

#2 -- Hon. Henry L. Stinson
and
Mrs. Oveta Culp Hobby

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Dunjee, Editor of the Oklahoma Black Dispatch. To see in the deep South men being trained together and associating with each other on a plane of complete democracy proves that human beings do get along together if they are permitted to know each other as human beings and fellow Americans.

The situation at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, where the W.A.A.C. officers are being trained, when compared with the situation at Fort Sill, represents a disheartening contrast. There was every reason to expect an even more democratic atmosphere than at Fort Sill. The camp is in the North where attitudes toward the Negro are not crystallized into a pattern of discrimination and segregation. The project was new and did not carry a burden of traditional policies toward Negroes. The women represented a highly selected group. They had been recruited voluntarily and, therefore, might be presumed to have sincere devotion to the ideals for which the war is being fought. Yet, with all of these factors present, conditions at Fort Des Moines are decidedly less democratic, and are infinitely more humiliating to the Negro officers, than in an older post located in a Southern state. In my opinion, the segregation which I observed there is not only un-American and contrary to the spirit of national unity, but is also absolutely unnecessary and artificially fostered.

That the W.A.A.C. officers' training camp is not living up to the democratic possibilities exemplified at Fort Sill is evidenced by the following facts. Although Negro and white W.A.A.C.'s have their meals in the same hall, the colored women are segregated at separate tables. White women who, for reason of friendship or convenience, have wished to eat with their Negro campmates have been peremptorily ordered away from the "colored" tables. Colored and white women are housed in separate quarters. Separate hours have been set for the use of the swimming pool. Recently a colored service women's club has been set up. The separate service clubs have been declared out of bounds for women of the opposite race.

One of the most glaring aspects of discrimination has been manifest in the assignment of officers upon graduation. While all of the white officer candidates graduating in the first class have been assigned to regular posts, most of the Negro graduates are still working at duties usually assigned to non-commissioned officers. (When such practices are viewed as a whole they actually represent the designation of the Negro women as pariahs who must not associate with their white fellow officers upon a basis of equal status.)

It is my sincere belief that such discrimination is unnecessary. The experience at Fort Sill would suggest this conclusion. Further facts from the Des Moines situation substantiate it. Permit me to cite here a few incidents:

I was told of one occasion when the colored W.A.A.C.'s went to the swimming pool at the hour allotted them a number of white W.A.A.C.'s remained in the pool for some time into the hour assigned to the colored officers. When the whites showed no intention of leaving, one of the colored W.A.A.C.'s told them that it was the time for the latter to swim. The white women in the pool, among whom, I am told, were several Southern women, invited the colored W.A.A.C.'s to come on in to swim. They swam and had a pleasant time together. But when news of this became known, I am informed that an order was issued forbidding white and colored W.A.A.C.'s to swim together again even though there was no objection from either white or colored.

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