

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 22, 1948

Memorandum for: David K. Niles
Administrative Assistant to the President

From: The President



Attached is a memorandum left with me by
the Negro Committee which was in to see me yesterday.
I am sending it to you so you will be familiar with the
conversation between us.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "H. S. V." with a long horizontal line extending from the top of the signature.

Encl.

N. 5. 189



March 22, 1948

MEMORANDUM TO PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN ON OCCASION OF 11 A.M. CONFERENCE

In your message to Congress on March 17, 1948, your appeal for enactment of Universal Military Training and for revival of Selective Service contained no reference to military segregation and discrimination on the basis of race, despite the recommendations of the President's Committee on Civil Rights.

Your Committee specifically recommended that there be no segregation nor discrimination in any peacetime draft and in the already existing military establishment. It recommended legislation by Congress to that end.

While the Committee's comprehensive report won the hearty approval of Negro citizens at the time it was issued, we are now deeply disturbed by the recent decision of Secretary of the Army Kenneth G. Royall to maintain jimcrow in the National Guard, making an exception of New Jersey only because of its firm constitutional prohibition. A further cause of distress is the exclusion of Negroes from the experimental UMT camp at Fort Knox, Ky., which appears to fit into the pattern of segregated white and Negro battalions planned by the War Department if Congress should enact a permanent draft. The authority for this information comes from Chairman Walter G. Andrews of the House Armed Services Committee and is buttressed by the reliable report that the Army removed an anti-discrimination proviso from the UMT bill as drafted by the Office of Selective Service Records, before the bill reached Congress.

In regard particularly to a revival of Selective Service, Negro veterans are well qualified to insist upon broad, unequivocal anti-segregation and civil rights safeguards for prospective draftees. The weak anti-discrimination Section 4A of the 1940 Selective Service and Training Act was willfully violated by Selective Service and the Army, and the violations were upheld by the courts.

We therefore urge upon you, as Commander-in-Chief, the following steps:

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1. Insist, in a supplementary message to Congress; upon anti-segregation amendments and civil rights safeguards -- pertaining to travel by men in uniform on public carriers, to use of public facilities, to attacks by police, mob and vigilante groups as well as to the military training program itself -- in any UMT and Selective Service legislation.
2. End immediately, by Executive Order, all racial discrimination and segregation in the already existing armed services.
3. Direct the Department of the Army to assign Negro enlistees, on an unsegregated basis, to the experimental UMT camp at Fort Knox, Ky.
4. Direct Secretary of the Army Royall to inform the governors of all states that the policy of discrimination in the National Guard will no longer be dictated by the federal government.
5. Use your administrative diligence to prevent a repetition of the wartime abuses, indignities and humiliations suffered by Negro soldiers, in the event that Congress should enact UMT legislation or revive Selective Service.

Grant Reynolds, National Chairman

A. Philip Randolph, National Treasurer

Albert Black, Washington Chairman



Norma E. Boyd, Director, Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

Joseph H. B. Evans, Former Executive Secretary, 12th Street Branch, YMCA, Washington

Charles H. Houston, Special Counsel, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Horace O. Pollard, National Bar Association

William Worthy, Jr., Action Director, Congress of Racial Equality