

Document 96
Papers of Harry S. Truman: President's Secretary's Files

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 11, 1949

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Attached is a list of the members of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, (Appointed September 18, 1948). It is planned that they will have their first meeting Wednesday January 12, 1949 in the Cabinet Room. They will be introduced to you at 12:00 noon. There are also attached two drafts of remarks you might wish to consider.

MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF TREATMENT
AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE ARMED SERVICES.

(Appointed September 18, 1948)

Mr. Charles Fahy (Chairman)
Former Solicitor General of the U. S.
Washington, D. C.

Mr. Alphonsus J. Donahue
President
A. J. Donahue Corporation
Stamford, Connecticut

Mr. Lester Granger
Executive Secretary
National Urban League
New York City

Mr. Charles Luckman
President, Lever Brothers
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mr. Dwight R. G. Palmer
President
General Cable Corporation
New York City

Mr. John H. Sengstacke
Publisher, Chicago Defender
Chicago, Illinois

Mr. William E. Stevenson
President, Oberlin College
Oberlin, Ohio

My Executive Order of July 26, 1948, declared the policy of equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services of the United States, without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. The Executive Order also set forth my desire and intention that this policy be put into effect throughout the armed services as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale. The Committee on which you have undertaken to serve has been appointed by me pursuant to the Executive Order. You are authorized in my behalf to confer and advise with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force; and to examine the rules, procedures and practices of the armed services to determine in what respects they might be improved toward carrying out the policy laid down in the Executive Order. On the basis of its inquiry, this Committee is asked to make recommendations to the armed services and to me as President and Commander-in-Chief.

I attach great importance to the successful accomplishment of your mission. Equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed services, without regard to race, color, religion or national origin is simple justice, and is that regard for the human person which finds expression in our constitutional safeguards of individual freedom and civil rights.

It was proclaimed most recently in the Declaration of Human Rights approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The vindication of those principles throughout every phase of our national life is a continuing goal of my Administration. To you gentlemen is given the opportunity to help effectuate those principles in a most critical sector, the forces gathered by our democracy for its own defense.

I congratulate you upon accepting this challenging task and express my personal appreciation for your services in the months to come.