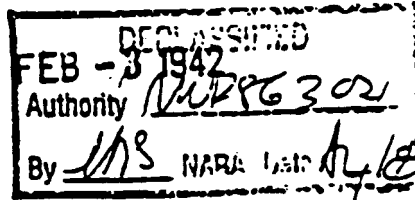


**DECLASSIFIED**

G.B. No. 421  
(Serial No. 201)

SECRET

OK



**From:** Chairman General Board;  
**To:** Secretary of the Navy.

**SUBJECT:** Enlistment of men of colored race in other than messman branch.

**Reference:** (a) SecNav Let. (SC)P14-4/AM (032001)/GBN of January 16, 1942.

1. The General Board, complying with the directive contained in reference (a), has given careful attention to the problem of enlisting in the Navy, men of the colored race in other than the messman branch.

2. The General Board has endeavored to examine the problem placed before it in a realistic manner.

A. Should negroes be enlisted for unlimited general service?

(a) Enlistment for general service implies that the individual may be sent anywhere, - to any ship or station where he is needed. Men on board ship live in particularly close association; in their messes, one man sits beside another; their hammocks or bunks are close together; in their common tasks they work side by side; and in particular tasks such as those of a gun's crew, they form a closely knit, highly coordinated team. How many white men would choose, of their own accord, that their closest associates in sleeping quarters, at mess, and in a gun's crew should be of another race? How many would accept such conditions, if required to do so, without resentment and just as a matter of course? The General Board believes that the answer is "Few, if any," and further believes that if the issue were forced, there would be a lowering of contentment, teamwork and discipline in the service.

(b) One of the tenets of the recruiting service is that each recruit for general service is potentially a leading petty officer. It is true that some men never do become petty officers, and that when recruiting white

G.B. No. (Serial No. 201)

men, it is not possible to establish which will be found worthy of and secure promotion and which will not. If negroes are recruited for general service, it can be said at once that few will obtain advancement to petty officer. With every desire to be fair, officers and leading petty officers in general will not recommend negroes for promotion to positions of authority over white men.

The General Board is convinced that the enlistment of negroes for unlimited general service is inadvisable.

B. Should negroes be enlisted in general service but detailed in special ratings or for special ships or units?

(a) The ratings now in use in the naval service cover every phase of naval activity, and no new ratings are deemed necessary merely to promote the enlistment of negroes.

(b) At first thought, it might appear that assignment of negroes to certain vessels, and in particular to small vessels of the patrol type, would be feasible. In this connection, the following table is of interest:

<u>Type of Ship</u>	<u>Total Crew</u>	<u>Men in Pay Grades 1 to 4</u>	<u>Men in Pay Grades 5 to 7 (Non-rated)</u>
Battleship	1892	666	1226
Light Cruiser (10,000 ton)	988	365	623
Destroyer (1630 ton)	206	109	97
Submarine	54	47	7 (5 seamen) (2 messmen)
Patrol Boat (180 foot)	55	36	19
Patrol Boat (110 foot)	20	15	5 (3 seamen) (1 fireman) (1 messman)

NOTE: Pay grades 1 to 4 include Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers, 1st, 2d and 3d Class; also Firemen, 1st Class and a few other ratings requiring length of service and experience equal to that required for qualification of Petty Officers, 3d Class. Pay grades 5 to 7 include all other non-rated men and recruits.

G.B. No. 421 (Serial No. 201)

There are no negro officers and so few negro petty officers in the Navy at present that any vessels to which negroes might be assigned must have white officers and white petty officers. Examination of the table shows the small number of men in other than petty officer ratings that might be assigned to patrol vessels and indicates to the General Board that such assignments would not be happy ones. The assignment of negroes to the larger ships, where well over one-half of the crews are non-rated men, with mixture of whites and negroes, would inevitably lead to discontent on the part of one or the other, resulting in clashes and lowering of the efficiency of the vessels and of the Navy.

3. The Navy Department is accused of discriminating against the negro by refusing to permit the enlistment of negroes, in the Navy, in other than messman ratings. If such is discrimination, it is but part and parcel of similar discrimination throughout the United States not only against the negro, but in the Pacific States and in Hawaii against citizens of Asiatic descent. The discrimination is less in some parts of the country than in others, depending rather generally on the density of colored population. It may be remarked that certain organizations and trade unions decline to receive negroes as members and that in certain industrial plants, employment of negroes is confined to common labor and to a very few trades. The reasons for discrimination, in the United States, are rather generally that:

- (a) the white man will not accept the negro in a position of authority over him;
- (b) the white man considers that he is of a superior race and will not admit the negro as an equal; and
- (c) the white man refuses to admit the negro to intimate family relationships leading to marriage.

These concepts may not be truly democratic, but it is doubted if the most ardent lovers of democracy will dispute them, particularly in regard to inter-marriage.

4. The General Board recognizes that part of the negro problem is political, and that both major political parties (Republican and Democratic) have endeavored, in one way or another, to gain the support of the negro vote. A Congressman of the United States supports the view of the Navy Department in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy reading as follows:

"I am just this morning in receipt of your letter and enclosure from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People which letter and enclosure I am herewith transmitting to you. These documents relate to the rejection by the Navy of a certain Harold J. Franklin.

G.B. No. 421 (Serial No. 201)

While this association criticizes you for discriminating against negroes, I noticed that you state that you were not discriminating. I have no objection to your statement, provided you do not carry out the wishes of this Association.

"In this hour of national crisis, it is much more important that we have the full-hearted cooperation of the thirty million white southern Americans than that we satisfy the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. I realize that you have never lived in the South. I have lived there all my life. You know that our people have volunteered for military service more readily than the people of any other section of the Nation. If they be forced to serve with Negroes, they will cease to volunteer; and when drafted, they will not serve with that enthusiasm and high morale that has always characterized the soldiers and sailors of the southern states.

"I do not mean to urge a complete seclusion of Negroes from military or naval service, but I do most earnestly plead with you to see that there is a complete segregation of the races. To assign a Negro doctor to treat some southern white boy would be a crushing insult and in my opinion, an outrage against the patriotism of our southern people."

5. The point has been made by some advocates of the negroes that negroes should be permitted to fight for their country. There are several negro organizations in the Army and those organizations will doubtless be utilized in the present war. Messmen on board ship are given stations during battle when they assist in fighting the ship as truly as do any other members of the ship's company.

6. The Navy of the United States is composed, except for messmen, of members of the white race. This condition has arisen because those in control have believed and experience has demonstrated that the white man is more adaptable and more efficient in the various conditions which are involved in the making of an effective man-of-war. The nation is now at war and the induction into the Navy of increasing numbers of negroes in the wider field of activities cannot fail to increase the difficulties of preparing for war and distract the attention of the Navy from concentrating all of its efforts toward winning a complete victory.

7. The General Board regrets that it is unable to comply with that part of reference (a) which requires submission of a

G.B. No. 421 (Serial No. 201)

plan for taking into the Navy 5,000 men of the colored race, not in the messman branch. The Board strongly recommends that members of the colored race be accepted for enlistment only in the messman branch. If, in the opinion of higher authority, political pressure is such as to require the enlistment of these people for general service, let it be for that.

*W. R. SEXTON.*

Copy to C.H.O.

**Nonconforming Sexual Orientations  
and Military Suitability**

Prepared by  
Theodore R. Sarbin, Ph.D.  
and  
Kenneth E. Karols, M.D., Ph.D.

Released by  
Carson K. Eoyang, Director

**GAO  
LAW LIBRARY**