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Guide to the

Tuskegee Airmen Trainees : Freeman Field Mutiny collection

1944-1996

SC MG 567

Summary

Title: Tuskegee Airmen Trainees : Freeman Field Mutiny collection

Date: 1944-1996

Size: 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Gift of Muriel Pivalo, October 2003.

Abstract: The all-Black 99th Pursuit Squadron was created by the U.S. Army in 1941, with the proviso that the pilots would be strictly segregated. The airfield at Tuskegee, Alabama, was chosen as their training site, thus they became known as the Tuskegee Airmen. The Tuskegee Airmen Trainees: Freeman Field Mutiny collection consists of documents relating to a case of racial discrimination that resulted in the arrest of over a hundred African American officers and their subsequent exoneration.

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Conditions Governing Access:

Researchers must use photocopies.

Preferred citation: [Item], Tuskegee Airmen Trainees : Freeman Field Mutiny collection, SC MG 567, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Accessioned by Janice Quinter, October 2, 2003.

Creator History

The all-Black 99th Pursuit Squadron was created by the U.S. Army in 1941, with the proviso that the pilots would be strictly segregated. The airfield at Tuskegee, Alabama, was chosen as their training site, thus they became known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

In early 1945, the pilots were transferred to Freeman Field in Seymour, Indiana, where racial tensions, which had been building, reached a climax. Black officers attempted to enter the Freeman Field Officers Club against direct orders and one hundred and three officers were arrested, charged with insubordination and ordered to face court martial. The court martial proceedings were quickly dropped; however one officer, Lt. Roger "Bill" Terry, was convicted. Fifty years later, on August 12, 1995, at the Tuskegee Airmen National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, fifteen of the original one hundred and three officers who were arrested received official notification that their military records had been purged of any reference to the Freeman Field Mutiny. Mr. Terry's court martial conviction was reversed and his military record cleared.

Scope and Content Note

The Tuskegee Airmen Trainees: Freeman Field Mutiny collection consists of documents relating to a case of racial discrimination that resulted in the arrest of over one hundred African American officers and their subsequent exoneration. Included are copies of Army Air Force Special Orders, restricting and arresting the airmen; their reassignments; and transfer orders. Of interest is the testimony of Col. Robert R. Selway, commanding officer at Freeman Field who issued the discriminatory orders and had the officers arrested. Selway also signed the administrative reprimand of Flight Officer Frank Pivalo (1922-1995), one of the Tuskegee Airmen who figures prominently in this collection. There is also a roster of the 115th A.A.F. Base Units.

Noteworthy are three handwritten letters by Frank Pivalo detailing the officers' reasons for refusing to obey orders, 1944-1945, in addition to personal papers pertaining to his service in the Army Air Force. The resolution to this issue can be found in the correction of the military record for Pivalo, 1995-1996, which summarizes the A.A.F.'s case against the Tuskegee Airmen.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American air pilots
African Americans -- Civil rights
African Americans -- Legal status, laws, etc
Air pilots, Military -- United States -- History
Race discrimination -- United States

Geographic Names

Freeman Field (Ind.)

Names

Pivalo, Frank, 1922-1995
United States. Air Force -- African Americans.
United States. Air Force -- History
United States. Army -- History
United States. Army Air Forces. Fighter Group, 332nd

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Special orders detailing reassignment and transfer orders for African-American officers and troops 1944 December 2-1945 November 23
- b. 1 f. 2 Roster of 115th Army Air Force base units (CCTS-M) 1945 March 4
- b. 1 f. 3 Testimony of Col. Robert R. Selway regarding discrimination against African-American officers at Freeman Field 1945 April 16
Army Air Force documents regarding arrest and reprimand of African-American officers for contesting racial discrimination
- b. 1 f. 4 1944 December 29-1945 June 19
- b. 1 f. 5 1945 August 7-1946 March 4
- b. 1 f. 6 Letters by Frank Pivalo protesting racial discrimination at Freeman Field 1944 September-1945 August
- b. 1 f. 7 Correction of military records of Army Air Force for Frank V. Pivalo and James C. Warren 1992-1996