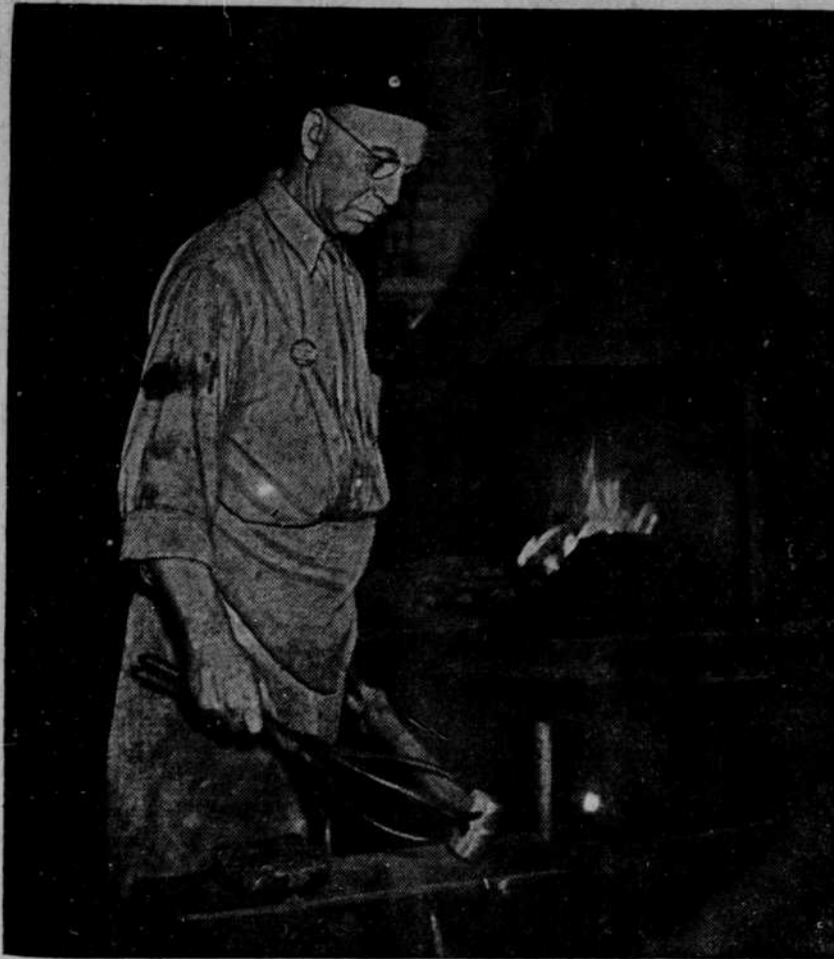


# NEGROES DO SKILLED WAR WORK IN ILL.



## OVER 1,100 ON JOB AT STEEL PLANT

This is the third of a series of articles on the important part being played by the Negro in the nation's war effort in the factories and in the armies of the United States.

Demands of the all-out war effort have so increased employment that today more than 1,100 Negroes are working at the South Works of the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, a survey discloses. These Negroes are 16 percent of the total number of persons on the payroll at this huge steel mill.

All along the company has had nondiscrimination as its official policy.

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Encourage your white neighbors to subscribe to THE OMAHA GUIDE and learn what the dark-one tenth of the American population is thinking and doing.

**TWENTY THREE YEARS**—of continuous service at the skilled job of blacksmithing at South Works, Carnegie, Ill., will be the record set by Jake H. Horton in November.

It didn't take the emergency of government urging to get jobs for Negroes at South Works, for many have been employed there for years. The expansion engendered by the war has found Negro employees increasing in the same proportion as all others, which indicates the plant long has had Negroes composing 10 percent of its force.

In fact, one Negro, Ward Fisher, a laborer at No. 2 Structural Mill, has been working for the United States Steel Corporation, of which Carnegie-Illinois is a subsidiary, for more than 37 years. He started at the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company in December, 1909 and was transferred to South Works in June 1923. Now 61, he also has worked for the company as a gashouse fireman and gas producer man.

**HOLD SKILLED POSITIONS** But Negro employment at South Works is not limited to common labor nor the unskilled category. Negro workers are found in such skilled classifications as switch tending, blacksmiths, millwrights and maintenance men. The semi-skilled positions include second helper, locomotive hostler, chipper, scarfer, stamper, bricklayer helper, locomotive crane switchman and hooker.

These and all other Negro employees are integrated throughout the plant, working beside whites with out friction. South Works officials say they know of no trouble, caused at any time by the two races working together. This policy of integration is carried over into the use of all plant facilities. No separation is practiced in locker room, and similar accommodations.



The rest of the employees, such as janitor, scrap man, press helper, bottom maker helper and laborer are classed as unskilled.

Many skilled and semi-skilled workers have been at South Works for long periods. Since November, 1919 Jake H. Horton has worked in the blacksmith's shop; Robert A. Chaney has been a locomotive crane switchman for four years after starting as a laborer in 1936; since 1932, Willie Handy has been a boilermaker helper for the preceding nine years.

**ON POWER STATION STAFF** A 1903 graduate of Syracuse University with a degree in electrical engineering, Charles Carter Robinson, started at South Works in April 1907, as a lineman in the electrical department. Six months later he was made a motor operator in the rail mill and in April, 1908, a substitution operator. He advanced through various positions until November, 1939, when he was made operator of No. 1 switchboard in the No. 3 power station.

These facts indicate that the hiring of Negro labor is not an experiment at South Works and that Negro and white will work harmoniously together, not only on the job but in outside activities. As for officials of Carnegie Illinois Steel, they state that they are satisfied with their Negro employees, whom they find to be "loyal and efficient workmen."

The Pressed Steel car Co., one of the biggest of the defense plants in the Chicago area, has learned the value of Negro labor in the manufacture of medium and light tanks. The company, operating on three eight hour shifts, employs more than 300 Negroes, many of whom are performing highly skilled tasks. John Michel, assistant to the vice president, conducting visitors through the plant, can point out Negroes operating milling machines, boring mills, precision grinding machines, arc welding machines, turret lathes and other implements used to turn out the 30 odd-thousand different tank parts.

**LOCOMOTIVE CRANE SWITCHMAN**—Robert A. Chaney served as a laborer for two years in the yard department at South Works before being promoted to his present job.

The workers themselves have voluntarily crossed color lines in the Good Fellow Club, an independent employee organization not sponsored by the plant. Many Negroes are members of this club and take full part in the athletic activities, welfare functions and other organization programs.

**LOCOTIVE CRANE SWITCHMAN** Many belong to the union, with some serving on labor committees, including the United Steelworkers Grievance Committee and the Joint Labor Management War Production Drive Committee.

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## WHY NEGROES SHOULD SERVE IN THE ARMY

(continued from page 1)

I belong to no organization, and I act solely for myself. But I know I reflect the feeling of many thousands of my fellow Americans of Negro blood, who are called upon to fight for a democracy they do not share.

I am taking my stand now, I am full convinced that in so doing I take a position on democratic principles which are far more important to me than any penalty I may suffer.

I have arrived at my position not lightly. I am not a man whose temper leads him to public notices. I would refrain from resisting if I could! Yet I cannot live with myself and yield the ground of principle on which I stand, and for which I am prepared to take whatever consequences come.

After I had read that letter of yours, we talked for quite a while. I raised a number of questions about your decision and you answered them. Usually you got back to the point of your letter; that you had the constitutional right to fight for your country on a basis of equality and could not fight otherwise. That seemed to me to be the hardest of all arguments for a white man to meet.

I told you that I believed this to be a two-front war.

The military front against the Fascist armies in the field.

The political front to improve and broaden and strengthen our democracy at home.

I said it seemed to me that the military front was the more urgent for, if we lose that fight, any gains made on the other front will be meaningless. And it is on the home political front that the Negro must win his fight for a full measure of democracy. Granting that the Negro has not achieved real democracy—for the very foundation of democracy is equality—I argued that if we lost on the military front the Negro would lose even the right to fight for the things that have been denied him.

You agreed that it is a two-front war, but you said that you could not believe that one front more urgent than the other. You said in any event, that you didn't believe we could win on the military front until and unless we had unity at home. That, you said, could come only if the Negro did achieve his full measure of democracy.

I asked you if you didn't think that even the right to fight for equality was worth fighting for. I said that the stake of the Negro was the same as that of the underprivileged white man, that democracy was the only means by which common people, white or black, could win and keep freedom.

I add now a few samples of other people who suffer in some degree or other the same kind of discrimination that burdens you. The Southern white sharecropper, the Jew particularly in communities where he is numerous, the Catholic, particularly in communities where he is few—those, too, are victims of discrimination. Democracy is the one protection for all of them.

You agreed with what I said about democracy. You said that because of the color of your skin, your stake in it was greater than mine. I understood what you meant. As a white man, I had equality. As a Negro, you did not. To you, the very denial of this heritage gave it a higher value than it could have to me, for I had it and took it for granted. But, you added, you felt you had to make even this great sacrifice for the principle you stood for.

I asked you if this was the only way you knew to fight for the equality of your people: to refuse to bear arms and, instead, spend the rest of the war in some spinking

## THE OMAHA GUIDE

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

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J. J. Ford, Pres.  
Mrs. Florna Cooney, Vice Pres.  
C. C. Galloway, Publisher and Acting Editor  
Boyd V. Galloway, Sec'y and Treas.

I told you of other Negroes who had accepted the Jim Crowism in the Army, not because they approved, but to carry on the fight for better race relations while enduring the very injustices to which you properly object. There are a couple more I would like to mention now:

There is Joe Louis, who fought for the Navy Relief at a time when the Navy would not have a Negro in its ranks except as a menial in the mess service. Don't you agree that part of the credit for the Navy's later decision to open the door to Negroes goes to the example set by Joe Louis?

Or Dorie Miller—didn't that Negro messman, denied the right to man a gun, bring the day of equality and understanding closer for all Negroes when he did man a gun at Pearl Harbor?

You met my point by granting that a Negro could serve his people and country in the armed services. You hoped that all who could would do so. For you know the slavery that Fascism holds for all of us if we are beaten. But for yourself, you said, your conscience would permit you only to make the other choice.

I asked you to consider the Southern white Bourbons—Negro-batters of the vile stripe of Eugene Talmadge—who were in the service. When one of these men dies in action, I said, his blood is being shed as much for your right to fight for equality as for his own version of democracy.

You said that even if you could bring yourself to enter the Army and submit to its Jim Crow discrimination, it would not be fair to the country, your leaders, or your comrades. For, you said, feeling as you do, your whole body and soul would not be in the fight—and a soldier must give everything.

I asked you, if discrimination meant so much to you, you had not gone around throwing bricks in windows long since—for you had never known anything but discrimination. I asked why you had waited until now.

You replied, simply, that the idea of serving in a Jim Crow Army was just the last straw. I asked if you thought that resistance to the injustice of discrimination should be carried to the ultimate—if the Negro should club the white man on the head in an effort to make him surrender the equality to which you are entitled. I knew how stupid the question was when you answered, quietly, that equality could not be achieved

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by Negroes and whites who were fighting each other. There was more. But those were the main lines. As I look back at what I have written, I see that I have not done you justice. Your arguments, your justifications for your decision have not been set down here without the clarity, without the integrity without the fully reflecting the intelligent honesty of purpose which you gave to them when we spoke. As I write your side of the case, I lose the burning pain of your burden, the sincerity of your approach. As I left, I expressed my regret that a man such as you should be wasted in jail. I felt inadequate to meet the simple courage of your insistence that you had constitutional right to fight for your country as a free man on the same basis as any other free man; that you wouldn't bring yourself to surrender that right by submitting to the segregation and humiliation of Jim Crow discrimination in the Army.

At this late date, there is just one idea I would like to add. You are a man of courage; your very decision shows it. Have you the courage to take even that final step to fight for your people that way; to fight discrimination while wearing of your own free will the heavy yoke of discrimination; to stand as a proud man by subjecting yourself to humiliation; to forego your rights

that you may win them? These discriminations of the Army are not the end of everything, they are just the handicaps of the fight. If your answer is no, I still know you as a man of courage, and the equal of any man I know. If your answer is yes, I will know you not as the equal, but as a better man than most.

Some time, somehow, all of us, whites and blacks together, will win the democracy of equality we are fighting for, and I feel that you can serve that fight better in the Army than in your cell.—JOHN P. LEWIS

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