Summary

Title: Tuskegee Airmen Trainees : Freeman Field Mutiny collection
Date: 1944-1996
Size: .2 linear feet
Source: Gift, Muriel Pivalo, 10/02/2003

Abstract: 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. Included are copies of Army Air Force Special Orders, restricting and arresting the airmen, their reassignment 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.

Access: Some collections held by the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in the NYPL's online catalog for detailed location information. To request access to materials in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, please visit: http://archives.nypl.org/divisions/scm/request_access

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

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 a hundred African American officers and their subsequent exoneration. Included are copies of Army Air Force Special Orders, restricting and arresting the airmen, their reassignment 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
World War, 1939-1945 -- Aerial operations, American
World War, 1939-1945 -- African Americans
World War, 1939-1945 -- Participation, African American

**Geographic Names**
Freeman Field (Ind.)

**Names**
Pivalo, Frank, 1922-1995
United States. Air Force -- History
United States. Army -- History