

Riley - Rippel

c/o American Red Cross Service Club,
102/104, Whitechapel, Liverpool, ENG.

A. Riley

28th March, 1945.

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Dear Mrs Roosevelt,

How are you?, I'm sure you will be very surprised at receiving this letter, but I don't think that you will feel I am being presumptuous or anything of that sort for writing to you. From what I have read and heard of you I have come to know you, as one of the most truly democratic people in the States today.

What I'm really writing you about, is your kind broadmindedness and understanding towards the Negro population in the States. I think you really are the top Mrs Roosevelt, and I don't mean maybe. I've been working with American Negro troops over here for about 16 months now, as a volunteer Red Cross worker, and I don't ever wish to meet nicer people than I have met in this club.

It's true that when I first volunteered, all I knew was that I was going to an American Red Cross club, and though the Supervisor of Volunteers did say to me "this is an American Red Cross club and as such we serve all American servicemen, but at this club we serve mainly coloured Americans", it did not mean anything to me, for as far as I was concerned all men were equal. Of course I was not to know anything of the segregation policies carried on in some parts of the United States.

However I was soon brought to know of their existence, through the nastiness of some white Southern Americans whom I met. It made me really mad to think that they could not even keep their prejudice until they got home, but that they had to try their darndest to inaugurate a colour bar, in a country where hitherto there had been no such thing.

Believe me Mrs Roosevelt, you are much appreciated for your truly American broadmindedness in your attitude towards the coloured people over there. It is your attitude of treating all men as equals, regardless of creed or colour, which really bears out the fine things one hears about America's Democracy.

I'm a clerk in an office during the day, and an ARC volunteer in the evenings, and of course as such I am just an ordinary person, but I aspire to much greater ambitions. One of which is to visit the United States in the future. I just know I'll get there some day. I've learned quite a bit about American history and geography, as I naturally studied something which interested me so much. When I get to the States I would like very much to continue those studies at College in the States.

Well I should imagine that you are a very busy person Mrs Roosevelt, so I won't make this letter too long, but I felt I just had to write you, because though you are a very much more important person than I, in every way, I don't have any hesitation at all in saying that our

ideas on certain subjects are the same.

Please take it from me Mrs Roosevelt, America's coloured troops are as great a credit to her, as are her white troops any day, and in any country. I don't have anything against white Americans on the whole, I'm a white girl myself, and I have met some fellows from such Northern States, as Michigan, Illinois and Massachusetts who are really great. Their attitude is that the coloured troops are doing the same job they are doing, and what is good enough for one, is good enough for the other, and if the men who are fighting for America can feel that way then surely it is the least the people back home can do, to back them up in this feeling.

America does not have any qualms about shedding Negro blood in her cause, so why should she have any qualms about granting the Negro equal status. There seems to be some queer fallacy like, give a coloured person an inch and he will take a yard, if they gave the Negro an inch of space over there, believe me, he'd be far too grateful to want any more.

Whether you read this letter yourself, or your secretary reads it for you, I can tell you that it is indeed a privilege to write it, and I pray God may bless you always for being such a real lady.

Yours very sincerely, and respectfully,

Ann Riley