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# Racism and Enlistment

## The Second World War Policies of the Royal Canadian Air Force

Mathias Joost

The Canadian military services have not been immune to racism. During the First World War recruiting officers at Militia units in British Columbia refused to accept Chinese-Canadians, with the result that they had to travel to Alberta and Ontario to enlist, while Japanese-Canadians were only accepted after a great deal of lobbying. Black-Canadians faced similar prejudice to that of the Chinese-Canadians in their attempts to enlist.<sup>1</sup> The refusal of some units to accept visible minorities into their ranks, however, was the result of decisions on the part of individual officers. There were no such proscriptive regulations.

Although members of those minorities who did participate in the war effort of 1914 to 1919 acquitted themselves very well, their efforts did not result in long-term changes in practice – the opposite was true. By the start of the Second World War, the regulations of the navy and air force were specifically exclusionary; only whites were accepted into almost all categories for enlistment. In the Militia, units were still able to decide for themselves whether or not to accept visible minority volunteers, with many deciding not to do so.

In 1938 and early 1939, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) put

**Abstract: Leading into the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Air Force requested Federal Cabinet approval of restrictive enlistment regulations that effectively barred the visible minorities from serving. Cabinet approved these regulations, yet by March 1942 these regulations were eliminated at the instigation of the RCAF. This paper compares the enlistment practices of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Militia to those of the RCAF. It then examines the potential reasons for these RCAF regulations, how they were applied and the process leading to their elimination. Finally, the application of the new, non-racist policies is examined.**

in place regulations prohibiting enlistment of visible minorities in most categories, and the government approved these regulations by orders-in-council. During the early years of the war policy rulings by senior authorities further proscribed enlistment of Canada's non-white population.<sup>2</sup> Actual practice, however, was more flexible. In fact, while the RCAF was the first among the three armed forces to introduce exclusionary regulations and policies, the service subsequently took the lead in eliminating them. In many ways these actions, together with varying practices of RCAF recruiting

officers, reflected the diversity of views prevalent in Canadian society towards visible minorities.

The focus of this paper is the evolution and then demise of the RCAF's regulations, policies and practices for the exclusion of non-white Canadians during the Second World War. While there is some literature about the participation of Black, Chinese and Japanese-Canadians in the Canadian military effort of 1939 to 1945, these works do not treat enlistment policies in any detail.<sup>3</sup> This study will examine the cases of Black and Chinese-Canadians; the special circumstances that limited participation of Japanese-Canadians in the Second World War are beyond the scope of the present paper.<sup>4</sup> Aboriginal Canadians will not be considered as policy did not restrict their enlistment.

The RCAF's enlistment policies can only be properly understood in the context of the policies of the other two Canadian armed forces, the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Militia,<sup>5</sup> and Britain's Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Army upon which the Canadian forces modelled themselves.

Both the RCAF and the RCN established their exclusionary enlistment regulations in 1938 on



**The original caption for this official photograph read, "Darkies, who with others, load Canadian Corps tramways with ammunition, resting." These are just a few of the estimated 800 Black Canadians who served with distinction on the Western Front during the First World War.**

that the RAF policy of pure European descent was maintained because mixing "European and non-European subjects in the same fighting service raises grave practical difficulties." The British Army required that for promotion from the ranks to combatant commissions as second lieutenants, candidates had to be of pure European descent, as well as being a British subject and the son of British subjects.<sup>11</sup>

### Royal Canadian Navy

The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) was the first of the three services to incorporate a racial enlistment restriction in its regulations and the last of the three services to modify the restriction. In 1938, an order-in-council changed the regulations so that candidates for commissions as officers had to be "of the white race and must be a British subject who has resided, or whose parents have resided in Canada for two years immediately preceding the date of entry." Ratings also had to be of the "white race" except that the applicant only had to be a British subject.<sup>12</sup> The reasoning for excluding visible minorities was that "[i]t is, in general, considered undesirable to mix Asiatic races with White under living conditions which prevail in small ships."<sup>13</sup> Confined spaces did not "lend themselves to satisfactory mixing" of races; "enrolment [of non-whites] would cause immediate and continued dissatisfaction amongst white ratings."<sup>14</sup> The objective was thus to maintain "all Royal Navies... of Pure European Descent and of the White Race."<sup>15</sup>

the basis of British precedents. The Royal Navy's "Regulations for the Entry of Naval Cadets" of 1906 stated that "candidates must be of pure European descent."<sup>6</sup> The Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), which in 1918 had combined to form the Royal Air Force, also required that officer candidates be of pure European descent. This was enforced in Canada and other British Empire nations in recruitment for the British flying services during the First World War. It was not, however, universal as white people with Maori background could be enlisted.<sup>7</sup>

Such were the demands for manpower during the First World War that troops had to be recruited from the non-white populations of the British Empire, but officers from visible minorities rarely led European troops or became pilots. Commissions were the last bastion of the pure European descent regulation, as the War Office considered that "a British private will never follow a half-caste or native officer."<sup>8</sup> There were always a few exceptions, such as Walter Tull, a Black Briton of Caribbean descent, who was killed in action on 25

March 1918 while leading his troops during the German spring offensive, Sergeant William Robinson Clarke of Jamaica and five Indian officers who served in the RFC and Royal Air Force (RAF). One Black-Canadian, George Frederick Shreve, transferred from the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the RFC in August 1917 to become a pilot, was commissioned and served until July 1919.<sup>9</sup>

Between the wars, the three British services reverted to the exclusionary regulations. Air Ministry Weekly Order 603/1921 (issued 28 July 1921) required that "[w]ith the exception of boys, recruits must be of pure European descent and the sons of natural-born or naturalized British subjects." The exception for boys was later eliminated, and when the RAF's first recruiting regulations appeared as Air Publication (AP) 948, they codified the pure European descent and British subject requirements. The requirement to be of pure European descent was also enforced for enlistment in the Auxiliary Air Force and RAF Special Reserve.<sup>10</sup> In 1924, in response to a question in Parliament, the under-secretary of state at the Air Ministry responded

On 9 November 1942, at the weekly meeting of the Naval Board, Angus L. Macdonald, minister of national defence for naval services, observed that the Army and the RCAF were accepting applicants of all races, and urged that the Navy should consider doing the same.<sup>16</sup> In May 1943 Naval Monthly Order 2653 was issued, stating in part: "All applicants of whatever race are to be treated on an equal basis as recruits. This includes coloured citizens."<sup>17</sup> A proposed amendment to Naval Regulations ("it is ordered that any male British Subject of any racial origin may be entered for the period of hostilities in the Canadian Naval Forces"<sup>18</sup>) was not carried out until 22 July 1944.<sup>19</sup> The Navy, much the smallest of the three armed forces, never had a problem finding recruits,<sup>20</sup> and there was thus no apparent urgency to change its enlistment requirements. Rather, the new policy appears to have reflected the convictions of the minister. Macdonald, formerly the premier of Nova Scotia and known as a social reformer, had taken the navy portfolio in the Federal Cabinet in 1940. He questioned the aping of Royal Navy personnel policies and urged changes that better reflected Canada's more open society.<sup>21</sup>

During the period of restricted enlistment, several instances were noted where members of visible minority groups were enrolled. William Lore, a Chinese-Canadian, enlisted in January 1943, and was likely an exception based on personal intervention, in this case by Vice-Admiral Percy W. Nelles, chief of the naval staff, while Japanese-

Canadian David Tsubota enlisted in 1940 and was soon released.<sup>22</sup> Black-Canadians were also apparently enlisted before the change; however, because of the lack of documentation, the exact number or details cannot be ascertained. These Blacks were enlisted into specific trades, such as stewards and cooks, much as the Royal Navy employed Chinese stewards and cooks.<sup>23</sup>

### Canadian Militia/Army

The situation in the Canadian Militia differed considerably from the RCN. The Militia had no regulations limiting enlistment on the basis of ethnicity, only the requirement to be a British subject for appointment as an officer in both the Permanent Active Militia (the regular force) and the Non-Permanent Active Militia (the reserves, or "citizen

soldiers").<sup>24</sup> Within months of the start of the war, the need to be a British subject was removed from the requirements to be an officer in the Non-Permanent Active Militia.<sup>25</sup>

The enlistment situation during the Second World War was similar to that of the First World War. Commanding officers decided whether or not to accept visible minority members into their units, and while military district headquarters could and did apply pressure to have these individuals accepted, the headquarters were loath to interfere in what had traditionally been a commanding officer's prerogative. The result in both wars was that regiments in some areas readily accepted Black-Canadians, while in others did not. The creation in 1916 of No. 2 Construction Battalion as a means of allowing the enlistment of Black-



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**Sub-Lieutenant W.K.L. Lore, RCNVR, photographed in Halifax on 27 March 1944. Lore, a Chinese-Canadian, was able to join the navy due to the personal intervention of the chief of the naval staff during a period of restricted enlistment.**

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Canadians is well known; less so is the fact that at least another 800 Black-Canadians were able to enlist in other units of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.<sup>26</sup> A handful of Blacks were even granted commissions, with Lieutenant Lancelot Joseph Bertrand being among the first.<sup>27</sup> Halifax was one area where some members of the Militia were prejudiced against Blacks. The Black population of the Halifax area had been pressing in the 1930s for greater participation by their community in the Militia.<sup>28</sup> With the onset of the Second World War, Militia Headquarters in Ottawa advised the district officer commanding, Military District (MD) No.6, Brigadier H.E. Boak, that the formation of coloured units, one

option he was considering on the precedent of the First World War No. 2 Construction Battalion that had been organized in Nova Scotia, was contrary to government policy.<sup>29</sup> Yet a survey on recruitment indicated that 14 units in the area had no desire to enlist Black personnel.<sup>30</sup> The consensus among MD 6 units was that coloured units or sub-units be formed. In July 1940, however, Army Headquarters, as Militia Headquarters had been renamed, confirmed that there was no intention to form such units, but, nevertheless, the prerogative of commanding officers to select recruits "should not be interfered with and that no pressure should be placed on them to take coloured persons."<sup>31</sup>

When pushed by members of the public, Army Headquarters provided a standard response that as long as Blacks met physical and other requirements for active service, there was nothing preventing their enlistment.<sup>32</sup>

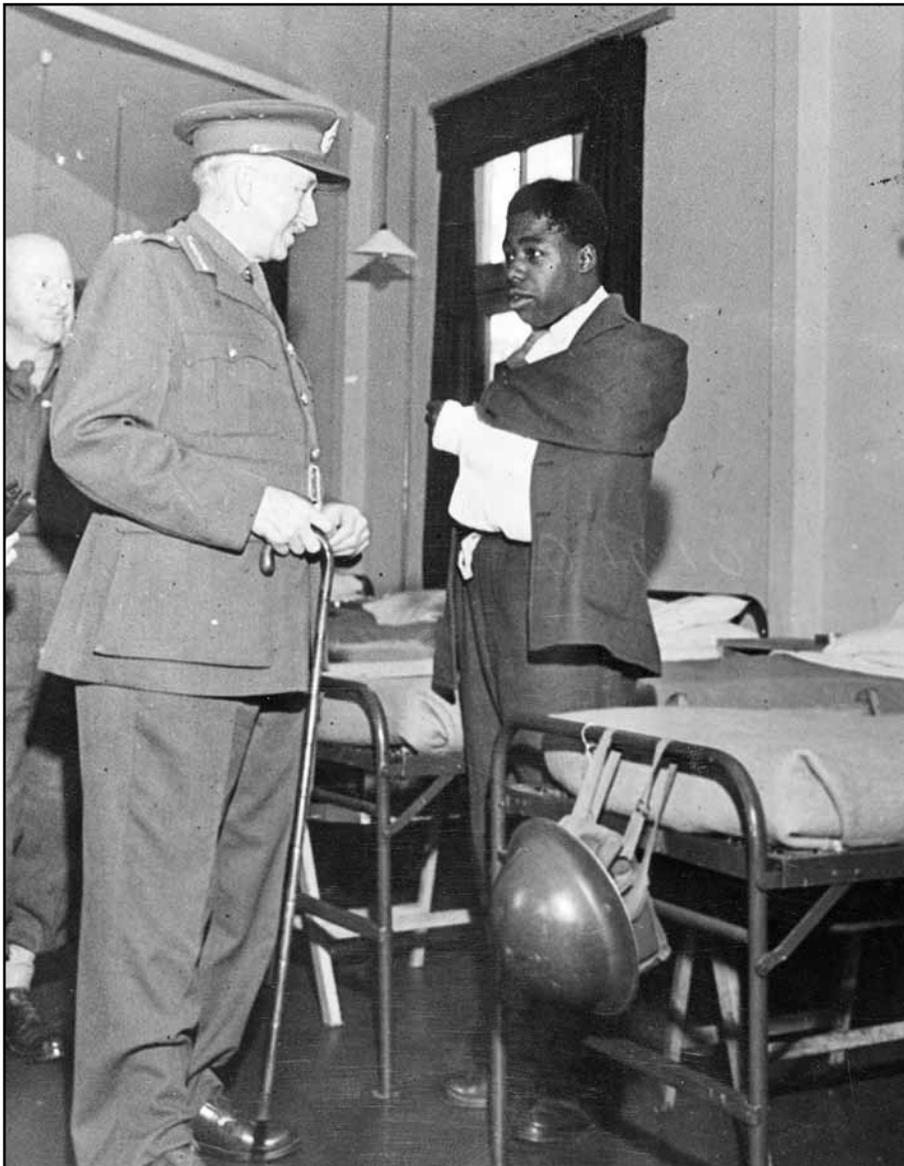
The situation was different in Military District 4, with headquarters at Montreal, where Blacks, in this case from the British West Indies (BWI), were being enlisted. The movement of individuals from the British West Indies to enlist in Canada was well underway by the summer of 1941. In July 1941, the under-secretary of state for external affairs, Norman Robertson, sent a letter to H. Desrosiers, acting deputy minister (army), indicating that the colonial secretary in Jamaica wished to send men to Canada for enlistment in the Army.<sup>33</sup> In August 1941 Major W.H. Scott, the district recruiting officer, MD 4, received letters from the commissioner of police of Barbados recommending two constables for service in the Canadian Army. Both letters from the applicants stated that they were Black. Major Scott replied that as long as the individuals passed the medical standards, no difficulty was anticipated in their enlistment.<sup>34</sup> Major Scott indicated in one letter that previous enlistees had acquitted themselves well, although no mention was made of their skin colour.<sup>35</sup> Organized groups of BWI candidates began to arrive in Canada in September 1941 and continued until at least September 1942; the recruiting officer for the MD was quite receptive and the individuals, both Black and White were almost all readily enlisted into MD 4 units.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, efforts were underway to turn back coloured recruits from the BWI. In response

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**Brigadier Georges Vanier, a future governor-general of Canada, chatting with a wounded Black soldier at No.17 Canadian General Hospital, Pinewood, England, 30 September 1943**

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**Chinese-Canadian soldiers who served in the Canadian Army during the Second World War (l. to r.): Privates O. Lee, F. Lee, G.A. Lee, W. Lee, K.D. Wong and J.H. Ma.**

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to Robertson's letter of July 1941, Desrosiers indicated that Jamaicans would not make good soldiers, as they were happy-go-lucky, worked sporadically, and were extremely temperamental, easily fatigued and highly emotional.<sup>37</sup> This was followed a week later by another letter suggesting that the Jamaicans could not handle Canadian military training or the Canadian military diet.<sup>38</sup> No further correspondence appears to have been exchanged between Robertson and Desrosiers on the matter; however, the issue did not rest there.

In September 1941, T.A. Crerar, the minister responsible for immigration, wrote to defence minister J. Layton Ralston warning that there was an organized movement to send "negro volunteers" from Barbados to enlist. The first group had arrived on 26 September and another group was scheduled to leave around 4 October. Crerar indicated that the matter would require special handling to avoid discriminating against the Black Barbadians as there were also White Barbadians in the group and all were British subjects.<sup>39</sup> In late September 1941 Desrosiers wrote to H.C. Collier, a Montreal businessman who promoted West Indies tourism and trade and was acting on behalf of the volunteers from the Caribbean, that the arrival of coloured persons was an immigration question. More important, Desrosiers noted that there was a question of whether the coloured individuals could handle the Canadian winter, suggesting that all enlistment be held in abeyance until the spring.<sup>40</sup> Then in October, F.C. Blair, director of immigration, and noted for his efforts to apply policies in ways that achieved



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exclusion, wrote to Robertson that "National Defence while not refusing to take coloured volunteers, wishes to discourage the movement."<sup>41</sup> Collier noted the contradictory responses to his efforts to facilitate recruitment from the British West Indies when he wrote to Prime Minister Mackenzie King in October 1941.<sup>42</sup>

The tide was beginning to turn, possibly because of the successful enlistment of previous BWI applicants. In November, the judge advocate general at Army Headquarters suggested acceptance of limited numbers of coloured applicants and that training syllabi be sent to the BWI to assist in preparing these individuals.<sup>43</sup> One last effort was made in 1942 to restrict enlistment when Major-General Harry Letson, the adjutant-general, took a different approach, considering the problem to be one of repatriation after the war; he underscored that the Army had no obligation to return the recruits to the BWI.<sup>44</sup>

Although the records are incomplete, at least 200 applicants arrived in Canada from the British West Indies up to August 1942; at least 37 were Black, with a figure of

75 or more likely to be closer to the actual number.<sup>45</sup> Almost all the BWI recruits were successful in enlisting, including the applicants known to be Black. This suggests that the units in MD 4 to which they applied had no problem accepting Black recruits. Still, both government officials and officers in Army Headquarters attempted to find ways to discourage coloured applicants, using the excuse that this was an immigration question, which conveniently ignored the fact that many American citizens were coming into Canada to enlist without such impediments.

For Chinese-Canadians, regional racism – in this case in British Columbia – was also a factor. From the data available, it would appear that actual enlistments were limited in number. The biggest problem in determining the actual numbers is the fact that the Army did not maintain lists of soldiers from visible minorities. From the names and narratives provided by Marjorie Wong, at least 17 Chinese-Canadians voluntarily enlisted in the Army between the start of the war and the end of 1942, including seven who joined before 1 January 1942.<sup>46</sup>

Of the three services, the policies and practices of the Army were the least racist. There were racist units in some military districts, with possibly some MDs having greater numbers than others. Individual racism existed such as noted in the attitudes of unit commanding officers in MD 6 and by the staff officers who prepared the various letters cited above. However, the apparent wider enlistment of Black and Chinese Canadians in the Army suggests that most units treated applicants fairly and restrictions were more a matter of local prejudices than Army policy or practice.

The enlistment practices contrasted by units in MD 4 and MD 6 demonstrate this dichotomy. Quite possibly, the circumstances noted in the Halifax area were isolated and not a policy within the Canadian Army as clearly, once these coloured applicants had made it to MD 4, they were readily accepted by local units, demonstrating that allowing local commanding officers the freedom to select recruits could work both for and against the recruitment of coloured persons. Likewise the fact that Chinese-Canadians had to go outside British Columbia to enlist highlights the nature of local prejudices.

With its policy of allowing unit commanding officers the freedom to choose their own recruits, the Army was in part allowing racism to be conducted; however, it does appear that efforts were made to apply pressure on units to change their practices without stepping on the prerogative of units to choose from among applicants. On the other hand, the efforts to hinder, if not prevent the entry of Black potential recruits into Canada is indicative of a racist attitude, supported in part by government bureaucracy. Despite efforts at Army Headquarters to turn back coloured applicants from the BWI in MD 4, the efforts were unsuccessful, possibly because of the political sensitivities of rejecting

British subjects simply because of skin colour. Yet, Army HQ was attempting at the same time to push MD 6 units to accept more Blacks.

### Royal Canadian Air Force

The RCAF's adoption of policies and regulations that excluded visible minorities shortly before the Second World War would appear to parallel that of the RCN. Like the Navy, the Air Force existed only in cadre strength prior to rearmament in the late 1930s. Indeed the Air Force was administered as a branch of the Militia under the authority of the chief of the general staff and did not achieve the status of an independent armed service until December 1938, when Air Vice-Marshal G.M. Croil became the first chief of the air staff. With expansion and reorganization, the Air Force, like the Navy, took guidance from its British counterpart. Only two visible minority members, both Black-Canadians, are known to have enlisted in the RCAF during the interwar period. These were Gerald William Alexander Bell, who joined No.119 Squadron of the Non-Permanent Active Air Force (NPAAF), that is the reserve force, on 11 June 1936 and E.V. Watts who enlisted in No.1 Squadron of the Permanent Active Air Force (PAAF), or regular force, on 1 May 1939. In both cases the airmen enlisted before the adoption of exclusionary regulations.

Although these are the only two visible minority members known to have enlisted, this does not mean that the RCAF was practicing exclusion. The RCAF was a very small force that began to recruit significant numbers only in the latter half of the 1930s, and even then the number of positions available was far smaller than the number of applicants, allowing the service – both the regular force and reserves – to select only the best qualified candidates.<sup>47</sup>

See Table 1.

Table 1  
Enlistments by year for the Permanent Active Air Force<sup>48</sup>

Year	Strength as of 31 March	Number recruited
1933	694	0
1934	692	6
1935	794	109
1936	1026	246
1937	1107	120
1938	1701	654
1939	2191	482

Allan English in his work *The Cream of the Crop* suggests one possibly important influence on RCAF aircrew selection. Social Darwinism, he shows, played a role in aircrew enlistment in the British air services during the First World War. The exclusion of non-whites from flying was based in part on the belief that white people were a superior race, especially in light of the success of European nations over foreign, non-white nations and peoples. These ideas of superiority extended to the belief that some ethnic groups were better suited than others to be pilots in terms of intellect, hand-eye coordination and other physical attributes.<sup>49</sup> Whether this was the case in the RCAF during the interwar period is not known; however, the close association between the RAF and the RCAF (whose senior members had in many cases served with the British air forces during the First World War) would suggest that members of the RCAF would have been exposed to this idea.

English also observes that the Royal Air Force placed emphasis on class distinctions in selecting its pilots.<sup>50</sup> There is no study available on whether RCAF pilots in the interwar period were selected on the basis of class or whether class played a role in allowing some to be chosen over

others, but several observations can be made. Individuals applying for the NPAAF of the RCAF were given some preference if they already had a pilot's licence. Such a licence was not readily available to all Canadians. The costs involved were high and beyond the reach of most, especially with the effects of the Depression of the 1930s. In the same vein, during the interwar period, the RCAF offered flying training to a limited number of candidates such as university students. Education was a large part of the selection process as schooling was considered an indicator of intelligence, and provided essential background for flying training.<sup>51</sup> Robin W. Winks notes that schools attended by Blacks were often not as good as schools in predominantly white districts, being underfunded and in some provinces, such as Nova Scotia, ignored by the provincial government. Often Blacks dropped out of school by grade six or seven.<sup>52</sup> The problem of obtaining sufficiently educated recruits was such that the RCAF and the Army reached an agreement in February 1941 that allowed the RCAF to recruit from among the Army's trainees and the Army Reserve. That same month Defence Council agreed that the RCAF should have first choice among applicants having junior matriculation or lesser high school education.<sup>53</sup> Thus, educational standards precluded a large part of the population from enlisting in the RCAF, including many visible minority members.

When the Canadian Air Force was established in 1923 (the "royal" designation came in the following year), the regulations indicated that the service was open to all individuals, provided they were British subjects.<sup>54</sup> Starting in May 1938, in the midst of the expansion and reorganization of the Air Force as a fully separate armed service, there were changes in the King's Regulations and Orders

Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum Archives Image 594



**Gerry Bell, from Hamilton, Ontario, was one of only two known Black-Canadians to enlist in the RCAF during the interwar years.**

(KR (Air)) pertaining to enlistment.<sup>55</sup> Because the RCAF consisted of two components, the regular force (PAAF) and the reserves (NPAAF), and enlistment requirements for officers and airmen were different, four categories of personnel needed to be addressed: officers of both components and airmen of both components.

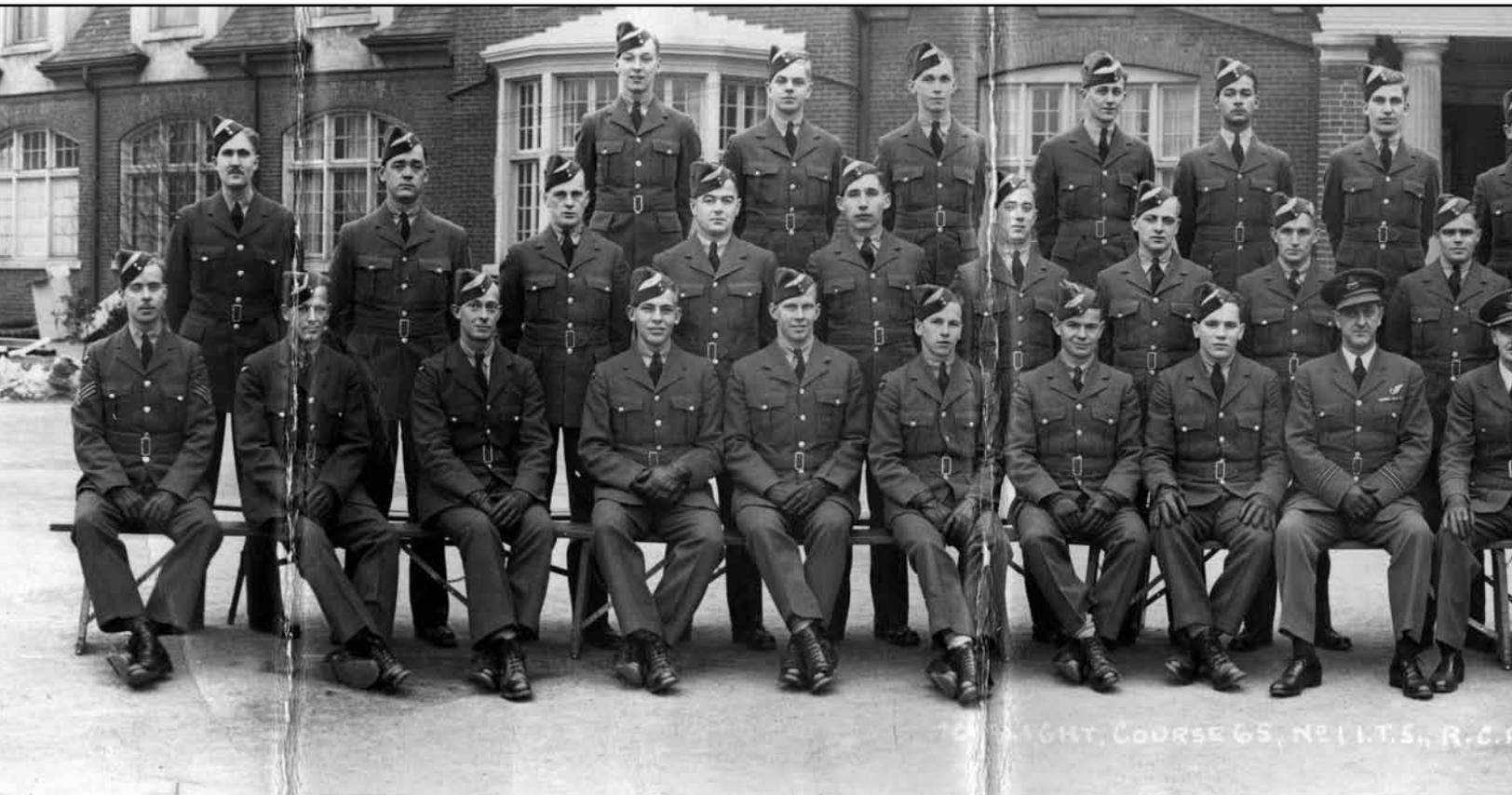
On 17 August 1938, the Federal Cabinet issued Order-in-Council PC 1994 which added the requirement of "pure European descent and a British Subject, the son of parents both of whom are, or if deceased were at the time of their deaths, British Subjects" for candidates to be

commissioned as officers in both the PAAF and NPAAF.<sup>56</sup> The change was promulgated on 15 September with the caveat that it was effective back to 1 March.

For airmen, the change was made only to the reserves, or Auxiliary Active Air Force (AAAF) as the NPAAF had been renamed, when Order-in-Council PC 233 was approved on 31 January 1939 and promulgated in RCAF General Orders that same day. Interestingly, the regulation here was stated negatively: "Men who are not both of pure European descent and the sons of natural born or naturalized British subjects" were not eligible for enlistment or re-enlistment.<sup>57</sup> The speed with which the amendment was approved by the Federal Cabinet and promulgated by the RCAF suggests there were no questions raised about exclusion on racial grounds.<sup>58</sup> Strikingly the process of amending the KR (Air) began when the RCAF was still under the authority of the chief of the general staff (CGS), who evidently accepted enlistment regulations more restrictive than those for the land forces. One explanation might be adherence to the RAF's regulations as a model for the reorganization of the RCAF as a more combat oriented force, the foremost feature of Canadian rearmament on the eve of the Second World War.

When Canada declared war on Germany on 10 September 1939, all officers joining the RCAF and airmen joining the reserves (AAAF) had to be of pure European descent, but no action had been taken similarly to restrict enlistments as airmen in the regular force. The latter still had only had to be British subjects.

Further restrictive regulations and policies were to ensue with wartime expansion. The terms of service for neither the regular or auxiliary forces were fully suitable to enlist large numbers of volunteers



**The December 1942 course at No. 1 Initial Training School in Toronto included both Flying Officer Tarrance Freeman and Flying Officer Alan Bundy, respectively the first and second Black-Canadians known to be commissioned in the RCAF. F/O Freeman is fifth from the left in the back row and F/O Bundy is second from the right in the front row.**

for service during hostilities only. For this reason the RAF created a new component – the Special Reserve – in September 1939.<sup>59</sup> Henceforth, almost all new enlistments were to the Special Reserve, leaving the establishments

of the other components at their prewar numbers.<sup>60</sup>

With the creation of the RCAF Special Reserve amendments to the KR (Air) had to be made quickly. On 29 September 1939, the RCAF passed their proposed Order-in-Council to the Privy Council Office, which the Cabinet approved on 13 October. It included the provision that candidates for commissioning in the Special Reserve had to be “of pure European descent and (except in case of an appointment to the Special Reserve) a British Subject, the son of parents both of whom are, or

if deceased were at the time of their deaths, British Subjects [underscoring added].”<sup>61</sup> Airmen, on the other hand, could be of any skin colour and no longer had to be British subjects if they joined the Special Reserve. The latter change was likely made as Americans had been offering their services to the RCAF since the start of the war and were being enlisted. See Table 2.

The exception that allowed direct appointment to commissions in the Special Reserve for those not of European descent in theory opened the door for qualified members of

Table 2  
Authorization Date of Restrictive Regulations and Policies

Component	Rank	Restrictive Regulation	Restrictive Policy
Permanent Active Air Force	Officers	PC 1994, 17 August 1938	
	Airmen	nil	nil
Auxiliary Active Air Force	Officers	PC 1994, 17 August 1938	
	Airmen	PC 233, 31 January 1939	
Special Reserve	Officers	PC 3050, 11 October 1939	
	Airmen		Letter S6496, 1 May 1940



visible minorities.<sup>62</sup> In fact, for the aircrew trades almost all recruits started as airmen; 10 to 15 percent of the top graduates in each class were commissioned as, subsequently, were others who demonstrated leadership capacity in the course of their duties. Thus, the possibility existed that a coloured airman could become an officer in what was supposed to be a purely “European” officer corps according to the regulations.

While there was no regulatory restriction on visible minorities enlisting as airmen in the Special Reserve, the RCAF set up barriers in part to prevent the situation described above.<sup>63</sup> In May 1940 RCAF Headquarters sent a letter to all recruiting centres that noted “obstacles which present themselves, and which prevent eventual enlistment of an applicant.” The letter suggested that failure to pass particular trade tests or medical examinations could be used to find an applicant unsuitable for enlistment.<sup>64</sup>

Further RCAF pamphlets and instructions were clear in their

requirement that aircrew candidates be of “pure European descent.”<sup>65</sup> By January 1941 the RCAF had decided that visible minorities could enlist in general duty trades, such as clerks, cooks, drivers, and mess men, but not in aircrew or groundcrew trades.<sup>66</sup> A letter from Wing Commander H.P. Crabb at headquarters to all recruiting centres on 7 October 1941 explained the policy in response to centres ignoring restrictions on enlistments of visible minorities.

Notwithstanding the regulations in the KR (Air), only those of pure European descent will be accepted for appointment or enlistment in Aircrew. There is no reason why applicants should not be frankly told of this general policy as those not of European descent cannot then feel that it is a personal discrimination.

Oriental and Negroes who are British subjects cannot be barred from enlistment in any category in General Duties for which they might be suitable.<sup>67</sup>

Applications from Chinese and Negroes in the General Duties category were to be sent to Air Force Headquarters. The file had to include a recommendation concerning their potential for service in the RCAF’s “white environment.” The applicants should be: “adaptable, temperamentally suited and of a disposition likely to be equal to the test of close association with men of the white race. Actually, the Air Force does not want coloured people because of the difficulties of racial differences.”

No mention was to be made to applicants that their application would undergo a second review at Air Force Headquarters.<sup>68</sup> Thus, while the RCAF policy indicated that visible minorities could enlist for general duty trades, the RCAF preferred that they not enlist.

Despite the restrictions, some members of visible minority groups were able to enlist and not necessarily in general duty trades. One Japanese-Canadian is known to have enlisted prior to the policy

change, Jim Ubukata who was born in Moose Jaw to an English mother and Japanese father. He enlisted in the RCAF in 1940, being told he would be accepted as aircrew. Initially rejected for aircrew, he was then selected for groundcrew training but then reverted to aircrew as an airborne radar operator due to his prior training at a radio school. The irony of the situation was that he was initially not accepted for aircrew due to his ethnic origin, but later was accepted into a highly sensitive trade.<sup>69</sup> The number of Chinese-Canadians known to have enlisted during the war is low. Of 69 Chinese-Canadians confirmed as having been in the RCAF, only one was able to enlist prior to the opening of enlistment to all in February 1942. John Victor Ching was enrolled on 6 November 1941 in Winnipeg as an air gunner, and after completing his training was deployed overseas.<sup>70</sup> His enlistment, like that of Ubukata, was an example of RCAF recruiting officers ignoring policy.

Black-Canadians were far more successful in gaining entry to the RCAF, with eight of 49 known volunteers enlisting prior to February 1942, of whom six were aircrew or groundcrew. Another two (Bell and Watts) were already in the RCAF before the restrictive enlistment policy was implemented. There is specific evidence for the circumstances of only one of the eight pre-1942 wartime entries: Samuel Estwick was able to enlist as a result of political pressure.<sup>71</sup> Equally interesting is the case of brothers Adolphus and William Carty of Saint John, New Brunswick, who enrolled in No.118 Coastal Artillery Co-operation Squadron in the first month of the war. No.118 Squadron was an Auxiliary squadron, to which the exclusionary restrictions were specific.

The restrictions on enlistment in the Special Reserve came from

within the RCAF, but so too did the elimination of this policy in the course of revisions of the regulations by the personnel division of Air Force Headquarters in 1940-1941.<sup>72</sup>

When the minister of national defence for air, C.G. Power, read some of the new KR (Air) regulations he observed that the age limit for mandatory retirement had been increased to age 60; he thought he had agreed to 55.<sup>73</sup> Air Commodore Harold Edwards, air member for personnel, received the minister's comments on 4 April 1941, and instructed his staff to change the age of retirement, and also to remove the section on pure European descent.<sup>74</sup>

Why Air Commodore Edwards took the step of changing the enlistment policy is unknown. Manpower shortages were not an issue; at that time there was such a surfeit of applicants that the service could pick and choose for aircrew.<sup>75</sup> It was only in the summer of 1942 that the RCAF began to experience recruiting problems, which came after the racist regulation and policies had been eliminated.<sup>76</sup> The change to an inclusive policy, moreover, would not have added many potential candidates for RCAF service. Visible minorities represented a very small fraction of the Canadian population, and fewer still had the necessary educational background or medical status. See Table 3.

Edwards may have been following the lead of the British government, which on 19 October

1939 made the announcement that the policy of accepting only those of pure European descent had been eliminated, and that all ethnic groups were welcome. Author Marika Sherwood indicates that this change was more cosmetic than real as the Colonial Office used this as a ploy to retain the support for the war among "coloured" colonial subjects during the hostilities, and that the Foreign Office (FO) and Colonial Office advised their officials that only whites were to continue to be accepted. How to handle the apparent contradiction between the stated policy and the covert directions was not communicated to officials, who were left to their own devices.<sup>78</sup>

Whether Edwards knew of the British Parliamentary announcement, and of the confusion it created, is unknown. On 20 May 1941 he wrote to Mr. Dyke of the UK Air Liaison Mission in Ottawa, requesting information about the regulations for nationality and racial descent for the RAF Volunteer Reserve, and about whether coloured persons were permitted as aircrew and could be commissioned.<sup>79</sup> However, Edwards' letter was sent after the recommended policy change had been sent to the Privy Council Office for Cabinet approval. It would thus appear that in authoring the elimination of the pure European descent restriction, Edwards acted without detailed knowledge of the RAF's latest practices. This was in

Table 3  
Canadians of Selected Ethnic Origin (1941 Census)<sup>77</sup>

Group	Men	Women	% of Canadian Population
Black	22,174	included with men	0.19
Chinese	30,713	3,914	0.30
East Indians	1,059	406	0.013
West Indians	2,219	1,915	0.04

character for Edwards, who was a passionate nationalist. Although he had begun his career in the British flying services during the First World War, and valued the professional and sentimental associations between the British and Canadian air forces, he was determined that the RCAF should become a distinctly Canadian service, particularly in personnel management policies and practices that reflected Canadian society. In this respect his views were similar to those of C.G. Power and it was no doubt for that reason that the air staff selected Edwards to take charge of the RCAF Overseas in November 1941 to implement the policy of "Canadianization" to ensure that Canadian graduates of the BCATP served in Canadian, rather than British, units and formations.<sup>80</sup>

On 23 April 1941, Air Vice-Marshal L.S. Breadner, chief of the air staff, sent the revised KR (Air) paragraph to the minister for review. In his covering memo, Breadner stated: "In order to conform to modern conditions, the amendment herein to KR (Air), deletes the requirement that an applicant for appointment to, or enlistment in, the Special Reserve be a British subject and of pure European descent."<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, the chief of the air staff does not explain what these modern conditions were.

Power approved the revised section and sent it to S.L. DeCarteret, the deputy minister, on 12 May 1941 to be forwarded to Privy Council. It was approved as Order-in-Council PC 63/4015 on 5 June 1941.<sup>82</sup> That Cabinet approved the change so quickly suggests that they were in agreement with the regulation, much as they had quickly approved PC 233 of 31 January 1939 quickly after receiving it. It also suggests the possibility that Cabinet was simply agreeing to whatever recommendations were placed before them by the armed services during wartime.



RCAF photo PL 10578



RCAF photo PL 10957

**Top: At RCAF Headquarters, Minister of National Defence for Air C.G. Power meets the heads of the various departments. Here he talks to Squadron Leader Harry Wright, of the personnel department. Air Marshal Harold Edwards (second from left) and Air Marshal L.S. Breadner (second from right) are also present, 11 August 1942.**

**Above: Colonel, The Honorable J.L. Ralston, minister of national defence, and Air Marshal Harold Edwards at RCAF Headquarters in London.**

In a letter dated 28 May 1941 to Member of Parliament Clarence Gillis responding to the latter's inquiry about the enlistment of a Black candidate, Power indicated that the regulation on enlistment in the Special Reserve had recently changed.<sup>83</sup> In fact, Cabinet would not approve the change for another week, indicating the minister's confidence that his colleagues would agree. The change would also only affect candidates for commissions as officers, while the person for whom Gillis had inquired was applying as an airman to the Special Reserve (see Table 2). The letter moreover suggested that enlistment was about to be opened to all, and this was far from the case. In fact, the policy of 11 January 1941 that limited visible minorities to the general trades would continue in force for another ten months.<sup>84</sup>

The situation was to change completely on 31 March 1942. In a letter to the commanding officer of No.1 RCAF Recruiting Centre in Vancouver that was distributed to all other RCAF Recruiting Centres, H.P. Crabb, now promoted to group captain, indicated that the instructions in his letter of 7 October 1941 were cancelled. The new policy stated that all "Orientals and Negroes" who met the educational and fitness requirements would appear before a Selection Board at the Recruiting Centre. The board had to consider that the individual could possibly be the sole representative of "his race" in a unit and therefore recommend those who were more likely to do well in an aircrew environment.<sup>85</sup> The responsibility for ensuring that an applicant had the "temperament, adaptability" and education now rested with the Recruiting Centre. While the delay between the signing of the Order-in-Council and the promulgation of the new instructions could be seen as the result of resistance, a change of this magnitude would have required

proper staff work to ensure that recruiting effected what the RCAF desired.

The change in policy was not, however, an end to racism. The new instruction had racist overtones in that it used a stereotype that most Orientals and Blacks were incapable of adapting to the RCAF work environment, and that only a few could succeed. These few would be carefully selected. The shift was thus from one of institutional racism through a complete restriction, to cultural racism based on the idea that white individuals were better suited to work in an Air Force culture, especially in a tightly-knit group such as found in a bomber crew. This was the Social Darwinism referred to by English in *Cream of the Crop*.

By shifting the review process to the Recruiting Centre the new policy of 31 March 1942 gave greater autonomy to the officers at the front lines of recruiting. Allowing recruiting centres to make the decision about suitability also meant that individual officers could apply their racist beliefs and therefore the policy change did not end racism in enlistment in the RCAF. Leonard Braithwaite, for example, was rejected because he was Black. From early 1942 until March 1943, he visited the RCAF recruiting center in Toronto on a monthly basis and was told he was not eligible and should join the army. He even travelled to the recruiting centres in Hamilton and Oshawa, and was told he had to enlist in Toronto. It was only when a new recruiting officer arrived in Toronto that he was allowed to enlist and at the same time was advised that he could have enlisted at Hamilton or Oshawa.<sup>86</sup>

With the removal of the colour barrier for enlistment for wartime service, there remained the possibility that the RCAF could still channel visible minority applicants to general duty trades. The numbers do not, however, support this hypothesis.

Of the 39 Black Canadians and 66 Chinese Canadians who enlisted after the colour bar was removed, 33 Blacks and 56 Chinese were in the aircrew and groundcrew categories.<sup>87</sup>

A further area of potential discrimination was that of limiting enlistment because of the lack of education, which as noted, was an area in which Black and Chinese Canadians were at a disadvantage and that Air Force Headquarters had previously suggested was a means of rejecting candidates. Yet 10 Blacks and 21 Chinese are known to have been sent to improve their education under the War Emergency Training Plan (WETP).<sup>88</sup> Under the WETP, recruits who had a deficiency in their education but were otherwise suitable for a trade were sent to upgrade their education at one of more than 20 participating universities and technical schools.

While the policy change of 31 March 1942 opened the RCAF Special Reserve to visible minorities for wartime service, the pure European descent policy still applied to anybody wishing to enlist as an officer in the PAAF and AAAF, and as an airman in the AAAF. When the new, completely updated and renumbered KR (Air) were approved on 29 July 1943 these racist policies were still in effect.<sup>89</sup> By the end of the Second World War there were no longer any regulations precluding the enlistment of visible minorities; however, the practice of the RCAF, as established after 31 March 1942, continued to be one of more careful screening of visible minorities wishing to enlist both during the war and after. Their applications continued to be sent to RCAF Headquarters; and recruiting centres were still required to consider that the applicants "may be the sole representative of his race at a unit."<sup>90</sup> This practice slowly disappeared of its own accord.

Interestingly the author's research, including correspondence



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Mail is loaded onto a Flying Fortress of No.168 (Heavy Transport) Squadron at Rockcliffe, near Ottawa, Ontario. Sergeant Edwin Erwin Phillips is handing mail bags into the aircraft. Phillips would die in the crash of a No.168 Squadron Flying Fortress on 4 November 1945 when it flew into a hill in Germany while delivering penicillin to Poland. Sergeant Phillips' brother Charles was able to enlist in May 1941, before the colour barrier was lifted.

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with Black and Chinese Canadians, found that once these visible minorities were enlisted they were by and large judged not on skin colour but by how well they did their jobs. This conclusion reflects experience during the war and in the postwar period. The number of cases examined is small, however, and further work is required to test the validity of this conclusion.

One vestige of racism did reappear when Group Captain J.G. Archambault, director of personnel management, ordered in May 1954 that "coloured female applicants are

not to be considered for enrolment at this time." Wing Commander P.S. Turner rescinded this direction less than two weeks later, indicating that applications of coloured persons were to be sent to Air Force Headquarters.<sup>91</sup> This continued the practice initiated in March 1942.<sup>92</sup>

### Conclusion

There were similarities and differences among the three services. The Militia/Army was much the largest and oldest of the armed forces and, unlike the centrally

administered Navy and Air Force, had a long and well-established regional organization. There were Army units in most localities across the country that had deep ties in communities, and did much of the recruiting. Thus, although the Army did not have any exclusionary enlistment regulations, practices at the local level varied considerably and created problems for Army Headquarters. The Army also faced special challenges such as the arrival of potential enlistees from the British West Indies in the Montreal area where the local recruiting staff had



**Leading Aircraftman (LAC) W.K. Rock of Windsor, Ontario and LAC T.S. Wong of Vancouver brush up for their final exams at No.9 Elementary Flying Training School in November 1943. Both graduated as pilots in 1944 but like many Canadians who won their wings at that time they did not realize their ambition to serve overseas. LAC Rock went on to be commissioned and serve as an instructor in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. After the war he became a respected doctor in Windsor, was involved in many community activities and also served as coroner.**

to deal with issues that directly involved other federal departments, External Affairs and immigration authorities.

The most important difference among the services was that the RCAF and RCN initiated exclusionary policies in 1938. In all cases Cabinet quickly approved the Orders-in-Council that implemented the exclusionary regulations. Whether the swift action, apparently without comment, was due to Cabinet's approval of the racist policies, or Cabinet simply rubber-stamped the regulations as a matter of routine is hard to measure. Still, the fact that Cabinet approved these regulations made them culpable in racism. Equally culpable were the officers and bureaucrats who drafted and staffed the regulations and other directives and advice that demonstrated attitudes and beliefs towards visible minorities based

on unfounded prejudices. Racism affected their job performance.

The reasons why the Air Force and the Navy introduced the exclusionary regulations are not documented. Until November 1938 the RCAF was under the direction of the Militia, which did not have such restrictions on enlistment. Perhaps, in the process of reorganizing as an independent armed service, the RCAF adopted the policies of its British counterpart, as did the RCN when it expanded greatly on the eve of the war. Still it is unknown why the RCAF restrictions deviated from those of the RAF by not prohibiting enlistment of visible minorities as airmen in the regular force (PAAF), and then in the wartime Special Reserve.

That the RCAF wished to keep its leadership "white" is evident in that officers of all components had to be of pure European descent.

Only later in the war did this change. For airmen, the most prestigious trades were those related to aircrew, followed by the groundcrew trades for the servicing of aircraft. The RCAF relegated visible minorities to the least esteemed general duty trades, a policy that reflected racism. This did not change until March 1942.

Even with clear regulations and policies, some RCAF recruiting officers chose to ignore them. As with the Army, some RCAF recruiting officers apparently accepted or rejected visible minority applicants based on their personal opinions. How else does one explain the enlistment of the Carty brothers in contravention of an existing regulation against visible minority enlistment in the NPAAF/AAAF, of John Ching's enlistment, or the rejections of Lionel Braithwaite. In this sense, the RCAF reflected the diversity of attitudes in Canadian society about race. However, it should also be noted that most recruiting officers treated visible minority enlistees as any other enlistee, as shown by the numbers provided additional education under the WETP, the proportion enlisted as aircrew, and the proportion who were commissioned.

The RCAF was the initiator of change, eliminating the regulations and policies that barred the enlistment of visible minorities. Why these changes were made is not documented. It was not, as this paper has shown, because of any manpower problems or the emulation of RAF policies. It may be significant that the initial impetus came from Air Commodore Harold Edwards, air member for personnel, a nationalist who was convinced that RCAF personnel policies should reflect the values of Canadian society. The same was true of C.G. Power, minister of national defence for air since the creation of that portfolio in 1940, who supported the change. Similarly Angus L. Macdonald, who

as navy minister initiated the end of restrictive regulations in that service, had doubts about the adoption of British standards and practices and sought to “Canadianize” RCN personnel policies.

Once the RCAF lifted its enlistment barriers in March 1942, there were still vestiges of racism. The policy that required applications from visible minority applicants to be sent to the Air Force Headquarters was apparently based on prejudices that supposed that some visible minority members would have trouble working in a “White” environment. This ignored those White people who would have trouble working in the RCAF environment.

This question of racism is also one of perspective. There is some validity to the argument that the RCAF should or could have made efforts to ensure racial harmony even though this was not a common attitude in the 1940s and 1950s. However, equally valid is the perspective that by requiring such applicants to demonstrate that they could work in a white environment, the RCAF was attempting to ensure that the presence of visible minority members within units did not affect morale and discipline. Whichever view one accepts, it should be noted that the success of those who were accepted would have made it easier for those who followed in their footsteps.

## Notes

1. Judy Maxwell, *A Cause Worth Fighting For: Chinese Canadians Debate their Participation in the Second World War* (MA dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2005), p.12; Roy Ito, *We Went to War: The Story of Japanese Canadians Who Served During the First and Second World Wars* (Stittsville, ON: Canada’s Wings, 1984); Calvin W. Ruck, *The Black Battalion: 1916-1920, Canada’s Best Kept Military Secret* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 1987); and James W. St.G. Walker, “Race and Recruitment in World War 1: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force,” *Canadian Historical Review* LXX, no.1 (1989), pp.1-26.
2. This paper uses the differentiation that regulations are those prescriptions approved by the Cabinet, such as the King’s Regulations and Orders, while policies are those prescriptions that the three services create on their own authority, such as the Air Force Administrative Orders.
3. See Patricia E. Roy, “The Soldiers Canada Didn’t Want: Her Chinese and Japanese Citizens,” *Canadian Historical Review* LIX, no.3 (1978), pp.341-258; Marjorie Wong; *The Dragon and the Maple Leaf* (London, ON: Pirie Publishing, 1994); Maxwell, *A Cause Worth Fighting For*; Ito, *We Went to War*; Dennis McLaughlin and Leslie McLaughlin, *Fighting For Canada: Chinese and Japanese Canadians in Military Service* (Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 2003); and Dennis McLaughlin and Leslie McLaughlin, *For My Country: Black Canadians on the Field of Honour* (Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 2004). The first four publications are well-researched academic works; the latter two publications contain many inaccuracies and generalizations.
4. The policies towards Canada’s Aboriginal people are covered very well in Scott Sheffield, “Of Pure European Descent and of the White Race: Recruitment Policy and Aboriginal Canadians, 1939-1945,” *Canadian Military History* 5, no.1 (Spring 1996), pp.8-15 and Michael D. Stevenson, “The Mobilisation of Native Canadians During the Second World War,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (1996), pp.205-226. In November 1939, RCAF Headquarters directed that the pure European descent policy did not apply to North American Indians. See Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 24, vol.3307, file 282-1-2, pt. 2, letter 27-3, 11 November 1939, Flying Officer O.S. Dunn to secretary, Department of National Defence, minute 3; and 1019-1-63, Flying Officer J.H. Hollies to officer in charge Recruiting Centre, Montreal, 18 November 1939.
5. This article will use the term “Militia” for the army prior to 1940 and “Army” after 1940, when the name changed.
6. House of Commons, *Debates*, 22 May 1912, cc 1907-8, 12 December 1911, cc 2129-30, 8 May 1912, cc 376-9. Clifford Pereira, *Black Liberators: The Role of African & Arab sailors in the Royal Navy within the Indian Ocean 1841-1941*, p.8, <portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/38503/122910237757.BlackLiberators.pdf/7>. BlackLiberators.pdf, accessed 15 August 2011.
7. “Royal Naval Air Service,” *Flight* (3 July 1914), p.705; provides the details of “Regulations for the Special Entry of Officers into the Royal Naval Air Service” while the RFC regulations for Canada are noted in Canadian Forces Directorate of History and Heritage [DHH] 73/208, “Regulations for the selection in Canada of candidates admission to the Royal Flying Corps Cadet Wing,” which clearly states that a candidates must be of pure European descent. “New Zealand’s Birdmen,” *Feilding Star*, 17 September 1917, <paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a+d&d=FS19170917.2.16>, accessed 15 August 2011.
8. Cited in Clive Richards, “The Origins of Military Aviation in India and the Creation of the Indian Air Force, 1910 – 1932, Part Two: The RAF in India and the Creation of the Indian Air Force, 1918-1932,” *Royal Air Force Air Power Review* 11, no.1 (Spring 2008), p.37.
9. Richards, “The Origins of Military Aviation in India,” p.37. Richards suggests the five Indian officers were able to enlist due to the interventions of senior officers. For Shreve, see DHH 77/661, Service Cards of Canadians in RNAS, RFC and RAF.
10. Richards, “The Origins of Military Aviation in India,” p.35.
11. *London Gazette*, 12 February 1924; and “Military Notes,” *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution* 67, no.468, p.756.
12. Regulations and Instructions for the Royal Canadian Navy, 1937; paras 2, 138, 143C, 143D and 144; Regulations and Instructions for the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve, 1940; paras 57 and 77; Regulations and Instructions for the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, 1938; paras 7.2, 32, and 42.
13. LAC, RG 24, vol.3811, file 1012-5-27, W.G. Wells, acting deputy minister to under secretary of state for external affairs, 2 December 1941.
14. See, for example, LAC, RG 24 vol.5620, file 30-2-12, chief of naval personnel to deputy minister, 29 October 1942.
15. DHH 112.3H1.009 (D293), K.S. Maclachlan, acting deputy minister to Dr. Charles Camsell, deputy director, Department of Mines and Resources.
16. DHH 81/520/1000-100/2, Naval Board meeting of 9 November 1942, item 69-5. The term “coloured” was used by the RCN to denote all persons not of white skin colour.
17. LAC, RG 24, vol.5620, file 30-2-12, secretary, Naval Board to all commanding officers of reserve divisions, 15 May 1943, “Naval Monthly Order 2653.” For the evolution of the amendment, see DHH 81/520/1000-100/2, Naval Board meeting of 12 November 1942, Item 70-3, meeting of 11 January 1943, item 87-4, meeting of 14 January 1943, item 88-4, and meeting of 14 February 1943, item 897-2.
18. For the evolution of the amendment, see DHH 81/520/1000-100/2, Naval Board meeting of 12 November 1942, item 70-3, meeting of 11 January 1943, item 87-4, meeting of 14 January 1943, item 88-4, and meeting of 14 February 1943, item 897-2.
19. Canadian Naval Regulations 1942, amendments 255-260, 22 July 1944. In six separate sections the reference was changed from “white race and British

- subjects" to "a British subject." The six sections related to specific officer categories and to ratings.
20. "Manpower Problems of the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War," Army Headquarters Historical Section, report no.71, para 29.
  21. W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty and Michael Whitby, et al., *No Higher Purpose: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-1943, Volume II, Part 1* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing and the Department of National Defence, 2002), pp.133, 149.
  22. Maxwell, *A Cause Worth Fighting For*, fn 117. Lore had been employed as a radio operator by the Department of Transport, Radio Division, Marine Branch and Air Services Branch. It is unknown how his case came to the attention of Vice-Admiral Nelles; and Roy Ito, *We Went to War*, p.153. After his RCN release Tsubota joined the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) and was with their company at Dieppe, was captured and spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner of war.
  23. LAC, RG 24, vol.5620, file 30-2-12. The contents of this file suggest that the Navy had been admitting Blacks into these trades; however, without names of individuals or related files that clearly indicate this occurrence, Black enlistment prior to March 1943 must remain one of supposition through inference and not of fact. One such letter that supports this inference is from the secretary, Naval Board to the Honourable G.B. Isnor, M.P., 62-21-50, F.D. 11018, 27 May 1943 found in *ibid.*
  24. King's Regulations and Order for the Canadian Militia, 1939, paras 127 and 145. The Permanent Active Militia (PAM) was the name of the regular serving component while Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) referred to the reserve component. The term "Canadian Army" did not come into use until 1940 at which time the PAM became the Canadian Army (Active) and the NPAM the Canadian Army (Reserve).
  25. Issued under General Order 239 of 12 December 1939, based on Order-in-Council P.C. 4023 of 5 December 1939.
  26. John G. Armstrong, "The Unwelcome Sacrifice: A Black Unit in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1917-19," in Nandor F. Dreisziger, ed., *Ethnic Armies: Polyethnic Armed Forces from the Time of the Hapsburgs to the Age of the Superpowers* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), pp.178-197. See footnote 10 in which Armstrong interviewed Mr. Thamis Gale of Montreal who had been tracing Black-Canadian veterans in the CEF.
  27. *Ibid.* Mr. Gale suggested seven had been commissioned. Bertrand enlisted 23 September 1916 at Valcartier. He was from St. George's, Grenada where he had previously served for two years in the Grenada Volunteers. See LAC database on Soldiers of the First World War, Enlistment Papers of Lancelot Joseph Bertrand. <[http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/cef/001042-119.01-e.php?&id\\_nbr=41501&interval=20&&PHPSESSID=3kcardrug2j3q17ltsugsb94p1](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/cef/001042-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=41501&interval=20&&PHPSESSID=3kcardrug2j3q17ltsugsb94p1)>, accessed 18 August 2011. Although he was initially enlisted to be an officer in charge of records, he was killed on 15 August 1917, while a member of the 7th Battalion (British Columbia Regiment) during the assault on Hill 70. A month previously he had been gazetted for the Military Cross. Veterans' Affairs Canada, Canadian Virtual War memorial website. <<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/virtualmem/Detail/1565241>>, accessed 18 August 2011.
  28. DHH 321.009 (D250), Lieutenant Colonel Dunbar to Mr. Husbands, 2 August 1938.
  29. *Ibid.*, Brigadier Dunbar to secretary, DND, 5 September 1939 and Major-General Matthews to secretary, DND, 15 September 1939.
  30. *Ibid.*, undated document labelled "Coloured Troops." The document location in the file suggests that the survey was taken near the start of the war. Similarly, Major-General Constantine noted that highland regiments were particularly opposed to enlisting coloured persons, while others did not mind accepting a few. Major-General Constantine to secretary, DND, 19 June 1940.
  31. *Ibid.*, Brigadier B.W. Browne to DOC, MD 6, 8 July 1940.
  32. *Ibid.*, Brigadier C.E. Connolly, DOC MD 6 to secretary, DND, 25 May 1941; and Major-General B.W. Browne to DOC, MD 6, 5 June 1941.
  33. LAC, RG 24, series C-1, reel C-5280, Robertson to Desrosiers, 14 July 1941
  34. DHH 391.009 (D7), Major W.H. Scott to commissioner of police, 29 August 1941.
  35. *Ibid.*, Major W.H. Scott to Major H. Peebles, 18 August 1941.
  36. This first group was composed of 16 Black and 12 white candidates and the second 21 Black and 15 white. *Ibid.*, "Name of first draft of Canadian Active Army from Barbados, B.W.I.," hand-dated that they embarked 27 September and indicating what service they joined. The lone RCAF recruit was white as was the lone rejected recruit. See "Nominal Roll – Volunteers from British West Indies (1st Group)," 28 October 1941. At least 18 had arrived prior to this group. No indication is given as to their skin colour. See "Nominal Roll – Volunteers from British West Indies," undated but shows dates from 30 July to 9 September 1941, starting with Daniel Richard Bradshaw; and "Nominal Roll – Volunteers from British West Indies (2nd Group)," 28 October 1941. It should be noted that at least four joined the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, although the records do not indicate their skin colour.
  37. LAC, RG 24, series C-1, reel C-5280, HQ 54-27-8-c T2 (A.P. 4), Desrosiers to Robertson, 24 July 1941. The first part of the file number indicates the subject, while the suffix, in this case (A.P.4), indicates which office in the Army Headquarters staff prepared the response.
  38. *Ibid.*, HQ 54-27-2-6 (A.P.4), 1 August 1941.
  39. *Ibid.*, Crerar to Ralston, 26 September 1941.
  40. LAC, RG 24 series C-1, reel C-5280, HQS 8853 (M&R), 26 September 1941.
  41. *Ibid.*, Blair to Robertson, 18 October 1941.
  42. *Ibid.*, Collier to King, 27 October 1941.
  43. *Ibid.*, attorney general to minister, HQS 8853 (DAG), 14 November 1941 (two letters).
  44. *Ibid.*, Campbell to D of O.A.A., HQS 8853 (DOS. A.), 24 March 1942 and Letson to OC "Y" Force, HQS 8853 F.D. 2 (DAG), 4 April 1942.
  45. *Ibid.*, HQS 8853, pt. 2 (AP 1), 29 April 1943, précis 1. The figure of 75 is based on extrapolations of Black to White enlistee ratios in the documents for which no skin colour is listed, based on the ratio in those documents in which the skin colour is listed, which totals 37 Black enlistees.
  46. Wong, *The Dragon and the Maple Leaf*, pp.86-106. In July 1942, retired Lieutenant-Colonel D.P. McCallum sent a letter to the RCAF's "Pacific [sic, Western] Air Command." McCallum suggested that the RCAF form a signals wing, believing it would be possible to recruit 400 Chinese. The RCAF was not interested in a signals wing and forwarded the letter on to the Army's Pacific Command. The response within Pacific Command was that this had been rejected in the past as "impractical" and that McCallum had brought this up before with that Command. See the correspondence in file DHH 322.009 (D814) and DHH 322.009 (D478), D.P. McCallum to "Officer Commanding, Pacific Air Command," 20 July 1942 and hand-written notes attached
  47. For the RCAF expansion of early 1939, "hundreds of applications" were received for the 76 pilot positions. "Flying 'University' Planned in R.C.A.F.," *Montreal Gazette*, 13 June 1939.
  48. The statistics are derived from the RCAF section of the Annual Reports of the Department of National Defence.
  49. Allan D. English, *The Cream of the Crop: Canadian Aircrew, 1939-1945* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p.24. While these ideas were espoused before the First World War, there is no indication in English's work that they were factors used in aircrew selection after the War. An interesting counter-point is that of Major A.C. Oxley, a Canadian engineer, who points out that Asiatic peoples had regularly overrun Europe and even in the twentieth century had achieved success against them, hence the fallacy of white superiority. See A.C. Oxley, "The Military Value of the White

- Race," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* XIII, no.3 (April 1936), pp.322-6.
50. English, *The Cream of the Crop*, p.25.
  51. *Ibid.*, pp.28-40 for a discussion on the evolution of aircrew selection toward a more scientific basis in the RCAF during the Second World War.
  52. See Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971), Chapter 12, "Source of Strength – The Schools", pp.362-389; especially p.388.
  53. DHH, "Manpower Problems of the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War," Army Headquarters Historical Section Report No.67, 15 January 1954, p.28.
  54. King's Regulations and Orders for the RCAF, 1924; paras 212A and 269A.
  55. LAC, RG 24, vol.17805, pt. 6. Although the modern abbreviation for these regulations would be KR&O, this paper uses the contemporary RCAF abbreviation KR (Air)
  56. Army General Order G.O. 141 /1938, of 15 September 1938 further to Order in Council PC 1994 of 17 August 1938. The change was issued in Army General Orders as the RCAF was still under the command of the Army until November 1938. The amendment was to paragraph 212A.
  57. This phrase was issued as KR (Air) Para 275 (c). LAC, RG 24, vol.17805, pt. 7, FD 418 had the changes for airmen. See Air Force General Order No. 3/1939 issued on 31 January 1939 for the change for airmen. It is interesting to note that as Gerald Bell had enlisted in 1936, the phrasing of the new regulation would have precluded him from continuing his service when it came time for him to reenlist.
  58. The change was submitted to Privy Council Office on 24 January 1939 and approved on 31 January. It was promulgated as Air Force General Order No. 3/1939. LAC, RG 24, vol.17805, pt. 7, FD 418.
  59. This was achieved through Order in Council PC 2677 of 14 September 1939. The other components of the RCAF were the Permanent Active Air Force, the Auxiliary Active Air Force and the Reserve Force.
  60. On several occasions during the war the Cabinet approved increases to the PAAF establishment; however, these were minor.
  61. LAC, RG 24, Box 17805, pt. 8, FD 280, approved by Order in Council P.C. 3050 of 11 October 1939 and promulgated in Air Force General Order 54 of 13 October 1939. This amendment would become KR (Air) paragraphs 211 F.
  62. The original section, in an undated draft, read "[o]f pure European descent except in case of an appointment to the Special Reserve and a British Subject, the son of parents both of whom are, or if deceased were at the time of their deaths, British Subjects [underscoring added]," *ibid.*
  63. LAC, RG 24, vol.17805, pt.8, FD 488. The policy was promulgated in KR (Air) paragraph 269A, which later became para 277.
  64. LAC, RG 24, accession 1983-84, vol.298, file 304-117, S6496, 1 May 1940.
  65. Some confusion resulted by reports from the recruiting staff in Vancouver that they had encountered airmen in the service who were visible minorities: for example Flight Lieutenant A.A. Harcourt-Vernon, 15 November 1940 in LAC, RG 24, series E-1-b, vol.3302, file 280-1-2, pt. 5 and RG 24, vol.3307, file 282-1-2, pt. 2, Flying Officer O.S. Dunn to secretary, Department of National Defence, minute 3. For pamphlets describing the requirement for aircrew to be of pure European descent see DHH 181.006 (D505) 1019-1-67, 1 February 1940, Enlistment, Royal Canadian Air Force (Special Reserve) Conditions of Service – Pilots and Aircraft Crew and 181.009 (D5972) Information relative to Entry into the Royal Canadian Air Force, 4 February 1941.
  66. LAC, RG 24, series E-1-c, accession 1983-84/049, vol.309, file 315-1, pt. 1; acting DM (Air) to USSEA, 11 January 1941 states that for aircrew, only those of pure European descent would be accepted, and for ground-crew, only those who were particularly well-suited would be accepted as the RCAF already had long waiting lists for ground-crew trades. In LAC, RG 24, accession 1983-84, vol.298, file 304-117, pt.7, a letter to the Reverend C.H. Este dated 8 May 1941 indicates that that were no barriers to "Negroes" enlisting in certain categories of the RCAF. The Reverend Este of Union United Church in Montreal was well known in the community for his efforts on behalf of Black-Montrealers. The documentary "A Hundred Years of Faith" by Anthony Sherwood is recommended viewing about the Union United Church. There were three classes of enlistees in the RCAF: aircrew (who flew in the airplanes), groundcrew (who serviced the airplanes), and general trades (who provided support to the other two groups).
  67. LAC, RG 24, accession 1983-84/049, vol.298, file 304-117, S.45-12-1 (DAFM), Wing Commander H.P. Crabb to all RCAF Recruiting Centres, 7 October 1941. It is interesting to note that this policy letter was generated after the RCAF had sent its amended policy on enlistment, which eliminated exclusionary policies in the Special Reserve, to the Privy Council Office, and after Cabinet had accepted the recommendation to eliminate this racist policy.
  68. *Ibid.*
  69. Ito, *We Went to War*, pp.160-1.
  70. DHH, 76/10, RCAF Personnel Cards
  71. Interview, Mathias Joost with Samuel (Sammy) Estwick, 8 September 2006. Having been rejected although well qualified, he wrote to his local Member of Parliament, Clarence Gillis, who asked questions first of the minister and later in the House of Commons. In a letter received from the RCAF Recruiting Centre in Halifax, dated 6 June 1941, Mr. Estwick was advised there were no vacancies for wireless operator (ground) and that he should try the Army. This referral to the Army was in accordance with RCAF policy. In September he was offered enlistment as a standard tradesman – a general duties trade – again in accordance with RCAF policy of the time. On 17 December 1941 he was enrolled. Letters are courtesy of Kathy Grant at The Legacy Voices Project, through the Estwick family.
  72. LAC, RG 24, vol.17806, pt.11, memorandum from Flight Lieutenant F.G. Ault, D.A.P. to D.A.F.M., 1011-1-4, 6 January 1940.
  73. LAC, RG 24, vol.17806, pt. 11, memorandum for Minister's Office, 27 March 1941, Wing Commander H.R. Stewart, air Secretary to air member for personnel.
  74. *Ibid.*, memorandum, Air Commodore Edwards to DAP, 4 April 1941. The AMP Branch was responsible for developing policies related to personnel matters, including enlistment and terms of service.
  75. "Manpower Problems of the RCAF," para. 50.
  76. *Ibid.*, para. 62 and DHH 83/345 mfm, CWC Meeting of 15 July 1942 where the MND Air indicated that a shortage of aircrew was being experienced.
  77. Figures taken from Jin Tan and Patricia Roy, *The Chinese in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985), p.9; Hugh Johnston, *The East Indians in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1984), p.16; James W. St.G. Walker, *The West Indians in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1984), p.10 and Government of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *The Canada Year Book, 1945* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1945), p.105. By comparison, aboriginal people comprised 1.09 percent of the population.
  78. Marika Sherwood, "Walter White and the British: A Lost Opportunity" in *Contributions in Black Studies: A Journal of African and Afro-American Studies* 9, no.1, p.216.
  79. See LAC, RG 24, series E-1-c, accession 1983-84/049 vol.309, file 315-1, pt. 1, Letter from Air Commodore Edwards to Mr. Dyke, 1019-1-63 (DAP), 20 May 1941. The RAF Volunteer Reserve corresponded with the RCAF Special Reserve. While the British government had announced on 19 October 1939 that the colour bar was lifted in the armed services for the duration of the war, the RAF continued to believe that they could meet their recruiting goals from their traditional recruiting grounds. However, the mounting casualties through June 1940 caused the RAF to reconsider and launch the Air Ministry Overseas

- Recruitment Scheme. In November 1940, the Air Ministry informed the Colonial Office that it would be prepared to accept Black aircrew candidates from the colonies. Roger Lambo, "Achtung The Black Prince: West Africans in the Royal Air Force, 1939-46," in David Killingray, ed., *Africans in Britain* (Ilford, Essex, England: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1994), pp.148-9.
80. Brereton Grenhous, Stephen J. Harris, William C. Johnston and William G.P. Rawling, *The Crucible of War 1939-1945: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force Volume III* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and the Department of National Defence, 1994), pp.51-52; Suzanne K. Edwards, *Gus: From Tapper Boy to Air Marshal* (Renfrew, ON: General Store Publishing, 2007), esp. pp. 93-94; Norman Ward, ed., *A Party Politician: The Memoirs of Chubby Power* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 214-236.
  81. LAC, RG 24, vol.17806, pt. 11, Draft Air Force General Order, 1011-1-4, 10 April 1941 and draft of 8 April 1941 and 1011-1-4 FD 930, 23 April 1941, Air Vice-Marshal Breadner to the Honourable C.G. Power.
  82. *Ibid.*, pt. 12.
  83. Letter, Power to Gillis, 28 May 1941; Papers of Samuel Estwick courtesy of Kathy Grant, The Legacy Voices Project.
  84. See endnote 64.
  85. LAC, RG 24, accession 1983-84/049, vol.298, file 304-117, S.45-12-1 (D. of M.3), Group Captain H.P. Crabb to commanding officer, No. 1 RCAF Recruiting Centre, Vancouver, 31 March 1942.
  86. Stanley C. Lartey, *My Visit with Leonard A. Braithwaite, C.M., O.Ont., Q.C.* (N.p.: Ontario Black History Society, 2009), pp.8-10.
  87. The statistics are based on lists created by the author on confirmed Black- and Chinese-Canadian enlistees in the RCAF during the Second World War.
  88. *Ibid.*
  89. The new regulations became "King's Regulations for the Royal Canadian Air Force, 1943," were authorized by Order in Council P.C. 5986 on 29 July and became effective on 1 October 1943. Paragraph 124 (1)(a) stated that applicants for commissioning had to be of pure European descent, British subjects and sons of parents who were British subjects or British subjects at the time of their deaths. Sub-paragraph (2) indicated that sub-sub-paragraph (1)(a) applied only to the PAAF and AAAF. Paragraph 129 on commissioning in the Special Reserve had no requirement for applicants to be British subjects or of pure European descent. Similarly, for airmen, the PAAF and AAAF (paragraphs 171 and 172) only required the applicant to be a British subject; the Special Reserve had no such requirement.
  90. This is noted in at least six letters from 1946 to 1956. See LAC, RG 24, accession 1983-84/049, vol.298, file 304-117, letter S45-12-1 (DSM) 4 October 1946; letter S48-1, 21 July 1949; letter S45-12-1 (DRM) 22 September 1950; letter S-304-101 (DPM) 30 March 1953; letter S304-101 (DPM) 7 May 1954, letter S-304-101 (DPM) 18 July 1956. The letters of 22 September 1950 and 30 March 1953 even indicated at paragraph 5 "When the text of this letter has been read and understood, it is to be destroyed."
  91. *Ibid.*, letter S304-101 (DPM) 7 May 1954 and letter S304-101, TD 133 (DPM) 18 May 1954 and Letter S304-101 (DPM) 19 May 1954.
  92. That an officer of lesser rank would counter an instruction or order from a superior officer indicates that the actions of the superior were not supported.

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