



ArchivesSpace

Black Military Photograph Collection

An inventory of the Black Military Photograph Collection at DC Public Library

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

People's Archive, MLK Library

901 G Street NW

Washington, DC

peoples.archive@dc.gov

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Summary Information

Repository:	People's Archive, MLK Library
Title:	Black Military Photograph Collection
ID:	P033
Date [inclusive]:	1942-1946
Physical Description:	2 Boxes
Physical Description:	1 Linear feet
Language of the Material:	English
Language of the Material:	English

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Biographical / Historical

Although African Americans have participated in every major U.S. war, the battle for integration and recognition of the accomplishments of Black soldiers was a slow process. It was not until after World War II that the U.S. Armed Forces became integrated, under Executive Order 9981 issued on July 26, 1948 by President Harry S. Truman. Of the more than 2.5 million Blacks who registered for the draft in World War II, about 909,000 served in the Army. In 1944, there were over 700,000 African Americans in the Army; this represented the greatest proportion of men of color to total Army strength in World War II. At its peak, only 8.7 percent of the Army—instead of the planned 10 percent—was Black. In June 1945, Blacks accounted for less than three percent of all men assigned to combat duty in the Army. About 78 percent of all Black males—and only 40 percent of all White males in the Army were placed in the service branches (including quartermaster, engineer, and transportation corps). Among the millions who registered, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. was determined to integrate the Air Force as one of the Tuskegee Airmen. These individuals enlisted to become America's first Black military airmen at a time when there were many people who thought that African American men lacked intelligence, skill, courage, and patriotism. These soldiers helped alter the ways in which society viewed Blacks. Davis became the first African American to achieve General's rank, retiring as a Lieutenant General in 1970. Approximately 167,000 blacks served in the Navy during the war, comprising about four percent of total Navy strength. Over 17,000 Blacks enlisted in the Marine Corps, comprising 2.5 percent of all Marines. The 761st Tank Battalion was one of the few Black combat units to fight in World War II. During 183 days of combat in 1944 and 1945, the 761st, wearing the Black Panther patch, captured or liberated more than 30 major towns and four airfields. The Battalion suffered a 50 percent casualty rate and lost 71 tanks. It pierced

the Siegfried Line into Germany and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. The unit also liberated the Nazi concentration camp Guns Kieserchen in Austria in 1945.

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Scope and Contents

This collection includes photographs and correspondence from soldiers in four branches of the armed forces: Air Force, Army, Marines, and Navy. It also includes images of a young and exuberant Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., who made significant advancements for African Americans in the armed services. Photos of soldiers include field combat, hospital recuperation, and leisure time. Correspondence includes letters, press releases, and soldiers' personal notes.

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Arrangement

Series 1: Army, 1942-1946 Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Army in combat, receiving honors or awards, performing duties, training, recovering from injuries, and enjoying leisure activities. Some portraits of soldiers are also included. One of the most notable pictures is of Queen Elizabeth talking with a lieutenant by his bedside as he recuperates in an American hospital in England. Series 2: Navy, 1942-1945 Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Navy receiving honors or awards, performing duties, training, recovering from injuries, and enjoying leisure activities. Some portraits of soldiers are also included. A notable image shows Dorie Miller receiving his Navy Cross for Heroism for his actions during the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. Series 3: Marines, 1944 Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Marine Corps in combat, receiving honors or awards, performing duties, and enjoying leisure activities. Series 4: Army Air Corps, 1944 Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Army Air Corps receiving honors or awards, performing duties, training, and enjoying leisure activities. Some portraits of soldiers are also included. A notable image shows Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. standing on the wing of his P-51. Series 5: Coast Guard, 1942-1946 Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Coast Guard performing duties, training, and enjoying leisure activities. Some portraits of soldiers are also included. Series 6: Printed Materials, 1944 Materials include captions not matched to any photographs and lists of soldiers who served during the war and/or received medals for bravery.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

Finding aid revised to be more evergreen. 2020-10-29

Custodial History

Photographs were discovered in the staff office of the Library's Black Studies Division in the mid-2000s by a staff member. There is no documentation pertaining to the donation of these images to the Library.

Processing Information

General processing procedures included removing pictures from construction paper that they were attached to. The correspondence were photocopied to acid-free paper. The collection was divided into the four branches of the Armed Forces as well as identifying dates.

Conditions Governing Use

No known restrictions.

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Controlled Access Headings

- African Americans
- Armed Forces
- Photographs
- World War, 1939-1945

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Army, 1942-1946

Scope and Contents

Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Army in combat, receiving honors or awards, performing duties, training, recovering from injuries, and enjoying leisure activities. Some portraits of soldiers are also included. One of the most notable pictures is of Queen Elizabeth talking with a lieutenant, by his bedside, as he recuperates in an American hospital in England.

Title/Description	Instances	
Combat, 1943-1944	box 1	folder 1
Combat, 1945-1946	box 1	folder 2
Combat	box 1	folder 3
Individual and Group Pictures, 1943-1945	box 1	folder 4
Individual and Group Pictures, 1945-1946	box 1	folder 5
Individual and Group Pictures	box 1	folder 6
Honors and Awards, 1944	box 1	folder 7
Honors and Awards, 1945	box 1	folder 8
Honors and Awards	box 1	folder 9
Leisure, 1944-1946	box 1	folder 10
Patient and Hospitals, 1943-1944	box 1	folder 11
Patient and Hospitals, 1945	box 1	folder 12
Quartermaster Corps, 1942-1945	box 1	folder 13
Quartermaster Corps, 1946	box 1	folder 14
Quartermaster Corps	box 1	folder 15
Training, 1943	box 1	folder 16

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Series 2: Navy, 1942-1945

Scope and Contents

Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Navy receiving honors or awards, performing duties, training, recovering from injuries, and enjoying leisure activities. Some portraits of soldiers are also included. A

notable image shows Dorie Miller receiving his Navy Cross for Heroism for his actions during the Pearl Harbor attack.

Title/Description	Instances	
Individual and Group Pictures, 1942-1945	box 2	folder 1
Honors and Awards, 1942-1945	box 2	folder 2
Leisure, 1942	box 2	folder 3
Patient and Hospitals, 1943	box 2	folder 4
Training, 1942-1944	box 2	folder 5

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Series 3: Marines, 1944

Scope and Contents

Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Marine Corps in combat, receiving honors or awards, performing duties, and enjoying leisure activities.

Title/Description	Instances	
Combat	box 2	folder 6
Individual and Group Pictures	box 2	folder 7
Honors and Awards, 1944	box 2	folder 8

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Series 4: Army Air Corps, 1944

Scope and Contents

Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Army Air Corps receiving honors or awards, performing duties, training, and enjoying leisure activities. Some portraits of soldiers are also included. A notable image shows Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. standing on the wing of his P-51.

Title/Description	Instances	
Individual and Group Pictures, 1944	box 2	folder 9
Honors and Awards, 1944	box 2	folder 10

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Series 5: Coast Guard, 1942-1946

Scope and Contents

Photographs depict soldiers serving in the United States Coast Guard performing duties, training, and enjoying leisure activities. Some portraits of soldiers are also included.

Title/Description	Instances	
Individual and Group Pictures, 1944	box 2	folder 11
Leisure, 1942-1946	box 2	folder 12
Training	box 2	folder 13

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Series 6: Printed Materials, 1944

Scope and Contents

Materials include captions not matched to any photographs and lists of soldiers who served during the war and/or received medals for bravery.

Title/Description	Instances	
Printed Materials, 1944	box 2	folder 14

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