Investigate the National Defense Program, 876, NARG 46. See too letter from Robert C. Weaver to Harry S. Truman, chairman of the Senate Committee, June 23, 1941, same file, in which he singles out the aircraft industry for discrimination and names Vultee, Consolidated Aircraft, Glenn Martin, Boeing, and Douglass.

Because of such attitudes, there were only 240 Afro-Americans in the entire aircraft industry in 1940 and the Fair Employment Practices Committee found, at its hearings in Los Angeles in 1941, that of the 6,000 people employed in California by Vultee Aircraft none were black and that, of Douglass Aircraft's 33,000 employees, only ten were Afro-Americans.<sup>17</sup>

That such discrimination was common throughout all industry was illustrated by the response to a query sent out to 'hundreds of industrialists with large war contracts' by the U.S. Employment Service in January 1942. When asked whether they would employ Afro-Americans, 51 per cent said they did not and would not and only half of the remainder said, without reservation, that they would employ them.<sup>18</sup> Equally indicative of the discrimination faced by blacks was the fact that from September 1940 to September 1941 blacks comprised only 1.6 per cent of the total of men deferred from armed service because they were 'engaged in occupations necessary to the national health, safety, and interest.'<sup>19</sup> The proportion among those deferred because they were engaged in national defence work was even smaller - 0.65 per cent.

Afro-Americans immediately began to fight for entry into the war industries. 'The struggle of the Negro for equitable

17. FEPC Hearings, Los Angeles, October 20-21, 1941, FEPC 408, NARG 228; Weaver, Negro Labor, 109-118; Council for Democracy, The Negro and Defense: A Test of Democracy, New York 1941, 7-10.
18. Quoted in Earl Brown and George R. Leighton, The Negro and the War, Public Affairs Committee, Pamphlet 71, New York 1942, 9, and President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, First Report, July 1943 - December 1944, Washington, D.C., 1945, 89.
19. Selective Service System, Selective Service in Peace Time: First Report of the Director of Selective Service, 1940-41, Washington, D.C., 1942, 258.

and decent treatment in the national defense program,' was seen as 'another aspect of the race's continuing battle for full manhood.'<sup>20</sup> The NAACP and the National Urban League strove for equality of opportunity in both the armed forces and in industry. They were joined by organizations such as the Committee on Negro Americans in Defense Industries and the Allied Councils for Defense which concentrated on discrimination in employment. The Committee for the Participation of Negroes in National Defense, led by Rayford Logan, aimed to 'serve as a medium for co-ordinating the efforts of all Negroes and all Negro organizations for national defense.'<sup>21</sup> To that end it held conferences and meetings, organized local branches, and lobbied government departments. It mobilized support for a Senate resolution, S.R. 75, introduced by Senator Wagner, which would have authorized a Senate committee 'to make a full and complete investigation into the participation of Negro citizens in all industrial and other phases of the national-defense program.'<sup>22</sup> Such a committee would have been empowered to recommend legislation and other governmental action in order to end discrimination. However, a committee to deal specifically with discrimination was thought unnecessary by government officials because of the existence of the Special Committee of the Senate to Investigate the National Defense Program. The problem of racial discrimination was referred to that body although its chairman, Harry S. Truman, frankly admitted that the committee was overloaded with work and would not

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20. 'For Manhood in National Defense', The Crisis, December 1940.

21. Appeal in the Pittsburgh Courier, December 14, 1940.

22. S.R. 75, February 13, 1941, in Special Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, 1941-48, file 875, NARG 46.



be able to hear witnesses for some time.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, the Truman Committee did manage to hold a Preliminary Conference on Racial Discrimination on June 25, 1941, which was attended by several blacks including Mary McCleod Bethune, Colonel Campbell C. Johnson, John P. Davis, of the National Negro Congress, and Rayford Logan.<sup>24</sup> In an angry speech Logan attacked the government for its lack of action and accused it of giving Afro-Americans the 'run-around'. On the very same day as the conference, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 which authorized a Fair Employment Practices Committee to see that discrimination in defence industries was ended. His order, which virtually duplicated Senate Resolution 75, was not so much the result of conferences but more of a threat of dramatic protest by A. Philip Randolph.

Randolph is one of the most interesting and yet most ignored figures of contemporary Afro-American history.<sup>25</sup> Born in Florida in 1889 and still alive and active today, he was a central figure during World War II when he developed the strategy of mass protest which has since become commonplace in the civil rights movement. As a young man, he and his co-editor of The

23. Memo. April 30, 1941 and July 2, 1941, Special Senate Committee, 875. Also letter Walter White to Senator Thomas, April 29, 1941, file 876, and White, A Man Called White, 189.
24. Preliminary Conference on Racial Discrimination, June 25, 1941, Special Committee of the Senate, 875, NARG 46.
25. Unfortunately there is as yet no biography or autobiography of Randolph. My brief sketch of his career is based on articles in Ebony, Vol 13, November 1958, The United Teacher, May 4, 1969, and Glass Horizons, June 1960, as well as material supplied by the A. Philip Randolph Institute, New York.

Messenger, Chandler Owen, became known for their socialism and for their opposition to participation in World War I. Randolph's anti-war speeches led to a brief stay in jail in 1918, and his writings earned The Messenger the title of 'the most able and the most dangerous of all Negro publications.'<sup>26</sup> During the inter-war years Randolph devoted himself to trade union organization and gained prominence as the leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters formed in 1925. Not only did he secure recognition of the union from the railroads, but in 1936 he also took it into the American Federation of Labor as an international union.<sup>27</sup> From then on he and Milton Webster, the vice-president of the Brotherhood, consistently attended the AF of L's annual conventions where they attacked discrimination in both the unions and all other spheres of life. Because of his position in the labour movement, he was elected president of the National Negro Congress, an organization which hoped to build a black mass movement by working with and through trade unions. After four years, Randolph left the Congress in 1940 because it had become dominated by the communists, with whom he had been feuding since the 1920s.<sup>28</sup> The following year he achieved its aim of a black mass movement in the March on Washington

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26. A. Mitchell Palmer, Attorney General, Radicalism and Sedition among Negroes as Reflected in Their Publications, Exhibit 10, Senate Documents, Vol. 12, 66th. Congress, 1st Session, 1919, Washington, D.C., 1919, 172.
27. Brailsford R. Brazeal, The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: Its Origins and Development, New York and London, 1946.
28. Black Worker, the official organ of the BSCP, May 1940, and Brazeal, The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 132.

Movement which resulted in Executive Order 8802.<sup>29</sup>

In January 1941, Randolph called on his fellow Afro-Americans to register their 'uncompromising demand for the right of Negro People to get their just share of work on all national defense work and also to be properly and equitably integrated into the armed forces of our country.'<sup>30</sup> Later that month, in an article headed 'Defense Rotten', he suggested that 10,000 Afro-Americans march on Washington to 'DEMAND THE RIGHT TO WORK AND FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY.'<sup>31</sup> At first there was little favourable reaction from other black leaders until it became clear that only such a protest would produce results from the government. In March 1941, a conference on Negro Participation in National Defense was held in Washington and Walter White wrote to the President that 'it was the unanimous opinion of those present' that nothing short of presidential action would meet the situation.<sup>32</sup> In response to his request for a meeting to discuss the subject of discrimination, however, White was told by F.D.R.'s secretary that the President was too busy and that he should consult Sidney Hillman of the Office of Production Management.<sup>33</sup> Faced with this type of rebuff, White, like Logan, felt that blacks were getting the run-around and in despair he, Logan, Lester B. Granger, of the Urban

29. The history of the March on Washington Movement is detailed in Herbert Garfinkel, When Negroes March: The March on Washington Movement in the Organizational Politics for FEPC, Glencoe, Illinois, 1959, reprinted with a preface by Lewis M. Killian, New York 1969. Although a good account of the MOWM, Garfinkel's work lacks the insights provided by government records.
30. Black Worker, January 1941..
31. Pittsburgh Courier, January 25, 1941.
32. White to F.D.R., March 31, 1941, 93:4, FDRL; and Pittsburgh Courier, March 22, 1941.
33. Edwin M. Watson to White, April 8, 1941. 93:4 FDRL. A six-point programme was submitted to the OPM, Pittsburgh Courier, April 12, 1941.



League, and others, joined Randolph in a national March on Washington Movement Committee which called on 10,000 Afro-Americans to demonstrate in the capital on July 1st.<sup>34</sup>

Sidney Hillman did act on receiving the complaints from Afro-Americans. On April 11, 1941 at the instruction of the Office of Production Management, he sent a letter to all holders of defence contracts asking for the removal of all bans on the employment of 'qualified and competent Negro workers' and pointed out that 'every available source of labor capable of producing defense material must be tapped in the present emergency.'<sup>35</sup> At the same time he created the Negro Employment and Training Branch and the Minority Groups Branch in the Labor Division of the Office of Production Management and named Robert C. Weaver and Will Alexander as their respective heads.<sup>36</sup> This did not appease the black leaders who insisted on a meeting with Roosevelt and on much stronger action. The aim of those in the MOWM was quite simply to force the President to issue an executive order abolishing discrimination in government, in industry, and in the armed forces, by exerting mass pressure. Similar demonstrations had been staged before. In World War I a parade had been led by the NAACP

34. 'Call to Negro America', Black Worker, May 1941; Courier, May 17, 1941. White explained his support in a letter to John Temple Graves, quoted by Graves in 'The Southern Negro and the War Crisis', Virginia Quarterly Review, XVIII, 4, 1942.
35. Hillman to all holders of defense contracts, April 11, 1941, quoted in FEPC, Minorities in Defense, 11. A similar statement was sent to the Office of Education, April 26, 1941, ordering the end of discrimination in defense training programmes, Office of Education, 40, NARG 12.
36. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', History of the Mobilization of Labor for War Production, War Manpower Commission, NARG 211, 4-6.

to protest against race riots and discrimination, and in the 1930s the 'Jobs-for-Negroes' movement had campaigned for the employment of blacks in ghetto shops and stores.<sup>37</sup> What was unusual about the MOWM was the exclusion of white participants and its proposed scale. Randolph made a point of asking sympathetic whites not to take part:<sup>38</sup>

We call not upon our white friends to march with us. There are some things Negroes must do alone. This is our fight and we must see it through.

He later pointed out, quite rightly, that an all-black movement would 'create faith by Negroes in Negroes', but an additional reason was that the exclusion of whites would prevent the infiltration of communists. While black communists were not barred, the MOWM would have nothing to do with the Party because 'its policy was rule or ruin.'<sup>39</sup>

White this racially exclusive tactic may have cost the whole-hearted support of the interracial NAACP and Urban League, it did not detract from its mass appeal.<sup>40</sup> By the end of May the number of marchers called for had risen to 50,000 and Randolph,

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37. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 475, 539.

38. Black Worker, March 1941.

39. Proceedings of MOWM Conference, Detroit, September 26-27, 1942, in Schomburg Collection, and Charles Radford Lawrence, 'Negro Organizations in Crisis: Depression, New Deal, World War II', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1952, 300.

40. As Garfinkel points out, there was no mention of the MOW in either Crisis or Opportunity from January to July, 1941 even though local branches were active in the Movement's organization, When Negroes March, 39-40.

as national director, warned President Roosevelt that between ten and fifty thousand were likely to take part.<sup>41</sup> Walter White wrote that the proposal to march on Washington 'had fired the imagination of the disheartened Negroes throughout the nation', and Randolph was even more enthusiastic. In a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt asking her to address the marchers on July 1st, he said,<sup>42</sup>

nothing has arisen in the life of the Negro since Emancipation which has gripped their hearts and caught their imagination more than the girding of our country for national defense without according them the recognition and opportunity as citizens, consumers, and workers they feel justified in expecting.

The initial reaction of the government was to attempt to have the March called off. Roosevelt said that he could 'imagine nothing that will stir up race hatred and slow up progress more than a march of that kind.'<sup>43</sup> At the suggestion of one of his secretaries, Stephen Early, he had his wife, Eleanor, and the Mayor of New York, Fiorello La Guardia, meet Randolph and White on June 13 and ask them not to go through with their demonstration.<sup>44</sup> The two Afro-Americans not only refused to abandon their campaign, but also managed to convince Mrs. Roosevelt that they were in the

41. Pittsburgh Courier, May 31, 1941, and Randolph to FDR, May 29, 1941, 93:4 FDRL.

42. Randolph to Eleanor Roosevelt, June 3, 1941, OASW 215, NARG 107. White, A Man Called White, 189.

43. Memo. from FDR, June 7, 1941, 93:5 FDRL.

44. Memo. Early to FDR, June 6, 1941. Details of the meeting are in White, A Man Called White, 189-90.



right. As a result, she promised to intervene on their behalf and to arrange a meeting with the President. The following day a statement was released from the White House containing the text of a letter, dated June 12, to William Knudsen and Sidney Hillman, the co-directors of the Office of Production Management. The letter recognized the extent of discrimination in the defence programme and re-affirmed the policy of full utilization of manpower as expressed by Hillman in April. It went on to say,<sup>45</sup>

No nation combatting the increasing threat of totalitarianism can afford arbitrarily to exclude large segments of its population from its defense industries. Even more important is it for us to strengthen our unity and morale by refuting at home the very theories which we are fighting abroad.

However, while seeming to agree with the arguments presented by Afro-Americans (and the Military Participation Ratio theory), Roosevelt left it to employers, workers, and the OPM to see that changes were made. The leaders of the MOWM still insisted on a meeting with the President and an executive order.

On June 18, Roosevelt finally acceded to their demands and held a meeting with White and Randolph at the White House. Also present were the Assistant Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson, the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, Hillman, and Knudsen. When informed by White that no less than 100,000 people would take part in the March, Roosevelt asked what he should do. He was told that the blacks wanted 'an unequivocal executive order to

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45. Roosevelt to Hillman and Knudsen, June 12, 1941, quoted in Minorities in Defense, 14. For the black reaction see Black Worker, June 1941 and Chicago Defender, June 21, 1941.

effectuate the speediest possible abolition of discrimination in war industries and the armed services.<sup>46</sup> The President appeared to acquiesce to these demands and he got Randolph and White to draft the kind of order they had in mind and leave it with him to consider. Knudsen had made his opposition to such an order clear at the conference and Patterson and the Under Secretary of the Navy, Forrestal, also had strong reservations. They felt that an order abolishing racial discrimination in industry would arouse, rather than allay, racial prejudice and that it would be difficult to implement.<sup>47</sup> The black leaders, however, had made it obvious that they would not accept anything less.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 commanding an end to discrimination in defence industries on June 25, 1941, and the MOW was called off.

Obviously, the Afro-Americans had not achieved all their aims. No executive action was taken on discrimination in the armed forces, nor, at least not specifically, in defence training, in government, and within trade unions. However, Executive Order 8802 stated national policy to be against 'discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or Government because of race, creed, color, or national origin.' To that end, it did order the end of discrimination in defence training programmes, the inclusion of a non-discrimination clause in all defence contracts,

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46. White, A Man Called White, 192.

47. Memo., Patterson and Forrestal to FDR, June 24, 1941, 93:5 FDRL.

48. White, A Man Called White, 193.

and the formation of a Committee on Fair Employment Practices to 'receive and investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the provisions of this order' and to 'take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds valid.'<sup>49</sup> Thus, rather than several orders dealing with discrimination in employment, the blacks were given one which seemed all-encompassing. Dalfiume has argued that because several orders were not issued, the postponing of the March on Washington marked a victory for Roosevelt and that the President had decided from the start on the concessions he would make to black demands.<sup>50</sup> This seems unfair on White and Randolph who refused to accept an emasculated version of their draft order and who fought, with a certain amount of success, for an order with some power. The blacks were also well aware, from their meeting with Roosevelt and his advisers in 1940, that action against segregation in the forces was unlikely to be taken at that time. Their prime concern in 1941 was to ensure black participation in the war industries and as far as Randolph was concerned, their main objective had been secured.<sup>51</sup>

While the results of the MOWM may seem puny to present-day writers, in 1941 they were seen as a huge success. Pointing out that this was the first executive order relating to civil rights since Reconstruction, the Chicago Defender called it 'one of the most significant pronouncements that has been made in the interests of the Negro for more than a century', and Mrs. Mary

49. Executive Order 8802, June 25, 1941, Appendix I.

50. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 117-22.

51. Black Worker, August 1941.



McCleod Bethune said it came 'as a refreshing shower in a thirsty land.'<sup>52</sup> Coupled with this enthusiasm were reservations. The President of the Pittsburgh Courier, Ira Lewis, wrote,<sup>53</sup>

If this order is made workable and effective, the thirteen million Negroes in the United States can very well proclaim it to be an Economic Emancipation Proclamation. [*italics mine*]

The Crisis pointed out that the Order was not popular with employers and unions, and that it was up to Afro-Americans to see that it worked.<sup>54</sup> When Roosevelt named the members of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, the Pittsburgh Courier, although pleased, felt that the recommendations of White and Randolph had been ignored, and therefore that the Committee was not truly representative.<sup>55</sup> Randolph disagreed. Praising the President on his appointments he wrote, 'You have gone right down the line with the Negroes.'<sup>56</sup> Whatever the reservations held by Afro-Americans, they were all aware that the threat of mass action had brought results. Randolph and the March on Washington Movement

52. Chicago Defender, July 12, 1941, and Bethune to FDR, June 26, 1941, 93:5 FDRL.
53. Lewis to FDR, June 28, 1941, 93:5 FDRL.
54. The Crisis, August 1941.
55. Pittsburgh Courier, July 26, 1941. The original members of FEPC were: Chairman Mark Ethridge, editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal; William Green, President of the AFL; Philip Murray, President of the CIO; David Sarnoff, President of R.C.A.; and two blacks, Earl Dickerson a lawyer and Chicago alderman, and Milton Webster, vice-president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In May 1942, the size of the Committee was increased to seven by the addition of Malcolm S. McLean, president of Hampton Institute, who replaced Ethridge as chairman.
56. Telegram, Randolph to FDR, July 22, 1941. Earlier Randolph had suggested La Guardia, Wendell Willkie, and Homer Brown as well as Sarnoff and Webster for membership, Telegram, July 14, 1941, both in 93:5 FDRL.

symbolized the militancy of blacks during World War II, and 'in recognition of the dramatic culmination of his years of effort in the mobilization of Negro mass opinion in 1941,' Randolph was awarded the Spingarn medal at the 33rd NAACP convention.<sup>57</sup>

Although the march was postponed, the Movement continued in being under Randolph's leadership. It immediately adopted a five point programme to continue existing local committees, to collect facts and present them to the FEPC, to develop more local committees to gain pressure power, to gather information about job opportunities for unemployed blacks, and to encourage Afro-Americans to apply for jobs in industries with defence contracts.<sup>58</sup> As the war progressed, the militancy of the MOWM declined. Although Randolph warned that a march could still take place after the transfer of FEPC to the War Manpower Commission under Paul McNutt, he had earlier spoken of a 'non-march pressure campaign.'<sup>59</sup> It has even been suggested that the original threat of a march was in fact a bluff and that the black leaders had little or no idea of how many people would take part.<sup>60</sup> If this were so, it is surprising both that Roosevelt did not call it and that White and

57. Citation in James Weldon Johnson Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale. See also, Garfinkel, When Negroes March, 62.
58. Chicago Defender, July 26, 1941.
59. Pittsburgh Courier, August 1, 1942; Baltimore Afro-American September 26, 1942; and Randolph, 'Why Should We March?', Survey Graphic, XXXI, 11, November 1942.
60. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 121, and Garfinkel, When Negroes March, 60, 62.

Randolph were so insistent on an Executive Order.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, three rallies were held in 1942, after America had entered the war, which demonstrated something of the Movement's following. On July 16, a crowd estimated at between 15,000 and 25,000 heard a number of speakers in Madison Square Gardens, New York.<sup>62</sup> Ten days later between ten and 20,000 gathered in Chicago and a third large meeting was held in St. Louis in August.<sup>63</sup>

Only once job opportunities for blacks had increased and America was fully engaged in total war, did this support fall away. When, in 1943, Randolph adopted the plan for a non-violent protest campaign directed at segregation in areas other than the armed forces and defence industries, he was accused of using the 'most dangerous demagoguery on record.'<sup>64</sup> A Pittsburgh Courier poll in 1942 had found 53.1 per cent of those asked opposed to a march on Washington: in 1943 70.6 per cent were against the civil disobedience campaign.<sup>65</sup> Despite this lack of support at the time, there was something strangely prophetic when, describing the civil disobedience

61. The government was warned by William Hastie that not only would a demonstration take place, but also that if the 'responsible leadership' withdrew, the march would be taken over by 'more radical elements'. Memo. Hastie to Secretary of War Stimson, OASW 215, NARG 107.
62. Pittsburgh Courier, June 27, 1942; Garfinkel, When Negroes March, 95.
63. Pittsburgh Courier, July 4, 1942; Baltimore Afro-American July 4, 1942; and When Negroes March, 98.
64. Pittsburgh Courier, January 23, 1943.
65. Pittsburgh Courier, October 17, 1942, and April 24, 1943.



campaign, Randolph said,<sup>66</sup>

it appears that an important part of the future strategy and technique of the Negro must be in the field of demonstration, both non-violent mass activity and disciplined non-violent demonstrations of small Negro and White groups for civil and economic justice.

The idea for this type of demonstration seems to have originated from Bayard Rustin and James Farmer, two young members of the Chicago branch of the MOWM, who spoke in favour of non-violent direct action at the 1943 convention.<sup>67</sup> Both were founder members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which sprang from the christian-pacifist movement, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, in 1942. CORE used pickets, boycotts, and sit-ins, to attack segregation in drug stores and department stores in a number of northern cities during the war but even more successfully during the 1960s.<sup>68</sup> The MOWM, while espousing such tactics, did not in fact use them. Although it lingered on until 1947, the MOWM lacked the support, particularly after the 1943 riots, necessary for direct action and was besides engaged in divergent activities. As well as supporting Winfred Lynn in his legal battle against segregation in the forces, the MOWM was active from 1943 onwards in the fight to save FEPC, the Committee for which it had been

66. Chicago Defender, July 3, 1943. Equally prophetic were the comparisons Randolph was making between America and India, see proceedings of MOWM Conference, Detroit, September 26-27, 1942, in Schomburg Collection, and Chicago Defender January 9, 1943.
67. Baltimore Afro-American, July 10, 1943.
68. Helen Buckler, 'The CORE Way', Survey Graphic, XXXV, 2, February 1946; George M. Houser, Erasing the Color Line, New York, 1945; August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, 'How CORE Began', Social Science Quarterly, Vol. 49, 4, March 1969.

largely responsible.

## II

In his history of FEPC, Louis Ruchames wrote,<sup>69</sup>

Through its achievements, the President's Committee proved that under certain conditions law - even in the emasculated form of an executive order - could alter customs and mores, and hasten the elimination of discrimination in significant sections of American industry.

Unfortunately, Ruchames failed to establish his case for guided change of this nature. As he himself admitted, there is no way of knowing how many Afro-Americans were employed as a result of the Committee's actions.<sup>70</sup> While in operation the Committee not only suffered constant attack from political opponents but also met with defeat at the hands of employers and unions in certain crucial areas. Afro-Americans did make great economic gains, but these generally occurred after 1942, and were the result of growing labour shortages rather than the work of FEPC.

The Committee had limitations which sprang directly from the Executive Order. Most important of course, was the unspoken fact that it was a temporary body to be in existence only during the war emergency and to deal only with defence industries. The Committee described the restrictions this placed on it:<sup>71</sup>

69. Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics: The Story of FEPC, New York 1953, 4. Like Garfinkel, Ruchames was unable to make use of the many, vital government sources and his history suffers accordingly.

70. Race, Jobs, and Politics, 156.

71. President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, FEPC: How it Operates, Washington, D.C., 1944, 7.

FEPC has no power to deal with privately owned and operated plants which do not hold Government contracts or subcontracts and which are not engaged in activities essential to the war effort, even though they may be engaged in interstate or foreign commerce.

In those areas where FEPC did have jurisdiction, it had little power to enforce its recommendations but could only hope that adverse publicity and persuasion would make a company change its hiring policies. When persuasion failed FEPC lacked the final authority to back up its ruling.<sup>72</sup> Another weakness was the Committee's size, or rather, the lack of it. The original order was amended on July 18, 1941 to bring the number of Committee members up to six, and again in 1942 to bring it up to seven. This small group had a staff not much bigger in size. In its first year of operation FEPC had only seven field officers and five clerical workers and a budget of \$80,000. Even when the personnel situation improved and the budget was increased to \$431,609, FEPC remained well below the standards of other government departments.<sup>73</sup>

Because of the limitations of size and budget, the Committee operated by holding public hearings in selected major cities. The first of these were held in Los Angeles in October 1941. The policies of ten firms, mainly aircraft manufacturers, and three unions were examined and the Committee made several recommendations

72. President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, Final Report, June 28, 1946, Washington, D.C., 1947, ix.

73. 'Important Dates in FEPC History', April 1, 1944, FEPC 407, NARG 228; Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics, 27; and Louis C. Kesselman, The Social Politics of FEPC: A Study in Reform Pressure Movements, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1948, 23.



in order to end discrimination.<sup>74</sup> Although no direct connection can be made, it is interesting to note that in 1944 Afro-Americans made up six per cent of the total number of aircraft workers compared to 0.2 per cent in 1940.<sup>75</sup> Later hearings were held in Chicago, New York, Birmingham, Washington, Philadelphia, and Portland. The pattern of 1941 was invariably repeated, with the Committee making recommendations and asking for periodic reports from those concerned.<sup>76</sup> During the hearings in Birmingham, Alabama, Mark Ethridge, the former chairman, reassured anxious fellow-Southerners about the Committee's intentions and criticized black leaders who regarded Executive Order 8802 as a second Emancipation Proclamation. He went on to say,<sup>77</sup>

There is no power in the world - not even in all the mechanized armies of the earth, Allied and Axis - which could now force the Southern white people to the abandonment of the principle of social segregation.

His attitude was common to the many whites in the South who did not object to the full utilization of black manpower, or to the principle of equal pay for blacks, but who did object to white and black working side by side on the factory line.<sup>78</sup> Any

74. Hearings, Los Angeles, October 20-21, 1941, FEPC 408, NARG 228.

75. Weaver, Negro Labor, 118.

76. Hearings, FEPC 408, NARG 228, War Manpower Commission, NARG 211, and OASW 190, NARG 107.

77. Quoted in Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics, 28-30.

78. Letter, Congressman W. R. Poage of Texas to Fowler W. Harper, Deputy Chairman, WMC, January 11, 1943, WMC, NARG 211. Other examples are quoted in Kesselman, The Social Politics of FEPC, 167.

attempt by the Committee to bring this about led to violent reactions in the South and from Southerners in Congress. The opposition to FEPC appeared to have been successful when on July 30 1942, without any prior warning, the Committee was transferred by President Roosevelt to the War Manpower Commission and placed under the supervision of Paul V. McNutt.

At the time, the black response to this move was that FEPC was being muzzled as a result of pressure from the South.<sup>79</sup> Later writers have agreed. Ruchames wrote of the transfer that 'there can be little doubt but that its purpose was to restrict the committee's activities.'<sup>80</sup> According to President Roosevelt's letter, however, the purpose of the transfer was to co-ordinate the activities of FEPC with those of the branches of the War Manpower Commission and in response to critics he said that the intention was 'to strengthen - not to submerge - the Committee, and to reinvigorate - not to repeal - Executive Order 8802.'<sup>81</sup> The official historian of the War Manpower Commission accepted this defence, but pointed out that neither greater co-ordination nor strengthening were realized.<sup>82</sup> The War Manpower Commission consistently ignored FEPC over questions of discrimination and failed to refer cases to it. There was disagreement and delay over changes in the U.S.

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79. Baltimore Afro-American, August 8, 1942; Pittsburgh Courier August 15, 1942; and Black Worker, September 1942.

80. Race, Jobs, and Politics, 46. Also see Garfinkel, When Negroes March, 102, and Kesselman, The Social Politics of FEPC, 19.

81. Roosevelt to McNutt, July 30, 1942 and White House Press Release, August 17, 1942, WMC, NARG 211.

82. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 48, WMC, NARG 211.

Employment Service's policies with regard to filling discriminatory applications for labour. It was not until September 3, 1943, when discrimination was defined to include the refusal to classify workers properly or hire workers of a particular colour or race, that the Employment Service changed its practices.<sup>83</sup>

More condemning was the fact that no hearings were held while the FEPC was under McNutt's control. Public hearings on discrimination against Mexican-Americans were scheduled to be held in El Paso, Texas, during August 1942. They were called off at the behest of the State Department for fear that Axis agents in South America would use them for propaganda purposes and damage relations between Mexico and the U.S.A.<sup>84</sup> The important hearings on discrimination in the railroad industry were postponed on January 11, 1943. Although other railroad companies were involved, the parties most concerned were members of the South Eastern Carriers Conference - all Southern companies. It was suggested by blacks that the hearings were cancelled because of pressure from big business, railroads, and Southerners in Congress and they voiced their fears that once again FEPC was

83. The immediate disagreement centred on the text of a USES bulletin, C-45, 'Field Instruction on Non-discrimination', which was eventually revised. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 37-40, 48-49, and letters, both in WMC, NARG 211.

84. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 52, and Kesselman, The Social Politics of FEPC, 17-18. The situation of the three million Mexican-Americans resident in the U.S.A. improved as the war progressed and as a result of later FEPC hearings. The importation of additional workers from Mexico, by agreement of the two countries, enabled the U.S. authorities to see that all people of Mexican origin received standard American wages and fair treatment, see FEPC 409, NARG 228.



being muzzled.<sup>85</sup> McNutt accepted responsibility and took the blame, but it appears that he had been directed to postpone the railroad hearings by the President who was then out of the country. According to Schuck, it was reasonable for the President not to want such major hearings to take place in his absence.<sup>86</sup> This rather facile explanation did not satisfy the majority of Afro-Americans nor FEPC members McLean, Ethridge, and Sarnoff, all of whom resigned.<sup>87</sup>

Following this debacle, Roosevelt held a conference with all those concerned to discuss a revision of the scope and power of FEPC on February 19, 1943. The principal recommendation, that the Committee be reconstituted as an independent agency, was accepted. On May 27, 1943, by Executive Order 9346, FEPC was re-established in the Office of Emergency Management of the Executive Office and was given powers to conduct hearings, make findings, and recommend measures to the War Manpower Commission.<sup>88</sup> As was soon to be demonstrated, despite this apparent strengthening many of FEPC's weaknesses remained.

On May 24, 1943, a four day riot began after the upgrading of 12 black welders at the Alabama Drydock and Shipping Company

85. Chicago Defender and Pittsburgh Courier, January 23, 1943, and Black Worker, December 1942.
86. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 51. This argument was accepted in the Chicago Defender, February 26, 1943.
87. Kesselman, The Social Politics of FEPC, 21.
88. 'Important Dates in FEPC History', April 1, 1944, FEPC 407, NARG 228, and Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 34. As Schuck points out, it is interesting to note that McNutt expressed approval at FEPC's departure from the War Manpower Commission.

yards in Mobile, Alabama. The riot was inspired by the League for White Supremacy, a group organized to prevent the end of discrimination and segregation in the shipyards. The violence ended and workers returned to work only after federal troops were called in.<sup>89</sup> The FEPC and WMC then worked out an agreement which set aside four slipways where black workers could be employed as welders, riggers, caulkers, and riveters. But even in those four yards Afro-Americans could not work as electricians, machine operators, or pipefitters. While it condoned segregation and discrimination, this settlement was a victory when compared with the Committee's failure with the railroads later that year. The postponed hearings were finally held in Washington, D.C., on September 15, 1943. After listening to 93 cases involving 22 companies and 14 unions, FEPC ordered an end to all discriminatory hiring practices and called for upgrading on an equal basis. Of the 20 companies and seven unions sent such cease and desist orders, 16 companies and three unions, all in the South, refused to comply. Four unions did not even reply to the request.<sup>90</sup> The companies argued that, rather than aiding the war effort, to enforce the Committee's directive would,<sup>91</sup>

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89. Baltimore Afro-American and Pittsburgh Courier, June 5, 1943; Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics, 58; and Harvard Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War', Journal of American History, LVIII, 3, 1971, 672.

90. 'Important Dates in FEPC History', FEPC 407, C. L. Golightly, 'FEPC and the Railroads', May 8, 1945, FEPC 412, NARG 228, Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics, 59-68, and Black Worker, September and October 1943.

91. December 13, 1943, Golightly, 'FEPC and the Railroads', and Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics, 68.

inevitably disrupt their peaceful and co-operative relations with their employees, would antagonize the travelling and shipping public served by them ... would result in stoppages of transportation, and would most gravely and irreparably impair the whole war effort of the country.

When the Committee referred these cases to President Roosevelt, he set up a three-man mediation committee to examine them. In February 1944, Roosevelt reported that progress was being made but then no more was heard and no action ever taken.<sup>92</sup> As the Committee later remarked, these cases 'proved that persuasion must be backed by final authority if conformity with the policy is to be realized.'<sup>93</sup>

Clearly, it was not just employers who were involved in acts of discrimination against Afro-Americans. Unions were cited in several FEPC hearings, other than those on the railroads, for either excluding blacks from membership of a particular union and thus denying them employment in 'closed shop' industries, or for segregating them in all-black auxiliary unions.<sup>94</sup> There were also a number of work stoppages when whites struck after the employment or upgrading of Afro-Americans even though the national union organizations had opposed discrimination in principle.

The many American trade unions were organized under two bodies similar to the British TUC, the American Federation of

92. Golightly, 'FEPC and the Railroads'.

93. President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices, Final Report, June 28, 1946, Washington, D.C., 1947, ix.

94. See for example, Hearings, Portland, Oregon, November 15-16, 1943, and Los Angeles, November 19-20, 1943, FEPC 408, NARG 228.



Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which united in 1955 to become the AFL-CIO.<sup>95</sup> The AFL, formed in 1881, began as a federation of craft unions and had a policy of non-discrimination. By the turn of the century, unions which excluded blacks altogether or relegated them to separate auxiliaries, were admitted to the AFL and such discriminatory practices became accepted if not explicit policies. The United Mine Workers Union was the only AFL affiliate with a completely egalitarian policy and in 1902 its 20,000 Afro-American members accounted for half of the blacks in the AFL.<sup>96</sup> In 1937 a number of industrial unions, led by the Mine Workers, broke away from the AFL to form the CIO, a federation of industrial rather than craft unions. Because it hoped to organize unskilled and semi-skilled workers in basic industries, many of whom were black, and because it attracted the liberal and left-wing elements within the labour movement, the CIO adopted a policy of non-discrimination from the beginning.

The differences in the racial policies of the AFL and CIO became more apparent during the war. By agreement with the National Defense Advisory Commission the two organizations assumed responsibility for removing barriers against Afro-American workers in defence industries.<sup>97</sup> Yet at its conventions in

95. The history of the Afro-American in the trade union movement is dealt with in: Abram L. Harris and Sterling D. Spero, The Black Worker, New York 1931; Julius Jacobson, ed., The Negro and the American Labor Movement, Garden City, New York, 1968; Ray Marshall, The Negro and Organized Labor, New York, 1965; Herbert R. Northrup, Organized Labor and the Negro, New York 1944.
96. Marc Karson and Ronald Radosh, 'The American Federation of Labor and the Negro Worker, 1894-1949', in Jacobson, ed., The Negro and the American Labor Movement, 157.
97. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 6, and President's Committee of Fair Employment Practice, Minorities in Defense, 11.

1940, 1941, and 1942, the AFL rejected resolutions condemning discrimination proposed by A. Philip Randolph. He was told that it was unnecessary for the AFL to do so because its opposition to discrimination had been stated in the past. Moreover, there was no need for such resolutions or the committee on discrimination proposed by Randolph until evidence of discrimination within the trade union movement was provided.<sup>98</sup> Randolph replied to these objections in 1943 when he presented details of prejudice amongst AFL affiliated unions from a paper written by Herbert Northrup, a member of the regional War Labor Board in Detroit and consultant to FEPC. Twenty unions within the AFL were listed as either excluding blacks altogether or affording them only segregated membership.<sup>99</sup> In answer to these charges the President of the AFL, William Green, said that as such a small percentage of the AFL's 107 unions were involved, the situation was obviously improving. He hoped that it would continue to do so but did not recommend that the convention adopt the resolution abolishing segregated auxiliaries.<sup>100</sup> It was not until after the riots of 1943 that the AFL took any stand on discrimination and then in the form of a resolution condemning prejudice and bigotry in the country as a whole rather than another resolution which concentrated on racial practices within the Federation itself.<sup>101</sup> Lukewarm resolutions in support of FEPC

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98. Reports of Proceedings, AFL Conventions, New Orleans 1940, Seattle 1941, and Toronto 1942. Also Brazeal, The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 157-68.

99. Proceedings, AFL Convention, Boston 1943; Herbert R. Northrup, 'Organized Labor and Negro Workers', Journal of Political Economy, LI, 3, June 1943.

100. Proceedings, AFL Convention, Boston 1943, 442-45.

101. Proceedings, AFL Convention, New Orleans 1944, 557-58.

were adopted throughout the war, but only after reference to discrimination in unions had been deleted. The AFL felt that to incorporate such a phrase would encourage government intervention in union affairs. For similar reasons it was opposed to a permanent FEPC.<sup>102</sup>

While the black press viewed AFL conventions as farces it saw the CIO 'coming forward as the foremost organization in the country to fight for equality of job opportunity for Negroes.'<sup>103</sup> Their optimism had some justification for the CIO maintained its pre-war policies and attempted to put them into practice. The 1941 convention not only condemned discrimination but also authorized the formation of a Committee to abolish it within the Congress itself. Every year thereafter the CIO re-iterated its position and related the issue of racial prejudice to the war.<sup>104</sup>

Discrimination against workers because of race, religion or country of origin is an evil characteristic of our fascist enemies. We of the democracies are fighting fascism at home and abroad by welding all races, all religions and all peoples into a united body of warriors for democracy. Any discriminatory practices within our own ranks, against Negroes or other groups, directly aids the enemy by creating division, dissension and confusion. Such discrimination practiced in employment policies hampers production by depriving the nation of the use of available skills and manpower.

102. Brazeal, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 168; Kesselman, The Social Politics of FEPC, 148.

103. Baltimore Afro-American, November 7, 1942, April 1, 1944; Chicago Defender, September 12, 1942, November 25, 1944.

104. Proceedings of Constitutional Convention of CIO, Boston, 1942, Resolution 18, 172.



A resolution adopted in 1943 commended FEPC for its work, demanded the prosecution of those 'whipping up hatred against minority groups,' and called upon President Roosevelt to end the segregation of the armed forces.<sup>105</sup> In 1944, the Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination reported that a total of 85 local CIO anti-discrimination committees had been formed and that intervention by the CIO had led to policy reversals in certain government departments.<sup>106</sup> The CIO was also responsible for a case against wage differentials based on race by the Southport Petroleum Company in Texas City, Texas, brought before the War Labor Board. The War Labor Board ruled that rates of pay based on race or colour were illegal.<sup>107</sup>

These were all points in the CIO's favour but there were flaws. The main one was that it was easy to pass resolutions at conventions or for the Congress to intercede with the government. It was not as easy for it to impose its wishes on all branches of member unions, as indeed the Committee to Abolish Discrimination recognized.<sup>108</sup> While delegates at the 1942 convention adopted a resolution 'urging that employers be compelled to utilize in full the services of colored workers, aliens, and women', members of the CIO affiliated Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers

105. Proceedings, Constitutional Convention, CIO, Philadelphia, 1943, Resolution 13, 267-68.
106. Proceedings, Constitutional Convention, CIO, Chicago, 1944, 93-4.
107. Chicago Defender, June 12, 1943.
108. CIO, Working and Fighting Together, Washington, D.C., 1943, 7. Council for Democracy, The Negro in America: How We Treat Him and How We Should, New York 1945, 10.

walked out of the Bethlehem-Fairfield shipyards in Baltimore in protest against the admission of two blacks to the welding school.<sup>109</sup> When the union expelled five men for inciting discrimination, there was a further protest demonstration. It was the determination of the employers, rather than union action which won the day.<sup>110</sup> CIO unions found themselves to be powerless in other disputes. In 1943, 700 workers at the Packard Motor factory in Detroit struck after the hiring of four black women and in the conflict at the Alabama Drydock and Shipping Company yards in Mobile, the CIO was reluctant to stress its anti-discriminatory position for fear of losing a forthcoming employee representation election to the AFL.<sup>111</sup>

FEPC faced a major crisis when the CIO Transport Workers Union proved unable to control its members in Philadelphia. Late in 1943, FEPC ordered the Philadelphia Transportation Company and the AFL Rapid Transit Employees Union to desist from discriminatory hiring and up-grading practices. The union notified the Committee that it could not obey the directive and advised the Transportation Company not to comply.<sup>112</sup> At the same time the union brought FEPC before the House Committee to Investigate Executive Agencies (Smith Committee) which was opposed to the Presidential Committee, and

109. Baltimore Afro-American, November 21, 1942.

110. Baltimore Afro-American, November 28, 1942.

111. Chicago Defender, March 27, 1943, April 17, 1943, and Weaver, Negro Labor, 37.

112. American Council on Race Relations, Negro Platform Workers, Chicago 1945, 3-17, and Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics, 100-20.

encouraged the Transit Employees to continue their defiance.<sup>113</sup>

However, in March 1944, the Transport Workers Union won the right to represent both maintenance and platform workers and a change in policy was expected. When the War Manpower Commission ruled, in July 1944, that all hiring was to be done through the U.S. Employment Service without discrimination, the TWU concurred. Following the up-grading of eight Afro-Americans the white workers, in defiance of their union, employers, FEPC, and the War Manpower Commission, went on strike on August 1, 1944, and effectively paralysed the city.<sup>114</sup>

On August 3, at the command of President Roosevelt, the Army moved into Philadelphia to curb violence and to take over the running of the bus and trolley services. Major-general Hayes warned the strikers that if they continued to stay away from work their draft deferment would immediately be cancelled and they would be declared 1A for draft purposes. That threat and the fear that they would lose their jobs permanently persuaded the strikers to return to work on August 5.<sup>115</sup>

FEPC also met with rebuffs from transport unions in Los Angeles and Washington but although they took some time to settle, those disputes did not require the Army to be called in.<sup>116</sup>

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113. 'Important Dates in FEPC History', FEPC 407, NARG 228, American Council on Race Relations, Negro Platform Workers, 9.
114. Baltimore Afro-American, August 5, 1944, and The Crisis, September 1944.
115. Baltimore Afro-American, August 12, 1944; The Crisis, September 1944; and film C-5275, 'Army Ends Transport Strike', 2-7, August 1944, Sherman Grinberg Library.
116. Negro Platform Workers, 24, and memo., C. L. Golightly to John A. Davis, May 19, 1945, 'FEPC and the Capital Transit Company of Washington, D.C.', FEPC 413, NARG 228.



There were, of course, instances when FEPC and the unions did solve industrial disputes over racial issues. A dispute in 1942 over seniority rights at the Chrysler plant near Detroit in which whites threatened to walk out, ended when the United Automobile Workers union advised the company to fire all strikers. In 1943 other strikes by car workers were avoided after concerted action by the UAW and FEPC.<sup>117</sup> In 1943 and 1944 alone, FEPC satisfactorily solved 25 work stoppages involving more than 181,791 workers. Nine of those stoppages were caused by whites resisting the employment or promotion of blacks, and 11 by blacks protesting against demotions, or other forms of discrimination.<sup>118</sup> In one strike, 500 white workers refused to return to work until the company agreed to end discrimination against blacks.<sup>119</sup>

While the union movement figures largely in FEPC's successes and failures, it also contributed to the Committee's opposition. In 1944, trade unions subscribed \$11,000 to the National Council for a Permanent FEPC, yet the same year the AFL voiced its opposition to a permanent agency at its convention and before a Senate hearing.<sup>120</sup> As Brazeal said, 'their opposition to a permanent FEPC is probably based as much on a desire not to admit

117. Weaver, Negro Labor, 71-2, and Marshall, The Negro and Organized Labor, 38-40.

118. 'Statement on Work stoppages', FEPC 413, NARG 228, and President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices, First Report, July 1943-December 1944, 79.

119. Baltimore Afro-American, May 27, 1944.

120. Baltimore Afro-American, March 4, 1944; Chicago Defender, November 4, 25, 1944; and Kesselman, The Social Politics of FEPC, 147-49.

Negroes to an equitable membership as it is to labor's avowed and traditional opposition to restrictive labor legislation.'<sup>121</sup> Even the more sympathetic CIO showed signs of division: at the 1943 convention the resolutions committee voted unanimously against support for a permanent agency on fair employment practices; the following year the CIO President, Philip Murray urged all member unions to back a permanent FEPC.<sup>122</sup> The Smith Committee encouraged the transport workers in Philadelphia to ignore FEPC directives and also challenged the Committee's rulings in the Southern railroad cases. Although it finally dropped the matter and failed to issue a report on FEPC hearings, the Smith Committee encouraged opponents of FEPC.<sup>123</sup> The National Council for a Permanent FEPC was formed by A. Philip Randolph in 1943 and grew out of the 'Save FEPC' campaign which had followed the transfer of the agency to the War Manpower Commission. An interracial organization, the Council attracted a diverse following but all in vain as opposition to FEPC in Congress proved too strong. In 1944, an Independent Office Appropriation Bill was passed which included a direct attack on the Committee.<sup>124</sup> An amendment attached to the bill by Senator Richard B. Russell of Georgia, forbade the appropriation of funds for any agency created by executive order and in operation for more than one year without the specific consent of Congress.<sup>125</sup>

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121. Brazeal, The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 168.

122. Chicago Defender, November 6, 1943, and November 25, 1944.

123. Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics, 81-86.

124. Papers and literature of the National Council in the James Weldon Johnson Collection, Yale University; Garfinkel, When Negroes March, 145-47, 150-58; and Kesselman, The Social Politics of FEPC, 29-37.

125. Ruchames, Race, Jobs, and Politics, 87-88.

In 1946, a Southern filibuster in the Senate prevented the passage of a bill of appropriation and FEPC died.

Despite this gloomy history, it would be ridiculous to deny that FEPC had some success. Conspicuous confrontations and defeats diverted attention away from the thousands of individual complaints successfully dealt with. In the 18 months from July 1943 to December 1944, 5,803 cases were examined by the Committee. Of these 64 per cent were dismissed for lack of merit while the remaining 36 per cent (approximately 1,723) were processed and brought to satisfactory conclusions.<sup>126</sup> Will Alexander, of the War Manpower Commission, pointed out too, that the Committee acted as a propaganda agency: 'it forced people to look, day after day, at this problem of the Negro's economic handicaps.'<sup>127</sup> During the war local and state governments followed the federal example. In July 1941, the state of Illinois declared it a misdemeanor for any war defence contractor to discriminate because of race or colour. A similar bill was passed in New York state in September 1941 and in New Jersey in 1942.<sup>128</sup> A number of ordinances and bills against discrimination in employment were passed in various cities and states in the immediate post-war period. This was all to the good, but like FEPC these bodies had only limited powers and, therefore, effect.

126. President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices, First Report, July 1943-December 1944, 2.
127. Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, The Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander, Chicago, 1962, 257.
128. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 23, and American Council on Race Relations, March 1949, 'Evaluation of State FEPC: Experiences and Forecasts', in James Weldon Johnson Collection, Yale University.



Most of the gains made by Afro-Americans in employment during the war came after 1942 when labour shortages began to effect hiring practices. In January 1942, only three per cent of the employees in defence plants were black: a year later this had more than doubled and by 1944, eight per cent of all war workers were Afro-Americans.<sup>129</sup> More than half of these gains were made in areas of acute labour shortages. Faced with such facts one has to agree that 'such evidence of greater utilization as does exist cannot necessarily be attributed to government efforts but may be attributed to the general appearances of stringencies in the supply of labor.'<sup>130</sup>

Whatever the exact cause, employment opportunities for blacks did increase during the war. From April 1940 to April 1944, the total number of Afro-Americans in work rose by one million: from 4.4 million to 5.3. These figures are, by themselves, impressive, but again they obscure the fact that most gains were made in the latter half of the war. There was an increase in job opportunities for blacks during 1940 and 1941, notably in shipbuilding and iron and steel works, but 'until mid-1942 Negroes had not profited from the war boom to the same extent as had white workers.'<sup>131</sup> The main reason for this delay was the large

129. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 61-62; Weaver, Negro Labor, 79; President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, First Report, 90; and Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 409.

130. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 60.

131. President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, First Report, 92; Murray, Negro Handbook, 1946-47, 99; and National Urban League, 'Changes in the Occupational Status of Negroes, 1940-1950', New York 1950, mimeographed, in Schomburg Collection.

number of unemployed whites who took precedence over blacks even if it meant importing them from outside areas. The lack of training and specific skills at a time when unskilled workers were not in great demand, also made it difficult for Afro-Americans to enter new occupations. By 1942, the expansion of industry and the armed forces had seriously depleted the labour force and all available sources of manpower had to be tapped. At the beginning of that year three per cent of all persons engaged in war production were black: in September, 4.6 per cent were black; in January 1943, this had risen to 6.4 per cent; by January 1944, it was 7.3 per cent; and in November 1944, it was 8.3 per cent.<sup>132</sup> The number of blacks unemployed dropped from 937,562 in 1940 to about 640,000 in 1942. By 1944 this had fallen to 151,000.<sup>133</sup>

This pessimism expressed by various writers early in the war vanished with this change in events. Robert C. Weaver referred to 1942 as the 'crucial year' and the New York State War Council which had described the employment situation of Afro-Americans in 1942 as 'extremely bitter', could, in 1945 boast that there was not one war plant in operation in the Empire state which discriminated

132. War Manpower Commission, 'Utilization of Reserve Workers: Recently Reported Placements of Negroes in Skilled Occupations', Washington, D.C., March 1944, FEPC 407, NARG 228, and FEPC, First Report, 90.

133. Social Security Board, Employment Security Review, IX,7, July 1942; Murray, Negro Handbook, 1942, 142; and FEPC, First Report, 94.

against blacks.<sup>134</sup> The Chicago Mayor's Commission on Human Relations reported that the employment of blacks in war production in Cook and DuPage Counties (Chicago) had risen from 80,347 in 1940 to 222,600 in 1945 and that this was 11.7 per cent of the total work force.<sup>135</sup> By September 1944, the Chicago Defender could record that the employment of Afro-Americans generally was at an all-time high.<sup>136</sup> While there were rises throughout all sectors of war production, certain areas witnessed greater increases than others. The proportion of blacks among those engaged in shipbuilding rose from 5.5 per cent in September 1942 to 10.2 per cent in March 1944.<sup>137</sup> The aircraft industry reversed its pre-war employment patterns as 'companies like North American, Boeing, and Martin completely altered their policies in the face of all-out war, the need to utilize all available manpower, government pressure, and obvious morality and decency.'<sup>138</sup>

Among the additional million black workers were 600,000 women who raised the total of Afro-American women in employment

134. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, New York 1948, 80, and New York State War Council, Committee on Discrimination in Employment, How Management Can Integrate Negroes in War Industries, New York, 1942, 3, and The Negro Integrated, New York 1945, 24.
135. Chicago Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, Race Relations in Chicago, Chicago 1945, 2.
136. Chicago Defender, September 9, 1944.
137. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 64; Weaver, 'Racial Employment Trends in National Defense', Phylon, III, 1, 1942.
138. Herbert R. Northrup, 'The Negro in the Aerospace Industry', in Northrup, et al, Negro Employment in Basic Industry: A Study of Racial Policies in Six Industries, Philadelphia, 1970. Also see Weaver, Negro Labor, 109-18.



to 2.1 million.<sup>139</sup> The pattern of discrimination was such that they found work only after white women and black men and as a result made up only four per cent of the seven million women in war production in 1944. Even so, the percentage of black women remained higher than that of white women in employment and like their male counterparts they made substantial gains in certain areas of industrial activity.<sup>140</sup> In 1940, in the Detroit-Willow Run region, the number of black women in factories was 14,451: in 1944 this had risen to 46,750.<sup>141</sup> The Chrysler Car company, in 1940, included no blacks among its female staff: by 1945, it employed 18,148.<sup>142</sup> An important area of increase was in government service, federal, state, county, and municipal, where the number of black female staff rose from 60,000 in 1940, to 200,000 in 1944.<sup>143</sup>

The number and status of Afro-Americans of both sexes in government work improved measurably during the war. President Roosevelt's letter of September 16, 1941, to all heads of department, required that,<sup>144</sup>

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139. 'Employment - Negro Women', FEPC 408, NARG 228; Kathryn Blood, Negro Women War Workers, Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, Bulletin 205, Washington, D.C., 1945; and National Urban League, 'Changes in the Occupational Status of Negroes'.
140. National Urban League, 'A Summary Report of the Industrial Relations Laboratory: Performance of Negro Workers in Three Hundred War Plants', New York, 1944, 4, mimeographed, Howard University Library.
141. Blood, Negro Women War Workers, 7.
142. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 81.
143. Blood, Negro Women War Workers, 19.
144. Quoted in Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 15.

all departments and independent establishments in the Federal Government make a thorough examination of their personnel policies and practices to the end they may be able to assure me that in the Federal Service the doors of employment are open to all loyal and qualified workers regardless of creed, race, or national origin.

FEPC received and reviewed data on black employment in government and found that it had increased in all departments. In 1943, of a sample of 1,957,858 federal employees, 12.5 per cent or 246,109, were Afro-Americans: in 1944, 19.2 per cent of all persons in federal departmental service were black.<sup>145</sup> A great proportion of these were working in the traditional janitorial and custodial positions, but the proportion was much less than it had been before the war. One of the best departments, the Office of Price Administration, employed 1,250 Afro-Americans in 1945, more than 70 per cent of whom held clerical and administrative positions.<sup>146</sup> Another aspect of black participation in the war effort was the inclusion of 396 Afro-Americans on local war price and rationing boards.<sup>147</sup> With blacks in almost every government department and acting as advisers on race in Selective Service, the Office of War Information, the Office of the Secretary of War, the Department of Labor, the Office of Education, and the Housing Agency, Afro-

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145. 'Tables and Summary of Employment of Negroes in the Federal Government', December 1943, FEPC 407; 'The Employment of Negroes in the Federal Government', March 1943, FEPC 408, NARG 228; and FEPC, First Report, 65.
146. 'The Employment of Negroes in Federal Government', March 1943, FEPC 408, NARG 228, and Memorandum, June 23, 1945, OPA, D-4, NARG 188.
147. Memo., 'Negro Participation in the Work of OPA', March 13, 1944, OPA, D-4, NARG 188.

Americans had sufficient numbers and experience to assert their claims and maintain their role in the post-war period. As one historian has said, 'the changes in governmental service were remarkable, even against the background of changes in American society generally.'<sup>148</sup>

As in government, the gains made by Afro-Americans in the industrial sector of the economy were qualitative as well as quantitative. Between 1940 and 1944, the number of Afro-Americans employed as skilled craftsmen, foremen, and semi-skilled operatives had doubled and by the end of the war black men and women were engaged in jobs which few had performed before.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, much of what happened in this period was contrary to accepted patterns of employment and was significant because of the departure from old, established practices. Even the numbers of blacks employed in domestic or personal service declined, but because of a greater drop in the number of whites in similar occupations, the proportion of Afro-Americans rose.<sup>150</sup> The increased opportunities and the higher wages in industry encouraged a further decline in the number of blacks working on farms and there was a considerable movement from the rural to urban areas. In 1940, 43.3 per cent of black men and 21.0 per cent of black women were engaged in agriculture:

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148. Krislov, The Negro in Federal Employment, 31.
149. Weaver, Negro Labor, 78; National Urban League, 'Changes in the Occupational Status of Negroes, 1940-1950'; and War Manpower Commission, 'Utilization of Reserve Workers: Recently Reported Placements of Negroes in Skilled Occupations', FEPC, 407, NARG 228.
150. Department of Labor, Negroes in the United States: Their Employment and Economic Status, Bulletin 1119, Washington, D.C., 1952, 13, 45, and Blood, Negro Women War Workers, 16.



four years later the comparable figures were 31.3 and 10.9 per cent.<sup>151</sup>

The primary motivation behind this movement was the possibility of achieving industrial employment with high wages during the war, and as a result of this trend Afro-Americans benefited from the general rise in real income. Because of regional variations in incomes it is hard to give overall statistics.

However, it seems clear that the earnings of the average black, urban worker more than doubled, rising from about \$400 to over

\$1,000<sup>152</sup> Family incomes also increased as wives and husbands, sons and daughters, found work. In two housing projects in

Atlanta, Georgia, it was found that the average income of the 1,281 families living there had increased by 65 per cent from 1940 to

1944, despite the fact that male wage earners had often been drafted.<sup>153</sup>

Many of the increases were due to changes in occupation such as in the case of a black woman whose income increased from \$312 to \$2,477 after she had left her job as a maid to become a drill operator. Even the earnings of those who

remained in their pre-war employment increased. The average annual earnings of janitors rose from \$709 to \$1,245; of truck drivers, from \$738 to \$1,340; and of pullman porters, from \$1,103

to \$1,795.<sup>154</sup> These rises were not limited to the South, for

151. Murray, Negro Handbook, 1946-47, 99, and Department of Labor, Negroes in the United States, 43. See Appendix II, Table 1.

152. Department of Labor, Negroes in the United States, 25, and Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 615, 620.

153. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 'Annual Family and Occupational Earnings of Residents of Two Negro Housing Projects in Atlanta, 1937-44', Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 61, 6, December 1945.

154. Ibid., 1070.

in housing projects in the North and West the median annual income of black families rose from \$867 in 1940 to \$1,967 in 1945.<sup>155</sup>

This economic progress was not always opposed by whites. The New York State War Council found that 'resistance of the white worker to the integration of Negro personnel has existed largely in the minds of some personnel directors'.<sup>156</sup> Just as in the Army some white soldiers found the thought of integration worse than the actual experience, so too with men on the shop floor. In an aircraft factory on the West coast, where 47.83 per cent of the white workers initially opposed the employment of Afro-Americans, after the event there was a progression from intolerance through tolerance to friendship and by 1944, objections were weak and infrequent.<sup>157</sup> Also indicative of some accommodation between black and white workers was the increase in black union membership during the war as 'even iron clad trade union tradition and practice were forced to bend, and at some points to give way.'<sup>158</sup> By 1945, the number of Afro-Americans in unions was 1,250,000, an increase of approximately 700,000 over the 1940 figure.<sup>159</sup>

155. Weaver 'Negro Labor Since 1929', Journal of Negro History, XXXV, I, January 1950, 29.
156. Committee on Discrimination in Employment, The Negro Integrated, 17.
157. Bernice Anita Reed, 'Accommodation between Negro and White Employees in a West Coast Aircraft Industry, 1942-44', Social Forces, XXIV, 1, October 1947.
158. Northrup, 'In the Unions', Survey Graphic, XXXVI, 1, January, 1947.
159. Jessie Parkhurst Guzman, ed., Negro Yearbook: A Review of Events Affecting Negro Life, 1941-1946, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1947, 134; Walter White, How Far the Promised Land?, New York 1956, 118; Maurice R. Davie, Negroes in American Society, New York 1949, 128.

Many employers found that hiring blacks did not lead to the disasters they had expected or that Afro-Americans necessarily proved to be poor workers. The National Urban League survey of 300 war plants in 120 cities discovered that 288 of the firms had increased the number of their black employees. Of these, 215 were satisfied with their workers, 50 were fairly satisfied, and only nine said that blacks were not as good as whites. Of the 300, 253 indicated that they would continue to use Afro-American workers.<sup>160</sup>

While these facts point to considerable changes in the economic status of Afro-Americans during, and largely as a result of, the war, there are important reservations. I have already shown that there were several incidents involving the opposition of white workers to the hiring or upgrading of blacks. Employers did still refuse to hire Afro-Americans or resorted to only token compliance with Executive Order 8802 by employing a small number of blacks in menial positions. There was still a widespread tendency to give blacks only the hot, heavy, and dirty occupations.<sup>161</sup> Bearing in mind the fact that blacks accounted for almost ten per cent of the American population, the proportion of Afro-Americans in major occupational groups for 1940, 1944, and 1948, reveal the limits of wartime advances.<sup>162</sup> In 1944, black males accounted for

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160. National Urban League, 'A Summary Report of the Industrial Relations Laboratory: Performance of Negro Workers in Three Hundred War Plants,' New York 1944. See too, Burleigh B. Gardener and David G. Moore, Human Relations in Industry, Chicago 1950, 312.
161. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 63-4; C. L. Golightly; 'Negro Employment before the War and Now', undated, FEPC 409, NARG 228.
162. Department of Labor, Negroes in the United States, 15, 45. See Appendix III, Table 2.



27.6 per cent of labourers, 21.1 per cent of farm workers and foremen, 21.9 per cent of service workers, 75.2 per cent of private household workers, and 10.1 per cent of the operatives and kindred workers. Although their representation had increased, they still comprised only 3.6 per cent of the craftsmen and foremen, 2.8 per cent of clerical and sales workers, and 3.3 per cent of professional and technical workers. The incomes of Afro-Americans rose during the war, but the discrepancy between their wages and incomes and those of whites still remained. In 1945, the average money income of all black families was only half that of white families. This was the highest it had ever been: it was also the highest it was to reach for some time.<sup>163</sup> As one writer pointed out, 'the gains of a decade, however striking, cannot seriously turn the tide of the seven preceding it.'<sup>164</sup>

Those gains which were made varied from area to area and from industry to industry. While the numbers of Afro-Americans employed in shipbuilding, or the iron and steel industry, were high, the numbers in textiles, electrical machinery, transportation, and public utilities were extremely low.<sup>165</sup> The numbers of Negroes in the petroleum industry increased substantially in

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163. Department of Labor, Negroes in the United States, 24-5.
164. John Hope II, 'The Employment of Negroes in the United States by Major Occupation and Status', Journal of Negro Education, XXII, 3, Summer 1953, 321.
165. Schuck, 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 64, and Weaver, Negro Labor, 79.

all regions, but in the rubber tyre business very little.<sup>166</sup>

William Schuck gathered a great deal of information which showed how conditions varied from region to region. He found that the employment of blacks in shipbuilding in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Seattle, San Fransisco, Los Angeles, and Galveston was good. In Mobile, New Orleans, Beaumont, and Evansville it was poor.

Similarly, the aircraft companies in Cincinnatti and Detroit compared more favourably with those in New Orleans, Dallas,

Atlanta, Evansville, and Baltimore.<sup>167</sup> Northrup pointed out

that employment patterns in the automobile industry changed very little in the South and West and the greatest changes of all were made in Chicago and Detroit.<sup>168</sup>

But the greatest reservation of all was that any progress, no matter how slight, was made with the economy in full operation, with industrial expansion, and with a high demand for labour. On top of this was the 'disproportionate concentration' of Afro-Americans in war industries or government war agencies: the sectors of the economy most likely to experience

166. Carl B. King and Howard W. Risher, Jr., 'The Negro in the Petroleum Industry', and Herbert R. Northrup, 'The Negro in the Rubber Tyre Industry', both in Northrup, et al, Negro Employment in Basic Industry, 410-12, 534-36.

167. 'Eliminating Employer Discriminatory Hiring Practices', 68-71. Schuck also compared regional variations in the ordnance industry, in non-electrical machinery, electrical machinery, iron and steel, rubber, and textiles. His overall conclusion was that in the South there was little economic progress, qualitatively, for blacks. Weaver, Negro Labor, 92, agreed with this summary.

168. Northrup, 'The Negro in the Automobile Industry', in Negro Employment in Basic Industry, 63-64.

cutbacks once the war had ended.<sup>169</sup> From past experience, most Americans expected an economic recession in the post-war period and blacks were well aware that they would, once again, be last hired and first fired. Even without a recession, Afro-Americans feared that many of them would be displaced by returning white servicemen.<sup>170</sup> However, the economic gap between black and white had been closed and the Afro-American had tasted enough of prosperity to whet his appetite for more. It was clear that he would not be prepared to 'return to his prewar economic status without a constant and loud complaint.'<sup>171</sup>

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169. National Urban League, 'Racial Aspects of Reconversion: A Memorandum Prepared for the President of the United States', New York, August 27, 1945, mimeographed, FEPC 407, NARG 228; President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices, Final Report, 41; Lloyd H. Bailer, 'The Negro in the Labor Force of the United States', Journal of Negro Education, XXII, 3, Summer 1953, 297.
170. Council for Democracy, The Negro in America, 12; Northrup, Will Negroes Get Jobs Now?, Public Affairs Committee, Pamphlet 110, New York, 1945; Walter P. Reuther, 'The Negro's Future', Opportunity, XXIII, 4, Fall 1945.
171. Weaver, Negro Labor, 245.



Chapter 5Wartime Migrations and Urban Conflict: The Disruptive Effects of War

Commenting on the impact of the second World War upon race relations, the eminent black sociologist, Charles S. Johnson, spoke of the 'profound and sustained social shock' and the 'social upheaval of war.'<sup>1</sup> His description could not have been more apt, for, during the 1940s, as a direct result of the American role in the world conflict, one of the most important of 'unguided' changes took place. Without any encouragement from government or other agencies huge numbers of people of both races moved to the locations of defence industries. The influx of these newcomers, most of them from the South, into areas in the North and West had an effect which could only be described as disruptive. State and federal bodies, still attempting to cope with the problems of the Depression, were incapable of dealing with this added burden. Overcrowding in poor homes, racial conflict over housing, employment, and recreational facilities, plus the anger of blacks at the continued insults they and their men-folk suffered in the armed services, raised tempers to fever pitch. As a result there was, in 1943, an outbreak of rioting and conflict on a scale not to be witnessed again until the 1960s. But as well as creating friction between the races, urbanization had an influence on the health and education of Afro-Americans - generally for the worse. However, these ill-effects were off-set by wartime prosperity, the general rise in standards of living, and the realization that the mental and physical

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1. Charles S. Johnson, 'The Impact of the War Upon Negro-White Relations in the United States', 1947, Johnson Papers, 164, F4, Fisk University.

well-being of ten per cent of the population was vital in times of emergency. Although the gap between black and white remained, it narrowed. It can be argued that this was another of the benefits of participation in the war effort.

The migration of blacks was no new development in American history. Following the Civil War some Afro-Americans left the South and moved West, to Texas, Kansas, and Oklahoma. In the late 1880s, their numbers increased and their direction changed from westwards to northwards. This trend continued in the 1890s as the ravages of boll weevils and floods exacerbated the poor economic status of blacks in the South and as repressive jim crow laws and acts of violence further threatened already reduced civil rights.<sup>2</sup> The North became even more attractive with the outbreak of war in 1914. Hostilities in Europe and danger in the Atlantic reduced the flow of immigration into America at a time when manufacturing, particularly of war materials, was increasing. The resultant economic opportunities for Afro-Americans turned what had previously been a trickle into a flood. Encouraged by friends, advised and cajoled by the Chicago Defender, and sought after by labour recruiters from Northern industries, blacks rushed towards the 'Promised Land'. While estimates of one million are certainly too high, the number who left the South was considerable, probably in the region of 300,000 - 500,000.<sup>3</sup> The black populations of

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2. Reynolds Farley, 'The Urbanization of Negroes in the United States', Journal of Social History, Vol. I, Spring 1968, 251-53; Gilbert Osofsky, Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, Negro New York, 1890-1930, New York and Evanston, 1968, 17-24; Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 399.

3. U.S. Dept. of Labor, Division of Negro Economics, Negro Migration in 1916-17, Washington, D.C., 1919, 11; Emmett J. Scott, Negro Migration During the War, New York 1920, 3; T. Lynn Smith, 'The Redistribution of the Negro Population of the United States, 1910-1960' Journal of Negro History, LI, 3, July 1966, 158-61.

major Northern cities increased dramatically. By 1920, the number of Afro-Americans in Detroit was 40,838, a 611.3 per cent increase over the 5,741 who had lived there in 1910. The increase in the white population over the same period was only 107 per cent. In Chicago, where the white population grew by 21 per cent, the black population increased by 148.2 per cent.<sup>4</sup> The 'great migration' as it was called, continued in the post-war years and, despite widespread unemployment amongst Afro-Americans in the North, into the 1930s if at a slower rate. This movement of Afro-Americans led to an increase in their numbers in cities, and a decline in their numbers in the South. Even so, in 1940 only 48.6 per cent of all blacks were classed as urban dwellers, and 77.1 per cent still remained in former Confederate states. Ten years later, the corresponding figures were 62.4 per cent and 68.1 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

These last bald statistics reveal something of the changes which took place during the second World War but they do not tell the whole story. The movement of blacks during the 1940s was not merely a repetition of the earlier migration, nor just a continuation of the later trends. A major difference was that the black migration of the 40s was part of a general shift in population and came only after whites had flocked to the cities. There was little need for encouragement from friends or the press, nor was there any call for labour agents although some were reported in the

4. Robert C. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, New York 1948, 26-7.
5. U.S. Dept. of Labor, Negroes in the United States: Their Employment and Economic Status, Bulletin 1119, Washington, D.C., 1952, 3-5; Farley, 'The Urbanization of Negroes in the United States', 245, 255.



South.<sup>6</sup> The departure between 1941 and 1945 of five and a half million people from farms and poor areas to seek work in towns and cities was encouragement enough.<sup>7</sup> Even though blacks had to wait until their white compatriots found employment, the attraction was the same for both races: work in the Arsenal of Democracy. The location of the major war industries was responsible for the second difference between the two migrations. The movement during World War II was not simply from South to North. Following the routes taken by whites, Afro-Americans went from country to town, to small cities as well as large, and to an entirely new region, the far West and Pacific coast. No matter where, the places which drew the largest numbers were inevitably centres of war production.

California, with almost half of America's shipbuilding and aircraft manufacture taking place within its boundaries, added over one million people to its population in three years. Between 1940 and 1944, more than 500,000 people moved to the San Francisco Bay area alone - 45,000 of those were black.<sup>8</sup> Although slower to start, the black migration soon surpassed that of whites, at least in percentage terms. Thus while the white population of San Francisco

6. Memo. Robert C. Weaver to Robert R. Taylor, Consultant, Defense Housing Co-ordinator, June 6, 1941, Housing and Home Finance Agency, box 23, NARG 207. (Hereafter HHFA 23, NARG 207). Weaver reporting agents from Buffalo, N.Y., recruiting black steel moulders in Chatanooga and Nashville, commented that 'The bidding by Northern plants had become so open that Nashville firms were protesting because their workers were being "lured" away.'
7. Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945, New York 1970, 69-71.
8. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's A War On?, 71; Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 83; Dept. of Labor, Negroes in the United States, 5.

increased by 28.1 per cent between 1940 and 1946, the black population grew by the enormous 560.4 per cent, that is, from 4,846 to 32,001. In Los Angeles, the number of whites increased by 17.7 per cent: that of blacks by 108.7 per cent.<sup>9</sup> In 1940, 1.3 per cent of Afro-Americans lived in the West; ten years later this figure had more than doubled.<sup>10</sup> But other areas had huge influxes too. In the Detroit-Willow Run area, another important centre of aircraft production, the number of blacks increased by 47.0 per cent while that of whites rose by only 5.2 per cent. The Afro-American population in Michigan as a whole more than doubled but the white population increased by only 17 per cent.<sup>11</sup> Between 1940 and 1950, the number of Afro-Americans in Washington, D.C., where government was the major war industry, increased by almost 50 per cent and that of whites by only 9.2 per cent.<sup>12</sup> In the country as a whole, 'by the end of 1947, 14 per cent (1.8 million) of all Negroes born on or before April 1940 were living in a different state from the one in which they had lived in 1940. During this period about ten per cent of all whites moved to a different state.'<sup>13</sup>

The states which made the largest proportional gain in black population were California and Michigan, followed by Oregon,

9. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 84. Also see Morton Grodzins, The Metropolitan Area as a Racial Problem, Pittsburgh 1960, 1-2.
10. Farley, 'The Urbanization of Negroes in the United States', 245.
11. Florence Murray, ed., Negro Handbook, 1946-47, New York 1947, 25-26; Jessie Parkhurst Guzman, ed., Negro Year Book: A Review of Events Affecting Negro Life, 1941-1946, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1947, 9.
12. Constance McLaughlin Green, The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital, Princeton, N.J., 1967, 200.
13. Dept. of Labor, Negroes in the United States, 5.

Washington, Utah, Colorado, Wisconsin, Illinois, and New York. Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia all suffered a decline in their black populations.<sup>14</sup> Afro-Americans who remained in the South were moving into urban areas and between 1940 and 1950 Southern cities gained 750,000 blacks.<sup>15</sup> The largest increases were, however, made elsewhere. Cities such as San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, Milwaukee, Pontiac, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse had increases in black population of over 100 per cent in the ten years beginning in 1940.<sup>16</sup> In a sense, these figures are misleading for those cities generally had relatively small black populations prior to the war. Buffalo, for example added only 8,000 to the 17,694 Afro-Americans present in 1940. The number of blacks in Milwaukee in 1940 was only 9,000: in 1945 it was still just 13,000.<sup>17</sup> In cities which already had sizeable black communities, the wartime growth did not appear as great in proportional terms. However, an additional 214,534 Afro-Americans entered Chicago during the war and 60,000 were added to Detroit's numbers - both greater increases than had occurred during World War I.<sup>18</sup> It is true, as Weaver said, that the impact of the migrants was probably greater for the cities which

14. Ibid. 5-7.

15. Wesley C. Calef and Howard J. Nelson, 'Distribution of Negro Population in the United States', Geographical Review, Vol. 46, I, 1956, 95; Farley, 'The Urbanization of Negroes', 255.

16. Dept. of Labor, Negroes in the United States, 7.

17. Charles Maboio Barresi, 'Residential Invasion and Succession: A Case Study', unpublished M.A. thesis, June 1959, S.U.N.Y. at Buffalo, 2; Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 83.

18. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 49, 85-87, and Otis Dudley Duncan and Beverly Duncan, The Negro Population of Chicago: A Study of Residential Succession, Chicago 1957, 4, 21.



had small black populations prior to the war than for the bigger cities which already had large numbers of Afro-American residents. But no matter what their size, the problems were the same for all.

The most obvious and pressing of problems was where to house the newcomers. The Depression had ended a boom in the building industry and construction was further curtailed during the 1940s as all resources were concentrated in the war effort. In the resultant general housing shortage blacks were harder hit than whites. Even before the war, in both the North and South, the worst housing was that occupied by Afro-Americans, and Southern blacks suffered more than others. Homes were often little more than overcrowded, unpainted, wooden shacks without toilets and often without running water.<sup>19</sup> Conditions in the North were little better. There Afro-Americans usually inhabited two-storey wooden houses or older brick tenements long vacated by whites. In either case, they were generally disapidated, overcrowded, and rat-infested. In Chicago, 'the core of the black belt was a festering slum.'<sup>20</sup>

Afro-Americans were concentrated in these poorer areas for a variety of reasons. New arrivals in a city normally sought the

19. Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, New York 1944, 376-78; Richard Sterner, The Negro's Share: A Study of Income, Consumption, Housing and Public Assistance, New York 1943, 166-70, 185-200.
20. Allan H. Spear, Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920, Chicago 1967, 24. See too, Sterner, op. cit., St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City, revised ed., New York 1970, 204, and Gilbert Osofsky, Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto; Negro New York 1890-1930, New York and Evanston, 1968, 135-48.

security and help of friends and relatives already established. Once settled, however, their low economic status and the prejudice of whites prevented any movement out of the ghetto. It was largely following the great migration, during the 1920s, that housing for blacks in the North became tightly segregated. As Robert Weaver, an authority on black housing, wrote,<sup>21</sup>

the idea of Negro ghettos in northern cities became fixed. As years went on, colored Americans were identified with segregated areas, and it was often assumed that Negroes had never been other than relegated to a well-defined area of living. It was also assumed that the Negro ghetto in the North was indestructible.

Attempts to break out of these physical confines were thwarted by real estate agents who refused to sell to blacks; by financiers who refused to loan money to them; and by restrictive covenants in property deeds which forbade the sale of a particular building to those other than of the Caucasian race.<sup>22</sup> When such methods failed whites often resorted to violence, terrorizing Afro-Americans out of homes in predominantly white neighbourhoods. As more and

21. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 4. Prior to the war, Weaver had been assistant adviser on Negro Affairs in the Department of Interior, then a member of the Public Works Administration, and later worked in the U.S. Housing Authority. During the war he was a member of the War Production Board until 1943 when he joined the Negro Manpower Commission. On the development of segregated housing, see too, Spear and Osofsky, op. cit., and Karl Taeuber and Alma Taeuber, Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change, Chicago 1966, 4.
22. Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 622-27; Tom C. Clark and Philip B. Perlman, Prejudice and Property: An Historic Brief Against Racial Covenants, Washington, D.C., 1948, 11-13; and Clement E. Vose, Caucasians Only: The Supreme Court, the NAACP, and the Restrictive Covenant Cases, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959, vii.



more blacks entered the cities the ghettos became increasingly congested and run-down, affecting morals, health, and race relations.<sup>23</sup>

The Depression, which led to widespread federal intervention in all walks of life, brought about some relief in housing. The near-total collapse in private construction, the breakdown of finance, and widespread unemployment enabled the government to launch housing programmes. Through the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, the Federal Home Loan Banks, and the Federal Housing Administration, the government endeavoured to provide credit facilities for home-owners in difficulties and for prospective house-purchasers. This part of the federal programme had little impact on Afro-Americans. Increased credit mainly helped those people in the middle and lower-middle income brackets rather than the very poor. Secondly, the loans, although insured by the Federal Housing Administration, were still arranged through established real estate agents and financiers who for one reason or another were reluctant to lend to blacks. Finally, the federal authorities accepted and maintained segregation in housing and the use of restrictive covenants thus limiting black participation from the start. The part of the government programme which did help Afro-Americans was that which provided and funded public, low-rent, housing. Under the aegis of the Public Works Administration, and later the U.S. Housing Authority, black participation in this area was considerable. Of the more than

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23. On the effects of segregation in housing see, Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 375-76; Clark and Perlman, Prejudice and Property, 14-15; E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States, revised ed., New York, 1969, 634-36.



20,000 houses built between 1933 and 1937, about one-third were for Afro-American occupancy.<sup>24</sup> While this was an encouraging development, it hardly skimmed the surface, and with the onset of war, the immediate housing situation of Afro-Americans deteriorated rather than improved.

The need to channel all resources into the war effort prevented much in the way of new building construction, and, to the extent that new housing was constructed, it was reserved for essential in-migrant workers in urgent war production areas.<sup>25</sup> Because of their late entry into war industry, Afro-American participation in the war housing programme was delayed. As a statement from the Federal Public Housing Authority pointed out, additional housing for blacks would come only with the breakdown of barriers to employment.<sup>26</sup> This proved to be a correct assessment of the situation, for the inclusion of Afro-Americans to any great degree in priority war housing took place after mid-1942.<sup>27</sup> Lack of co-ordination and contradictory racial policies among the various government housing agencies also served to limit the number of

24. Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 350. The Federal housing programmes and their application to blacks are dealt with in An American Dilemma, 348-52; Sterner, The Negro's Share, op.cit.; Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 69-75; and in Nathan Glazer and Davis McEntire, eds., Studies in Housing and Minority Groups, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1960.
25. Housing and Home Finance Agency, Housing of the Non-white Population: 1940 to 1947, Washington, D.C., 1948, 1.
26. Quoted in Baltimore Afro-American, May 23, 1942.
27. 'Negro Share of Priority War-Housing - Private and Public, as of December 31, 1944', Office of Principal Housing Analyst, May 1, 1945, HHFA 91, NARG 207, and HHFA, Housing of the Non-white Population, op.cit.

'defense homes' available to blacks. A statement from the Defense Housing Co-ordinator of the Office of Emergency Management, which seemed to recognize the needs of war, declared,<sup>28</sup>

Public interest and the war program demand that equitable provision of housing be made for Negro defense workers. This statement is to reaffirm and make effective this policy. A total war demands total participation by all of the people.

He went on to say that the lack of vacant sites for development in black areas should not constitute an impediment to the defense program through the failure to provide adequate housing for Negro war workers.' Government officials were called upon to take part in interracial and public relations work to prevent and overcome any problems that arose. Yet later the same year, a memorandum from the Federal Works Agency stated that sites should be selected 'in accordance with our established racial policy, that is, to avoid any disturbance of existing racial patterns for any communities affected.'<sup>29</sup> Such basic differences of policy were, theoretically, ironed out when the National Housing Agency was created, in August 1942, to oversee the war housing programme. Although it had a policy of non-discrimination, the NHA lacked the machinery to put its principles into effect. Actions were also limited by the traditional economic viewpoints held by private financiers and by

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28. Memo., C. F. Palmer, Office of Emergency Management, Division of Defense Housing Co-ordination, to all personnel, January 28, 1941, HHFA 23, NARG 207.

29. Memo., W. P. Seaver, Assistant Administrator for Development, Federal Works Agency, to all Regional Directors, May 9, 1941, 'Defense Housing', OASW 199, NARG 107.

local laws, which in some areas forbade integration.<sup>30</sup>

This variety of forces restricted black participation in defence housing throughout the war. In 1941, only 4,600 or 1.4 per cent of the total number of privately and publicly financed homes for war workers were for Afro-Americans although it was said that more than 20 million dollars were being spent on homes for blacks.<sup>31</sup> By the end of 1944, 8.6 per cent or 115,389 out of the total of 1,336,141 privately and publicly financed homes were for blacks. These figures obscure the fact that blacks received a greater number (and a greater proportion) of the publicly financed homes than they did of those privately financed: only four per cent, approximately 19,000, of the privately financed homes were for Afro-Americans in 1944, compared with 16.4 per cent, 96,461, of the public.<sup>32</sup> The better situation in public housing was, in part, due to the Federal Public Housing Authority (formerly the U.S. Housing Authority) which was active in providing homes for black in-migrant workers. It was also due to the 'necessities of war, the enlightened policies of some housing authorities, and the constant prodding of the racial advisers in the Federal housing agencies' which 'yielded a growing number of racially mixed public

30. Davis McEntire, Residence and Race: Final and Comprehensive Report to the Commission on Race and Housing, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1960, 318-20, and Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 141-43.
31. 'Negro Share of Priority War-Housing - Private and Public', op.cit., and Press Release, Office of Emergency Management, Division of Defense Housing Co-ordination, October 28, 1941, 'Defense Housing', OASW 199, NARG 107.
32. These figures are from 'Negro Share of Priority War Housing', and Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 144, 162.



housing projects.<sup>33</sup> While this was all to the good, public housing could not keep up with the needs of Afro-Americans or, for that matter, of whites. Lack of money, authority, and initiative all stood in the way of an adequate housing programme. More important for blacks was the attitude of local white populations which was accurately summed up by a government official:<sup>34</sup>

Local resistance against the use of suitable sites to house Negro in-migrants has often been intractable and intransigent, with roots so deeply imbedded in the mores, customs, or traditions of some communities that even the demands of war were insufficient, in many instances, to facilitate private or public war housing developments to accomodate these essential war workers.

With such limitations on what little new home building there was, the housing conditions of Afro-Americans could not improve. Indeed, one survey found that during the war 'conditions of Negro housing in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, St. Louis, and other cities changed on the whole from bad to worse', a view with which Weaver agreed.<sup>35</sup> There was, it is true, an increase in 'non-farm home ownership' amongst Afro-Americans in the war years, but in 1947 two-thirds of the black urban population still lived in rented property.<sup>36</sup> Despite considerable increases in earnings, the purchasing power of black Americans was still limited by racial

33. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 180.
34. B. T. McGraw, 'Wartime Employment, Migration, and Housing of Negroes in the United States, 1941-44', HHFA 91, NARG 207.
35. 'A Crucial Problem in Race Relations - Housing: Negro Housing Conditions in Five Cities of the North, 1940-1945', Race Relations: A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends, IV, 4, November 1946, 117, and Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, viii.
36. HHFA, Housing of the Non-white Population, 2.

considerations. The prejudices of estate agents and their clients, reflected in the increasingly widespread use of restrictive covenants, prevented blacks from buying homes in new developments, most of which were in the suburbs. Between 1940 and 1950, approximately 2,000,000 whites moved out of the central cities while 1,300,000 blacks moved in. There was, in short, an intensification of segregation in housing during this period as a survey of 185 cities by a social scientist confirmed.<sup>37</sup> Whatever the shortcomings of his findings, and there are several, Cowgill's general conclusion that 'residential segregation in these American cities did in fact increase during the decade, 1940-1950,' is borne out by writers at the time.<sup>38</sup> The effect of this was to turn areas where some blacks lived in 1940, solidly black; to create new black areas; and to add to the congestion in existing ghettos. Thus while the proportion of the white population living in overcrowded dwellings, (i.e., with more than 1.5 people per room), declined from 4.8 per cent in 1940 to 3.6 per cent in 1950, for blacks, despite their generally improved economic status,

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37. Donald O. Cowgill, 'Trends in Residential Segregation of Non-whites in American Cities, 1940-1950', American Sociological Review, XXI, 1, February 1956; Weaver, 'Non-white Population Movements and Urban Ghettos', Phylon, XX, 3, 1959; HHFA, Housing of the Non-white Population, 10-13.
38. Cowgill, 'Trends in Residential Segregation', 46; Weaver, Hemmed In: ABCs of Race Restrictive Housing Covenants, American Council on Race Relations, Chicago 1945; and Charles Abrams, Race Bias in Housing, New York 1947. Some of the limitations of Cowgill's findings are pointed out by Wendell Bell, 'Comments on Cowgill's "Trends in Residential Segregation of Nonwhites"', American Sociological Review, XXII, April 1957, 221-22. The main criticism is in the size of the areas used by Cowgill, and the important conclusion drawn is that there was more segregation than Cowgill's figures would have us believe.

the figures rose from 16.0 per cent to 16.7 per cent.<sup>39</sup>

This, of course, is a general view of the situation which omits variations from one place to another. A brief examination of a selection of cities in different areas will give some idea of the conditions faced by Afro-Americans. San Francisco and Los Angeles were both said to have no 'Negro problem' prior to 1941, largely because the number of blacks there up until then was small. This situation changed almost overnight as thousands of Afro-Americans, most of them from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana, moved west.<sup>40</sup> The reason for this migration was, quite simply, economic. Of 152 black in-migrant families interviewed in San Francisco, the majority had come to seek better employment, to work in war industries, and to earn more money. A number had moved to join husbands in the forces who were stationed in or near the city.<sup>41</sup> For most of these their wishes for economic improvement were fulfilled and in the war boom prosperity the average gross monthly wage was \$329.32.<sup>42</sup> Despite their earnings, however, Afro-Americans were restricted in their choice of accommodation. Restrictive covenants in both Los Angeles and San Francisco forced blacks into the areas formerly occupied by Japanese. In San

39. Weaver, 'The Relative Status of the Housing of Negroes in the United States', Journal of Negro Education, XXII, 3, Summer 1953, and Davis McEntire, Residence and Race, 39-40.
40. Joseph James, 'San Francisco', and Charles Bratt, 'Los Angeles', both in Journal of Educational Sociology, XIX, 3, November 1945.
41. Charles S. Johnson, et. al., The Negro War Worker in San Francisco: A Local Self-survey, San Francisco 1944, 80.
42. Johnson, The Negro War Worker in San Francisco, 18.



Francisco this meant that there were 10,000 people in a district previously inhabited by less than 5,000 where 55 per cent of the homes were rated as substandard.<sup>43</sup> War housing programmes were completely inadequate. The black population of Los Angeles had increased by over 60,000; almost 30,000 blacks worked in war industry; but only 3,825 units of war housing were provided for Afro-Americans. The number of defence homes occupied by blacks in San Francisco was 4,784 although there had been over 20,000 black in-migrants to the city.<sup>44</sup> While the public housing authorities in San Francisco insisted on segregation of the races, those in Los Angeles tried to ease the situation by dispersing Afro-American families throughout their projects. This was also true in Seattle and Portland but in all cases white resistance limited the success of such ventures.<sup>45</sup>

The inflow of such huge numbers and the lack of vacant accommodation led to overcrowding. The average migrant family of five people in San Francisco occupied 3.3 rooms. For some, conditions were even worse: one family of three lived, ate, and slept in one poorly furnished room, another in a 'substandard frame dwelling' without bathroom, toilet, or hot water.<sup>46</sup> Living

43. James, 'San Francisco', 170; Johnson, The Negro War Worker in San Francisco, 20; Clark and Perlman, Prejudice and Property, 15.
44. 'Los Angeles Negro Housing', HHFA 91, NARG 207; Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1941-1946, 341; Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 84.
45. 'Housing for Negro Occupancy in Seattle and Portland', March 21, 1945, HHFA 91, NARG 207; Robert W. O'Brien, 'Seattle', Journal of Educational Sociology, XIX, 3, November 1945; Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 188-9, 198.
46. Johnson, The Negro War Worker in San Francisco, 24-27.

conditions in Los Angeles were described as 'apalling': in one case more than 40 people used a single toilet; the sharing of beds by shifts was common - as one person got up to go to work, another took his place in the 'hot bed'.<sup>47</sup> Similar conditions were recorded in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital. There, a woman journalist reported, were the worst slums of all where 'five or six persons to a room, occupying at times a single bed, is commonplace.'<sup>48</sup> Local housing authority plans to build homes for Afro-Americans outside of the ghetto in Washington were abandoned in the face of white opposition. While 55,000 new war homes were built for whites only 4,000, half of them temporary, were built for blacks.<sup>49</sup>

Attempts to construct housing projects in Buffalo, New York, were also resisted by the local white populations. With Bethlehem Steel and Bell Aircraft plants located there, Buffalo was an important centre of war industry. It therefore attracted a considerable number of black migrants, most of whom found work as labour shortages developed.<sup>50</sup> Finding accommodation was not as easy. When the Division of Defense Housing of the National Housing Agency announced, early in 1941, that it planned to build homes in

47. Dorothy W. Baruch, Glass House of Prejudice, New York 1946, 27-36.
48. Agnes E. Meyer, Journey Through Chaos, New York 1944, 324.
49. National Committee on Segregation in the Nation's Capital, Segregation in Washington, Chicago 1948, 41; Meyer, Journey Through Chaos, 330.
50. Buffalo Courier Express, August 8, 1940, November 1, 1942, February 14, 1943; Weaver, Negro Labor, 111-12.

north Buffalo for some of the black workers, protest was immediate. The NHA then suggested alternative sites in neighbouring Cheektowaga and Tonawanda, but those projects too were unacceptable to whites.<sup>51</sup> Most of this opposition appears to have come from Polish and Irish Catholics, often led by their priests. In an address before the Catholic Interracial Council in New York, a representative of the Defense Housing Co-ordinator said 'the frequency with which Catholic priests have inspired, organized, and led opposition to the Government's efforts to provide housing for Negroes has been very disturbing.' Buffalo, he went on to say, was 'the outstanding example.'<sup>52</sup> Pressure from Lester Granger of the National Urban League and from government officials, persuaded representatives of the Catholic church to condemn the discriminatory actions of some of its priests and affiliated organizations.<sup>53</sup> Although the opposition to black housing projects then died down, it had already had effect. The Federal and local authorities thereafter insisted on segregation in public housing and spent two years trying to find sites for projects while units in white areas stood empty for lack of suitable applicants.<sup>54</sup> Despite the resultant hardship and

51. See correspondence in OASW 199, 'Defense Housing', NARG 107, and William L. Evans, Race Fear and Housing in a Typical American Community, National Urban League, New York 1946.
52. Address before C.I.C. by Robert R. Taylor, December 1, 1941, OASW 199, NARG 107.
53. Granger to Rev. John A. Duffy, Bishop of Diocese of Buffalo, October 22, 1941; William H. Hastie to Professor T. W. Turner, November 24, 1941; Memo., Hastie to Taylor, December 3, 1941, all in OASW 199. Also letters in HHFA 23, NARG 207.
54. Evans, 'Federal Housing Brings Residential Segregation to Buffalo', Opportunity, XX, 4, April 1942; Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 95.



wastage and the heated criticism of housing officials by the local Urban League, the policy of racial separation was adhered to until 1947 when the State Commission against Discrimination ordered an end to it.<sup>55</sup>

The Chicago housing departments attacked the problem of war housing for Afro-Americans with considerable vigour, attempting to house blacks outside of the 'Black Belt'. Their efforts were staunchly resisted by whites. The scene of the most intense covenant activity, 80 per cent of Chicago was estimated to be covered by racially restrictive housing agreements.<sup>56</sup> When such 'legal' methods failed to keep blacks out of white areas, violence and intimidation were used. Between May 1, 1944 and July 20, 1946, there were 46 cases of arson-bombings.<sup>57</sup> In the face of this, public housing was the blacks' only hope, but with an increase of over 100,000 in the number of Afro-Americans in the city, the 7,000 war homes had little effect. For one project of 1,658 units opened in January 1941, there were 19,000 applicants.<sup>58</sup> By 1945, 300,000 Afro-Americans were crowded into the South Side, an area suitable for a maximum of 225,000. A survey of 69,000 homes in three black areas in 1944 found that 26.3 per cent, (15,780), were

55. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 207.
56. Clark and Perlman, Prejudice and Property, 14; Abrams, Race Bias in Housing, 12.
57. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 95; Chicago Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, Human Relations in Chicago: Report for Year 1946, Chicago 1946, 61-62.
58. Mayor's Commission, Race Relations in Chicago: Report for 1945, Chicago 1945, 25; Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1941-46, 341.

overcrowded.<sup>59</sup> It was not surprising then that the Mayor's Commission found that 'most of the cases of racial friction... have occurred directly in relation to the housing situation.'<sup>60</sup>

Like the migration of Afro-Americans, interracial violence was not new to America, nor was its relation to times of war. During the Civil war there had been bloody clashes between blacks and whites in New York and Detroit. In 1917, at least 40 Afro-Americans were killed in the riot at East St. Louis: in 1918, there were more deaths in Philadelphia; in 1919, there were 26 race riots in various cities, the largest taking place in Chicago.<sup>61</sup> The outbreaks during World War II, however, surpassed those of any previous period. There were clashes between servicemen of both races, between black soldiers and white policemen or civilians, and between black workers and white workers. These eruptions reached their peak in 1943 when there were 242 racial battles in 47 cities including Beaumont, Los Angeles, New York, and Detroit.<sup>62</sup>

Attracted by the huge car factories converted to war production, over 500,000 people, more than 50,000 of them black, moved to Detroit and neighbouring Willow Run during the war. The black

59. Avarh E. Strickland, History of the Chicago Urgan League, Urbana, Illinois, 1966, 157-8; Mayor's Commission, Race Relations in Chicago, 26.

60. Race Relations in Chicago, 40.

61. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 278, 474, 480-83; Arthur I. Waskow, From Race Riot to Sit-in: 1919 and the 1960s, New York 1967.

62. 'The Pattern of Race Riots Involving Negro Soldiers', Race Relations: A Summary of Events and Trends, 1-2, August-September 1944; Harvard Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War', Journal of American History, LVIII, 3, December 1971; Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1941-46, Chpt. X.

newcomers found that Detroit had but two areas for Afro-Americans, one on the west side and a larger one called Paradise Valley, on the east. The Federal Public Housing Authority projects for warworkers at Wayne and Willow Run were restricted to whites only, and of the total of 44,607 units built in Detroit only 3,070 were for blacks.<sup>63</sup> With an estimated shortage of 6,000 to 20,000 dwellings for Afro-Americans, Paradise Valley was, in 1943, no paradise at all and an assistant to the U.S. Attorney General was to describe the housing situation as 'deplorable'.<sup>64</sup> When, in 1942, the Sojourner Truth Housing Project, a project named after a female black abolitionist but built in a white neighbourhood, was opened for black tenants, white protests led to its reassignment to whites. Pressure from Afro-Americans led to the reversal of the order, but did not prevent a mob of whites from gathering to block the entry of blacks. Eventually, the Afro-Americans, protected by state troopers, gained access to their homes.<sup>65</sup> Whites also resisted the employment of blacks in Detroit and as late as 1943 there were still plants which made little or no use of Afro-Americans despite the shortages of unskilled production workers. In the first six months of that year, three million man-hours were lost due

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63. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 86, 173.

64. 'A Crucial Problem in Race Relations: Negro Housing Conditions in Five Cities of the North, 1940-1945', Race Relations: A Monthly Summary, 4, November 1946; Earl Louis Brown, Why Race Riots? Lessons from Detroit, Public Affairs Pamphlet 87, New York 1944, 14-16; Louis E. Martin, 'Detroit', Journal of Educational Sociology, XVII, 5, January 1944; Memo. C. E. Rhett's to Attorney General Biddle, July 12, 1943, 93:12 FDRL.

65. Bucklin Moon, The High Cost of Prejudice, New York 1947, 43-5; Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 92-94; Walter White and Thurgood Marshall, 'What Caused the Detroit Riots', in Thomas R. Frazier, ed., Afro-American History: Primary Sources, New York 1971, 173-81.



to strikes after the up-grading or hiring of blacks in the U.S. Rubber company, the Vickers company, Hudson Motors, Packard, and several others.<sup>66</sup> Much of this race hatred was stirred-up by white in-migrants from the South, encouraged by men like the Reverend J. Frank Norris, Gerald L. K. Smith, and Father Charles Coughlin, who were described, rather accurately, as 'religious political demagogues.'<sup>67</sup>

With this background of tension, it is not surprising that a major riot should have been forecast. After numerous violent incidents an editorial in Opportunity warned,<sup>68</sup>

There is something highly disturbing in the repetition of racial clashes in Detroit, something ominous like the low rumble of distant thunder before a storm. The clouds gather. And the storm will eventually break unless the constructive forces of racial amity in Detroit take aggressive and positive action to quell those irresponsible and vicious elements in the population who are intent on fastening the pattern of race relations of Mississippi and Florida on that municipality.

No action was taken, and on the evening of Sunday, June 20, a riot began that was to last for three days, ending only after Federal troops had been called in. The immediate cause was a confrontation between youths of both races on Belle Island which in turn sparked

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66. Brown, Why Race Riots, 19; Joseph D. Keenan, Vice-chairman, Labor Production, (W.P.B.), to J. Bron Philipson, Program supervisor, NHA, August 7, 1943, HHFA 91, NARG 207.
67. Brown, Why Race Riots, 6-8; Walter White, A Man Called White, New York 1948, 224-25; Thomas Sancton, 'The Race Riots', New Republic, July 5, 1943, 130.
68. Opportunity, XX, 5, May 1942. Also see Sitkoff, 'The Detroit Race Riot of 1943', Michigan History, LIII, 3, 1969, 188.

off other clashes in the vicinity. By night time, rumours of atrocities were circulating amongst both blacks and whites. The commonest story was that a black (white) baby had been thrown off a bridge, or that a white (black) women had been assaulted.<sup>69</sup> The truth would have made little difference: the tensions of several years exploded. Blacks looted and destroyed white-owned stores, whites attacked blacks caught outside the ghetto. The police force could or would do nothing. In some instances blacks were beaten in the presence of police officers, in others the police themselves were actually involved in attacks.<sup>70</sup> Despite the obvious inability of the forces of law and order to control the situation, both the mayor, Edward Jeffries, and the Governor, Harry F. Kelly, hesitated to call in federal troops. It was Tuesday before such action was taken and by the time the soldiers arrived there was rioting in 19 precincts affecting 75 per cent of the entire city.<sup>71</sup>

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69. Detailed accounts of the riot are provided in Alfred McClung Lee and Norman Humphrey, Race Riot, New York 1943; Robert Shogan and Tom Craig, The Detroit Race Riot: A Study in Violence, New York 1964.
70. Of the 25 blacks killed, 17 died at the hands of the police. They were severely criticised by Thurgood Marshall, a black lawyer and representative of the NAACP, in 'The Gestapo in Detroit', The Crisis, August 1943, see too Pittsburgh Courier, July 3, 1943.
71. Telegram Kelly to Roosevelt, June 22, 1943, 93: 12 FDRL; Brig. General William E. Guthner to Lt. Col. F. W. Reese, Provost Marshal General's Office, August 2, 1943, 'Detroit riot', War Dept., NARG 389. The delay in calling for assistance is dealt with in Sitkoff, 'The Detroit Race Riot', 191-94, and in White, A Man Called White, 226.

After initially dispersing crowds, using bayonets and occasionally gas, the troops worked in patrols protecting especially the transportation system.<sup>72</sup> Gradually, the city returned to order. By that time 34 people, 25 black and nine white, were dead, more than a thousand injured, and a great deal of damage done. The general effect of the riot was 'to retard industrial production, to impair the morale of our armed forces, and to injure national unity.'<sup>73</sup>

The violence in Detroit caused some alarm among the administrators of other municipalities with large black populations. The mayor of New York, Fiorello LaGuardia, sent observers to Detroit during the riot and held a meeting after it in order to prevent a repetition of those events in his own realm. A few days later, he wrote to President Roosevelt that, 'so far as conditions are concerned, I believe we have done more than any other city in the country.'<sup>74</sup> He must, therefore, have been sorely disappointed when a major disturbance broke out in Harlem on Sunday, August 1, 1943. During a minor fracas in a somewhat

72. Military Log , 'Detroit riot', War Dept., NARG 389. The efficiency of the Army once called in, was demonstrated by the fact that no deaths were recorded after the soldiers' arrival and by the gradual return to work on Wednesday 23rd. See both Military Log and Guthner to Reese, op. cit., War Dept., NARG 389. In fact, the War Department had been prepared for such an eventuality for a number of years. A plan existed which stated in detail the action to be taken in case of domestic disorders. For some reason this was known as 'Emergency Plan White'. See, Acting Sec. of War to Roosevelt, August 19, 1943, 93:12 FDRL.
73. Congressman Vito Marcantonio to Roosevelt, June 26, 1943, 93:12 FDRL.
74. LaGuardia to Roosevelt, June 27, 1943, 93:12 FDRL, and White, A Man Called White, 230.



disreputable hotel, a 26 year-old black soldier, Robert Bandy, was shot and wounded by a white policeman. Immediately, a rumour that the soldier had been shot in the back and killed began to circulate amongst the black inhabitants.<sup>75</sup> Whether or not the soldier was alive or dead was really irrelevant: what was important was the fact that such a confrontation had taken place. As the poet, Langston Hughes, summed it up,<sup>76</sup>

They didn't kill the soldier,

A race leader cried.

Somebody hollered,

Naw! But they tried! [*italics his*]

Unlike the Detroit riot, what resulted in Harlem was more of an implosion than explosion. Although there were a few attacks on white people who had mistakenly strayed into the area, most of the black rage was directed at white-owned property. After several hours of window smashing and general commotion, wholesale looting of shops and stores took place as Afro-Americans seized foodstuffs and clothing previously sold to them at exorbitant prices.<sup>77</sup> The only white people involved were the police and city administrators attempting to restore law and order. As many people pointed out

75. Baltimore Afro-American and Chicago Defender, August 7, 1943; New York Times, August 2, 1943; and White, A Man Called White, 234-35.

76. 'The Ballad of Margie Polite', in One Way Ticket, New York 1949, 75-78. Margie Polite was one of the principal participants in the original scuffle. Also see the editorial in The Crisis, September 1943, on the feelings of the riot participants.

77. White, A Man Called White, 235; New York Times, August 3, 1943.

afterwards, the eruption in Harlem was not a race riot in the sense that Detroit was.<sup>78</sup> It was not necessary for federal troops to be called into New York either. Careful use of the police force and the assistance of prominent black leaders such as Walter White and Roy Wilkins of the NAACP was all that was needed to restore peace. Without the battles with whites that had occurred in Detroit, the black rage soon burned itself out. Only five people, all black, were killed, (compared with the 34 in Detroit), 500 were injured, and another 500 arrested. An estimated five million dollars worth of property was damaged.<sup>79</sup> Fortunately, this was the last major riot of the war years, and in fact, the last of its scale until the 1960s.<sup>80</sup>

The question of why these outbreaks should occur when they did was one which drew a variety of answers. The New York Times pointed out that both riots 'had similar powderkeg backgrounds in the rapid growth and overcrowding of Negro districts in recent years, charges of discrimination in the Army, Navy and war industry, demands for economic and social equality, and the rise of Negro radical agitators preying on these conditions.'<sup>81</sup> The Detroit Governor's Committee seized on the last of these points and in its report blamed Afro-Americans for starting the initial fight and black organizations and newspapers for stirring up the underlying

78. White, A Man Called White, 238-39; New York Times, August 3, 1943; Langston Hughes, Fight for Freedom: The Story of the NAACP, New York, 1962, 97.

79. New York Times Review, August 8, 1943.

80. Arthur I. Waskow, From Race Riot to Sit-in: 1919 and the 1960s, New York 1967, 220.

81. New York Times, August 3, 1943, 10.

tensions.<sup>82</sup> Afro-Americans, on the other hand, accused racist and subversive elements of causing trouble in order to prevent progress in civil rights and to weaken America's war effort.

Walter White referred to the riots prior to that in Harlem as,<sup>83</sup>

deliberately provoked attacks which are designed to hamper war production, destroy or weaken morale, and to deny minorities, Negroes in particular, the opportunity to participate in the war effort on the same basis as other Americans.

Local and federal government officials rejected such arguments as unfounded.<sup>84</sup> They did, however, agree on some of the deeper causes of unrest, although their solutions to the problem generally differed from those of blacks.

One major contributory factor, as was pointed out by the New York Times, was the wartime migrations and resultant overcrowding. New York was no different from Detroit in that respect. Although the New York Housing Authority had a comparatively liberal policy, it could do little to counteract the prejudice that confined blacks to Harlem. Even Afro-Americans in the higher income brackets could not escape despite their ability to pay. Newcomers from the

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82. Newspaper reports and the findings of the Governor's committee are included in the War Dept. files on the riot, NARG 389. See too, Sitkoff, 'The Detroit Race Riot', 199-204, and Brown, Why Race Riots?, 22-3.
83. Telegram, White to Roosevelt, June 21, 1943; Program of Action on Nation-wide Race Riots Adopted by Conference of National Organizations, and many other letters blamed seditionist activity, all in 93:12 FDRL.
84. In a letter to Roosevelt, Attorney-general Biddle declared, 'There is no evidence of any Axis, or Fascist or Ku Klux Klan incitement. In fact there is no evidence of any concerted action to bring about the riots.' July 15, 1943, 93:12 FDRL. See also, Sitkoff, 'The Detroit Race Riot', 204.



South found themselves condemned to live in tenements which were 'a hundred delta cabins, plus tuberculosis.'<sup>85</sup> A senior official of the National Housing Agency singled out the shortage of housing as a major cause of racial friction, and the vice-chairman of Labor Production in the War Production Board blamed the lack of 'adequate expansion in community facilities.'<sup>86</sup> These and other similar reports led the Attorney General, Biddle, to recommend that the President get a report 'on the advisability of putting into effect a program for building houses and recreational facilities in Detroit, particularly for Negroes, and in other areas where racial tensions are largely affected by the lack of housing and recreational facilities.' He also suggested that 'careful consideration be given to limiting, and in some instances putting an end to, Negro migrations into communities which cannot absorb them' A hint of pessimism was included with his advice concerning the production of 'a simple manual to be used by local officials and corps commanders to expedite the sending in of troops when necessary.'<sup>87</sup> His gloom was probably justified given the impossibility of controlling migrations and the already proven failure of federal housing agencies to deal with the racial question. Moreover, President

85. Roi Ottley, Black Odyssey: The Story of the Negro in America, London, 1949, 259; Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 186-87; White, A Man Called White, 240; Warren M. Banner, 'New York', Journal of Educational Sociology, XVII, 5, January 1944, 272-79.
86. Coleman Woodbury, NHA, to Jonathan Daniels, Admin. Assistant to the President, August 12, 1943, and Joseph D. Keenan, WPB, to J. Bron Philipson, Program Supervisor, NHA, August 7, 1943, both in HHFA 91, NARG 207.
87. Biddle to Roosevelt, July 15, 1943, following report from C. E. Rhett to Biddle July 12, 1943, 93:12 FDRL.

Roosevelt was reluctant to take action on civil rights in general, preferring to leave the problem until after the war. In the meantime, he was content to let his advisers and local civic committees handle racial affairs.<sup>88</sup>

Racial violence has been shown to be related to population changes and conflict over housing, and clearly poor housing and overcrowding played a large part in the disturbances in Detroit and Harlem.<sup>89</sup> But housing was just one of several causes of dissatisfaction and friction. While the lot of Afro-Americans could, in general, be said to have improved during, and because of, the war, all progress met with stubborn opposition. Employment opportunity did not come until necessity demanded it, and even then was limited by the attitudes of white workers and employers. Blacks in the armed services were segregated and discriminated against and reports of violence directed at black soldiers appeared in the press with alarming frequency. There was still a rise in expectations and in militancy amongst Afro-Americans but when their aspirations were met by whites determined to maintain the racial status quo the result was anger, and bitterness. Given the economic and social discrimination, the stories of racial violence elsewhere, and the physical restrictions of the ghetto, it is not surprising that a

88. Jonathan Daniels was one of four aides appointed to deal with race relations problems and in preference to Biddle's suggestions, Daniels was to correlate all information on race relations. What he was to do afterwards is not clear. See Daniels to John B. Blandford, July 28, 1943, HHFA 91, NARG 207, and letters in 93:12 FDRL. Also Sitkoff, 'The Detroit Race Riot', 204-5.

89. Allen D. Grimshaw, 'Urban Racial Violence in the United States: Changing Ecological Considerations', American Journal of Sociology, LXVI, 2, September 1968.

black area such as Harlem could be described as a 'cauldron of brooding misery and frustration.'<sup>90</sup> Added to the racial tensions was the strain of war. The war fulfilled some of the conditions said to be necessary for riots to occur by preventing institutions from functioning properly and by delaying the resolution of grievances. In short, the war lead to 'the disarrangement or distortion of the patterns of social interaction to the extent that the happening of major race conflicts was possible.'<sup>91</sup> People of all races were working long hours, subject to rationing, irritated by shortages of material goods, and, if not subject to the draft themselves, likely to have a relative or friend sent off to face the perils of armed conflict. Thus the war contributed, both directly and indirectly to the 'powderkeg' atmosphere. It only took fairly trivial incidents on hot sticky days to provide the spark.<sup>92</sup>

The very violent nature of war may have encouraged rioting: it certainly would appear that armed service did, in more than one way. In Harlem, but more especially in Detroit, the majority of

90. White, A Man Called White, 235; Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War', Journal of American History, LVII, 3, December 1971, 671; Carey McWilliams, 'What We Did About Racial Minorities', in Jack Goodman, ed., While You Were Gone: A Report on Wartime Life in the United States, New York 1946, 89-90.
91. Bernard F. Robinson, 'War and Race Conflicts in the United States', Phylon, IV, 4, 1943; Stanley Lieberson and Arnold R. Silverman, 'The Precipitants and Underlying Conditions of Race Riots', American Sociological Review, XXX, 6, December 1965.
92. Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence', 670; Brown, Why Race Riots?, 6-16. It is worth bearing in mind that both riots began on hot, humid Sundays, and in Detroit it started among crowds in a cramped recreational area. It was a situation in which tempers were already frayed.



the rioters were young males. The Governor's committee found that almost 63 per cent of the participants in the riot were under 31 years of age while less than 35 per cent were under 21.<sup>93</sup> This fact led Walter White and Thurgood Marshall to suggest two categories of young rioters.<sup>94</sup> The first was made up of those people who had been rejected for armed service on physical, mental, or moral grounds, or deferred by reason of occupation. Rioting for them was a means of demonstrating their masculinity and that they were as physically able as those who had gone into the Army. The second category consisted of those facing armed service, or likely to face it if the war continued for some time. The riot presented them with the chance of a 'final fling' and armed service broke the pattern of their lives and destroyed the normal stabilizing influence of continuity. It is interesting to note that many of the rioters in Los Angeles as well as in Detroit, were men in uniform whose pattern of life had already been disrupted. The riots may have been an expression of their nervousness about their futures, a reaction against the restrictions of military life, or even a sign of resentment at young people who had avoided military service.<sup>95</sup> One of the participants in the Harlem disturbance was later interviewed.<sup>96</sup>

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93. Details of report in War Dept. files NARG 389.
94. White and Marshall, 'What Caused the Detroit Riots?', 178-79.
95. See Sitkoff, 'The Detroit Race Riot', 189; Lee and Humphrey, Race Riot, passim; Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On?, 350. I should point out that there were cases of white soldiers protecting blacks in Detroit, see photographs in War Dept. file, NARG 389.
96. Kenneth B. Clark and James Barker, 'The Zoot Effect in Personality: A Race Riot Participant', Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 40, 1945.

He was an 18 year-old Afro-American facing induction who had given up school in order to have some fun. When the disorder began he joined in, looting a number of different shops. Of his future in the Army he said, "'...I do not like it worth a dam. I'm not a spy or a saboteur, but I don't like goin' over there fightin' for the white man - so be it.'" His role in the riot was obviously more than a final frolic prior to armed service: it was a conscious or unconscious protest against his social isolation, rejection, and humiliation by white society. The same was probably true of most of those who took part with him.<sup>97</sup>

The war, then, served to damage race relations to the point of violence. By opening up employment opportunities in certain areas it encouraged large-scale migrations of people, both black and white. Unable to cope even with the increases in white population, most towns and cities were unwilling to tackle the problems facing Afro-Americans. Old ghettos were added to, new ones were formed. In either case, housing was poor and overcrowded and the general lack of decent accommodation and other facilities added to the many grievances felt at the time. Although generally having unpleasant consequences, the growth in the black urban population did lead to an increased sense of community and awareness. Attacks by whites were met with concerted action and news of racial incidents passed quickly through the entire Afro-American populace.

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97. Surprisingly, some black commentators disagreed with this view. The Pittsburgh Courier, August, 14, 1943, referred to the Harlem riot as 'an orgy of vandalism without reason, without excuse and without defense.' Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., called the rioters hoodlums and thieves, in Riots and Ruins, New York 1945, 49-51.

As the war progressed and as more in-migrants entered the cities, tensions mounted and points of friction between the races increased. With the additional disruption of life by long hours in war industries, by rationing and controls, and by armed service, open conflict became virtually inevitable. The war may well have 'pointed up the basic issues in the housing problem of Negroes in the North', as Robert Weaver said.<sup>98</sup> It did not, however, produce much in the way of solutions for that particular problem or for the race relations problem in general.

## II

As Gunnar Myrdal pointed out, 'housing is much more than just shelter': its relation to general health and welfare is of prime importance.<sup>99</sup> Inadequate accommodation, low economic status, and white prejudice ensured that the health of Afro-Americans prior to the war was far below that of the rest of the population. Measured by any indice, the difference between black and white was appalling. Two examples will suffice: in 1939, the number of deaths out of 100,000 due to tuberculosis was for whites 37.4, for blacks 134.3. The infant mortality rate per 1,000 births for whites in 1940 was 43.2: for blacks it was 72.9.<sup>100</sup> Given the results of migration and urbanization during the war, one might expect a further deterioration in this situation. In fact, although the gap

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98. Weaver, The Negro Ghetto, 90.

99. Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 375-76.

100. Mary Gover, 'Negro Mortality: Course of Mortality from Specific Causes, 1920-1944', Public Health Reports, Vol. 63, 7, February 13, 1948, 212; Murray, Negro Hand Book, 1946-47, 71.



between the two races remained, it narrowed as the health of the black population continued to improve.

In many respects, this was a continuation of the long-term trends in national health statistics. The greatest progress actually occurred before the war, during the 1930s, when federal intervention led to an improvement in medical care and facilities and in standards of living. That these trends continued, if at a slightly slower rate, during the 1940s, was due to several factors. Housing in northern ghettos was often superior to that in the rural South and usually there was less discrimination in hospitals and by doctors in the North. Wartime employment and prosperity, and the generally higher standard of living meant that Afro-Americans could spend more on hospitalization and on medicines.<sup>101</sup> The treatment of people in the armed services and in defence plants also had effect. Even in the South, blacks could afford better foods with higher nutritional contents, thus ensuring that their children received something approaching the correct balance of vitamins.<sup>102</sup> By 1944, the figures for deaths per 100,000 due to tuberculosis had dropped to 32.7 for white Americans and 109.7 for Afro-Americans.<sup>103</sup> The statistics for infant mortalities also showed an improvement. In 1943, they had dropped to 37.5 for whites and 61.5 for blacks. This was even more remarkable given that the birthrate of both races

101. Dept. of Labor, Negroes in the United States: Their Employment and Economic Status, Bulletin 1119, Washington, D.C., 1952, 2-3; E. H. Allen, 'Extending Health Horizons Among Negroes', Opportunity, XXIV, 1, Jan.-March, 1946.
102. Dorothy Dickins, 'Food Patterns of White and Negro Families, 1936-1948', Social Forces, XXVII, 4, May 1949.
103. Gover, 'Negro Mortality', 212; Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1952, 161.

rose during this period.<sup>104</sup> In part this was due to the factors already mentioned but also to the Emergency Maternity and Infant Care Program which provided free care for the wives and newborn babies of men in the lower ranks of the armed forces.<sup>105</sup>

However, many of the imperfections in medical care for Afro-Americans still remained. Once again, the war served to highlight some of them. An editorial in the Baltimore Afro-American pointed out that 'it was not until war demands for manpower weighed our young folk in the balance of physical, mental and emotional fitness and found so many of them wanting, that many of us recognized the urgent need for better health and better homes', a view with which a researcher for the NAACP heartily agreed.<sup>106</sup> The 921,000 black registrants for armed service declared IV-F, that is, physically, mentally, or morally unfit, was a serious indictment of the American social system.<sup>107</sup> The number of rejections was such that southern politicians actually claimed that whites were being discriminated against!<sup>108</sup> Even so, little was done to change the

104. Murray, Negro Hand Book, 1946-47, 71; Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1941-46, 320-22. See Appendix IV.
105. Philip F. Williams, 'Maternal Welfare and the Negro', Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 132, II, November 16, 1946, 611; Murray, Negro Hand Book, 1946-47, 71.
106. Baltimore Afro-American, March 31, 1945; William Montague Cobb, Medical Care and the Plight of the Negro, NAACP, New York 1947, 5.
107. Jean Byers, A Study of the Negro in Military Service, Dept. of Defense, Washington, D.C., 1947, mimeographed copy in Moorland Collection, Howard University, 14-15. It is interesting to note here that some psychiatrists at induction stations rejected blacks with strong attitudes on segregation and discrimination as mentally unfit for military service, Campbell C. Johnson to Col. Rowntree, October 2, 1942, Selective Service System 220, NARG 147.
108. Various letters from southern congressmen in Selective Service System 220, NARG 147.

underlying reasons for this state of affairs. While the general ratio of doctors to people in 1945 was 1:750, there were only 3,810 black doctors - one to every 3,377 Afro-Americans. In dentistry, the ratio was even worse, 1:8,800.<sup>109</sup> There were only two all-black medical schools, at Howard University and Meharry Medical College, and the number of graduates they produced was pitifully small. Once graduated, the students had difficulty finding places as interns. By 1948, the number of black patients per doctor had actually increased to 3,681.<sup>110</sup> The majority of Afro-Americans qualified as general practitioners or specialists were located in the North where there was greater opportunity. In the South, segregation of patients and practitioners led to a wasteful duplication of facilities and a lack of hospital treatment for blacks. Separate was by no means equal. Despite the higher incidence of illness and disease amongst Afro-Americans, the proportion of beds per head of population was much lower for them than for whites. In Mississippi, for example, there were 0.5 beds per 1,000 Afro-Americans compared with 2.3 per 1,000 whites. In the entire state of Virginia there was no surgical treatment of tuberculosis available to blacks although it was one of the main causes of mortality amongst that section of the community.<sup>111</sup>

109. Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1941-46, 331; Michael M. Davis and Hugh H. Smythe, 'Providing Adequate Health Service to Negroes', Journal of Negro Education, Vol. 18, 1949, 308.
110. Cobb, Medical Care and the Plight of the Negro, 7, 12-13; Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1952, 163.
111. James Worsham Barksdale, A Comparative Study of Contemporary White and Negro Standards in Health, Education and Welfare, Charlottesville, Virginia, Phelps-Stokes Fellowship Paper, University of Virginia 1949, 30; Davis and Smythe, 'Providing Adequate Health Service to Negroes', 308.



While the opportunities for black women to obtain training as nurses increased as a result of scholarships from the Public Health Service, and, in 1943, through the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps, service in the Army Nurse Corps was segregated until 1945. Even the Red Cross refused to permit Afro-Americans to assist in its civilian first-aid training programme unless they formed segregated units on their own initiative.<sup>112</sup> Blacks did participate in the military war effort despite these limitations on their service. As a result, they made some gains. Co-operation between the National Nursing Council for War Service and the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses helped to break down discrimination in nursing schools and, in 1948, the American Nurses Association voted individual membership to all black nurses excluded from state organizations on racial grounds. After the Arkansas State Nurses Association admitted blacks to full membership in 1949 only six other state nursing bodies barred Afro-Americans. By 1950, the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses was disbanded because there was felt to be no further need for a separate association.<sup>113</sup> The previous year the American Medical Association named an Afro-American, Dr. Peter Marshall, as a member of its policy-making body. He was the first black to hold such a position in 103 years.<sup>114</sup> A greater

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112. Mabel Keaton Staupers, No Time for Prejudice: A Story of the Integration of Negroes in Nursing in the United States, New York 1961, 97; Kathryn Blood Negro Women War Workers, Dept. of Labor, Bulletin 205, Washington, D.C., 1945, 13; Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 1367.

113. Staupers, No Time for Prejudice, 63, 119; Walter White, How Far The Promised Land?, New York 1956, 157.

114. White, How Far the Promised Land?, 157.

advance was made with the passing of the Federal Hospital Survey and Construction Act in 1946. The Act, which provided federal funds for the construction or enlargement of hospitals, prohibited discrimination in the use of such monies. It demanded that separate facilities for Afro-Americans were to be equal and that the number of beds provided for blacks was to be in proportion to their representation in the local population.<sup>115</sup>

Although encouraging, these were but small steps towards bringing the health of Afro-Americans up to the level of that of whites. De jure segregation in the South, de facto in the North, led to separation and thus inequality, in all facilities, housing, recreation, and hospitalization. The circle of prejudice and discrimination limited the very life of black Americans and in a system based primarily on private rather than public health services, the gap between the two races would remain as long as Afro-Americans were confined to the lowest economic and social strata of society.

The same was also true of education, another area in which Afro-Americans lagged behind whites as a result of discrimination and segregation. The educational gap between the races was apparent in the comparative number of years spent in school, the length of school terms, the amount of money spent per pupil, the ratio of pupils to teachers, and the differences in teachers' salaries. While there were differences in standards between black and white throughout the entire country, they were more pronounced in the 18 southern states which required segregated schools. In those states,

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115. Michael M. Davis, 'What Color is Health?', Survey Graphic, XXXVI, 1, January 1947, 85-86; Davis and Smythe, 'Providing Adequate Health Service to Negroes', 316.

the average length of school terms in 1934-35 was 167 days for whites and 146 days for blacks. The salaries of black school teachers were generally half those of their white counterparts, ranging from 235 dollars per annum in Mississippi to 667 dollars in Texas.<sup>116</sup> While the situation was generally better in the North, de facto segregation and ghetto schools ensured that the educational attainments of northern blacks, while greater than those of both blacks and whites in the South, were lower than those of whites in the same geographic area as themselves. There were considerable improvements in the education of both races during the 1930s under the auspices of the New Deal: the Public Works Administration helped finance a considerable number of schools, the Works Progress Administration launched a huge adult education programme, and the National Youth Administration gave aid to students. An awareness of the racial problems in education was revealed by the government financed studies and by the appointment of blacks to the Office of Education.<sup>117</sup> Also of importance was the NAACP campaign to equalize teachers' salaries begun in 1936. By 1941, it reported considerable success. As well as salaries, the length of school terms and the number of black pupils also rose in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of

116. Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 425-40; Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1941-46, 54-61; Murray, Negro Handbook, 1942, 109. The 18 states were, Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, No. Carolina, Oklahoma, So. Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia.
117. Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 343-44. The studies included, Doxey A. Wilkerson, Special Problems of Negro Education, Washington, D.C., 1939; Advisory Committee on Education, The Federal Government and Education, Washington, D.C., 1938; U.S. Office of Education, National Survey of the Higher Education of Negroes, Washington, D.C., 1942. See Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 1270-71, and Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 480-81.



war.<sup>118</sup> Even so, the basic faults in the system which kept black standards below those of whites remained.

Just as the war pointed out the inadequacies in housing and health provision for blacks, so too did it focus 'the attention of the nation on the educational deficiencies of the Negro.'<sup>119</sup> Again, it was rejections for military service which brought the lack of educational qualifications among Afro-Americans to the country's notice. Between May and September 1941, five times as many black as white registrants for Selective Service were rejected. Of these, almost one third were due to educational inadequacies.<sup>120</sup> The statistics also revealed regional variations which reflected the differences in school systems. For example, while 0.3 per cent of the white registrants and 1.8 per cent of the blacks from New York were found ineligible for military service because of their inability to read and write, 1.9 per cent of the whites and 15.4 per cent of the blacks from Mississippi were deferred for the same reason. Even after the Army had lowered its standards, the gap

118. Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 436-37; Harry S. Ashmore, The Negro and the Schools, Chapel Hill, No. Carolina, 1954, 28-29; Virgil A. Clift, et al, Negro Education in America: Its Adequacy, Problems and Needs, New York 1962, 53; Henry Allen Bullock, A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967, 216-17.
119. Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 446; see also, Malcom S. MacLean and R. O'Hara Lanier, 'Negroes, Education, and the War', Educational Record, XXIII, 1, January 1942, for comments on the Afro-American as 'a huge and largely untapped resource of manpower, brain power, and service power.'
120. Director of Selective Service, Selective Service in Wartime: Second Report, Washington, D.C., 1943, 289.

between North and South, black and white, was much the same.<sup>121</sup>

Both the American Teachers' Association, an organization of black school teachers, and Ambrose Caliver, the Senior Specialist on Negro Education in the Office of Education, concluded that these figures were indicative of the inequality in educational opportunity and they called for change.<sup>122</sup> Some southerners argued that the high rejection rate amongst blacks was a sign of discrimination against whites and expressed concern that as the white male population was depleted through Selective Service, white women were endangered by the large number of blacks left at home.<sup>123</sup>

While such complaints may have had some effect, a more immediate and serious cause for alarm was the rapidly developing manpower shortage in the forces. By 1943, the situation was such that the Army could no longer afford to refuse the illiterates and slower learners of either race. In June of that year, a special training programme to give such inductees a basic education in reading and writing was initiated. Approximately 136,000 Afro-

121. American Teachers' Association, The Black and White of Rejections for Military Service: A Study of Rejections for Selective Service Registrants By Race, On Account of Educational and Mental Deficiencies, Montgomery, Alabama, 1944, 2-6.
122. American Teachers' Association, The Black and White of Rejections for Military Service, 50-51; Caliver, Postwar Education of Negroes: Educational Implications of Army Data and Experiences of Negro Veterans and War Workers, Washington, D.C., 1945, 44-55, in Office of Education, 40, NARG 12.
123. Representative Norvell of Arkansas, October 2, 1942, Senator Overton, Louisiana, August 10, 1942, and letter from Edgar Hoover, head of F.B.I. to Director of Selective Service, Hershey, May 28, 1943, all in Selective Service 170, NARG 147. Also see Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 447.

Americans benefitted from this course and their 85.1 per cent success rate, compared to 81.7 per cent of whites, was regarded as a 'shattering blow to racists.'<sup>124</sup> This programme in particular and military service in general provided many blacks with some degree of education, if only in technical skills such as vehicle maintenance and electrical engineering.<sup>125</sup> A greater source of industrial education was the Defense Training scheme for war workers.

Although the role of blacks in defence training was discussed from its inception, there was nevertheless, in its early days, open discrimination. In the 18 states with separate school systems, where Afro-Americans comprized 22.3 per cent of the population, as of June 30, 1942 only 3,910 or 7.0 per cent had taken part in pre-employment courses. Despite non-discrimination clauses in the federal laws which appropriated funds for training, there was ample evidence that blacks received less than their fair share.<sup>126</sup> As the war progressed and as shortages forced the breakdown in racial barriers, black participation increased. In the latter half of 1942, a total of 58,228 Afro-Americans took part in pre-employment courses, while another 13,066 took supplementary classes. In 1943, more than 112,000 completed war production, trade, professional, and clerical studies. Over the four year

124. Byers, A Study of the Negro in Military Service, 36-38.
125. Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 419; Caliver, Postwar Education of Negroes, 2-7.
126. Memo., John W. Studebaker, Commissioner, Office of Education, to Paul V. McNutt, Chairman, War Manpower Commission, September 1942, and Lawrence W. Cramer, executive secretary, FEPC, to Studebaker, July 3, 1942, both in Office of Education 40, NARG 12.



period beginning in July 1940, 12.4 per cent, or 323,496, of all trainees were black and 22,780 had taken engineering, scientific, and managerial courses.<sup>127</sup> These educational gains came about as a direct result of the war: as Robert Weaver remarked, 'were there no anticipated shortage of skilled workers, there would be no current federal program for their training.'<sup>128</sup>

The necessities of war had an impact on the very institutions of learning. Firstly it stripped the universities and colleges of students and then flooded them with military and defence trainees who brought with them an influx of federal monies to provide equipment and materials for their training. Secondly, there was, as the film 'Negro Colleges in Wartime' illustrated, an emphasis on war-related skills: electronics, radio engineering, mathematics, and the sciences. This raised questions about the place of non-related subjects on the college curricula and about the aspirations and the future place in society of those who completed such technical courses.<sup>129</sup> The wartime migrations, while alleviating the pressures on the inadequate school facilities in the rural South, added to the burdens of urban areas. In the South, wartime prosperity enabled

127. War Manpower Commission, Utilization of Reserve Workers: Recently Reported Placements of Negroes in Skilled Occupations, Washington, D.C., 1944, in FEPC 407, NARG 228; Caliver, 'Office of Education Services for Negroes', Education for Victory, February 20, 1945, in OE 40, NARG 12.
128. Weaver to Studebaker, July 18, 1940, OE 40, NARG 12.
129. Ashmore, The Negro and the Schools, 48; Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 477; 'Negro Colleges in Wartime', Office of War Information, 1943, National Archives N.A. 208-7-PPC; Felton G. Clark, 'Negro Higher Education and Some Fundamental Issues Raised by World War II', Journal of Negro Education, XI, 3, July 1942; Ambrose Caliver, 'Certain Significant Developments in the Education of Negroes During the Past Generation', Journal of Negro History, XXXV, 2, April 1950.

the states to spend more money on all schools and partly as a result of this, partly because of the urbanization of blacks, in the 18 states with segregated schools there was during the war an increase in the average length of terms, an increase in the number of black teachers, and a 25 per cent increase in their salaries.<sup>130</sup> Similar developments were taking place elsewhere in America: more black children were spending longer in school at all levels, had slightly more money spent on them, and were taught by better paid teachers.<sup>131</sup> While the developments of the pre-war era were consolidated and continued, the gap between black and white still existed. The average black teacher's salary in the South was still only 44 per cent of that of his white counterpart; the pupil- teacher ratio was still 20.7 per cent more than in white schools; the wide difference in expenditure per white and per black pupil still remained.<sup>132</sup>

For those already past school age, there was the opportunity to study under the G.I. Bill of Rights or the Project for Adult Education of Negroes. The latter, launched in 1946, was sponsored by the Office of Education with the financial support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Under the directorship of Ambrose Caliver, the Project aimed 'to raise the educational level of the large

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130. 'Statistics of the Education of Negroes, 1945-46', Office of Education Statistical Circular, No. 239, March 1948, OE 40, NARG 12; Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 447-49.
131. Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1941-46, 71; Dept. of Labor, Negroes in the United States, 9-10.
132. 'Statistics of the Education of Negroes, 1945-46'; Frazier, The Negro in the United States, 447.

numbers of Negroes whom the Selective Service System and the 1940 census described as functionally illiterate.'<sup>133</sup> Most writers on the subject of education shared the sentiments inherent in that statement. They saw the failings in the existing school system which the war had revealed and emphasized, and they called for improvement in order that America might be better prepared to meet any future test. Minorities would benefit from any such improvement. Charles H. Thompson, the editor of the Journal of Negro Education, summed up this feeling as early as 1942:<sup>134</sup>

We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the last war in believing that all of the problems of race relations are going to be solved merely because we are fighting a war for the preservation of democracy. And yet we do have reason to hope for a better post-war world.

This applied as equally to housing and health as to education. The war had exposed the inequalities, Afro-Americans had played their part in the war effort: they expected their just rewards.

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133. Papers on Project for Adult Education of Negroes and Articles in School Life, October 1946, and November 1948, all in OE 40, NARG 12.

134. 'Negro Higher Education and the War', Journal of Negro Education, XI, 3, July 1942. This entire volume is devoted to Negro Education and the war and nearly all of the articles concentrate on what will have to be done in the future.



Chapter 6Blacks in Film, Music, and Literature during World War II

The impact of total war is felt in all areas of life, cultural as well as economic, social, and political. This was perhaps more true of the countries near to and directly involved in the conflict than of those, such as America, which were some distance from it.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the war did have a similar effect in the United States: films were made, songs sung, and books written about the war which revealed the response to the challenge it posed. By and large, patriotism and propaganda were the order of the day.<sup>2</sup> Afro-American participation in these cultural activities reflected much of this impact of war and while all three avenues are explored in this chapter, it really falls naturally into two parts: the first dealing with film and the second music and literary writings. The reason for this division is simple. The film world was essentially a white world and so any changes in the treatment of blacks in that media during the war were due to changes in white attitudes. In music and literature, on the other hand, Afro-Americans had a more independent role and so could express themselves

1. Angus Calder, The People's War: Britain 1939-45, London 1971, 413-22, 423-31; Arthur Marwick, Britain in the Century of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change 1900-1967, London 1968, 299, 359-60; Gordon Wright, The Ordeal of Total War, 1939-1945, New York 1968, 254-62.
2. Lewis Gannet, 'Books', and Bosley Crowther, 'The Movies', both in Jack Goodman, ed., While You Were Gone: A Report on Wartime Life in the United States, New York 1946; Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front 1941-1945, New York 1970, 175-244.

more freely. Thus the songs, stories, and poetry of this time dealt with their moods and reactions to the war.

With one or two exceptions, films prior to 1941 treated Afro-Americans in a manner symptomatic of their general status in society. As one critic wrote,<sup>3</sup>

Cinema audiences now regard the coloured man as a clown, a buffoon, a gangling idiot or a superstitious fool. They despise the negro. Quite unconsciously their feeling of contempt for "the poor black trash" is fostered and fed by the unfair manner in which the negro is portrayed on the screen.

From 'Birth of a Nation' (1915), 'The Jazz Singer' (1927), through to 'Gone With the Wind' (1939), the characterization of the Afro-American was designed to demonstrate his inferiority. The failure of films made independently by blacks for blacks revealed the dominance of white-controlled Hollywood and its concern with the white censors and populations of the southern states.<sup>4</sup> Following the outbreak of war, this situation began to improve and in the years 1942-45, 'the Hollywood film industry demonstrated a conscious effort to bring a better understanding amongst most races and groups in this country and, in a broader field, among the nationalities and races allied with us in World War II.'<sup>5</sup>

In part, the change in films was directly due to the war.

3. Georg Noble, 'The Negro in Hollywood', Sight and Sound, Spring 1939, 14.
4. Peter Noble, The Negro in Films, London 1949, 7-8, 48-49, 71-75; Thomas R. Cripps, 'Movies in the Ghetto, B.P. (Before Poitier)', Negro Digest, XVIII, 4, February 1969.
5. John T. McMann and Louis Kronenberger, 'Motion Pictures, the Theatre, and Race Relations', Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 224, March 1946, 152.

Of its own volition Hollywood produced films to encourage audiences in their support of the war. There were the patriotic-propaganda type of films based on both military and civilian life to bolster morale, and others, such as 'Strange Incident', a western which stressed the ideals of democracy. Of the 1,313 feature films produced between 1942 and 1944, 374 were directly concerned with some aspect of the war.<sup>6</sup> The government considered the movies so important as to declare the film-making business an essential industry and to create a Bureau of Motion Pictures under the Office of War Information to see that nothing damaging to the war effort was portrayed on the screen. In its information manual the Bureau advised the use of Afro-American extras in uniform in crowd scenes in order to demonstrate black loyalty and their participation in the war effort. The Office of Censorship forbade the export of several films showing racial discrimination for fear they would tarnish America's image abroad.<sup>7</sup> Government action of this type was, however, limited due to opposition within both Hollywood and Congress to such federal controls. The Bureau of Motion Pictures was forced to concern itself with regulating the amounts of money spent on film production and the use of manpower and other resources. More important, as far as Afro-Americans were concerned, were the pressures brought to bear by certain individuals and organizations, including actors themselves.

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6. Dorothy B. Jones, 'The Hollywood War Film: 1942-1944', Hollywood Quarterly, I, 1, October 1945. 'Strange Incident', 20th Century Fox 1943, based on The Ox-Bow Incident, by Walter van Tilburg Clark.

7. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's A War On?, 191-92, 201.



Wendell Willkie, the Republican party presidential candidate of 1940, and Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP were amongst the most active campaigners for better roles for blacks on the screen. The two men spoke out against discrimination and poor parts at the Annual Awards of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1940 and 1942 and also at the Writers' Congress in Los Angeles in 1943. Dalton Trumbo, the screenwriter later named in Joseph McCarthy's 'Hollywood Ten', also spoke at the latter meeting and criticized the film industry for its failure to use blacks in crowd scenes and shots of war production lines, as well as its generally poor treatment of Afro-Americans.<sup>8</sup> Other pressures came from black actors and actresses, such as Paul Robeson, Clarence Muse, and Lena Horne, who refused to accept parts which denigrated the members of their race.<sup>9</sup> White actors, including Boyer, Bogart, Robinson, Laughton, and Welles, joined with Afro-Americans in organizations working for racial unity like the Emergency Committee of the Entertainment Industry, the International Film and Radio Guild, and the Independent Citizen's Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions.<sup>10</sup> Also of importance were the protests of the Afro-American population as a

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8. Walter White, A Man Called White, New York 1948, 200-202; Proceedings of the Writers' Congress, Los Angeles 1943, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1944, 14-18, 495-501; Pittsburgh Courier, August 8, 1942.
9. Noble, The Negro in Films, 147-57. Even Stepin Fetchit, the actor who played and gave his name to the archetypal black stereotype was later to complain that he had trouble finding work after he had refused to play the old demeaning role any longer, New York Times, July 24, 1968.
10. Noble, The Negro in Films, 221-22; White, A Man Called White, 231-32; Leon H. Hardwick, 'Motion Pictures', in Florence Murray, ed., The Negro Handbook, 1946-47, New York 1947, 262.

whole, but especially of servicemen, which demonstrated 'their growing social consciousness.'<sup>11</sup> These forces together had some obvious and immediate effects. In 1942, Warner Brothers, 20th Century Fox, and Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer gave assurances that black stars would be given roles more in keeping with their normal place in society, a promise re-iterated by the movie-moguls, David O. Selznick and Darryl F. Zanuck.<sup>12</sup>

Several films made during and after the war reflected the changes that had taken place. A number of motion pictures featured Afro-Americans in small but significant parts. Dooley Wilson in 'Casablanca', Canada Lee in 'Lifeboat', Kenneth Spencer in 'Bataan', and Rex Ingrams in 'Sahara', all broke with established stereotypes in roles stressing unity and democracy. 'Bataan' and 'Sahara' showed black soldiers, one an American G.I., the other a French officer, in an extremely favourable fashion, and in one scene in 'Sahara', the main character, played by Humphrey Bogart, emphasized the democratic ideals of the Allies compared with the racism of the Axis.<sup>13</sup> A film which dealt more obviously with the question of racial discrimination was 'In This Our Life' which featured Hattie McDaniel and Ernest Anderson in the story of a young Afro-American

11. Hardwick, 'Negro Stereotypes on the Screen', Hollywood Quarterly, I, 2, January 1946, 234.
12. Noble, The Negro in Films, 216-17; Baltimore Afro-American, August 29, 1942; Pittsburgh Courier, August 29, 1942.
13. 'Sahara', Columbia 1943; 'Bataan', MGM-Loews 1943; 'Casablanca', Warner Bros., 1942; 'Lifeboat', 20th Century Fox 1944; Noble, The Negro in Films, 198; Cripps, 'Movies in the Ghetto, B.P.', 22; George E. Norford, 'The Future in Films', Journal of Negro Education, XXVI, 3, July-September, 1948, 108.

studying to be a lawyer victimized by southern prejudice.<sup>14</sup> Not so far removed from the old stereotypes were the all-black musicals 'Cabin in the Sky' and 'Stormy Weather'. Whatever their limitations, these films were very popular and did provide opportunities for entertainers such as Lena Horne, Ethel Waters, Rex Ingrams, and Cab Calloway.<sup>15</sup> More important was the spate of 'Negro problem' films released in the immediate post-war years. In 1949, four motion pictures were produced which clearly showed that Hollywood had moved into a new phase, treating Afro-Americans as a social problem: 'Lost Boundaries', 'Pinky', 'Intruder in the Dust', and 'Home of the Brave'.<sup>16</sup>

In 'Lost Boundaries', the family of a successful doctor practising in a New England town, long thought of as white, suffer a traumatic period when it is discovered that they have black ancestry. Rejected by former friends and neighbours, they face the type of discrimination normally experienced by Afro-Americans in every-day life. They are eventually saved from this situation by the intervention of a white minister. While the film obviously had an important racial message, not one of the main roles was played by a black person. Even so, it was banned in Memphis and Atlanta because of its potential to provoke violence and law

14. 'In This Our Life', Warner Bros. 1942; Noble, The Negro in Films, 198.
15. 'Cabin in the Sky', MGM 1942; 'Stormy Weather', Fox 1943; Hardwick, 'Negro Stereotypes on the Screen', 236.
16. Jim Pines, 'Blacks in the Cinema: The Changing Image', mimeographed June 1971, Education Department, British Film Institute; Thomas R. Cripps, 'The Death of Rastus: Negroes in American Films Since 1945', Phylon, XXVII, 3, 1967; Richard Winnington, 'Negro Films', Sight and Sound, February 1950.



breaking.<sup>17</sup> 'Pinky' had a similar plot and indeed, a similar limitation. This was a story about a young black girl also 'passing' as white but, as in 'Lost Boundaries', the title role was played by a white person, in this case Jeanne Crain. Ethel Waters played the part of the young woman's confidant. After Pinky confesses to her black heritage she is raped by white assailants, suffers doubts about whether she should marry her white lover, and has to fight a court case in order to inherit the plantation left to her. Mixed audiences in the South were reported to have wept and applauded during the final courtroom scenes in sympathy with the victorious heroine.<sup>18</sup> 'Intruder in the Dust' received equally favourable reactions and, unlike most other films with a racial content, was allowed to be shown uncut by the southern censors.<sup>19</sup> Based on the William Faulkner novel of the same title, the film tells the tale of a black farmer in the South, played by Juano Hernandez, falsely accused of murdering a white man. He is only saved from lynching by the intervention of a white boy whom he had earlier befriended. The final film in this group, 'Home of the Brave', starred James Edwards as Moss, a black G.I. In a piece of artistic licence ignoring the segregation of the armed forces, Moss is sent with four white comrades to reconnoitre a Japanese-held island. When

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17. V. J. Jerome, The Negro in Hollywood Films, New York 1950, 29-34; Cripps, 'The Death of Rastus', 270; Peter Noble, 'Hollywood Thinks Again About the Negro', Picture Post, February 11, 1950, 25.
18. Jerome, The Negro in Hollywood Films, 24; Winnington, 'Negro Films', 27-31; Noble, 'Hollywood Thinks Again About the Negro', 24.
19. Cripps, 'The Death of Rastus', 270; Jerome, The Negro in Hollywood Films, 36-7; Ralph Ellison, 'Shadow and Act', The Reporter, December 6, 1949, included in the collection of essays, Shadow and Act, New York 1966 ed., 264-71.

his closest friend in the group calls him, in the heat of the moment, 'nigger', Moss wishes him dead; only to be wracked with guilt after a Japanese soldier makes the wish come true. Still burdened with his sense of sin, Moss returns to base where he is cured after extensive treatment by a white psychiatrist. After nine profitable weeks in Manhattan, the film opened in Dallas and Houston where it was greeted with good reviews from the critics. Far from provoking the race riots it was expected to, 'Home of the Brave' scored a box-office success.<sup>20</sup>

While it is undoubtedly true that these four films made 'explicit the nature of Hollywood's changed attitude toward Negroes', they also revealed the new stereotype.<sup>21</sup> Afro-Americans were not treated in these stories as real, complete people, but as problems - almost as if they were permanently in the third person. Moreover, in each case, salvation came as a result of white actions. The Afro-American was still portrayed as the passive victim of prejudice and the passive recipient of white largesse. There were serious doubts whether such films, even if they were breaking new ground, would continue to be made. Throughout the war, movies were still produced which portrayed blacks in unfavourable roles, or companies 'wrote-out' black characters from scripts to avoid any controversy. It was not until the 1950s that film producers and directors tackled the problem with any honesty and that Afro-Americans emerged on the screen as real people.<sup>22</sup> While the war,

20. Time, July 18, 1949; Jerome, The Negro in Hollywood Films, 42-3.

21. Ellison, 'Shadow and Act', in Shadow and Act, 267.

22. Walter White's statement at opening session of Writers' Congress, Proceedings, 16; Hardwick, 'Negro Stereotypes on the Screen', 235; Noble, The Negro in Films, 193; Cripps, 'The Death of Rastus', 272; George E. Norford, 'The Future in Films', Journal of Negro Education, XXVI, 3, July-September 1948, 109.

with its stress on unity and democracy, and America's new-found position amongst other nations, brought about some improvements, the forces for radical change were not sufficient to produce major results in America. Not as directly involved in the war as other countries, the American film industry did not react to fascism with the same speed or depth that its counterpart in Britain did. Racism was not seen as a major war-issue and, besides, was so ingrained in America that any great departure from old formulas would have been far ahead of its time. In this light, such advances as were made, were considerable.<sup>23</sup>

Those changes which were made were the result of the war emergency and the mood it engendered. Government intervention clearly had little impact on the world of feature films. However, several of its agencies did play an important part in producing documentary films, again designed to improve morale and further the war effort. The most important of these was 'The Negro Soldier' made by the War Department in 1944. Reactions to this film have been discussed elsewhere though not the content.<sup>24</sup> A black minister's sermon to his congregation provides the vehicle for a film history of black military participation in wars past and

23. Noble, The Negro in Films, 191-92; McMann and Kronenberger, 'Motion Pictures, The Theatre, and Race Relations', 154; Herbert Margolis, 'The Hollywood Scene: The American Minority Problem', The Penguin Film Review, 5, 1948, 84.

24. 'The Negro Soldier', War Dept., 1944, NA 1110F-51, National Archives; see 73-5 above. An interesting comparison is provided in 'The Black Soldier', C.B.S. Of Black America Series, 1968, with its narration by Bill Cosby, in Library of Congress. Covering much the same material, this is more honest and much more biting than 'The Negro Soldier' - but then it was not made as a government propaganda film in time of war.



present. On the issues involved in the second World War, the minister contrasts Mein Kampf with the American Constitution while, for visual comparison, the audience is shown the boxer Max Schmeling training in the German paratroops and Joe Louis, his old rival, in the U.S. Army. After shots of a member of the congregation's son in the Army and various scenes of blacks in the forces, the minister again emphasizes what they are defending and calls for 'no let up' in their effort. Aptly enough, the final credits are backed with the congregation singing 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. The film was clearly intended for showing to both blacks and whites. On the one hand, it urged continued black loyalty and participation while, on the other, demonstrated to whites that Afro-Americans had taken part in America's past struggles and were still doing so. Coming after the riots and violence of 1943, the film was clearly a belated attempt to repair morale and bolster unity. To that end, it overlooked numerous historical contradictions and completely ignored the discrimination and segregation faced by blacks in the forces during the 1940s.

Indicative of the success of 'The Negro Soldier' was the later, and even more emotive, 'Teamwork' also made by the War Department.<sup>25</sup> The film opens with actors purporting to be German officers who, in the guttural accents and broken English peculiar to such parts, discuss how they will divide America by playing black against white. Thus, they theorize, they will rob the United States of ten per cent of its strength without firing a shot. From then on, the film concentrates on the Allied attack on the

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25. 'Teamwork', War Dept., Orientation film 14, 1946, NA 111-OF-14, National Archives.

fortress of Europe and the importance of racial unity to that fight. Black service battalions are shown delivering vital supplies to the troops at the front on the famous 'Red Ball Express'. To scenes of blacks and whites rebuilding airfields, railway tracks, and roads, the commentator says, 'they were busy hating Germans, not each other.' A mixture of real and recreated clips show black airmen supporting bombers and downing enemy aircraft. Here the comments are about how these men are destroying Nazi racial myths. On the ground, black artillery and tank regiments are filmed helping the men at the front. In a following sequence, again presumably acted rather than real, an Afro-American soldier under the anxious gaze of a white comrade reads a Nazi propaganda sheet which urges him not to fight. The black crushes the leaflet and joins the attack - the German strategy had failed. The film closes, after shots of the swastika being destroyed, with black and white soldiers marching to 'The Battle of Jericho'. As in 'The Negro Soldier', the segregation and discrimination in the forces is played down and the existence of racial strife completely ignored. Indeed, 'Teamwork' exaggerates the degree of unity in the services and fails to point out that most blacks served in segregated regiments. The shots of blacks and whites together are in fact misleading. The only Afro-American combat troops to serve with whites were the few in the specially integrated platoons which fought during the Battle of the Bulge and were then disbanded.<sup>26</sup> However, the film did show something of black participation and unwittingly revealed

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26. See above, 78-9, 80-1.

the supportive, even subordinate, role of Afro-Americans in the Army. Also unwittingly, the film provided an extremely strong case in favour of integration in the forces.

More exact, and more interesting from the historian's point of view, is the film, 'Negro Colleges in Wartime', made by the Office of War Information in 1943.<sup>27</sup> Only nine minutes long, this picture still shows the extent to which black colleges and universities were affected by the war. Again the message is that blacks were playing their part. Pointing out that the need for trained men and women had led to the mounting of courses geared to the war effort, the film moves from Tuskegee, to Prairie View, to Howard, and finally ends at Hampton Institute. The latter, we are told, was working on a twenty-four-hour basis to train war workers and certainly the range of activities shown taking place here and at the other institutions makes this credible. At Tuskegee, men are trained for the airforce while women learn automotive and other skills. The black nutritional expert (and the inventor of peanut butter), George Washington Carver, is shown at work, adding his expertise to the war effort. Meanwhile, Dr. Charles Drew, the man largely responsible for the use of blood plasma in storage banks is filmed teaching classes at Howard University. Here too, laboratory experiments on various possible war materials are taking place. At Hampton, students are trained as engineers, mechanics, chemists, and nurses, and some women are taught to operate farm equipment. The institute is also used for Army and

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27. 'Negro Colleges in Wartime', Office of War Information 1943, NA 208-7-PPC, National Archives.



Navy training courses and students in mechanics and vehicle maintenance learn their lessons while servicing the lorries from nearby military bases.

This film reveals, much more clearly than the written word could, the extent and manner in which black colleges felt the effects of the war. Quite obviously, there was an influx of federal money to finance many of these training courses and even without such official classes, the emphasis in teaching was put on technical and practical skills - that is, those relevant to the industrial and military war effort. Many Afro-Americans must have learned trades and professions which might otherwise have remained closed to them. The film leaves unanswered questions about economic discrimination, both during and after the war emergency, which might prevent such qualified persons from putting their knowledge into practice. Like the other films of its type, it makes no explicit mention of racial prejudice or segregation although the fact that these colleges are all-black is readily apparent. While Charles Drew is shown working in a field extremely vital to the war effort, no reference is made to the segregation of blood from different races in the Red Cross banks, a practice which drew considerable criticism from Afro-Americans. But despite these omissions, 'Negro Colleges in Wartime' would give white Americans a good idea of the contribution blacks were making to the Allied cause.

'Henry Browne, Farmer', a film made by the Department of

Agriculture, had a similar moral.<sup>28</sup> This compared the military and civilian contribution to the war of one black family in the South. The man, Henry Browne, and his family labour in the fields producing valuable food products to supply the troops at the front and the workers at home. The film ends with the entire family going to town to visit their elder son stationed at the Army camp. The final shots are of the young man flying off in his aeroplane watched proudly by his parents. The message is obvious. Over and above this intended information, we see fairly typical conditions for Afro-Americans in the rural South. The farming is very small scale; the plough and the wagon are drawn by horses or mules; and the farmhouse is a poor wooden structure. Of course, this was not the point of the film and it is important to bear in mind that this and the others discussed were made during or after 1943, the year when race relations in America were at their lowest ebb. The four films were designed to improve that situation by showing whites that Afro-Americans were loyal and were participating in their country's struggle. Black audiences were shown that they did have an important role to play and a stake in the war. While there were no similar films made by the government prior to 1943, there were numerous newsreels with essentially the same type of content. Here the visual material is often less important to the historian than the commentary.<sup>29</sup>

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28. 'Henry Browne, Farmer', Dept. of Agriculture-United Films 1943, NA 59.53, National Archives. For some reason this version is in Spanish but a copy with an English commentary is available in the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
29. See the collections in the Sherman Grinberg Library and Hearst Metrotone, both in New York.

One important documentary film made before 1943 and before America had even entered the war, was 'One Tenth of Our Nation', produced by the American Film Center.<sup>30</sup> A much more honest film, it restores some balance to the impression made by the later government-produced pictures. As well as showing, in great detail, the poverty of blacks in the South, 'One Tenth of Our Nation' also has a strong social message - the emphasis is on the 'Americanness' of blacks and the conditions they have to endure despite it. Palatial southern mansions are contrasted with the run-down, two-roomed, wooden shack which houses a family of ten. The children's school is shown and all its inadequacies pointed out. Black people are filmed working in the fields and the commentator acknowledges that those people get few of the end products. Attention is drawn to the lack of health facilities for Afro-Americans and to the difficulties which lie in the way of their getting a university education. Ending with more views of the school, homes, fields, and children, the audience is told that it is here they 'must make a start' and that racial differences are 'not to be solved with bombs': 'we must show the world democracy.' Thus, while obviously not a result of American participation in the war, this film did show the impact of the European crisis and the rise of fascism.

Something of the importance of these particular films has been noted in other works.<sup>31</sup> If the better treatment of blacks in

30. 'One Tenth of Our Nation', American Film Center 1940, in film department Museum of Modern Art, New York.

31. Noble, The Negro in Films, 106-8; Hardwick, 'Motion Pictures', in Murray, ed., Negro Handbook, 1946-47, 265-66; Ulysses S. Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, U.S. Army in World War II, Special Studies 8, Washington, D.C., 1966, 387-89.



feature films indicated a change in Hollywood's attitudes, the government-produced films showed an awareness in the federal agencies of the necessity for racial unity and harmony during times of war. In addition to improving morale, films illustrating black and white fighting the enemies of democracy together 'inevitably promoted ideals of integration.'<sup>32</sup> This long-term educational value was not appreciated by the government and the films were withdrawn from circulation after the end of the war. Again the changes promoted by the war seemed to be short-lived.

The impact of the war on black 'popular' music, the blues and, to a lesser extent, jazz, went much deeper and was more permanent. Enforced separation from the white cultural mainstream, first by the institution of slavery and then by social convention, had enabled blacks to produce a music entirely their own, combining both African and American elements in one form. The most obvious result of this process of mixture was the gospel song; less influenced by European forms and more a purely black phenomena was the blues song with its distinctive twelve-bar construction, African-based rhythms, call and response, and, of course, the blue notes.<sup>33</sup> First sung in the fields and then by itinerant performers,

32. William J. Sloan, 'The Documentary Film and the Negro: The Evolution of the Integration Film', Journal of the Society of Cinematologists, vol. 5, 1965, 66-69.

33. For the musical background to the blues see Samuel B. Charters, The Country Blues, London 1960; Charles Keil, Urban Blues, Chicago and London, 1966; Leroi Jones, Blues People: Negro Music in White America, New York 1963 (1970 edition quoted in text); Richard Middleton, Pop Music and the Blues: A Study of the Relationship and Its Significance, London 1972. Unlike the blues, jazz had almost from birth been an integrated music listened to and played by both blacks and whites. Blacks also contributed to mainstream European music: see Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans: A History, New York 1971.

the blues moved into the cities with the migration of Afro-Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century. The major white record companies, unlike the film industry, recognized a potentially valuable market and began to record black blues singers in the 1920s on records issued under separate 'race' labels. Such records were, almost entirely, bought and listened to by Afro-Americans. The relevance of such songs to the historian lies in the fact that they 'offered an indication of the hopes and fears of black people, sometimes their anger and sometimes their apathy. There was in the blues a gauge of the frustration within the coloured community....'<sup>34</sup> Thus the blues of the 1940s offer some reflection of the feelings and attitudes of Afro-Americans at that time.

While the majority of blues continued to be about sex, unrequited love, loneliness, and despair, a few related specifically to the war. The black reaction to participation, and its limitations, were revealed in 'Defense Blues', 'Training Camp Blues', 'Uncle Sam Came and Got Him', 'The Army Blues', and 'War Rationing Papa'. Typical was 'Million Lonesome Women', which, with its ironic comment on one effect of armed service, was a variation on a common blues theme.<sup>35</sup> Other songs, such as 'Win the War Blues', 'Letter to Tojo', 'Pearl Harbor Blues', and 'Are You Ready, attacked the Japanese:<sup>36</sup>

34. Paul Oliver, The Story of the Blues, London 1969, 106; Jones, Blues People, 120.
35. Paul Oliver, Blues Fell This Morning, London 1960, 8-12; Mike Leadbitter and Neil Slaven, Blues Records, January 1943 to December 1966, London 1968, 21, 27, 82, 360.
36. 'Pearl Harbor Blues', quoted in Oliver, Blues Fell This Morning, 12.

The Japanese is so ungrateful, just like a  
stray dog in the street.  
Well, he bites the hand that feeds him, soon  
as he gets enough to eat.

and extolled patriotism and heroism;<sup>37</sup>

When the captain says, "Attack",  
There'll be no turning back.  
Are you ready?  
Are you ready to go?

Although different in basic style and with a much more biting and honest approach, this type of song was not too far removed in content from the more sentimental war-songs of whites. However, other songs were more to the point, for Afro-Americans wanted to know about their future after participation:<sup>38</sup>

I helped win sweet victory  
With my little plough and hoe  
Now I want you to tell me brother  
What you gonna do 'bout the old Jim Crow.

The wartime propaganda had also had effect on black thinking:<sup>39</sup>

If you ask me, I think democracy is fine  
I mean democracy without the color line.  
Uncle Sam says, "We live the American way,"  
Lets get together and kill Jim Crow today.

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37. 'Are You Ready', quoted in Jones, Blues People, 178. The emphasis was on patriotism in more 'serious' music, too. The League of Composers asked 16 American composers to write a piece on a patriotic theme associated with the war. The one black musician included, William Grant Still, wrote 'In Memoriam: The Colored Soldiers Who Died For Democracy'. See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 459.
38. 'Black, Brown and White', quoted in William Broonzy and Yannick Bruynoghe, Big Bill Blues; William Broonzy's Story, London 1955, 56-7.
39. 'Uncle Sam Says', quoted in Marjorie E. Greene, 'Josh White Starts Them Listening', Opportunity, XXII, 3, July-September 1944, 114.



This explicit message was reinforced in 'Baby Remember Me':<sup>40</sup>

And you can tell the world I'm fighting  
for what really belongs to me.

Such lyrics were, by themselves, interesting and informative but more significant were the changes in actual musical style which came about as a result of the war and related social changes. White America reacted musically to the war with bland sing-along ballads and songs sung by the crooners, Bing Crosby, Perry Como, and Frank Sinatra. Songs such as 'White Christmas', the biggest seller of the war, were designed to relieve wartime tension and anxiety and were completely lacking in excitement, stimulation, or emotion. Black Americans, on the other hand, 'had seen fundamental changes take place in their lives as they moved from southern rural areas to northern urban ghettos. They were eager for more radical changes to alter their status as second-class citizens.'<sup>41</sup> Urbanization, armed service, improved economic status, all served to whet black appetites for more change rather than stability. Discrimination, segregation, and racial prejudice only made them more militant, more demanding. All of this was reflected in their music.

The increased urbanization which resulted from the migration of blacks to centres of war production in turn led to an increased

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40. 'Baby Remember Me', quoted in Oliver, Blues Fell This Morning, 12.

41. Don Heckman, 'Black Music and White America', in John F. Szwed, ed., Black America, New York and London 1970, 168; Charlie Gillet, The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll, London 1970, 4, 135-37; Lingeman, Don't You Know There's A War On?, 223.

sophistication in black music following a mixture of hitherto regional styles. Blues singers from Texas and the South-west followed the movement of people to California and to northern cities, adding their type of singing to that all ready present. Performers such as Joe Turner, Louis Jordan, and T-Bone Walker contributed a shouting kind of singing, boogie-woogie rhythms, and all-round sophistication to the existing city blues.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, there was among young Afro-Americans a rejection of the older 'down-home' blues and a desire for more aggressive music. Singers also had to cope with the crowded city dance-halls and bars. The two were made possible by coupling the new, loud, harsh singing with increased electrical amplification. The end product, as sung by Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Sonny Boy Williamson, became known as Rhythm and Blues which was later to form the basis of white Rock and Roll songs. The phrase, rhythm and blues was actually coined during the war as the white record companies lost control of the production of 'race records' to small, independent, black companies which sprang up in the 40s. To them, the term 'race' record was an embarrassment and so they resorted to 'ebony', 'sepia', and 'rhythm and blues', and the latter eventually stuck.<sup>43</sup> This, and the 'kind of frenzy' and 'extra-local vulgarity' of the music itself, was indicative of the 'profound changes in the cultural consciousness of Negroes' which had resulted from the war.<sup>44</sup>

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42. Middleton, Pop Music and the Blues, 98-104.

43. Oliver, The Story of the Blues, 141; Gillet, The Sound of the City, 135-37, 91-104; Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 497.

44. Jones, Blues People, 171.

In jazz, the parallel development at this time was bop or bebop. Rejecting the values of whites, middle-class blacks, and older musicians, men like Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, and Dizzy Gillespie, got together to play music with complex rhythms and jagged, varied, melodies which was in complete contrast to the dominant swinging jazz of the period. For them, even more than for the blues singers, this was a conscious act of rebellion and defiance, a declaration of their blackness which mirrored the aggressive, militant mood of many young Afro-Americans, particularly those who had served in the forces. They had no intention of accepting the pre-war social conditions nor the music that such an environment had produced.<sup>45</sup> The outward physical manifestation of this rebelliousness was the clothing worn both by musicians and their audiences. The zoot suit, as it was called, was described later by Malcolm X, who was in his late teens and early twenties during the war:<sup>46</sup>

sky-blue pants thirty inches in the knee and angle-narrowed down to twelve inches at the bottom, and a long coat that pinched my waist and flared out below my knees.

This was topped with a broad-brimmed hat. With the distinctive

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45. Jones, Blues People, 188-99; A. B. Spellman, 'Revolution in Sound', in Ebony, The Black Revolution, Chicago 1970, 86-7; Heckman, 'Black Music and White America', 168; Frank Kofsky, 'The Jazz Tradition: Black Music and its White Critics', Journal of Black Studies, I,4, 1971, 417-29.
46. The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1968 ed., 135; Jones, Blues People, 190-91. Also, see photograph in Richard Wright, 12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States, New York 1941, 129.



clothing went an equally distinctive language, the hip or hep language of chicks and cats, of groovy scenes in swinging pads.<sup>47</sup>

This non-conformity amongst young Afro-Americans seemed contrary to the effort among the majority of black people to achieve integration and equality with whites. But it was clearly a sign of anger and a declaration of militance. For a black to wear a zoot suit meant that he wished to be recognized as a black, a non-conformist by virtue of his colour, and to be given equality on those terms. It was also the reaction of youth to the new pressures of urban society and wartime life. If the zoot suit became a 'popular fashion', it did so precisely because of its racial significance.<sup>48</sup>

Whatever the exact explanation, the musical changes in blues and jazz which accompanied the mode of dress were longlasting and remain in existence today, if in modified forms.

Some authorities have claimed that the war had an equally deep, if somewhat differently directed, effect on black literature. Rather than an emphasis on militant protest and a declaration of blackness, there was said to be 'a drastic reduction of the racial content, a rise in preoccupation with urban themes and subject matter both in the novel and the poem.'<sup>49</sup> The explanation

47. Autobiography of Malcolm X, 140; Gillet, The Sound of the City, 183-84. The parallels between black teenagers of the 1940s and white teenagers of the late 50s and 60s, both in music and in dress are overwhelming. As Richard Middleton has pointed out in Pop Music and the Blues, it is significant that the post-war rebellion of white children against their parents who had served during the war was heralded with black, blues-based music.
48. Kenneth B. Clark and James Barker, 'The Zoot Effect in Personality: A Race Riot Participant', Journal of Abnormal And Social Psychology, Vol. 40, 1945. See above, 168-9.
49. Richard Wright, White Man, Listen!, New York 1964 ed., 103.

for this was that the discontent of the 1930s had been 'siphoned off' by the war boom and that as Afro-Americans generally were moving towards integration, the black writers felt they should point the way by writing 'integrated novels'.<sup>50</sup> Another reason was given by the black author, James Baldwin: as far as he was concerned, the protest novel had already appeared before America entered the war with the publication of Richard Wright's Native Son in 1940.<sup>51</sup> This may be no more than a question of semantics as most books by Afro-Americans seem, at least to me, to have some element of protest in them. There is plenty of evidence both for and against such claims for, whatever else was true, there was a considerable number of books with racial themes written by blacks and whites during the war years. One commentator said at the time,<sup>52</sup>

This furious devotion and loud acclaim which now attends minority causes in the literary world is unprecedented in America. In comparison, the famed Negro Renaissance of the twenties is a mere whine. This fever seems to be the expected complement of a war period, during which minority causes become the major area of free speech and discussion.

While this statement may be slightly exaggerated, the large number of books by and about blacks can be seen as 'the second period' of

50. Robert Bone, The Negro Novel in America, New Haven, Conn., 1966, 156-57; Carl Milton Hughes, The Negro Novelist: A Discussion of the Writings of American Negro Novelists, 1940-1950, New York 1970 ed., 20; Margaret Just Butcher, The Negro in American Culture, New York 1956, 176-81.

51. James Baldwin, 'Everybody's Protest Novel' (1949), 'Many Thousands Gone', (1951), both included in Notes of a Native Son, London 1965. Also see, 'Alas, Poor Richard' in Nobody Knows My Name, London 1965.

52. Ira DeA Reid, 'The Literature of Race and Culture', Phylon, V, 4, 1944.

the Renaissance of the 1920s.<sup>53</sup>

There was, of course, a long literary tradition amongst Afro-Americans, beginning in the eighteenth century with Phillis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammon. Later, blacks wrote abolitionist tracts, slave narratives, biographies, and novels.<sup>54</sup> However, the general subordination of Afro-Americans, their poverty, lack of education, and rural background, all served to limit such endeavours to just a small number. Following the first World War, there was suddenly a great increase in the production of literary works among blacks. Urbanization, increased prosperity, wider educational opportunities, and the post-war mood enabled a circle of black writers, centred at first in Harlem, to reach a wide audience. Afro-Americans like Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and many others were encouraged and joined by whites in writing 'Negro' literature. While the number of books and articles produced, and the interest they attracted, was more than sufficient to justify the term 'Renaissance', they were still the work of a small elite of Afro-American intellectuals: only Langston Hughes could be said to be writing of and for the common man.<sup>55</sup> This literary renaissance ended with the economic depression: writers found it difficult to secure financial support; publishers found

53. John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 513-14.

54. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 155-56, 409-12.

55. The literature of the '20s and '30s is dealt with in Nathan Irvin Huggins, Harlem Renaissance, New York 1971; Hugh M. Gloster, Negro Voices in American Fiction, New York 1965; Butcher, The Negro in American Culture; Nick Aaron Ford, The Contemporary Negro Novel, Boston, Mass., 1936. On Hughes, see, James A. Emanuel, Langston Hughes, New York 1967.



it difficult to sell books. Several of the black writers went abroad while others sought refuge in the Federal Writers Project. The few works which did appear in the 1930s differed from those of the previous decade. No longer dependent on white patrons and white interest, black writers 'turned more and more to materials which genuinely interested them rather than to sensuous and bizarre themes which delighted American readers during the boom years.'<sup>56</sup> There was as much an emphasis on class as on race, and a use of characters drawn from real life rather than stereotypes. These new trends were best demonstrated in Wright's collection of short stories, Uncle Tom's Children, and his novel set in Chicago's South Side, Native Son.<sup>57</sup> Following America's entry into the war, there was a revival in literature about blacks as Afro-Americans and whites addressed themselves to the problems of the conflict and the issues it raised.

These various books, essays and poems give an extra dimension to the other, more conventional historical sources. As well as adding to and confirming the information given in reports, pamphlets, articles, and statistics, they provide the background and capture attitudes and moods. For example, a number of essays and short stories describe Harlem prior to and during the riot of 1943, an incident of some size and importance largely ignored elsewhere.<sup>58</sup>

56. Gloster, Negro Voices in American Fiction, 208.

57. Richard Wright, Uncle Tom's Children, (originally published individually 1936, '37, '38) New York 1940; Native Son, New York 1940. See Robert Bone, Richard Wright, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 74, Minneapolis 1969.

58. See above, 161-63. While there have been two full length studies on the Detroit riot, there is none on the one in Harlem.

Ralph Ellison, who was later to include a riot in his famous novel Invisible Man, wrote an account of his conversation with a black woman which reveals the trials and tribulations of a typical Afro-American family.<sup>59</sup> Her husband is dead, her eldest son in the Army, and her daughter desperately trying to enter a defence training scheme in order to get work. Both her daughter's and her nephew's experiences in search of employment lead the woman to dismiss FEPC as 'doing something everywhere but here in New York.' She works herself to supplement the government cheques from her son's Army pay - which always arrive late - and spends her time worrying whether the boy will survive his stay at Fort Bragg, an Army camp in North Carolina. Ellison sums up her's, and every other Afro-American's, situation:<sup>60</sup>

In the very texture of their lives there is confusion, war-made confusion. And the problem is to get around, over, under and through this confusion. They do not ask for a lighter share of necessary war sacrifices than other Americans have to bear. But they do ask for equal reasons to believe that their sacrifices are worth-while, and they do want to be rid of the heavy resentment and bitterness which has been theirs for long before the war.

In a later essay, Ellison depicted Harlem as a 'ruin' of 'crumbling buildings', 'ill-smelling halls and vermin-invaded rooms': 'the scene and symbol of the Negro's perpetual alienation in the land of his birth.'<sup>61</sup> Another black writer to become

59. 'The Way It Is', originally in New Masses, October 20, 1942, included in Shadow and Act, 272-81. The riot in Invisible Man, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1972 ed., 430-56 is said to be the one in 1943, although it could equally well be that of 1935.

60. 'The Way It Is', 280.

61. 'Harlem is Nowhere', (1948), in Shadow and Act, 283.



equally famous later, James Baldwin, agreed with this description. Deferred from armed service because of poor health, Baldwin was in Harlem in the summer of 1943 to attend his father's funeral. He felt and later wrote of the tensions of the time:<sup>62</sup>

All of Harlem, indeed, seemed to be infected by waiting. I had never before known it to be so violently still.

everybody felt a directionless, hopeless bitterness, as well as that panic which can scarcely be suppressed when one knows that a human being one loves is beyond one's reach, and in danger.

This kind of fear, common to many blacks, was the basis of Ann Petry's short story, 'In Darkness and Confusion'.<sup>63</sup> A black man, anxiously waiting for news of his son in an Army camp in Georgia, finally hears the worst. After refusing to take a jim crow seat on a bus, the young man had been involved in a fight with white military policemen. In the struggle he had taken the gun of one of his opponents and wounded him before being shot and wounded himself. Courtmartialled, the boy had been sentenced to 20 years hard labour. The father later witnesses the incident between the black soldier and white policeman at the hotel in Harlem and imagining his son in the place of the wounded soldier, his stifled anger and sorrow explode. Unconsciously, he encourages the gathering crowds to riot as does his wife when she joins him and is told the

62. 'Notes of a Native Son', Harper's Magazine, November 1955, included in Notes of a Native Son, London 1965 ed., 82, 84. See too, Fern Major Eckman, The Furious Passage of James Baldwin, London 1968, 94-5.

63. Ann Petry, 'In Darkness and Confusion', in Edwin Seaver, ed., Cross Section 1947: A Collection of New American Writing, New York 1947.



news. The rumour that a black soldier has been shot dead while defending a woman of his race spreads rapidly. The truth is ignored and is irrelevant: as Baldwin commented the mass of Afro-Americans 'preferred the invention because this invention expressed and corroborated their hates and fears so perfectly.'<sup>64</sup> Although a fictional story, Petry's account of the actual riot is extremely realistic, no doubt drawing from her experiences as a journalist on the Amsterdam News and The People's Voice.

Two full-length novels by Afro-Americans dealt, at least in part, with the problems faced by blacks in the defence industries. Alexander Saxton's rather unsatisfactory book, Bright Web in the Darkness, involved both blacks and whites: the former in the quest for employment; the latter as representatives of the unions.<sup>65</sup> A black woman completes a welding course only to be told there is no need for women welders and is refused union clearance. The racial troubles in the ship-yards increase and when the union fails to pass a no-discrimination resolution, the black workers walk out. In answer to a suggestion that they might damage the war effort, the Afro-American leader angrily exclaims, 'Don't you talk to me about this war! It's a white man's war. I've seen it.'<sup>66</sup> There were enough real examples of job discrimination and this type of action by blacks for the story to be based on fact. The same was also true of the plot of If He Hollers Let Him Go which concentrates on

64. Baldwin, 'Notes of a Native Son', 92. The comments of Petry's fictional characters illustrate the way in which the truth had become unimportant.

65. Alexander Saxton, Bright Web in the Darkness, Berlin 1959.

66. Bright Web in the Darkness, 263.

one black man from the mid-West working in the shipyards of Los Angeles.<sup>67</sup>

This, the first novel by Chester Himes, is a much better, if angrier and more militant, book than Saxton's and was reviewed favourably by the critics.<sup>68</sup> The chief character, Bob Jones, is from the start portrayed in conflict with his white-dominated environment, seeing even driving in heavy, rush-hour traffic as a racial battle. At home Jones has problems with his girl-friend and her middle-class family, at work he is troubled with a white foreman, apathetic union officials, and a white woman who is openly hostile. She succeeds first in getting him demoted for using bad language then falsely charged with raping her. Jones flees after being beaten severely by white workers but is caught by the police with a gun in his possession. Although the accusation of rape is dropped at the behest of the shipping company, the judge persuades Jones to join the Army rather than be jailed for carrying the weapon. Even amid all these adversities, the black man can still manage to feel a part of the mainstream. Driving past the shipyards and the towering cranes, he says,<sup>69</sup>

I felt the size of it, the immensity of the production. I felt the importance of it, the importance of the whole war. I'd never given a damn one way or the other about the war excepting wanting to keep out of it; and at first I wanted the Japanese to win. And now I did; I was stirred as I had been when I was a little boy watching a parade, seeing the flag go by. I felt included in it all; I had never felt included before. It was a wonderful feeling.

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67. Chester Himes, If He Hollers Let Him Go, Garden City, New York 1945. See above, 120-23.
68. Hughes, The Negro Novelist, 206-11.
69. If He Hollers Let Him Go, 45-6.

Later, not surprisingly, he has doubts and wonders, 'what would happen if all the Negroes in America would refuse to serve in the armed forces, refuse to work in war production until the Jim Crow was abolished.'<sup>70</sup> In the end he is pushed into open revolt and defeated, losing everything.

In a short story published in The Crisis, Himes wrote of a black soldier on leave in Harlem after six months of active service in North Africa.<sup>71</sup> He meets and falls in love with a beautiful woman whom he eventually has to leave to return to the war. This is certainly not a 'protest' story in the sense that If He Hollers is: the couple could equally as well have been white; the feelings described must have been common to many couples, regardless of race. The same is not true of William Gardner Smith's novel about blacks in the American Army in Berlin at the end of the war.<sup>72</sup> Smith's theme is that Afro-American G.I.s received better treatment from the Germans than from their fellow Americans. Harassment on and off base, particularly in respect to relationships with German women, forces some of the black soldiers to flee to the Russian zone. The moral is obvious: the contradiction of discrimination in the armies of democracy compared with the acceptance of blacks by the former supporters of Hitler. Again, the book met with considerable acclaim although one reviewer thought it lacked 'the psychological penetration and daring which could have transformed it from an

70. If He Hollers Let Him Go, 139.

71. Chester Himes, 'So Softly Smiling', The Crisis, October 1943. His 'Two Soldiers' in The Crisis, January 1943 had a more purely racial theme.

72. William Gardner Smith, The Last of the Conquerors, London 1949.



interesting historical document into a great and moving exposé of the inconsistencies and dilemmas of exported race prejudice.<sup>73</sup>

Much less impressive was Jigger Whitchet's War, written ten years later by Avery E. Kolb.<sup>74</sup> Whilst also concerned with black troops in Europe, this concentrated on humour rather than social comment and suffers accordingly. Both books were surpassed in style and content by And Then We Heard The Thunder.<sup>75</sup> The author, John Oliver Killens, had served in the amphibious forces during the war and although not published until 1962, his novel was clearly based on his own experiences. It has been considered 'the most important novel about the Negro during World War II.'<sup>76</sup> The story follows a black army unit from induction and training at a southern base to service in the Pacific. The black soldiers hold widely differing views, ranging from the pro-Japanese to the believers in the war for democracy. The hero, Solomon Saunders, a moderate, initially considers the racists of the South little different from Hitler or Tojo. He has ambitions to become an officer and do well once the war is over and so he is prepared to put up with a certain amount of the Army's brand of discrimination. However, his attitude changes as time wears on. Referred to as 'boys' by their

73. Alain Locke, 'Dawn Patrol: A Review of the Literature of the Negro for 1948', Phylon X, 1, 1949, and Hughes, The Negro Novelist, 230-32.
74. Avery E. Kolb, Jigger Whitchet's War, New York 1959.
75. John Oliver Killens, And Then We Heard The Thunder, New York 1962, 1971 edition quoted in text.
76. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 516. For a less favourable opinion see Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in Black and White, London 1965, 61-3.

commanding officer, abused by military and civil policemen off-base, and given the dirtiest jobs to do, the unit eventually ends up in Australia. There another clash with white American authority leads to an all-out riot in which Saunders takes part declaring, 'there is no peace till freedom'.<sup>77</sup> All of the incidents described by Killens are founded on fact, including the final debacle which is based on the Brisbane riot. As well as accurate on the gloomier side of military race relations, the book is not without humour. The sardonic wit of Afro-Americans despite all adversity recurs continually: one soldier comments on black military participation, 'colored people join the service and white folks join the Army.'<sup>78</sup> Whether or not his comrades agree, the entire group later marches to this song:<sup>79</sup>

They say this is a white man's war,  
Parlez-vous;  
They say this is a white man's war,  
Parlez-vous;  
They say this is a white man's war,  
Well what the hell are we fighting for?  
Hinky, dinky, parlez-vous -

None of the works discussed so far could be referred to as 'integrated' - some were very angry protest novels. However, there were a number of books written during and published after the war which justified the comments mentioned earlier. Frank Yerby's historical romances of the South prior to, during, and after the Civil War use characters of all races, but the main ones are

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77. And Then We Heard The Thunder, 497.  
78. And Then We Heard The Thunder, 46.  
79. And Then We Heard The Thunder, 68.

white.<sup>80</sup> Like Yerby's books, the personae of Willard Motley's Knock on Any Door are not black nor was the book advertized with any reference to the author's race.<sup>81</sup> Ann Petry's first full-length novel, The Street, was also classed as 'integrated'. According to Butcher, 'the fact that her characters are Negroes is only incidental to her theme.'<sup>82</sup> And yet the book paints a gloomy picture of race relations in America, describing the effect of segregation, low incomes, and slum environments on black people. However, in her second novel, Country Place, the chief characters are white, but the story of a veteran returning from the war to find he has been jilted by his wife could have applied to any race or class of people.<sup>83</sup>

Just as Afro-Americans wrote about whites, so they in turn wrote about blacks. Prior to the war black subjects had been treated sympathetically by a number of white authors including William Faulkner and Erskine Caldwell. During the 1940s a 'group of militant young liberals began writing increasingly of the significance of the war for the Negro minority and the inevitability of a revolutionary shift in Southern race relations following the war's conclusion.'<sup>84</sup> Howard Fast's tale of blacks in the South following the Civil War was dedicated to 'the men and women, black

80. The Foxes of Harrow, New York 1946, and The Vixens, New York 1948.
81. Knock on Any Door, New York 1947.
82. Butcher, The Negro in American Culture, 176; Petry, The Street, Boston, Mass., 1946.
83. Country Place, Boston, Mass., 1947.
84. Butcher, The Negro in American Culture, 176.



and white, yellow and brown, who have laid down their lives in the struggle against fascism.'<sup>85</sup> The moral of the story, about returning black soldiers denied their rights, needs no elaboration. More directly to the point was Hodding Carter's, The Winds of Fear, set in a southern town during the 1940s. The white townspeople fear the return of 'the unruly Negro': 'Maybe it's the war, maybe not. Things are happening too fast for them, things they don't like.'<sup>86</sup> When the sheriff is killed by an Afro-American, a replacement known for his violence and dislike of blacks is appointed. He eventually shoots a black soldier in uniform for no good reason and the incident and its coverage in the national press divides the town into two camps: the blacks with white liberal support facing the rascists. It is a confrontation guaranteed to lead to more violence. Equally pessimistic is James Gould Cozzens' story of racial friction between black and white airforce units in Florida. As one of the white airmen points out,<sup>87</sup>

It is very dangerous to deny people their rights. It means that, in the long run, you drive them to take their rights by force.

The violence inherent in America's race relations was the subject of one of the best-sellers of the war years. Strange Fruit, Lillian Smith's powerful novel, was remarkable both because it was

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85. Howard Fast, Freedom Road, London 1946.

86. Hodding Carter, The Winds of Fear, London 1945, 14, 71.

87. James Gould Cozzens, Guard of Honour, London 1949, 337.

written by a southerner and a woman and also because of the reception it received.<sup>88</sup> The story is of an interracial love affair in a southern town. When the black girl, Nonnie, finds that she is pregnant, her white lover Tracy Dean arranges for her to marry his house servant. Nonnie's brother regards this as another example of white outrage against black womanhood and kills Dean. An incensed white mob then takes the falsely accused houseboy from the jail and lynches him. This is the 'strange fruit' of America's race relations. As one of the more sympathetic whites comments, 'We lynch the Negro's soul every day of our lives.'<sup>89</sup> As well as being successful as a novel, Strange Fruit was one of several works dealing with Afro-Americans produced on the stage. Others included Deep are the Roots and Jeb, both about returning black servicemen and their re-adjustment to American society. In general, there was an increase in the number of theatre productions with racial themes and in the use of black actors. In 1940, blacks appeared in three Broadway plays, in 1944 in 20, and in 1946 in 28, and the roles 'indicated a trend toward unprecedented liberalism.'<sup>90</sup>

White liberalism was also revealed in the much quoted poem by Witter Bynner, 'Defeat'. Commenting on the fact that German

88. Lillian Smith, Strange Fruit, New York 1944; Lingeman, Don't You Know There's A War On?, 273; Gannet, 'Books', in Goodman, ed., While You Were Gone, 458.

89. Strange Fruit, 302.

90. Mabel Roane, 'The Broadway Theater', in Murray, ed., Negro Handbook, 1946-47, 251; John Lovell, Jr., 'Roundup: The Negro in the American Theater, 1940-47', The Crisis, July 1947; Miles M. Jefferson, 'The Negro on Broadway, 1945-46', Phylon, VII, 2, 1946.

prisoners of war were treated as equals on a train in Texas while black soldiers were segregated, and referring back to the Civil War, Bynner wrote,<sup>91</sup>

Whom are we fighting this time, for God's sake?  
Mark well the token of the separate seat.  
It is again ourselves whom we defeat.

Much less well-known is the wartime poetry of Afro-Americans, a great deal of which was published in popular magazines and newspapers as well as in book form. Overall, such poems posed the same questions asked elsewhere. The worries of the black soldier overseas were encapsulated in the 'Draftee's Prayer':<sup>92</sup>

Dear Lord, today  
I go to war:  
To fight, to die,  
Tell me what for?  
Dear Lord, I'll fight,  
I do not fear,  
Germans, or Japs;  
My fears are here.  
America!  
"Land of the Free",  
This is the place,  
That troubles me,  
So while I fight  
Wrong over there,  
See that my folks  
Are treated fair.

Several of the poems of Owen Dodson were concerned with the issues of the war. In one he asks the American soldiers longing for peace if their home will be one of peace and equality and racial

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91. Witter Bynner, 'Defeat', in Take Away the Darkness, New York 1947, 12.
92. 'Draftee's Prayer', Baltimore Afro-American, January 16, 1943.



harmony,<sup>93</sup>

Or where a man will trample again  
His neighbor, shake no hands,  
Scorn fellowship, light fires  
Of dark bones and flesh to warm his hands.

Similar questions were raised about the post-war world by other  
black poets:<sup>94</sup>

Where are we to go when this is done?  
Will we slip into old, accustomed ways,  
finding remembered notches one by one?

and even more explicitly;<sup>95</sup>

Will we be rid of them when the war is done,  
These myths of nationality and race,  
This haughty dominance of the white face,  
This brag of the self-engendered sons-of-the-son?

One former black soldier supplied an apt comment on segregation  
in the forces when he wrote that troops in combat,<sup>96</sup>

were pulverized ... Reduced ... Wiped out -  
made uniform and equal!

White America was also warned that once the war had ended blacks  
might, instead of joining in singing the national anthem, 'sing

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93. Owen Dodson, 'The Decision', in Powerful Long Ladder, New York 1947, 96. Also see 'Open Letter' and 'Conversation on V', 103, 91.
94. Alfred A. Duckett, 'Sonnet', in Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds., The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1949, Garden City, New York, 1951, 202.
95. Allen E. Woodall, 'Questions', Phylon, V, 4, 1944, 315.
96. Myron O'Higgins, 'Sunset Horn', in The Poetry of the Negro, 175.

new words to another tune.<sup>97</sup>

One of the greatest of black poets, and one of the few from the Renaissance period still writing during the 1940s, was Langston Hughes. His many poems captured all the moods of war. While he contributed to the war effort by providing jingles, verses, and slogans for the Treasury Department and the War Writers Board, Hughes was also well aware of the issues the war raised for black people. He pointed out that,<sup>98</sup>

Freedom's not just  
To be won Over There.  
It means Freedom at home, too -  
Now - right here!

And commenting on the beating of Roland Hayes the black jazz musician in Georgia in 1942, he wrote,<sup>99</sup>

Negroes,  
Sweet and docile,  
Meek, humble, and kind.  
Beware the day  
They change their minds!

Like the blues singers, Hughes dealt with every aspect of black life. Typical was 'Restrictive Covenants':<sup>100</sup>

97. Katie Robinson, 'The Colored Boy', Black Worker, July 1943.
98. 'How About It Dixie?', New Masses, Vol. 45, 3, October 20, 1942. See Emanuel, Langston Hughes, 40-1.
99. 'Roland Hayes Beaten', in One Way Ticket, New York 1949, 86.
100. One Way Ticket, 64.

In Chicago  
 They've got covenants  
 Restricting me -  
 Hemmed in  
 On the South Side,  
 Can't breathe free.

But the wind blows there.  
I reckon the wind  
Must care.

But Hughes could transcend simple racial themes and in reference to the war reveal his greatness and his humanity:<sup>101</sup>

What a grand time was the war!  
 Oh, my, my!  
 What a grand time was the war!  
 My, my, my!  
 In war we had fun,  
 Sorry that old war is done!  
 What a grand time was the war,  
 My, my!

Echo:

Did  
Somebody  
Die?

He was a soldier in the army,  
 But he doesn't walk like one.  
 He walks like his soldiering  
 Days are done.

Son! ... Son!

In a later collection published after his death in 1967, Hughes devoted an entire section to 'The Face of War'. These apply to any war at any time and his 'Peace' provides a final epitaph:<sup>102</sup>

We passed their graves:  
 The dead men there,  
 Winners or losers,  
 Did not care.

101. 'World War II' and 'Casualty' in Hughes, Selected Poems, New York 1957, 255, 259.

102. 'Peace', in Hughes, The Panther and the Lash: Poems of Our Times, New York 1971, 51-60.



In the dark  
 They could not see  
 Who had gained  
 The victory.

Clearly then, it was true to say that, 'Negro poets of the forties addressed themselves to the problem of war,'<sup>103</sup> and the same could be said of the black authors and musicians. In poem, story, and song, Afro-Americans dealt with the question of equal military participation and the rewards they hoped it would bring. In the main, this meant that their works were still primarily protest, angrily denouncing discrimination and segregation in all areas of the defence effort. While this was easily seen in content, there was apparent too a change in the very form and style of music and literature which echoed the militant and aggressive mood of Afro-Americans: rhythm and blues and bop was the natural musical accompaniment to the March on Washington Movement and even to the more extreme groups. (It is interesting to note, for example, that a number of black jazz musicians took Muslim names at this time.)<sup>104</sup> At the same time, sufficient progress was made during the war to encourage some blacks to envisage a time in the not-too-distant future when integration and equality would be the norm. So much was this so that writers like Petry, Motley, and Yerby could write what were later to be described as 'integrated' novels. These two radically different developments could take place simultaneously: the existence of one did not rule out the other. Indeed the two together reflected exactly the black mood, demanding

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103. Butcher, The Negro in American Culture, 138.

104. Jones, Blues People, 210.

and expectant. The promising economic and social advances were coupled with the increased portrayal of blacks on the stage and screen and the sympathetic treatment of racial themes by white authors. That such efforts could be commercially successful also demonstrated the change that had come about during and as a result of the war.

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Chapter 7Black Expectations and the White Response

That the majority of Afro-Americans wished to participate in the war effort is clear enough. Why they should do so is not perhaps so readily apparent. To a certain extent, participation was itself a reward bringing an increased prosperity and a sense of belonging. However, underlying black demands for greater and equal involvement was their desire for complete equality once the war had ended. If the Military Participation Ratio theory has any validity in this context, it is because it was unconsciously recognized by both blacks and whites. Thus, the black campaigns to end discrimination and segregation in the armed forces and war industries were coupled with claims for equality in society generally. Once they had taken part in the war, their position with regard to civil rights was strengthened considerably. While white liberals saw the logic of the Afro-Americans' reasoning and agreed with it, those with more prejudiced racial attitudes disagreed. But their very argument, that black involvement in the war effort would encourage 'uppity niggers' and moves toward social equality, itself recognized the importance of participation and the justice of the black point of view. Just as blacks were determined to be included in their country's struggle, so, for really the same reasons, those whites were determined to resist them. The government, meanwhile, was intent on preserving nation unity and winning the war. Aware of its position as a 'defender of democracy' and of the views of the voters at home, it temporized and compromised and so postponed the



confrontation until a later date.

In its simplest form, what the blacks expected was to be treated as equals and accorded the same rights and privileges, as well as responsibilities, as other Americans. In case there was any doubt, a number of organizations spelt out the ways by which this would be made possible. The significant feature of these programmes was that they were coupled with specific demands for participation in the war effort. The leader of the March on Washington Movement, the most important of the bodies formed during the period, demanded,<sup>1</sup>

in the interest of national unity, the abrogation of every law which makes a distinction in treatment between citizens based on religion, creed, color, or national origin. This means an end to Jim Crow in education, in housing, in transportation, and in every other social, economic, and political privilege; and especially we demand, in the capital of the nation, an end to all segregation in public places and in public institutions.

The Movement went on to call for the enforcement of existing statutes and additional legislation in order to end lynchings and the disenfranchisement of Afro-Americans, the abolition of all discrimination and segregation in the armed forces and government, an end to economic discrimination, and black representation in all federal agencies. The Chicago Defender's National Negro Defense Program included similar points and for similar reasons.<sup>2</sup> Explaining why it was necessary to launch such a scheme at that particular time, the

1. A. Philip Randolph, 'Why Should We March?' Survey Graphic, XXXI, 11, November 1942, 489.
2. Chicago Defender, March 28, 1942.

Defender argued that,<sup>3</sup>

Negroes CAN and MUST profit from the discipline that war will impose on all American citizens and BEGIN NOW under a planned program to secure all of the things which have previously been denied.

Expanding on its 'Double V' slogan for 'Victory at Home and Abroad', the Pittsburgh Courier said,<sup>4</sup>

we would be less than men if, while we are giving up our property and sacrificing our lives, we do not agitate, contend, and demand those rights guaranteed to all free men ... this would be neither patriotism nor common sense.

This was exactly the motivating force which lay behind the widespread militancy discussed in earlier chapters.

If white Americans were not aware of the black demands or had ignored them, the belligerence of Afro-Americans and the riots of 1943 forced them to take notice. In 1944, a book was published 'at the request of the Press' entitled not surprisingly, What The Negro Wants.<sup>5</sup> Edited by the former chairman of the Campaign for Participation of Negroes in National Defense, Rayford Logan, the book consisted of essays by 14 well-known blacks of varying political opinions, including W. E. B. DuBois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Roy Wilkins, George Schuyler, and Willard Townsend. The degree of unanimity amongst these diverse contributors was remarkable. All noted that

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3. Chicago Defender, March 14, 1942.

4. Pittsburgh Courier, August 8, 1942. See too issues for February 7, July 11, 1942.

5. Rayford W. Logan, ed., What The Negro Wants, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1944. See Publisher's introduction, ix.

the war had heightened racial issues and spoke of the 'abnormal' and 'unprecedented' changes which were taking place. All, too, demanded 'first-class citizenship' for the Afro-American and full 'economic, political and social equality.'<sup>6</sup> In another collection of essays, pointedly called Primer for White Folks, both black and white writers commented on the importance of the war to race relations and emphasized the paradox of fighting for democracy abroad while denying it to minority groups at home.<sup>7</sup> That blacks had participated in the war effort despite the often considerable limitations imposed on their service, was stressed in these and other publications. One book of 85 selected short stories from the Baltimore Afro-American's war correspondents declared, This Is Our War, while the black role and achievement was listed in Democracy's Negroes and various year books.<sup>8</sup> On V-E day, Afro-Americans could justifiably proclaim, 'On Land, On Sea, in the Air, We Did Our Part,' and so strengthen their demands for civil rights.<sup>9</sup>

A number of white Americans agreed that the Afro-American had played his part and supported his demands for equality. One writer, a white man, suggested that,<sup>10</sup>

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6. What The Negro Wants, 7, 14, 65, 71, 103, 163, 193, and ff.
  7. Bucklin Moon, ed., Primer for White Folks, New York 1945.
  8. This Is Our War, Baltimore, Ma., 1945, see Afro-American, March 10, 1945; Arthur Furr, Democracy's Negroes, Boston, Mass., 1947; Also Florence Murray, ed., The Negro Handbook, 1946-47, New York 1947 and Jessie Parkhurst Guzman, ed., The Negro Year Book, 1941-46, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1947.
  9. Baltimore Afro-American, May 12, 1945.
  10. Dennis I. Imbert, The Negro After The War, New Orleans 1943.



The common hardship all of us have to go through to make America strong for final victory may bring the races closer to a better understanding and a chance to estimate the merits of the Negro in our democratic way of life, and extend to him consideration for his well-being as partner in our struggle.

In the summer of 1943, prior to the riots of that year, the Chicago Defender went so far as to claim that this prediction had become fact. The war, it said, had made America become 'a melting pot from which all of the progressive forces are emerging' as the country became 'unified under the hammer blows of war.'<sup>11</sup> This optimistic appraisal of the situation was due in large part to the actions and declarations of liberal whites and to the publicity which the Afro-American's plight received during the war. Several popular magazines devoted entire issues to the question of race relations in the United States and the significance it had achieved because of the conflict abroad.<sup>12</sup> Various books by white authors served a similar function on a larger scale. Prominent among them were Gunnar Myrdal's, An American Dilemma, and Lillian Smith's novel, Strange Fruit. Later works also stressed the manner in which the war had brought questions of prejudice and tolerance to the fore and pleaded for unity and understanding.<sup>13</sup> Afro-American participation was

11. Chicago Defender, July 10, 1943.

12. 'The Negro's War', Fortune, XXV, 6, June 1942; 'The Negro: His Future in America', New Republic, October 18, 1943; 'Color: Unfinished Business of Democracy', Survey Graphic, XXXI, 11, November 1942.

13. An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, New York 1944; Strange Fruit, New York 1944; W. Stegner and the Editors of Look, One Nation, Boston, 1945; Buell G. Gallagher, Color and Conscience: The Irrepressible Conflict, New York 1946; John D. Silvera, The Negro in World War II, New York 1946; Carey McWilliams, Brothers Under the Skin, Boston, 1943. Works of fiction by white authors with essentially the same message are discussed above, 215-17.

lauded in all of these as well as in the House of Representatives where it was noted in 1946 'that Negro heroes in this war achieved their proud records under handicaps that did not have to be overcome by most of their white fellow citizens.'<sup>14</sup>

The most important and influential supporter of the Afro-American's case during the war was undoubtedly Wendell Willkie, the Republican Party's presidential candidate of 1940. He sided with the black press in urging 'Fight for Democracy at Home as well as Abroad', and argued that,<sup>15</sup>

the correction of certain injustices can be made under the pressures of war which years of peaceful effort have failed to bring about, such as, for instance, the discrimination against the colored citizen in industry, in labor, and in the armed service of the nation.

Willkie pointed out, in his best-selling book, that America could not, in all honesty, fight 'the forces of imperialism abroad and maintain any form of imperialism at home': he wanted the United States to adopt policies and practices in keeping with Allied propaganda and so demonstrate its good faith to India, Africa, and China.<sup>16</sup> In taking this stance he was, according to Carey McWilliams,

14. Helen Gahagan Douglas, 'The Negro Soldier: A Partial Record of Negro Devotion and Heroism in the Cause of Freedom Gathered from the Files of the War and Navy Departments', a copy of her speech in the House of Representatives, February 1, 1946, in Moorland Collection, Howard University.
15. Baltimore Afro-American, August 15, 1942, and resolution to the war policy session of the Republican National Committee, April 20, 1942, quoted in Afro-American, April 25, 1942.
16. Wendell Willkie, One World, London 1943, 148-56. See Donald Bruce Johnson, The Republican Party and Wendell Willkie, Urbana, III., 1960, 287, 304; Walter White, A Man Called White, New York 1948, 198-204.



reflecting 'a growing interest and concern with racial minorities on the part of a large section of the majority.' This ferment could not be written off as 'crisis patriotism.'<sup>17</sup> Following his untimely death in 1944, Willkie was mourned in the black press as the 'Nation's Number One Patriot' and the Afro-American's 'foremost champion.'<sup>18</sup>

Willkie's views were shared by, among others, the well-known novelist, Pearl S. Buck. In a widely-publicized letter to the New York Times she too attacked American hypocrisy and suggested that the government could at least guarantee equal economic opportunity to all Americans and see to it 'that colored people in this democracy shall not suffer insult because of their color.'<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that these comments were made both after the issue of Executive Order 8802 and before America had entered the war. Later Buck urged blacks to stand by their white countrymen 'in this imperfect democracy' because America was the place where 'the hope of democracy is still clearest.'<sup>20</sup> The paper to which she had originally written took a stand on race relations itself and, in an editorial headed 'A Minority of Our Own', urged Americans to demonstrate their sincerity to their allies: the racial problem had to be solved if America was to avoid 'the sinister hypocrisy of fighting abroad for what it is not willing to accept at home.'<sup>21</sup>

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17. Carey McWilliams, 'What We Did About Racial Minorities' in Jack Goodman, ed., While You Were Gone: A Report on Wartime Life in the United States, New York 1946, 95.
18. Chicago Defender, October 14, 1944; Pittsburgh Courier, October 14, 1944; Baltimore Afro-American, October 14, 21, 1944.
19. New York Times, November 15, 1941.
20. 'A Letter to Colored Americans', Opportunity, XX, 3, March 1942.
21. New York Times, April 3, 1942.



This concern amongst whites increased following the riots of 1943 which made evident the deterioration in race relations that had occurred despite their pleas.

A survey of opinions conducted by the Office of War Information after the outbreak in Detroit found that people were 'shocked', 'outraged', 'alarmed', and occasionally, 'shamed'. While the correspondents showed an awareness of black discontent, they put the cause of the riots down to the 'belligerence' of Afro-Americans and the resentment this caused among whites.<sup>22</sup> Yet there was evidence to suggest that white Americans had been unaware of the black mood prior to 1943. In a National Opinion Research Center poll taken in 1942, 62 per cent of the whites interviewed felt that blacks were 'pretty well satisfied with things in this country,' while 24 per cent felt that blacks were dissatisfied. By 1944, only 25 per cent thought that blacks were satisfied, and 54 per cent said the opposite, a considerable reversal in attitudes.<sup>23</sup> Indicative of the panic and fear felt by whites after the riots was the appearance of numerous race relations committees and organizations. By the summer of 1944 over 200 local, state, and national commissions had been established to deal with racial problems. In Chicago alone

22. Office of War Information, Bureau of Special Services, Division of Research, Report No. C-12, 'Opinions About Inter-Racial Tension', August 25, 1943, in OASW 230, NARG 107.
23. National Opinion Research Center, June 20, 1942 and May 1944, in Hadley Cantril, Public Opinion, 1935-1946, Princeton, New Jersey 1951, 988-89.

there were 20 such agencies including one set up by the Mayor.<sup>24</sup> Although such bodies could only be to the benefit of the communities concerned, their effectiveness was limited. In the first place, the vast number of organizations was misleading: in many instances the same people were members of more than one committee thus duplicating membership and reducing the real number of activists.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, the committees were born out of fear of riots. In order to prevent further outbreaks they centred their attentions on building goodwill and understanding rather than attacking the root causes such as poverty, poor housing, and discrimination in employment. Typical was the American Council on Race Relations founded in 1944 with a six-point programme designed to do little more than disseminate information to other bodies, schools, and the mass media.<sup>26</sup> Of course, the spreading of knowledge was an important and valuable function and the very existence of the committees demonstrated that civic leaders and authorities had recognized their responsibility for the maintenance of good human

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24. Guzman, Negro Year Book, 1941-46, 226; American Council on Race Relations, Directory of Agencies in Intergroup Relations: National Regional, State and Local, 1948-49, Chicago 1949; 'Programs of Action on the Democratic Front', Race Relations: A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends, II, 1-2, August-September 1944.
25. Goodwin Watson, Action for Unity, New York 1947, 5.
26. Baltimore Afro-American, May 13, 1944; Robert C. Weaver, 'Wither Northern Race Relations Committees?' Phylon, V, 3, 1944; A. A. Liveright, 'The Community and Race Relations', Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 244, March 1946.

relations.<sup>27</sup> However, public opinion polls taken throughout the war did not reveal any comparable enlightenment amongst the mass of people.

Although a survey of 12,622 students in 63 colleges throughout the country revealed that 73.6 per cent of them felt that in order for America to implement the 'Four Freedoms' in the world as a whole, she should take steps to end discrimination against blacks, other opinion polls were not as encouraging.<sup>28</sup> Surveys of factory workers and high school pupils taken in 1942 showed that the majority were opposed to working or living with Afro-Americans.<sup>29</sup> Later polls showed that there was considerable confusion in white attitudes. In 1944 the majority of interviewees thought blacks were dissatisfied with their lot but 60 per cent thought that Afro-Americans were treated fairly. Again, 85 per cent felt that there was equal opportunity in education while 71 per cent suggested that blacks did not have the same chance as whites of finding employment.<sup>30</sup> Expectations about the future were decidedly gloomy: most surveys showed that whites feared that more jobs for blacks would lead to less for whites and that this would cause conflict.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps because

27. Edwin Embree and Julia Waxman, Investment in People, New York 1949, 176. One committee, the Chicago Mayor's Commission, was severely criticized by the Chicago Defender for failing to attack discrimination and segregation. According to the paper, the commission was just 'a convenient cubbyhole' where complaints were filed and forgotten, March 30, 1946.
28. 'War and Race Relations: Student Opinion', The Crisis, September 1943.
29. Cantril, Public Opinion, 1935-1946, 477.
30. NORC polls, May 1944, Cantril, Public Opinion, 1935-1946, 509-10, 988-89.
31. NORC polls, May 1944, op. cit., and in Pittsburgh Courier, August 19, October 28, 1944.



of such fears, opinion was divided on the question of fair employment laws. In a survey in 1945, 43 per cent of those interviewed favoured a law which would require an employer to hire people regardless of race or colour while 44 per cent were opposed to it. More revealing were the statistics for particular regions. In the North and mid-Atlantic states, 58 per cent favoured such a law compared to only 30 per cent in the South where the majority opposed it.<sup>32</sup> There was little in this to suggest that the war had altered the climate of opinion in the South and in fact, if anything, racial intolerance in that region seemed to increase during the 1940s.

The migration of Afro-Americans during both World Wars had changed the 'Negro problem' from a purely sectional one into a national one. Even so, the South still had the largest black population and the long ingrained racial prejudice and intolerance remained. The numerous outbreaks of violence directed against blacks and the utterances of racial demagogues during the war demonstrated that many white southerners were immune to propaganda about democracy and the rights of man. The long, drawn-out campaigns for equal service in the armed forces and for an effective committee on fair employment were fought tooth and nail by southerners. Any form of integration in no matter what area of life was to be opposed, regardless of the war and America's role in it. In 1944, the South Carolina House of Representatives declared,<sup>33</sup>

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32. American Institute of Public Opinion, June 12, 1945, Cantril, 477-8.

33. Quoted in Sterling A. Brown, 'Count Us In', in Logan, ed., What The Negro Wants, 322.

We reaffirm our belief in and our allegiance to establish white supremacy as now prevailing in the South and we solemnly pledge our lives and our sacred honor to maintaining it.

The Senator from Mississippi, James Eastland, was quoted as saying,<sup>34</sup>

I have no prejudice in my heart; but the white race is a superior race and the Negro race is an inferior race, and the races must be kept separate by law.

Even more incongruous was the sign on a bus in Charleston, South Carolina which read:<sup>35</sup>

Victory Demands Your Co-operation.

If the peoples of this country's races do not pull together, victory is lost. We, therefore, respectfully direct your attention to the laws and customs of the state in regard to segregation. Your cooperation in carrying them out will make the war shorter and Victory sooner. Avoid friction. Be patriotic. White passengers will be seated from front to rear; colored passengers from rear to front.

It would appear from this that to some people at least, the war was to reinforce existing institutions rather than to bring about change.

Yet the war did affect the South: its 'cataclysmic' forces had shaken and loosened many traditions.<sup>36</sup> Indeed the views just

34. In Gallagher, Color and Conscience, 1.

35. See Brown, 'Count Us In', 318.

36. Charles S. Johnson, 'The Present Status of Race Relations in the South', Social Forces, XXIII, 1, October 1944; John Samuel Ezell, The South Since 1865, New York 1963, 417; Thomas D. Clark and Albert D. Kirwan, The South Since Appomattox, New York 1967, 286.

quoted were, in large part, a reaction to a new situation. The economic, social, and political advances made by blacks during the war and their militant demands for further progress caused widespread alarm in the South. Symptomatic of this feeling was the variety of rumours which were common throughout the region. Domestic servants were supposedly leaving en masse for better paid jobs in defence factories, while those that remained in service were said to be joining 'Eleanor Clubs' and demanding higher wages as well as behaving in an offensive manner. Other tales were of black men threatening to take over white women when their husbands joined the forces. An equally widespread fear was that black servicemen would return to America with ideas above their station.<sup>37</sup> The whole issue of black military participation highlighted the paradoxical position of many southerners. On the one hand they feared that Afro-Americans would lay claim to white women if only white men were called to serve or equally that the whites would bear the brunt of war casualties. On the other hand, they were opposed to the equal integrated armed service of blacks because it would recognize the Afro-Americans' claims to equal citizenship and destroy the principles of white supremacy. Besides, even if they did think that blacks were incapable of becoming good soldiers, the prospect of

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37. Howard Washington Odum, Race and Rumors of Race: Challenge to American Crisis, Chapel Hill, No. Carolina, 1943. Also see the manuscript by Odum, 'On Trying to Analyze Southern Race Tensions with Special Reference to the War Situation and to the Total National Picture', Winter 1943, in Yale University Library. The 'Eleanor Clubs' were named after Eleanor Roosevelt whom many southerners regarded as being responsible for black militancy. Neither Odum nor the F.B.I. were able to find such a club: see Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of their Relationship, New York 1971, 672-4, and letter to F.D.R. complaining of his wife's supposed activities, September 1942, 93:7 FDRL.



blacks with guns and military training was frightening.<sup>38</sup> In the event, a solution to their dilemma was forced upon them by the manpower shortages which required the full utilization of all sections of the community.

It would be foolish to write-off all southerners as ignorant bigots blind to their own lack of logic, just as it would be foolish to consider all northerners free of prejudice. There were a number of liberal men in the South who were aware that the racial beliefs and practices of their neighbours were in complete contradiction with America's war aims. Several of these joined with blacks from the South in forming the Southern Regional Council in 1944. This organization sprang from a number of conferences that took place in 1942 and 1943 and its objectives were spelt out in the first meeting blacks at Durham, North Carolina.<sup>39</sup> Recognizing that the war had 'sharpened the issue of Negro-white relations', particularly in the South, the Durham conference called for the abolition of the poll tax, the white primary, and other forms of disenfranchisement. It also demanded equal, but not necessarily integrated, educational and economic opportunities for Afro-Americans; segregation was condemned, but for the time being the conference wished only to improve race

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38. Odum, Race and Rumors of Race, 105; Letters in Selective Service System files, 170, NARG 147 quoted above, 172, 178; Pittsburgh Courier, September 26, 1944.

39. Ina Corinne Brown, Race Relations in a Democracy, New York 1949, 143-45; Charles S. Johnson, Into the Mainstream: A Survey of Best Practices in Race Relations in the South, Chapel Hill, No. Carolina, 1947, 5-7.

relations within the existing framework.<sup>40</sup> Other interracial committees were formed elsewhere in the South to perform a similar function.<sup>41</sup> Also influential were the liberal newspaper editors, Hodding Carter, Virginius Dabney, John Temple Graves, and Thomas Sancton. Following the breakdown of segregation in public transport in areas in and around Richmond, Virginia, due to pressure of numbers, Dabney, the editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, urged the repeal of the segregation laws "on the ground that under the stress of war conditions these laws no longer work." He reported that he had received hundreds of letters of support and only a few which were unfavourable.<sup>42</sup> Also indicative of the liberal sympathies in the South was a petition from over 2,000 white 'Citizens of the Southern States' to members of congress. The petition urged support for the Fair Employment Practices Committee which, it said, was,<sup>43</sup>

an important step forward in translating the American ideal of democracy and brotherhood into practical working relationships and will contribute materially to the economic welfare of the South and the nation.

Even this liberalism, however, was tempered with caution.

Many southerners sympathetic to the Afro-Americans' cause were

40. Southern Regional Council, Changing Problems in the New South, Atlanta, 1955; The Southern Frontier, III, 11, November 1942, IV, 1, January 1943, IV, 8, August 1943.
41. Johnson, Into the Mainstream, 12-46.
42. 'Virginians Speak on Jim Crow', The Crisis, February 1944.
43. 'A Petition from Citizens of the Southern States', 1945?, FEPC 409, NARG 228.



alarmed by militant campaigns and they urged the blacks to be patient and not push events. John Temple Graves accused northern black leaders of going crazy, 'making plain beyond question an intent to use the war for settling overnight the whole, long, complicated, infinitely delicate racial problem.' They were, he said, alienating the little support they had in the South.<sup>44</sup>

Dabney agreed with this viewpoint. While he attacked the white demagogues, Talmadge and Dixon, for fanning the flames of prejudice, he was also critical of the intemperance of black organizations and newspapers. He warned that 'a group of Negro agitators' and 'a small group of white rabble rousers' were pushing the country 'closer and closer to an interracial explosion which may make the race riots of the First World War and its aftermath seem mild by comparison.'<sup>45</sup>

Like Mark Ethridge, the chairman of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, these men were prepared to work for equality but at the same time defend segregation: reform was to be gradual and within the existing social system.<sup>46</sup> In the face of violent and sudden criticism from the North, the threats of bodies such as the March on Washington Movement, and the outbreak of riots in 1943, the liberals tended to side with their more extreme brethren rather than the blacks. The same was also true in Congress where the issue of race generally united southern senators and representatives in

44. Graves, 'The Southern Negro and the War Crisis', Virginia Quarterly Review, XVIII, 4, 1942.
45. Dabney, 'Nearer and Nearer the Precipice', Atlantic, January 1943, also in NAACP 279, Library of Congress.
46. See Ethridge's statement in Birmingham, Ala., quoted above 111.



opposition to the rest of the country.<sup>47</sup>

As Key repeatedly pointed out in his mammoth study of southern politics, the South was not as wholly united nor as reactionary as was commonly imagined. Although the region was almost entirely Democratic, there were within the party's ranks differences ranging from left in Louisiana to right in Virginia. The southern congressmen did not always vote en bloc, but when they did so in opposition to the representatives from the rest of the nation, it was invariably on matters involving race or federal intervention in the states.<sup>48</sup> Civil rights measures were, of course, opposed on both counts. This opposition could not be ignored nor overruled because the South was vital to the Democratic party and to the President both in getting measures passed in Congress and in securing victory in presidential elections. Not only did a number of southerners serve as chairmen of important committees due to their seniority, but also, after the defeat of many Democrats in the North and mid-West in the elections of 1942, the Dixiecrats formed the backbone of the party in Congress.<sup>49</sup> But if Roosevelt and his government had to be careful not to offend the South, they

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47. V. O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation, New York 1949, 351-2, 371-2.
48. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation, 345-82.
49. Richard R. Polenberg, War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945, New York 1972, 187-92. The strength of the southern Democrats was such that at the 1944 Party Convention Harry S. Truman was nominated as Roosevelt's running-mate instead of the more radical Henry Wallace. The platform contained an extremely weak civil rights plank widely criticized in the black press which accused the party of an appeasement equal to Munich. See Pittsburgh Courier, July 22, 1944, Chicago Defender, July 29, 1944.

also had to pay attention to the Afro-Americans. The number of black voters in urban areas, particularly in the North, was increasing and becoming of strategic importance. Their support had already played an important part in the election of 1940.<sup>50</sup> Caught between these conflicting camps, Roosevelt had also to direct America's war effort and in the end, he concentrated on that: 'Dr New Deal' had given way to 'Dr Win-the-War'.<sup>51</sup>

Roosevelt and his advisers were well aware that the war had affected race relations in the United States: their files contained hundreds of letters from both blacks and whites about the situation. That federal agencies felt it necessary to carry out surveys of black and white opinion and to study the Afro-American press was an acknowledgement of how important the issue was.<sup>52</sup> It was even suggested in 1942 that the editors of the more flamboyant black newspapers be indicted for sedition, but that advice was rejected by Roosevelt. Instead, meetings were held between black editors and the heads of various government departments and in 1944 the President himself met members of the Negro Newspaper Publishers

50. Henry Lee Moon, Balance of Power: The Negro Vote, New York 1949.
51. Polenberg, War and Society, 73.
52. Office of Facts and Figures, The Negro Looks at the War: Attitudes of New York Negroes Toward Discrimination against Negroes and a Comparison of Negro and Poor White Attitudes Toward War Related Issues, n.p., 1942, in Schomburg Collection; Office of War Information, Supplement to Survey No. 25, 'Negroes in a Democracy at War', July 14, 1942, in OASW 226, NARG 107; Analysis Branch, News Division, Bureau of Public Relations, 'Reports on Trends in the Negro Press', in OASW 223, NARG 107.



Association.<sup>53</sup> As well as the minorities at home, the federal government had to consider the attitudes of her allies and enemies abroad. The credibility of America's war aims was vital in securing support in the far East and Africa. As so many commentators pointed out, America had to practice at home what she preached abroad. Similarly, Axis powers could, and did, make great play on the poor race relations in the United States. Japanese radio programmes beamed to North and South America dealt with the Ku Klux Klan, the riots in Detroit, and the discrimination in the armed forces.<sup>54</sup>

One way of counteracting such messages and of attempting to ease racial tensions, was to produce propaganda of one's own, and Roosevelt and his government tended to rely on this rather than taking positive action. The Atlantic Charter, signed by Churchill and Roosevelt in August 1941, was little more than a public relations measure aimed at the non-European countries. (Its effect was considerably limited following the British prime minister's later qualifications.)<sup>55</sup>

At home, the Americans produced pamphlets such as Report to the Nation which stressed the need for unity in the face of total war, but did not mention race relations specifically.<sup>56</sup>

More to that point was Negroes and the War, a 70-page illustrated record of black life written by Chandler Owen for the Office of War

53. Correspondence in Office of Facts and Figures, 40, and Office of War Information 1050, both NARG 208; Walter White, A Man Called White, 207-9; Roi Ottley, New World A'Coming, 269; Pittsburgh Courier, February 12, 1944.

54. Extracts from propaganda programmes in OFF, 40, NARG 208.

55. Gordon Wright, The Ordeal of Total War, 205-6.

56. Office of Facts and Figures, Report to the Nation: The American Preparation for War, Washington, D.C., 1942.



Information. The emphasis was on the gains made and being made rather than on the disadvantages faced by Afro-Americans. Hitler's writings on race were compared to pronouncements made by Roosevelt and the reader was told that no matter how bad things were, they would be worse if America lost the war.<sup>57</sup> After the riots of 1943, the government also produced several films, 'The Negro Soldier', 'Teamwork', and 'Negro Colleges in Wartime', all of which had the same message.<sup>58</sup> What the Afro-Americans wanted, however, was not so much propoganda as action but the prejudices of whites, both within government and without, made this impossible.

President Roosevelt was neither willing nor able to act on civil rights unless forced to do so. Executive Order 8802 was, as I have shown, only issued after a militant campaign by blacks which, if it had been allowed to come to fruition in the march on Washington, would have been extremely embarrassing. Once America had entered the war, the President was even less prepared to respond to black demands. By 1942 he could not find the time to meet Afro-American leaders to discuss the status of blacks in the war emergency and, in reply to a request for a 'commission on race and color in the present world struggle,' he said,<sup>59</sup>

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57. Office of War Information, Negroes and the War, Washington, D.C., n.d.

58. See previous chapter.

59. F.D.R. to Edwin R. Embree, March 16, 1942 in reply to letter of February 3, FDRL 93:5. Also telegram, A. Philip Randolph to F.D.R., August 2, 1942, and reply, August 6, FDRL 93:5.

I think we must start winning the war with all the brains, wisdom and experience we've got before we do much general or specific planning for the future.

Yet, one year later, while asking Congress to approve educational benefits for veterans, Roosevelt could declare that, 'the time to prepare for peace is at the height of war.'<sup>60</sup> Obviously, it depended very much on the popularity of measures in Congress and the country as a whole. Even so, Roosevelt did appear to realize the importance of black participation and America's race relations to the war effort. In his message to the 1942 NAACP convention he suggested that they reverse their theme from 'Victory is Vital To Minorities' to 'Minorities Are Vital To Victory'.<sup>61</sup> The following year, in a statement to the annual National Urban League conference, he pointed out that the 'integrity of our Nation and our war aims is at stake in our attitude towards minority groups at home.' Racial strife, he said, 'destroys national unity at home and renders us suspect abroad.'<sup>62</sup> If the underlying theme of these messages was unity and a call to put aside grievances in order that the war might be won, Roosevelt was prepared to suggest that participation would bring rewards. In a radio message to the nation from the White House in October 1944, the President called for the right to vote for all citizens 'without tax or artificial restriction of any

60. Davis R. B. Ross, Preparing For Ulysses: Politics and Veterans During World War II, New York and London, 1969, 91.

61. Ottley, New World A'Coming, 320.

62. Letter of address, September 7, 1943, in National Urban League, 'Victory Through Unity: Annual Conference of the National Urban League', September 28-October 3, 1943, in Schomburg Collection.

kind.' He went on,<sup>63</sup>

We must be able to present to our returning heroes an America which is stronger and more prosperous, and more deeply devoted to the ways of democracy, than ever before.

He reinforced that message while writing to the Sixth Congress of the Southern Negro Youth Congress in December 1944 when he wrote that the thousands of young blacks had fought,<sup>64</sup>

not only to defend America but to advance America. They have fought to establish a universal freedom under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all - regardless of station, race or creed.

Despite these various declarations, Roosevelt remained peculiarly insensitive to demands for civil rights legislation. Even after the outbreak of riots, a development Roosevelt deplored for its damaging effects on the war effort, plans for a government investigation and a committee on race relations were dropped. In place of them a presidential aide, Jonathan Daniels, was appointed to correlate information on racial problems and the flow of morale-boosting material was increased. Once more, attention was not to be distracted from the immediate problem of winning the war and the prevention of future riots was left to the local community organizations which sprang up after the summer of 1943.<sup>65</sup> The counsel of patience

63. Message to the Nation, October 5, 1944, in Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Victory and the Threshold of Peace, 1944-45, New York 1950, 317-21.
64. Chicago Defender, December 9, 1944.
65. F.D.R. to Anson Stokes Phelps, July 1, 1943, FDRL 93:12; Harvard Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War', Journal of American History, LVIII, 3, 1971, 675-78.



and moderation at a time when blacks were most impatient was even put forward by Eleanor Roosevelt, normally an outspoken defender of the Afro-Americans' cause. Like her husband, she felt that militant civil rights campaigns could only detract from the war effort.<sup>66</sup>

As well as his over-riding concern with winning the war and his political pragmatism, there was inherent in the Roosevelt philosophy a feeling that special legislation for blacks was unnecessary. In all of the New Deal programmes there was not one act which was aimed at helping the black community alone. Rather, all policies were expected to apply equally to all underprivileged groups and it was left to the administrators of particular agencies to see that there was no discrimination in the areas of their jurisdiction. Where local laws and customs prevented this policy from becoming practice, little was done to correct the imbalance. To do so would have alienated the South, as would have any public support from the President for civil rights legislation such as an anti-lynching or anti-poll tax bill.<sup>67</sup> With the outbreak of war, the support of southerners was even more vital to ensure the passage of war measures. Besides, with New Deal policies and agencies being abandoned and abolished. Roosevelt was even less likely to single out the black community for favourable action.<sup>68</sup>

66. Baltimore Afro-American, July 18, 1942; Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, 673-74.

67. Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., 'The Negro in the New Deal Era', in Bernard Sternsher, ed., The Negro in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution, 1930-1945, Chicago, 1969, 7-28.

68. Richard Polenburg has argued convincingly in War and Social Change: The United States, 1941-45, that the war put an end to reforms and led to the reversal of some New Deal policies, 73-95.

He did still maintain that such domestic measures as were passed would apply equally to all Americans, thus negating the need for special consideration. For example, when Walter White asked that a qualified Afro-American be appointed as assistant administrator in the Veterans Bureau, Roosevelt replied that such an appointment would not be necessary. Blacks, along with all veterans, were provided for in the Serviceman's Readjustment Act the G.I. Bill of Rights.<sup>69</sup>

There was some justification for Roosevelt's approach. Afro-Americans had gained with the rest of the population from participation in the war effort and from wartime policies. Employment had risen, better wages were paid, rents and prices were controlled and even cut back, housing had been built, and defence training and armed service had given blacks skills which they could later use in civilian life. However, as the Afro-American spokesmen were well aware, those gains had been made under exceptional circumstances and had still been limited by the discrimination which Roosevelt was unable or unwilling to see. In all areas, housing, health, employment, and education, the advances had not been sufficient to bring blacks up to white levels and there was still an immense gap between the races. Moreover, Afro-Americans, even more than whites, suffered from 'depression psychosis' - the fear that the war would be followed by mass unemployment.<sup>70</sup> In such an eventuality,

69. White to F.D.R., October 5, F.D.R. to White, October 14, 1944, FDRL 93:10. Subsequently, however, meetings were held between White and General Hines of the Veterans Administration to discuss racial policies, see White to F.D.R., October 23, 1944, FDRL 93:10.

70. Ross, Preparing for Ulysses, 34-5.



blacks would once again be last hired, first fired, the gains they had made would be lost, and the gap between black and white would widen.<sup>71</sup> Such fears were not groundless. Even without discrimination, the disproportionate concentration of Afro-Americans in industries directly related to the war - shipbuilding, munitions, iron, and steel - meant that they would be the first to feel the effects of peace. As early as 1944, lay-offs were reported in a number of plants in Missouri, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Indiana in which black seniority rights were being ignored.<sup>72</sup> In seven 'war centers' studied by the Fair Employment Practices Committee during the period of reconversion, all but one showed a heavier loss of jobs by blacks than by white workers and by 1948, Afro-Americans in San Francisco had dropped back halfway to their pre-war employment status.<sup>73</sup> Once laid-off, black workers were less likely to be re-employed or at least not at the levels they had experienced during the war.

These early post-war developments caused considerable alarm among Afro-Americans, particularly about the fate of the returning

71. For expression of such fears see, Pittsburgh Courier, August 25, 1945; Chicago Defender, September 9, 1944; Baltimore Afro-American, August 25, September 1, 1945; National Urban League, 'Racial Aspects of Reconversion: A Memorandum Prepared for the President of the United States', August 27, 1945, in FEPC 417, NARG 228.
72. Clarence M. Mitchell, Associate Director of Field Operations to Malcom Ross, FEPC chairman, March 22, 1944, in FEPC 407, and Malcom Ross to John A. Davis, 'Significant Facts about the Negro in Postwar Employment', July 28, 1944, in FEPC 410, NARG 228.
73. FEPC, Final Report, June 28, 1946, Washington, D.C., 1947, 41-45; Davis McEntire and Julia Tarnopol, 'Postwar Status of Negro Workers in San Francisco Area', Monthly Labor Review, 70, no. 6, June 1950; Herman D. Bloch, The Circle of Discrimination: An Economic and Social Study of the Black Man in New York, New York and London 1969, 64, describes the higher rate of lay-offs among blacks in that city.



black veterans. Of all the blacks, it was the servicemen who were most conscious of the part they had played in the war and so most likely to have high expectations for change. As Roy Wilkins pointed out, 'certain it is that the Negro soldiers are not fighting and dying to maintain the status quo for their race.'<sup>74</sup> Even if the majority of black servicemen had performed only noncombatant duties, their experiences were still likely to encourage optimistic ideas about their future. Indeed, the soldiers in service of supply regiments had perhaps greater reason to be hopeful. Many of those in the engineering, technical, and mechanical units were taught skilled and semi-skilled trades which might otherwise have been denied them. They would naturally expect to put such expertise to good use in civilian life. A man who had gained such qualifications would 'not be satisfied, in light of the training which he has received and in light of the occupational changes which have occurred amongst nonwhites, to return to his former occupational status.'<sup>75</sup>

As well as training in the forces, service outside the United States had also affected the attitudes of the black soldier. One commander of a black supply unit summed this up when he said,<sup>76</sup>

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74. Wilkins, 'The Negro Wants Full Equality', in What The Negro Wants, 132. Also see Charles S. Johnson, 'The Negro in the Postwar World', March 1, 1944, in Johnson Papers, box 167, F. 27, Fisk University.
75. Robert C. Weaver, 'The Negro Veteran', Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 238, March 1945, 130; National Urban League, Dept. of Industrial Relations, 'Occupational Adjustment for Negro Veterans: A Memorandum on the Problem of Counselling Negro Veterans'; July 27, 1944 in OASW 225, NARG 107.
76. Quoted in Roi Ottley, Black Odyssey: The Story of the Negro in America, London 1949, 310.

Negroes got a swell education in Europe. They went to theaters, heard good music, stayed at nice hotels, and even visited the homes of people in Europe. They went to museums. They saw great art and architecture, and historical things, and saw how civilized white people live. They did things they could not do at home. Its something you can't expose a man to and expect him to forget overnight.

There is evidence in written and filmed records, as well as in fictional works, that blacks were well received by the people of a great many countries.<sup>77</sup> In most of them, Afro-Americans were seen as just part of the armies of liberation and treated as heroes. In all areas of the world, like other American soldiers, blacks had more money than the local inhabitants and a ready supply of items considered luxuries such as cigarettes, chocolate, razor blades, and nylon stockings. In many places a black face was a novelty and racial prejudice unusual and Afro-Americans often found that they were treated better by the locals than by their fellow Americans.

In Britain, the importation of discrimination and segregation by white G.I.s created considerable problems. Although there were blacks in Britain before the war, the number was very small. Some West Indians had remained in Britain following their discharge from her armed forces after World War I, black seamen still in service made their homes in British ports, and a few Africans studied at

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77. 'Fighting 92nd Hailed As Liberators', U.S. Army Signal Corps, Sherman Grinberg Library, No. C-5425; William Gardner Smith, The Last of The Conquerors, London 1949; Ulysses Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, Washington, D.C., 1966, 623-27; John Oliver Killens, And Then We Heard The Thunder, New York 1963; Angus Calder, The People's War: Britain 1939-45, London 1971, 356-57.

British universities. While there was some conflict between blacks and whites in those particular areas just after the first World War, it was shortlived and of a highly localized nature.<sup>78</sup> The influx of West Indian technicians, workers, and servicemen after 1940 was not sufficient to create any major racial problems. Besides, those newcomers were viewed as temporary residents who were only in the country to help win the war and because they were concentrated in a few specific areas most Britons were unaware of their presence.<sup>79</sup>

The first black American troops arrived in 1942 and by the end of October that year there were 12,049 Afro-Americans in Britain. By May 31, 1944, this number had risen to 132,253 and while some were stationed in Northern Ireland, most were scattered throughout England.<sup>80</sup> Initially, both American and British authorities acted to discourage segregation and racial conflict. General Eisenhower was determined that dissension within the American ranks would not be permitted to jeopardize Anglo-American relations. To that end

78. St. Clair Drake, 'The "Colour Problem" in Britain: A study in Social Definitions', Sociological Review, vol. 3, 1956; Anthony H. Richmond, Colour Prejudice in Britain: A Study of West Indian Workers in Liverpool 1941-45, London 1954, 16-20.
79. St. Clair Drake, 'The "Colour Problem" in Britain', 204-7; Richmond, Colour Prejudice in Britain, 23-5; Michael Banton, White and Coloured: The Behaviour of British People Towards Coloured Immigrants, London, 1959, 117-9, 138.
80. James C. Evans, Civilian Aide to Secretary of War, to Miss Shirley Ender, September 25, 1947, in answer to her request for information on black troops in Britain, in OASW 248, NARG 107. Also Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 627.



an order issued in 1942 declared that,<sup>81</sup>

The spreading of derogatory statements concerning the character of any group of United States troops, either white or colored, must be considered as conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline and offenders must be promptly punished. In the interest of military efficiency, if for no other reason, isolated incidents of friction must be eliminated.

A film made by the British Ministry of Information for the U.S.

Army in order to acquaint G.I.s with English manners and customs emphasized the difference in racial attitudes. A black soldier

from Birmingham, Alabama is shown talking to a white lady from

Birmingham, England. When the woman invites the soldier to her

home, the white American narrator warns other Americans not to be

alarmed or offended by such actions.<sup>82</sup> On their part, the British attempted to resist any imposition of American racial patterns.

The Home Office issued a directive to Chief Constables warning them

that local police forces were not to implement or enforce any form

of colour bar: segregation could only be enforced at the orders of

and by American troops.<sup>83</sup> That the British considered the racial

81. Quoted in Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 625, and also in Walter White, A Rising Wind, Garden City, New York 1945, 18. White, the executive secretary of the NAACP, toured the European Theatre of Operations, North Africa, and the Pacific during 1944 as an accredited correspondent for the New York Post. He also sent a note of his observations to Roosevelt and to the Secretary of War, see OASW 204, 221, NARG 107 and White papers, Yale University.

82. 'Welcome to Britain', Ministry of Information 1943, London National Film Archives.

83. Quoted in White, A Rising Wind, 27, and Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops, 625.

attitudes of their Allies unusual was evidenced in an issue of Current Affairs, the fortnightly journal for British servicemen.

After giving the historical background to the American 'Colour Problem', the article warned the reader against embarrassing his guests:<sup>84</sup>

There is no reason why we should adopt the average American attitude to the problem, but we should certainly respect that attitude and appreciate the reasons for it.

British soldiers and civilians were urged not to interfere no matter how angered or offended by cases of discrimination. It was even suggested that attempts to 'breakdown the various forms of social regulation accepted by the average American family' would be of little purpose and likely to lead to violence, 'especially where women are concerned.'<sup>85</sup>

Despite this information and the various orders, there was a certain amount of fraternization between white Britons and black Americans. There were, too, examples of American-style segregation and outbreaks of racial violence. By December 17, 1943, Truman Gibson, the civilian aide to the Secretary of War who had replaced Hastie, could record that 'a rigid pattern of racial segregation' had appeared in Britain, 'community patterns in that country to the contrary notwithstanding.'<sup>86</sup> By way of illustration, he enclosed a

84. 'The Colour Problem as the American Sees It', Current Affairs, December 1942, 13.

85. 'The Colour Problem as the American Sees It', 14.

86. Truman Gibson to Ass. Secretary of War, December 17, 1943, OASW 204, NARG 107.

list of public houses in Ipswich, eight of which were used exclusively by Afro-Americans. Publicans and dancehall owners sometimes gave way to demands from white Americans to exclude blacks from their premises and women in branches of the British forces were told to refrain 'from associating in public with Negroes.'<sup>87</sup> However, the British people often sided with the black Americans against their white comrades. Sympathetic bar-owners hung signs declaring, 'This Place For the Exclusive Use of Englishmen And American Negro Soldiers' and 'Only blacks served here.'<sup>88</sup> It was even said that the British preferred black Americans to whites because they were less brash, more careful, and reserved and the problem of 'Brown Babies', the illegitimate children of Afro-Americans and English women, certainly suggests that some blacks were successful in making friends.<sup>89</sup> As black newspapers reporting the situation in the United Kingdom pointed out, the British press and public were often offended by American attempts to introduce segregation and defended the Afro-Americans. In one clash between white American paratroopers and blacks of a quartermasters regiment in Bristol in 1944, it was found that British civilians had encouraged the Afro-Americans in their actions. One of the black soldiers was

87. Richmond, Colour Prejudice in Britain, 88-90; White, A Rising Wind, 30.

88. White, A Rising Wind, 11; K. L. Little, Negroes in Britain: A Study of Race Relations in English Society, London 1947, 240.

89. Little, Negroes in Britain, 240; St. Clair Drake, 'The "Colour Problem" in Britain', 207. There were estimated to be some 2,000 'brown babies'.



shot and killed after stabbing a military policeman. In other areas, the British took a more active part and joined in the fighting.<sup>90</sup> Walter White concluded from his visit to England in 1944 that many of the Afro-Americans there gained 'their first experience in being treated as normal human beings and friends by white people.'<sup>91</sup>

The treatment Afro-Americans received from whites outside the U.S.A. contrasted very sharply with the treatment they received at home and from their fellow Americans in the forces. Insofar as it emphasized that they were an equal part of the armies of democracy and respected as such by Europeans, it was bound to influence their attitudes towards American society. Coupled with the expertise they had gained as a result of military training, these experiences were certain to heighten expectations about their future and the militancy with which they would pursue their demands. As one black soldier wrote from 'somewhere on Okinawa',<sup>92</sup>

90. A report of the Bristol clash from the Provost Marshall to the Deputy Theater Commander, July 20, 1944, is in OASW 204, NARG 107. See too, Chicago Defender, July 3, September 25, October 23, 1943, April 1, April 29, 1944, and Edwin Embree, Brown Americans: The Story of a Tenth of the Nation, New York 1944, 155.

91. White, A Rising Wind, 21. Another important effect of service overseas was that it enabled blacks from different countries to meet and discuss their common problems. The impact of this is extremely difficult to gauge. At least one black African, later active against the power in control of his country, noted the influence of his meeting with a black G.I. in Burma in 1943, see Waruhiu Itote, 'Mau Mau' General, Nairobi, 1967, 11-13. It is fair to suppose that Afro-Americans too gained additional insight from this type of encounter.

92. Pittsburgh Courier, May 19, 1945. Also see White, A Rising Wind, 144.

Our people are not coming back with the idea of just taking up where they left off. We are going to have the things that are rightfully due us or else, which is a very large order, but we have proven beyond all things that we are people and not just the servants of the whiteman.

What the black soldier would want, said the National Urban League, were 'jobs, opportunities to complete their education, a chance to go into business, and the privilege of sharing completely in the future development and prosperity of the nation.'<sup>93</sup> This, of course, was the wish of every American, black or white, but provision on the scale described by the National Urban League was only made for those who had been in the armed forces.

The Serviceman's Readjustment Act, or G.I. Bill of Rights as it became known, is possibly the major example of reward for military participation in modern society. The only comparable legislation passed for American civilians (although it applied to all no matter what their role had been in the war effort) was the Employment Act of 1946 which made explicit the government's responsibility for full employment and instituted a Council of Economic Advisers to assist in the formulation of economic policies. This was the nearest Congress came to enacting Roosevelt's Economic Bill of Rights which had declared that every individual was entitled to employment, fair wages, decent housing, and a good education.<sup>94</sup>

93. N.U.L., Dept. of Industrial Relations, 'Occupational Adjustment for Negro Veterans', 1; FEPC, Final Report, June 28, 1946, Washington, D.C., 1947, 86.

94. Polenburg, War and Society, 94-5; Henry Steele Commager, Documents of American History, New York, 7th ed., 1962, 483-85, 514-16. The Economic Bill of Rights was perhaps the equivalent of the British Beveridge Report, itself a good example of wartime planning.

The G.I. Bill not only recognized these rights but also enabled war veterans to obtain them. The former soldiers could claim a 20 dollar-a-week re-adjustment allowance, loans for home purchase or improvement, loans to buy farms or businesses, and educational grants of up to 500 dollars for tuition plus 65 dollars per month subsistence allowance for the single man.<sup>95</sup> By the 1950s several million veterans had availed themselves of these benefits.

Unfortunately there is no record in the Veterans Administration of the number of Afro-Americans who profited in this way. However, it is clear from information concerning the plans of black soldiers that many intended to make use of the G.I. Bill to improve their lot in life.

Among black enlisted men 43.5 per cent hoped to return to school, college, or university for part- or full-time study. Another indication of the black soldiers' expectations was the fact that only one-fifth intended to return to their old jobs and employers and only a third planned even to return to the same type of work.<sup>96</sup> The Afro-American veterans not only hoped to find new and better jobs, but were also prepared to move in order to do so. Only 65.7 per cent, compared to the 82 per cent of white soldiers, said that they would return to their former homes. Most of those planning to

95. The history and details of the G.I. Bill are dealt with in Ross, Preparing For Ulysses, 90-124. See too NAACP, Veterans Handbook, New York, n.d.
96. War Dept. Report, B-133, 'Postwar Educational Plans of Soldiers', March 14, 1945, in Selective Service System, Special Groups: Special Monograph 10, Washington, D.C., 1953, 174-5; Ambrose Caliver, 'Post-war Educational Implications of Army Data and Experiences of Negro Veterans and War Workers', Office of Education, 1945, in OE 40, NARG 12; Robert C. Weaver, 'Negro Veterans Return', Race Relations, III, 1-2, 1945.



move were going to leave the South and, following the patterns of wartime migration, head for the North and the far West. Indeed, by 1947 some 75,000 black veterans were reported to have left the South.<sup>97</sup> Many of these migrants were going to join families and relatives already in the new regions. However, a great proportion of the departures were undoubtedly due to the repressive and limiting atmosphere of the South which prevented the use of newly-acquired skills and training. Sadly, the black veteran was to find that similar problems faced him no matter where he went.

The various different provisions of the Bill of Rights were dependant on factors largely outside of federal control. To receive an educational grant, a soldier had to be accepted by one of the colleges approved by individual states. For blacks this raised immediate obstacles. The 112 black colleges were already over-crowded and segregation in the South, prejudice elsewhere, limited the number of alternatives available. By 1947, some 20,000 black veterans had managed to enter college but another 15,000 had been unable to secure places. Of those accepted, 70 per cent went to black institutions.<sup>98</sup> In order to obtain loans whether for homes, farms, or business, the black soldier had to satisfy the lending agency, government or private, of his suitability and the likelihood of the project being a safe investment. In the area of housing, restrictive

97. War Dept. Report, B-128, 'Postwar Migration Plans of Soldiers', 1944, in Special Monograph, 170-1; Weaver, 'Negro Veterans Return'; Charles G. Bolte and Louis Harris, Our Negro Veterans, New York Public Affairs Committee Pamphlet, 128, New York 1947, 4.

98. Weaver, 'Negro Veterans Return', 14-15; Bolte and Harris, Our Negro Veterans, 18.

practices and the prejudices of builders and agents meant that there were too few new homes and too little of the existing supply available to Afro-Americans. Houses in the old, deteriorating neighbourhoods were unlikely to qualify for grants.<sup>99</sup> Low incomes presented yet another problem in securing loans and purchasing a house. No matter what the provisions of the G.I. Bill or the expectations of the soldiers, blacks were faced with the same patterns of prejudice as had prevailed before the war. The number of Afro-Americans employed by either the Veterans Administration or the U.S. Employment Service was very small, particularly in the offices in the South. Information was therefore often denied the black veterans or the jobs offered were of the menial and unskilled variety. In one survey of 50 cities, the movement of blacks into peacetime employment was found to be lagging far behind that of white veterans: in the state of Arkansas 95 per cent of the placements made by the U.S.E.S. for Afro-Americans were in service or unskilled jobs.<sup>100</sup> There was even discrimination in the redistribution centres provided for returning servicemen. In reply to complaints about the inadequate and segregated facilities for black soldiers, the Secretary of War, Stimson, said that they were 'essentially' equivalent to the

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99. Weaver 'Negro Veterans Return', 15-16; B. T. McGraw, 'Minority Group Participation in the Veterans Emergency Housing Program', February 19, 1946, HHFA 91, NARG 207.

100. National Urban League, Dept. of Industrial Relations, 'Adjustment of Negro Veterans: A Report of Negro Veterans in 50 Cities', 1946, in War Manpower Commission, NARG 211; American Council on Race Relations, 'Survey of Community Veteran Information Centers', March 29, 1946, in Schomburg Collection; Bolte and Harris, Our Negro Veterans, 11; Howard Johnson, 'The Negro Veteran Fights for Freedom', Political Affairs, Vol. 26, May 1947, 429-31.



centres for whites. Afro-Americans, he said, were more able to rest, relax, and readjust in the 'congenial' atmosphere in black areas and all-black centres.<sup>101</sup> Given such widespread discrimination it is not at all remarkable that blacks accounted for 25 per cent of re-enlistments in the first year after the war. For some at least, Army life was better than civilian life.<sup>102</sup>

Re-entry into armed service offered not only greater economic security but also more personal safety than civilian life for, with the end of the war, there was a rising tide of violence directed at Afro-Americans and black veterans in particular. In 1946 it appeared that the 'Red Summer' of 1919 was to be repeated. In February, rioting whites in Columbia, Tennessee, killed two blacks and wounded ten others. The following August more than 50 Afro-Americans were injured in a riot in Athens, Alabama and there were smaller disturbances in Philadelphia and Chicago.<sup>103</sup> Even more horrifying were the bloody murders of two black men, one of them a veteran, and their wives in Walton County, Georgia in July 1946. Shortly afterwards, in Taylor County, Georgia, another veteran was

101. Telegrams and letters concerning the Hotels Theresa and Pershing in New York and Chicago, and Stimson's comments to F.D.R., September 20, 1944, in FDRL 93: 12.
102. Charles G. Bolte, 'He Fought For Freedom', Survey Graphic, XXXVI, 1, January 1947, 117.
103. Baltimore Afro-American, March 9, August 17, 1946; New York Times, December 11, 1946; Langston Hughes, Fight for Freedom: The Story of the NAACP, New York 1962, 102-4; Arvarh E. Strickland, History of the Chicago Urban League, Urbana, Ill., 1966, 159-60.



shot to death for voting in the local elections.<sup>104</sup> Throughout the South returning black servicemen were involved in incidents on buses and trains and many of them suffered injuries at the hands of either police or transport officials. One of the worst, and also the most publicized, examples of this sort of brutality occurred when Isaac Woodard was beaten in a town in South Carolina. Woodard, on his way home after three years in the Army, was arrested for being drunk and disorderly at the request of a white bus driver. The black soldier, who did not drink, protested and as a result was hit about the face. His eyes were damaged to the extent that he was permanently blinded.<sup>105</sup> This and the other incidents caused widespread revulsion and in response a National Emergency Committee Against Mob Violence was formed in August 1946. One of the Committee's first acts was to arrange a meeting with the President in order to put their case.<sup>106</sup>

By 1946, the man in the White House was Harry S. Truman, the Vice President who had succeeded to office following Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945. Despite the fact that most of them had

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104. Baltimore Afro-American, June 22, August 3, 1946; Hughes, Fight for Freedom, 112-13; Maceo Snipes, the soldier who voted, was just one of a number of blacks who tried to exercise their political rights. In Atlanta, several hundred veterans met to work for their share of democracy and in Birmingham, Alabama, 100 black veterans marched on the courthouse to register their votes: the majority were rejected on the grounds that they could not understand or interpret the constitution, Chicago Defender, February 2, 1946, and Pittsburgh Courier, December 8, 1945.

105. White, A Man Called White, 325-27; Baltimore Afro-American, June 22, August 3, 1946.

106. White, A Man Called White, 329-30; William C. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration, Columbus, Ohio, 1970, 50.

opposed his re-election in 1944, Roosevelt's passing was mourned in the Afro-American newspapers, because the New Deal had been to the benefit of all underprivileged groups, and because in a general humanitarian way Roosevelt had sympathized with the black cause. The newspapers were doubtful whether Truman would continue in that vein: he was from a southern state, Missouri, and had been chosen as Vice President in order to appease the South.<sup>107</sup> Truman's record on civil rights issues as a senator was not outstanding in one way or the other. Rather, his position had been that of a liberal southerner, a defender of equality of opportunity and of segregation.<sup>108</sup> Yet as President he was to take actions on the Afro-Americans' behalf which far surpassed those of his predecessor in office and which, moreover, threatened to jeopardize southern support of the Democratic Party. In his first year in office he gave strong verbal support for a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee, appointed a black lawyer to the U.S. Customs Court, and nominated William H. Hastie for the Governorship of the Virgin Islands. In July 1946 he instructed the Justice Department to investigate the murders in Georgia and in September he met the members of the Committee Against Mob Violence. According to Walter White, the chief spokesman at that meeting, Truman was shocked by the details of the violence which he heard. As a result, he promised to institute a committee by executive order to investigate violations of civil

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107. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 17-19; Pittsburgh Courier, July 22, 1944, April 21, 1945; Baltimore Afro-American, April 21, 1945.

108. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 8-17; Richard M. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953, Columbia, Missouri, 1969, 134-37.



rights and make recommendations.<sup>109</sup> Such a Committee was formed in December 1946.

The reasons for the delay between the meeting in September and the announcement in December are not clear. It may be that the President withheld his statement until after the November congressional elections for fear of losing the votes of Democrats. If so the decision had little effect: the Republicans scored widespread victories. The President's advisers reacted to the electoral defeats by urging on him a liberal programme, including civil rights, and Truman concurred.<sup>110</sup> On December 5, 1946, by Executive Order 9808, he set up a committee to study, report, and recommend 'effective means and procedures for the protection of the civil rights of the people of the United States.'<sup>111</sup> In speeches to Congress in January and February of 1947, Truman again referred to the need for civil rights action and called for FEPC legislation.<sup>112</sup> Later that year he gave an address to an NAACP meeting before the Lincoln Memorial which was broadcast on the national radio networks. He demanded action on race relations, stressing America's role in world affairs: 'Our national government must show the way.'<sup>113</sup> America's

109. White, A Man Called White, 330-31; Pittsburgh Courier, September 28, 1946; Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 50-51.

110. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 53-56.

111. Executive Order 9808, President's Committee on Civil Rights, To Secure These Rights, Washington, D.C., 1947, vii; New York Times, December 5, 1946.

112. State of the Union Message, January 6, 1947, Economic Message, January 8, 1947, in Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1947, Washington, D.C., 1962, 31-32.

113. July 5, 1947, Paramount News, National Archive Film Library, NA 200 PN 6.89; White, A Man Called White, 347-49.



vulnerability on the racial issue became more apparent when delegates of the U.S.S.R. tabled a petition, presented to the United Nations by the NAACP, at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. Although the motion was denied, the attempt brought publicity the United States could ill-afford.<sup>114</sup> Further pressure was exerted on the President with the publication in October 1947 of the Report of the Committee on Civil Rights.

In a comprehensive document covering every aspect of black life, the Committee spelt out four essential rights due to all Americans: the right to safety and security of the person; the right to citizenship and its privileges, including armed service and voting; the right to freedom of conscience and expression; and the right to equality of opportunity. The black claims concerning the importance of military participation were accepted and reiterated. 'Any attempt to curb the right to fight in its defense' said the Committee, 'can only lead the citizen to question the worth of the society in which he lives.' Further on, the report said,<sup>115</sup>

Underlying the theory of compulsory wartime military service in a democratic state is the principle that every citizen, regardless of his station in life, must assist in the defense of the nation when its security is threatened.

In order that this be achieved, the Committee recommended the end to all discrimination and segregation in the armed forces. The general

114. 'Our Civil Rights Become a World Issue', New York Times Magazine, January 11, 1948; Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 65-66; Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 139.

115. To Secure These Rights, 8, 40-41, 162.

separation of the races was also attacked. Segregation was described as 'the cornerstone of the elaborate structure of discrimination' and separate facilities were said to be 'far from equal.'<sup>116</sup> The Committee called for the elimination of discrimination and segregation from American life by means of fair employment and fair education laws, the ending of segregation in public and private health facilities, the outlawing of restrictive covenants, anti-lynching laws, and guarantees of Afro-American voting rights.<sup>117</sup> As well as legislation, the Committee wanted the civil rights section of the Justice Department reorganized and strengthened, the formation of a civil rights unit in the F.B.I., and permanent federal and state commissions on civil rights.<sup>118</sup> On February 2, 1948, President Truman included many of these recommendations in his Civil Rights Message to Congress. He emphasized that 'the world position of the United States in the world today makes it especially urgent that we adopt these measures to secure for all our people their essential rights.'<sup>119</sup>

It has been suggested that Truman's stand on civil rights and this speech in particular, was merely a political manoeuvre to win black votes away from the Progressive and Republican Parties prior to the 1948 presidential elections.<sup>120</sup> If this were so, then Truman

116. To Secure These Rights, 63-65, 81-82.

117. To Secure These Rights, 139-73.

118. To Secure These Rights, 151-59.

119. Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1948, 125-26.

120. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 80-82, 238-40. For a more realistic appraisal, see Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 139-40, and Harry S. Truman, Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1953, London 1956, 191-94.

had taken a brave gamble for the southern Democrats, predictably, reacted violently, some even threatening to bolt the party. At the convention in July 1948, the Administration supported a general civil rights plank on the lines of that of 1944 in order to mollify the South. This was accepted by the platform committee but overthrown in favour of a more liberal and specific plank in a floor vote. Several southern delegations then walked out of the convention and shortly afterwards the States Rights Party with Strom Thurmond of South Carolina as its presidential candidate was formed.<sup>121</sup> Yet in face of this open opposition Truman issued two more Executive Orders later in July 1948; one to set up a Fair Employment Board within the Civil Service Commission, the other to bring equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed forces.<sup>122</sup> Although he played down the civil rights issue in his whistle-stop campaign, Truman did visit black areas and he became the first President to speak in Harlem. As a result of his speeches and actions, Afro-Americans contributed to his remarkable upset victory over the Republican candidate, Thomas Dewey. An estimated 69 per cent of all black voters in 27 major cities across the country backed Truman, while in the South, the Dixiecrats carried only four states and 22 per

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121. New York Times, July 14, 15, 1948; Pittsburgh Courier, July 24, 1948; Key, Southern Politics, 329-38; Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 108-112; Kirk H. Porter and Donald B. Johnson, National Party Platforms, 1840-1964, London 1966, 467-68.

122. Pittsburgh Courier, July 31, 1948; New York Times, July 27, 1948; Also see above, 84-86, for black campaign against segregation in the forces.



cent of the entire southern vote.<sup>123</sup> However, the southern Democrats in coalition with conservative Republicans, did block the legislation on lynching, poll taxes, FEPC, and civil rights which Truman submitted early in 1949. After 1950, the position of the South was further strengthened as southern congressmen held a majority of the Democratic seats in the House and only lacked one seat to have a majority in the Senate. Coupled with this was the increasing fear of communism, the McCarran Internal Security Bill, and the rise of Joseph McCarthy, all of which created 'an atmosphere when anyone who believed in equal rights for Negroes must ipso facto be a "Communist".'<sup>124</sup> It was not to be until 1957 that any of the Truman proposals became legislation, and then only in a general and rather unsatisfactory Civil Rights Bill.

This is not to detract from Truman's achievements. He was the first President to publicly discuss the issue of race relations and demand civil rights legislation. His Executive Orders, the report of the Committee on Civil Rights, and the desegregation of the armed forces marked a shift from federal support of segregation to support for equality and integration: instead of following public opinion, the government attempted to lead it. If the administration had little success in the legislative area, it was more fortunate in the judiciary and particularly in the Supreme Court. During the New Deal and the second World War there was a marked change in

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123. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 124-32; Clark and Kirwan, The South Since Appomattox, 295; Donald S. Strong, 'Durable Republicanism in the South', in Allan P. Sindler, ed., Change in the Contemporary South, Durham, North Carolina, 1963, 176.

124. Walter White, How Far the Promised Land?, New York 1956, 208; Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 179-80.

opinion within the Supreme Court and as a result several important important decisions were made. In cases during and after the war, the Court ruled against segregation in interstate transport and against segregated educational facilities. Segregated schools were also attacked by the President's Commission on Higher Education in its report of 1948.<sup>125</sup> Encouraged by Truman, the Attorney General, Tom Clark, prepared amicus curiae briefs against restrictive housing covenants and in 1948, the Supreme Court ruled that such covenants were not enforceable in law. The Federal Housing Authority thereafter refused to insure mortgages on property with restrictive covenants in the deeds.<sup>126</sup> Also of some benefit to Afro-Americans in the field of housing was the 1949 Housing Act, the aim of which was to provide 'a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.' By furnishing federal funds for local authorities, the act launched a direct attack on poor housing. However, it was still up to the individual cities and towns to embark on programmes of slum clearance; the government provided financial aid, but not the initiative. Of the 205,706 dwelling units built under the act's provisions, 55,826 or 27.1 per cent were for black families.<sup>127</sup>

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125. President's Commission on Higher Education, Higher Education for American Democracy, New York 1948, 34-38; John T. Hubbell, 'The Desegregation of the University of Oklahoma', Journal of Negro History, LVII, 4, 1972; Monroe Berger, Equality by Statute, New York 1952.

126. Tom C. Clark and Philip B. Perlman, Prejudice and Property: An Historic Brief Against Racial Covenants, Washington, D.C., 1948; Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 74-5.

127. White, How Far the Promised Land?, 147; Davis McEntire, Residence and Race: Final and Comprehensive Report to the Commission on Race and Housing, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960, 294-334; Richard O. Davies, Housing Reform During the Truman Administration, Columbia, Missouri, 1966.



Afro-Americans were also affected by the amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act which raised minimum wages in 1949 and again in 1950. Although they were still concentrated in the lowest-paid jobs and suffered a higher rate of unemployment than whites, blacks were still better off economically than they had been before the war because of the generally high levels of employment. The losses incurred in the early post-war lay-offs did not continue and nowhere did Afro-Americans drop back to the levels of the 1930s.<sup>128</sup> With this continued prosperity there were other signs that the Afro-American was gaining recognition as an equal citizen under law. In a series of Supreme Court actions the white primary which had excluded blacks from the local Democratic Party conventions in the South was declared unconstitutional. Partly as a result of this, and partly because of the increased political and social consciousness of blacks, the number of registered black voters in the South increased throughout the 40s. Afro-Americans were still subjected to harassment at the polling stations by the Ku Klux Klan but less so after that organization had joined the Communist Party on the Attorney General's list of subversive movements.<sup>129</sup>

It is clear from this that not all the black expectations had been met either during or after the war. Indeed it would have been

128. 'Postwar Trends in Negro Employment', Monthly Labor Review, 65,6, 1947; National Urban League, 'Changes in the Occupational Status of Negroes, 1940-1950', New York 1950, in Schomburg Collection.

129. O. Douglas Weeks, 'The White Primary, 1944-1948', and Donald S. Strong, 'The Rise of Negro Voting in Texas', both in American Political Science Review, XLII, 3, 1948; 'Race and Suffrage Today', in New South, Changing Patterns in the New South, 12-15; Joseph P. Frank, 'Legal Developments in Race Relations, 1945-1962', in Sandler, Change in the Contemporary South, 67-81; Davis M. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965, New York 1965, 325-27.



remarkable if they had been. It would take considerably more than America's involvement in the war, and a longer period, to change the attitudes and mores of the majority of whites. However, there were signs of progress. In the executive and judicial branches of the federal government there was a change from grudging acquiescence to black demands, to open support for them. Liberal white opinion was also outspoken in the black man's defence. This change was due to the new role in international affairs which the war had forced on the United States and to the constant campaign of blacks themselves. Neither world opinion nor black voters could not be ignored: America was forced to practice what she preached. While such progress continued, black expectations remained high. When those hopes were crushed with the widening of the economic gap between the races and the outbreak of open opposition to social and political reform in the 1950s and 1960s, the second 'revolution' in American race relations began. As Lerone Bennett Jr. pointed out, the seeds of that revolt had been sown during the second World War.<sup>130</sup>

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130. Bennett, Confrontation: Black and White, Baltimore, Maryland, 1965, 168; also see Richard M. Dalfiume, 'The "Forgotten" Years of the Negro Revolution', Journal of American History, LV, 1, June 1968.

Chapter 8The Postwar Years: World War II in Perspective

Several writers have recently commented on the impact of the second World War on America and her black population. Richard Polenberg, for instance, says that, 'World War II radically altered the character of American society and challenged its most durable values' and that by 'disrupting traditional patterns of racial behavior the war broke down many barriers to equality.'<sup>1</sup> However, while this is undoubtedly true, Polenberg and other commentators close their studies with the end of the war and we are left to conclude that the conflict had few, if any, long-term consequences. In fact, the importance of the war to Afro-Americans can only be seen in the context of later events. Black participation in the military and industrial war effort had brought economic, social, and political gains which Afro-Americans were determined to hold on to and improve. America's new-found position in the community of nations, her role in the Cold War and later involvement in Korea, all themselves direct results of World War II, made it possible for blacks to maintain the advances they had won. Unfortunately, when those pressures were removed, the progress, particularly in the economic sphere, halted and the promises of the Truman years were

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1. Polenberg, War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945, New York 1972, 4, 100; Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's A War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945, New York 1970; Harvard Sitkoff, 'Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War', Journal of American History, LVIII, 3, December 1971. Richard M. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts 1939-1955, Columbia, Missouri, 1969, 105-31, does attempt to put the war in the context of later developments, but only in a limited way.

unfulfilled. As a result, black expectations were crushed and frustrated and the militancy of the 1940s returned with a vengeance. If there was a 'Negro Revolt' in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was precisely because America could not, or would not, continue during times of peace the progress made in war.

While the actual achievements of the Truman administration were slim, they were still sufficient to encourage and, to a certain extent, satisfy black Americans. The President's uncompromising stance on civil rights, the desegregation of the armed forces, the Supreme Court decisions, and above all, a fairly high rate of employment, all served to convince Afro-Americans that the progress made during the second World War would continue. American involvement in the Korean war from 1950 to 1953 further bolstered hopes: 'once again ... armed conflict and national danger brought the Negro advancement toward his goal of full citizenship.'<sup>2</sup> However, because of the limited nature of the conflict, the racial issue did not reach the prominence it had in the earlier war. Truman refused to use the opportunity to establish another Fair Employment Practices Committee but instead ordered the inclusion of non-discrimination clauses in defence contracts. Although the order was neither very strong nor by itself very effective, unemployment amongst blacks which had been rising before 1950, dropped by half. Indicative of the economic progress between 1949 and 1953 was the rise in black trade union membership from 1,500,000 to 2,400,000. As in the 1940s, the demands of war and 'unguided' change succeeded where

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2. Walter White, How Far the Promised Land?, New York 1956, 96.



government action failed.<sup>3</sup> Advances also continued to be made in areas other than employment: the number of black voters registered in the South rose from 750,000 in 1948 to 1,300,000 in 1952; more blacks bought their own homes and went to colleges; in Washington, D.C., the attack on segregation began to produce results.<sup>4</sup> In three separate cases in 1950, the Supreme Court undermined the legal basis of segregation and, equally important, public opinion surveys revealed that white opposition to integration in housing, transportation, and education continued to decrease through the 1940s and into the 1950s. Even in the South the number of whites who favoured integration was growing.<sup>5</sup> The progress, or promise of progress, in civil rights was such that black leaders urged Truman to run for re-election in 1952. Though Truman refused to stand for a second term for fear of splitting his party, black allegiance to the Democrats remained strong. Afro-Americans, unlike the majority of

3. White, How Far the Promised Land?, 117-20; William C. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration, Columbus, Ohio, 1970, 185; Herbert R. Northrup, 'Recent Unemployment Rates of Negroes, 1948-1969', in Northrup, Negro Employment in Basic Industry: A Study of Racial Policies in Six Industries, Philadelphia, 1970, 23.
4. White, How Far the Promised Land?, 82, 117-20, 157-58; U.S. Information Service, The People Take The Lead: Civil Rights, 1948-1956, Washington, D.C., 1956; Lerone Bennett Jr., Confrontation: Black and White, Baltimore 1965, 170; Constance McLaughlin Green, The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital, Princeton, New Jersey, 1967, 274-300.
5. H. H. Hyman and P. B. Sheatsley, 'Attitudes on Desegregation', Scientific American, 195, 6, December 1956, 36-40; Mildred A. Schwartz, Trends in White Attitudes Toward Negroes, Report 119, National Opinion Research Center, Chicago 1967; Monroe Berger, Equality by Statute, New York 1952, 72-109; Jack Greenberg, Race Relations and American Law, New York 1959, 4, 113-14; M. M. Chambers, The Colleges and the Courts 1946-50: Judicial Decisions Regarding Higher Education in the United States, New York 1952.

their white countrymen, voted overwhelmingly for Adlai Stevenson and his running mate from Alabama rather than the victorious Republican candidate, Dwight D. Eisenhower.<sup>6</sup>

Eisenhower's election in 1952 marked the end of one era in civil rights and the beginning of another. The strong executive leadership on issues of race relations was gone and in its stead was a policy of 'dynamic conservatism' which was more conservative than dynamic. It was unfortunate for America, and for Afro-Americans, that this development should coincide with a period of reaction and crisis. In 1954 the Supreme Court followed up its earlier decisions and concluded a series of cases presented by the NAACP when it ruled that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The following year, it ordered that the integration of schools be carried out 'with all deliberate speed.' The response of the white South was immediate and overwhelming. The Ku Klux Klan re-emerged and White Citizens Councils were formed; the Supreme Court was denounced by 100 southern senators and representatives who urged massive resistance; and mobs in towns in Texas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama gathered to prevent the entry of black children into formerly all-white schools.<sup>7</sup> In 1957 President Eisenhower was forced to intervene in the conflict when the Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, used the local National Guard to keep nine black students out of Little Rock Central High School. Faced with this challenge to the federal laws and courts, Eisenhower took control of the

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6. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights, 196, 230-31; John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 613.

7. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 614-19; Hodding Carter, The South Strikes Back, New York 1959.



National Guard and sent federal troops to escort the black children into the school. His action ended open defiance of the Supreme Court but his own ambivalence and caution on the entire issue in fact served to encourage southern resistance. Fourteen years after the initial court order, not a single school in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, or Louisiana had been integrated.<sup>8</sup>

While white Americans prepared to resist any attack on the racial status quo, blacks prepared to launch a direct assault. In Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, Afro-Americans began a boycott of the segregated bus services which lasted almost a year and which brought national prominence to Martin Luther King. In the following years there were similar campaigns in other cities in the South and sit-in demonstrations against segregation in restaurants and lunch-counters throughout the entire country. The early 1960s witnessed 'Freedom Rides' through the South, campaigns against de facto segregation in the North, and a massive March on Washington in 1963 attended by over 250,000 people. Appropriately enough, one of the spokesmen at that gathering was A. Philip Randolph, the leader of the March on Washington Movement of the 1940s. By 1960, the militant methods advocated by Randolph and the members of the Congress on Racial Equality twenty years earlier had become widely accepted. There had indeed been a revolution in civil rights.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Bennett, Confrontation: Black and White, 189-90; Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, 619-20; William Miller, A New History of the United States, London, 1970, 416-17.

9. Anthony Lewis, The Second American Revolution: A Firsthand Account of the Struggle for Civil Rights, London 1966, xiv.; Bennett, Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America, Chicago 1969, 311-324, 421-33. There are many other accounts of this 'Negro Revolt': like Lewis's they begin with the Montgomery bus boycott.



The reasons for this dramatic change are complex, but their roots lie in 'the deepening mood of despair and disillusionment that gripped the American Negro after World War II.'<sup>10</sup> The Afro-Americans were divided between the older generation of optimists who emphasized the progress made since the war, and the younger group of pessimists who replied that the progress was too slow.<sup>11</sup> The latter, with some justification, pointed out that the advances of the earlier years were more apparent than real and were anyway being gradually eroded. The Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 were too little, too late. They dealt almost entirely with the voting rights of blacks in the South and did little to mollify the young Afro-Americans who pointed to the continued widespread segregation, in both North and South, of housing, schools, and recreational facilities. The slow rate of progress in those areas was made even more galling by the rapid developments in Africa where 36 former colonies gained their independence between 1957 and 1965. The black writer, James Baldwin, was quoted as saying, 'At the rate things are going, all of Africa will be free before we can get a lousy cup of coffee.'<sup>12</sup> Such fears were borne out by the violent reaction of whites in the South to integration and to the peaceful demonstrations. To counter such violence Afro-American veterans of World War II and Korea formed a

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10. Louis Lomax, The Negro Revolt, London 1963, 81.
11. Carleton Mabee, 'The Crisis in Negro Leadership', Antioch Review, XXIV, Fall 1964; W. Haywood Burns, The Voices of Negro Protest in America, New York and London 1963, 30-32.
12. In Lomax, The Negro Revolt, 77; see too, Rupert Emerson and Martin Kilson, 'The American Dilemma in a Changing World: The Rise of Africa and the Negro American', Daedalus, 94, 4, Fall 1965.

para-military organization, the Deacons for Defense, and Robert F. Williams, another veteran of the second World War, was dismissed from the NAACP in North Carolina in 1959 for advocating armed self-defence. In both cases, the blacks acknowledged that their military experiences had had an important effect on their attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

As well as being alarmed by, and responding to, the set-backs faced in the South in the attack on legal segregation, the more militant Afro-Americans argued that the campaign had drawn attention away from the spread of de facto segregation in the North. The migrations which had accelerated during the 1940s had continued at a high rate in the post-war years. In 1950, the proportion of the black population still in the South was 68 per cent: by 1964 it had dropped to 54.4 per cent and 73.2 per cent of the total black population lived in urban areas.<sup>14</sup> This movement and urbanization led to increased separation of the races as the newcomers added to and expanded the existing ghettos in cities in the North and far West. In 212 metropolitan areas in 1960, 78 per cent of blacks lived in the blighted city centres while 52 per cent of the whites lived in the suburbs. Where there was urban renewal and slum clearance it actually led to a reduction of the number of homes available to Afro-Americans and to greater over-crowding.

Rebuilding was never able to keep up with the clearances and blacks

13. August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto: An Interpretive History of American Negroes, New York 1966, 248-51; Charles C. Moskos, Jr., The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today's Military, New York 1970, 131.

14. Reynolds Farley, 'The Urbanization of Negroes in the United States', Journal of Social History, Volume 1, Spring 1968.



had limited access to housing in areas outside of the ghetto.<sup>15</sup>

While poor housing affected schooling and employment opportunities, their concentration in the low-paid jobs or the ranks of the unemployed made it impossible for most blacks to consider house purchase and limited their choice to low-rent homes of an inferior quality.

Indeed, the deteriorating economic situation of the Afro-Americans was one of the chief causes of anger and pessimism amongst the young blacks. The progress which followed World War II continued until the end of the Korean War when it slowed almost to a halt. Afro-Americans were hit particularly hard in the recessions of 1953-55 and 1957-60: the unemployment rate amongst blacks rose from 4.5 per cent in 1953 to 9.9 per cent in 1954; in 1958 it reached 12.6 per cent and thereafter was consistently over ten per cent and always more than double the rate of unemployment amongst whites.<sup>16</sup> The gap between the races in income levels and occupational status, which had been slowly closing up to about 1952, began to widen and the gains of the earlier years began to disappear. In 1947, 17.7 per cent of all the families with incomes below 3,000 dollars were black, but by 1960 this proportion had risen to 20.8 per cent and, as one commentator said, although 'the majority of the poverty-stricken

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15. Charles Abrams, The City is the Frontier, New York 1965, 54-71; Karl and Alma Taeuber, Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change, Chicago 1966; Robin M. Williams, Jr., Strangers Next Door: Ethnic Relations in American Communities, Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964.
16. Northrup, 'Recent Unemployment Rates of Negroes'; Harry A. Ploski and Ernest Kaiser, The Negro Almanac, New York 1971, 407-20.



are not Negro, the majority of Negroes are poverty-stricken.<sup>17</sup>

Given this situation, it is not surprising that many Afro-Americans gave up in despair and joined separatist-nationalist movements such as the Nation of Islam or Black Muslims. This organization, in existence since the 1930s, attracted public attention in the years after the Korean War because of its dramatic growth.<sup>18</sup>

Other young Afro-Americans, however, responded in an entirely different fashion and sought to enter the one occupation in which there was equality - the armed forces. The process of desegregation begun after World War II had been concluded during, and largely because of, the Korean War.<sup>19</sup> As Charles Moskos has written,<sup>20</sup>

A tragic irony in our country is that many Negro youths, by seeking to enter the armed forces, are saying that it is even worth the risk of being killed in order to have a chance to learn a trade, to make it in a small way, to get away from a dead-end existence, and to join the only institution in this society that seems really to be racially integrated.

Even more ironic, given the events of the 1940s, was the shift in black attitudes toward armed service. During World War II, the majority of Afro-Americans had attempted to make black military

17. Louis A Ferman, ed., Poverty in America: A Book of Readings, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1965, xix; Michael Harrington, The Other America: Poverty in the United States, New York 1962, 72-76; Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, Trends in the Income of Families and Persons in the United States: 1947-1960, Technical Paper 8, Washington, D.C., 1963, 7, 18-23.
18. E. U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism: The Rise of the Black Muslims in the U.S.A., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1966 ed., 73-75.
19. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, 201-17.
20. Moskos 'The Negro and the Draft', in Roger W. Little, ed., Selective Service and American Society, New York 1969, 161.

participation more equitable in the hope that this would improve opportunities in the rest of society. Only a minority, as I have shown, had questioned the basic legitimacy of black involvement in armed forces altogether. Twenty years later, the situation in the forces, and black views about it, had completely changed.

Whereas in World War II Afro-Americans had been largely limited to service in labour and engineering regiments, in Vietnam they accounted for 9.8 per cent of the military strength, 20 per cent of the combat forces, and 14.1 per cent of those killed in action.<sup>21</sup> Now, Afro-Americans argued, the forces were too integrated and, besides, the black soldiers were fighting and dying for little visible reward. The Muslims were joined in their opposition to black military participation by a number of other organizations, including the Black Panthers, and even more moderate spokesmen questioned the black man's role in the Army in Vietnam. Many blacks agreed with Floyd McKissick, Stokely Carmichael, and later, Martin Luther King, all of whom pointed out publicly that it was contradictory to fight for freedom in Asia while it was denied at home.<sup>22</sup> Such attitudes were, and still are, widespread among the black soldiers themselves. One survey found that not only did the majority of

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21. Despite these figures, there was still discrimination: in the Army blacks comprised 13.4 per cent of enlisted men, but only 3.5 per cent of the officers, Gene Grove, 'The Army and the Negro', New York Times Magazine, July 24, 1966; Leo Bogart, ed., Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army, Chicago 1969, 1-2.

22. American Broadcasting Companies, 'The Vietnam War: Black and White', Scope part 63, 1967, Library of Congress, FBA 5852, includes filmed interviews with McKissick, Carmichael, people in Harlem, and soldiers in Vietnam. See too, King, Chaos or Community, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1969, ed., 41, 87-88, 174.



Afro-American G.I.s feel they had no business in South-east Asia, but also that most of them were prepared, if necessary, to take up arms in order to secure their rights at home. The writer concluded,<sup>23</sup>

A significant number of veterans are sure to continue to believe that America owes the black soldier a debt for his service in Vietnam and for his suffering at home. In Vietnam, this young black is coming increasingly to believe that if America does not meet this demand peacefully, he will use the means he has learned in the paddies and the jungles - violence.

The wheel had turned full circle and the fears held by some whites throughout America's history had been realized: to train, arm, and commit Afro-Americans to combat without recognizing such service with equal citizenship had led to the threat of armed insurrection. It still remains to be seen whether such an eventuality can be forestalled.

In conclusion, we have to ask how the second World War relates to the later period and what effect, if any, the war had on the Afro-American's status. A sociologist has written,<sup>24</sup>

It is clear enough that poverty and unemployment by themselves are not enough to account for social protest and militant action. We have known for some time that organized and sustained protest is most likely not when the economic position of a population is continuously low and oppressive but rather when conditions have been improving, especially if advancement is abruptly blocked or reversed.

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23. Wallace Terry, 'Bringing the War Home', Black Scholar, November 1970.
24. Robin M. Williams, Jr., 'Social Change and Social Conflict: Race Relations in the United States, 1944-1964', Sociological Inquiry, XXXV, 1, 1965, 17.



This was true of the revolutions in France and in Russia: it was also true of the 'Negro Revolt'. The second World War and its aftermath provided that crucial period of progress before reaction. Participation in the war-effort, while it did not close the gap between the races, did bring Afro-Americans increased employment and economic security which lasted into the 1950s. Equally important, the war fostered a growth in political and social consciousness amongst blacks. The campaigns for greater involvement in the military and industrial effort, the migrations and resultant urbanization of the black population, and the issues of the war, all pushed the American racial question to the fore 'in a disturbing and challenging manner unequalled since the days of Reconstruction.'<sup>25</sup> The expressions in black literature and song, the increased circulation of black newspapers, the growth in civil rights organizations, and the formation of the March on Washington Movement indicated that Afro-Americans were aware of this new situation and were prepared to take advantage of it. By threatening mass demonstrations during the war and use of their now decisive voting power after it, they were able to secure executive actions on their behalf which marked a definite change. It was surely no coincidence that the first President since Lincoln to take a stand openly sympathetic to the Afro-Americans, and at the risk of dividing his own party, should do so in the immediate aftermath of war. This was both a reward for military participation and a response to new political circumstance.

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25. Maurice R. Davie, Negroes in American Society, New York 1949, 314.

However, not all the effects of the war were to the Afro-American's benefit. The increased urbanization intensified problems of housing, health, and education and those problems grew as conditions in the ghettos deteriorated under the added strains of post-war migrations. Nor were the forces of war sufficient to break down the racial barriers or to overcome white prejudice. Truman's actions and the progress made during the 1940s raised black expectations but at the same time revealed the extent of white opposition to change. That opposition was able to prevent any legislation being passed until the 1950s and then to limit the consequences of that legislation when eventually enacted. Coupled with the economic recessions which practically destroyed the gains of a quarter of a century, this intransigence on the part of whites was sufficient to frustrate and anger Afro-Americans. They, however, had learned from the experiences of the second World War. The Gandhian tactics of non-violent demonstrations, of sit-ins, and of civil disobedience espoused by the March on Washington Movement and put into practice by the Congress of Racial Equality during the 1940s, became commonplace during the 1960s. When whites reacted to such protests with increasing violence, blacks became more militant and resorted to armed resistance and retaliation. It was only with this growing conflict that strong executive and legislative action was taken in the area of civil rights and human welfare. The tragedy was that it took the threat of another war, this time a race war within America, to bring about the long overdue attack on poverty and prejudice.

Appendix I

Executive Order 8802, June 25, 1941.

WHEREAS it is the policy of the United States to encourage full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders; and

WHEREAS there is evidence that available and needed workers have been barred from employment in industries engaged in defense production solely because of consideration of race, creed, color, or national origin, to the detriment of the workers' morale and national unity:

Now, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes, and as a prerequisite to the successful conduct of our national defense production effort, I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or Government because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations, in furtherance of said policy and of this order, to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without



discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin;

And it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. All departments and agencies of the Government of the United States concerned with vocational and training programs for defense production shall take special measures appropriate to assure that such programs are administered without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin;
2. All contracting agencies of the Government of the United States shall include in all defense contracts hereafter negotiated by them a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against workers because of race, creed, color, or national origin;
3. There is established in the Office of Production Management a Committee on Fair Employment Practice, which shall consist of a chairman and four other members to be appointed by the President. The chairman and members of the Committee shall serve as such without compensation but shall be entitled to actual and necessary transportation, subsistence, and other expenses incidental to performance of their duties. The Committee shall receive and investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the provisions of this order and shall take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds to be valid. The Committee shall also recommend to the several departments and agencies of the Government of the United States and to the President all measures which may be deemed by it necessary or proper to effectuate the provisions of this order.

Signed,

Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Note on Executive Order 8802

The original order was amended on July 18, 1941 to increase the membership of FEPC to a chairman and five members. On May 25, 1942, by Executive Order 9111, it was further amended to bring the number of members, excluding the chairman, to seven. When the Committee was re-established after its brief sojourn in the War Manpower Commission by Executive Order 9346 on May 27, 1943, it consisted of a chairman and not more than six members.

While the Order specified discrimination 'because of race, creed, color, or national origin', it was issued as a result of black protest and was aimed chiefly at racial discrimination. However, FEPC did consider the situation of Mexican-Americans, Japanese Americans, and Jews as well as that of Afro-Americans.

It is most important in the light of this thesis, to note the emphasis on the necessities of war. The Order is not issued to halt infringements on Afro-Americans' constitutional liberties but to 'encourage full participation in the national defense program' and ensure that 'the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully.' Discrimination, in such a context, was described as detrimental to 'the workers' morale and national unity.'

Appendix IITable I

The percentage distribution of black men and women by major industry group for selected years, 1940-52.

|  | 1940  | 1944  | 1948  | 1950  | 1952  |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total employed men.                                    | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Agriculture  | 43.3  | 31.3  | 22.4  | 24.6  | 19.2  |
| Nonagriculture   | 56.7  | 68.7  | 77.6  | 75.4  | 80.8  |
| Mining   | 1.8   | 4.1   | 6.1   | 2.4   | 2.7   |
| Construction   | 4.8   | 3.7   | 6.7   | 7.3   | 8.8   |
| Manufacturing  | 16.1  | 23.6  | 24.0  | 21.5  | 26.4  |
| Transportation, communication<br>and public utilities. | 6.7   | 10.0  | 9.6   | 7.3   | 7.5   |
| Trade, finance   | 11.7  | 12.3  | 13.6  | 17.3  | 16.2  |
| Domestic and personal service                          | 8.3   | 6.0   | 7.6   | 7.7   | 7.2   |
| Professional services                                  | 2.9   | 3.2   | 4.2   | 4.4   | 4.4   |
| Government   | 1.7   | 3.9   | 4.2   | 5.0   | 4.9   |
| Business repair services,<br>amusement, recreation     | 2.7   | 1.9   | 2.6   | 2.5   | 2.7   |
| Total employed women                                   | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Agriculture  | 21.0  | 10.9  | 8.7   | 8.7   | 6.2   |
| Nonagriculture   | 79.0  | 89.1  | 91.3  | 91.3  | 93.8  |
| Mining   | 0.05  | 0.05  | 0.1   | 0.05  | 0.05  |
| Construction   | 0.1   | 0.05  | 0.2   | 0.1   | 0.05  |
| Manufacturing  | 3.0   | 13.0  | 8.9   | 7.9   | 7.0   |
| Transportation, communication,<br>etc.                 | 0.2   | 1.1   | 0.5   | 0.6   | 0.8   |
| Trade, finance   | 4.5   | 11.4  | 14.1  | 11.4  | 12.9  |
| Domestic and personal service                          | 64.6  | 52.7  | 55.7  | 57.6  | 55.2  |
| Professional services                                  | 5.7   | 7.3   | 9.4   | 10.1  | 13.8  |
| Government   | 0.6   | 3.1   | 1.8   | 2.5   | 3.5   |
| Business repair, etc.                                  | 0.4   | 0.5   | 0.8   | 1.0   | 0.7   |

Department of Labor, Negroes in the United States: Their Employment and Economic Status, Washington, D.C., 1952, 43.



Appendix IIITable 2

The proportion of blacks to whites in each major occupational group, for selected years, 1940-52.

|  | 1940 | 1944 | 1948 | 1950 | 1952 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Employed black males                         | 8.6  | 9.8  | 8.4  | 8.3  | 8.9  |
| Professional, technical, and kindred workers | 2.8  | 3.3  | 2.6  | 2.6  | 2.5  |
| Managers, officials, and proprietors         | 1.1  | 2.1  | 1.8  | 1.9  | 1.6  |
| Clerical, sales, and kindred workers         | 1.3  | 2.8  | 2.3  | 2.8  | 3.4  |
| Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers      | 2.6  | 3.6  | 3.7  | 3.9  | 4.0  |
| Operatives and kindred workers               | 5.9  | 10.1 | 10.1 | 8.5  | 10.4 |
| Private household workers                    | 60.2 | 75.2 | 53.7 | 51.3 | 31.6 |
| Service workers                              | 16.5 | 21.9 | 20.7 | 21.4 | 21.7 |
| Farmers and farm managers                    | 12.4 | 11.0 | 9.8  | 10.5 | 10.7 |
| Farm labourers and foremen                   | 21.0 | 21.1 | 15.8 | 19.8 | 16.2 |
| Labourers, except farm and mine              | 21.0 | 27.6 | 23.6 | 21.4 | 26.9 |
| Employed black females                       | 13.8 | 12.9 | 11.8 | 12.0 | 11.4 |
| Professional, technical, and kindred workers | 4.5  | 5.7  | 5.4  | 5.2  | 7.0  |
| Managers, officials, and proprietors         | 2.6  | 4.8  | 2.4  | 2.7  | 3.1  |
| Clerical, sales, and kindred workers         | 0.7  | 1.4  | 2.3  | 1.9  | 2.2  |
| Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers      | 2.2  | 5.2  | 5.4  | 2.2  | 4.9  |

Table 2 (continued)

|                                 | 1940 | 1944 | 1948 | 1950 | 1952 |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Operatives and kindred workers  | 4.7  | 8.3  | 8.2  | 7.8  | 6.8  |
| Private household workers       | 46.6 | 60.9 | 52.4 | 53.9 | 53.9 |
| Service workers                 | 12.7 | 23.9 | 20.0 | 19.1 | 20.0 |
| Farmers and farm managers       | 30.4 | 23.8 | 21.9 | 20.2 | 24.1 |
| Farm labourers and foremen      | 62.0 | 21.4 | 15.9 | 19.2 | 14.3 |
| Labourers, except farm and mine | 13.2 | 35.6 | 24.4 | 42.6 | 7.8  |

Department of Labor, Negroes in the United States, Their Employment and Economic Status, Washington, D.C., 1952, 45.

These tables taken together do, I think, reveal something of the Afro-American's economic progress during the war and its limitations. From table I, it is apparent that the numbers of black males and females in domestic or personal service declined. But because there was a decline in the number of whites in this form of employment, proportionately black representation increased. In agriculture the reverse was true. The number of black farmers and farm labourers declined rapidly and so did the proportion of blacks to whites. Apart from farming, gains were made in all forms of employment. However, the greatest progress appears to have been in blue, rather than white, collar jobs. Black representation in professional, clerical, or managerial posts was still far below their proportion in the population or in the work force. Moreover, in practically each occupational group blacks suffered a reverse after the war or, at least, the rate of progress slowed down. The expectations of the 1940s were not fulfilled in the 1950s.

Appendix IVCertain Health Statistics for Afro-AmericansMortality from selected causes, adjusted for age, per 100,000 populationTable I Tuberculosis

|      | Black | White |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1920 | 273.7 | 104.9 |
| 1925 | 230.5 | 75.3  |
| 1930 | 199.7 | 60.5  |
| 1931 | 198.8 | 56.5  |
| 1932 | 180.5 | 52.0  |
| 1933 | 164.0 | 49.0  |
| 1934 | 154.8 | 47.3  |
| 1935 | 150.9 | 45.7  |
| 1936 | 157.7 | 45.5  |
| 1937 | 150.8 | 43.6  |
| 1938 | 142.3 | 39.1  |
| 1939 | 134.3 | 37.4  |
| 1940 | 133.1 | 36.1  |
| 1941 | 128.5 | 34.7  |
| 1942 | 123.4 | 33.5  |
| 1943 | 116.6 | 33.3  |
| 1944 | 109.7 | 32.7  |

Table 2 Diseases of the Heart

|      | Black | White |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1920 | 245.8 | 199.8 |
| 1925 | 310.1 | 219.6 |
| 1930 | 337.1 | 244.8 |
| 1931 | 310.3 | 241.7 |
| 1932 | 298.2 | 251.9 |
| 1933 | 297.4 | 252.4 |
| 1934 | 315.1 | 261.1 |
| 1935 | 307.0 | 263.2 |
| 1936 | 335.8 | 280.4 |
| 1937 | 331.2 | 278.2 |
| 1938 | 327.3 | 274.2 |
| 1939 | 306.0 | 277.1 |
| 1940 | 330.3 | 288.1 |
| 1941 | 326.3 | 280.6 |
| 1942 | 316.5 | 281.2 |
| 1943 | 326.9 | 297.8 |
| 1944 | 320.2 | 295.5 |



Appendix IV (continued)Table 3 Pneumonia, all forms

|      | Black | White |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1935 | 140.3 | 77.8  |
| 1936 | 169.2 | 86.9  |
| 1937 | 158.4 | 78.7  |
| 1938 | 127.0 | 61.9  |
| 1939 | 106.5 | 54.3  |
| 1940 | 99.7  | 49.9  |
| 1941 | 85.5  | 41.9  |
| 1942 | 80.0  | 41.1  |
| 1943 | 91.3  | 46.5  |
| 1944 | 82.3  | 41.5  |

Table 4 Syphilis, all forms

|      | Black | White |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1935 | 61.3  | 11.2  |
| 1936 | 64.5  | 11.6  |
| 1937 | 65.8  | 11.4  |
| 1938 | 66.1  | 11.0  |
| 1939 | 62.5  | 10.3  |
| 1940 | 61.6  | 9.7   |
| 1941 | 54.2  | 9.0   |
| 1942 | 48.5  | 8.2   |
| 1943 | 45.8  | 8.1   |
| 1944 | 43.1  | 7.4   |

Table 5 Life expectancy at birth, males

|         | Black | White |
|---------|-------|-------|
| 1930-39 | 50.06 | 60.62 |
| 1939-41 | 52.26 | 62.81 |
| 1942    | 54.28 | 63.65 |
| 1943    | 54.66 | 63.16 |
| 1944    | 55.30 | 63.55 |

Table 6 Infant mortality per 1000 births, 1940 and 1943

|      | Black | White |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1940 | 72.9  | 43.2  |
| 1943 | 61.5  | 37.5  |

Tables from: Mary Gover, 'Negro Mortality: Course of Mortality from Specific Causes, 1920-1944', Public Health Reports, Vol. 63, 7, February 13, 1948; Jessie P. Guzman, Negro Year Book: A Review of Events Affecting Negro Life, 1941-46, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1947, 323; Florence Murray, Negro Hand Book, 1946-47, New York 1947, 71.

Note on Appendix IV

These tables are included to show that, statistically, the health of Afro-Americans continued to improve during the war years. But while the rate of improvement was greater for blacks than for whites (because there was more room for improvement), the huge gap between the races remained. Although the distance between them was closing a projection based on the figures here shows that the number of deaths among Afro-Americans due to T.B. would not meet with that of whites until 1959 or 1960. Similar predictions could be made based on the other tables, with one exception, that of mortalities due to diseases of the heart. In this category, the racial distinctions were not so pronounced and rather than falling, the number of deaths due to this cause seemed to be rising among both races. Why this should be is not readily apparent. It may have been because more deaths were recognized as being due to heart disorders. It may also have been a symptom of generally rising standards. Diseases of the heart seem to increase as people live, eat, and drink better and work in the more sedentary white-collar occupations. If this were so, these figures would, on the face of it, indicate that blacks were better off than whites. Of course this was not so, and the higher death rate was due to poorer medical care and hospitalization. Notice that the deaths due to syphilis among blacks had been increasing up until 1940 but declined from then on. This could well have been due to the provision of prophylactics to men in the armed services and to the medical care given to servicemen unfortunate enough to catch the disease.

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