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.

Encl.
In your message to Congress on March 17, 1945, 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 or discrimination in any service draft or in the already existing military establishment. It recommended legislation by Congress to that end.

While the Committee’s comprehensive report was based primarily on white citizens of the time it was issued, we are now deeply disturbed by the recent decision of Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall to maintain a Negro in the National Guard, making an exception of “race only” because of his firm constitutional obligation. A further cause of distress is the exclusion of Negroes from the experimental U.S. camp at Fort Benning, Ga., which appears to fall into the category of segregated army and Navy battalions planned by the War Department if Congress should meet a permanent draft. The authority for this information comes from Chairman White of the House Armed Services Committee and is underscored by the multiple reports that the Army removed an anti-discrimination clause from the U.S. bill as directed by the Office of Selective Service, before the bill reached Congress.

In order “particularly” to a revival of Selective Service, those veterans are well qualified to insist upon an equal, non-discriminatory and fair service for prospective service, the non-discrimination section 4 of the 1940 Selective Service and Training Act was “ill-fatedly 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:

- Here -
MEMORANDUM TO PRESIDENT TRUMAN

March 22, 1948

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 NMT 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 NMT camp at Fort Knox, Ky.

4. Direct Secretary of the Army Bogue 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 NMT legislation or revive Selective Service.

Grant Reynolds, National Chairman
A. Philip Randolph, National Treasurer
Albert Blaise, 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, NAACP, Washington
Charles E. Houston, Special Counsel, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Horace A. Pullard, National Bar Association
William Worthy, Jr., Action Director, Congress of Racial Equality