



*Card Thomas  
file Red Cross*

# AMERICAN RED CROSS

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

WASHINGTON, D. C.

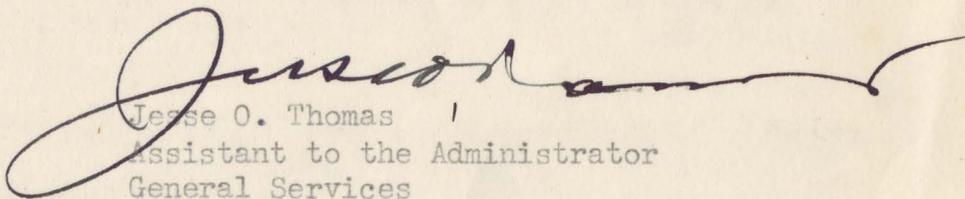
October 5, 1944

Mr. Truman K. Gibson  
Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army  
War Department  
Pentagon Building  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Gibson:

Enclosed is a copy of letter which a Negro soldier in Rome, Italy has written to his wife. Inasmuch as reference is made to representatives of the Army being a party to this discriminatory experience, I thought you might want to discuss it with some of the top people in your set-up.

Very truly yours,

  
Jesse O. Thomas  
Assistant to the Administrator  
General Services

encl.

C O P Y

A letter from a soldier in Rome Italy to his wife, who works in the War Department.

Italy  
9-17-44

My Dearest \_\_\_\_\_

All my life, I've been hustling nickels and dimes to contribute to the Red Cross. Every since I can remember, in school and in church, I've scuffled to belong to the various Red Cross enterprises.

You're forever telling me about working for the U.S.O. - contributing to the Red Cross. . . . ., I don't believe that anything you could do would make me any more angry that to hear of you giving another penny, or spending another minute at a U.S.O. club.

The frenchmen whom the American Army fought against in North Africa, the same frenchmen who have been responsible for the killing of American soldiers have access to all the facilities of the American Red Cross. The Italians who before they were conquered, were Allies of the Germans, and who have been responsible for the taking of thousands of American lines--these soldiers, provided they are wearing the American uniform have access to all the facilities of the American Red Cross. This same organization, to whose benefits the Negro has contributed, stands solidly on its feet, and bluntly tells the American born Negro soldier that -- "We have a regulation that does not include Negroes in our program." I have found that one of the most insufferable fates that can happen, is to be born an American Negro.

A fellow from the 15th air force came to a dance that the Red Cross was giving-- he and another soldier and their two girls friends. He was dancing with the girl when a white soldier tapped him. Of course, being more democratic than the policy of the Red Cross, he permitted the fellow to dance with his girl. In the meantime, he taps another soldier, who is dancing with a Red Cross worker. She refuses to dance with him, so he taps another couple. This soldier, who is white, gives him the rest of the dance. His partner happens to be another Italian girl. After that dance is over, the Red Cross hostess makes it a point to come to him and tell him publicly that Negroes aren't allowed to dance at the American Red Cross. So the fellows, along with their girl friends, leave the club. On their way out, they see \_\_\_\_\_ who happens to be on duty then. They tell him about it. \_\_\_\_\_ comes back and reports it to our Sgt. who goes to see the director of the Red Cross. It so happens that one of the field directors, a major happens to be there. The director says that there is segregation between races at the ARC and furthermore, he can't do anything about it.

The remarkable thing about the situation is, there is little or no friction between Negro and white soldiers over here.

Every day, you read in the papers about the war being fought for the liberation

of subjugated people. Yet, the soldiers over here fighting for that purpose are subjugated. It's farce, \_\_\_\_\_. And the deplorable thing about it is that nothing can be done about it. You can't appeal to their reason, because they have none where this issue is concerned.

Now, we are in a position to create a "stink" about this affair, but that would solve nothing. Because it has been proven that violence has never solved anything in the past.

Yesterday, a fellow who came to the detachment from the camp where we were, said that a staff sgt. in my company had been presented with a chicken as a medal for having shot and killed an Arab while on duty. The presentation was made at a formal ceremony by a colonel! The Company Commander said that for every man in his company who killed an Arab, he would present him with a nice tender young frying chicken. Can you think of anything more preposterous--more imbecilic? I can't. If it had been me, and a general were making the presentation, I would have refused it, even if it had meant the guard-house. There are some things that a man cannot tolerate, no matter what the consequences.

The evening of the Red Cross incident, \_\_\_\_\_ and I happened to be there. Incidentally, it is the second time that we had been there since we've been here. Both times, we went to see a Red Cross worker, who wanted us to sing on one of her programs. I hope that I will be stricken dumb, and that my tongue will cling to the roof of my mouth forever!--if I so much as walk out on the stage of that Red Cross.

It's not that the guys over here are dying to dance at a Red Cross. It is the principle that we are American soldiers, and have contributed just as much, proportionately to the American Red Cross. And by the same principles should be allowed to enjoy the privileges. But we are born black, unfortunately!!

\_\_\_\_\_, we didn't ask to participate in this damn war--but since we were called on to do our part, we do it willingly, and to the best of our ability. But at the same time, we feel that we should have access to the same recreational facilities. Haven't we left our homes and families?--haven't we interrupted our educations, and made the same sacrifices that other soldiers have made? Have we not left wives, whom we love; and being near to them--is that not just as important to us as it is to the next soldier? Do we not die on the battle-field, fighting for the same cause as the white soldier? Are we not subjected to the same laws as are the white soldiers?--and the same punishment? And lastly, should we not be accorded the same rights and privileges as the American of Japanese Ancestry??

We should be, but we were unfortunate enough to be born with dark skins, just a shade darker than the Japs.--And every time you pick up a paper you read about

democracy. I'm inclined to believe that there is a different interpretation of democracy for every race. As must be necessary through our experiences, ours is certainly different from that of the white man. To us, it means denial, subjugation, persecution! To him, it means freedom! and a right to live and enjoy life as he sees fit.

Someday, \_\_\_\_\_, and I hope that I may live to see it; through the intervention of the Grace of God, there will be a change. Because, I know, and believe, that a just God will not continue to tolerate these things. I know that some day He will clear this world of the stink and filth of race hatred.

All my love,

\_\_\_\_\_ "  
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