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July 24, 1951

My dear Miss Ferebee:

This is in acknowledgment of your thoughtful letter of July nineteenth to the President. All that you say has been most carefully noted and I am indeed sorry that it is not possible to arrange the interview with the President that you request but his calendar of engagements is so crowded we simply cannot add this commitment to it. You will, I am confident, understand and accept best wishes in the President's name.

Very sincerely yours,

MATTHEW J. CONNELLY
Secretary to the President

Miss Dorothy B. Ferebee,
President,
National Council of Negro Women, Inc.,
1318 Vermont Avenue, Northwest,
Washington 5, D. C.

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MARY McLEOD BETHUNE
Founder, President Emerita

DOROTHY B. FERREBE
National President



National Council of Negro Women, Inc.

(Affiliated with the National Council of Women of the United States, Inc.
and International Council of Women of the World)

1318 VERMONT AVENUE, NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON 5, D. C.

Telephone: Columbia 4434

July 19, 1951

The Honorable
Harry S. Truman, President
United States of America
White House
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

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After considerable reflection on your provocative Independence Day address, I am impelled to write this letter. On a recent trip abroad, I was confronted with a situation which caused me to appreciate more than ever, your courageous, persistent effort to reconcile American principles and American practices lest we "betray the hopes of mankind".

Following a tour of western Europe after attending the International Council of Women in Athens, Greece, I was a member of a panel of eleven American women representing the twelve largest women's organizations in this country. The panel was invited by the High Commissioner of Germany and sponsored by the United States Department of State and the International Division of the Women's Bureau of the United States Labor Department. Specifically our objective was to help interpret the role of women's organizations in a democratic society, and to help German people to a fuller understanding of life in a democracy. The panel was both vocal and vital in its interpretations, and I think reasonably successful in accomplishing its objective.

During my stay in Germany, I had the occasion to speak to Negro units of the American military force in several installations, and I must confess this confronted me with the most humiliating and frustrating situation I encountered in my entire tour. I need not tell you that the presence of the segregated military units belies the democratic principles we extolled, and reeks damage that cannot be repaired by hundreds of good-will emissaries.

Although I attempted to interpret the difference between the Nazi brand of racism and that which despoils our own nation, I was aware of the fact that the pattern of our own American military units made bitter mockery of my words.

I remember especially on the day of my visit to a WAC installation at Petersen Kaserne just outside of Munich, new Negro WACs were arriving to reinforce the unit. In speaking to them, I encouraged them to be the best possible exponents of American ideals of justice and of democratic living, even as I was saying this, my own words resounded with a hollow ring, and I knew from the faces of those girls that they shared with me the leaden burden of the American dilemma.

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Though it may be true that we cannot wipe out in one sweep all the evils that corrode and erode the foundations of the democracy upon which we seek to build a world dedicated to freedom and liberty, certainly we can purify the symbols of our American government. If we have not the courage to do at least this, our shame and hypocrisy—not our power and glory, will be bared before the cynical mockery of the world.

I wish particularly to say I am not releasing this letter to the press at this time. My sole objective is to point up to you a situation of immeasurable gravity which I earnestly believe menaces the prestige, integrity, and indeed, the future security of our Nation. The situation calls for urgent and drastic action.

It would be a privilege to call upon you to discuss personally some of the implications of this subject.

Very sincerely yours,

Dorothy B. Ferebee
Dorothy B. Ferebee
President

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