

under the microscope

by E. Washington Rhodes

"I AM AN AMERICAN"

The following article was written four years ago on the cold-bare Aleutian Islands by Harvey N. Schmidt. I feel that it is appropriate to publish it at this time. Mr. Schmidt is a practicing Philadelphia attorney. (E.W.R.)

ALEUTIANS

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"I AM AN AMERICAN"

"Racial discrimination in any form and in any degree has no justifiable part whatever in our democratic way of life. It is unattractive in any setting, but utterly revolting among a free people."

—Justice Murphy

Within the past few months several investigations have been launched in an attempt to find ways of democratizing the army. Committees have investigated officer and enlisted men's relationships the Courts-Martial and Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army. The failure or refusal of the last committee to recommend complete integration of all personnel in the postwar Army must be viewed by all lovers of democracy as a setback in the fight to make democracy a real living monument to those Americans of all races and creeds whose 'blood, sweat, and tears' are comingled on the earth's battlefields. The history of this war cannot be accurately written unless the deeds of valor of the many interracial fighting groups in our army are listed. The records show that morale and cooperation in such groups was as good or better than in fighting units where there was no interracial relationship. The records show that men living and working together forget about race, color and creed and learn to accept and respect a man on the basis of individual merit.

Admiral King, speaking at an "I am an American" day rally last week, was correct when he said, "that the U. S. is in competition, even conflict with Communism;" for it is understandable that the massive discontent felt by Negroes who have observed Russia's emphasis on racial equality and our theoretic acceptance and actual shrinking from it will tend to split the loyalty of those who did not hesitate TO FIGHT for an OPPORTUNITY to FIGHT for America in her hour of gravest need.

There has been an unforgiveable failure to recognize that out of this war, there has evolved a new Negro—one who will refuse to bow his head or bend his knee or lower his voice in servile plea. The New Negro does not seek special consideration; he asks, no, he demands that equality of opportunity be given him, that he be accepted or rejected as an individual and not as a member of a group of untouchables. He has heard the "Unalienable Rights" of the Declaration of Independence, the "Bill of Rights" of the Constitution and the "Four Freedoms" of the Atlantic Charter, extolled as the embodiments of the ideals for which America fought. Today, he is seeking an opportunity to live those ideals in order that democracy be worth fighting for.

We, who have tagged ourselves, the arsenal of democracy, must decide now whether we are going to follow the advice of Admiral King and wage a militant peace to preserve this nation's ideals and blast away the most fascistic of all practices or whether we are going to allow the slimy backwash of our past to continue to contaminate our potentially great future.

The American Army as an instrument of democracy should abolish its policy of segregation and discrimination and thus enable each and every soldier to say and feel without equivocation that, "I Am An American."

(Sgt.) Harvey N. Schmidt