Charles H. Alston

photographs

Note:- See backs of plates for description of media.

"Dog Trot" Cabin

Alabama Landscape

Charles H. Alston

coal miner

Charles H. Alston

Convict

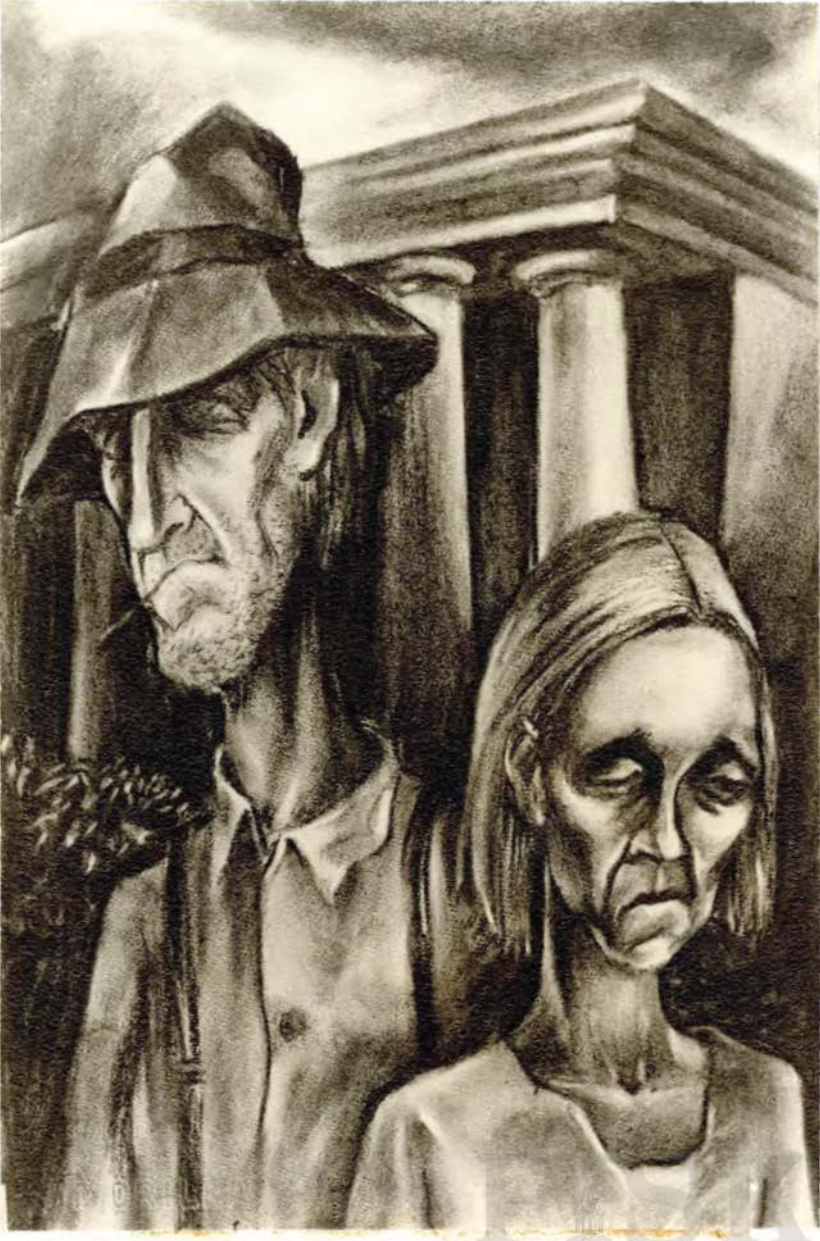
Charles H. Alston

Tying Tobacco

Charles H. Alston

Tobacco barn

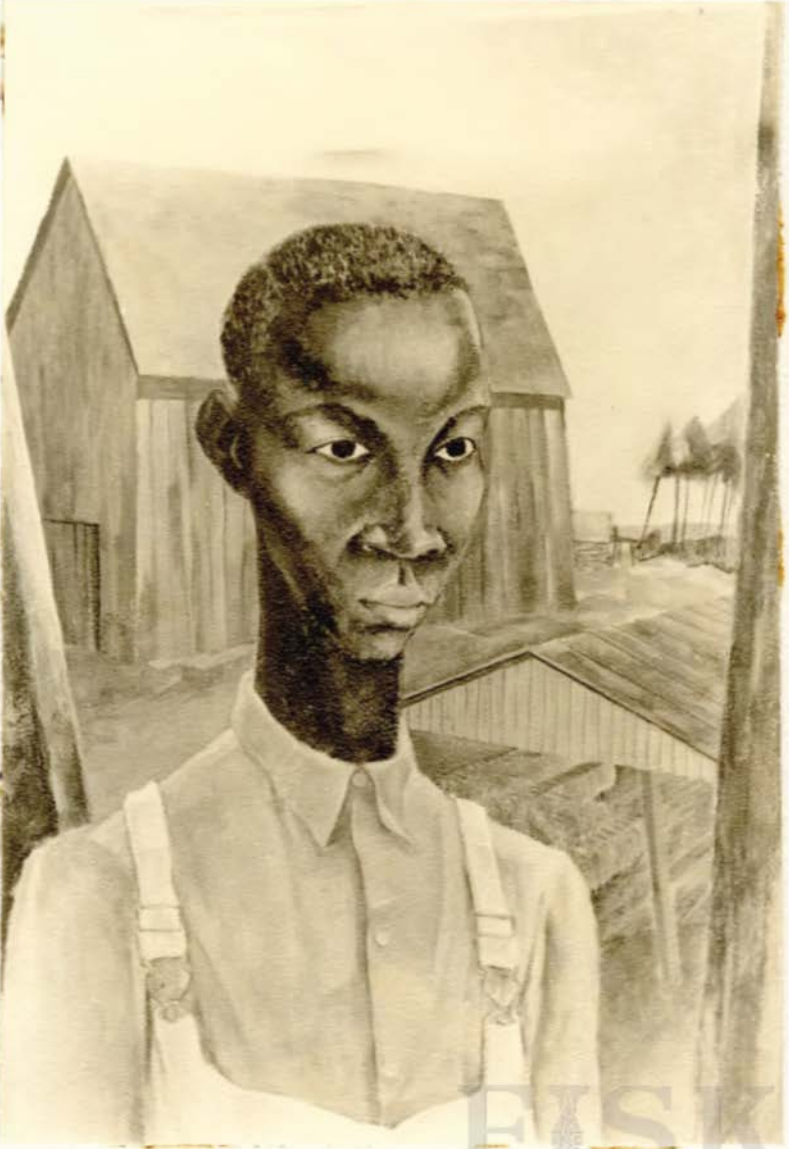
Charles H. Alston



Poor White

Charles H. Alston

Fellowships — Alston, Charles



Tobacco Farm boy

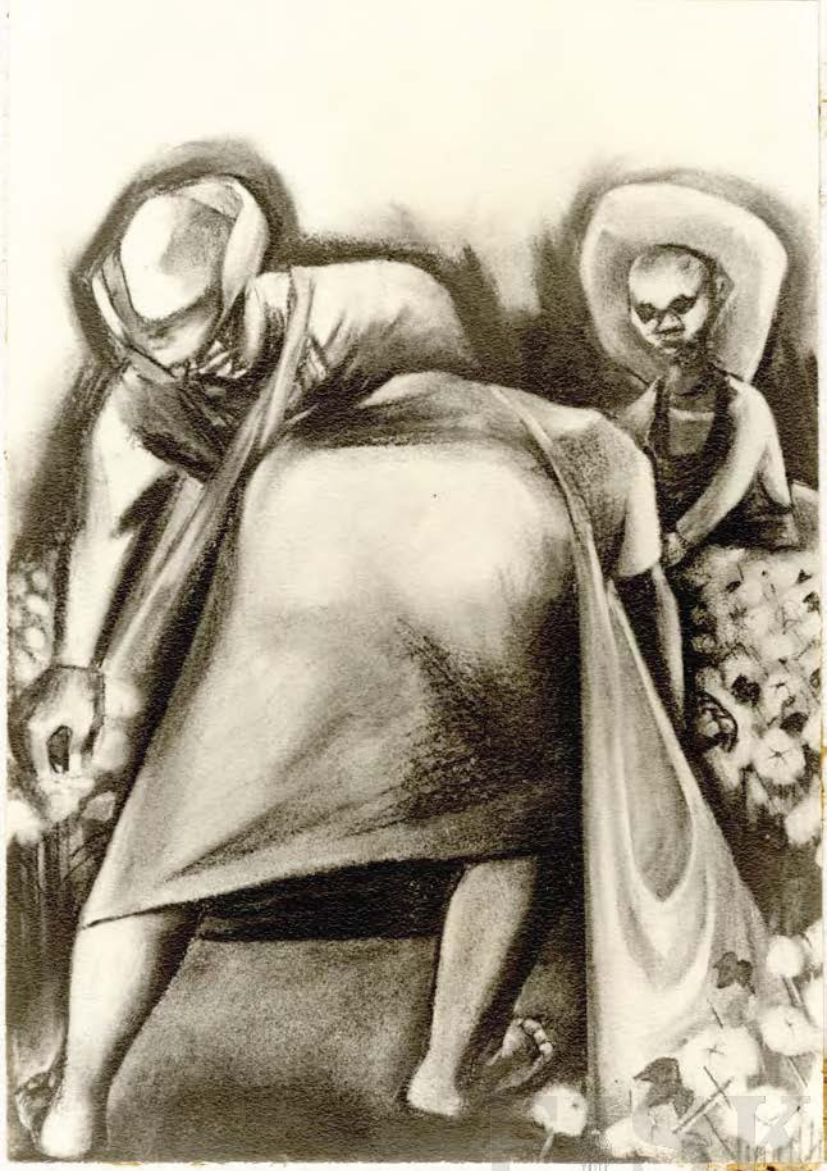
Charles H. Alston

Night Coach

Charles H. Alston

Prostitute

Charles H. Alston

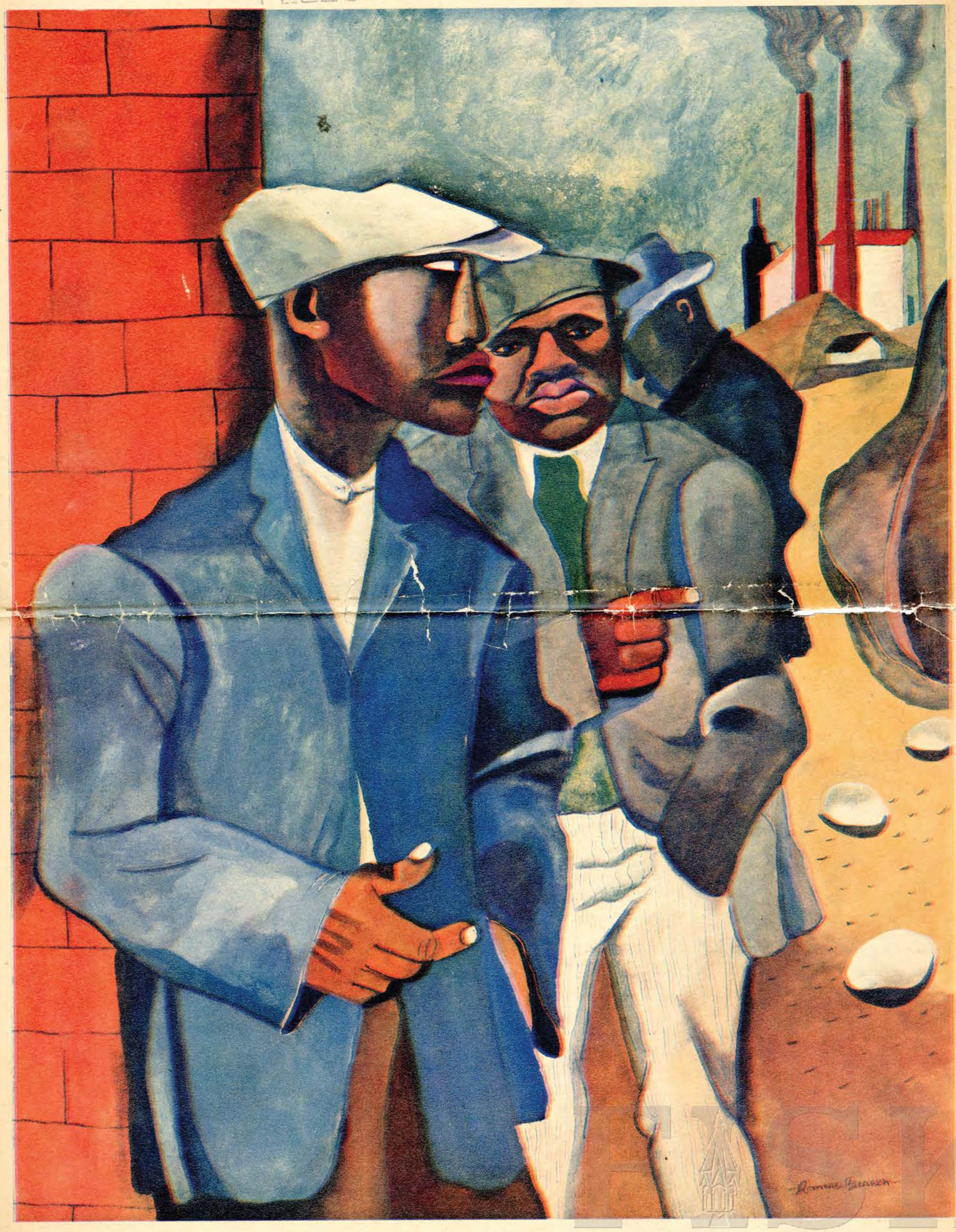


Cotton Pickers

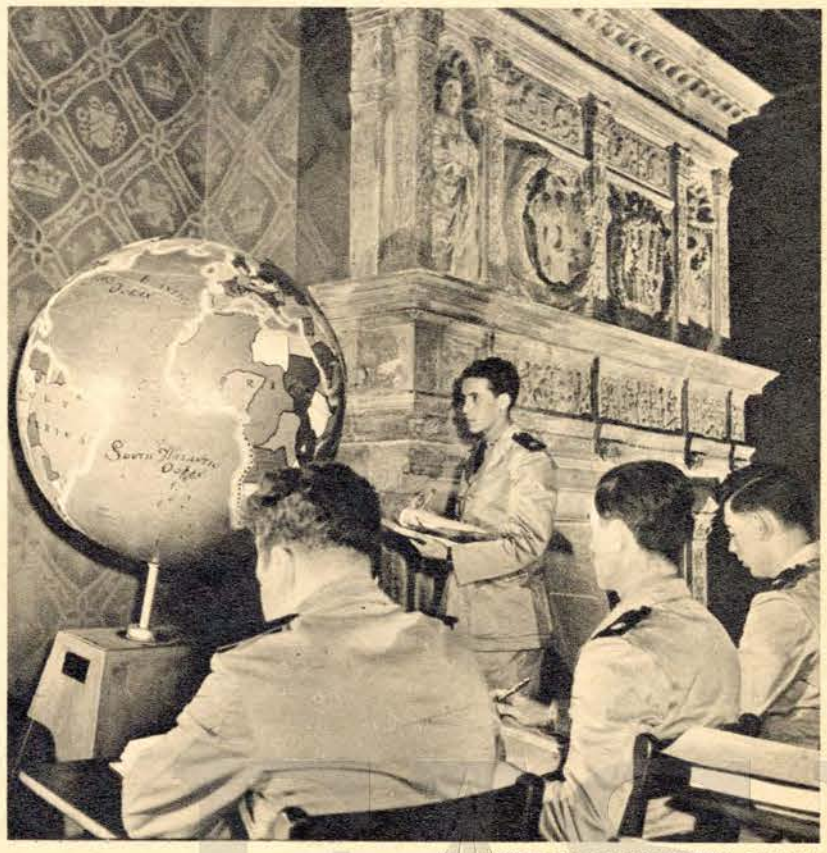
Charles H. Alston

"Shade Chadman"

Charles H. Alston



TRAINING of seamen from the farms and cities has been put under the coast guard, which gives short courses for unlicensed and licensed personnel. Below, cadet officers in training at the former Chrysler estate on Long Island.



PHOTOGRAPH FOR FORTUNE BY K. CHESTER

during December and January the U.S. merchant fleet was torn apart. For sixty days after Pearl Harbor practically nothing was shipped out of the country to our allies, and countless ship-hours of work that can never be made up were wasted. By March, out of a total of between 500 and 600 ocean-going ships, the army had seized over 150 for its own use, and the navy had about 75. The struggle over the remainder continues unabated. For some weeks an order has supposedly been on the President's desk that will give the navy authority over the merchant marine—not necessarily a bad thing if it is restricted to control over the discipline and training of the crews, and sea routings. Meanwhile, the army is maneuvering for a bigger bite and at the rate it has been taking over ships lately, it will be in control of at least one-third of our merchant ships by the end of the year. The army argues that since it must fight the battles and plan the offensives, it should have the say over what goods should be moved when and where.

SHIPS FOR WHOM? AND FOR WHAT?

With no intent to impugn the patriotism or selflessness of the army, the citizen familiar with the reflex actions of any bureaucracy may question whether a service that is only one of many claimants for shipping space can be expected to pass judgment without prejudice upon the claims of others. Conflicts that strike to the heart of our strategic dilemma have already developed. Military demands have begun to cut across other demands that cannot be lightly dismissed, on either strategic or political grounds.

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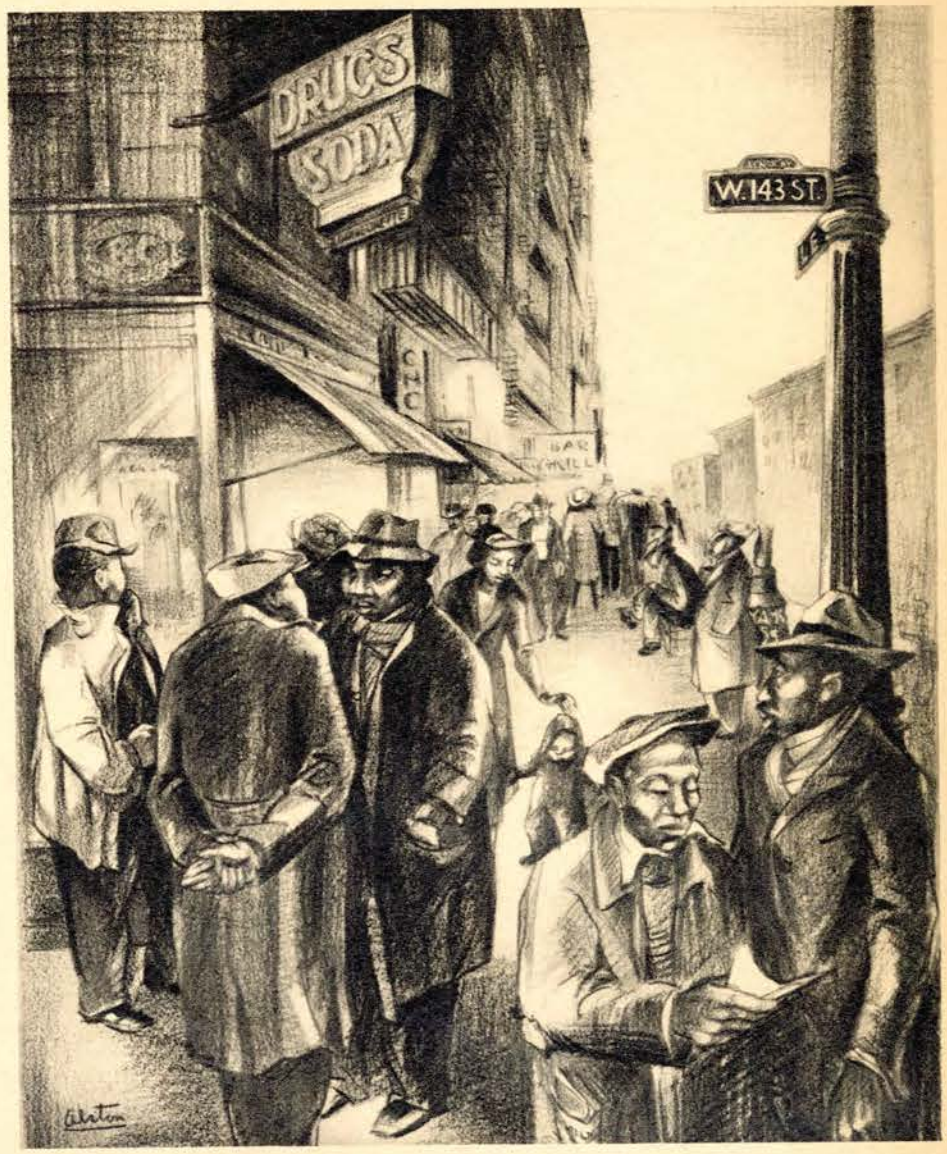
THE NEGRO'S WAR

One-tenth of the U.S. population still has not a full share in America's greatest undertaking. Nine-tenths may have to pay the costs of wasteful discrimination.

Long acknowledged in the fields of music and dancing, the Negro's gift for creative expression now finds recognition in art. This season three important Manhattan galleries held exhibitions of contemporary Negro painting and sculpture. Among the most distinguished contributors to the shows were Romare Bearden and Charles Alston, whom FORTUNE *invited to illustrate this article. Bearden, who painted the frontispiece, is a graduate of New York University. He worked daytime as an employee of New York City's Welfare Department, painted at night in a Harlem studio, which he shared with Alston. Lately he enlisted in the army. Alston, who made the sketches on this and the following pages, is an M.A. from Columbia. He was a teacher of Bearden, as well as of Jacob Lawrence, whose pictorial history of the migration of his people appeared in* FORTUNE *last November.*



IN HARLEM they are still waiting for the employment boom. While war increases job chances elsewhere, there is little defense industry in New York.

FOR many months Japanese radio propaganda aimed at the Americas has capitalized the Negro and the tough deal he gets in the U.S. Take this English-language broadcast from Manchukuo (March 15, 1942) as recorded by American listening posts: "Democracy, as preached by the Anglo-Americans, may be an ideal and noble system of life, but democracy as practiced by Anglo-Americans is stained with the bloody guilt of racial persecution and exploitation." Last February the Detroit riot against Negro families who wanted to move into their lawful homes was a boon to the Japanese and, incidentally, also the German short-wave propagandists.

A specifically conditioned anti-Semitism has made certain inroads into Harlem; but so far the Nazis seem to realize how little chance the author of *Mein Kampf* has to be accepted as savior of Negroes and they do not address them openly. The Japanese, however, work hard. The clumsiness of their propaganda indicates the Japanese certainty of the Negro's readiness to turn against white America. They are making a mistake. As they are bound to find out, it makes no sense to apply Japan's strategy in Asia to the U.S. Negro—her gamble on the primitive thesis that peoples will choose sides in this world convulsion simply according to the color of their skins.

Although the American Negroes are undeniably in a critical state of mind, foreign agents still have pretty slim chances among them. America is all the American Negro knows. In fact, he is the isolationist par excellence; no other category of American has so few ties with the outside world. If nativity were really the measure of citizenship, the Negroes would excel any other national or racial stock in this country. Indeed, out of 12,865,500 Negroes (1940 census), 99.4 per cent are American-born and about 97 per cent are of purely native parentage. But of the U.S. white population nearly 10 per cent were born abroad and less than 70 per cent are of native parentage on both sides. Every attempt to revive for the American Negro alleged African allegiances has failed. Negro intellectuals, in a morose gesture of protest, may seek escape from frustration in an artificial nostalgia for an African civilization of their own; but as a whole, the American Negro community is at home here in the U.S., beyond any temptation from abroad, inextricably rooted into this country's soil.

An American who thinks with his skin

The Negro has grown with America, though his was a different pace. He has seen members of his race achieve high academic and civic honors in contest with white people. In the North he has learned to use all the gadgets of American civilization and feels himself equal, if trained, to any job. He is molded by American patterns of life. He has shared everything with his American contemporaries, particularly their disillusionment. But his is a specific skepticism: the fierce violent skepticism of a very young race. He lives in America, but then again he does not. Reminded every day of his color, sometimes he can't help thinking with his skin; worse even, sometimes his skin thinks for him. This is the irrational toll on his, and America's, rational way of life—an ever-present irritation, the steady denial of a normal American existence. The more hurdles he takes, the taller looms the last decisive one. His growing unrest is caused not by the lack but by the momentum of his progress. Being an offspring of America, he

FORMING AN INGOT, and a team, these white and colored war workers have learned to depend on each other. Lukens Steel at Coatesville, Pennsylvania, where this painting was done, has successfully used mixed labor for years.

JUNIOR WELDERS are learning the trade in an integrated NYA school in Astoria, Long Island. Nationally, 11 per cent of the agency's graduates are young Negroes. At present their job chances look better than ever before.

reacts as would any American in his position: he wants more.

The Negro wants more—but of America. He may occasionally find a gloomy sort of satisfaction when "the arrogant white folks" are taught a lesson about the efficiency of a colored people, any colored people; but even the most defiant and least astute American Negro senses that his fate is tied up with America's, and he realizes with a minority's instinct for self-preservation his selfish stake in an American victory. Defeated nations are neither generous nor rational. And no power on earth could save the Negro from the whiplash of a national catastrophe: it would scourge the least resourceful, most conspicuous minority with prompt and unabashed fury; it would destroy in one blow whatever the Negro has achieved or hopes for—and he knows it. That's why the Japanese gamble is a mistaken one.

Those colored people in Burma and Malaya who aided the Japanese invaders thought the white man to be the real intruder. But the American Negro certainly does not see himself as the native of a conquered colony. He is not disturbed by the principles of American government but by the fact that, as he feels, these principles are not fully applied to him. Sometimes these feelings explode violently in his press. Three months before the U.S. was attacked, *The Crisis,* a responsible and rather calmly edited Negro journal, stated: "We shall see what we shall see. Negro Americans might as well discover at the beginning whether they are to fight and die for democracy for the Lithuanians, the Greeks and the Brazilians, or whether they had better fight and die for a little democracy for themselves." This vehement statement expresses a widespread attitude: The American Negro is agitated not because he is asked to fight for America but because full participation in the fight is denied him. He is humiliated as a Negro because he is not fully accepted as an American.

Northbound journey into WPA

No serious review of the nation's status could ever overlook the contradiction between America's dream and the Negro reality. He has always been intimately involved in America's crises—sometimes retarding, sometimes accelerating the nation's march. This time America's battles for a fuller life have to be fought all over again, only on a higher and broader scale; and unavoidably the Negro takes the stage.

He is not the southern white man's burden any more. True, in 1940 three-quarters of our Negro population were still living south of the Mason and Dixon Line. But the South-North migration continues steadily. In Detroit the Negro community had grown from 5,700 in 1910 to about 150,000 by 1940; in New York City from 91,000 in 1910 to 152,000 in 1920 and 478,000 in 1940. The overwhelming majority found employment as unskilled laborers and in domestic or other service positions, only to lose it again in the depression of the thirties. Being Negroes as well as the most recently arrived labor group, they were marked for industrial decimation. During the thirties, up to 70 per cent of the Negro communities in Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York were on relief or WPA. In 1937, when Negroes were 6 per cent of New York's population, they constituted no less than 22 per cent of the city's relief load.

When after the lean years (and there were more than seven of them) prosperity came back, it pointedly avoided the colored unemployed. To illustrate: the Negro category on WPA rolls actually *rose* from 14.2 per cent in February, 1939, to 17.6 per cent in February, 1942. This was due not to any real growth of Negro unemployment, but to the fact that white workers enjoyed

THE FBI INVESTIGATED the leaders of the mob that prevented Negro war workers from moving into the Sojourner Truth Housing Project in Detroit last February and found behind the U.S. flag a coalition of fascist-minded groups. In April, Negro families began to move in, protected by state troops.

priority in reemployment by defense industries. Thus to be without a job during the defense boom was no longer an American fate, as it had been during the depression; it began to be a Negro fate.

Last September the U.S. Bureau of Employment Security inquired from selected defense industries the number of job openings the management expected to occur during the following six months; and for how many of them Negroes, if available, would be considered. The survey, concentrated on regions with considerable Negro labor, uncovered this fact: out of 282,245 prospective openings, 144,583 (51 per cent) were barred to Negroes, as a matter of policy. The answers were given at a time when labor shortage was beginning to make itself felt in many an industry, and to a federal agency—two months after the President had called for the abolition of discrimination in war industries.

The survey revealed little difference between employment trends in the South and in the North. Out of Texas' announced 17,435 defense jobs, 9,117 were barred to Negroes—but in Michigan the figure was 22,042 out of 26,904; in Indiana, 9,331 out of 9,979; in Ohio, 29,242 out of 34,861. Moreover, the inquiry failed to support the assumption that the job-seeking Negro's frustration starts only when he seeks skilled work. No less than 35,000 out of 83,000 unskilled jobs were declared closed to colored applicants. There are even regions where a Negro would be hired for skilled rather than for unskilled work. Illinois, for instance, reported 72 per cent of the prospective skilled jobs open to Negroes but only 7 per cent of the unskilled jobs. Obviously, where demand for labor heavily outweighs the supply, the skin color miraculously lightens.

Not even the most essential defense industries have sufficiently lifted race barriers. Aircraft industries reported 37,659 out of 64,859 prospective jobs closed to Negroes; electrical machinery 10,346 out of 20,792; chemicals 5,561 out of 8,033; iron and steel 20,397 out of 33,230. In general, the critical industries reported color restrictions rather above the average of 51 per cent. Shipbuilding is the one outstanding exception: out of 64,000 anticipated openings less than 28 per cent have been declared beyond the Negro's reach.

Management's actual experience with Negro labor has little to do with the habit of employment discrimination. Last December the National Industrial Conference Board presented in its management record the results of an extensive study of such experiences. One hundred and two selected managements of industries employing Negroes had been requested to rank colored and white employees on comparable skilled and semiskilled work. As to ability and skill, seventy managements graded Negro workers equal to their white colleagues, thirty-one poorer, one better than whites. As to production, eighty-five managements found Negroes equal to,

twelve poorer, five better than white workers. As to regularity in attendance, sixty-four managements reported Negroes to be equal to, thirty-two poorer, five better than white labor. The Conference Board closed its report with a suggestion "that all firms having suitable work of any nature should make an honest effort to hire colored persons in proportion to the total population of the area."

The President had anticipated this advice on June 25, 1941, with Executive Order No. 8802, warning government, employers, and labor that discrimination in defense industries is contrary to the country's fundamental interests and must not be tolerated. In the history of the U.S., this was the second presidential executive order with a direct bearing on Negroes; the first one was the Emancipation Proclamation. Seventy-eight years after they had been freed, the American Negroes got another American President's pledge—on the brink of another war.

The story of an executive order

The President's proclamation would have caused more enthusiasm among the Negroes, and probably a quicker response throughout the country, had it not been so clearly the result of pressure. America's Negroes, headed by A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, had announced a general protest march on Washington for July 1. A few weeks before the critical day, Fiorello La Guardia, then still in charge of the Office for Civilian Defense, requested them to call it off. When this was refused, the White House took the matter up officially. At a meeting with the President and ranking members of the Cabinet and the Office of Production Management, the suggestion of an executive order came from the Negro side of the conference table, and was coolly received on the other side. When only a few days were left for preventing an international embarrassment, the Negro leaders were shown a first draft, which committed defense industries but not government itself. The Negroes stood pat. Finally the President agreed to include an order to his own administration. And the march was canceled. But what could have been an inspiring demonstration of democracy at work came about as a compromise between hardboiled pressure groups.

This genesis of a great document has hampered its effectiveness ever since. To realize the proclaimed policy, the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice was created, equipped with little more power than that of investigating the field and holding public hearings on glaring cases of discrimination. True enough, the committee (whose jurisdiction includes all racial, national, and religious minorities) has somewhat accelerated the nation's adjustment to a critical situation, but the adjustment itself was caused by practical necessity rather than by political or industrial statesmanship.

The character of this necessity has been well defined by the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, an avowed supporter of conservative traditions. Baltimore's trained-labor supply is now virtually exhausted, and 35,000 more defense workers may be required by the end of 1942. There has already been heavy migration to the city. Sewer, water, highway, transport, police, fire, school facilities are overstrained and will have to be enlarged even if no more people come to Baltimore. How can the city digest an influx of another 35,000 families? So far, no one has provided the answer. But Baltimore's Negro population of 167,000 could substantially lessen the pressure of labor need, if an extensive training program were carried out in time. Concluded the Baltimore *Evening Sun:* "We are not here concerned with the long-range social consequences which might result from the removal of some of these barriers [against the use of Negroes for skilled work]. We are thinking simply of the ironic situation Baltimore finds itself in right now: on the one hand a desperate shortage of skilled and semiskilled workmen for our war industries, and on the other hand the existence of a large reservoir of labor which is rarely considered when there is need for skilled rather than unskilled workmen. It seems to us that in this emergency a dispassionate and objective examination of the situation of the Negro in Baltimore's industries is called for."

In varying degree this is the picture of each U.S. city with a war-production boom and Negro labor reserves. And management is not unaware of the critical situation. Last September 53,000 out of 184,000 additional jobs in both skilled and unskilled categories were declared open to Negro applicants by companies that had never before employed colored labor of any kind.

Buck passing: poor policy

Theoretically, management should have fewer objections to hiring colored labor than any other part of the industrial team. The employer seldom has social contact with his workers anyway and

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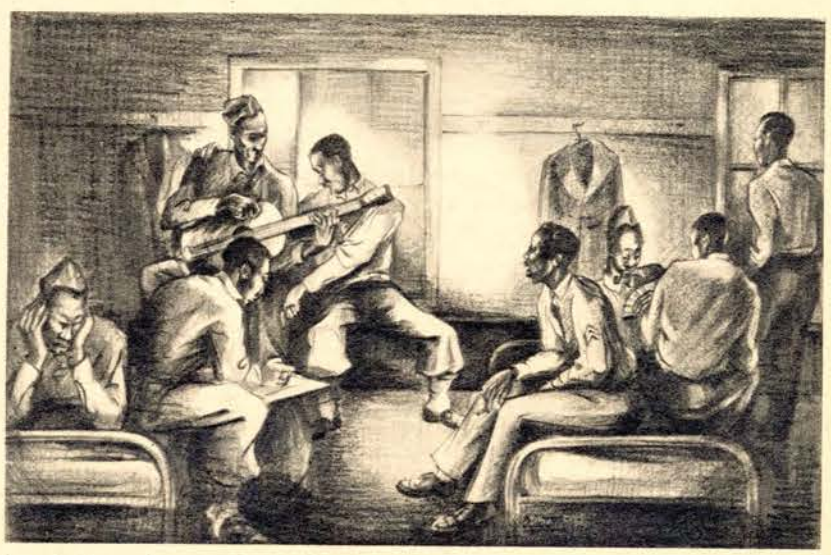
IN WASHINGTON, D.C., in an office of the U.S. Employment Service, Negroes are separated from white job seekers. In his military camp the Negro soldier gets training and food of the same quality, and in the same quantities, as his white fellow soldier. But if the camp is down South, he does not find much



hospitality and recreation in the civilian communities outside. This, rather than experiences of their actual army life, is what Negro soldiers complain about. Every army's petty enemy, the boredom of repeated evenings spent inside the barracks, strikes the Negro soldier as just another liability of segregation.

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his primary concern is production efficiency and satisfactory investment return. This, and not a pedigree, is what management wants from labor—theoretically. In reality, a multitude of extra-economic motivations help to determine the employer's attitude. And nowhere are they stronger than in his dealings with men—in his employment policy.

Anything may happen, and sometimes does, when the first Negro workers enter a plant or an office—from a few minutes' slowdown to the walkout of aroused foremen, even to strikes of the entire personnel. If work is not directly disturbed, there may be in some cases the grievous problem of segregated cafeterias, washrooms, recreation facilities. Management is afraid of opening a formidable Pandora's Box of troubles. And employers who, recoiling from the implications of a nondiscriminatory hiring policy, tend to pass the buck to labor, have some impressive facts on their side. Moreover, they argue that the same government that insists on such a policy for private industry has not exactly established a working model in Washington. Yet a conclusive answer to all that has been given by the Employers' Association of Chicago, in a memo to its members: "Some employers have raised the objection that the attitude of their own employees forces them to discriminate. However true this may have been in the past, it is now the job of employers to influence their employees toward sacrificing such prejudices as a matter of patriotic necessity. It is not going to be easy—nor is it going to be easy to train a whole new army of unskilled men and women—but both must be done, and the employer must do it."

And it can be done. Consider the example of Lockheed-Vega. Once the management had made up its mind to employ Negro labor, foremen and supervisors were advised to see that the plan succeeded; and they accepted the responsibility, since evidently the management was resolved to carry out its intent. Last August, after the internal machinery had been fully set up, each of Lockheed's thousands of employees was provided with a firm statement of the management's policy; even if they had wanted to, the local unions could not have resented Lockheed's compliance with the Commander-in-Chief's executive order, which was extensively quoted in the communication. And then, one Negro worker after another was introduced into the plant—the one hundredth last November, by Joe Louis himself, cheered by the white workers. Today many hundreds of Negroes are working at Lockheed-Vega, mostly in production jobs, and the company reports no trouble.

Not every management in the U.S. has such elaborate industrial-relation devices at its disposal; nor are they indispensable. With different, though equally effective, methods the Wright Aeronautical Corp. in Cincinnati employed last April more than 1,000 Negro workers without any friction. A year ago Western Electric hired Negroes for the first time in its Kearny, New Jersey, plant and put them to work side by side with skilled white people. The experiment was a full success. No separate cafeterias, no separate washrooms, and no move to get them. The plant is producing highly complicated instruments; neither the work nor its quality was even slightly disturbed. The navy shipyards increased the use of Negro labor extensively during the last year, and all over the country colored yardmen are working practically shoulder to shoulder with white colleagues. There is, however, not a single production region that cannot provide the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice with documented complaints.

While experiences vary according to regional habits, local population structure, and type of work, they agree on one point; namely, that much depends on the management's own approach. Where management reluctantly yields to local Negro or governmental pressure, the result generally is trouble. Where management conceives the hiring of Negroes to be part of its own wartime labor policy and sticks to it, results are encouraging. They are exemplary where management and unions join forces against discrimination. In fact the unions' responsibility for the Negro's economic fate equals, if it does not surpass, that of management.

Dues the unions don't want

For labor unions to turn against any group of men who have to work for a living contradicts their original aims but at least not the written constitutions of some of them. Nineteen international unions, ten of them affiliated with the A.F. of L., explicitly exclude Negroes from membership. Officially, the A.F. of L. advises its affiliated organizations not to retain a constitution discriminating against Negroes. So diplomats of those internationals long ago found an ingenious way out: the machinists, for example, exclude Negroes by a ritualistic oath. In America, and in the twentieth century, prospective union men must make a solemn promise that they will introduce into their union only "competent, white" men. To eliminate this hocus-pocus, the A.F. of L. leaders argue, is beyond their jurisdiction since affiliated internationals and locals have jealously preserved their independence. Management usually accepts the situation, even where there is no closed shop, since most of the discriminating unions include highly skilled workers whom the employer cannot afford to lose to a competitor. Closed shop or no, in times of inflated demand for skilled labor no Negro can get into a machine plant if the worker aristocrats don't want him there.

In certain places and industries the congestion of war orders has been so heavy that discriminating unions could not totally obstruct Negro employment without endangering production and their own jobs. In some of these instances a peculiar device is used: the Negro is not accepted as a member, but purchases from the union a working permit—an interesting hybrid of tenant feudalism and industrial democracy.

The C.I.O., officially opposed to racial discrimination, is built on the principle of industrial, vertical organization and intends to embrace "all the workers." Furthermore, centralization is more strongly stressed in the C.I.O. than in the A.F. of L. so that headquarters have direct responsibility for the policy of a local. On both accounts Negroes have good reason to prefer the C.I.O. to the A.F. of L.

The inexhaustible variations of life, however, produce weird results in the struggle between the two organizations. In Birmingham, Alabama, of all places, the A.F. of L. acted as the advocate of the Negro ironworkers, merely because the local C.I.O. did not. Enjoying the bargaining rights in the two Birmingham plants of the Ingalls Iron Works, the C.I.O. had done little to improve the situation of the Negro workers (about a third of the personnel). The job classifications, they complained, were unfair, keeping Negroes in a low-paid wage stratum regardless of the job done The part they played in union affairs was not commensurate with their numerical strength. Last year the Negroes offered to bolt the C.I.O. when and if the A.F. of L. would promise to right their grievances. Assured of a new deal from the A.F. of L., the Negroes shifted their votes and the C.I.O. lost its hold at Ingalls. In negotiating the next contract the A.F. of L. lived up to its promises: the

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Negroes' jobs have been reclassified and they are now paid for what they do; they serve on the shop grievance and contract committees; they share justly with white men the pay raise gained last year. Such miracles happen when two unions fight for jurisdiction—food for thought on the merits of competition in general, and the closed-shop issue in particular.

Where organized labor indulges in ethnological double talk, industry is prevented from fully utilizing its potentialities. When Chrysler in Detroit tried to overcome the scarcity of skilled labor by upgrading and transferring able Negro workers, the C.I.O. personnel in a division of the Highland Park plant went on a sit-down strike. It took War Department intervention and a firm stand by both management and national union leadership to protect the Negroes and the country's claim on unhampered defense production. When Packard shifted two expert Negro metal finishers from work on automobiles to the polishing department of a new tank plant, 250 C.I.O. members staged a forty-minute sit-down strike, holding up the work of 600 persons. The Negroes were withdrawn; and for the following six months the U.S. Government, the Executive Committee of the United Automobile Workers-C.I.O., and the Packard company were interlocked with the personnel in a wrestling match over two American citizens' right to contribute their skill to the production of tanks. Fortunately, government, company, and union leaders did not back down but finally told the race-conscientious objectors either to work or to get out. Consequently, all usable labor is now harnessed smoothly to production.

The Labor Division of the War Production Board has a special Negro Employment and Training Branch, under Dr. Robert C. Weaver, which is attempting to secure the unions' cooperation. Improvements are slow but undeniable. In some regions C.I.O. and A.F. of L. officials have formed joint-action committees to speed the integration of Negroes into union shops. Usually, C.I.O. headquarters is willing to put serious pressure on locals that are not yet impressed by the President's order. Although William Green of the A.F. of L., testifying before Representative Tolan's House Committee on National Defense Migration, was not particularly outspoken against the discriminatory practices of some of his unions, an increasing number of A.F. of L. organizations have put a damper on their racial feelings. But the unions still have a long way to go.

The high tax on discrimination

What America's Negro community resents as employment discrimination is in part due to the fact that the bulk of Negro labor is still unskilled. Every third gainfully working white American belongs to the skilled and semiskilled groups, but only one out of each eight working Negroes. In FORTUNE's manpower study of last April, training and upgrading of unskilled labor was shown to be a prime prerequisite for full mobilization of America's human resources. For the Negro it is more than that. He will march into a richer life through training schools or not at all.

On his initial steps along this road he has not exactly been encouraged. Here is an over-all picture of conditions in eighteen selected southern and border states and the District of Columbia. Over 22 per cent of the population in this area is Negro; but in the preemployment and refresher-training courses, supervised by the U.S. Office for Education, only 3,215 Negroes were enrolled last January—less than 4 per cent of the trainees. Out of 4,630 training sources only 194 accepted Negroes.

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[*Continued from page 158*]

All these courses are financed out of the $60 million fund appropriated by Congress in 1940 for the national-defense training program. The bill contains this amendment: "No trainee . . . shall be discriminated against because of sex, race, or color; and where separate schools are required by law for separate population groups, to the extent needed for trainees of each such group, equitable provisions shall be made for facilities and training of like quality."

For the strange execution of this program the training-school managers in the field have some plausible justification. In the South unions often refuse to supply instructors for Negro training schools. Also, it is indeed ironic to train workers who, after graduation, are almost sure to be denied the jobs they were schooled for: a year ago the records of the U.S. Employment Service showed that only one out of fifty Negro graduates of training schools could be placed.

Waste of training facilities is the result. Last February Texas was training 12,472 persons for defense production. These included exactly 206 Negroes. Yet more than 23,000 defense workers could have been trained with full use of the available equipment. If used to capacity, the state's courses for airplane-engine mechanics could have educated 749 specialists; they were producing 218. Classes for turret-lathe workers, capable of turning out 200 experts, were training 32. But many a trainable Negro was not admitted.

A New Orleans shipyard was recently reprimanded by the Maritime Commission for falling behind schedule. The company's defense: not enough local skilled labor; 700 or 800 additional trained workers would have made all the difference. But about 7,000 local Negroes had registered for defense training—unsuccessfully.

A plant is being built for Bell Aircraft near Atlanta, Georgia, which by the end of the year will employ many thousands of workers. In March 6,000 Negroes in the area had expressed their desire for training by registering with their Urban League. At that time forty-five defense courses were open for whites but only one for Negroes, and this was, unfortunately, a class in ship woodworking. When specific training for the Bell factory was first being planned, all these additional courses were confined to white applicants. Not until Washington intervened with the local and state vocational authorities in Georgia was training for the new plant finally promised to Negroes.

The Labor Division of WPB has estimated that 5,000 trained workers will be needed in the next few months in Mobile, Alabama, and ultimately more than 20,000 new workers will be required. As of April 1, available Negroes were not being trained, although the local vocational centers for whites were running short of candidates. To take care of the stream of in-migrant workers 500 defense housing units have already been built and more are needed. But each new house for an imported worker whose job could be done by Mobile labor wastes around $3,000 and 2,330 pounds of critical metals.

There are other regions and an increasing number of them where all labor is used up, and still more must be imported; and there the construction of defense homes becomes a prerequisite for a thrifty investment of the nation's human resources. As for the Negro, it is another turn of the blind wheel.

The merry-go-round of housing

In Denver, Colorado, federal authorities were interested in a housing project for the three worst-housed local groups: Mexicans, Eastern-European immigrant workers, and Negroes. The plan

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miscarried. The Negroes resented the idea of living in close contact with Mexicans. In short, everybody is somebody else's Negro.

Just so, the spearhead of local opposition against Negro housing projects is nearly always one of the poorest, most recently arrived groups. The reasons are partly economic; i.e., fear of displacement by even cheaper labor; anxiety over their small real-estate holdings which may lose in value if close to a Negro settlement, the site of which is usually picked in the poorest section of a town. But the truly impelling motives are unmistakably psychological: the satisfaction of kicking someone who is socially even lower than oneself; the illusion that a potential target for xenophobia can escape being hunted by turning the heat on somebody else; the eagerness to belong—if only in sharing and outdoing, a respectable community's prejudices. In recent months, Negro housing projects have encountered especially vehement opposition in Detroit and in Buffalo; and in both cases primarily from Catholic Polish immigrants who thus had three rational reasons to appreciate tolerance.

The story of the Sojourner Truth project in Detroit has become a *cause célèbre* with repercussions high in the federal bureaucracy. The riot hit not only bystanders in Detroit's streets but also the Director of Defense Housing in FWA, Clark Foreman. This scion of a leading southern family lost his job, under some congressional pressure, because he supported too firmly the Negroes' insistence on their legal rights. But more revealing than the skirmish of Detroit, because more typical, is the stalemate of Buffalo.

Buffalo, having nearly exhausted the local labor pool, is in pressing need of homes for in-migrating defense workers. The Bethlehem Steel mills, which employ a great deal of colored labor, imported Negroes from New York state, Tennessee, Virginia—only to discover that 400 of their men have to live under deplorable slum conditions. Last July, federal authorities who then had $500 million for just such purposes, decided to build a 200-unit housing project for Negro workers. As a matter of policy, defense-housing agencies decline to spend their funds for slum clearance. The money, after all, was earmarked for *additional* emergency housing, not for reform programs; besides, demolition and rehousing of the slum tenants waste labor and delay work. A desperate search for a site began. One selection after another had to be abandoned because of organized public pressure. After nine months of protests, petitions, and investigations, it now looks as if the federal housing authorities must give in. The present plan, strictly contradicting a sound general policy, calls for the demolition of a slum area of 100 existing homes. Therefore, not 200 but 300 homes will have to be built—an excess expenditure of more than $400,000, and 100 tons of strategic metals. Meantime, the imported workers are still living under conditions that Bethlehem Steel considered impossible ten months ago.

However, when straightforward action of authorities has met calm cooperation of a township, experiments with Negro housing have been encouraging. In Chicago, in Stamford, in South Jamaica, Long Island, there are public projects where Negro and white tenants live in closest neighborhood. In industrial Elizabeth, New Jersey, 333 white families peaceably share the Pioneer Homes with seventy-two Negro families and have mixed clubs. The widely popular belief that Negro homes depreciate adjacent property values is not supported by the experience of Atlanta, Georgia. There, the monthly rate of private construction in the vicinity of the John J. Eagan Homes showed a gain of 500 per cent, eight times the gain for the city as a whole. Nor is this an exceptional experience. Baltimore, Boston, Knoxville, Austin, Philadelphia,

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Detroit, Gary have learned that construction impetus and real-estate prosperity in connection with well-managed Negro housing projects is a country-wide phenomenon.

Army in black and white

Socially, the Negro's place is not fully defined by the economic patterns of his life; nobody's is—particularly not in such times as these. What individuals or groups are aware of contributing to the collective endeavor, determines their feelings more deeply than job, income, housing. Accordingly, the biggest single factor in shaping the American Negro's mind about this war and his part in it, is his place in the U.S. armed forces.

In a communication to FORTUNE the War Department said: "The Army is extremely enthusiastic about the morale, the performance, and the reenlistment rates of its existing Negro units, a number of which are outstanding on any basis." Last fall there were about 100,000 Negroes in the U.S. armed forces, but the pace of induction has been considerably stepped up since. The army aims at reaching and preserving for the duration a ratio of 10 per cent. This, however, is an over-all ratio that does not necessarily apply to each of the various service branches, particularly not to the nation's pride and greatest single hope—the Army Air Corps.

There is only one training school for Negro combat pilots, the segregated establishment at Tuskegee, Alabama. Equipment, standards, instructors match anything the army has elsewhere; so do the students, the first of whom got their wings in March. But at the present rate of training and graduation there will be only a few score Negro fighting pilots at the end of 1942. In as much as the U.S. goal for 1943 is 200,000 combat fliers, the Negroes think their race could contribute much more to the air arm. In fact, they know it could. So do the white instructors at Tuskegee.

In 1918, all Negro officers were trained in a single segregated institution at Camp Dodge, Des Moines. Today, Negro officer candidates are interspersed in almost all officer-training schools. The instructional part of the integration works perfectly. White and Negro candidates attend the same classes, get common physical exercise and common field practice. After they have been at school for two weeks, they rate one another for aggressiveness, loyalty, leadership, etc.; and in Fort Benning, Georgia, Negroes rate whites above other Negroes, whites rate Negroes above other whites. As to achievement, one of the officers in charge of this training school thinks that white and black candidates shape up just about the same. Only one instance of a white candidate objecting to colored candidates sleeping in the same barracks was reported. If he did not like it, he was told, he could get out of the school and stay out. In training, housing, feeding, there is scrupulous impartiality. Outside of that, segregation continues in recreational and social affairs, but this applies to facilities and institutions that are not the camp's official business. To the Negro, however, who wears the U.S. officer's uniform and is told by a white enlisted man that he, an officer, is not wanted in the officers' movie house or club, the question of formal responsibility makes but little difference. And if the Negro officers have to journey nine miles for a haircut because there is no barbershop for Negro officers at Fort Benning, the blessings of integration appear somewhat limited.

Outside of the officer-training schools, segregation in the army is total, except of course for white officers who are serving with Negro troops. But the army, its leaders insist, did not create the problem and cannot undertake to change social views of the individual citizens who fill its ranks. Its sole objective is maximum success in training and using the country's men for military action; and, the army leaders point out candidly, that's why they are not going to indulge in experiments such as the establishment of a trial division including, on a voluntary basis, whites and Negroes alike.

The navy insists even more strongly that it cannot take a chance on a social experiment. Since racial integration on naval units implies much more than in any other service, the navy feels that it cannot justly be expected to be so far ahead of the nation's general habits in racial matters as the advocates of full integration wish. Still, these advocates (at the suggestion of Wendell Willkie, they now include the National Committee of the G.O.P.) retort that the navy's argument is not watertight. The much-quoted "tradition of a white navy," they point out, is after all only twenty-odd years old and was preceded by a tradition of generations during which the U.S. accepted Negroes for every kind of naval service.

Last April the navy announced its willingness to enlist Negro applicants in the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Coast Guard, but to accept them as sailors only "for duty in District craft of various kinds, in maritime activities around shore establishments, in Navy Yards, and in the navy's construction crews and companies." This, the Negroes feel, is not necessarily more than a token payment on a pretty extensive debt. For the country, it was reassuring evidence that the leadership of its armed forces is gradually living up to this war's unique, basically political nature.

Cynicism cannot win the war

For this is a war in which ideas weaken, enforce, and sometimes are even substitutes for armies. The Negro's fate in the U.S. affects the fate of white American soldiers in the Philippines, in the Caribbean, in Africa; bears on the solidity of our alliance with 800 million colored people in China and India; influences the feelings of countless neighbors in South America. In this shrunken world of ours, a fracas in Detroit has an echo in Aden, and what a southern Congressman considers to be a small home-town affair can actually interfere with grand strategy.

At home, discrimination is too costly. To keep a minority "in its place" is a tough job. Germany, an old hand at efficient policing, had to profess the principle and to concentrate on it for many years, synchronizing all aspects of national life to that single purpose. Practiced apologetically, halfhearted discrimination is bound to damage the discriminators not less than those who are discriminated against. A perpetual irritation of the social tissues, it combines the discomfort of a troubled conscience with the high tax of inefficiency. In mellow times of peace, our civilization could afford waste and inconsistency, but the raw climate of war forces upon society speedy, clean-cut decisions.

In the consciousness of all peoples in the world, this war is being fought for and against the idea of racial superiority. America's Constitution, like Christianity, is based on the principle that every man is born with the inalienable right to equality of opportunity. Whether or not this assumption is "realistic"—we must either stick to it or change sides. Anything else would be not only immoral, it would be a military mistake. For men do not die for causes they are cynical about; and they cannot conquer on behalf of a principle they discount. That one-tenth of our population may lack enthusiasm is bad enough, but not crucial. What counts in a war like this is whether the nine-tenths feel at peace with themselves.

A Negro Artist Covers the Harlem Horse Show

Artist C. H. Alston

The Harlem Horse Show, which opened Friday and continues through today at the Speedway Gardens, is a great success. Yesterday morning Heavyweight Champion Joe Louis put his stamp of approval on it by showing his five-gaited horse Flash. Louis entered eight horses in the show. He shipped them here from his Michigan farm.

Artist Charles H. Alston, who covered the show for PM with his pencil, is the son of an Episcopal minister and was born in North Carolina 33 years ago. He has spent most of his life in New York, was graduated in 1929 from the Columbia School of Fine Arts.

He has been touring the south, principally through Georgia and Louisiana, the last eight months drawing sketches of his race. He aims to put the American Negro people on canvas as they are. He has had exhibits here, in Chicago, Baltimore, Atlanta, New Orleans, San Francisco and Washington. For the last two years he has been working on a Rosenwald Fellowship, a scholarship awarded to Negro painters.

In his sketch here he has caught the spirit of the show and sketches Col. Hubert Fauntleroy Julian, the Black Eagle of Ethiopia, in polo shirt and riding togs, talking to friends.