

## History Professor Writes Book Detailing Life of Black Soldiers During World War II

Fayetteville, N.C. -- While pouring over records at the National Archives in Washington D.C., Dr. Phillip McGuire, a Fayetteville State University history professor discovered hundreds of government-classified letters written by Black soldiers during World War II.

He has selected and commented on a number of them in his book, *Taps for a Jim Crow Army*, covering a broad range of abuses and injustices suffered by Black soldiers. Dr. McGuire has left the letters as they were written, sometimes eloquent, often ungrammatical, but always deeply emotional.

"This is the first time someone has collected these letters and put them together in one volume," Dr. McGuire said. "They provide a powerful illustration and confirm many tales I've heard about discrimination against Black soldiers in World War II.

The major theme of the book is that Blacks faced a color barrier in the military during the 1940s, but that today skin color doesn't prevent Black soldiers from having successful military careers. "The military continues to play an important role by providing young African-American men and women with career opportunities and upward social mobility.

"I want my students and the public to acquire a feeling for the broader historical mission that Black soldiers correctly sensed they were performing by serving their country during World War II," Dr. McGuire said.

"The African-American community believed that if the U.S. military could be integrated, then the integration of all of American society would follow," he said.

Many Blacks in the U.S. Army during World War II were hopeful that they might make permanent gains as a result of their military service and their willingness to defend their country. Dr. McGuire's book details the soldiers' disillusionment, rage, and anguish over the discrimination and segregation they experienced in the Army.

Most Black troops were denied entry into Army specialist schools; Black officers were not allowed to command white officers; Black soldiers were served poorer food and were forced to ride Jim Crow military buses into town and to sit in Jim Crow base movie theaters.

In the South, German prisoners of war could use the same latrines as white American soldiers, but Blacks could not. "White soldiers would not sleep or eat with Black

soldiers," Dr. McGuire said. "The military reflected the times. Whites in the military had the same thoughts and attitudes of whites in the larger society."

**Interview with Dr. Phillip McGuire;  
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Barron**

Dr. Phillip McGuire, a professor of history at Fayetteville State University, has published a book titled, *TAPS FOR A JIM CROW ARMY: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II*. The usage of the word "taps" in the title is suggestive of "lights out," or the end of the day, and symbolically represents the end of segregation in the Army. "Taps for a Jim Crow Army" is a powerful collection of letters written by Black soldiers in the 1940s to various government and nongovernment officials." According to Dr. McGuire, the underlying theme of the letters was the search for equality and racial justice. Dr. McGuire became interested in the subject while researching his doctoral dissertation entitled "Black Civilian Aides and the Problems of Racism and Segregation in the United States Armed Forces: 1940 - 1950". His research focused on the first black judge in the United States, William H. Hastie, who was appointed as civilian aide to the Secretary of War from 1940 to 1943. Dr. McGuire finished his dissertation in 1975 and published his first book in 1988: *He, Too, Spoke for Democracy, Judge Hastie, World War II, and the Black Soldier*. Black soldiers had been fighting and dying for the principles of democracy since the American Revolution. The question, then, was how was it possible to be fighting for democracy while being denied democracy themselves. "Many black soldiers serving in the U.S. Army... were hopeful that they might make permanent gains as a result of their military service and their willingness to defend their country." After World War II, progress was made in break-

ing down segregation through the efforts of Black leaders, advocacy of white supporters such as Eleanor Roosevelt, and through the persistence of the Black soldiers themselves. Dr. McGuire developed two theses in the book. One is the idea that race was a significant factor in the placement, training, and promotion of black soldiers. The second is that the military continues to play a significant role in the social mobility of young Blacks.

Dr. McGuire is originally from Dallas, Texas where his family still resides. He received his doctorate at Howard University in 1975. He has taught at Ohio State University, at UNC, Wilmington, and is in his fourth year at FSU. The hardback of *TAPS* was published in August, 1993 and the softback is currently available. The hardback version sells for \$35 and the paperback for \$19. Dr. McGuire's book will be available in the FSU bookstore.

## AIR FORCE RESERVE OFFICER'S TRAINING CORPS

by Jimmie Griffin

Air Force Reserve Officer's Training Corps. What do those words mean? Everyone who goes to college is aware of the ROTC acronym, but behind the uniform and the marching, what does it all stand for? In a recent interview with Captain Dennis Wilder, an instructor at FSU'S AFOTC detachment, he explained the many benefits of the Aerospace Science elective.

The program is primarily designed to provide well-qualified officers the opportunity to meet the demands of today's Air Force. After two years in an ROTC General Military Course (GMC), the cadet has the option to attend a four-week summer camp. While at the camp, the cadet is evaluated according to the qualities desired in a future officer such as discipline, integrity and responsibility. After successful evaluation, the cadet may choose to train for an Air Force career.

The Professional Officer's Course (POC) prepares cadets for the transition to military life. Upon graduating from the course, the cadet receives a commission as a Second Lieutenant with an annual starting salary of \$26,500. In addition to medical and dental benefits, the cadet receives thirty days of paid vacation as well as many other opportunities.

What are the benefits for those who choose not to pursue a career in the Air Force? The cadet enjoys the many activities in which the unit participates without any of the obligations. As an example, the FSU detachment has a military ball in the fall semester and a cadet dining out in the spring. There are also visits to bases in such places as Orlando, Phoenix, Atlanta, Montgomery and Washington, D.C. There are also opportunities to be active in community service, to develop long-lasting friendships, and to develop discipline and interpersonal skills that are essential to personal success.

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