



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Lawrence D. Reddick World War II project

1943-1953 [bulk 1943-1945]

Sc MG 490

Summary

Creator: Reddick, Lawrence Dunbar, 1910-1995

Title: Lawrence D. Reddick World War II project

Date: 1943-1953 [bulk 1943-1945]

Size: 4 linear feet (3 record cartons, 4 archival boxes, 1 1/2 archival boxes)

Source: Gift, Ella Ruth Reddick, 1998 Gift, Ella Ruth Reddick, 1998

Abstract: Lawrence D. Reddick served as curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, 1939-1948. An African-American historian, Reddick was interested in the role of the black soldier in U.S. wars and published on this topic. Concerned that the role of black soldiers during World War II would not be portrayed accurately by the government, the mainstream or black press, Reddick initiated a campaign to document the experiences of blacks in the military using their first hand accounts. He placed an ad in newspapers served by the Associated Negro Press, requesting that letters written by black soldiers to their families be sent to the Schomburg Collection. In addition, he conducted interviews with black servicemen and women from 1944 to 1946, and collected memorabilia and other World War II related items. The Lawrence D. Reddick World War II Project Collection, 1943-1953 (bulk 1943-1945) consists of correspondence with black servicemen and women, summaries of interviews Reddick conducted, as well as research files maintained by him. The series Letters and Interviews, 1943-1945 consists of more than a hundred letters that black servicemen and officers, and a few black servicewomen, wrote principally to their families and friends relating the individuals' experiences. The servicemen were stationed in all of the theaters of operation, and some were stateside at various training camps throughout the United States. Of note is a letter Dwight Eisenhower wrote in 1947 in response to a letter from Reddick, stating his opposition to discrimination of American soldiers based upon color or race. Also included in the collection are summaries of interviews Reddick conducted between 1944 and 1946 in Harlem with former servicemen and officers. The interviewees were forthright in their discussions about their experiences with both black and white soldiers and officers, and the people in the countries where they served. There are also summaries of interviews with several black servicewomen and one white serviceman, as well as civilians. Individuals interviewed include William E. Artis (artist), Warren Cuney (writer), Benjamin O. Davis (Air Force General), Ewart Guinier (who later headed the first African-American Studies Department at Harvard University), William H. Hastie (civil rights attorney), Roi Ottley (author and journalist) Leigh Whipper (actor).

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: [Item], Lawrence D. Reddick World War II project, Sc MG 490, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Related Materials:

Also located at Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

Creator History

Lawrence D. Reddick served as curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, 1939-1948. An African-American historian, Reddick was interested in the role of the black soldier in U.S. wars and published on this topic. Concerned that the role of black soldiers during World War II would not be portrayed accurately by the government, the mainstream or black press, Reddick initiated a campaign to document the experiences of blacks in the military using their first hand accounts. He placed an ad in newspapers served by the Associated Negro Press, requesting that letters written by black soldiers to their families be sent to the Schomburg Collection. In addition, he conducted interviews with black servicemen and women from 1944 to 1946, and collected memorabilia and other World War II related items.

Scope and Content Note

The Lawrence D. Reddick World War II Project Collection, 1943-1953 (bulk 1943-1945) consists of correspondence with black servicemen and women, summaries of interviews Reddick conducted, as well as research files maintained by him. The series Letters and Interviews, 1943-1945 consists of more than a hundred letters that black servicemen and officers, and a few black servicewomen, wrote principally to their families and friends relating the individuals' experiences. The servicemen were stationed in all of the theaters of operation, and some were stateside at various training camps throughout the United States. Of note is a letter Dwight Eisenhower wrote in 1947 in response to a letter from Reddick, stating his opposition to discrimination of American soldiers based upon color or race. Also included in the collection are summaries of interviews Reddick conducted between 1944 and 1946 in Harlem with former servicemen and officers. The interviewees were forthright in their discussions about their experiences with both black and white soldiers and officers, and the people in the countries where they served. There are also summaries of interviews with several black servicewomen and one white serviceman, as well as civilians. Individuals interviewed include William E. Artis (artist), Warren Cuney (writer), Benjamin O. Davis (Air Force General), Ewart Guinier (who later headed the first African-American Studies Department at Harvard University), William H. Hastie (civil rights attorney), Roi Ottley (author and journalist) Leigh Whipper (actor).

The series Writings and Research Files, 1943-1949 contains manuscripts and material Reddick created or gathered for articles and a book he had intended to write; nearly all focus on the black experience during World War II. Included a file about Commander Howard O. Queen's role in the 366th Infantry Regiment and formation of the 92nd Infantry Division. Several of his manuscripts, both published and unpublished, form part of this series, including an incomplete manuscript about black soldiers from the Civil War through World War I.

Additional research material consists of a file about discriminatory practices, folders about black officers, World War II heroes, the Army's policy toward black soldiers during the war, and President Truman's committee on equality of treatment. Of special interest is a scrapbook about the Manhattan Beach Coast Guard Training Station in Brooklyn containing photographs and news clippings about black officers. Reddick maintained a large set of files regarding employment of blacks from 1940-1945 divided into such categories as agriculture and various war-related industries as well as War Manpower Commission reports. Additional files pertain to conscientious objectors and notes from Army aptitude tests taken by black soldiers.

Arrangement: Collection organized into two series: I. Letters and Interviews; and II. Research Files

Key Terms

Subjects

African American soldiers
African Americans -- Employment
Black author
Military camps -- United States
Women soldiers -- United States
World War, 1939-1945 -- African Americans
World War, 1939-1945 -- Participation, African American

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Interviews
Scrapbooks

Geographic Names

United States -- Armed Forces -- African Americans -- History
United States -- Armed Forces -- Women

Names

Artis, William E., 1914-1977
Cuney, Warren
Davis, Benjamin O., Jr., 1912-2002
Dodson, Owen, 1914-1983
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969
Granger, Lester B. (Lester Blackwell), 1896-1976
Guinier, Ewart
Hastie, William, 1904-1976
Johnson, Charles Spurgeon, 1893-1956
Ottley, Roi, 1906-1960
Pickens, Harriet, 1909-1969
Reddick, Lawrence Dunbar, 1910-1995
Whipper, Leigh R. (Leigh Rollin), 1877-1975
Manhattan Beach Coast Guard Training Station (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)
United States. Army
United States. Navy