

William Dawson to John McCloy, February 28, 1944. White House
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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

February 28, 1944

Honorable John J. McCloy,
Assistant Secretary of War,
War Department,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. McCloy:

Yesterday Representative Hamilton Fish of New York addressed the House of Representatives on the matter of the utilization of Negro troops in combat. In the course of his remarks, he read a letter that had been sent him over the signature of the Secretary of War.

The above was the beginning of a letter which I intended to send to you the day after Congressman Fish made his speech and inserted the letter of Secretary Stimson into the Congressional Record. I thought better of the matter, however, and waited until I could view the entire situation in a calmer mood because I was so indignant at the unfair implication of the letter that what I said might have seemed unfair. I am glad that I did wait. Since that date I have received hundreds of communications from every section of this country, denouncing the statements made by the Secretary of War, and demanding that I see the President to ask for the removal of the Secretary of War, or demanding that I immediately introduce a resolution for a sweeping investigation of the entire military situation with a view of finding out the sources responsible for the information upon which the Secretary of War based his letter.

I do appreciate the attitude that you have shown in the past, and I sincerely believe that you have the moral courage to stand up for your convictions, either pro or con; so before taking any other step, I thought I would bring it to your attention and, if possible, get your views on the matter. The letter of the Secretary of War is widely regarded as a direct insult to every Negro in the country and a gratuitous slap in the face to many thousand Negro soldiers in the Army. It represents the attitude with which I, an officer in a combat regiment in the last war, am all too familiar.

In view of my former experiences, it is not a strange phenomena that the units selected for conversion were all officered by Negro officers. The evident attempt now to discredit units officered by Negroes seems to be but a move to strike at the Negro officer. Negro units have been taken out of combat and Negro officers have been put up against an impossible situation. Consequently, I would appreciate being informed of the existing plans for the utilization of the Negro officers now in the units which the War Department letter states have failed so miserably. I would further



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appreciate some amplification of this generalization particularly in view of the long training these units have undergone. In addition, please let me have a statement of the service schools attended by the officers of the 795th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 930th, 931st Field Artillery Battalions also the bases from which they were formally certified for combat service and who certified them for such service.

This whole situation which has been developed by the letter of the Secretary of War is an unfortunate one and is the gravest danger to the morale of the Negroes in the Army and out of the Army. I would appreciate any views you have upon this matter.

Respectfully yours,

WILLIAM L. DAWSON



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