

HEADQUARTERS, U. S. MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON

14 May 1948

LETTER OF INSTRUCTION NUMBER 421

From: The Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps  
To: All Commanding Officers

Subject: Colored Personnel

Encl: (A) Copy of ltr CMC to Distribution List AO-320-kb (OIC7743),  
dated 20 March, 1943.

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded for your information and guidance in connection with the handling of colored personnel.

2. The initial assignment of colored personnel to Marine Barracks and Marine Detachments at posts and stations within the continental limits of the United States will be in the rank of private first class and private.

3. While rapid promotion, when deserved, is necessary, it is essential that in no case shall there be colored noncommissioned officers senior to white men in the same unit, and desirable that few, if any, be the same in rank.

4. Subject to the above provision, promotion of colored personnel is authorized in the same manner as applicable to all Marines. In cases where, for example, a colored corporal is qualified for promotion to sergeant prior to the time all white corporals in the unit have been replaced by colored ones, recommendation will be made to this Headquarters, and if the recommendation is approved, the man will be transferred to a post where his services can be utilized in the highest manner. The same procedure will be followed through all ranks until only colored noncommissioned officers are employed in all colored units. The above does not apply to members of the Steward's Branch.

5. Beyond the continental limits of the United States commanding officers will control promotions of colored personnel as necessary to carry out the spirit of the above directive.

6. On all change sheets and strength reports, colored personnel will be shown separately. They will not be included in quotas for transfer unless transfer orders so state, except that beyond the continental limits of the United States they may be transferred in such manner as the Corps, Division, Wing, Area, or Force Commander may direct.

7. Since the inclusion of colored personnel in the Marine Corps organizations is a new departure, it is requested that Commanding officers make a study of the situation as it exists from time to time and the problems involved, and make report to the Commandant, Marine Corps. This report should include the adaptation of the Negroes to military discipline and guard duty, their attitude towards other personnel, and vice versa, liberty facilities, recreation facilities, and any other matter that would be of interest to the Commandant.

8. All Marines are entitled to the same rights and privileges under Naval Regulations. The colored Marines have been carefully trained and indoctrinated. They can be expected to conduct themselves with propriety and become a credit to the Marine Corps. All men must be made to understand that it is their duty to guide and assist these men to conduct themselves properly, and to set them an example in conduct and deportment.

9. Commanding Officers will see that all men are properly indoctrinated with the spirit of paragraph 8 above, particularly when Negro troops are serving in the vicinity.

T. HOLCOMB