

NAME: Phil

RANK: Not Available

ORGANIZATION: XX Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron

OVERSEAS WARTIME SERVICE: Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations

- The following excerpt is directly from an original wartime period letter written by Phil. This is one of many letters from Phil in the site curator's possession and more will be transcribed in the future.
- The following excerpt is presented under fair use provisions for educational purposes.
- No controversial material has been omitted from the following excerpt aside from an edited racial slur for the protection of younger readers. No grammatical or spelling errors have been corrected.

Phil writes his sister in the United States:

“[Oct. 9, 1945]

...This is as good a place as any too, to disagree with you in what you wrote about things in the U.S. at present – particularly your opinion of the unions. I'm afraid that you and Mom too, are still thinking in terms of the war that's all done. And maybe I ought to explain that being in the army has given me a brand-new viewpoint on a lot of things. It's made me conscious of things like class distinctions and inequalities – things that theoretically do not exist at all in the U.S. but actually are as much a part of our country as they are of any country in the world. It's time you grew up and discovered that all of our statesmen's and politicians fine speeches about equality of opportunity and the glorious freedoms prevailing everywhere in the U.S. is the bunk. We have no monopoly on all the good, fine things in the world. We're just another tribe of people no better than any other nation in the world. We don't have all the brains nor all the wealth, nor is it exactly “God's country” as so many idiots would have you believe. We're a bunch of weak-brains who bring better government and better living conditions to the nations we conquer than we do to certain sections of our own country. We treat the nationals of those countries better than we treat citizens of our own country – citizens of the minority groups called negroes and Japanese-Americans, I mean. I've seen so much in this army that has burned me up that I'll never again believe the stuff that I believed before I was in this army...

...Take for instance the Japanese-Americans. I've met a lot of those fellows from Hawaii. They're the lucky ones tho just because they live in Hawaii where there's no discrimination against a man whether he's black or white or yellow. What I'm thinking of are the ones from California. They went to Italy and then into Germany and their battalions have the best record of any in the entire U.S. Army. But what do Americans do to these men when they get back to the dear old U.S? They come back to find their homes wrecked, their families being shot at and stoned they find themselves being thrown out of barber shops and restaurants and Lord knows what else. These guys are wearing Purple Hearts and Silver Stars and I wonder if they know why they were dumb enough to give that much to a people that welcomes them home in such a manner.

Then – we've got the black boys. They've been plenty good enough to die by the thousands doing all the dirty jobs in this war but exactly what will they get out of it? They can go back to that stronghold of democracy and equality...where they get off the sidewalk when a white man comes along.

Do you think that the right to get off a sidewalk for some arrogant white is a fitting reward for them? Do you think that they fought to perpetuate that privilege? Boy, they're certainly suckers if they did!

On the subject of the black boys – our commanding officer has lately pulled another stunt that has earned him a little bit more contempt from everyone here who isn't a X or some other breed of Southerner... There's an aviation service squadron about a quarter mile from here and they're plenty good enough boys to bring in the gasoline for the major's plane and to tote in the food that he eats. He lets them do that for him alright. But when it comes to looking at our movies – that's different. We've got a theater and they haven't so they started coming over to ours nights. Well, we don't mind. We're darn glad to get rides with them into Naha or somewhere when they're driving their trucks our way, so we can manage to share a movie with them. But this fine example of X manhood, who is master here, "doesn't like n _ _ _ _ s" so he called the colored boy's commanding officer and made it plain that we didn't have room for them here. Too crowded – much too crowded. Sure...

Phil"

- Phil made it through the Second World War but when he passed away is unknown.
- **For visual context, this link connects to an original wartime newsreel in the public domain that covers some of the kinds of African American servicemen Phil mentions in his letter (viewer discretion advised):** <https://archive.org/details/ARC-38995>
- **For additional detail, this link connects to the Wikipedia article that covers Phil's type of organization, the Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron (reader discretion advised):** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerial_reconnaissance_in_World_War_II