

Title: Integration of The Negro Into the U. S. Navy

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Preface: All documentary materials herein have been used with full Naval authority.

While the study is in no sense an official history, it is believed to be an objective and accurate synthesis of the available source material. The work gives a fair and valid appraisal of the Navy's attitude toward and interest in its Negro Personnel.

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Introduction: The U. S. Navy has made no attempt to settle national racial problems, nor can it be expected to do so. The first objective of the U. S. Navy is to maintain the most efficient Navy, regardless of race or creed.

It is to be noted from the offset that the present day U. S. Navy does not recognize any form of race distinction. The U. S. N. has reached the objective of integration with the position that 'race' is not a sound basis for any military organization.

Chapter One: Historical Background (Prior to World War I)

A) Policy: The U. S. Navy did not pursue any apparent 'Jim Crow' course, and it is recorded that Negroes were always entered on the ships' books without any distinction. In view of the Mass desertions on many ships, the Captains often resorted to Negro crews, in lieu of Caucasians. The Negroes were promised freedom

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plus additional bounties of money, land etc., if they would serve aboard ship.

In the war of 1812 Negroes constituted about  $\frac{1}{6}$  of the total naval personnel and it is remarkable to note the lack of reference, on ship records, as to racial origins. The then Lt. Oliver Hazard Perry was reprimanded by Captain Isaac Chauncey for having complained about Negro replacements. Chauncey said that he had had fifty 'blacks' aboard and they were among his best sailors. Perry was not anti-Negro, but rather unfamiliar with them. In 1816 it is recorded that Negroes and Whites messed together on Perry's ship. Fifty thousand Negroes fought for the Union in the Civil War and an additional fifty-thousand served as cooks, stewards etc., and were commended by President Lincoln.

B) Restrictions: The Navy continued to enlist Negroes where feasible, but did restrict them to the enlisted ranks. At the beginning of World War I the U.S. Navy still allowed mixed crews on ships and Negroes were eligible for all ratings, but for several years it had been obvious that segregation was becoming part of Navy policy.

C) Negro Willingness: In World War I, 380,000 were inducted into the U.S. Army; 1400 officers were commissioned, this being the first Negro commissioning in U.S. history. The Navy, however, at this time did not act accordingly, and it continued its policy of segregation. Negroes have always volunteered in time of war, but their willingness to fight has been limited by the willingness of their officers in command allowing the Negro to fight. The Negro had to struggle for the privilege of fighting for the U.S.

## II Navy Policy Since World War I

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A) National Trend: Cognizance should be taken of the fact that the Navy's discrimination was not initiated by the U.S.N., but rather the U.S.N. followed the national sociological trends of the U.S. The U.S.N. continued to accept Negro enlistments, but only in the mess branch until 1 June 1942.

B) Negro Responsibility: It is well to note that with every war the measure of Negro responsibility increased in the U.S. Navy as his education, physical well being and his general recognition of his part in American life increased. The Navy was almost forced to restrict the Negro to mess branch only. A man cannot be endowed with a responsibility unless he is capable of coping with it and literacy is a primary factor in this respect.

Increase in Negro personnel: In October, 1940, the War Dept. announced that Negro personnel would be increased substantially, so that Negroes in the Army would constitute the same proportion there as in general population of the United States. Five years later, however, the Army 'Gilliam Board' recommended a maximum of 10% in Negro personnel in Army and Navy, this being done in review of wartime experience. During the War (II) the Negro enlistment never exceeded 4.5% of total enlistment. The author says that it was the Navy's attitude at this time (Feb. '43) that enlistment of Negroes led to disruptive and undermining conditions.

C) Change in Navy Policy Toward Negroes: As of April 1942, a change was effected in the Navy policy. The U.S.N. would now accept Negroes in the 'Navy proper'. This resulted in the segregation of the Negro and delimitation to shore duty only. This proved impractical, as the number

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of Negroes entering the Navy increased the needs of shore installations. This resulted in the feeling that the Negro was a second-class citizen. Consequently on 23 Feb '44 two anti-sub craft were commissioned and manned by negro crews. Negro training officers would replace the white officers as soon as the former proved their ability. In Aug-'44 Negroes were assigned to twenty-five auxiliary ship also. It was reported that no segregation nor racial friction existed on these craft. No more than 10% of the crews of above mentioned aux. craft were Negroes.

E) Removal of All Restrictions: It is well to take cognizance of the fact that until 1942 Negroes in U.S.N. were given all the privileges and pay that their jobs required, but not the rank. As of July '49 the Navy, following a note from the Foley Committee, (President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces), issued an order giving men their proper rank. Since World War II it is a fact that the general service ratings of Negroes in U.S.N. is approaching parity at a rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1% per month.

### III Great Lakes Training Program

A) Training Program: On 1 June '42 the Navy started recruiting Negroes under its new policy of accepting them in the Navy Proper. Two-hundred + seventy-seven men were to receive basic training at Great Lakes under the command of Lcdr. Daniel W. Armstrong. The latter favored segregation, believing that the Negro should retain his own "culture." Hence the 18<sup>th</sup> regiment was set aside for the Negroes. Negro C.P.O.s were employed to train the group + they proved unqualified. Later younger and more educated C.P.O.s were given the task of training the men. This training was on a

segregated basis and U.S.N. soon discovered that the maintenance of a dual system was too costly.

B) Dissension: This cause here was discipline. It is believed that impartial firmness, on the part of Commanding Officers, was the remedy for serious conflict among Negro recruits. The author states that the lower-ranking officers were prone to take such problems to Armstrong. Hence this meant that discipline was often dealt privately by officers and included 'beatings', 'Squat jumping', and 'stricken equals' etc. Bad morale followed.

C) Pride in Race: The Negro was encouraged by Armstrong to take pride in his race. This included National Negro history Weeks, art classes, etc.. There were all efforts to segregate the Negro and have it so well to note that the Negro does not desire 'Special Treatment', but prefers to be treated as other sailors.

D) Illiteracy: At the end of World War II the Navy's proportion of Negro enlistments soared. An increasingly number of illiterate Negroes were accepted. Actually these men could fill only very menial jobs as they were not otherwise equipped. In 1944-45 nearly 31% of Negro recruits at Great Lakes were illiterate or below minimum standards of U.S.N.

## IV Technical Training

A) Schools: As of July 42, 15 technical training schools were spread over the U.S.A., 13 for Whites and 2 for Negroes. One of the latter was at Camp Robert Small (Great Lakes) and the other at Hampton Institute, Va. The latter one was the more liberal school and had better classrooms, labs, etc than corresponding facilities at schools for Whites.

B) Advantages of Training: Segregation plus other factors, resulted in a curious situation, making possible valuable training opportunities for Negroes which otherwise would have

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been closed to them. Records do not substantiate theory that it took longer to train qualified Negroes than Whites of equal ability.

c) Integration: Integration on a small scale was introduced in 1944 and it proved an immediate success. In integration, disciplining problems of Negroes were of same type as those of Whites. This was not so prior to integration.

d) Captain Bond, commanding officer of service schools in May '45 said of segregation: "It was an egregious error, un-American, inefficient and a waste of money and manpower." It is gratifying to note that at close of World War II Comm. Armstrong admitted that integration should have been instituted in the beginning.

### Special Training Program:

A) Illiterate: A man who cannot read & follow simple written instructions attached to war equipment is hampered in the proper handling of said materials. He is also a hazard to himself and those with whom he works.

B) Selective Service Standards: Standards for S. S. were not uniformly applied to Negroes and Whites. Standards for the selection of Negroes were often more lenient than those for Whites. Therefore in the induction of Negro illiterates, the comparison of military performance with a corresponding White group, was biased and weighted.

C) Training of Illiterates: They were processed & trained at Norfolk, Va. Later, due to cramped conditions at Norfolk, the illiterates were transferred to Bainbridge, Md. Extreme crowding was experienced here also; therefore the Bureau, Training Div. printed a series of pamphlets together with a twelve week program for illiterates. The Bureau refused from assuming administrative control of illiterates alone.

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the recruit level. The responsibility for such illiterates beyond recruit level was in the hands of the individual C.O.s. Proper steps were taken by them to train the illiterates under their command. The author pointed out that the majority of Negro illiterates were inducted from twelve Southern States which furnished 91% of Negroes requiring remedial training.

- 1) Personal awards were proffered to increase the incentive to learn. Most men in S.T.P. expressed gratitude for the opportunity afforded them by the Navy to learn to read & write.
- 2) It is to be noted that Bu Pers lacked the authority to put the training of illiterates on a compulsory basis.

#### D) Training in the Field:

- 1) By autumn of 1944 various Naval Stations throughout the country had programs of their own to train illiterates. Specialists from S.T.P. headquarters were sent to these stations to help train the men.
- 2) Cognizance should be taken of the fact that the S.T.P. for Negro recruits by U.S.N. met with unprecedented success. This did much to refute the theory of innate Negro inferiority.

#### E) Navy's conclusions regarding the training of illiterates:

- 1) The educational achievements of Negroes, alone average in I.Q., are similar to those of Whites with comparable I.Q.s.
- 2) In the field of racial difference, 'race superiority or inferiority' has not been demonstrated.
- 3) Differences revealed in I.Q. tests can be accounted for in terms of differences in opportunity and



background

- 4) Scientific evidence does not support theory that racial inferiorities exist as inborn traits.

## VI Negro Personnel Problems in World War II

### A) The Port Chicago 'Mutiny'

At Port Chicago two ships loading ammunition exploded at the docks of Port Chicago. Of the 300 killed, 250 were Negroes. For several days thereafter other seamen would not return to this type of work, since they feared another explosion. Much pressure was brought to bear & all but 50 returned to work. These 50 were charged with mutiny. All were tried, convicted & sentenced. In Jan '46, after much protest it was announced that the sentence had been commuted & men freed. The Navy then issued three directives:

- 1) More effective use of Negro Personnel
- 2) Eliminate practice of maintaining all Negro units at powder magazines.
- 3) Eliminate practice of dumping great numbers of sub-standard Negroes at port depots.

### B) Clarification of Racial Designations:

- 1) Until late 1949 Navy forms listed personnel in the following manner: If an applicant was white, all his features would be described accurately. If Negro, the applicant's features would all be listed as 'Negro'. Even in Nov. 49 the Navy Dept. issued a directive forbidding descriptive terms & listed in physical description forms such as - color of eyes - Negro etc.
- 2) It is well to note that the U.S.N. no longer classifies race except on medical forms.

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## VII Officer Training

### A) Officer caste system:

- 1) There has been almost complete exclusion of Negroes and Jews from officer Corps of U.S.N. for generations. This problem is probably more sociological than moral. It is the author's opinion that the Navy's failure to find an early solution to this problem, laid the U.S.N. open to serious criticism.
- 2) The 1st Negro commissioned from the U.S.N. Academy was in June, '49. Others have attended the Academy, but for various reasons did not complete the courses. Later the U.S.N. opened other channels, such as V-12 to qualified men & some negroes were commissioned.

B) Additional Commissioning: Following the initial commissioning of Negro officer, it was announced that a number of staff officers would be commissioned (Mexico, India, etc.). Of the 58 officers commissioned in World War II, the majority of line officers overseas attached to logistic support companies. Work of such units was primarily stevedore work.

(C) Because of blanket assignment to duty, the lack of responsibility given Negro officers etc., most Negro officers applied for demobilization as rapidly as possible.

(D) During World War II, the U.S.N., at peak enrollment had only 60 Negro officers (Line, Staff). In this period after the war only 3 Negro officers were on active duty. According to the ratio of enlisted personnel, there should have been 1800 Negro officers in U.S.N.. The U.S. Army as of 1 June 47 had 1400 Negro officers on active duty - more proportionate to the number of enlisted.

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Negroes. Acc. to the author it is "paradoxical that the Army, with many pinks in its integration program, has no trouble enlisting personnel for officer training."

E) The Fahey Committee: - This group has shown disfavor at the small number of Negro officers in U.S.M. during W.W.II. At the end of 1950 there were 17 Negro officers on active duty in U.S.M. The author states: "The present policy is not infallible and admittedly far from perfect, but the barriers and traditional problems long common to the services have been substantially removed."

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# IX. The Policy In Other Arms of the Naval Service

## I. The Marine Corps.

A. The U.S.M.C., has not and does not make race distinctions in any service records. Hence it is extremely difficult to present a history of Negro activity in U.S.M.C. The references to Negroes serving in the Corps in the World War of 1812 and Civil War are more frequent, this being due more to the casualty lists than official Corps records. Many negroes are known to have served in U.S.M.C., this being confirmed by contemporary photos of Civil War.

B. The next available date regarding Negroes in U.S.M.C. as from the last war. It was then that this recruiting of the 1st all-Negro battalion began at Camp Lejeune, N.C. The unit numbered 900 and it became a competent battalion trained in anti-aircraft-machine gun, tanks, artillery, etc. At Lejeune the Negroes were billeted in separate quarters and trained apart from the whites. Later the enlistment of Negroes on a grand scale was insisted. It is well to note that only 10% of the volunteers were in class 5 (lowest rating in Army Classification Test) while ratio of Army Selectees had often risen to 50%. There were no Negro commissioned officers and the highest rating of any man in the Corps was that of Sergeant (until 1945).

C. Overseas the Negro battalions were received with some surprise but cordially. When in action these Negro Marines proved an important addition to the finest body of fighting men in the world.

D. The enlisted Negroes advanced in non-commissioned ranks and the first negro officer of U.S.M.C. was commissioned on 10 Nov 1945 - in active status.

E. Marine Corps policy is in practice, Navy policy, although policy changes percolate more slowly through the Corps than through Naval ranks. Hence the U.S.M.C. policy toward the Negroes was following U.S.N. pattern, but at a retarded rate. The corps has eliminated segregation

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in liaison training, but later are usually assigned to Negro units. In this respect the Corps has not yet fully carried out Navy policy. Complete integration within the Corps is a matter of time rather than resistance to policy change.

## II. Coast Guard

A. This service has had Negroes in its service for many years and is reported to be the most liberal of all the branches of the Armed Forces. For a long time it was the only branch of the service in which Negroes and white recruits were brought together without segregation. It is worthy of note that the U.S.N. followed the pattern set by Coast Guard of indoctrinating and commissioning men at its academy but on a much larger but far more limited and continuous basis.

B. Of all men in the Coast Guard Corps 50% were apprentice seamen and 50% were mere attendants.

C. The first Negro commissioned the U.S.C.G. was Ens. J. P. Jenkins, a graduate of Coast Guard Academy on 14 Apr 1942. Other commissions followed.

D. In Oct 1942 ratings were opened to Negro seamen in the Navy's Famed Sea Vee's. On its 3rd birthday the number of Negroes therein numbered approximately 6% of total enlistment.

## III. Women's Reserve Corps (Waves) Established 1942

A. At its inception Negro women were neither encouraged nor given the opportunity to join Waves or Spars. Secretary Knox replied to a complaint of the AKA Sorority about this situation: "The changes the Navy has affected in recognition of the Negro's steady progress have been wholly consistent in democratic principals and that all theoretical possible steps that are not taken at one cannot be reasonably condemned as undemocratic."

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The main point of conflict was that the sorority had not been willing to accept segregated units; if this had been granted by Negro sorority women could have been admitted into the Naval Service.

B. In Oct 1944 the Navy Dept. announced that Negro women would be admitted to the Naval services. The Negro women were trained at "enlisting Navy Schools" and no segregation was noticed. The Waves were the 1st ad best integrated unit in Naval services. The Coast Guard followed Navy Policy.

C. On 13 Nov 1944, the 1st Negro women were sworn into the Waves and there three of these two were commissioned in December 44. The experiment proved profitable to U.S.N. It accordingly encouraged subsequent enlistment of other Negro women.

#### IV. Navy Nurses:

A. Negro nurses did not serve in the Navy until later in World War II. In view of the great need for nurses in U.S. N. the latter let it be known that the U.S.N. would accept qualified Negro nurses applications.

On 8 Mar 1945 the 1st negro nurse was sworn into the Navy Nurse Corps in N.C. Three others were commissioned at a later date and as of Jan 1 1951 there were 2 Negro Navy nurses on active duty.

B. The Navy has reiterated recently that all Negro nurses who can qualify physically and professionally will be given some consideration as all other applicants.

#### V. Merchant Marines:

A. Policy of M.M. was one of nondiscrimination. Men were hired according to their individual ability and usefulness and when aboard ship they messed and bedded together indiscriminately. By Dec 1942 the percentage of Negroes in M.M. increased over 10% of the totaled enlistment.

B. As the war progressed, however, instances of discrimination against

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Negro seamen increased. By Fall of 1943, Negroes in training at US. Maritime Service Stations, Sheepshead Bay, N.Y., began to expose situations of discrimination against them. In Oct 1943 ten seamen made specific charges against the U.S. War Shipping Administration and against Seamen's Pacific Union, which latter, they said did not accept Negro seamen. It is presumed that these charges were investigated and justice dealt with all concerned.

C. By 1946 at least 24,000 Negroes were on had been engaged by the M.M. during World War II. They worked in all capacities, as officers, Pharmacists, messmen etc.

D. There was neither segregation nor discrimination in employment or in ~~living~~ living quarters aboard merchant ships during the closing years of the war.

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## Chapter 10

### The Negro and Military Law:

- (A) The average Negro (especially from the South) has learned from long experience that his chances for securing justice in the lay courts are extremely poor, especially in those sections of the country where discrimination in other things is legal. Hence, the Negro's lack of respect for the law or in those who administer it must be taken into consideration in weighing the merits of the acts or violations of regulations.
- (B) In citing a typical court-martial of a Negro, the Navy recognized this fact that when Negroes are given a reasonable chance of important justice in court and fair and equal treatment in military or civilian life, there is no justification for assuming that they are less law-abiding than other people.

## Chapter 11

### The Fahy Committee (President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services)

- (A) The President's Committee on Civil Rights made the following comments in 1948:
1. Almost 80% of Negro sailors are serving as cooks, stewards and steward's mates; less than 2% of white personnel are assigned duty in the same capacities. Almost 15% of white enlisted Marines are in the 3 highest pay grades; less than 2½% of Negro Marines fall in the same category.
  2. Discrimination is one of major elements which keeps the service from attaining the objectives which it has set for itself.
  3. Fahy Committee said of Navy: In the relatively short space

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of 5 years the U. S. Navy had moved from a policy of complete integration in general service.

(B) Service defended denial of opportunity to Negro on 2 grounds: (1)

Negro population as a group is not as intelligent as Caucasians

(2) Social custom dictated segregation of Negroes. "To get ahead of the country" would provoke trouble and imperil efficiency to morale.

Committee then pointed out the services ignorance of differenced among individuals and consequent waste of manpower.

On the whole the Fahy Committee was satisfied that the Navy integration program was a reality.

## Chapter 12

### Integration in Everyday Practice

(A) The Navy is discovering that Social equality is an inevitable result equal treatment and opportunity.

The Navy has not been troubled with many problems involving social relationships ~~xxx~~ among personnel since the advent of integration.

Those that have been reported were sufficiently serious to endanger the overall aims of the policy of integration. Integration is here to stay, according to the Negro personnel interviewed. The Caucasian members of the U. S. Navy as a whole favored the policy of integration.

## Chapter 13

### Public Relations

(A) The Negro press carries Navy news and information material and presents to the Naval authorities reports of discrimination contrary to Naval racial policy.

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The Navy in turn gives immediate consideration to such infractions and keeps the press informed of its investigations and findings. The press reports the outcome of these incidents in a fair and unbiased fashion. The harmony is a fair index of the success of integration.

- (B) In conclusion it must be said that the Negro press goes and will go more than half the way in promoting and encouraging the aims of the integrated U. S. Navy.

#### Chapter 11 - Conclusion

- (A) The philosophy motivating the U. S. Navy's racial policy is the production of a better sailor and a more useful citizen. In the U.S.N. the emphasis is on the individual effort and abilities of each ~~EX~~ man.
- (B) The Navy is the first of the military services to treat minority groups within the service as first classed citizens with no encumbering reservations.
- (C) The accruing results in qualified, efficient personnel working in harmony with others have unquestionably justified the program of integration.
- (D) Those who attempted to maintain "status quo" in race relations face increasing pressure for national social reforms.
- (E) The U.S.Navy has rejected the feasibility of the gradual process of education and social improvements when thinking of race problems. Rather, the U.S.N. holds that the social reforms and intelligent selection of personnel relieves the pressures that make for racial rivalry and antagonism.
- (F) It is agreed that there cannot be complete elimination of segregation and discrimination over night. The Navy is cognizant of this.

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- (G) Democracy cannot go to battle against Communism with ideas of race superiority.
- (H) The Negro public is gratified to learn that integration in the U.S.N. is continuously progressive. Now Negroes take an active non-servile role in the U.S.N. at home and overseas.
- (I) At this date (1950) 21 Negro officers were serving in the various capacities in the U.S.N. The Navy is growing through social reforms and the Negro is growing with it. Integration is the best and most economical solution of the race problem.
- (J) The present plan is not infallible and admittedly ~~XXXX~~ far from perfect, but barriers and traditional problems long endemic to the U.S.N. have been substantially removed.

It is assumed that the Navy will continue to face racial issues and its policy responsibilities with honest endeavor and fortitude.

Note: This book was prepared as a thesis for a doctor's degree at Howard University, Washington, D. C., by Dennis D. Nelson, LT, USN.

*This rough draft submitted by  
Dennis B. Nelson*

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## The Negro's 'new' status in the U.S. Navy

**THE INTEGRATION OF THE NEGRO INTO THE U.S. NAVY.** By Lt. Dennis D. Nelson. Farrar, Straus & Young. 238 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by Robert Friedman

IT WAS an unenviable task the lieutenant chose, that of documenting his claim that the Navy brass is committed to a policy of ending segregation.

The author, himself a Negro, can cite chapter and verse in his sharp and detailed indictment of past anti-Negro actions of the Navy high command. But the best he can do for evidence of the new, allegedly non-segregated Navy is to quote the official orders "ending" jimcrow.

The printed decrees and the actual facts, however, are not quite the same thing. Even Lt. Nelson acknowledges that the new policy was wrung from the Navy brass by public pressure, as clear an indication as possible that there has never been a change in the admirals' hearts.

It is also clear that his book was written to try and sell the Navy, the Korean war and the Truman war policy to the Negro people. It carries the imprimatur of Rear Adm. T. L. Sprague, head of the Bureau of Personnel, who in a preface calls it "objective and accurate."

Lt. Nelson records the history of segregation in the Navy, with special emphasis on the events of World War II. He writes with an indignation and contempt for the supremacists which is in jarring contradiction to his lush tribute to such men as former Secretary of the Navy Matthews, who publicly called for a surprise atomic attack on the Soviet Union, and his endorsement of the Truman foreign policy.

The author complains that "the

Communists are attempting—with marked success—to prove that the conflict (in Korea) is basically racial." The fact is, of course, that it is the Truman-Wall Street gang which is doing the proving, as the author acknowledges by criticizing the widespread use of the racist epithet "gook."

The fact is, too, that it was 54 Negro soldiers, not the Communists, who wrote to The Pittsburgh Courier that "it looks to us like this war is strictly the rich white supremacists' war."

It was these Negro GIs who asked: "Can the U.S. possibly bring freedom to other colored countries if we are not free at home? You cannot give them what you have not got."

Lt. Nelson makes the defensive point that the Navy can't end oppression of the Negro in the country, it can only do it in the Navy. But this is specious evasion of the truth that the Navy—and the Army—are part and parcel of the American way of life, that the Pentagon brass is inseparable from the racism which stamps the capitalist system, whose governmental center, appropriately enough—is jimcrow Washington.

Against the vigor of this indictment, Lt. Nelson's brave new world of "integration" in the Navy looks pretty feeble.

In 1948, President Truman set up the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces. There were at that time four Negro officers on active duty in the entire U.S. Navy. On Jan. 1, 1950, after the alleged reformation of the admirals, there was the tremendous total of 17, including two nurses and nine reservists.

If this is equality of treatment and opportunity, it is the kind that few white supremacists will violently oppose.

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