

Guide to the Microfilm
Edition of

BLACKS IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES

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INTRODUCTION

These volumes contain what we consider to be the basic documents that define and illustrate the status of blacks in the armed forces from colonial days until the end of the Vietnam War. Three major themes emerge during this period of almost 350 years. First, when in need of manpower, the armed forces, for entirely practical reasons, turned to the Negro. Second, influential individuals, acting on principle but usually arguing in terms of increased military efficiency, prodded the armed forces toward acceptance of blacks and whites as equals. Third, the black community, gathering strength and self-awareness, succeeded in exerting strong if sometimes indirect pressure upon personnel policies within the armed forces.

The story of blacks in the armed forces is not an account of slow, steady progress from exclusion to limited, segregated service, and finally to equal treatment and opportunity with whites. At times, the accomplishments of decades vanished within a few years; for example, the Jim Crow era, beginning about 1890, caused the Navy to reverse a policy of racially integrated crews that had begun in the War of 1812. For the Army, the fruits of Jim Crow included the Brownsville Affray, the Houston Riot, and the restricted use of black soldiers in World War I combat. After the armistice, blacks found few opportunities in the small peacetime defense establishment. The need for manpower during World War II and reliance on Selective Service brought many Negroes into the services, but the return of peace signaled a revival of limited and segregated duty. Not until the early 1950s did pressure from a presidential committee and the need for combat troops in Korea force the Army and Marine Corps to accept racial integration.

These volumes should also help explain how a major American institution responded to a fundamental challenge to American society, the struggle for minority rights. Although the services share the prejudices and shortsightedness that have bedeviled the country, as well as the compensating impulses toward decency and fairness, they have never mirrored American society as some leaders have claimed. They are obviously demographically different, and unlike civilian society they are disciplined organizations, able to control the behavior if not the attitudes of their members.

Our approach to this complex story of the quest for minority rights and the countervailing forces of prejudice and discrimination has been to employ the development and execution of official policy as a unifying theme. To keep our compilation within manageable bounds, we have not attempted to document in any detail the discrimination suffered by blacks in the service or to trace the growth of those civil rights organizations and movements that fought discrimination. We have concentrated on developments within the governmental institutions themselves as these agencies reacted to complaints of discrimination lodged by servicemen or civilians interested in the cause of civil rights.

We have focused our attention on materials generated by officials of the federal government, except when these official documents fail to reflect the forces that brought them into existence. As a result, we have sometimes included background material—such as articles from *The Crisis*, a publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—that illustrate the changing concerns and growing influence of blacks themselves. Also useful in identifying motives and underlying causes are the excerpts we have chosen from Congressional documents.

The evolution of policy, our primary concern, did not take place in a vacuum. We have, therefore, included documents that attempt to measure the effectiveness of official policy, such as reports by the commanders of black units, evaluations of the combat effectiveness of these organizations, surveys of racial attitudes, and accounts of racial friction within the services and

between black servicemen and white civilians. Particularly in the post-World War II era, the selection of those documents best illustrating the changing status of black servicemen required the sifting of literally thousands of files. To flesh out the complicated story we have added documents that reflect the bureaucratic give and take that is an essential part of the development of new policies and practices in large institutions. Because the status of blacks continues to evolve, we have ended the collection with materials that point out problems yet to be solved.

If we were inundated with materials in some areas, we were less fortunate in others. Despite the presence of one difficult-to-obtain document—"The History of the Negro in the United States Navy," which is part of an unpublished administrative history of the Navy in World War II—our coverage of the Navy has a number of gaps. Future researchers may unearth the documents missing from the service's early files, but the confidential correspondence of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, a vital source of information concerning racial policy during and immediately after World War II, was lost forever when the collection was accidentally destroyed.

Although the sources for all documents are listed in the calendars accompanying each volume, three sources deserve special mention. The most fruitful source for the earlier period is *The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639-1886*, a collection numbering some 5,000 pages and containing both copies and original documents that are essential to any serious study of the subject. The compilation was finished in 1888 under the direction of Elon A. Woodward, Chief of the Colored Troops Division, Adjutant General's Office.

The Navy and Old Army and Modern Military Branches of the National Archives and Records Service are responsible for most of the official records dealing with blacks in the armed forces before 1950. These materials are scattered among a bewildering number of collections, keyed to the everchanging internal organization of the defense establishment. Although other collections and depositories contain vital documents, particularly for the period after 1950, these components of the National Archives remain the truly essential source for this study.

Another major source of documents for this collection has been the files of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services (the Fahy Committee) on deposit at the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. The papers tracing the work of the Fahy Committee constitute an important chapter in the fight for integration, and the testimony given before the committee, perhaps the rarest item in our collection, provides insight into the extreme complexity of race relations in the services during World War II and immediately afterward. The committee's testimony also contains the best available account of the wartime racial practices in the U.S. Coast Guard.

Three points should be made concerning the physical appearance of the documents in these volumes. Most are reproductions of the original or the official file copy. It should be noted that file copies are often so marked and usually dispense with the letterheads and signature blocks associated with official correspondence. In some rare instances we have included typed copies of documents whose condition defied current photocopying techniques. In some cases, we found it necessary to crop those pages that bore irrelevant marks—doodling or type faded through from other pages—or were badly frayed. Surgery of this sort was performed most frequently on the many Disposition Forms, the DFs or buck slips used incessantly by the modern-day military staffs. In all cases, however, we have indicated the sender and recipient.

Some documents included in our collection have been reproduced without all the indicated tabs or enclosures. In some instances these attachments have been included as separate entries; in others the enclosures proved to be of peripheral interest and were dropped to save space. In a few rare cases, the enclosures are missing because they have strayed beyond the archivists' ability to retrieve them.

Again in the interest of saving space we have freely used extracts in place of whole documents when only part of a lengthy paper concerns the status of black servicemen. This has been particularly true in the case of military circulars, orders, and staff reports.

A compilation of this size and scope obviously depends to a large degree on the expertise and good will of many people. Our thanks go particularly to the staff of the National Archives and Records Service, especially William H. Cunliffe, Timothy K. Nenner, Dale E. Floyd, Gibson B. Smith, and Carrie B. Lee; to John Slonaker at the U.S. Army Military History Research Collection; to Mary Wolfskill at the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress; to Benedict K. Zobrist, Director of the Harry S. Truman Library; and to the staff of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, especially the editor of its publication *The Crisis*, Warren Marr, II, for its extensive cooperation and permission to reprint special NAACP materials.

The staffs of the historical offices of the four services were consistently supportive in regard to this project. We would especially like to thank Lt. Colonel James J. Steinbach, Joseph K. Mosley, and Hannah M. Zeidlik of the U.S. Army's Center of Military History; Dean C. Allard, Kathleen M. Lloyd, and Walter B. Greenwood of the U.S. Naval Historical Center; George M. Watson, Jr., of the Office of Air Force History; and Ralph W. Donnelly of the Office of Marine Corps History and Museums.

The Massachusetts State Historical Society, Maryland Historical Society, the Association of Graduates, U.S. Military Academy, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library have also generously made documents available.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the publishers, editors, and technicians at Scholarly Resources, especially Jean L. Adams, T. Wistar Brown, Helen Cripe, Eileen Daney, Michael Glazier, and James Preston, who were responsible for the skillful production of these complicated volumes.

Finally we would like to dedicate these volumes to the memory of those black servicemen and women who struggled so long against discrimination at home so that they might defend their country.

Preface to Volume I

From colonial times until the outbreak of the Civil War, American Negroes, whether slave or free, provided a source of manpower in time of emergency. Usually, colonial governments employed these men as unarmed auxiliaries, but black militiamen did fight in the French and Indian War. By the time the American Revolution erupted, most colonies expected militia service from all free men, whether black or white.

When war came, both British and American forces attempted to enlist blacks. The royal governor of Virginia held out the promise of freedom to those slaves who would serve under his command, while the rebel forces concentrated at first upon recruiting free Negroes, using slaves mainly as laborers. The British experiment failed, however, and as the revolution dragged on, both the continental armed forces and the various militia units proved willing to accept slaves as auxiliaries if not as soldiers. A majority of those blacks who served against the British carried out their duties on land, though some saw action in warships, coastal schooners, or privateers.

After helping the United States gain its freedom, the Negro found himself excluded from the armed forces. The first departure from this policy occurred in Louisiana, where members of a black militia organized under Spanish rule served for a time under the American flag and later provided the nucleus of black volunteer units raised in 1814 by Andrew Jackson to defend New Orleans against the British. Following Jackson's victory, the U.S. Army reverted to its policy of excluding Negroes.

The Navy, though not the Marine Corps, began recruiting free Negroes during the War of 1812. Racially mixed crews continued to man American warships after the conflict had ended. Indeed, the Navy came to establish a 5 percent quota for black recruits.

Preface to Volume II

During the Civil War, both North and South tapped the reservoir of black manpower, but the Confederacy moved gingerly, haunted by fear of a slave uprising. Although willing to employ slaves as military laborers, Confederate leaders were reluctant to go further, even spurning a Louisiana militia unit made up of free Negroes. The government ignored several recommendations for enlisting slaves, refusing to admit the necessity for arming them until defeat was certain.

When the war began, the North had no national policy toward Negroes freed by its armed forces. Some generals, particularly John C. Fremont and David Hunter, emancipated slaves whose masters were in rebellion against the authority of the United States. Others, among them Thomas W. Sherman and John A. Dix, refused at first to disturb the institution of slavery in conquered territory. As the months passed, Northern leaders saw that a long and bloody conflict lay ahead and that the freedmen could help fight that war.

Eagerness to draw upon a convenient source of manpower combined with idealism to persuade the Union to enroll freed slaves, first as laborers and later as soldiers. In July 1862, Congress directed the War Department to begin accepting black enlistees, formally reversing a policy that had existed since the Army was first established. Despite inequities in pay that persisted until the final months of the war, as many as 200,000 blacks joined the U. S. Colored Troops, where they served under white officers.

Approximately 29,000 Negroes enlisted in the Union Navy. Some of them were veterans of the peacetime service, signing on for another tour. Others were freedmen, who usually stoked fireboxes or loaded coal but sometimes served as pilots on blockading warships or river gunboats.

Preface to Volume III

After the disbanding of the Union volunteer regiments at the end of the Civil War, Congress authorized the inclusion of four black regiments, two infantry and two cavalry, in a reorganized regular Army. Proposals to form artillery regiments failed, however, because military leaders doubted that Negroes were intelligent enough for this arm of the service. No black artillery unit was organized during the nineteenth century, although the Signal Corps and Hospital Corps came to accept Negroes.

A few blacks attended the service academies, where they sometimes underwent savage hazing. The command hierarchy showed little understanding of their plight. To obtain an insight into the status of the black cadet, compare "The Freedman at West Point and in the Army," in the *Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1880*, with John F. Marszalek, Jr., *Court-Martial: A Black Man in America*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972. Both deal with the court-martial of Cadet Johnson C. Whittaker.

The four black regiments generally served at the more remote military posts, with the cavalry putting in long tours in the Southwest. The policy of concentrating blacks in racially segregated units slowed promotions for the Negro career soldier and frustrated efforts by qualified sergeants to obtain commissions. General William Tecumseh Sherman, for one, held that the Army should follow the Navy's policy of making assignments without regard to race. Shortly after Sherman made this observation, the Navy's attitude began changing. Signs of racial friction began appearing. The stirrings of discontent coincided with the coming of Jim Crow and its thoroughgoing racial segregation, which soon fastened itself upon much of the nation.

Paradoxically, the number of black military units increased at the same time that Jim Crow was gathering strength. To fight the Spanish-American War, Congress authorized four regiments of black volunteers, with black officers. Other Negro units were furnished by the states. Among those providing black militia for wartime service were Alabama, North Carolina, Virginia, and Kansas. The success of Negro soldiers—whether in state units, the U. S. Volunteers, or the four regular regiments—caused agitation for additional black organizations, including artillery. Despite the urging of leaders such as Emmet Scott and Booker T. Washington, the Army maintained its basic racial policy.

Local Jim Crow laws turned Texas into what one officer described as a "quasi-battleground" for the black soldier. At Brownsville in 1906, several armed men shot up the town, killing one white citizen and wounding another. Undeterred by fragile and conflicting evidence, the Army fixed the blame upon 167 members of the 25th Infantry. These men, judged guilty of either firing the shots or engaging in a "conspiracy of silence" to conceal the criminals, received dishonorable discharges. The injustice went uncorrected until 1972, when all but one of the men were dead.

At Houston in 1917, Jim Crow laws, brutally enforced by local police, triggered a riot that claimed the lives of sixteen whites, four of them policemen, and four black soldiers. Court-martials tried 118 members of the 24th Infantry, acquitting only eight of them. Nineteen were hanged, and sixty-three sentenced to life imprisonment.

The Navy was now segregating its enlisted force, refusing to assign Negroes as seamen. Except for a few veteran petty officers, blacks served exclusively in firerooms and galleys. By 1913, when the Navy paraded in New York, only the deck divisions took part and no blacks were seen.

Preface to Volume IV

Between America's entry into World War I and the beginning of rearmament for the Second World War, the attitude of the nation's black leaders began changing. In spite of the Houston Riot and the executions that followed so swiftly afterward, the leadership of that time urged black Americans to participate in the war effort in order to demonstrate their loyalty and undermine the Jim Crow system. On the eve of the second war, however, black spokesmen were talking in terms of an offensive against uniformed racism. Mustering their growing political strength, Negroes enlisted enough Congressional support to obtain a variety of concessions, though segregation continued to reign throughout the armed forces.

This as yet hesitant militancy originated in the experiences of those Negroes who answered their country's call during World War I. Of some 380,000 black soldiers, only one in nine served in a combat unit; the others were uniformed laborers. About 1200 Negroes received wartime commissions; they made up less than 1 percent of the officer corps, even though 13 percent of the Army's enlisted strength was black. Negroes served in segregated units and suffered all the attendant indignities. W. E. B. Du Bois, the black sociologist and editor of *The Crisis*, official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, carefully documented the treatment accorded the Negro soldier.

During World War I, roughly 1 percent of the Navy's enlisted strength was black. There was not one Negro naval officer and there were no black Marines. Like the Army, the postwar Navy saw no need to depart radically from its World War I racial policy in planning for the possibility of some future conflict.

Preface to Volume V

Throughout World War II, the Army clung to the policy of racial segregation formalized in the War College studies of the 1920s. With the passage of the Selective Service Act in 1940, civil rights activists began urging Negroes to support the defense effort in order to strike a blow against segregation and racial discrimination. The Army General Staff, however, continued to endorse segregation, citing lessons learned from World War I and warning against social experimentation that might weaken the military in time of national emergency.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who sought to retain the support of black voters, arranged a compromise between civilian activists and uniformed conservatives. In effect, the Army remained free to establish segregated units, though it agreed to accept Negroes for all combat and service branches, including aviation. The President appointed a few Negroes to important posts—Colonel Benjamin Davis, for example, became the first black general officer, and William H. Hastie, dean of the Howard University School of Law, became the War Department's principal adviser on matters affecting Negroes. This compromise failed either to satisfy the foes of segregation or to meet the manpower needs of a wartime Army.

Preface to Volume VI

The Navy's experience in World War II provided the history of race relations in the armed forces with one of its most dramatic changes. Possessed in early 1942 of but a small group of black stewards, the Navy had acquired some 167,000 black personnel, including 73 officers, by V-J Day. A significant number of these black officers and men were serving in integrated occupations, and all were being trained in integrated classes.

Although the Navy's racial change was more dramatic than that of the wartime Army, the impulse for change was remarkably similar in both services. Like the Army, the Navy was reacting to pressure from President Roosevelt, who in turn was reacting to the demands of black leaders who deeply resented the Navy's exclusion policy. The President demanded that the Navy accept more Negroes and enlarge the number of occupations opened to them. Again like the Army, the Navy found that once it was compelled to rely exclusively on the draft for its manpower, the percentage of blacks in its ranks increased rapidly.

Still, the speed and extent of racial change in the wartime Navy was unique, a product of the Navy's size and mission. Where the much larger Army could go on almost indefinitely multiplying segregated units for all sorts of combat and service assignments, the Navy found it impossible to create enough land-based segregated jobs for its black personnel. Quite early in the war the segregated black naval units, such as ammunition depots and base companies serving for the most part well outside the battle zones, experienced the same racial tension that was causing disturbances in the Army. When an experiment proved all-black combat ships impractical, a new Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal, decided to begin integrating black personnel into the fleet. Integration had already begun in the Navy's training programs, where the smaller size of the classes made it prohibitively expensive to retain segregation. Before the war ended, all naval training, including recruit training, had been quietly integrated.

Although components of the Navy Department and obliged by the same decision to accept black personnel, the Marine Corps and the wartime Coast Guard developed quite different racial practices. The Marine Corps had never enlisted Negroes in its long history. In 1942 it agreed to enlist a small number of blacks to serve in a segregated system modeled on the Army's. Although the Corps would eventually recruit more than 19,000 black Marines for wartime service, its segregation policy endured with little change well into the postwar era.

The Coast Guard had accepted Negroes long before World War II, but most of these men had served at isolated lighthouses or small lifesaving stations. With the coming of war, the Coast Guard began to accept its share of the nation's black manpower, although at first Negroes were limited in numbers and types of assignment. When Selective Service began assigning large numbers of Negroes, the Coast Guard hurriedly organized a stewards' branch. Most Negroes served in this specialty, but enough of them developed less narrow skills to convince the Coast Guard that its efficiency would improve if individual Negroes were assigned to ships. The cutter *Sea Cloud* patrolled the Atlantic with a racially integrated crew that included black officers, petty officers, and seamen. After the war the Coast Guard reverted to its peacetime status within the Treasury Department. An account of the Coast Guard's wartime experience with black personnel is included in the testimony before the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in Volume XI.

Preface to Volume VII

The precise status of Negroes in the postwar Army and Navy remained undetermined at the end of World War II. Although the first steps in the long journey toward equal treatment could be discerned in both services' wartime racial practices, the opportunities open to Negroes had remained limited throughout that conflict and their assignment to segregated service units was the general rule. To what extent these policies might be changed in the postwar period would depend not only on how military officials evaluated the wartime record of black servicemen, but also on how these officials would react to the ideological and political factors that were shaping postwar America. Several of these factors combined to ensure that at the very least the services would not return to their prewar racial policies. These included the renewed veneration of democratic ideals generated by the war; the rising political strength of the black community associated with its increased urbanization; and the growing awareness in the services that military manpower was a limited commodity and in future wars would be subject to the strictures of a democratic selective service system.

Preface to Volume VIII

Each of the services emerged from the postwar period with racial policies that proclaimed in varying degrees equality of treatment and opportunity for black servicemen. The Army and Air Force, which became a separate service in 1947, for example, guaranteed that Negroes would be enlisted in significant numbers (at least 10 percent of the services' total populations), that specialized training would be made available to those eligible, and that specialists would be at times assigned jobs that used their skills without regard to race. The Navy offered a similar guarantee to blacks eligible for assignments in the general service, that is, in all branches of the Navy except the stewards', which required a special and separate enlistment contract. Under these policies the black portion of the nation's military population remained about the same as its wartime percentages, and many hundreds of Negroes served without distinction being made because of race.

These men, however, comprised a small minority, for in fact all the services interpreted their racial policies in a way that systematically imposed segregation on the great majority of black personnel. This was accomplished in a variety of ways. The Navy accepted most black enlistees for the stewards' branch. The larger Army and Air Force assigned most Negroes to segregated units, theoretically unlimited in the variety of job opportunities and training but limited, in fact, to the few positions available in these black organizations. The Marine Corps not only reduced its black strength to a token representation, but in making this reduction also abolished all black combat units. Black Marines were then relegated to service and guard detachments.

The services justified this type of segregation, inherently unequal in terms of treatment and opportunity, in the name of military efficiency, arguing that the fewer the number of black servicemen, the less the military would be burdened by the inept and unteachable. Segregation, they insisted, spared blacks the humiliation and resentment that would result inevitably from competition with whites. As one five-star general observed, the services were a mirror of American society, and it was important that they reflect precisely the social mores of that society.

When the services tried to maintain segregation and at the same time carry out their postwar commitment to black servicemen, military efficiency suffered. It was impossible, they discovered, to achieve any semblance of equal opportunity within segregated black units, and personnel planners quickly gave up the struggle. In the end a limited number of Negroes served in a limited number of segregated occupations. Consequently, a major aim of peacetime service—the training of cadres for the kind of mobilization believed necessary for another war—was frustrated.

Of even more pressing concern to the first Secretary of Defense, James V. Forrestal, who took charge of the newly combined military establishment in 1947, were the continuing protests of the increasingly powerful civil rights organizations. Although Forrestal was working for a genuine but gradual improvement in the lot of black servicemen, his plans did not satisfy the nation's black leadership, whose demands for integrated and unlimited service were beginning to receive a sympathetic hearing within the Truman administration. In contrast, many of Forrestal's military and civilian subordinates clung to traditions and prejudices that caused them to resist racial change. In the end Forrestal's philosophy of gradualism failed and the President felt compelled to intervene.

Preface to Volumes IX, X, XI

President Harry S. Truman appointed a committee, headed by Charles Fahy, to oversee the implementation of his executive order forbidding racial discrimination in the armed forces. This body, The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, was slow in taking up its duties. Previous professional commitments kept Fahy from assuming the chairmanship and convening the committee until January 1949, some six months after its establishment in Executive Order 9981.

The Fahy committee's investigation centered around a series of public meetings during which its members heard testimony concerning the status of Negroes in the services and the policies that had determined this condition. Those who appeared before the group included service representatives, members of organizations interested in racial equality, and former government officials. As a result, the committee sessions provided the most comprehensive review yet produced of racial matters within the armed forces.

The investigation also caused a gradual change in the way in which the committee itself came to interpret the Executive Order. Equality of treatment and opportunity, the committee decided, demanded an end to segregation in the armed forces. By its reiteration of this position, the committee removed all vestiges of legitimacy from the old service argument that separate (segregated) but equal service fulfilled the Executive Order.

Although Chairman Fahy negotiated directly with the services and reported periodically to President Truman, his committee depended on the cooperation of the Secretary of Defense. Both James Forrestal and Louis Johnson, who succeeded Forrestal in March 1949, retained a close and active interest in the committee's proceedings. Both reserved the right to grant formal approval to the service regulations governing equality of treatment and opportunity. At first the Secretary of Defense recognized the committee's right to review and approve these service submissions, but in the protracted negotiations that surrounded the development of an acceptable Army program, Mr. Johnson tried to curb the Fahy group's power. Only after Fahy appealed to the White House was the committee's right to review the service programs before their approval reasserted.

The first plan accepted by both the committee and Secretary Johnson was that offered by the Air Force. Actually, this proposal had been completed when the Fahy committee first met. Stuart Symington, the service secretary, had postponed implementation so that a joint proposal could be devised with the Army. The Air Force and Army policies proved so different, however, that a common position was not possible, and Secretary Symington submitted the existing plan.

The Navy shared the Air Force view that racial segregation represented a waste of manpower. The existence of a separate stewards' branch and a resulting lack of confidence among Negroes in the Navy's good intentions delayed the formulation of a plan acceptable to Secretary Johnson. At the committee's suggestion, the Navy agreed that a chief steward should hold the rank of petty officer and that a special effort was needed to enroll blacks in the Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps.

The months of painstaking negotiation with the Army marked the central drama of the committee's existence. The major points of contention between the two centered around the committee's demand that the Army abandon its enlistment quota based on race and provide Negroes with equal access to military schooling and equal opportunity to military assignments. The committee believed that if these provisions were put into effect simultaneously the integration of the Army would be assured. The Army yielded on the first two points, and on the third the committee agreed to a quota based on General Classification Test (GCT) scores in place of the racial quota. This compromise was aimed at removing racial barriers while accepting the Army's proposition that it must be protected from an overwhelming number of marginal personnel. After approving all these agreements between the committee and the services, the President dismissed the Fahy group saying that now the services must be allowed to carry out their programs without outside supervision.

Preface to Volume XII

When it finally came, the integration of the units of the active armed forces was accomplished with reasonable speed. Even using the exacting definition of integration demanded in defense department reports, that is, no military unit could count more than 49 percent of its personnel as black, less than sixty months would elapse between the breakup of the all-black air units at Lockbourne and the Department of Defense's announcement that the last all-black Army unit had been abolished.

Actually all the services had precedents to guide them in this momentous change. The Navy had already integrated its general service, although the majority of its black personnel continued to serve in the separate, non-white stewards' branch. All the services had integrated their basic training programs long before their regular units were racially mixed, and all had integrated officer training programs dating back at least to World War II. Further, the evidence suggests that in addition to the limited integration in the Army's overhead units by the Gillem Board, considerable unofficial integration had occurred as a result of training requirements and battlefield emergencies.

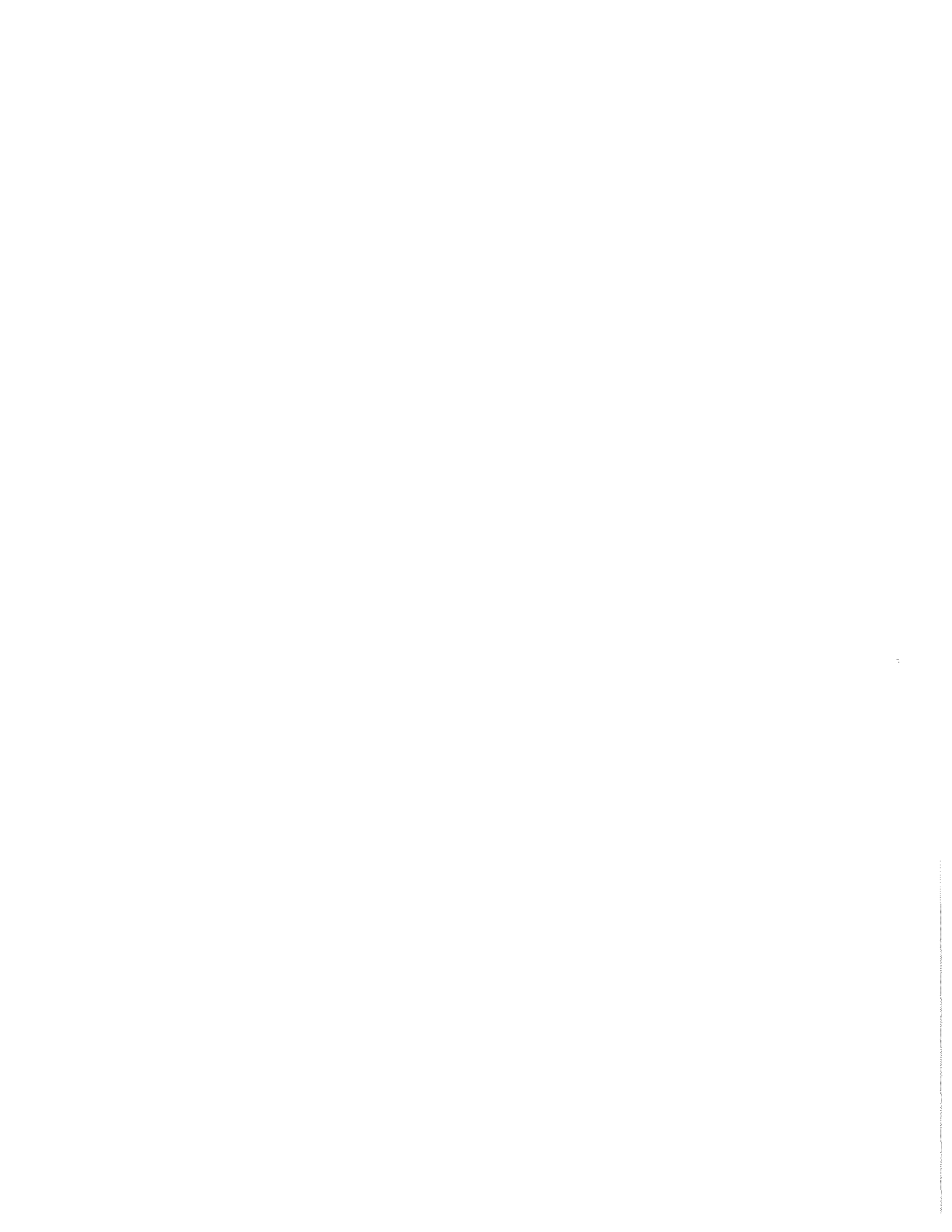
If the integration of men in the active forces was an easy process, the realization of President Truman's equality of treatment and opportunity was not. Both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations wrestled with the complicated problem of providing equality for black personnel in communities where segregation still carried the force of law. In their struggle to define a proper racial policy for the defense establishment, officials found themselves trapped between the reluctance of the military leaders to intervene in what traditionally were purely civilian concerns and the rising expectations of the emerging civil rights movement.

Preface to Volume XIII

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara issued a directive on equal treatment and opportunity in the armed forces in July 1963 that set the direction of the defense department's racial policy for more than a decade. In spelling out how the services would work to end the widespread discrimination against black servicemen in the civilian community and the lingering racial inequities within the services themselves, McNamara was responding to the recommendations of a presidential committee that had recently concluded a comprehensive investigation of the status of Negroes in the armed forces. Of great importance, the committee had also demonstrated the connection between racial discrimination and troop morale, thereby equating equal treatment and opportunity with military efficiency.

McNamara's directive preceded the major racial legislation of the 1960s, and, at first, the services had to depend exclusively on the influence of the local commander to achieve changes in the racial practices of the civilian communities. This technique produced some remarkable successes in improving the lot of black servicemen and their families, but many of the services' greatest achievements owed much to the 1964 civil rights act and subsequent legislation. In his campaign against discrimination in housing, for example, McNamara could depend on the weight of federal law. The open housing campaign also saw for the first time the Secretary of Defense throw the economic might of his department into the fray, declaring the property of discriminating landlords off-limits in several test areas.

The struggle against discrimination outside the military reservation was generally successful, but efforts to eliminate the lingering, and more subtle, discrimination within the services failed to head off growing dissatisfaction among black servicemen. The end of the 1960s witnessed the return of racial unrest and violence. As the services came to appreciate the complexity of their task, they began to develop new techniques and new formulas for dealing with this persistent social problem.



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ARMED FORCES: Basic Documents

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BLACKS IN THE UNITED STATES
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