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# A War on Two Fronts: Race, Citizenship, and the Segregation of the Blood Supply during World War II

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A WAR ON TWO FRONTS:  
RACE, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE SEGREGATION OF  
THE BLOOD SUPPLY DURING WORLD WAR II

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Human blood carries with it much more than cells, platelets, and plasma—it is a substance of intense scrutiny in medicine and public health, a liquid representation of the fluidity of socio-cultural stigmas, norms, and values. Enlightenment scholars believed blood “to be the seat of the soul.”<sup>1</sup> In ancient Egypt and medieval Europe, blood was a symbol of youth and longevity. And in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a new element became tangled up with blood: race. Less than three decades after Darwin published his paradigm shifting tome, *On the Origin of Species*, his cousin Francis Galton coined the term eugenics, labeling it as a field that would give “the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable.”<sup>2</sup> Early eugenicists tied blood to their theoretical principles. Eugenics became concerned with “improving” the human race by studying how traits could be passed on (or prevented from being passed on) to future generations, often in a way that justified racial, gendered, and class-based prejudice.<sup>3</sup> Although it had its critics, through most of the first half of the twentieth century eugenics was a popular field, well-regarded by scientists and laymen alike.<sup>4</sup> Blood was no longer a physical substance, but a potent symbol of lineage, race, and citizenship.

By the twentieth century, blood gained an additional layer of symbolism as the practice of transfusion became commonplace. Blood transfusion did not become an accepted therapeutic treatment until the nineteenth century, as it directly conflicted with the centuries-old practice of bloodletting to cure disease.<sup>5</sup> While blood transfusion was only sporadically performed in that century,

Karl Landsteiner's discovery of ABO groups in 1901 led to its more commonplace use in the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> However, blood transfusion was still quite rare before 1914, used only in the most severe cases due to its low success rate. In 1914, particularly during World War I, a coagulating agent called citrate was first employed. This allowed blood to last longer in transport, resulting in transfusions being performed on a larger scale than before.<sup>7</sup> At this time, civilian blood donation was still not an accepted practice, and blood was typically provided by other soldiers in return for rewards like extended leave.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1920s, voluntary, non-compensated donation became the standard, but collection efforts remained uncoordinated and existed in only a few select cities and hospitals. The U.S. government did not establish a national-level blood collection program until 1940.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the Red Cross launched a major civilian blood collection program in 1941.<sup>10</sup> When Dr. Charles R. Drew, an African American man, developed new plasma-drying technology that allowed blood to be transported across states and oceans, blood could more regularly be transfused from one human to another on a mass scale. The symbolism around blood began to take new forms. What did it mean now that one person's blood could easily and anonymously flow into the veins of another? In the United States, at a time when racial segregation was rampant, the practice of blood transfusion brought to the fore a new trajectory of discourse regarding blood and race.

Using an array of primary sources, from local periodicals and advertisements to internal letters and memos from the Red Cross and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), I will trace the evolution of this segregation policy and the calculated actions of the Red Cross as it found itself caught between two sides of a burgeoning American war on racial segregation. Scholars such as Thomas Guglielmo argue that the Red Cross had a poor understanding of public opinion and that its actions instead reflected many of their own race-based prejudices.<sup>11</sup> While the Red Cross did

indeed have difficulty reflecting public opinion, the organization understood that it could never precisely mirror it. Instead, it chose to take a middle ground approach so as not to anger either side of the debate and rise above racial politics. The Red Cross placed great value on its symbolism and the quasi-religious space it had carved into the psyche of the American public. In an attempt to act as a supranational, post-political humanitarian force, even an embodiment of American democracy itself, the Red Cross promoted segregation as a social rather than scientific policy, a “democratic compromise” between two wholly conflicting views on race. Meanwhile, local Red Cross chapters and everyday American citizens often found themselves deeply misinformed about the policy and its origins for the duration of the war. Year after year, the Red Cross found itself pulled into the messy weeds of American racial politics by fierce opponents of segregation, from the NAACP to religious leaders and labor groups, unable to truly function as the apolitical humanitarian organization it sought to be.

I will close with a discussion on the implications of this policy of segregation on the perception of citizenship in the African American community. Sarah Chinn, in her book *Technology and the Logic of American Racism*, traces how the rhetoric of Red Cross officials and Red Cross advertisements contributed to an erasure of black citizenship.<sup>12</sup> I will build from this concept while digging more deeply into the responses of everyday black citizens to better understand their own perceptions of the implication of this debate. The stakes were further raised due to the backdrop of World War II, a war fought against a German aggressor obsessed with ethnic purity and the racial symbolism of blood. Due to the Red Cross’s policy of blood supply segregation, black Americans felt unable to fulfill their patriotic duties, unable to contribute to their country and its war efforts as full and equal citizens. In this way, black Americans became caught in a second symbolic war on the home front just as the United States found itself fighting in a fierce battle against racialized

ideology abroad.

SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITY AND AN EVOLVING POLICY:  
SURVEYING THE RED CROSS POLICY'S TRAJECTORY

As U.S. citizens started to donate blood for the war effort, even before the formal entrance of the United States into World War II, some black donors reported being turned away by the Red Cross. At first, the Red Cross, which collected blood for Allied troops, did not have an official national policy on accepting black donors. In some local centers, such as those in Philadelphia and New York, the blood of African Americans was accepted but not sent to the laboratory for processing. In other locations, such as Baltimore, black donors were turned away from the war blood donation program, and were redirected to the regular Baltimore-area hospital transfusion program.<sup>13</sup>

By late August, due to the continued media publicity and the new recommendations from the army and navy, the Red Cross made it its official policy to reject black blood completely.<sup>14</sup> The national director of the Red Cross's Blood Donor Service, G. Canby Robinson, specified that "pursuant to the requests and instructions of the Army and the Navy, and up to this time the Red Cross has been asked to supply only plasma from white donors."<sup>15</sup> The justification for this policy was that it would be "impractical" to accept blood from multiple races due to limited need and limited processing resources.<sup>16</sup> This identical language can be found in several letters and statements sent from various Red Cross figures to concerned citizens and organizations.<sup>17</sup>

The Red Cross included this exact language in their manual as well. All local Red Cross chapters received a widely disseminated guide entitled "Team Work from Publicity to Plasma." This guide instructed local chapters on how to conduct publicity efforts and served as an all-inclusive manual containing official Red Cross collection procedures and policies. The guide explicitly stated that "only white donors can be taken," again stating

that they were “acting pursuant to the requests and instructions of the Army and Navy.”<sup>18</sup> The guide, however, went into additional detail:

This position is taken because about ninety-five percent of those serving in the armed forces are white men, who it is understood prefer plasma from white donors. Where transfusions are required for Negro service men, they will be given normal transfusions from Negro donors if they do not desire to use the plasma from white donors. In this way a person would have the right to receive blood transfusions of the proper type, or plasma, as he himself might choose.<sup>19</sup>

Shortly afterwards, the NAACP became involved in the blood supply debate, viewing it as an opportunity to spread its message of anti-segregation and racial equality. In December 1941, Walter White, the secretary of the NAACP, forwarded G. Canby Robinson’s official statement to the secretary of the navy in order to put pressure on Robinson and receive clarification on the policy. By January 15 of the next year, the navy had received the note and Surgeon General Ross T. McIntire penned a reply. McIntire denied that the war department had ever been involved in the formulation of the Red Cross’s policy. “So far as the Navy is concerned,” he began, “I wish to tell you that it has never requested the American Red Cross not to take blood from black donors.”<sup>20</sup> McIntire described the Red Cross’s statement as “based upon misinformation,” noting that black donors had donated to the navy’s supply as recently as December 31, 1941.<sup>21</sup>

In an effort to ascertain the Red Cross’s actual policy, Walter White did not hesitate to challenge the Red Cross upon receipt of the letter of denial from the navy. White forwarded the navy’s letter to the Red Cross and also sent it to numerous publications around the country. In one letter sent by White, he

attached the letter from McIntire and wrote, "I know this will interest you in its proof that the Red Cross has been guilty not only of race prejudice but also of falsifications."<sup>22</sup> The Red Cross, suddenly caught in an unexpected public relations predicament, explained in a letter from their director of domestic operations: "the publicity which grew out of the letter...is something we had no opportunity to deal with because we did not know that Admiral McIntire had written the letter."<sup>23</sup>

In order to dampen the effect of White's actions following the published letter from the navy, Red Cross National Chairman Norman H. Davis replied to White in a letter on January 26, 1942. He wrote: "It is true...that the Navy never actually requested the Red Cross to refuse to take blood from Negro donors," adding the caveat that the navy had told them that there was "no need for Negro blood."<sup>24</sup> Upon hearing from the navy that there was no particular need for black blood, the Red Cross decided only to take white blood, calling it "impractical" to set up separate facilities for collecting black blood. In the same letter, Davis noted that due to facilities that had "considerably expanded" and because of a need for civilian transfusions, "arrangements have been made...to accept the blood of Negro donors."<sup>25</sup> Davis continued to mention the navy like this in subsequent statements explaining this new policy, although he softened the language considerably. The policy was no longer "pursuant to the requests and instructions of the Army and the Navy," but now "in agreement with the Army and the Navy."<sup>26</sup>

Attached to this letter was an official statement from January 21 in which Davis presented the new Red Cross policy to accept blood from all races, but always labeled by race and "processed separately into plasma."<sup>27</sup> This new policy was developed in a conference that included the chairman of the Red Cross and the surgeons general of the army and navy. At the conference, it was decided that "there was complete agreement that neither the Red Cross, nor the Army or the Navy could accept responsibility for mixing the [white and black] blood...It was recognized,

of course, that this position would probably be attacked just as vigorously as our practice to this time of not accepting Negro blood.”<sup>28</sup> This new policy was an attempt at a compromise to appease both sides due to its political implications.<sup>29</sup> Despite the appearance that this policy compromise incorporated the thoughts of the army, navy, and the Red Cross, the Red Cross continued to attempt to diffuse blame in both public and private statements. In an off-the-record note to a colleague, Robinson wrote that “[i]f we were instructed not to indicate Negro blood as such [by the army and navy], we would not do so.”<sup>30</sup> It is clear that neither the Red Cross, army, nor navy wanted to take full ownership of the policy, contributing to the confusion surrounding it for many years. Davis even acknowledged in private correspondence that he “repeatedly told representatives of the Negro point of view, that the decision to keep plasma separate was really the decision of the Army and Navy and that we were complying with their request.”<sup>31</sup> The national Red Cross was “unwilling to have the Red Cross placed in the position publically of appearing to disapprove a War Department policy,”<sup>32</sup> yet at the same time it believed that desegregating the blood supply would lead to “a storm of criticism far more difficult.”<sup>33</sup>

Believing that taking a firm opinion in either direction would result in severe controversy, the Red Cross attempted instead to strike a sort of balancing act with its policy and national statements, neither fully accepting ownership of the policy nor fully opposing segregation. The organization kept attempting to shift responsibility to other parties. In 1942, it worked to modify legal language so that “the actual title to the whole blood will pass from the Red Cross to the Army at the time it is delivered to the processing firm,” essentially removing culpability from the Red Cross. Davis explicitly stated that, as a result, “the entire matter of the handling the blood and processing it into plasma will be after the Army has assumed control so that it will be more accurate for us to contend that we really have nothing to do with whether the white and Negro plasma is mixed or kept

separate.”<sup>34</sup>

Despite the Red Cross’s best efforts to tamp down negative publicity, activists saw the policy as an outright extension of Jim Crow racial segregation laws to the blood supply, institutionalized by the Red Cross’s new blood donor policy.<sup>35</sup> The news of this new policy was disseminated widely, even appearing in a *New York Times* article on January 29, 1942.<sup>36</sup> The paper’s coverage was relatively negative, featuring a quote from a New York congressman who declared the policy “abhorrent to the principles for which this war is being fought and on which this country was founded.”<sup>37</sup>

The muddled and inconsistent responses from both the national Red Cross and the military meant that the true origins of this policy were unclear to everyday citizens for many weeks, months, and even years. While the navy had already denounced the Red Cross’s statement and many local chapters appeared to be actively accepting donations from black citizens, one union publication informed its members on January 22, 1942, that the Red Cross still barred donations from black donors per the army and navy’s requests.<sup>38</sup> The origins of the policy were also unclear to many citizens throughout the span of the war.<sup>39</sup> This confusion led to organizations like the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties accusing the Red Cross, army, and navy of “repeatedly [attempting] to shift responsibility” for the policy, noting that even in April, the Red Cross continued to claim that the segregation policy was done “in accordance with [the Navy’s] desires.”<sup>40</sup> Throughout the entire length of the war, the NAACP continued to receive letters from citizens who were confused about this policy and its origins.<sup>41</sup>

BLOOD IS BLOOD: SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL CONSENSUS  
AGAINST BLOOD SUPPLY SEGREGATION

While local justification for the policy of segregation was fragmented and often uncoordinated, the national Red

Cross organization was more consistent. As discussed in the first section of this work, each time the national Red Cross updated its official policy, which was quite infrequently, statements were brief and contained little justificatory detail. However, other sources such as quotes from national Red Cross employees and editorials provide a better window into understanding how the Red Cross justified its segregation policy publically and on a national scale.

Some scholars have written off the Red Cross's segregation policy as a practical decision based on social norms without fully acknowledging the extent of the controversy or the amount of time the Red Cross spent agonizing over the policy.<sup>42</sup> Other contemporary scholars have attempted to understand early twentieth-century attitudes towards non-white blood through a lens of science and public health. Historian Keith Wailoo has extensively studied the way that African American blood was associated with certain diseases such as sickle cell anemia during the first half of the twentieth century. He explains that, by viewing the blood of African Americans as a medium through which sickle cell was carried and spread, some physicians justified existing social views of segregation with the scientifically dubious mentality that African American blood was inherently infectious or unclean. Despite a general consensus that sickle cell anemia was genetic, many physicians still believed that any exposure to black blood carrying sickle cell anemia, regardless of the genetic makeup of the recipient, could spread the disease.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, it is striking that the Red Cross did not employ any of this medical or public health rationale to justify this segregation policy during World War II. In fact, most of the major players involved in this debate, from the Red Cross to the government to the NAACP, seemed to agree that there was no apparent scientific or public health rationale to segregate the blood supply. A representative from the Chicago chapter of the Red Cross explained in a letter to the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee that all blood at the time was tested for disease and type before being

processed into plasma. He emphasized that “if [a donor’s] blood is tainted with disease, he is notified that his blood is unsatisfactory” and the blood would be rejected and not processed into plasma. Since all blood was rigorously tested, the Red Cross did not fear contamination. Rather, it was primarily concerned with the health of the donor, regardless of race.<sup>44</sup>

Waldemar Kaempffert, the former president of the National Association of Science Writers, explained that despite the higher rate of diseases like syphilis in the African American population, any risk was negligible due to the mandatory testing of all donated blood. He then stressed that “thousands of whites who have received Negro blood are alive today because there is no difference [in blood between races].”<sup>45</sup> Red Cross National Chairman Norman H. Davis likewise told protesters that “he recognized the scientific fact that there is no difference between the blood of Negroes and whites,”<sup>46</sup> and Lt. Col. Kendrick of the Army Medical Corps agreed “that there is no scientific basis for segregation.”<sup>47</sup> Journalists and activists also emphasized that “there is no chemical or physical difference between the blood of colored persons and the blood of other races.”<sup>48</sup> The cartoon in Figure 1, created by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), is a variation of a common image used by activists in flyers and



Figure 1

newspapers, employing this scientific consensus alongside nationalist pathos to protest the Red Cross's segregation policy.

In fact, when the Red Cross referenced science, it was actually to say that segregation was inconvenient. In 1941, a representative from the Red Cross stated that since "technical procedures require mixing the blood of donors in processing dried plasma...it is impractical to keep separate the blood of particular individuals in this process."<sup>49</sup> The national technical consultant of the Blood Donor Service called the segregation policy "a very difficult problem from a technical point of view."<sup>50</sup>

#### EXPANDING STAKEHOLDERS: BLOOD SEGREGATION AND THE SOCIAL STATUS QUO IN THE RED CROSS'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS

The Red Cross, acknowledging that science would not be sufficient to segregate the blood supply, instead used the idea of "popular will" as an expression of democracy to justify their policy. When the Red Cross announced that they would no longer ban black blood but would still segregate the blood supply, in an official statement on January 21, 1942, they gave only the following justification: "In deference to the wishes of those for whom the plasma is being provided, the blood will be processed separately so that those receiving transfusions may be given plasma from blood of their own race."<sup>51</sup> This argument proved to be highly contentious. Representative Vito Marcantonio (ALP-NY) believed that "this policy of segregating the blood of black and white donors does not represent the wishes of the American people."<sup>52</sup> One World War I veteran wrote to the NAACP soon after learning of the Red Cross's policy. He was extremely "troubled," explaining, "I know that if I needed a pint of blood I would not care where it came from if it would help me."<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, the Red Cross's primary justification throughout the war remained the same. They never named any disinclinations from within the organization but rather deferred

to other groups, such as the army and navy leadership, soldiers, and, more generally, “whites.” While the army and navy had originally denied any involvement in the segregation policy, a letter in 1943 from Lt. Col. Kendricks admitted that the military was, in fact, involved. He explained that “there is a disinclination on the part of many whites...to have colored blood injected into their veins,”<sup>54</sup> without referencing any specific data or particular instance of a soldier refusing non-white blood. A group of NAACP officials interviewed J. Harrison Heckman, manager of the North Atlantic division of the Red Cross. He admitted that “soldiers and sailors had never been asked and would not be. The wishes were those of the surgeons general of the army and navy who...were not apt to need any transfusions.”<sup>55</sup> In agreement with this statement, there were few to no public objections from soldiers themselves on this issue, but rather objections from non-soldiers who projected their opinions onto soldiers. One congressman, Representative John E. Rankin (D-MS), was particularly outspoken. In 1944, Rankin announced that “there are many Southern white troops with the Allies and I resent having the blood of other races pumped into their veins when they are helpless to do anything about it.”<sup>56</sup>

S. Sloan Colt, national chairman of the Red Cross’s War Fund Program, made the argument used by the Red Cross even more general, applying it to white and black Americans as a whole rather than just white and black soldiers. He outlined this in a letter to a doctor who questioned the policy. The main paragraph of his letter illuminates the expanding group of stakeholders in this debate:

It is recognized that there are many persons in this country who object to having Negro blood used for the transfusion of white persons... When this situation is accepted it seems that the feelings and perhaps even the prejudices of individuals to whom transfusions are given should

be respected as a symbol of democracy. Neither the American Red Cross nor the Medical Departments of the Armed Forces have considered that this feeling can be disregarded.<sup>57</sup>

This argument is a natural extension of the way that the Red Cross often viewed itself—as an embodiment of democracy. Red Cross pamphlets described the organization as “democracy in action—the people’s exemplification” and a “fusion of...diverse points of view,” even claiming that “[d]ynamic American democracy [is] on the march under the Red Cross emblem.”<sup>58</sup> Various arguments were employed to justify the ban and segregation of African American blood from the Red Cross blood supply. Tracing this language shows that the arguments were no longer solely about white and black soldiers, but about white and black Americans across the country. Consequently, it is more accurate to label the debate over the blood supply a societal one rather than one isolated to the Red Cross and the army alone.

Because the Red Cross employed the broader societal argument that whites did not feel comfortable with the blood of African Americans being transfused into white soldiers, it is important to understand why they used this justification, regardless of the veracity of the claim. What made the Red Cross concerned about the opinions of white Americans at large rather than just the opinions of white soldiers?

Many in the Red Cross and the military believed that the viability of the Red Cross’s blood collection operation depended on the support of white America, much of which was resistant to social change. The Red Cross frequently expressed the concern that desegregating the blood supply would be a direct challenge to the United States’ “social order.” In 1942, a group of Mid-Atlantic social workers were unhappy that they had to comply with the Red Cross’s policy of segregation. Walter Davidson, assistant manager of the Eastern Division of the Red Cross, defended the policy by stating: “we have not yet reached

the place in society which would permit radical social changes.”<sup>59</sup> The aforementioned Congressman Rankin likewise criticized a newspaper opposed to blood supply segregation for “[stirring] up race friction” rather than “[promoting] national unity.”<sup>60</sup> To critics like Rankin, desegregation represented an unnecessary social battle that would distract from the war.

Even supporters of desegregating the blood supply understood that desegregation would alter current social mores. They, however, saw this as a positive rather than a deleterious alteration. For example, a white donor wrote in a letter to the *Chicago Daily Tribune* that desegregating the blood banks would be an important “stepping-stone” towards a more equal social order. This donor argued that segregation may very well have been part of the entrenched social structure in certain parts of the United States, but that the Red Cross was actually “extending” the reach of segregation into a new sphere, not simply preserving what already existed.<sup>61</sup>

Statements from the Red Cross and the U.S. military suggest that they viewed objects to desegregation with concern and feared that desegregation could distract from their main goal: blood collection. Lt. Col. Kendrick explained that “whether that disinclination is the result of ignorance or prejudice, it nevertheless exists...It is the conviction of this office that disregard of this feeling would greatly mitigate against the successful conclusion of the program for collecting blood plasma for the armed forces.”<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Red Cross official J. Harrison Heckman said off the record in his interview with the NAACP that the Red Cross would only change the policy if the blood supply somehow depended on it. He admitted that the organization received many letters from concerned citizens who did not support the policy, in addition to complaints from nearly a hundred committees, but asserted that the Red Cross was “getting all the blood [they could] handle.”<sup>63</sup> According to statements like this one, the organization did not mind the many complaints and bad publicity, since it was not hurting their donation numbers in the end.

In other words, the Red Cross appeared to be mostly concerned with its steady supply of donations rather than accusations of racial discrimination. Yet this claim was likely not fully true. Throughout the war, the Red Cross sent letters to chapters reminding them of the organization's ambitious collection quotas, and the Red Cross was acutely aware of negative publicity that could risk its donation numbers.<sup>64</sup>

In a letter to NAACP cofounder Mary White Ovington, G. Canby Robinson continued to use this practical justification for their policy. He explained that the Red Cross enacted the original ban because they feared it "would be detrimental to the whole undertaking." Robinson also stated that his organization had to listen to the "prejudices of a relatively large number of people in this country," as it would be "in the best interests of the Army and Navy from the point of view of successful procurement of dried plasma."<sup>65</sup> Even officials from the NAACP were concerned about the views and opinions of racially motivated white Americans. NAACP officials in the Publicity and Promotion leg of the NAACP feared publishing the words of Representative Rankin's racially tinged tirade due to the fact that "too many people agree with Rankin and might be persuaded by the full text that he was right."<sup>66</sup> Even the official "authorized reply" that the national Red Cross distributed to local chapters used language emphasizing the success of the blood donor program. This authorized reply, referring to critics of integration, stated: "we have no alternative but to recognize the existence of a point of view which, if disregarded, would militate against the effective use of the blood plasma."<sup>67</sup>

"THE PEOPLE'S EXEMPLIFICATION":  
THE RED CROSS AS A FORCE "ABOVE" POLITICS

The national Red Cross's extensive concern over the language of democracy, public opinion, and interfering with the social order of the United States reflected a larger trend in the

Red Cross's continuing predicament with regards to segregation. Throughout its history, the organization often struggled to reconcile its own guiding principle of neutrality with the fact that its interventions inevitably had political ramifications.<sup>68</sup> The Red Cross has historically been extremely preoccupied with transcending national politics, branding itself as an extra-governmental, almost religious force that rose above everyday political conflict. Yet, during World War II, segregation dragged the organization into the minefields of the explosive and divisive national politics of race.

The Red Cross was consumed on a day-to-day basis with its public image, particularly with cultivating a post-political image. In one piece of publicity material, the Red Cross called itself “the people’s exemplification” and “the Greatest Mother”—an amalgamation of all members of the United States, a representation of “city and country people, rich and poor, white and Negro, capital and labor, agriculture, Protestant, Catholic, Jew.”<sup>69</sup> The organization continued to cultivate this sort of quasi-religious embodiment of democracy in this same document, describing how all of these diverse segments of the United States, “by the alchemy of the Red Cross emblem...become one people.”<sup>70</sup>

The Red Cross often accused its critics of undermining this self-constructed post-political image and muddying it with matters of local race politics. In a letter to the *New York Times* after the publication of an article criticizing the Red Cross’s segregation policy, the director of the New York chapter of the Red Cross accused the paper of “knowingly [seeking] to discredit the American Red Cross or injure an undertaking so vital to the welfare of our armed forces,”<sup>71</sup> and explained that the Red Cross policy was constructed for the sole purpose of “the alleviation of suffering and the conservation of human life,” calling racial controversies “beyond the scope of the Red Cross.”<sup>72</sup> A newspaper article from the same year noted that one of the Red Cross’s “favorite” public arguments was “that it is not its business to settle racial controversies.”<sup>73</sup> Indeed, in one letter the Red

Cross secretary explained that “[t]he Red Cross was not created to settle racial questions.”<sup>74</sup> The Red Cross believed that it was beyond these political matters of race. As a result, the Red Cross continually attempted to dodge blame for the policy and justify its actions with the vague language of public opinion in an effort to sustain its image as an embodiment of democracy.

For the duration of the war, the Red Cross was continually preoccupied with matters of public opinion. Each year from 1942 until 1946, the Red Cross commissioned Gallup polls in order to gauge public opinion. These polls were national in scope. Notably, the polling results were classified as confidential. The polls referenced other competitor relief organizations such as the Salvation Army, and the Red Cross believed that this “might be considered controversial.”<sup>75</sup> In its effort to classify these polls, the Red Cross was again attempting to maintain an air of partiality and apoliticism, above inter-organizational squabbling.

The Red Cross saw the importance of maintaining positive public relationships with the black press and black America more broadly, as criticisms from the black press would inevitably bleed into the consciousness of the white reading public. One national Red Cross employee wrote in an internal letter: “The press has so frequently called the attention of the colored reading public to what it alleges to be discriminatory practices on the part of the Red Cross that the average lay citizen reads and examines every publication that is published in the name of the American Red Cross with critical eyes.”<sup>76</sup> Another employee noted that “practically all of the complaints [sent to the national Red Cross] related to the separation of the blood from white and Negro donors.”<sup>77</sup> The national organization believed that the segregation of the blood supply represented one of the Red Cross’s major obstacles in transcending politics and matching public opinion.

It became apparent to members of the national Red Cross that because of the issue of segregation, it would be impossible to perfectly match public opinion and fully transcend

national politics. The Red Cross could neither appease segregation-supporting whites nor appease America's black population with any single policy. Jesse O. Thomas, assistant to the vice chairman of domestic services to the Red Cross, described this predicament in a frustrated letter to the Red Cross's public relations department:

It will be difficult to make any statement that will stand up against critical analysis and yet maintain the position we occupy...It is a controversial question in which we find ourselves essaying to reflect public opinion. I am not sure that we know what is the public's opinion. Under these circumstances we will have to assume that our opinion is the public's opinion...If no white Americans choose to go with [the Negro]...he could not threaten our security nor could his unsympathetic attitude do us much harm. Of course if the labor organizations and a considerable section of the white community should join him in protest, it would create a somewhat different situation. Only a Solomon could be wise enough to give the answer.<sup>78</sup>

A WAR ON TWO FRONTS:

BLOOD SUPPLY SEGREGATION AND WAR RHETORIC

For many Americans, the stakes of the debate over the blood supply were significantly heightened due to its concurrence with World War II. In Europe, Allied troops were fighting against a dictator obsessed with blood purity and erasing non-whiteness. Opponents of the Red Cross were not hesitant to draw parallels between that organization and the Axis powers.

The NAACP drew these parallels quite frequently, viewing this comparison as a point of weakness that could be used

to pressure the Red Cross and draw a war-engulfed public to the anti-segregation side. In December 1941, when black blood was still totally banned, the NAACP issued a press release utilizing this sort of war rhetoric against the Red Cross. The press release featured Dr. James J. McClendon, president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP, who stated that he saw “very little different between the Hitler-like tendencies in Germany and the Hitler-like tactics of the American Red Cross in refusing to take Negro blood.”<sup>79</sup> McClendon then utilized more wartime rhetoric, calling it “deplorable that democracy should maintain such inconsistencies during this time of national emergency” and adding that “the need for national unity should overshadow the prejudices which the Army and Navy persist in maintaining.”<sup>80</sup> Since the Red Cross used an argument of personal preference as an expression of democracy, the NAACP and other critics viewed this as an opportunity to reverse the language and use it against the Red Cross to portray it as “undemocratic” or “un-American.” This specific press release makes significant use of these themes, with one paragraph as a particularly salient representation of the NAACP’s overall rhetorical strategy:

We feel that in a national emergency, such as this, we can ill afford to practice the same undemocratic principles that Hitler and Mussolini are practicing overseas. We understand that we are fighting against racial hatred, bigotry, and totalitarianism. It seems rather strange to us that if we are fighting against those things, why we should practice them here at home.<sup>81</sup>

The NAACP continued to use very strong anti-Axis language in its writings. Walter White, in a letter to Chairman Davis, excoriated the policy. He wrote, “how ironic must be the laughter today in Berlin and Tokyo as they listen to American assertions that the war is being fought against the racial ideology

of aryanism and to wipe out totalitarianism based on racial bigotry.”<sup>82</sup> In its letters and press releases of this nature, the NAACP was relentless and continuous. Over three years later, almost immediately after Davis was replaced by Basil O’Connor as Red Cross chairman, the NAACP released a press release calling on the new chairman to immediately reverse the blood segregation policy. The statement noted that “our Axis enemies have used this policy of segregation to convince colored peoples of the world that our country is not sincere when it says that it is fighting against the racial theories of Adolph Hitler while at the same time it practices a similar master race theory.”<sup>83</sup>

While this language may at first appear to be overly dramatic, comparing the Red Cross and America’s genocidal opponents was fairly common, even among those who did not work for the NAACP, such as Red Cross volunteers and donors. Mabel K. Staupers, the executive secretary of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses and famous opponent of the racial segregation of nurses in the armed forces,<sup>84</sup> made this comparison in a letter to the Red Cross. In her letter, she included a “small donation” and noted that she had “been trying very hard to get other donations but the Red Cross attitude towards Negroes in relation to the Blood Bank has been most disastrous.”<sup>85</sup> She closed her letter with a criticism of the Red Cross through war rhetoric similar to that of the NAACP: “This recent announcement of labeling the blood—Negro and White is adding insult to injury and I am sure that it must give great satisfaction to the Totalitarian Powers who in their attitude towards minority groups have claimed that they are copying the American Pattern.”<sup>86</sup> Stauper’s statement added a financial element to the war rhetoric, explaining that the segregation policy was undermining the Red Cross’s fund collection efforts.

Even the famed American poet Langston Hughes used war rhetoric to put pressure on the Red Cross. In a letter to the Red Cross War Fund Authors’ Division, Hughes wrote: “Hitler could hardly desire more. General Douglas MacArthur may be

right when he says, ‘The Red Cross never fails a soldier.’ Certainly it has failed thirteen million Negroes on the home front, and its racial policies are a blow in the face to American Negro morale.’<sup>87</sup> Hughes forwarded the letter to his acquaintance Walter White of the NAACP, who lauded it.

In another letter to the Red Cross, Dr. Ephraim Kahn, president of a New York association of medical students and physicians that offered assistance to the Red Cross, used similar language. Noting the “scientific stupidity” of the segregation policy, Kahn wrote, “We are Americans engaged in a bitter war with those tyrants who seek to foist barbaric race theories upon the world, and as such we are indignant at the undemocratic and fascist implications of your policy.”<sup>88</sup> Another letter writer, the executive secretary of the Urban League of Cleveland, claimed that the segregation policy would actually prolong the war by dividing the allies and creating “obstacles to that real national unity without which our struggle may be unnecessarily long and bloody.”<sup>89</sup> These two quotes take the war rhetoric used in previous examples even further, actively accusing the Red Cross of undermining national unity and hurting the war effort, not simply critiquing them for promoting racist policies.

A column in the weekly newsletter of the Greater New York Federation of Churches compared Hitler’s “doctrine of Aryan blood supremacy” to the Red Cross’s policy of blood supply segregation.<sup>90</sup> Likewise, an article in the Jewish newsletter *The Reconstructionist* called it “a sin against democracy to keep alive the myth of racial characteristics inherent in the blood stream,” built upon “Nazi mythology of Aryan preeminence.”<sup>91</sup> Another religious figure, Henry Smith Leiper, complimented the Red Cross’s efforts in a letter but wrote that he felt “that the situation is intolerable at a time when we are fighting Hitlerism with its grotesque race theory, the central item in which happens to be in complete accord with the nonsense about racial blood that is perpetuated here through such policies.”<sup>92</sup> From religious figures and NAACP members to concerned everyday civilians, letters

with war rhetoric put pressure on the Red Cross from a diverse array of backgrounds.<sup>93</sup>

E. Frederic Morrow, NAACP field secretary and future major in the army, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Bergen Evening Record*, a New Jersey newspaper, making an emotional call to fight this war on race on multiple fronts. It is an example that takes these rhetorical strategies to the extreme, comparing not just the Red Cross with the Germans, but more broadly applying the debate over the blood supply to racial injustice across the United States and the world. It shows not only the powerful rhetorical strategies used by the NAACP and others to put pressure on the Red Cross, but also alludes to the emotional stakes of this policy battle and its implications for millions of black citizens in all spheres of American society. It sheds light on why the NAACP made this blood supply policy one of the organization's main ideological battlegrounds of World War II:

As we go, we want our citizens conscious that we cannot defeat Hitlerism leaning on the black crutch of invidious color distinctions in our national life. We want America to realize that we can win the war abroad, but lose it at home, unless we simultaneously crush the little Hitlers and their fascist tendencies here in this land. We want honest agreement that if pogroms are wrong in Poland, so are lynchings wrong in America. If forced labor is an evil in Czechoslovakia, so are peonage farms in Georgia. If badges of racial distinction are damnable in Germany and France, so are Jim-Crow arrangements in the United States. This fight for freedom for people everywhere must start right here at home. And the time is now!<sup>94</sup>

BLOOD DONATION AS A LENS FOR  
UNDERSTANDING BLACK PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

During World War II, the Red Cross was a familiar household name, found in all corners of popular media. The publicity wing of the national Red Cross was extremely active, even creating sample advertisements to send to local newspapers for publication.<sup>95</sup> The national organization developed publicity guides along with cartoons, stories, photo spreads, testimonials, and other forms of advertisement so that local chapters could work with local newspapers to advertise for blood donation.<sup>96</sup> Newspapers and radio shows, from local radio stations to popular periodicals like *Parents' Magazine*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Town & Country*, and *Redbook*, regularly announced when organized Red Cross blood drives were taking place and ran ads, articles, and shows encouraging readers/listeners to donate blood.<sup>97</sup> It was not uncommon to read an article about a group of colleagues



Figure 2



Figure 3

taking a break during the working day to donate blood.<sup>98</sup> One Cincinnati radio station began to air a weekly Sunday night series that would “include dramatizations from the home and war fronts” to encourage listeners to donate to the Red Cross.<sup>99</sup> A Chicago radio station did the same three times per week.<sup>100</sup> Another Baltimore station aired a similar nightly program where “listeners [were] urged to call in during the broadcast and verbal arrangements [were] made over the air for the blood donations.”<sup>101</sup> Broadcasts and radio programs like these could be found around the country.<sup>102</sup>

Advertisements explicitly used the Red Cross to promote their products. An advertisement for Julianna housecoats in *Vogue* told readers that “a half-hour in a rest-inducing Julianna housecoat will restore you to normal after your Red Cross blood donation.”<sup>103</sup> In *Billboard* magazine, J.P. Seeburg Corporation, a Chicago musical instrument maker, bought a full-page advertisement encouraging everyday citizens “to give all that is humanly possible in work...in bonds...in blood donations...in all patriotic activities...until a final Allied Victory is achieved.”<sup>104</sup>

To activists, the ubiquity of the Red Cross in the consciousness of everyday Americans—due to popular media, government propaganda, and otherwise—provided an opening for fighting segregation in a space that was very familiar to the American public. To black Americans, this ubiquity represented a direct challenge to their citizenship. Advertisements telling citizens it was their duty to donate blood were extremely commonplace, yet black Americans were told they could not contribute on this front; they were either barred from donating or had their blood segregated in the process.

One poster (Figure 2) directly compared fighting in battle and donating blood. It read: “He gave *his* blood. *Will you give yours?*” Another poster (Figure 3) used the language of recruitment to encourage citizens to donate blood, telling donors to “Enlist...As a Red Cross Blood Donor,” just as a soldier would “enlist” in the war. Posters like these demonstrate that donating

blood was a contribution equated with fighting in battle. One article in *Vogue* magazine told readers that “your blood is in the war” and that “in your arteries is the power to give men a second chance to live,” directly comparing donors to soldiers on the battlefield and encouraging them to donate.<sup>105</sup> Since blood donation was so often described as having near equivalent importance to physically fighting in battle, the blood donation restrictions on African Americans represented a direct challenge to their ability to contribute to the war in the same way that white Americans could.<sup>106</sup>

Blood segregation became a very visible and widespread issue for African Americans. The NAACP considered it one of its top concerns with the Red Cross. Secretary White emphasized that until blood plasma was desegregated, everything else “would be futile in winning the goodwill of Negroes, so stirred are they by the segregation of Negro blood.”<sup>107</sup> On July 15, 1942, the Red Cross brought black leaders from across the country to the organization’s Washington headquarters. At this conference “it was made clear to the Red Cross administrators that the segregation of Negro blood in the blood plasma project was the principal thing affecting adversely the Negro’s morals today.”<sup>108</sup>

This ban caused such a visceral response from black Americans because it deprived them of the chance to serve their country. The contributions of African Americans, if not outright rejected, were labeled and marked separately in a way that showed that even in their blood they were not equal citizens and could not give to their country like white Americans could. As described by E. Frederic Morrow, African Americans “want, and demand all the responsibilities, as well as privileges of citizenship.”<sup>109</sup> The segregation of the blood supply diminished these responsibilities.

After donating, one African American man heard that black blood was being rejected and wrote to the Red Cross. He said he hoped they would accept his blood, “by an American for the use of Americans.”<sup>110</sup> Black workers at the New York

City Department of Welfare described to the NAACP how “the establishment of a discriminatory blood donor station in offices where whites and Negroes work together is embarrassing and humiliating.”<sup>111</sup> In another instance, the NAACP followed a group of African Americans who hoped to donate their blood only to be rejected. One woman, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, stated that she was “humiliated” by not being permitted to donate.<sup>112</sup> Dr. James J. McClendon described how his patients and friends, many of whom were teachers, attempted to donate their blood “for the American Soldier,” only to be rejected. He described them as “fine, loyal, American colored people” who were “insulted and humiliated” by the ban.<sup>113</sup>

In another instance, Alva B. Johnson, an administrator of a historically black college in West Virginia, described how he was perturbed by a message in the weekly newsletter of his hometown of Langhorne, Pennsylvania. The message called on “all white patriotic citizens who wish to donate blood report to the Community House at a certain date,”<sup>114</sup> with no announcement following regarding black blood donors. Johnson was particularly bothered by the fact that the announcement referred to the community house, a public building. This correspondence raises the broader question of what it means to be part of a community. Articles such as this one excluded African Americans from the perceived community, a smaller instance of the larger issues raised by the segregation of the blood supply.

One element that heightened the stakes of the debate was the fact that blood donation practices regarding race changed once the United States entered a state of war. One letter from a New York City hospital explained that before the war they performed “at least 1,400 transfusions each year,” all of which were done “without regard to race or color.”<sup>115</sup> Then suddenly, during a time of war, millions of African Americans were banned from doing what they had always done. When the stakes moved from aiding fellow private citizens to contributing on a larger scale to the country’s war efforts, African Americans were banned from

doing so and later segregated from participating fully. It was no longer just about donating blood, it became a matter of the government excluding “more than ten per cent of its population from the opportunity to join in giving their blood to save our way of life.”<sup>116</sup> In many ways, the segregation of the blood supply paralleled the fight against segregation in the armed forces. Just as those at home hoped to contribute to the war effort through blood donation but were either banned or segregated in the process, many black men were turned away from the armed forces, and those who did enter lived and operated in segregated conditions, often in service rather than fighting units.<sup>117</sup> In her book *Black Soldiers and Civil Rights*, Christine Knauer argues that the relegation of black men to service roles “was a manifestation of black men’s perceived inferiority”<sup>118</sup> and that “the claim for full and equal citizenship...was deeply interwoven with military service.”<sup>119</sup> She argues that as these soldiers returned home, they carried back with them their mistreatment, “[spurring] black activism.”<sup>120</sup> The fight over the segregation of the blood supply was in many ways the translation of this issue to the home front. Just as their brothers and fathers were fighting for the right to shed blood abroad in the name of their country, so too were many fighting for the exact same right at home. The denial of the right of black Americans to contribute on all fronts during the war only intensified the battle over segregation in the country in the years leading up to the civil rights movement.

It is evident that the Red Cross did not segregate the blood supply out of an explicit desire to promote racial segregation in American society. Rather, the organization saw segregation as the path of least resistance in an effort to collect blood for wounded Allies while simultaneously promoting itself as a humanitarian organization above the fray of everyday politics. The Red Cross’s ultimate desire was to embody American democracy. In doing so, it co-opted one of the country’s deep institutional racial injustices by perpetuating American society’s dark traditions of segregation. The Red Cross was not acting in

a sinister, coordinated effort to oppress black Americans, but rather was subtly perpetuating structural racism on a vast scale through what was ostensibly a noble effort to save lives. In the twentieth century, African Americans were linked to the diseases of syphilis and sickle cell anemia, which affected the way that African Americans were treated. In the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, AIDS has often been closely associated with gay men—it was and still is often referred to as a gay disease or gay-related disease.<sup>121</sup> There are deep connections between the segregation of the blood supply in the 1940s and modern-day bans on blood donation. Jessica Martucci, in her article “Negotiating Exclusion,” explains that “keeping the blood supply safe in America has always been a process of donor exclusion,”<sup>122</sup> but with varying repercussions over time. She closes her article by claiming that “there is something unquestionably powerful about the claim of biological citizenship that makes the biomedical and health policy realm an increasingly active one for making citizenship claims.”<sup>123</sup>

While the plight of African Americans in the 1940s as it relates to the blood supply is in no way fully comparable to modern-day examples, it is impossible to ignore the parallels and to not consider the deeply powerful symbolism of blood donation and what it means to participate in society with all of the privileges and responsibilities of a full citizen. A quote from an article in the National Medical Association’s 1942 publication by its president provides a powerful perspective on the societal and emotional stakes of blood donation:

[T]hese thirteen millions of Negroes... are loyal to the core. They along with other citizens of this country, know that for them as for whites, to lose this war means that all is lost that is worth living for. They are ready and willing to sacrifice the very extreme in helping to win the war. There is a big difference between bodily and spiritual

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service. The body and the spirit should go together. Such acts as [the blood supply segregation] kill the spirit. They wound the very soul.<sup>124</sup>

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Marina Levina, “The Stake and the Chip: Biomedical and Genomic Discourse and the Management of Difference in Popular Culture” (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2006), 57.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: International Society for Science and Religion, 2007), xiii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>4</sup> *Britannica Academic*, s.v. “Eugenics.”

<sup>5</sup> Frank Boulton, “Blood Transfusion and the World Wars,” *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 31, no. 1 (2015): 58.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 59–60.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah E. Chinn, *Technology and the Logic of American Racism* (London/New York: Continuum, 2000), 77.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Guglielmo, “Red Cross Double Cross,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 1 (June 2010): 63–90.

<sup>12</sup> Chinn, *Technology and the Logic of American Racism*, 115

<sup>13</sup> Albert McCown to Mr. Fieser, August 12, 1941, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>14</sup> Julia E. Baxter to Reverend Rembert Stokes, November 9, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>15</sup> Unknown sender to Harry Bergerson, November 5, 1943, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>16</sup> Julia E. Baxter to Reverend Rembert Stokes, November 9, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>17</sup> “Union Urges Blood Donations; Protests Negro Discrimination,” News clipping from Alfred Hirsch, January 22, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>18</sup> “Team Work from Publicity to Plasma,” November 30, 1941, Box 3, Folder

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020.101, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ross T. McIntire to Walter White, January 15, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross blood donor policy (1942-1949), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0037, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Walter White to Earl Taylor, January 16, 1942, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>23</sup> DeWitt Smith to Claude A. Barnett, January 24, 1942, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>24</sup> Norman H. Davis to Walter White, January 26, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross blood donor policy (1942-1949), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0037, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> American Red Cross Statement of Policy Regarding Negro Blood Donors, January 21, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross blood donor policy (1942-1949), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0037, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>28</sup> DeWitt Smith to G. Canby Robinson, January 17, 1942, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Norman H. Davis to James B. Forgan, July 11, 1942, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Susan E. Lederer, *Flesh and Blood: Organ Transplantation and Blood Transfusion in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 117.

<sup>36</sup> "Red Cross to Use Blood of Negroes," *New York Times*, January 29, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> "Union Urges Blood Donations; Protests Negro Discrimination," News Clipping from Alfred Hirsch, January 22, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>39</sup> M. Harris to Mr. Wilkins, February 26, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross blood donor policy (1942-1949), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0037, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>40</sup> "Action Letter," National Federation for Constitutional Liberties, May 22, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross blood donor policy (1942-1949), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0037, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>41</sup> Clayborne George to Walter White, August 16, 1943, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15; Unknown sender to Harry Bergerson, November 5, 1943, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Douglas Starr's *Blood* provides a meticulously detailed and thoroughly enjoyable discussion of blood's role in science and popular culture through history, but spends little time discussing the issue of blood's segregation during World War II. He writes: "[The Red Cross] did, after all, have other priorities. They were trying to blanket the nation with blood centers, providing for all Americans, regardless of social standing or color." Douglas P. Starr, *Blood: An Epic History of Medicine and Commerce* (New York: Quill, 2000), 170.

<sup>43</sup> Keith Wailoo, "Genetic Marker of Segregation: Sickle Cell Anemia, Thalassemia, and Racial Ideology in American Medical Writing 1920-1950," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 18, no. 3 (1996): 307.

<sup>44</sup> Roger Holden to Ira Latimer, April 22, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>45</sup> Waldemar Kaempffert, "Science News in Review," June 14, 1942, Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>46</sup> "Says Red Cross Has Yielded to Scientific Lying," *Baltimore Afro-American*, February 21, 1942.

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<sup>47</sup> “Army, Navy Accept Blame for Blood J.C.,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 18, 1943.

<sup>48</sup> “Red Cross Follows Hitler’s Racist Theory, Says PM,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, March 14, 1942; “New Policy Demanded of Red Cross,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, March 21, 1942.

<sup>49</sup> Sloan S. Colt to Ernest R. Alexander, December 30, 1941, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>50</sup> Earl S. Taylor to John Reichel, January 20, 1942, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>51</sup> American Red Cross, “Statement of Policy Regarding Negro Blood Donors,” January 21, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>52</sup> “Red Cross Puts Negro Blood on Par with White,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 29, 1942; “Highest Medical Authorities in U.S. Pooh-Pooh Blood Bank Segregation,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 11, 1942.

<sup>53</sup> William McCabe to NAACP, December 13, 1943, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>54</sup> “Army, Navy Accept Blame for Blood J.C.,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 18, 1943.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from unknown sender to Jack, September 20, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>56</sup> “Rankin Pleads for Blood Plasma J.C.,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 2, 1944.

<sup>57</sup> “UN Blood Bank Still Mystery,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 23, 1950.

<sup>58</sup> “Know Your Red Cross,” May 1942, Box 3, Folder 020.1, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>59</sup> “Social Workers Put Red Cross on Spot,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 16, 1942.

<sup>60</sup> Douglass Hall, “Seen from My Window,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 4, 1943.

<sup>61</sup> “Segregation in Blood Banks,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 31, 1942.

<sup>62</sup> “Army, Navy Accept Blame for Blood J.C.,” *Baltimore Afro-American*,

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December 18, 1943.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from unknown sender to Jack, September 20, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>64</sup> Frank E. August to Chapter Chairman, December 12, 1941, Box 3, Folder 020.101, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>65</sup> G. Canby Robinson to Mary White Ovington, February 4, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>66</sup> Charlotte Crump to Walter White, June 9, 1942 Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>67</sup> "Authorized Reply to Persons Protesting Against the American Red Cross Statement of Policy of January 21, 1942, Concerning Negro Blood Donors," March 5, 1942, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>68</sup> In her book *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal*, Marian Moser Jones "seeks to explode the myth that the ARC as a sacred national trust operates above interests of class, race, and politics." While it mostly covers the Red Cross prior to WWII, it provides a compelling and detail-rich look at the organization, its guiding ideologies, and its interactions with current events and social issues over time.

<sup>69</sup> "Know Your Red Cross," May 1942, Box 3, Folder 020.1, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Earle Booth to Waldemar Kaemppfert, n.d., Box 3, Folder 020.101, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas DeC. Ruth to G. Canby Robinson, June 29, 1942, Box 2, Folder 020.101, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>73</sup> "Red Cross Continues to 'Respect Prejudices,'" February 6, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>74</sup> Secretary to Ethel C. White, February 12, 1942, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College

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Park.

<sup>75</sup> E.A. Winfrey to Heckman, Eaton, Wilson, Keisker, and Simmons, December 13, 1943, Box 22, Folder 020.28, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>76</sup> Everett Dix to W.C. Hunt, May 13, 1942, Box 107, Folder 109.1, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>77</sup> DeWitt Smith to the Chairman, August 2, 1944, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park

<sup>78</sup> Jesse O. Thomas to Louis C. Boochever, May 15, 1946, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park

<sup>79</sup> "American Red Cross Refuses to Take Blood from Negro Donors," December 16, 1941, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Walter White to Norman H. Davis, January 27, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross blood donor policy (1942-1949), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0037, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>83</sup> "NAACP Urges New Red Cross Head Reverse Blood Policy," July 27, 1944, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross blood donor policy (1942-1949), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0037, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>84</sup> "Mabel Keaton Staupers," American Nurses Association, available at <http://www.nursingworld.org/MabelKeatonStaupers>.

<sup>85</sup> Mabel K. Staupers, RN, to Miss Florence Johnson, February 2, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Langston Hughes to Carl Van Doren, March 19, 1943, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>88</sup> Ephraim Kahn, MD, to Norman H. Davis, January 26, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

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<sup>89</sup> Sidney R. Williams to John D. Cremer, February 2, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>90</sup> "The Observation Post," *Metropolitan Church Life*, January 29, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>91</sup> "The Red Cross Sins Against the Negro," *The Reconstructionist*, February 20, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>92</sup> Henry Smith Leiper to G. Canby Robinson, January 15, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross blood donor policy (1942-1949), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0037, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>93</sup> Arline English-Paiya to the American Red Cross, May 20, 1943, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>94</sup> E. Frederic Morrow to Editor of Bergen Evening Record, January 27, 1942, Group II, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1942-1943), Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>95</sup> "Insert Mats for Newspaper Advertisements," 1944, Box 3, Folder 020.101, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>96</sup> Ollie Tucker to Directors, Red Cross Blood Donor Centers, October 13, 1944, Box 3, Folder 020.101, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, National Archives at College Park;

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<sup>97</sup> Gertrude Crawford, "For Blood Donors," *Chatelaine* 17, no. 10 (1944): 92; "Amusement Machines: Gets News Boost as Blood Donor," *The Billboard* (Archive: 1894-1960) 55, no. 10 (March 1943): 72; "KPO Helps Blood Bank," *Broadcasting, Telecasting* (Archive: 1945-1957) 31, no. 11 (September 1946): 82; "Mothers Can Give Blood Too," *Parents' Magazine* 19, no. 10 (1944): 64; Lucile D. Kirk, "Blood Donations for the Red Cross," *Parents' Magazine* 17, no. 10

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<sup>99</sup> "Studio Notes," *Broadcasting, Broadcast Advertising* (Archive: 1936-1945) 27, no. 6 (August 1944): 58.

<sup>100</sup> "Purely PROGRAMS," *Broadcasting, Broadcast Advertising* (Archive: 1936-1945) 26, no. 26 (June 1944): 58.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> "Radio: Inside Stuff-Radio," *Variety* (Archive: 1905-2000) 149, no. 11 (February 1943): 30.

<sup>103</sup> "Advertisement: Juliana (Julius Dittel, Inc.)," *Vogue* 104, no. 4 (September 1944): 222.

<sup>104</sup> "Seeburg," *The Billboard* (Archive: 1894-1960) 56, no. 37 (September 1944): 83.

<sup>105</sup> Edgar L. Jones, "People and Ideas: Your Blood Is in This War," *Vogue* 102, no. 8 (October 1943): 92; Donita Ferguson, "Features/Articles/People: My Blood Is in the War," *Vogue* 101, no. 2 (January 1943): 56-56, 57.

<sup>106</sup> For a more comprehensive rhetorical analysis of the Red Cross's statements and advertisements, see Sarah Chinn's *Technology and the Logic of American Racism*.

<sup>107</sup> Walter White to Frederick D. Patterson, October 30, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>108</sup> Julia E. Baxter to Zerlina Reefer, December 18, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>109</sup> E. Frederic Morrow to William Caldwell, January 27, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>110</sup> Lewis Gannet to S. Sloan Colt, January 2, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

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<sup>111</sup> “NAACP Asks La Guardia to Ban Red Cross Blood Stations from City Departments,” January 16, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>112</sup> McClendon, “American Red Cross Refuses to Take Blood from Negro Donors,” December 16, 1941, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Alva B. Johnson to Walter White, February 10, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>115</sup> “Rough Draft of Letter to Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy,” December 30, 1941, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>116</sup> E. Frederic Morrow to William Caldwell, January 27, 1942, Discrimination complaints against American Red Cross (1941-1943), Group II, Series A, General Office File: American Red Cross, Folder 001441-001-0516, Papers of the NAACP, Part 15.

<sup>117</sup> Christine Knauer, *Let Us Fight as Free Men: Black Soldiers and Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 18–19.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>121</sup> Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978).

<sup>122</sup> Jessica Martucci, “Negotiating Exclusion,” *Social Studies of Science* 40, no. 2 (2010): 215.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>124</sup> John A. Kenney, “An Open Letter to The American Red Cross,” *New York Age*, December 19, 1942.

### Images

Page 41: “Protest Flyer,” Congress of Racial Equality, 1944-1946, Box 909, Folder 505.09, Records of the American Red Cross, 1881-2008, courtesy of National Archives at College Park.

Page 54 (Figure 2): “Red Cross recruiting posters,” courtesy of U.S. Army

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Medical Dept. Office of Medical History Website, Douglas B. Kendrick, “Blood Program in World War II,” <http://history.amedd.army.mil/books-docs/wwii/blood/ch05fig23.jpg> (accessed December 30, 2017).

Page 54 (Figure 3): “Red Cross recruiting posters,” courtesy of U.S. Army Medical Dept. Office of Medical History Website, Douglas B. Kendrick, “Blood Program in World War II,” <http://history.amedd.army.mil/books-docs/wwii/blood/ch05fig23.jpg> (accessed December 30, 2017).