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Blacks and the Draft

A History of Institutional Racism

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Since 1917, nearly two million blacks have been drafted into the Armed Forces of the United States. Due to the restrictions placed on black enlistments prior to 1948, these draftees comprise the great majority of black servicemen in this century. Numerous studies have examined what happened to blacks once they entered the Armed Forces, but no one has yet seriously looked at the process by which Afro-Americans were selected for military service.

The operation of the draft has involved both the Selective Service System and the various branches of the armed forces, particularly the Army. None of these institutions has ever been free of racism, and blacks have never received equal treatment in the draft. The selection of black draftees can be viewed as an example of institutional racism. However, the pattern of racism changed from World War I to World War II and has changed again during the Vietnam War. By tracing the history of institutional racism in the draft, it is possible to observe both the racist manner in which America chooses men for military duty and the ambivalent attitude of white Americans toward black soldiers.

WORLD WAR I

American involvement in the "Great War" required the rapid recruitment of a massive army. To accomplish this, military planners decided to institute a universal draft. On June 5, 1917, all men between the ages of 21 and 31 were required to register for the draft. After registration, they were classified, examined, and selected for induction by boards of citizens from their home communities.

The draft legislation contained no specific racial provisions. Whites and blacks were registered and classified by the same local boards. They were inducted separately, however, due to the Army policy of strict segregation. By the end of the war, blacks had contributed more than their share to the draft calls. In all, 367,710 blacks were inducted. Although blacks constituted only 9.63% of the total registration, they were 13.08% of those drafted. While 34.10% of all black registrants were ultimately inducted, only 24.04% of the whites were drafted (Crowder, 1919: 459).

Provost Marshal General Enoch Crowder offered several explanations to justify this inequity. One reason more Negroes were drafted, he argued, was that they had few opportunities to enlist. It was Army policy to allow Negro enlistments only to fill vacancies in the four all-black units which existed prior to the war. Whites faced no such obstacles. While approximately 650,000 whites volunteered, only 4,000 Negroes were allowed to enlist (Johnson, 1956: 6). Since many qualified whites had already enlisted, a higher rejection rate could be expected for those who remained. At preinduction physicals, 69.7% of the whites examined were found acceptable and 74.6% of the blacks passed (Work, 1922: 189). But this difference alone cannot account for the large disproportion in induction rates.

Crowder also blamed the lower Negro standard of living. Few blacks were given hardship deferments, since not many could prove that a soldier's pay was less than their civilian

wages. Because of their advantaged economic position, more whites also qualified for occupational deferments. Of all black registrants, 51.6% were placed in Class I while only 32.4% of the whites were placed in this category of greatest draft liability (Crowder, 1919: 192). In his explanation, however, Crowder failed to consider another factor responsible for the high rate of black inductions—racism on the part of the Selective Service personnel.

Draft board members, selected from their local communities, exercised wide discretion in deciding who would be drafted and who deferred. Emmett J. Scott, Special Assistant to the Secretary of War, accused them of discriminating against blacks: “Colored men, palpably unfit for military service, and others who were entitled to exemption under law, were ‘railroaded’ into the army while other men with no legitimate excuse for exemption were allowed to escape the requirements of the draft system” (Crowder, 1919: 102). The number of black draftees indicated that white board members did not need to be reminded that “every colored man in khaki is filling a place that otherwise a white man would have to fill” (see the *Atlanta Constitution* dated October 13, 1917). In three instances, the racist actions of local exemption boards were so blatant that Secretary of War Newton Baker suspended them and appointed new members. The Exemption Board of Fulton County, Georgia (Atlanta), was dismissed after it had given deferments to 526 of 618 whites, but had deferred only 6 of 212 blacks (see the *Atlanta Constitution* dated December 16, 1917). On other occasions, local boards were instructed to reclassify or discharge blacks who had been improperly treated. The number of local boards which escaped Baker’s attention can only be a matter of conjecture.

Not only were individual appointees prejudiced against blacks, but the Selective Service System itself encouraged discrimination. Nearly all of the personnel of the system were whites. In the entire country, there were only five or six

black members of local draft boards. As mentioned above, official standards for occupational and hardship deferments worked to the advantage of white registrants. Local boards across the nation required registrants "of African descent" to tear off one corner of their registration questionnaires so they could be more easily identified (see *Crisis* for August, 1917, page 165). In 1918, Exemption Board Number Four in Detroit received the following letter from the office of the Adjutant General (see *Crisis* for May, 1918, page 8):

It has come to the attention of this department that many of your white registrants have been examined by colored doctors.

This matter has been taken up with the Adjutant General and he desires that this practice be discontinued.

The Selective Service System operated directly under the authority of the War Department, where segregation was deeply entrenched. In its racism, however, it was not unique among the branches of the Wilson government.

Apparently fearing the success of German propaganda aimed at American blacks, Secretary of War Baker launched an extensive public relations campaign to ensure their support for the war effort. The results of this program can be seen in the virtually complete absence of complaints against discrimination in the draft. The most influential black protest organ of the period, *The Crisis*, contained a few brief news items related to the draft, but no editorial comment. In part, this silence reflects the position of W. E. B. DuBois, the editor, who strongly endorsed black participation in the war.

With all the benefits of hindsight, it is possible to see the racism inherent in the operation of the draft. At the time, however, the major concern of black Americans was the fight against exclusion from the military. The draft was eagerly accepted as proof of the Negro's Americanism. Any shirking of military duty was feared as a possible justification for continued discrimination in civilian society.¹ Emmett Scott

was not far from wrong when he claimed that the Negro's only complaint during the war "was due to the limited extent to which he was allowed to join and participate in combatant or 'fighting' units" (Crowder, 1919: 195).

There are no recorded cases of blacks refusing to be drafted for racial reasons, but blacks did take part in at least one draft resistance action. During August 1917, more than five hundred farmers in eastern Oklahoma engaged in a brief and unsuccessful revolt which was later named the "Green Corn Rebellion." Resentment of the draft was the immediate cause of this uprising. Although led by white socialists, several blacks participated in the movement. The only casualty inflicted by the rebels was a deputy sheriff wounded in an ambush by a "band of Negroes" (Bush, 1936).

Despite this resistance, most blacks accepted the draft with little complaint. A Kansas editor accurately summarized black reaction to Selective Service: "It is pretty generally acknowledged that on the whole the Negroes of the United States have responded more universally and cheerfully to the call of the government than the white men" (see *Crisis* for June 1918, page 68).

WORLD WAR II

As the threat of a second world war became more serious, black leaders began to organize to prevent a repetition of their unhappy experiences in World War I. One of their first demands was the inclusion of a nondiscriminatory provision in the Selective Service Act of 1940. Senator Robert F. Wagner and Representative Hamilton Fish, both of New York, sponsored antibias amendments. In its final form, Section 4(a) of the Act read: "In the selection and training of men under this Act there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race or color" (Selective Service System, 1953b: 9). As the war progressed, however, blacks

learned that official racism could continue despite antidiscrimination legislation.

The Army continued to cling stubbornly to its policy of rigid segregation. Draft officials "reluctantly" complied with the Army's request to issue separate calls by race. All draftees received notices of selection at the same time, but there was often a wait of several months before blacks were ordered to report for induction. Selective Service blamed this delay on the lack of adequate Army facilities to house and train the black draftees. By September 1941, 27,986 blacks had been passed over and by 1943 this number grew to an estimated 300,000 (Lee, 1966: 91). This policy hurt many blacks who "lost or quit their jobs after receiving notices of selection and yet had to wait months until the Army's call actually led to their induction" (Dalfiume, 1969: 52).

Complaints from whites who had been drafted while eligible blacks remained at home, pressure from the Selective Service System, and the recommendations of Paul V. McNutt, chairman of the War Manpower Commission, finally forced the Army to reverse its policy of limiting the number of all-black units. The induction of Negroes rapidly increased in 1943 and by September the Selective Service System was short 28,700 black deliveries (Lee, 1966: 412). This shortage was not reduced and by the end of the year the Army lacked 80,000 blacks to fill planned units (Dalfiume, 1969: 91).

Despite this increased rate of call, blacks never constituted the officially announced goal of 10.6% of total military strength. In large part, this was due to the many blacks rejected at the preinduction examinations. As in World War I, black draftees were in good physical condition. On only five of the thirty principal causes for rejection did the Negro rates exceed the white rates (Selective Service System, 1953a: 102). The single most frequent cause for black rejection was "mental deficiency." Although the armed forces initially had no fixed educational requirements, commanders soon complained that too many illiterates were being drafted. To

correct this situation, the Army required that, after May 1941, all draftees be able to read and write on the fourth-grade level. Richard Dalfiume (1969: 91) has argued that the literacy standard was adopted "primarily to reduce the number of black soldiers it [the Army] would have to accept." Whether or not this was the intent, the effect of the new standard was indisputable. During the first four months it was employed, 12% of the blacks examined were rejected for illiteracy versus 1% of the whites (Selective Service System, 1953a: 145).

In June 1943, the Army introduced a test designed to measure mental ability, the Army General Classification Test (AGCT). Under this new program, the black rejection rate increased. During 1943, more than half the blacks examined were rejected, compared to a third of the whites. "Mental deficiency" was the single factor which accounted for this difference. In September 1943, the black rejection rate reached its peak, as more than 60% of the men examined failed to pass either the mental or the physical tests. The blacks' poor performance prompted the Georgia State Director of Selective Service to complain, "The rejection rate is exceedingly high and it is very difficult for Georgia to fill calls for Negroes—they simply don't want them" (Lee, 1966: 411).

Several objections were raised to the indiscriminate use of the AGCT as a screening device. Black spokesmen pointed out that the major reason for the high black rejection rate was not any lack of native intelligence, but rather the poor educational background of black draftees. Special remedial classes within the Army, despite hasty organization and poorly trained staffs, showed that 87% of the blacks enrolled could be brought to a fourth-grade level of literacy in from eight to twelve weeks of intensive instruction (Selective Service System, 1953a: 164). Despite the objections, the Army continued to rely on the AGCT. Military officials equated the low black test scores with a lack of native

intelligence. This racist assumption conveniently “allowed Army planners to use the unfavorable scores to justify restrictive practices in the use of Negro manpower” (Dal-fiume, 1969: 57).

Although the mental standards kept blacks out of the Armed Forces, few blacks qualified for other types of deferments. Of the deferments for occupations essential to the national health, safety, or interest, blacks received only 5.4%. At the end of 1942, blacks held 0.7% of the deferments for defense employment. This situation improved as the war created labor shortages, but by 1945 blacks still held only 4.4% of these deferments. Only in agricultural deferments did blacks receive a proportionate share: in 1945 they held 11.8%. Black clergymen and divinity students received 7% of the ministerial exemptions. Virtually no blacks were among the public officials deferred by law (Selective Service System, 1953a: 98-101). A small group of blacks refused to serve in the Armed Forces because of their pacifist religious beliefs and were classified as conscientious objectors. By the end of 1943, 219 blacks had succeeded in obtaining this status—2.3% of the 9,617 objectors from the whole nation (Murray, 1944: 129).

By the end of the war, 2,438,831 blacks had registered for the draft—11% of the total registration. On August 1, 1945, a total of 1,030,255 blacks had been drafted—10.7% of all draftees (Hershey, 1948: 647). Although blacks were drafted in proportion to their numbers in the United States population, they never reached 10% of American forces because of the ban on black enlistments.

In marked contrast to the World War I period, World War II saw a small but vocal black antidraft movement. Several young blacks refused to be drafted into a segregated army. The most important instance of black resistance was the case of Winfred W. Lynn. Ordered for induction in September 1942, he refused, claiming that he was willing to fight for his country but would not serve in a segregated unit. His lawyers

argued against the legality of separate racial quotas for the draft. When all legal channels appeared blocked, Lynn decided to accept induction and continue his legal battle. After numerous appeals, the case was dismissed on a technicality by the Supreme Court (Murray, 1947: 359).

The largest group of black draft resisters were not those who protested segregation in the Army, but rather nationalists who opposed the draft on religious grounds. In September 1942, FBI agents arrested 80 Black Muslims and charged them with encouraging sympathy for Japan. When the government was unable to find any link between the Nation of Islam and enemy agents, the Muslims were charged with failure to register for the draft. Their refusal to register was in keeping with the Muslims' belief that "Allah forbids them to bear arms or do violence to anyone whom He has not ordered to be killed" (Essien-Udom, 1962: 80). Elijah Muhammed, the Muslim leader, was sentenced to five years in prison, and his followers received three years. By the end of the war, 167 Negroes who called themselves Muslims or Hebrews had been convicted for Selective Service violations (Selective Service System, 1950: 263). One reason for these convictions was the attitude of government officials toward the nationalists. For example, the Nation of Islam was described as an "ordinary cult designed to exploit the uninformed" (Selective Service System, 1953a: 81). The nationalist leaders were considered nothing but "a few 'hand-to-mouth' racketeers using those organizations as a means of sustenance" (Selective Service System, 1953a: 80). The draft officials refused to accept the Muslims as a legitimate institution of the black community.

Another example of racism was the limited participation of blacks within the system. The number of blacks in official capacities increased greatly in comparison with World War I, but at no time did the number of black personnel approach their proportion of the national population. "Token" Negroes were appointed to several posts at high levels of the

system. In 1940, Dr. Channing H. Tobias of the YMCA was named to the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service. In 1941, President Roosevelt appointed Dr. Paul B. Cornley of Howard University to the National Medical Advisory Council of the Selective Service System. Major Campbell C. Johnson served as an executive assistant to General Hershey and handled "all matters relating to racial minorities." Three other black officers served with Johnson in the national headquarters and one black officer was assigned to the headquarters for Michigan, Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York City (Selective Service System, 1953a: 32-34).

On the local level, 250 blacks were members of draft boards (1.1% of the total), 30 were government appeal agents, and 14 served on appeal boards. In addition, more than 600 blacks were members of registrants' advisory boards and nearly 500 black physicians and dentists took part in the draftees' physical examinations. Black representation was completely denied in many heavily black areas of the South. Only three Southern states had blacks on local boards: Virginia had ten, North Carolina had four, and Kentucky had three (Selective Service System, 1953a: 34-35). Governors who appointed the local board members refused to give blacks power over white draftees. Although officially committed to a position of nondiscrimination, the Selective Service System was unwilling to attack Southern racism and tolerated the exclusion of blacks from local boards.

Throughout the war, the Selective Service System showed great sensitivity to criticism from minority groups. The lack of adverse comment led a representative of the system to claim, "It can be stated unequivocally that despite the general lack of faith held by racial minorities in many things American, the System enjoyed their wholesome respect and confidence" (Selective Service System, 1953a: 69).

This self-congratulation is unjustified. Although the record of Selective Service during World War II was not as blatantly

racist as was the World War I draft system, the virtual exclusion of blacks from Southern boards, the discriminatory deferment criteria, the separate induction calls, and the treatment of black nationalists prove that racism had not been eliminated. The lack of black criticism can be attributed to an effective public relations program rather than to the actual absence of discrimination.

THE POSTWAR DRAFT

The Selective Service Act was not extended when it expired in March 1947. In its place, Army officials, with the endorsement of President Truman, urged Congress to enact a program of Universal Military Training (UMT). Black leaders immediately protested this plan, which would force black youths to serve in a Jim Crow Army. Under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph and Grant Reynolds, a group of prominent blacks formed the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training.

On March 22, 1948, several members of the committee met with President Truman in the White House. Randolph reportedly told him, "Negroes are in no mood to shoulder a gun for democracy abroad as long as they are denied democracy here at home." Later in the month, he testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, "I personally pledge myself to openly counsel, aid, and abet youth, both white and Negro, to quarantine any Jim Crow conscription system" (see the *New York Times* for April 1, 1948).

The UMT bill was defeated in Congress, but in its place a new Selective Service Act was passed in June 1948. The act contained no prohibition of segregation in the Armed Forces.

Defeated in his attempt to persuade Congress to end the segregated draft, Randolph did not give up his fight. On June 26, 1948, he announced the formation of the League for Nonviolent Civil Disobedience Against Military Segregation.

The purpose of this group, he said, was to force the President to issue an order ending segregation in the Armed Forces. A poll by the NAACP showed 71% of black college students were sympathetic to Randolph's plan (Reddick, 1953: 202).

On July 26, 1948, Truman issued Executive Order 9981 calling for "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the Armed Services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin." Though the order did not specifically end segregation, Randolph apparently was satisfied and withdrew from the League.

One of the first effects of this order was an announcement by a spokesman for the Selective Service System that "no [racial] quota had been fixed and that Negroes and whites were being 'taken as they come'" (see the *New York Times* for September 1, 1948). The Armed Forces soon followed suit and announced an end to their quotas on black enlistments.

Despite the executive order, the pace of integration moved slowly. Not until the Korean War did large-scale integration occur. The low opinion of black combat units, plus the lack of manpower in many white units, forced the military commanders to desegregate front-line troops and training facilities. They soon concluded that black soldiers performed more effectively in integrated units and the rate of desegregation rapidly accelerated. By 1954, the last Jim Crow unit had been disbanded (Nichols, 1954).

The Korean War also brought a great increase in the number of draftees. More than 1.7 million men were inducted during the four-year period. Department of the Army figures for fiscal years 1951 to 1954 show that a total of 219,128 Negroes were inducted, 12.8% of all draftees (Strength of the Army, 1954).² Due to the Selective Service policy of not keeping statistics by race, no data are available on the number of blacks deferred or the types of deferments they held.

TABLE 1
NONWHITE INDUCTIONS, 1965-1970

Calendar Year	Total Inductions	Nonwhite Inductions	% Nonwhite
1965	232,014	31,060	13.4
1966	382,396	47,504	12.4
1967	228,743	37,223	16.3
1968	296,251	44,642	15.1
1969	284,624	41,955	14.7
1970 ^a	111,449	17,884	16.0
Total	1,535,477	220,268	14.3

SOURCE: U.S. Army Recruiting Command, "Qualitative Distribution Report of Male Enlistments, Inductions, and Rejections" DD-M(M) 663.

a. First seven months of 1970.

From January 1953 to July 1970, 456,054 nonwhites have been drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces, 13.2% of all draftees. Table 1 shows that in recent years, with one exception, the proportion of nonwhite draftees has been above this average. Only during the 400,000 man draft of 1966 did the number of nonwhite draftees begin to approach its proportion in the civilian population.³

One cause of this inequity is the deferment policy of the Selective Service System. In the postwar period, the military did not need all the draft-age men in the country, so an elaborate system of deferments was established to select those who had to serve. The deferment of college students, begun during the Korean War, was continued and expanded. Fathers were deferred and, for a while, married men were not inducted. Occupational deferments were freely granted for a wide variety of jobs. The physical and mental standards were raised and a new classification was introduced: 1Y—"qualified for service only in emergency."

Few of these provisions favored blacks. Since few Negroes attended college or graduate school, they did not qualify for many student deferments. Due to lack of education and discrimination in employment, few blacks could gain occupa-

tional deferments. More whites were rejected for physical reasons. From 1950 to 1966, 21.9% of the whites failed the physical examination while only 14.5% of the blacks examined were rejected (Karpinos, 1967: 45). In recent years, the total rejection rate has increased, but the disparity remains. In fiscal year 1970, 34.6% of the whites were rejected, but only 24.5% of the blacks. This difference does not necessarily mean that blacks are healthier. Bernard Karpinos, a civilian analyst in the Surgeon General's Office, cited two reasons to explain this difference:

- (1) the less frequent exposure of lower-class youths (i.e., blacks) to medical care, which makes them less aware of their physical defects and denies them the medical records on which many deferments are based; and
- (2) the greater sophistication of middle-class youths (i.e., whites) with regard to the medical standards for deferment (Supplement to Health of the Army, 1969: 17).

The major source of black deferments is mental-test failure. Between 1950 and 1966, 54.1% of the blacks examined were rejected because of their low scores on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT), but only 18.6% of the whites failed for this reason (Karpinos, 1967: 45). Despite this high rejection rate, the absence of other deferments ensures that a large proportion of the draftees are black. Among the men found physically and mentally qualified, more blacks are drafted. A 1964 Defense Department survey showed that among qualified men aged 26 to 34, 30.2% of the blacks had been drafted in comparison with 18.8% of the whites (National Advisory Commission on Selective Service, 1967: 22).

In addition to being denied deferments, blacks are less likely to avoid the draft by other means. The 1964 study revealed that only 5.4% of the qualified blacks had served in the Reserves. For whites in the same age group the figure was

20.6%. The same survey showed that fewer blacks entered officer training programs. Only 0.4% of the qualified blacks received commissions compared to 4.3% of the whites (National Advisory Commission on Selective Service, 1967: 22). Since the National Guard is not subject to rigid federal control, many states have developed a policy of excluding blacks from this means of avoiding the draft. In 1967, only 1.15% of the Army National Guard was black. For the Air National Guard, this figure was 0.6% (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968: 318).

The burden of the draft has fallen disproportionately on blacks, as it has on lower-class youth in general.⁴ As Table 1 shows, the proportion of nonwhite draftees began to decline as the manpower demands of the Vietnam War increased. Since the qualified blacks are heavily drafted, even in peacetime, whites must bear more of the burden when calls are enlarged. Faced with the prospect of drafting white college students, the Defense Department lowered its qualifications instead, and more blacks were drafted. In November 1965, April 1966, and October 1966 the minimum acceptable score on the mental test was lowered. These changes were felt disproportionately by blacks. During 1966, 42.5% of the blacks examined were found acceptable, compared to 29.9% in 1965 (Karpinos, 1967: 45).

The Pentagon's "Project One Hundred Thousand" is another method for relieving the draft pressure on middle-class whites. This program, begun in 1966, inducts men who were not previously able to meet the Armed Forces' standards. Introduced as part of the war on poverty to "reverse the downward spiral of human decay," Pentagon officials later admitted that the plan was primarily designed to enlarge the pool of available manpower (see the *New York Times* for October 16, 1966). The "new standards men" received no special training, and the bulk of them were placed in unskilled job categories. Of the first 246,000 men inducted under this program, 41.2% were nonwhite (Project

One Hundred Thousand, 1969: 14). The impact of this policy can be seen in the dramatic increase in the percentage of black draftees from 1966 to 1967.

Recent reforms in the draft system, particularly the elimination of occupational deferments, may reduce the proportion of black draftees. The proposed elimination of student deferments would also benefit black youths. But blacks will probably continue to be overrepresented in draft calls. White middle-class youths of draft age are highly sophisticated in the intricacies of the draft. They will continue to rely on the remaining deferments such as medical disqualification and conscientious objection. In addition, they can still take advantage of Reserve programs and the National Guard to avoid the draft. The lowered standards for induction of Project One Hundred Thousand ensure that blacks will continue to be disproportionately drafted into the armed forces.

Black militants have denounced the draft as a form of genocide, but a large portion of the black community still retains a favorable image of military service. In a discriminatory civilian labor market, a career in the military is considered an excellent avenue of opportunity. This positive evaluation of the military has influenced black attitudes toward the draft. A 1964 survey found that black soldiers and civilians at all levels held a more favorable opinion of the draft than whites in similar circumstances (Moskos, 1969: 160-161). Louis Harris reported in 1966 that 63% of the blacks in a national sample thought the draft was fair, as opposed to 48% of the whites (Willenz, 1967: 65). George Gallup found that 25% of the blacks in a 1966 national survey thought the draft was unfair. By 1969, this figure had increased to 47% (see *Newsweek* for June 23, 1969).

Despite this acceptance of the draft, black participation in the Selective Service System has been minimal until recently. In October 1966, only 1.3% of the total board members was black. In only one state (Delaware) was the number of black

board members equal to its proportion in the population, and 23 states had no black representation at all (National Advisory Commission on Selective Service, 1967: 19).⁵ When this information was released, the system embarked on a program to recruit minority group personnel. As of June 30, 1970, 1,265 blacks were serving on local boards, 6.7% of the total, a considerable increase from 278 blacks on January 1, 1967. This figure, however, is still far less than the 12% of the U.S. population which is black.

In addition to the black local board members, several blacks serve in other capacities in the system. Levi A. Jackson, a Ford Motor Company executive, was appointed by President Nixon to the National Appeal Board. Of the 56 state directors, Colonel Joseph A. Christmas of the Virgin Islands and Colonel John T. Martin of the District of Columbia are black.⁶ Until his death in 1968, Colonel Campbell C. Johnson served in the National Headquarters of the Selective Service System. Beginning as an Executive Assistant to the Director of Selective Service in 1940, he was appointed Assistant Director of Selective Service in 1964. Although initially appointed as an advisor on race relations, Johnson was not a militant "race man." In the words of a close associate, "Campbell was not a man to rock the boat."

CONCLUSION

Racism has always been a dominant factor in the selection of black draftees. Overrepresented in the World War I draft, blacks were nearly excluded from the draft in the first years of World War II. Only the complaints of influential whites and the pressing need for military manpower ensured that a proportional number of blacks were drafted. During the Korean War, and, more dramatically, during the Vietnam War, blacks again have been overrepresented in the draft calls.

Following World War I, American military commanders decided that blacks did not have the capacity to make good combat soldiers and did all they could to keep blacks out of uniform during World War II. A combination of political and military factors led to the integration of U.S. forces in Korea. To their surprise, the commanders found that blacks fought well in integrated units. Since Korea, no barriers to black combat assignments have existed. Rather than risk the political consequences of drafting middle-class whites for Vietnam duty, the Pentagon planners have devised several methods for drafting a disproportionate number of blacks. The unpopular war in Vietnam makes whites eager to send blacks to fight and die in Southeast Asia.

Although the official policies of the Selective Service System have always benefited white registrants, only recently has the Army abandoned its theories of black inferiority. Now both institutions are cooperating to draft as many blacks as possible. Racist assumptions have been a part of the draft since its inception, but not since World War I has the racial impact of the draft been as great as it is today.

NOTES

1. Thinly veiled white threats confirmed these fears: "It is to be hoped that the colored people, in the service and out of it, are fully imbued with the fact that their race is on trial before the nation today as never before in its freedom; and that its happiness in the future hinges in no small measure upon the record it shall make during this period of national stress in the face of a foreign enemy" (see *Atlanta Constitution* for October 3, 1917).

2. Approximately 80,000 men were inducted into the Marine Corps during the Korean Conflict. No accurate information is available on the proportion of blacks in this total, but a rough estimate places the figure at 7-8% (see Shaw, n.d.).

3. In 1965, nonwhites were approximately 13.2% of the total U.S. male population aged 15 to 24—those at greatest risk of being drafted for Vietnam.

4. In their study of the Wisconsin Selective Service System, Davis and Dolbeare (1968: 129) found that the group with the highest draft liability is

composed of "rural, white, lower-income, non-college youths and physically and mentally acceptable Negroes."

5. Among the states which had no black board members were Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Indiana, Kansas, and New Jersey.

6. In December 1970, Ernest D. Tears was appointed state Director of Selective Service for Virginia, the first black to head the draft operations of a major state.

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