

LETTER FROM AN AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIER.

This edited letter titled, "And I Fight for Democracy?," and dated November 5, 1943, was sent to the Secretary of War in Washington, D.C., and was signed, "A Loyal Negro Soldier."

I was selected by the President and citizens to fight for a "now – existing Democracy." I am one soldier who waited to be drafted.* I didn't volunteer out. I am learning to fight to protect whatever cause for which the Allies* are fighting. I am forced to learn to be ready to kill or be killed for "Democracy." When the fighting time arrives, I will fight for?

I learned early in life that for the Negro* there is no Democracy. Of course, I know the principles set forth in the Amendments of the Bill of Rights.* I learned that I knew nothing of the operation of a true democratic form of government. I found that a Negro in civilian life has a very tough time with segregation* in public places and discrimination in industry. I knew this and I thought that white people would react differently toward a colored* soldier.

I had heard and read of the cruel treatment given colored soldiers and somehow, even among existing conditions of civilian life. I couldn't understand how white people could be so down on one who wears the uniform of the fighting forces of this country. From civilian life I was drafted, and now I prepare to fight for the continuation of discriminatory practices against me and my people.

I am a soldier; I made no answer but deep down inside I knew when I faced America's enemies I will fight for the protection of my loved ones at home.

Listen, Negro America, I am writing this article believing that it will act as a stimulant. You need awakening. Many of you have come to realize that your race is fighting on the battlefields of the world but do you know why they fight? I can answer this question.

The fight on the battlefield is for your existence, not for Democracy. It is upon you that each soldier depends. In my fight, my thoughts will invariably return to you who can fight from Democracy. You must do this for the soldiers because Democracy will be, and Democracy must, must be won at home – not on battlefields but through your bringing pressure to bear on Congress.

*Have students research and discuss these terms.

Reproduced in *Phillip McGuire, Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters From Black Soldiers in World War II* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-Clio, 1983), 85, 87.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Discuss this soldier's assertion that "for the Negro there is no Democracy."
2. What were some of the connections, if any, between fighting for democracy on the battlefield and at home?

LETTER FROM AN AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHER.

"Georgia," the mother of a nine-year-old son, wrote this letter in 1943.

This is my problem – keeping alive in him that pride and eagerness to help his country win this war. I have read much about the tasks and duties of mothers in wartime. Mine is a big job – much bigger than that of some mothers, for I am a Negro mother, and first, in order to keep that pride and love of his country alive in the heart of my little boy, I've got to fight against the resentment and discouragement that wells up sometimes in my own heart.

The fanatics* in my own race almost cause me to waver at times. They say: "What are we fighting for? If we help win the war, we will continue to be kicked around, discriminated against, denied the right to make a decent living."

I have faith in the goodness of America, because I'm an American.

Yes, I have faith in America, and I love it. I believe in it in spite of the fanatics. I believe that America will eventually wipe out this challenge to her democracy, and that the time will come when no person need fear that he cannot become a truly great American because of race, color or creed.* I believe that after we win this war, we will emerge as an even greater nation. I will keep this faith alive in my own heart, and in the heart of my little boy.

*Have students define and discuss these terms.

As quoted in *Maureen Honey (ed.), Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War II* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Discuss "Georgia's" claim, "Mine is a big job – bigger than that of some mothers, for I am a Negro mother."
2. Has "Georgia's" belief that America would become truly democratic been fulfilled? (She predicted this in 1943.)

3475th Q. M. Trk Co.
Fort Ord Calif.
November 10, 1942

Mr. William H. Hastie

Dear Sir:

It has been several months since we have passed the necessary examination and approval of the Cadet Examining Board to qualify as an aviation Cadet.

During the Course of our examination we were stationed at Fort Sill, Okla, at which time several other soldiers took the examinations and have since then received their transfers to the Air Corp; but for some unknown reason we have not received ours.

Sir, we are college men and have had Senior R.O.T.C. training. We were also members of the Enlisted Reserve Corp. Since completing our basic training in Field Artillery we have been transferred to Fort Ord California to do basic training in the Quartermaster Corp. It seems, sir, as if we are going from one basic training to another and getting no nearer to the Air Corp. We are writing you hoping you may be able to give us either and or information so as to hasten our transfer to the Air Corp. It seems with aviation playing the vital part it is we should have hardly any trouble getting in. Our papers are in Washington awaiting disposition, as is the case of all Negro applicants. We hope you can help us. We close now awaiting your answer.

Respectfully,

Pvt. Rufus R. Johnson 15317492
Pvt. Emory A. James 15317509
Pvt. Jack Housen 15317527



EXECUTIVE ORDER 8802

FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE
IN DEFENSE INDUSTRIES

. I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or Government because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations, in furtherance of said policy and of this order, to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Franklin D. Roosevelt".

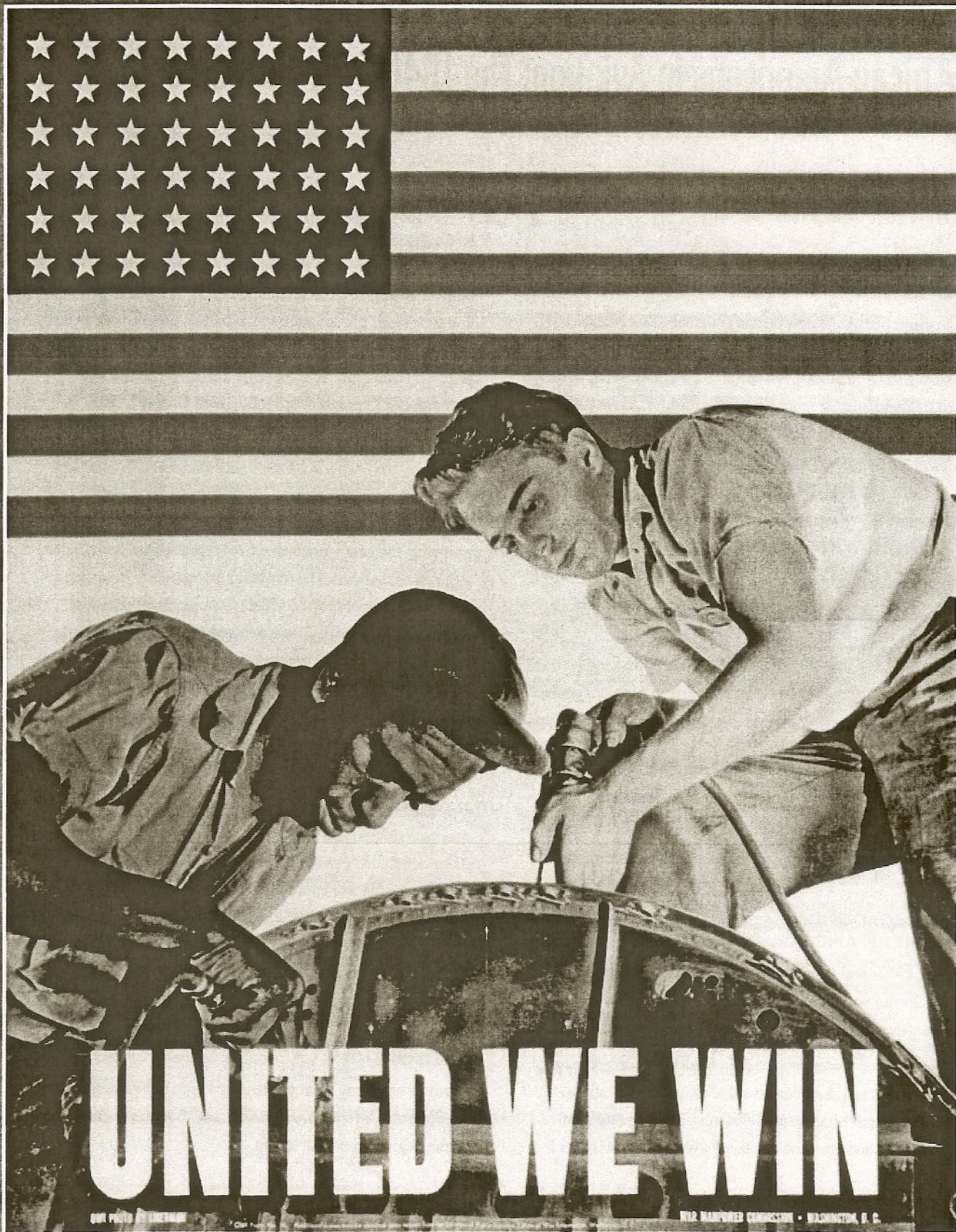
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE WHITE HOUSE
June 25, 1941**Excerpt from Executive Order 8802*

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1941 O - 44000

African Americans in Aviation: The 1940s—A Decade of Change

PRACTICING HISTORY WITH PRIMARY SOURCES



UNITED WE WIN

UNIT PHOTO BY [unreadable]

WAR RAMPARTS COMMISSION • WASHINGTON, D. C.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This poster is made possible by the generous support of the Garrigue E. Mabry Charitable Foundation. Coordinated by Linda O'Flaherty with Mary Mitchell, researcher Geoff Krasner, the script and production. © 2009 the National Air and Space Museum. The Museum is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily. For more information on this program or to schedule a School Program, please contact the Museum's Education Office at (202) 328-7200 or visit the Museum's website at www.nasm.si.edu. Additional resources regarding African Americans in Aviation are available on the Museum's website at www.nasm.si.edu/african.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 1942

The Pittsburgh Courier

PAGE 1078

These Men Developed The "Double V" Idea

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Pittsburgh Courier's "Double V" idea, created in the mind of James G. Thompson of Wichita, Kansas, and brought to glowing light through the brilliant pen of Wilbert L. Holloway, Courier staff artist, has swept the nation like wildfire.

January 31, is reprinted here, because of its over-all significance and because of its gem-like literary value.

The editors of The Pittsburgh Courier suggest that everyone who reads this letter, clip it out and place it in a conspicuous place... where all may see AND read!

The letter of Mr. Thompson, which appeared first in our issue of

DEAR EDITOR:

Like all true Americans, my greatest desire at this time, this crucial point of our history, is a desire for a complete victory over the forces of evil, which threaten our existence today. Behind that desire is also a desire to serve, this, my country, in the most advantageous way. Most of our leaders are suggesting that we sacrifice every other ambition to the paramount one, victory. With this I agree; but I also wonder if another victory could not be achieved at the same time.

After all, the things that beset the world now are basically the same things which upset the equilibrium of nations, internally, states, countries, cities, homes, and even the individual.

Being an American of dark complexion and some 26 years, these questions flash through my mind:

"Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?"

"Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?"

"Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life?"

"Is the kind of America I know worth defending?"

"Will America be a true and pure democracy after the war?"

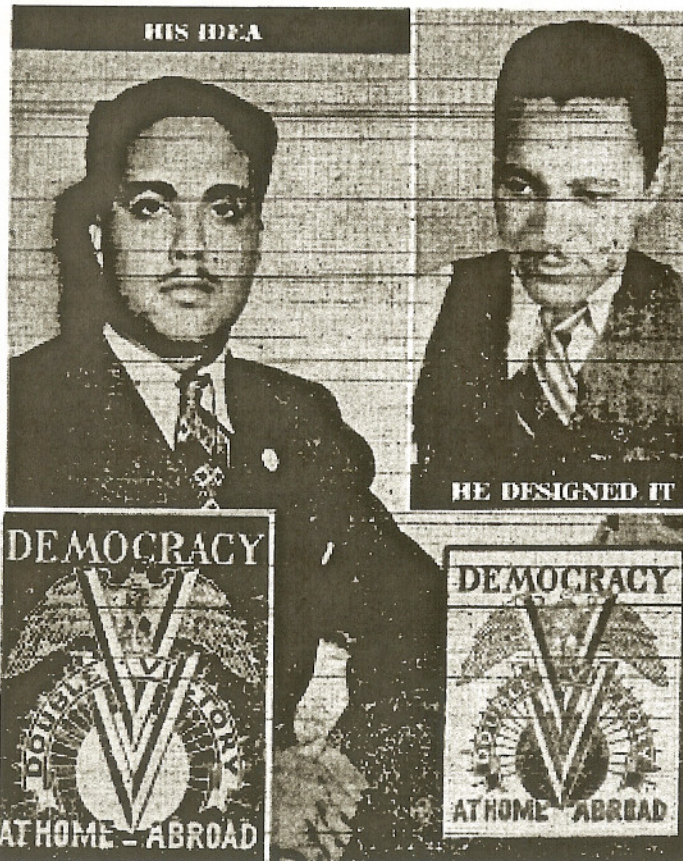
"Will colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past?"

These and other questions need answering; I want to know, and I believe every colored American, who is thinking, wants to know.

This may be the wrong time to broach such subjects, but haven't all good things obtained by men been secured through sacrifice during just such times of strife?

I suggest that while we keep defense and victory in the forefront that we don't lose sight of our fight for true democracy at home.

In conclusion let me say that though these questions often persecute my mind, I love America and am willing to die for the America I know will someday become a reality.



The "V for Victory" sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory... The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.

This should not and would not lessen our efforts to bring this conflict to a successful conclusion; but should and would make us stronger to resist these evil forces which threaten us. America could become united as never before and become truly the home of democracy.

In way of an answer to the foregoing questions in a preceding paragraph, I might say that there is no doubt that this country is worth defending; things will be different for the next generation; colored Americans will come into their own, and America will eventually become the true democracy it was designed to be. These things will become a reality in time; but not through any relaxation of the efforts to secure them.

JAMES G. THOMPSON.

Please note: This newspaper article has been reprinted to improve readability. No wording, punctuation, or format has been altered in the process. The original article appeared on page 5 of the Courier. It was centered on the page and was surrounded with photos relating to Mr. Thompson receiving an award for his efforts.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

ESTABLISHING THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON
EQUALITY OF TREATMENT AND OPPORTUNITY IN
THE ARMED SERVICES

WHEREAS it is essential that there be maintained in the armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country's defense;

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, and as Commander in Chief of the armed services, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.

2. There shall be created in the National Military Establishment an advisory committee to be known as the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, which shall be composed of seven members to be designated by the President.

3. The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to examine into the rules, procedures and practices of the armed services in order to determine in what respect such rules, procedures and practices may be altered or improved with a view to carrying out the policy of this order. The Committee shall confer and advise with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary

of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Air Force, and shall make such recommendations to the President and to said Secretaries as in the judgment of the Committee will effectuate the policy hereof.

4. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such information or the services of such persons as the Committee may require in the performance of its duties.

5. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons in the armed services or in any of the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before the Committee and shall make available for the use of the Committee such documents and other information as the Committee may require.

6. The Committee shall continue to exist until such time as the President shall terminate its existence by Executive order.

Harry Truman

THE WHITE HOUSE,

July 26, 1948.

JUL 27 10 39 AM '48
IN THE OFFICE OF THE
FEDERAL REGISTER

9981

LETTER FROM A JAPANESE AMERICAN SOLDIER.

This edited letter was written by George Saito, who served with his brother Calvin, while their family was in an American concentration camp. It was written on July 11, 1944, four days after his brother was killed in action, and addressed to his father, Kiichi Saito.

Dear Dad –

I believe the War Dept. has notified you of our loss of Calvin. Dad, I am writing you now because I've just learned of his passing. July 7th was the immemorable day.

I can imagine what a shock it was to you, as it was to me, because it happened so soon – on the twelfth day of combat.

A few events and action leading up to the time of his loss as related by a member of his company, are: On the 6th of July his unit was attacking a hill held by the enemy. After a hard fight with even a little hand-to-hand combat, they took the hill. The Jerries,* after being shoved off, were reforming for a counterattack. In the confusion and disorder of battle, Cal, being the radio-man, somehow got a call through to the artillery to open fire on the enemy. He personally directed and guided the firing on the enemy positions, which routed the enemy. His action and doing his job well at this one instance, explained the fellows, saved many of his buddies. Their unit held that hill that night but the next morning the enemy barraged the hill with mortars and he happened to be one of the unlucky ones. His passing was instantaneous. All of the fellows were telling me what a good soldier and radio-man he was and that his loss was keenly felt.

Well dad, now that the inevitable has happened, I guess you're wondering about his remains. Right now I can't do much for we're still in battle and I am writing you while at our gun position, but as I understand things now, they will bury him here in Italy and after the war you can ask the Government to transfer them to an American cemetery in the States. His personal belongings will be shipped to you in time.

Dad, this is not time to be preaching to you but I have something on my chest, which I want you to hear. In spite of Cal's supreme sacrifice, don't let anyone tell you that he was foolish or made a mistake to volunteer. Of what I've seen in my travels on our mission, I am more than convinced that we've done the right thing in spite of what has happened in the past. America is a damned good country, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Well dad, the Germans are beginning to throw a few shells our way now so maybe I'd better get down in my hole. If there is anything also that you'd like to know except the place, I shall only be too glad to let you know. In time though, when we're allowed I'll give you the exact location.

Cheer up, dad, and do take care of yourself. Regards to all.

Your loving son,

George*

N.B. Three months after sending his father this letter, George Saito was killed in battle.

*Have students research and discuss these.

Gift of Mary S. Tominaga, Japanese American National Museum (94.49.42).

QUESTION TO CONSIDER:

1. If you were Calvin or George Saito, would you have volunteered to serve in the U.S. Army?