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THE INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN MASSACHUSETTS

A Thesis Presented

by

CAITLIN E. PINKHAM

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2015

History Program

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THE INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE CIVILIAN

CONSERVATION CORPS IN MASSACHUSETTS

A Thesis Presented

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ABSTRACT

THE INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN MASSACHUSETTS

December 2015

Caitlin Pinkham, B.A., University of Massachusetts Lowell
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Directed by Associate Professor Timothy Hacsi

The Civilian Conservation Corps employed young white and black men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. In 1935 Robert Fechner, the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, ordered the segregation of Corps camps across the country. Massachusetts' camps remained integrated due in large part to low funding and a small African American population. The experiences of Massachusetts' African American population present a new general narrative of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Federal Government imposed a three percent African American quota, ensuring that African Americans participated in Massachusetts as the Civilian Conservation Corps expanded. This quota represents a federal acknowledgement of the racism African Americans faced and an attempt to implement affirmative action against these hardships.

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First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Timothy Hacsi, for pointing me in the right direction, revising my thesis, and supporting me through the process. Members of my thesis committee, Dr. Monica Pelayo and Dr. Marilyn Morgan for offering valuable feedback and critiques to make my argument stronger. Sean Fisher of the Department of Conservation Archives became instrumental in providing resources about the Civilian Conservation Corps in Massachusetts and African American enrollment. Archivist Gene Morris of the National Archives in Washington D.C. took the time to answer any questions and help with research.

To my family,

My older sister, Sarah Pinkham, took the time out of her schedule to visit Washington D.C. with me for primary sources. With limited interest in history, her support and encouragement greatly aided the research process. With gratitude, I would like to thank my parents, Lawrence and Maureen Pinkham for revising and helping me through the process. I would also like to thank Matthew Martell for his words of encouragement. As always, my gratitude extends to my younger brother, Brendan Pinkham, a Sergeant in the United States Army, whose courage proves that anything is possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hyde Park, New York is the home and final resting place of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Now in possession of the National Park Service, tour guides invite tourists to visit the president's beloved home and presidential museum. The museum exhibits videos, photographs, and material items from Roosevelt's presidency. Walking through the museum, tourists will notice a small exhibit, describing the importance of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The exhibit provides a brief explanation of the popular New Deal program and states, "African Americans participated, but they worked in segregated camps."[1] The museum's interpretive claim is too generalized; it does not account for the African Americans who participated in the integrated camps of the First Corps area through the duration of the program. The First Corps area included the states of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. This exhibit failed to include the African American experience in the integrated camps.

President Franklin Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933 in order to offer economic relief to young unemployed men. The program took these inexperienced men off the streets and relocated them into the nation's forests. While in

[1] Civilian Conservation Corps Exhibit, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York.

the forests, they received job training, educational opportunities, and monthly allotments for their families. The Civilian Conservation Corps became one of the first federal programs to recognize and address the economic hardships that Americans faced because of the Great Depression. Roosevelt appointed Robert Fechner as the director of the Corps and created an advisory committee to oversee national and local issues that arose. While this program had a resounding impact on some African Americans, racial discrimination and continued opposition to African American enrollment prevented the CCC from aiding African Americans enough to overcome financial hardships. In 1935, Robert Fechner issued an order to segregate black and white Americans in the CCC camps across the country. Due to the low African American population in the Northeast and the financial burden accompanied with establishing new camps, the First Corps area remained integrated. The standard quota of three percent worked in favor of African Americans when the program expanded. This space provides a new alternative narrative to the story of segregated CCC camps. African American enrollment numbers could not provide the amount of relief African Americans in New England needed, but it also allowed these men to remain in close proximity to their white peers. This paper examines the racial discrimination African Americans faced in the Civilian Conservation Corps and describes the integrated camps in the First Corps area, focusing on Massachusetts.

The First Corps integrated camps offers historians a new understanding of the Civilian Conservation Corps program. It demonstrates the transition of the Federal Government's passive observance of African American hardship to federal recognition

and intervention. The First Corps area remained integrated through the use of quotas, introducing a new federal responsibility to address the hardships of African Americans. Scholars recognize the societal influence of the CCC in that it not only provided jobs and hope to unemployed young men, but it also transformed the landscape, providing recreational opportunities that Americans still enjoy today. The Civilian Conservation Corps quickly became one of the most popular New Deal Programs, yet the program was not the same across the nation. Studying the integrated camps in the First Corps area offers historians the opportunity to examine the regional differences within the CCC and alters the Civilian Conservation Corps general narrative.

Few historians have examined the role that African Americans played in the Civilian Conservation Corps. John A Salmond analyzed the discrimination African Americans faced across the United States.[2] He argued that the CCC ultimately failed to offer the African American community its full potential relief. Yet, Salmond focused on white southern reactions to African American corps members and the segregation of African American camps. He did not analyze the integration of camps in the First Corps area. Howard Oxley also examined the experiences of African Americans by concentrating on their education in the CCC,[3] Oxley outlined the educational policies the Civilian Conservation Corps developed for African Americans, including its literary

[2] Salmond, John A. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro." *The Journal of American History* 52, no. 1 (1965): 75.
[3] Oxley, Howard. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Education of the Negro." *The Journal of Negro Education* 7. no. 3 (1938) 375-382.

program and character development.[4] Historian Calvin Gower explored the role of African Americans in positions of authority in the Civilian Conservation Corps. In his article "The Struggle of Blacks for Leadership Positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps," Gower argues that African Americans could not gain an equal footing in the New Deal Programs because the discrimination they faced in the CCC prevented them from obtaining authoritative positions in the organization.[5] Both of these historians' works give insight into the experiences of African American men in the larger program, but they do not detail their experiences in the First Corps area, specifically.

Despite the Civilian Conservation Corps popularity, there is limited historical scholarship available on the subject. The three most prominent studies on the federal policy include Neil Maher's *Nature's New Deal* (2008)[6], Perry H. Merrill's *Roosevelt's Forest Army: A History of the Civilian Conservation Corps* (1981),[7] and Leslie Alexander Lacy's *The Soil Soldier: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression* (1976).[8] Maher included a brief overview of the African American experience demonstrating the hostilities African Americans experienced in the South and the fact that "the Corps placed African Americans in segregated camps."[9] Maher focused his research on the transformation of the CCC landscape and the impact CCC had on

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Gower, Calvin. "The struggle of blacks for leadership positions in the CCC." The Journal of Negro History 61, no.2 (1976) 123-135.
[6] Maher, Neil. *Natures New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
[7] Merrill, Perry. *Roosevelt's Forest Army: A history of the Civilian Conservation Corps.* Vermont: Perry H. Merrill, 1981.
[8] Lacy, Leslie Alexander. *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression*. Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1976.
[9] Maher, Neil. *Nature's New Deal.* 108.

environmentalism and the future. Perry Merrill on the other hand concentrated on federal reports and national CCC enrollee's letters. He examined the social and economic impact of the CCC. Similar to Meyer and Merrill, Leslie Lacy's work focused on the Civilian Conservation Corps program, providing minimal information on African American corps members. While Merrill and Lacy each provide historical context for the CCC nationally, neither of them focused extensively on the African American experience.

Howard Sitkoff focused on the experience of African Americans in a broader context of the New Deal in his book, *A New Deal for Blacks* (1978).[10] He illustrated the obstacles that prevented the New Deal from becoming a conversation about civil rights. According to Sitkoff, African Americans lacked resources and power that ultimately inhibited Roosevelt from constructing a deal to increase equality for African Americans. Sitkoff argued that Roosevelt believed unemployment outweighed the importance of civil rights. In other words, Roosevelt focused on the creation of jobs and legislation, balancing the needs of African Americans against southern Democratic resources.[11]

Olen Cole Jr. became one of the first historians to focus on the silenced voices of African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps.[12] Basing his research in California, Cole interviewed African Americans that participated in camps of the Ninth Corps area, concluding that segregation altered the African American experience. Their

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[10] Stikoff, Howard. *A New Deal for Blacks: The emergence of Civil rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
[11] Ibid., 41-48.
[12] Cole, Olen, *The African American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps.* Florida: University Press of Florida: 1999.

participation provided them with valuable resources, food, shelter, and education.[13] Cole hoped his research would inspire further studies on the African American experience in the CCC.[14]

Following the advice of Olen Cole, this paper delineates the discrimination African Americans faced in the Civilian Conservation Corps, nationally, concluding with an examination of the integrated camps in Massachusetts. Chapter 1 provides a brief background on race relations leading up to the Great Depression and examines the Depression's impact on African Americans. Chapter 2 explores the fast mobilization and development of the Civilian Conservation Corps. It presents evidence of discrimination at the start of the program. The heightened racial tension ultimately leads to events covered in Chapter 3, the year of 1935 that examines Fechner's call for African American segregated Corps camps. Chapter 4 examines the African American experience in the integrated camps in the First Corps area focusing on Massachusetts.

[13] Cole, *The African American Experience, 76.*
[14] Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE 1920S AND 1930S FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

During the period of the 1920s, the United States experienced a time of political upheaval and rapid change in a prospering economy. The new industrialized economy propelled citizens into cities while "forty-four percent of the population was still counted as rural."[15] Historian David Kennedy indicated that these two conflicting economies created a dichotomy in the United States and produced a regional separation.

Industrialization sparked mass production throughout the country with advances in agriculture, electrical power, automobiles, radios, and motion pictures.[16] The prospering economy flooded the American labor market with immigrants as well.[17] Northern factories employed both immigrants and African Americans. When Congress severely curtailed European immigration in 1924, factories across the country heavily recruited African American and Mexican American laborers.[18] As a result, over a million

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[15] Kennedy, David M. *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 16.
[16] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 13.
[17] Ibid. , 14.
[18] Ibid., 18.

African Americans moved out of the rural South and sought employment in the Northern and Midwest cities of the United States.[19]

Discrimination took its toll on African American communities in the early twentieth century, particularly in the South.[20] Jim Crow laws enacted in the South segregated white and African Americans.[21] "Blacks sat in separate waiting rooms in railroads and bus stations, drank from separate drinking fountains, worshipped in separate churches, and attended strictly segregated and abysmally inferior schools."[22] These laws promoted and encouraged discrimination, placing African Americans in a position of second-class citizenship and producing a system where white supremacy was a socially accepted practice. African Americans faced abject poverty particularly in the South and had a life expectancy fifteen years shorter than whites had.[23]

African Americans faced discrimination in the north with policies reinforcing their social position. "Northern blacks lived as second class citizens, unencumbered by the most blatant southern style Jim Crow laws but still trapped in an economic, political, and legal regime that seldom recognized them as equals."[24] African Americans remained in a state of second-class citizenship in the north. White Americans remained passive

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Sitkoff, Harvard. *A New Deal For Blacks The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. 8.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear,* 18.
[23] Ibid.,19.
[24] Sugrue, Thomas. *Sweet Land of Liberty, the Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North.* New York: Random House, 2008. 13.

observers of African American injustice with little incentive to help them.[25] The north did not provide any economic promise to African Americans and Historian Thomas Sugrue argued African Americans navigated "invisible color lines that separated neighborhoods."[26] It resulted in white community opposition of African Americans in schools, neighborhoods, restaurants, and shops.[27]

The Federal government and northern states adopted the discriminatory practices that ran rampant in the South, "the Southern Way had become the American Way."[28] Scientific studies reinforced discrimination, declaring African Americans mentally and physically inferior. The eugenics movement under the direction of biologist Charles Davenport reinforced ideas of racial inferiority.[29] This movement argued that African Americans were naturally inferior to whites and their difficult status in American society resulted directly from their own genetics.[30] Biologists measured African Americans' craniums and likened their physical features to those of chimpanzees and apes.[31] Psychologists believed African Americans would remain intellectually inferior to whites no matter the amount of education they received.[32] Science backed racial discrimination in the early twentieth century.

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[25] Ibid.,18.
[26] Ibid.,31
[27] Ibid.
[28] Sitkoff, Harvard. *A New Deal For Blacks, 7.*
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.,6.
[31] Ibid.,30.
[32] Ibid.

Popular culture ingrained racial discrimination as a societal norm portraying African Americans as uncivilized and barbaric.[33] These popular works included titles such as *The Negro and a beast* and *The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization*, and songs like "All Coons Look Alike to Me," and "Colored Boy Eating Watermelons."[34] Books, newspapers, and songs reinforced African American stereotypes. White Americans compared African Americans to chimpanzees, looked upon as thieves—ill prepared to fulfill obligations of American citizenship.[35] Popular works promoted racial discrimination against African Americans.

Sentiments and laws such as these made it increasingly difficult for African Americans to gain political power. Southern states suppressed the African American political voice through the establishment of "the poll tax, and the 'understanding' and 'good character' tests."[36] The poll tax required African Americans to pay money in order to vote, placing an economic strain on a already financially burdened racial group. The character tests served as another voting barrier where African Americans were tested based on their education and white culture. Due to the inferiority of African Americans' segregated schools African Americans were ill equipped to pass character and understanding tests, ultimately silencing the power of the African American vote. These discriminatory practices made it increasingly difficult for African Americans to gain political leverage. With four out of every five African Americans residing in the South,

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[33] Ibid.,6
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

southern political officials silenced the African American majority through legal mechanisms.[37]

African American civil rights advocates attempted to overcome these injustices. Booker Washington stressed the importance of a gradual transition to end discrimination and racism. Washington believed African Americans could overcome racism if they adopted white American notions of civilization and educating themselves though vocational schools.[38] W.E.B. Dubois stressed the vote and urged African Americans to fight racism and discrimination on all fronts.[39] The African American community was not monolithic and therefore different leaders created different avenues of reprieve for African Americans.

As America's economy continued to prosper in the early twentieth century, violence became a regular occurrence against African Americans. Throughout the United States, lynching of African Americans became a common practice. According to historian Howard Sitkoff, "petty brutality, lynchings…occurred so frequently in the first decade of the twentieth century that they appeared commonplace, hardly newsworthy."[40] The perceived inferiority of African Americans provoked an acceptance of racial violence.

The stock market crash of October 1929 signaled the end of American economic prosperity, halting the economy. President Herbert Hoover and economists across the

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.,9

nation believed the economy would recover quickly. An Oklahoma senator compared the economic downturn to a disease "you might just as well try to prevent the human race from having a disease as to prevent economic grief of this sort."[41] Hoover attempted to overcome this economic slump by relying on private charities and limiting government intervention. Believing the economy would bounce back; Hoover tightened his hold on the economy, harming most economic growth.[42] As the Depression continued, Hoover reluctantly became the butt of all jokes in regards to his presidency.

The Depression devastated Americans. The unemployment rates soared, job prospects diminished, and "stock prices plunged 85 percent. Manufacturing had all but ground to a halt…between one quarter and one third of the workforce was jobless,"[43] The United States had not experienced this type of rampant unemployment in its history. Both the Federal Government and private charities were ill prepared to deal with the economic devastation.[44]

This economic disease chronically injured an already heavily burdened African American population. The Depression increased job competition. The menial jobs that ordinarily went to African Americans were offered exclusively to whites instead. African Americans began to bitterly understand "first fired, last hired."[45] Jobs prospects in cities and rural areas practically vanished for African Americans. White protestors in Atlanta

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[41] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear,* 51.
[42] Shlaes, Amity. *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression*. New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007. 109.
[43] Cohen, Adam. *Nothing to Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America*. New York, New York: Penguin Press, 2009. 14.
[44] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear,* 88.
[45]Salmond, John, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro."76.

shouted "No jobs for Niggers until every white man has a job!"[46] In 1933, unemployment for African Americans soared to double the national average, with over "two million on relief." [47]

Ethel Robinson, an African American woman, described the devastation of the Depression in a play *Mr. Depression* recited on November 27, 1933 at Shiloh Baptist Church. Robinson voiced the horrors and struggles of African Americans by personifying the Depression:

> He hung out signs: 'No help wanted.' He reached up and pulled the real estate down. Caused parks to become fields and mansions to become tramps' and insects' hiding places. Caused the insane asylum to be over-packed; Caused hundreds of suicides…He has seen to it that marriages have become complete failures…Caused thousands of Men, Women and Children to be in the bread lines. Where we used to have two meals we are having one and calling it keeping thin.[48]

The Depression took a particular toll on African American families. Burdened by the sinking economy, African Americans' only hope for economic and physical survival rested in the hands of the Federal Government—a government with a poor record of aiding African Americans.

In November of 1932, Americans placed their faith in Franklin Delano Roosevelt as the next President of the United States. Roosevelt defeated Hoover with over seven

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[46] Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 36.
[47] Salmond, John, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro."76.
[48] Play, Robinson, Ethel. *Funeral of Mr. Depression.* (Special Presentation). Shiloh Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, November 27, 1933. Roosevelt, Franklin D. President's Personal File. OF 93: Colored Matters. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

million votes.[49] Hailing from Hyde Park, New York, Roosevelt stressed the importance of federal experimentation, "the country demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it: If it fails admit it frankly and try another. But above all try something."[50] Out of this ideology, Roosevelt attempted to overcome rampant unemployment with rapid experimentation.

When he came into office in 1933, Roosevelt walked the political tightrope to focus his attention on the creation of American jobs. In order to gain political leverage, Roosevelt appeased southern politicians, refusing to acknowledge African American hardships which were further burdened by the crippled economy. Since Southern Democrats held the power of Congress, "Southerners controlled over half the committee chairmanships and the majority of leadership positions in every New Deal Congress."[51] Roosevelt understood he would not make any headway if he championed African American rights.[52] When considering whether to eliminate the poll tax that severely hindered African Americans, Roosevelt stated, "I believe you should never undertake anything unless you have a 50-50 chance of winning."[53] Repeatedly, Roosevelt appeased the political majority for political expediency.

Members of Roosevelt's administration avoided African American issues to appease the political majority as well. Vice President John Nance Garner, Press Secretary Stephen Early, Appointments Secretary Marvin McIntyre, Political Advisors

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[49] Shlaes, Amity. *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression*, 44.
[50] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 104.
[51] Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 34.
[52] Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 37.
[53] Ibid.,35.

Louis Howe and James A. Farley all advised Roosevelt against bringing African American rights into political prominence.[54] The Attorney General Homer S. Cummings, the Secretary of State Cordell Hulls of Tennessee refused to acknowledge African American politics.[55] The southern political majority silenced any strides towards African American rights in the early days of Roosevelt's presidency. Even former labor activists, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and Harry Hopkins, the head of the Federal Emergency Relief Act, remained silent about African American civil rights.[56] Roosevelt and his Cabinet members focused on immediate economic relief for the unemployed and avoided African American politics to appease the majority and forward executive legislation.

With Southern Democrats in control of the money, New Deal programs reflected southern ideals. Southern Congressmen at New Deal hearings decentralized the programs placing more authority in the states and out of the hands of the Federal Government.[57] The decentralization of federal authority provided more opportunities for states to limit federal relief to African Americans and increased the possibility of racial discrimination. New Deal programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) created jobs for unemployed Americans.[58] The TVA employed Americans in construction and flood control and the WPA improved

[54] Ibid., 42,43.
[55] Ibid.,44.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.,48.
[58] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 148.

highways, bridges, and public buildings.[59] These programs controlled the amount of aid African Americans received, allowing for pay differentials based on race. African Americans and their political allies lacked the resources and authority to fight the political majority.

Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes and Eleanor Roosevelt attempted to curtail racial discrimination. Ickes' political ideas remained in the minority. "I have long been interested in the advancement of the Negro, and I do not see how any fair minded individual either white or colored, can expect to advance the interests of the Negro if mutuality of contact is not established through the efforts of both races."[60] As New Deal programs developed, it became clear that white joblessness took precedence over helping African Americans. Using her public presence, Eleanor Roosevelt attracted media attention to struggling African Americans.[61] Roosevelt urged Americans to question racial intolerance. "Are you free if you cannot vote, if you cannot be sure that the same justice will be meted out to you as your neighbor; if you are expected to live on a lower level and to work for lower wages."[62] Eleanor Roosevelt's ability to attract media attention aided the slow emergence of a federal recognition of African American rights and inspired other political activists to fight for equality for African Americans.[63]

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[59] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 148, 254.
[60] Sklaroff, Lauren Rebecca. *Black Culture and the New Deal the Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. 18.
[61] Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 63.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

Harry Hopkins, the director of the WPA, became an African American rights political ally similar to Eleanor Roosevelt and Harold Ickes. As a result, the WPA aided over one million African American families, improving the overall literacy and skill set of black enrollees. Similar to the TVA and FERA, the WPA had its faults in regards to African American advancement. Although Hopkins believed in the enforcement of anti-discrimination policies in the New Deal programs, he struggled to balance hardships and politics. Similar to President Roosevelt, Hopkins avoided conflict with the Southern majority and prevented the WPA from fully embracing African American equality.[64]

Frances Perkins of the Labor Department advocated for African American rights in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Due to Eleanor Roosevelt's influence, Perkins fought against the Southern political majority.[65] Developed under an executive order, the CCC was organized under different areas of the government. At its creation, five percent of enrollees were African-American and 95 percent were white. In 1933, the executive order stated, "no discrimination should be made on account of race, color or creed."[66] As the most popular New Deal program, African American enrollment continued to spark controversy.

African American hardships often took a backseat to the political majority. Despite this continued political burden, Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins, Frances Perkins, and Harold Ickes introduced African American hardships to the federal

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[64] Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal*, 23.
[65] Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 65.
[66] Salmond, John. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," 75-88.

discussion. As a result, a number of African Americans who participated in New Deal programs had the ability to "fight for respect, recognition and most significantly an equal form of American citizenship."[67]

African Americans found hope in the actions of President Roosevelt and New Deal legislation. In the words of Ethel Robinson of Orlando, Florida, "When President Roosevelt took his seat, Mr. Depression took the bed. The doctors announced that he was run down from overwork…known as the N.R.A. …we thought we hated you but President Roosevelt hated you worst."[68]

The Roosevelt administration provided a new hope for struggling African Americans and mobilized African American political voices. In 1934, the African American population increased in urban areas in the United States and African American voting registration strengthened.[69] With an increase in voters, African Americans had political leverage and switched to the party that provided them relief.[70]Zebedee Green, an African American of Pennsylvania described the transition of African Americans from Republican to Democrat--"I have always voted for the republicans up to 1928, but since the Republicans have done but little for our race. Many of us have turned democratic."[71]

The Federal Government began to recognize the plight of African Americans even though their issues remained on the backburner. The actions of members of his

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[67] Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal*, 3.
[68] Play, Robinson, Ethel. *Funeral of Mr. Depression.*
[69] Sklaroff, Lauren Rebecca. *Black Culture and the New Deal*, 19.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Green, Zebedee to Franklin Roosevelt. August 3, 1933. Pennsylvania. Roosevelt, Franklin D. President's Personal File. OF 93: Colored Matters. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

administration and Eleanor Roosevelt placed a new obligation on the government to address the everyday struggles of African Americans. This federal recognition mobilized African American voting and provided federal relief to a heavily burdened race. Even though, racial discrimination and southern political appeasement continued to burden African Americans in New Deal programs across the nation. New Deal programs became a civil rights battlefield and the competition played out in the most popular New Deal program, the Civilian Conservation Corps.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

President Roosevelt developed his love of forestry while residing in his estate in Hyde Park, New York. He planted 36,000 trees to improve the forests around his property.[72] This experience raised his awareness of American conservation and affected his ideas about the American economy. Roosevelt believed industrialization harmed American forests creating natural disasters. While Governor of New York, Roosevelt employed ten thousand New Yorkers to improve the state forests.[73] His experience in forestry led to the proposal of the Civilian Conservation Corps.[74]

According to historian Adam Cohen, The Civilian Conservation Corps "brought together two wasted resources, the young men and the land, in an attempt to save both."[75] In 1933, "over a third of the nation's 14,762,000 known unemployed were under the age of twenty five, amounting to about five million of America's youth."[76] Roosevelt hoped the new Civilian Conservation program would address the problem of massive youth unemployment. The program also aimed at saving the American landscape. Soil erosion

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[72] Maher, Neil. *Natures New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008),,22.
[73] Cohen, Adam. *Nothing to Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America*. (New York, New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 208
[74] Maher, *Natures New Deal*, 20.
[75] Cohen, *Nothing to Fear* ,208.
[76] Cole, Olen. *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1999), 9.

and timber harvesting harmed American forests and greatly reduced environmental resources.[77] America's unemployed youth and forests needed government intervention.

As Roosevelt advocated for a new governmental program to employ young men, opponents declared the program "Un-American."[78] According to historian Neil Maher, Martin Dies, a representative of Texas and the chair of the Un-American Committee vehemently opposed the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps. He argued that immigrants caused the economic devastation in the country and attacked Roosevelt's public relief programs.[79] Maher indicated that each end of the political spectrum joined in opposition of the idea of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Left believed that the CCC followed a fascist agenda while the Right argued against a possible communist agenda.[80] In order to silence the opponents, Roosevelt promoted the Civilian Conservation Corps with ties to American ideals.

On March 23, 1933, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins spoke to Congress about the benefits of the legislation. Perkins argued that the Civilian Conservation Corps would create "honest occupation to self respecting Americans who have been forced to pan handling and similar practices."[81] She informed Congress about the realities of struggling American families, "there is nothing more destructive than prolonged unemployment, where a man has to sit around the house and brood, and his only

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[77] Cohen, Adam. *Nothing to Fear* ,208.
[78] Maher, *Nature's New Deal.* 107.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Cohen, *Nothing to Fear*, 216.

occupation is to go twice a week and get his basket or dole."[82] Perkins focused on the amount of relief the CCC would provide to American families.

Some members of Congress opposed the Civilian Conservation Corps because of the proposed earnings of enrollee members, its ties to the military lifestyle, and the amount of funding required to mobilize the project.[83] William Green of the American Federation of Labor worried about the impact the program would have balancing the wage differences in the private sector.[84] James Warburg, a banker, stated "it would do irreparable damage to the government's credit."[85] Most Congress people worried about this large governmental program, but especially members of the labor sector.

On March 28, the Senate and the House of Representatives passed the CCC bill despite the continued opposition. Oscar De Priest, an African American U.S. Representative from Illinois, proposed an anti-discriminatory policy in the House.[86] He was elected by Chicago as their first African American representative and served from 1929 to 1935.[87] De Priest advocated for equality across the board, including the integration of the House's cafeteria. "I stand peculiarly as representative of the twelve million loyal colored citizens of the United States." [88] The House passed the anti-

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Cohen, Adam. *Nothing to Fear,* 217.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Rudwick, Elliott M. "Oscar De Priest and the Jim Crow Restaurant in the U. S. House of Representatives." *The Journal of Negro Education* 35, no. 1 (1966): 77-82.
[88] Ibid., 78.

discriminatory policy and the Civilian Conservation Corps bill. As a result, President Roosevelt signed the Civilian Conservation Corps program into law on March 31, 1933.[89]

After the creation of the CCC, Roosevelt appointed Robert Fechner as the director. A Democrat from Tennessee, historian Lesile Lacy described Fechner as apolitical, an individual who focused on union development.[90] Prior to his involvement with the CCC, Fechner had served as a vice president for the American Federation of Labor and as an officer of the General Executive board of the International Association of Machinists.[91] Roosevelt's decision to select Fechner was aimed at appeasing disgruntled labor officials.[92] Fechner's appointment silenced potential labor officials' oppositions to the program.[93]

Roosevelt also created an Advisory Council within the Civilian Conservation Corps. He appointed Colonel Duncan K. Major Jr., Frank Persons, R. Y. Stuart, Horace Albright, and Brigadier General George P. Turner.[94] Fechner tasked the Advisory Council with grasping the financial situation of the CCC, developing executive decisions, and finding solutions to issues at the national and state level.

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[89] Cohen, *Nothing to Fear* 218.
[90] Lacy, Leslie Alexander. *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression*. Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1976. 16.
[91] Cole, Olen, *The African American Experience,* 10., Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers*, 16.
[92] Maher, *Nature's New Deal,* 79.
[93] Ibid.,80.
[94] Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers,* 16.

Under the direction of Roosevelt, the program acquired over 20 million acres of private land.[95] Roosevelt could place CCC enrollees in "every state of the union."[96]

> The camps are scattered along the Pacific Coast, all through the Rockies, along the Appalachian Chain in the East, down into the Great Smokies in Tennessee and up into the White and Green Mountains in New England…in the Middle West, the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys."[97]

The government organized the Civilian Conservation Corps into Nine Corps areas. The First Corps area included Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. Delaware, New Jersey, and New York comprised the Second Corps area. The Third Corps area included Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland. The Fourth Corps area consisted of southern states including Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia comprised the Fifth Corps area. The Sixth Corps area included Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. The Seventh Corps area included Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. States in the Eighth Corps area included Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming. The final Corps area, the Ninth included California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.[98] Map 2.1 below of Lacy's work *The Soil Soldiers* displays the states divided by Corps area.[99]

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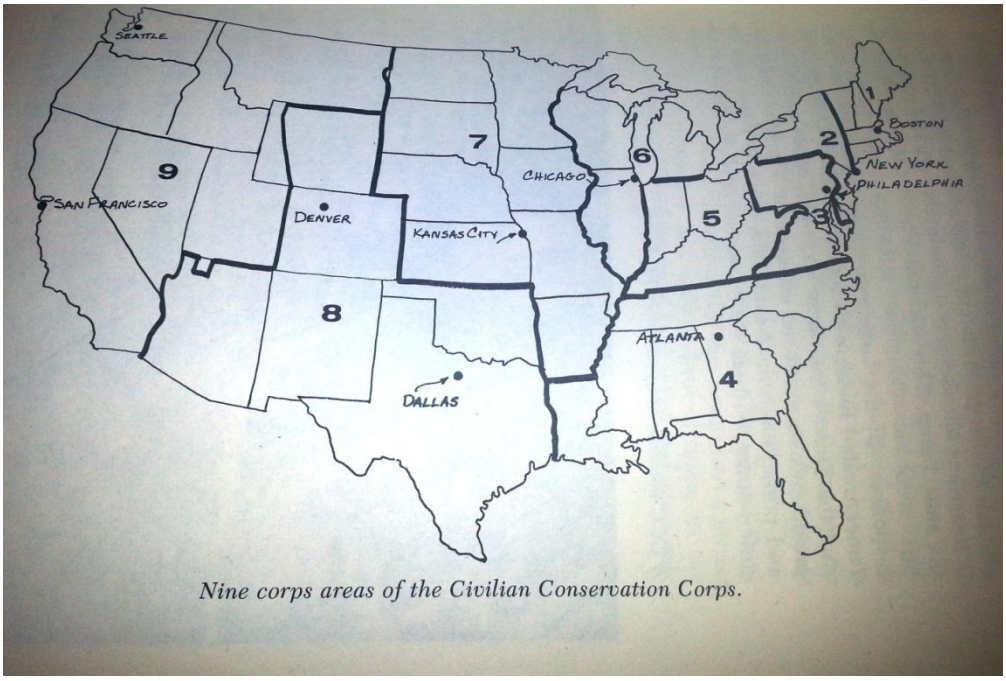
[95] Maher, *Natures New Deal*, 44
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., 45.
[98] "Memorandum for the Press." August 10, 1937. Policy file 1933-1942, Division of Selection, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.
[99] Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers*, 27.



Map 2.1 (Lesile Alexander Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers*, 27)

The Civilian Conservation Corps developed quickly, and after three months, the CCC employed over three hundred thousand men.[100] These men consisted of junior enrollees, local experienced men, and war veterans. The program categorized junior enrollees as unemployed, unmarried young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three.[101] These men had no prior work experience. The Advisory Council in 1933 described local experienced men as "men from the country who are used to outdoor work…[and] fit the nature of the work and the locality of which they are assigned."[102]

[100] Ibid.,24.
[101] Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, 1938-1942, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Record Group 35, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[102] September 15, 1933, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, 1938-1942, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.

The Civilian Conservation Corps program employed war veterans as well and assigned a specific quota for each state. The men enrolled for two six-month periods.[103]

The Department of Labor spearheaded selection decisions by recruiting and identifying potential enrollees through unemployment relief bureaus.[104] The Department of Labor decided the quota of men based on the 1930 census.[105] In 1933, the Department of Labor set a total quota of 250,000 men. [106] According to historian Neil Maher, these quotas continued to fluctuate throughout the existence of the CCC program. "Increasing to a peak of 520,000 in August 1935 then settling at 350,000 during the winter of 1937 before tapering off when Congress terminated the program in 1942."[107] Each state then decided how to apply these quotas based on their population.[108] This federal policy placed African American enrollment decisions in the hands of state officials**,** which in turn created variations in enrollment and discrimination against African Americans throughout the CCC.

Since the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps, African American enrollment sparked controversy in many states. During an Advisory Council meeting on September 15, 1933, Frank Persons insisted that selection decisions should be made based on "unemployment, physical fitness, intelligence," and not based on the poverty of

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[103] Ibid.
[104] Maher, Neil, *Nature's New Deal*. 80
[105] Letter to Congressmen Aubert C. Dunn from Robert Fechner, General Correspondence, 1933-1942, Enrollment of men,RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[106] Maher, Neil, *Nature's New Deal.* 80.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.

the individual.[109] Persons advocated for unemployed young men willing to benefit their families. Persons believed African Americans should share equal opportunity in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Influenced by the first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, "Persons took the lead in insisting upon an equitable share of CCC enrollees for blacks."[110] As a member of the Advisory Council, Persons continued to advocate for African American rights.

The Emergence of Discrimination

Shortly after its creation, the Civilian Conservation Corps emerged as a battleground for Southern control against African American rights. State selecting agencies for the Civilian Conservation Corps enrolled only white men in companies, particularly in the South. White communities aware of the participation of African Americans became increasingly hostile towards the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Advisory Council in the CCC quickly became aware of the discrimination against African Americans across the country.

"White Only" became two words readily associated with CCC companies in Georgia and Tennessee. Though Georgia had an African American population of 60 percent, Clark County had a CCC unit comprised entirely of white enrollees.[111] Tennessee called for only white applicants within the Civilian Conservation Corps. Mr.

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[109] September 15, 1933, Minutes of the Advisory Council.
[110] Stikoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 49.
[111] Salmond, John A. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro." The Journal of American History 52, no. 1 (1965): 77.

Upp of the Veterans Administration and Advisory Council stated, "in Tennessee the entire quota calls for white men only"[112] Despite the large presence of African Americans in the Southern states, Tennessee, and Georgia selecting agents ignored the anti-discrimination policy and provided federal relief to only white young men.

Southern states utilized the decentralized federal control to their advantage. For example, John Salmond showed that enrollment was classified in A,B,C, categories, "All colored applications fell into the Class B and C. The A Class being the most needy and the selection decisions were made from the same."[113] Southern politicians and government agencies used loopholes in the system in order to discriminate against African Americans.

White communities across the nation opposed African American enrollees in the Civilian Conservation Corps. In Belton, Montana, the presence of African American CCC enrollees enraged local storeowners. They placed signs in their storefronts stating, "We cater to white trade only."[114] A college town in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania took on an "anywhere, but here" attitude. Harry L. Haines, a Corps area Commander, sent a telegram to the Advisory Council stating "TWO CAMPS BETTER SUITED FOR THESE MEN STOP HOPE YOU CAN ASSIST IN HAVING WHITE MEN CAMP IN GETTYSBURG WILL APPRECIATE YOUR HELP."[115] Counties across the state

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[112] February 5, 1934. Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Cole, Olen. *African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps.* 4
[115] July, 10, 1933, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.

accepted the presence of white CCC enrollees but felt threatened by the presence of African Americans in their community. In Rawlins, Wyoming, community members rejected the transfer of African American enrollees from Texas "even though their work was considered to be excellent by many of the communities that they served."[116]

Institutionalized discrimination hindered the number of African Americans enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps. In 1933, L.R. Reynolds investigated possible discrimination in Virginia and North Carolina. Although the document neglected to illustrate why he completed this study, his findings are telling. Reynolds stated that many recruiting agencies believed African Americans lacked the intelligence to participate in the Civilian Conservation Corps--"in some instances there has been a disposition to interpret the intent of the law to recruit only those of such mental capacity as would develop into expert foresters."[117] In the early twentieth century, African American literacy rates were worse than whites. Due to poverty, school segregation, and the perceived mental inferiority of blacks, white Americans believed African Americans lacked the mental capacity to achieve the same skill sets as whites. The state of African American schooling and rampant racism served as barriers for the ability for African American CCC participation. White recruiting agents had trouble believing African Americans could successfully transition into the CCC.

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[116] Cole, Olen. *The African American Experience*.4.
[117] "L.R. Reynolds." Box 14, Policy File, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.

According to Reynolds, African Americans had trouble meeting the qualifications in order to be selected for the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Civilian Conservation Corps required enrollees to provide 25.00 dollars of their earnings to their family members. This hindered African American CCC acceptance. Reynolds cited an African American that had no ties to a family and was rejected on behalf of that qualification--"he had no family or a home and since they had no eligible person to go. The committee refused him."[118] Even with a willingness to participate in the Civilian Conservation Corps, some of the requirements prevented African Americans from joining. This qualification allowed local officials to discriminate against African Americans and disqualify them from the CCC program.

An awareness of the Civilian Conservation Corps program served as another obstacle for African Americans. According to Reynolds, African Americans were reluctant to apply without a full understanding of the Civilian Conservation Corps program. "Negroes generally are afraid that they are joining the army and do not like the idea of having to send home 25.00 [dollars] out of a total of 30.00 [dollars] each month."[119] The Federal Government had a poor record of aiding African Americans. Reynolds concluded that publicity played into the acceptance of African Americans. Reynolds stated "Negroes generally do not know about the plan soon enough. This is particularly true in the rural sections."[120] Reynolds used the lack of publicity of the

[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] "L.R. Reynolds." Box 14, Policy File, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

program and the fact that African Americans may be frightened of the Federal Government as a justification for the discrimination against them.

Ingrained societal discrimination served as a barrier for African American participation in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Reynolds' report highlighted how the state and government agencies could discriminate against African Americans. Seeing as local selecting agencies made decisions on African American enrollment, it provided them with leniency and power. Recruiting agencies based selection decisions on intelligence. Reynolds last sentence and conclusion is telling of this believed authority. Reynolds concluded, "I have tried to find reasons given for the small proportion of acceptances of Negro recruits and to what extent prejudice and discrimination played a part in these numbers. I am of the opinion that in some instances the Negroes themselves have been at fault."[121] Stating that the lack of African Americans in the CCC is their own fault, it is clear that many individuals could not understand the inherent racism and discrimination in American society and institutions as a whole. Discrimination as a social construct inhibited the amount of relief the CCC could provide to African Americans.

Qualified African Americans who sought leadership positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps also faced discrimination. Robert Fechner cited a situation in Idaho where the National Urban League argued for the appointment of an African American physician. According to the case,

[121] Ibid.

> When the colonel found he was colored, he told him he could not send him. The doctor asked if he could be assigned to one of the colored companies…in addition he made a protest of the fact that no Negro officers have been called to serve with Negro companies.[122]

Even well qualified African Americans had trouble overcoming discrimination barriers.

Fechner opposed making strides towards African American equality due to the opposition he faced from Congressmen and states. In November of 1934, members of the Advisory Council continued to field questions about African American enrollment. New York, Representative Robert Bacon resisted the movement of African American companies into his state. Protestors formed in Washington D.C. and even hired attorneys.[123] Fechner stated, "Unfortunately, the situation is bad, but it is being remedied."[124] Fechner attempted to appease white community opposition at the expense of African American advancement.

As opposition and discrimination mounted against African Americans, Fechner appeased the white majority and increased barriers for African Americans. On April 4, 1934, Robert Fechner issued a policy that limited African American authority in CCC camps. The policy allowed African Americans to only hold the position of educational advisor and argued that surrounding communities would only accept companies with white supervisors.[125] It ultimately discriminated against African Americans and

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[122] August 2, 1933. Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Salmond, John A. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro." 82.

continued to limit the open vacancies available to them for relief. Fechner hoped his actions would curtail white community opposition against African American companies.

Fechner further increased barriers for African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps by preventing an increased enrollment of African Americans. On September 10, 1934 against the wishes of Persons, Fechner placed a limit on African American enrollment.[126] African Americans could only apply to the CCC with available vacancies in their given state.[127] As a result, states established quotas for African American enrollment in the CCC.

Persons strictly opposed these policies in a letter on August 10, 1935, stating, "arbitrary colored quotas are not to be established by selecting agencies nor are limitations amounting to discrimination to be placed in the way of qualifying applicants voluntarily desiring the privilege of enrollment."[128] Quotas established by state selecting agencies inhibited the amount of African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps. This decreased the amount of aid the CCC could provide to African Americans and reinforced the potential for discriminatory practices within the CCC. The quota created a barrier for African Americans that could receive aid.

Despite Person's opposition, Fechner maintained his position as a best practice.

> I think we can easily defend and justify a policy of making replacements in accordance with the color of the vacancy existing. The practical thing is to

[126] Ibid.,83.
[127] Ibid.
[128]Ibid.,84..

> maintain the organization we've got. Every time we make a change it constantly brings up friction.[129]

Fechner believed his actions would decrease white community opposition against African American enrollment. He appeased the political majority and refused to increase aid to African American enrollees.

Fechner's inability to take direct action failed African American enrollees and increased discrimination within the CCC organization. In 1934, Mr. Upp of the Advisory Council and Veteran's Administration discussed Fechner's inability take a concrete position on African American rights, "Mr. Fechner had failed to make a decision in a previous case of this kind, and that regional managers had been instructed that no discrimination shall be permitted."[130] His actions decentralized the Civilian Conservation Corps and provided more opportunities for discrimination against African Americans.

Fechner believed the Department of Labor would handle the problems associated with African American enrollment. Fechner stated, "The Department of Labor is responsible for the enforcement and observance of the law. The law definitely states that there must be no discrimination and it cannot be put in the position of discriminating against the negro race…I will give advance notice to the selecting agencies that no limitations are to be made as to race, creed or color."[131] Fechner directed the opposition

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[129] November 1, 1934, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[130] February 5, 1934. Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[131] Ibid.

of African Americans towards the Department of Labor taking a backseat on the advancement of African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Robert Fechner also placed disciplinary authority in the hands of the Army. In an Advisory Council meeting in 1936, Fechner addressed questions about discrimination of African Americans in Georgia. He promptly called on the Army to discipline the Corps Commanders. Fechner stated, "I do not like to pick on anyone and suppose you do discipline a camp commander for disregarding regulations."[132] Fechner refused to take responsibility for the discrimination against African Americans and believed it was not his job to enforce or call out instances for punishment. His position hindered the potential strides African Americans could make towards equality in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Fechner's actions heightened the challenges for African American participation in the Civilian Conservation Corps. His refusal to enforce policies and enact change limited the potential for African American enrollment in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Fechner attempted to maintain the integrity of the federal organization and prevent continued opposition from state selecting agencies that opposed the inclusion of African Americans. Fechner's sanctioning of nationwide discrimination inhibited the potential for economic relief of African Americans. Decentralization allowed states to direct and continue the discrimination of African Americans with little punishment from the federal

[132] 1936, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.

government for blatantly ignoring anti-discrimination policies. The Civilian Conservation Corps program continued as an African American rights battlefield with the Southern discriminatory majority counting their victories.

Conclusion

The Civilian Conservation Corps mobilized and developed soon after its enactment in 1933. As a temporary relief program, local officials maintained control over enrollment statistics. Since its founding, the program faced harsh criticism from community officials and African American rights organizations. Problems continued to emerge concerning discrimination against African Americans enrollment. Exasperating the situation, Fechner limited authority positions for African Americans in 1934. His attempts to appease racist politicians and white communities opposing African American enrollees ultimately maintained discrimination in the CCC and increased local tension in regards to African American aid.

The discrimination against African Americans served as a continued burden for state and federal recognition of African American hardship after the Depression. Investigators of CCC programs declared that African Americans had to remain in lower positions in the CCC. They fell into a different category for selection due in large part to the systemic discrimination that they faced, which limited their education and circumstances within their families. Politicians and local officials created loopholes in order to discriminate against African Americans. States established quotas that worked against the potential aid the CCC could provide for struggling African Americans. The

Civilian Conservation Corps failed to recognize the need for African American relief. As discrimination and opposition to African American enrollment increased with the development of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the federal government continued to fail to do enough for African Americans. The "it's the blacks fault" attitude prevented and limited African American enrollment in the CCC and increased discrimination. As the Civilian Conservation Corps expanded over the years, Robert Fechner continued to keep African American enrollment low.

CHAPTER 4

THE YEAR OF 1935- HOSTILITIES, SEGREGATION, AND A DEFINING MOMENT FOR THE FIRST CORPS AREA

Since 1933, Robert Fechner, the Civilian Conservation Corps Director, and a Democrat from Tennessee had fielded questions regarding the discrimination against African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps with the Advisory Council. Congressional representatives, white community protestors, and state selecting agencies hoped their opposition would limit the number of African Americans enrolled in the CCC. In 1935, two years after the creation of the program, Fechner slowly began to alter his feelings and policies towards African Americans. Realizing how difficult the anti-discrimination policy was to enforce, Fechner's feelings of tolerance toward African Americans changed to irritation.

Public officials and white community protestors challenged Fechner's position on African American enrollment. Governor Henry H. Blood of Utah objected to the integration of African Americans noting, "at present the War Department has stationed a very undesirable class of men, such as Mexicans, Phillipians [sic] and worst of all, Negroes, Imagine the social problems this incurs in our city."[133] White communities throughout the country objected to the presence of African Americans in their

[133] Cole, Olen. *The African American Experience*. 25.

neighborhoods believing African Americans would disrespect their moral standards. For example, a white community in Thornhurst, Pennsylvania worried about how women residents would be affected by a large influx of single African American men.[134] "Unescorted women of various ages are obliged to travel by the site of camps and along highways thereabouts at all hours of the day…who should not be exposed to the dangers that are possible, if not indeed probable."[135] Fechner fielded questions and heard protests across the nation including Washington DC, California, Montana, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Texas, demonstrating that the racism was a national problem and not regionally confined.[136] As Fechner continued to face community opposition to African American enrollment in the Civilian Conservation Corps he attempted to silence critics with a new policy.

In 1935, Robert Fechner ordered the segregation of African American and white camps nationally. According to Fechner, "no negro was to be transported outside his own state and that all negro campsites were to be selected by the state's governor."[137] Fechner advocated for the removal of African Americans from white camps.[138] His actions further decentralized the Civilian Conservation Corps across the country and placed more authority in state selecting agencies. Fechner hoped this decision would ease white opposition and protests against African American enrollment. According to historian John Salmond, it actually harmed the CCC more than it helped. "What Fechner

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[134] Salmond, John. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," 80.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Cole, Olen. *The African American Experience.*24.
[137] Salmond, John. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro,"75-88.
[138] Ibid.,83.

had done in fact, was to increase greatly his own difficulties by increasing the need for colored campsites without doing anything to lessen the prejudice in local areas against their establishment."[139] In other words, Fechner's desire to appease racist communities meant that he needed to create more spaces and bureaucracy in order to house CCC corps members.

A memorandum to the Adjutant General on June 15, 1935 by Robert Fechner declared, "complete segregation of white and colored enrollees is directed. Only in those states where colored strength is too low to form a company unit will the mixing of colored men in white units be permitted."[140] Fechner's new policy decentralized the Civilian Conservation Corps in the government. It strengthened states power to discriminate against African Americans. Fechner attempted to inhibit discrimination by segregating African Americans, but racism ran rampant throughout the country in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Fechner believed that the segregated camps would still be equal. Fechner stated "the negro companies are assigned to the same types of work, have identical equipment, are served the same food, and have the same quarters as white enrollees…I have received no single complaint."[141] Fechner's ideology of separate but equal segregation followed federal policies implemented in the South such as the Jim Crow laws. Fechner hoped this policy would curb local tensions and racial discrimination. Instead, his policies

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[139] Ibid.
[140] Letter to Thomas L. Griffith from Robert Fechner, September 21, 1935. Correspondence, 1933-1942, 900 Regulations Negros, Box 891, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[141] Ibid.

propagated racism, further complicating the experiences of African Americans within the CCC and making it challenging to find areas that would accept all African American companies.

The Impact of the Segregation Policy

Fechner's new policy limited the amount of potential aid African Americans could receive from the Civilian Conservation Corps. The chart below illustrates the number of African Americans in each Corps area in 1935. The First Corps area had trouble recruiting white and African American men to meet established quotas and President Roosevelt rejected camps that did not operate to full capacity. As a result, the First Corps area remained integrated.

Table 3.1: African Americans by Corps Areas as of September 30, 1935[142]

Corps Area	Juniors	Veterans	Total
I	426	54	480
II	3,237	425	5,662
III	7,034	947	7,981
IV	14,575	1,860	15,835
V	4,303	1,071	5,474
VI	2,731	561	3,222
VII	2,544	229	2,773
VIII	4,335	834	4,969
IX	911	110	1,021

[142] "Negroes by Corps Area as of September 30, 1935." 900 Regulations Negros, General Correspondence, 1933-1942, RG:35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.

Segregation of African American camps increased the discrimination against African Americans and white community opposition. Many states opposed segregated CCC companies including New York, Pennsylvania, Washington DC, Kansas, and Maryland. Residents of Pennsylvania worried about their safety with the influx of segregated African American camps. Salmond examined how a Pennsylvania community felt about an all-African American CCC camp, noting that the white community felt "the social danger of 'isolating so great a number of unattached negro males' in an area 'occupied permanently and exclusively by white people."[143] White residents of Washington D.C. opposed segregated camps, arguing that white women worried they would be put in danger with the presence of single, young African Americans in the CCC.[144] In 1938, 175 protestors in Anne Arundel County, Maryland convinced local officials to oppose the creation of a new segregated CCC Camp.[145] Similar to Maryland, citizens of Kansas and New York rejected the creation of an African American company.[146] Therefore, Fechner's solution to segregate camps increased his problems.

Georgia accepted two African American campsites into their community. In an Advisory Council meeting General Tyner stated, "Both companies are in-settled for a month or so, they were the last companies on the reservation…better to not object to the

[143] Salmond, John, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro."80.
[144] Ibid.
[145] June 22, 1936, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[146] Ibid.

camp commander's desire to have these men beautify the grounds around the camp."[147] Salmond indicated that the acceptance of African American camps occurred in the South particularly in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Georgia. However, he argued Fechner's indifference towards acknowledging discrimination impeded segregated camps from having any positive contributions to Southern communities.[148]

Across the country, states had trouble enforcing this new segregation policy. Miss B. Ethelda Mullen, the Delaware Selection Director, questioned Fechner's policies regarding African American segregation as early as October of 1935. Robert Fechner addressed her concerns that Delaware was unable to form a segregated camp for African Americans. Fechner stated that the population of African Americans in Delaware limited Delaware's ability to establish a segregated CCC camp.

> It is indeed unfortunate that there is no junior CCC company in Delaware, but we cannot change that fact unless the states quota was sufficient to permit the enrollment and organization of a negro company. In the view of the well known attitude of white enrollees and negro enrollees being mixed in one company, I am not sure that I will be able to help you.[149]

Fechner believed segregated camps were the solution to the mounting discrimination against African American enrollment. He hoped segregation would silence white community opposition even if it increased problems for African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

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[147] Ibid.
[148] Salmond, John. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," 81.
[149] Letter to Miss Mullen of Delaware from Robert Fechner. October 17, 1935, General Correspondence, 1933-1942, 900 Regulations Negros, Box 901, RG: 35 Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.

Even as states struggled to establish segregated African American camps in their own communities, African Americans were required to remain in their state of origin when enrolled in the CCC. In another letter addressed to Mullen, Fechner stated, "We do not transport negro enrollees out of their state of origin…none of the states surrounding Delaware is willing to have negro CCC enrollees from other states sent to camps within its own area. It appears to me that we will have to accept the situation as it exists."[150] Similar to his previous letter, Fechner stated that Delaware had limited options when placing African Americans. Other states would not accept out of states enrollees and it remained difficult to locate areas that would accept the presence of African American camps in their communities. These two challenges prevented Fechner from upholding his policy in most Northern states. It also limited the number of African Americans that could participate in the CCC.

Fechner believed that segregation solved the problems of African American enrollment in the CCC. "I think you must know of the difficulty that is experienced when it is necessary to mix negro and white enrollees in one company. It has been our established policy to segregate the races and after an experience of thirty months I am convinced that the policy is sound."[151] Fechner believed segregation reduced white community opposition.

On June 18, 1935, another policy hindered potential aid to African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Advisory Council stated, "In those states now

[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.

having negro companies the War Department will be authorized to refuse acceptance to certified selectees in excess of those necessary to replace losses in existing colored companies."[152] The CCC only allowed African Americans to participate in segregated companies. This limited the amount of relief the CCC could provide to African Americans in states that could not meet their quotas.

Even with an abundance of men who needed relief, the Civilian Conservation Corps continued to struggle to uphold the anti-discrimination policy. On October 8, 1936, Robert Fechner wrote a letter to Congressmen Jed Johnson in Washington D.C. concerning African American enrollment in the CCC. [153] Fechner stated, "I wish it was possible to offer enrollment to every young man, white or black, who might desire to go to a CCC camp but of course you know that this is impossible."[154] Johnson questioned the lack of new African American enrollees in Oklahoma during October enrollment. Again, Fechner indicated that the men needed to be on relief in order to be eligible and there needed to be open vacancies within the camp for men to be accepted.[155] Fechner acknowledged that the Civilian Conservation Corps could aid men regardless of race, but the requirements and available vacancies limited the potential aid.

Political barriers prevented African Americans from participating in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Many local relief officials would not help African Americans. The

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[152]June 18, 1935, . Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[153] Letter to Congressmen Jed Johnson from Robert Fechner, October 8, 1936. General Correspondence, 1933-1942, 900 Regulations Negros, Box 901, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.

Civilian Conservation Corps continued to face challenges enrolling and recruiting African Americans. "Out of this number thirty-six eligible men…only nineteen accepted, the remaining seven did not report or refused by the army."[156] The prospective enrollees needed to be on direct relief or rural rehabilitation.[157] This requirement limited the number of prospective enrollees that the program would accept. This was reiterated in Frank Persons' final paragraph, "At present, there is only one young colored man in this vicinity who is in all respects eligible, however there are a number who are within the age limit who would like to enroll but being from farm families and not on public relief, are not eligible."[158] The requirements for CCC enrollees inhibited the program from accepting a large number of African Americans.

Eligibility requirements for the Civilian Conservation Corps also inhibited highly skilled African Americans from participating. Fechner struggled to fill positions within African American camps because African American applicants did not fit the required standards for Local Experienced Men (LEM). This problem quickly became an annoyance to Fechner. In an Advisory Council meeting, Fechner explained the challenges in finding qualified African Americans.

> I have not expected that we could find qualified negroes to handle some of the heavy machinery. All I can say is that I do not want inexperienced men, white or black, to be put on machinery dangerous to themselves or to those they work with.

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[156]Letter to Roy Wilkins from Robert Fechner, October 3, 1935. General Correspondence, 1933-1942, 900 Regulations Negros, Box 901 RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

> I do not think we would be justified in putting inexperienced men on any machinery where their inexperience would delay the progress of the work.[159]

Fechner believed this hot button political issue continued to be an annoyance. Fechner stated, "The problem of negro LEM's is getting very annoying. I do not know whether we can do any more about them. It really has become a political issue." [160] He argued that his actions of ordering segregation were justified allowing for the protection of CCC enrollees. He focused on the dangerous aspects of the machinery. Due to the standards of public relief, age limits, and dependence on families, it became increasingly difficult to fill LEM positions with African American applicants.

Conclusion

The decision to segregate camps in 1935 developed under the mounting pressure Robert Fechner and his Advisory Council faced in regards to African American enrollment. Even though Fechner and Persons stressed the importance of non-discrimination, it became increasingly difficult for them to uphold these policies. African Americans had trouble qualifying for the CCC program due to local officials and political barriers. Local communities protested segregated African American companies making it difficult to locate areas for CCC camps. New camps also required more funding. Fechner's need for political appeasement and his belief in maintaining the organization as is, limited African American enrollment. As in other New Deal programs, the decentralization of the CCC program in the government provided more authority to

[159] Advisory Council Minutes 1935, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[160] Ibid.

states. As the states continued to make their own decisions in regards to African American enrollment, differences emerged between Corps areas especially in the First Corps where companies remained integrated.

CHAPTER 5

AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE, THE INTEGRATION OF MASSACHUSETTS CCC CAMPS OF THE FIRST CORPS AREA

From the onset of the program in 1933, three percent of Massachusetts' Civilian Conservation Corps were African Americans. The First Corps area remained integrated due to the new camps inability to secure funding and a low population of African Americans in the region. African Americans comprised only 2.6 percent of the population in Boston, and 4.8 percent in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1930. [161] As a result, camps in Massachusetts remained integrated until the program dismantled in 1942. African Americans selected into the Civilian Conservation Corps greatly benefited from the integrated camps in Massachusetts. The experiences of three African American enrollees Harold Crichlow, Lawrence Chaffin, and Charles Edmond Salesman shed light on a part of the African American experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps. As members of camps in Massachusetts supervisors were forced to treat them as CCC men, impeding them from openly discriminating against them as African Americans. They were accepted similar to the white members of the camp and the Corps. These men became CCC enrollees and the camps in Massachusetts differed greatly from segregated

[161] Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung. "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990 and by Hispanic Origin 1790 to 1990, for Large Cities and other Urban Places in the United States. U.S. Census Bureau. (2005).

camps in the South. The Civilian Conservation Corps provided much needed employment, educational opportunities, job training, and family benefits.

Prospective African American enrollees began their Civilian Conservation Corps application through the selecting agents in Massachusetts. Lauretta C. Bresnahan, the State Selecting Agent for the Civilian Conservation Corps in Massachusetts, described selection decisions for CCC enrollees. Bresnahan stated that the best selection decisions came from local officials who had a close relationship with their community members.[162] Bresnahan stressed the importance of the quality of the young men that the local officials selected. "The Corps wants, as enrollees, young men of purpose, ambition and character, such men are best able to contribute to and profit from the experience of camp life…follow instructions on the job, and take advantage of job training, educational and leisure time opportunities."[163] The state of Massachusetts sought young men that would comply with directions and seek new skill sets within the Civilian Conservation Corps.

For African Americans, the selection process became the first hurdle to overcome in order to join the Civilian Conservation Corps. Aside from meeting the personal characteristics, prospective enrollees had to prove unemployment, be citizens of the United States between the ages of eighteen and twenty three, and willing to forfeit some of their pay to help their family members.[164] Chaffin, Crichlow, and Salesman all fit

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[162] Bresnahan, Lauren."Selection of Men for enrollment in the Civilian Conservation Corps." State Procedural Manuals Maryland to Michigan, box 3, RG: 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archive Building, Washington DC.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Lacy, Leslie Alexander. *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression*. Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1976. 23.

these criteria as African Americans. Lawrence Chaffin applied to the CCC at the age of eighteen in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1935.[165] He indicated that his mother Vera Chaffin would accept twenty-five dollars on behalf of his enrollment.[166] Harold Crichlow applied to the Civilian Conservation Corps on October 23, 1937 after a year of unemployment as a floor worker at the Bowdoin Square Garage in Boston, Massachusetts.[167] At nineteen years old, Crichlow hoped the CCC would provide him with "general work" and benefit his mother Miram Crichlow.[168] Charles Edmond Salesman joined the Civilian Conservation Corps on December 27, 1938.[169] Salesman attended the Government Technical School and resided with his aunt in Cambridge, Massachusetts.[170] Without any living parents, Salesman hoped the Civilian Conservation Corps would end his 18-month long stint of unemployment.[171] Salesman had prior experience as a lathesman working with the Kingston Pumping Station for two years.[172] Salesman provided twenty two dollars to his aunt in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Salesman, Crichlow, and Chaffin all provided monthly allotments to the women in their family. The Depression shifted gender politics towards the importance of male employment to benefit their families. It reflected the ideology that men need to be the primary breadwinners in the household. Salesman, Crichlow, and Chaffin provided relief

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[165] Chaffin, Lawrence. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records. National Archives and Records Administration. St. Louis, Mo.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Crichlow, Harold. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records. National Archives and Records Administration. St. Louis, Mo.
[168] Crichlow, Harold. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[169] Salesman, Charles Edmond. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

to the women in their family as the primary goal during the depression years was to provide male employment. In order to provide allotments to the women in their families, African Americans had to meet eligibility requirements first.

Eligibility requirements prevented the Federal Government from aiding a larger portion of African Americans. Prospective enrollees had to prove financial hardship, unemployment, and have a beneficiary from the program. Throughout the country, state-selecting agencies struggled to entice prospective African American enrollees. Many African Americans feared discrimination unaware of the purpose of the Civilian Conservation Corps program.[173] Although the state-selecting agent Bresnahan reinforced the anti-discriminatory policy in document communication, local official's personal discretion decided the fate of African American applicants. This policy created a double-barrier for African American enrollment because it simultaneously required them to fit the criteria of the program while also keeping their fate in the hands of their local selecting agent who could potentially not abide by the non-discrimination policy.

Once accepted into the program, junior enrollees began their CCC experience in Fort Devens, Massachusetts, a military base west of Boston in central Massachusetts. New members of the CCC followed a strict processing schedule that included interviews, inspections, and physical exams.[174] The physical exam involved inspections for diseases in the bones, joints, and doctors examined prospective enrollee's eyes. If they passed the

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[173] Cole, Olen, *The African American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps.* Florida: University Press of Florida: 1999. 14

[174] "Annual Report 1937," May 1937. Civilian Conservation Corps, First Corps Area, Third C.C.C. District, Massachusetts CCC Archives, Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.) 24.

exam, the processing center at Fort Devens issued clothing to the Civilian Conservation Corps members including shoes and a uniform.[175] After reciting an oath, enrollees began their new journey as Civilian Conservation Corps members in Massachusetts.

Lawrence Chaffin began his journey like many other enrollees at the Civilian Conservation Corps staging area in Fort Devens, Massachusetts in 1935. Chaffin underwent a physical evaluation that placed him at 5'6" and 125 pounds. The doctors evaluated Chaffin's vision and hearing, where he passed the evaluation with 20/20 vision and hearing.[176] The doctors evaluated his teeth noting the absence of wisdom teeth.[177] Doctors also examined Chaffin for physical ailments including an assessment of his "head, chest, abdomen, extremities…[and] general surgical conditions including hernia, hemorrhoids, varicose veins, and state of abdominal wall."[178] Chaffin passed these physical examinations and received two vaccines against typhoid fever.

The Civilian Conservation Corps' health assessment greatly benefited new enrollee's well being. They received vaccines that alleviated possible diseases in the future and the men became aware of any health conditions they had. While in the Corps, Salesman and Crichlow underwent their physical evaluation and Crichlow received his vaccines against typhoid and small pox in October of 1937.[179] The medical examiner concluded that Crichlow could participate in the Corps.[180] These evaluations gave

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[175] Ibid.
[176] Chaffin, Lawrence. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Crichlow, Harold. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[180] Ibid.

Crichlow and Salesman the opportunity to receive comprehensive health care and to understand where they stood as healthy black men.

Once accepted into the program, African American enrollees traveled to their respective camps. Nineteen-year old Lawrence Chaffin joined the camp in Holyoke, Massachusetts in 1935. The Civilian Conservation Corps assigned Harold Crichlow to the 120th company in Beckett, Massachusetts in 1937. Hailing from Cambridge, Massachusetts, Charles Salesman joined Company 1139 in West Townsend, Massachusetts.[181] Used to urban living in Cambridge, the Civilian Conservation Corps introduced Salesman to a new kind of environment. The Civilian Conservation Corps placed these African American city boys in Massachusetts's rural forests.

The Civilian Conservation Corps furthered educational opportunities for African American enrollees. While in a CCC camp in Beckett, Massachusetts, Harold Crichlow enrolled in five educational courses. Crichlow only completed two years of high school, but the Civilian Conservation Corps advanced his education in drawing, history, and leather craft.[182] Photo 1 depicts a classroom in Crichlow's camp in 1937. Crichlow excelled at drawing with his camp advisor commenting on his "very good art work."[183] His camp advisers evaluated him as an individual with "good common sense, a great attitude, handy with tools, and a good worker."[184] The CCC provided Crichlow with an

[181] Salesman, Charles Edmond. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[182] Crichlow, Harold. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.

educational environment that allowed him to improve his skills and he was accepted even as an African American enrollee.

Photo 1: 120th Company Beckett, Massachusetts[185]

The Civilian Conservation Corps integrated education into the program on May 9, 1933 under the direction of the camp's educational advisor.[186] The CCC offered optional educational courses to benefit the enrollees with a useable skill outside of the camps. According to historian Neil Maher, this program became increasingly popular overtime, especially in Massachusetts. The State Forester of Massachusetts demonstrated the popularity in a letter, "I certainly appreciate very much your kindness in sending the Forestry Primers which will be very helpful to the CCC camps in Massachusetts. We are organizing classes in forestry, geology, surveying and other subjects."[187] These classes

[185] Photograph. "Annual Report 1937," Beckett, Ma. May 1937. Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.)

assimilated the CCC enrollees to new subjects and skills enhancing their understanding of the job and providing new skills for their futures.

Although the Civilian Conservation Corps greatly benefited African American's educational opportunities, the program placed limitations on African American leadership. Historian Olen Cole argued that despite these educational opportunities in the classroom, the CCC denied the position of educational supervisor to African Americans in Massachusetts. "By September 1935, with the exception of the West Coast, Southeast, and the New England states, African Americans were being appointed as educational advisors throughout the Corps."[188] Racist attitudes in the CCC prevented African Americans from achieving leadership roles in education.

Even with these setbacks, Lawrence Chaffin advanced his talent under the guidance of the Civilian Conservation Corps. With three months of training at the Federal Art School, Chaffin excelled as an artist in the Civilian Conservation Corps.[189] CCC officers became so impressed with Chaffin's artwork that his paintings were displayed in camp offices. [190]

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[186] Cole, Olen, *The African American Experience*.46.
[187] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 91.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Chaffin, Lawrence. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[190] October 1938 Photographs, Mt. Tom Reservation. Compiled by Sean Fisher. Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.)

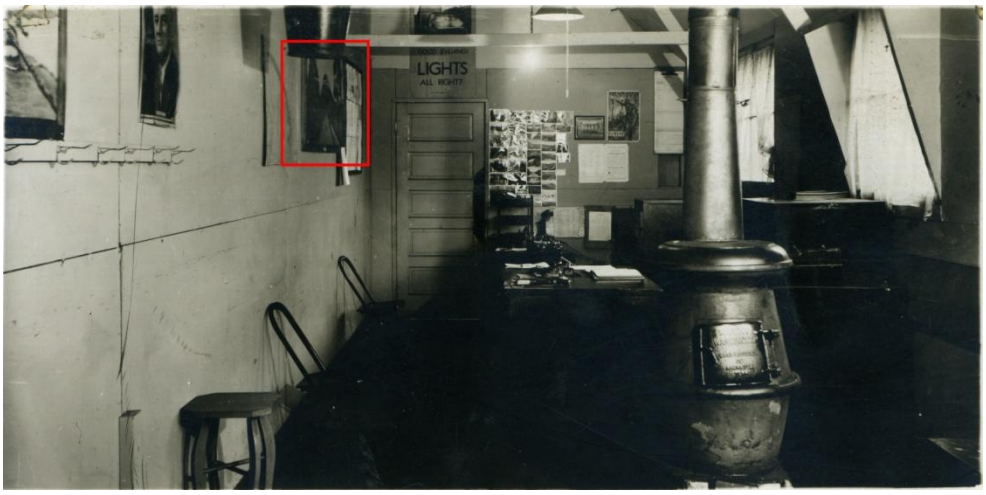

Photo 2 and 3: Lawrence Chaffin's paintings[191]

The Civilian Conservation Corps improved Charles Salesman's education as well. Even though Salesman already had a high school diploma, Salesman had the opportunity to attend classes and receive job training. His coursework included fire hazard reduction training, typing, journalism, civics, engineering, leather, and arithmetic.[192] Mason, the

[191] Ibid.
[192] Salesman, Charles Edmond. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.

camp advisor, evaluated Salesman on his efforts. Salesman received "very good" scores in civil service, typing, journalism, history, arithmetic, and spelling. Mason believed Salesman was "average" in woodwork, sculpture, and religion.[193] The CCC provided Salesman the ability to expand his knowledge in a variety of subjects and receive feedback on his progress.

Mason evaluated Salesman on other aspects of his involvement in the Civilian Conservation Corps as well. Mason determined that Salesman had a "very good" personality and attitude in camp.[194] Mason believed Salesman's physical health was average but he certainly excelled in sports.[195] Mason evaluated Salesman as a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Salesman's exemplary evaluations demonstrated that race did not serve as a factor.

Salesman indulged in the sports offered by the CCC such as track, baseball, and cricket. Photo 1 below illustrates a baseball team in a camp in Massachusetts similar to Salesman's camp. He became the leader of his company's track and cricket teams. The camp accepted him for his athletic ability and provided him with an opportunity to lead. The camp treated Salesman as a regular CCC member, rewarding his ability with a leadership position in the spaces where they were allowed to do so. Sports provided an outlet for enrollees in the Civilian Conservation Corps and throughout Massachusetts; enrollees used these recreational activities to bond and pass their time.

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[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.

Photo 4: Baseball Team in Palmer, Massachusetts, 1937[196]

Camp Superintendents emphasized the importance of sports in camps throughout Massachusetts. Supervisors of Mt. Greylock, a company in western Massachusetts, encouraged CCC enrollees to actively pursue sports while in camp. The camp newspaper, the *Greylock Tower*, reinforced this idea, "Every man should engage in some form of recreational activity to give his body some form of physical relaxation in the form of a change in activity…Spirit is all that is needed to keep the 'ball rolling.' Get into the swing of things and enjoy life."[197] Aside from boxing, Mt. Greylock offered classes in volleyball and basketball, which became an extremely popular past time. The

[196] Photograph. "Annual Report 1937," Palmer, Ma. May 1937. Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.)
[197] *The Greylock Tower*. Pittsfield, Ma. Company 107. Center for Research Libraries.

enrollees divided their teams by barrack numbers and competed in basketball tournaments.[198] The CCC newspaper provided weekly announcements of the results. The photographs below illustrate the games CCC members enjoyed while integrated.

Photo 5: CCC Members boxing[199]

Photo 6: CCC Members playing Ping Pong [200]

Photo 7: Integrated Volleyball[201]

Photo 8: CCC Members boxing[202]

Sports aided the enrollee's assimilation to their new environment and helped transform their physical bodies. Through sports, these members collaborated and

[198] Ibid.
[199] Photo 5. Pittsfield, Ma. Box 5. Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.)
[200] Photo 6. West Townsend, Ma. Box 9. Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.)
[201] Photo 7. Holyoke, Mt. Tom, Box 4. Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.)
[202] Photo 8. Townsend, Ma. 1936-1938, Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.)

developed a sense of pride in their company. The Civilian Conservation Corps encouraged enrollee's involvement in sports after work.

The rigorous work schedule in the CCC ensured that enrollees would remain active and healthy as well. The work varied by campsite location. The work in Massachusetts focused on "camp construction, road building, silviculture, fire hazard reduction, pest control, wildlife enhancement, and recreational development."[203] The state government also utilized CCC members in case of a natural disaster. In 1936 a flood overtook the state of Massachusetts and CCC enrollees were called to action.[204] CCC enrollees also aided the community in a 1938 hurricane. [205] Seeing as the camps remained integrated, African American and white enrollees had access to the same tools and work schedules. The photographs below depict African Americans and white enrollees working together to achieve the CCC's goals.

Photo 9: Shoveling Pittsfield, Ma.[206]

Photo 10: Sweeping, West Townsend[207]

[203] Gilman, Alec. Civilian Conservation Camps in Massachusetts 1934-1942. Department of Conservation and Recreation. CCC Archives. (February 1 2012).
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Photo 9. Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Box 5. Department of Conservation Archives, (Danvers, Ma.)
[207] Photo 10: West Townsend, Massachusetts. "1937 Annual Report" Department of Conservation Archives (Danvers, Ma).

The Civilian Conservation Corps developed an environment that required collaboration in work. As a result, enrollees spent the majority of their time together completing tasks for their camp.

The CCC introduced African Americans into various types of occupations during their enrollment. While in the Civilian Conservation Corps, Harold Crichlow worked as a utility man for six months. [208] Salesman drove for the Civilian Conservation Corps, worked as a room orderly, and worked for twenty-one months in different occupations.[209]

Harold Crichlow's younger brother, Ellsworth Crichlow later enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps and he joined company 1134 in Beckett, Massachusetts. As an African American CCC member, Ellsworth gained experience in tools such as the "pick and shovel, jack hammer, rock splitter, cement mixer, pipe fitter, carpenter, [and] post hole digger."[210] The Civilian Conservation Corps provided a range of opportunities for their enrollees to gain experience and training.

Crichlow, Salesman, and Chaffin were three members of the African American community that greatly benefited from their experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps. They received physical assessments of their health, educational opportunities, physical improvements through sports and job training. The Civilian Conservation Corps provided them with experiences unavailable to them outside of the forest. These experiences helped them achieve better career opportunities once they completed the

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[208] Crichlow, Harold.. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[209] Salesman, Charles Edmond. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Personnel Records.
[210] Ellisworth Crichlow. Nolte, M. Chester, ed. *Civilian Conservation Corps: The Way We Remember It, 1933- 1942 : Personal Stories of Life in the CCC*. Paducah, Kentucky: Turner Publ., 1990.

program. Upon completion of the CCC, Chaffin returned to school in 1936 and became a commercial artist.[211] He received regional recognition for his artwork in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Crichlow's younger brother worked on ships after his involvement in the Civilian Conservation Corps. In 1941, he could be found restoring ships in preparation for World War II.

Their experiences differed greatly from the segregated camps in the South. CCC Director Robert Fechner created more headaches for himself when he segregated African Americans. The segregated camps that were established lacked funding, had less adequate equipment, and faced enormous outside community pressure for relocation.[212] In other words, separate did not mean equal. Camps in California reiterated that integration benefited African Americans more than segregation. According to historian Olen Cole, the CCC treated African American enrollees well in integrated camps, "written and oral sources revealed that integrated CCC camps and companies disciplinary problems were no more prevalent among African American enrollees than they were of white enrollees."[213]

Although the African Americans that participated in the Civilian Conservation Corps enhanced their skills, it is important to understand that Massachusetts did not provide enough relief to its African American community. Overall, 105 camps operated in Massachusetts under the direction of Albert W. Foreman within the Third CCC

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[211] Lawrence Chaffin. Compiled by Sean Fisher. Department of Conservation and Recreation, CCC Archives (Danvers, Ma.)
[212] Salmond, John. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro,"79.
[213] Cole, Olen. *The African American Experience.* 22.

district.[214] Even with an abundance of camps, the majority of CCC participants were white. African Americans enrollment in Massachusetts' camps ranged between one to eight African Americans per camp as seen in Table 4.1. The majority of the participants were Massachusetts residents.

Table 4.1: African American enrollment in CCC camps in Massachusetts[215]

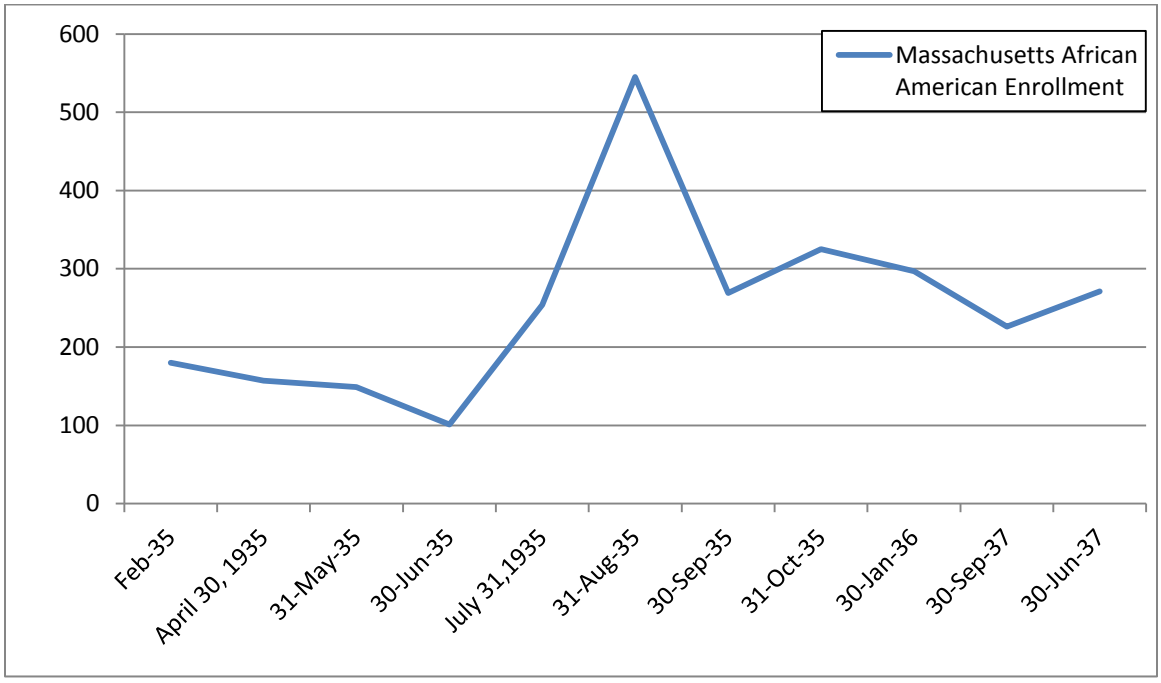
SP-7 Company 107, Pittsfield Massachusetts	176 white , 2 African American
Sp-8, 127th Company, Pittsfield, Massachusetts	192 white, 1 African American
Sp-11, 120th Company, Beckett Massachusetts	193 white, 4 African American
S-66, 108th Company, South Lee, Massachusetts	198 white, 8 African American July 1935 : 190 white, 8 African American
S-53, 109, Otis, Massachusetts	199 white, 1 African American
Sp-5, 110, Andover, Massachusetts	194 white, 1 African American
S-74, 111 Illinsdale, Massachusetts	190 white, 5 African American
S-64, 113th Company, Chester, Massachusetts	170 white, 4 African American
S-62, 116th Company, Miller Falls, Massachusetts	174 white, 3 African American
Sp-9, 115, West Cunningham, Massachusetts	196 white, 2 African American
S- 56 102nd Company, Plymouth, Massachusetts	195 white, 2 African American
S- 53, 104th Company, Bourne, Massachusetts	202 white, 3 African American
Sp-7, 107th Company, Pittsfield, Massachusetts	176 white, 2 African American
S-52, 125, Beckett, Massachusetts	189 white, 5 African American
Sp-12, 128th Company, North Adams, Mass.	184 white, 2 African American

[214] Gilman, Alec. Civilian Conservation Camps in Massachusetts 1934-1942.
[215] Table. "Camps with Negro Enrollees as of February 28, 1935." General Correspondence 1933-1942, Regulations, Negros, Box no 891, RG: 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archive Building, Washington DC.

Due to the quota, African American enrollment in Massachusetts continued to fluctuate. When Roosevelt expanded the program in 1935, the African American enrollment numbers reflected the change.[216] Chart 4.1 below represents African American enrollment in Massachusetts between February 1935 and June 1937. The chart depicts a huge influx of African American enrollment in July and August of 1935. In July, Massachusetts enrolled 254 African Americans. Roosevelt's call for expansion increased African American enrollment 47 percent to 545 enrollees by August 31, 1935.[217] The standard quota of three percent worked in favor of African Americans when the program expanded. The increase in 1936 resulted from the need to help the Massachusetts community after the hurricane. When the program expanded, more African Americans enrolled and their families benefited economically.

[216] June 18, 1935, Advisory Council Minutes, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archive Building, Washington DC.
[217] Chart. "Negroes by Corps area 1935- 1937." General Correspondence, 1933-1942, 900 Regulations Negroes, Box 901, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archive Building, Washington DC.

Chart 4.1: Massachusetts African American enrollment[218]



Massachusetts continued to employ African Americans in integrated camps past 1935. "At its height there were more than 51 camps in Massachusetts with an enrollment of more than 10,000 boys working on 170,000 acres of state forest lands."[219] On March 23, 1936, Roosevelt issued a gradual reduction in enrollees to 350,000 until March 31, 1937.[220]

The First Corps area enrolled the second smallest percentage of African Americans in 1937. Just fewer than three percent of CCC enrollees were African Americans. The First Corps area claimed only 1.2 percent of the total African American population in the

[218] Ibid.
[219] Cook, Harold. *Fifty Years a Forester*. 50.
[220] Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Letters on Continuing the C.C.C.," March 23, 1936. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15275.

area.[221] Massachusetts lacked a sufficient number of African American residents to make separate segregated African American camps feasible. Massachusetts remained integrated by default. According to Salmond, the Civilian Conservation Corps had no intention of creating a "nationwide system of integrated camps. Given the customs of the era, to do so would have invited trouble."[222]

By 1942, Massachusetts struggled to maintain the enrollment figures necessary for the Civilian Conservation Corps. On July 16, 1941, the Brigadier General analyzed the effectiveness of recruiting for CCC areas. The report concluded that the First Corps area had a 36% effectiveness rating due to the industrialized centers in the First Corps area.[223] Industrialization drew potential recruits to other employment-decreasing enrollment in the CCC.

The Civilian Conservation Corps program concluded in 1942 and camps in Massachusetts terminated in 1941.[224] The First Corps area was the only area without segregated African American companies. Massachusetts remained integrated until the completion of the program.[225] The Federal Government focused its attention and

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[221] Table. "Negroes by Corps Area as of March 23, 1937." General Correspondence 1933-1942, Regulations, Negros, Box 901, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archive Building, Washington DC.
[222] Salmond, John. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro,"79.
[223] Letter from the Brigadier general to the Director. July 16, 1941. "Advisory Council Minutes." Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archive Building, Washington DC.
[224] Berg, Sherry. *The Civilian Conservation Corps, Shaping the Forests and Parks of Massachusetts. A Statewide Survey of Civilian Conservation Corps Resources*. Department of Environmental Management. 1999.
[225] Letter from the Brigadier general to the Director. July 16, 1941. Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archive Building, Washington DC.

resources on the war effort. [226] Although the CCC program terminated in 1941, the impact of the Civilian Conservation Corps on Massachusetts and its enrollees remained. The Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees developed recreational areas, buildings, and paths that transformed the forests in Massachusetts.

Conclusion

African Americans greatly benefited from their involvement in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Lawrence Chaffin developed his artistic skills, Charles Salesman furthered his understanding of arithmetic, engineering, and journalism and Crichlow's involvement in the CCC had such a positive impact on him that his younger brother joined in 1941. Their participation in the program brought needed relief to their families suffering from the economic hardships of the Depression. They developed physical and mental confidence participating in sports and working daily. Although the CCC program in Massachusetts benefited these families and enrollees, the young African American men still had to fight against racial discrimination.

The Civilian Conservation Corps limited African American supervisory positions and overall enrollment in Massachusetts. For instance, education advisor roles were open to African American corps members across the country except in New England. Furthermore, the three percent quota ensured that the majority of the camps remained white creating an additional barrier for these men. Enrollment numbers of African

[226] Ibid.

Americans fluctuated with the expansion and reduction of the program, providing more relief to African Americans in Massachusetts during expansion but not enough.

The First Corps area remained the only Corps area to continue integration. This important facet should alter historians' understanding of the African American experience in Massachusetts' CCC program. The camps in Massachusetts provided relief and skills to the African American community, creating a new precedence of federal relief for economic suffering. Although the Civilian Conservation Corps developed to provide employment to needy Americans, the acceptance of African Americans to the program further developed the Federal Government's recognition of African American hardship. The Civilian Conservation Corps program in Massachusetts represented a step in the right direction for African Americans allowing them access to the same resources as white enrollees. The integrated camps in Massachusetts benefited African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps more than segregated camps could.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The Depression of 1929 accelerated problems for an already struggling African American population. It increased job competition and African American unemployment rose as two million African Americans relied on relief rolls in 1933.[227] Racial discrimination meant that African Americans lacked the adequate schooling and skills to compete in an uncertain job market. Despite desperately needing federal government intervention, African American remained largely jobless, with an unemployment rate of around fifty percent during the Great Depression.[228]

The election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 brought little hope to the struggling community as Roosevelt sought political appeasement over racial politics. Roosevelt placed economic legislation over the advancement of African American civil rights in the hopes of appeasing Congress' Southern majority. With the help of Eleanor Roosevelt and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, questions about the discrimination against African Americans slowly gained prominence. These questions played out in the new Federal Government programs initiated by the New Deal.

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[227] Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 32.
[228] Cole, Olen. *The African American Experience*.11.

President Roosevelt developed the Civilian Conservation Corps out of a love of forestry and the understanding that Americans needed jobs. Due to the efforts of Oscar De Preist, an African American House Representative, the bill passed in 1933 with an anti-discrimination policy. Yet, Roosevelt appointed Robert Fechner, a Southern labor activist, as the Director of the CCC.

Shortly after its creation, African American enrollment in the Civilian Conservation ignited white community opposition across the country. In Belton, Montana local storeowners refused to serve African American CCC members. A Corps commander in Pennsylvania urged Fechner to seek an alternative location for any African American enrollee.[229] Rawlins, Wyoming rejected African Americans in their community as well. Protestors organized in Washington D.C., hired attorneys to represent them and argue against African American enrollment. In New York, a Congressional Representative resisted the movement of African Americans into his state.[230] Racism remained a rampant issue across the country.

Racial discrimination occurred inside of the Civilian Conservation Corps program as well. The decentralized program allowed regional differences to occur increasing the ability for states to discriminate against African American enrollment. A heavily populated African American community in Georgia enrolled only white men in the

[229] June 10, 1933, , Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.
[230] August 2, 1933, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.

CCC.[231] Southern officials used the decentralization of the CCC program to their advantage increasing discrimination against African Americans. Qualifications for enrollment created barriers for potential African American enrollees preventing many from acceptance.

As opposition to African American enrollment mounted, Robert Fechner issued policies that further increased discrimination. He limited the potential for African American leadership positions by only allowing African Americans to become educational advisors. In 1934, he placed a limit on African American enrollment causing states to develop African American quotas. This greatly decreased the amount of aid African Americans could potentially receive from the Civilian Conservation Corps.[232] The quota became a double-edged sword benefiting African Americans as the program expanded and ensuring enrollment yet, creating problems when the program contracted limiting potential relief and enrollment. Fechner advocated against making the Civilian Conservation Corps more accessible to African Americans and sought appeasement over rousing political friction.

In 1935, Fechner believed the solution to white community opposition would lie in segregated camps. This new policy only increased challenges for African American enrollment and created more headaches for him. This policy required the CCC to locate areas that would accept African American companies. New York, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Kansas, and Maryland all opposed the influx of African American men

[231] Salmond, John A. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro." 77.
[232] Salmond, John A. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro." 84.

into their CCC Companies.[233] Delaware struggled to find companies willing to accept African Americans. The segregation of camps backfired for Fechner, requiring him to find locations for African Americans in particularly hostile states and to fund more camps.

The camps in Massachusetts and the First Corps area told a different story of African American enrollment. Massachusetts lacked a large African American population and the camps remained integrated. With one to eight African Americans in each camp, these African Americans enjoyed the same resources as their fellow white enrollees. They benefited from the integrated camps as regular CCC men. Many were recognized for their abilities, placed in leadership positions, or celebrated on behalf of their work. African Americans became a regular part of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Massachusetts. The camps remained integrated in Massachusetts until its termination in 1941.

How could African Americans receive equal opportunity in the Civilian Conservation Corps with such great opposition? The solution to this question lies in the actions of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the First Corp area. The small number of African Americans that participated in the program allowed the northern states to begin to provide solutions for a long deprived African American population. The small

[233] "June 22, 1936, Minutes of the Advisory Council to the Director, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, National Archives Building, Washington DC.

numbers prevented the program from receiving a large influx of community opposition and taking a step backwards towards camp segregation.

The Civilian Conservation Corps established in 1933 designed to provide relief to struggling Americans and played out as a civil rights battlefield for African Americans. Roosevelt's New Deal established a new precedent of federal recognition of African American hardship. As many historians have argued, the Civilian Conservation Corps struggled to provide the most deprived racial group with economic relief. Ultimately, the Civilian Conservation Corps in the First Corps area presented a new alternative understanding to the African American experience in the CCC. Through continued research, historians will be able to understand the complexity of the program and further understand how to address racial inequality.

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