

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

21ST STREET AND C STREET, N. W.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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18-23-98  
81

Mr. W. E. B. Du Bois,  
Atlanta University,  
Atlanta, Georgia.

Dear Mr. Du Bois:

I was pleased to hear from you again and particularly interested in your comments in connection with the question of white and Negro selectees.

As you know, the present law specifically provides that there shall be no discrimination on account of race or color in the interpretation and execution of the Selective Service Act. I understand from the General Staff Officers of the War Department that it is the intention of the Army to provide organizations and facilities for the proper percentage of colored trainees and white trainees from each of the states based on the proportion in these states. This will not mean that during any one month the proportions can be accurate. The present quota of 800,000 trainees is to be filled between now and the end of next June. During that period the state quotas will be adjusted from time to time as more definite figures become available.

For the country as a whole I understand that the 1930 census shows approximately 9.7 of the population to be colored, but that the 1940 census figures are not yet available. The Army intends to provide for the correct percentage and to call for the proper numbers in each state based on the proportion of Class I-A men as between the races in the particular state. For the immediate present, however, the percentage of colored trainees called will be considerably less than the proper proportion because of lack of facilities. This comes primarily from the fact that there are now only two or three percent of Negroes in the Regular Army and National Guard, and, while new organizations are being activated and others are being

18-33-99

planned, it is impossible over night to produce the non-commissioned officers and training cadres necessary to properly care for the trainees. For this reason, the January call for Negroes will be small, but in February this will be increased rapidly and shortly after that the proper percentage of colored and white will have been inducted.

I have tried to explain this in some detail so that you would realize that in a particular county or state a particular call during any one month would not necessarily follow the proper percentages. The surprising thing concerning the instance you cite where the respective percentages were 71% and 74½% is that they were so close. Of course, the time of induction represents no discrimination, since the selectees will probably serve the same twelve months' period no matter whether they start in January or in March. It would be a very real discrimination if equal facilities, which include not only barracks, hospitals, and other physical facilities, but also the necessary organization, including supply sergeants, cooks, training cadres, and other personnel were not available when either white or colored selectees are inducted. As you are doubtless aware, the law requires that men not be inducted until necessary facilities and equipment are available for their reception, and, regardless of the law, this is the only proper policy.

I note you suggest that the census figures for 1940 be made public as early as possible, and I will do what is possible to have this published as promptly as practicable.

Selective Service, both as a matter of law and as a general policy based on the need for national unity under existing conditions, is based on fair and equal treatment for the races in this most important phase of national defense, and I can assure you that ~~I will do~~ everything possible *will be done* to see that this policy is carried out.

Appreciating your good wishes for my work here in Selective Service, I am

Yours very sincerely,

*W. B. Bryan*  
Director.