

30 January
1950

Dear Bill:

I have just returned from a nine-day visit to Air Force installations, which will explain my delay in answering your letter about Captain I. Maximillian Martin, who was transferred from the Finance Section of the 304th Civil Affairs Military Government Group at the Schuylkill Arsenal to the all-colored 391st Field Artillery Battalion of the 79th Division Artillery.

If Captain Martin's transfer was for the reason alleged, namely, that Army policy prohibits the assignment of a Negro officer to a white unit, then that transfer was indefensible, for it definitely is not written Army policy that a Negro officer cannot be assigned to a white unit.

When in late 1945 and early 1946 the original Gillem Board report was circulated to the reviewing agencies, some of the General Staff divisions and also, I believe, Army Ground Forces, raised the question of Negro officers in command of white troops. In a memorandum replying to these questions the Gillem Board said it was not contemplated that Negro officers would be in command of white units. However, Secretary Patterson, in a memorandum to Chief of Staff Marshall interpreting the Gillem Board Report, said quite definitely that the Gillem Board policy meant that (1) Negroes were no longer required to be placed in segregated units, and (2) Negro officers would be utilized and assigned on the same basis as white officers.

Furthermore, there are numerous instances in the Army today where individual Negro officers are commanding units composed of both whites and Negroes -- though most of these units are service units.

On September 30, 1949, the Army issued a new racial policy statement in which there is no proscription against assignment of a Negro officer to a white unit. Finally, the Army put out on January 16, 1950, a new Special Regulation on Negro utilization, and here again there is no mention of limited assignment of Negro officers.

Incidentally, the Finance Department has always set itself against using Negroes, and the records show that it completely ignored the Gillen Board policy when that went into effect, and was still ignoring it a year later.

I am enclosing a copy of the Army's recently announced racial policy, and I will look into the matter of Captain Martin and write you as soon as I have run the facts down.

Betts and I are going to New York this weekend for a long delayed holiday, but let's get together soon.

Sincerely,

Mr. William L. Batt, Jr.
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