



No Frankness



The battle against the Pentagon ban takes an unexpected turn

Openly gay U.S. representative Barney Frank's decision to propose a compromise in the fierce months-old debate over an antigay Pentagon policy has left gays and lesbians across the country grappling with questions of political direction that transcend the battle over the policy.



LGBTQ Rights and the U.S. Military

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THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN gay people in the United States military, even if it hasn't always been legal to be gay and in the military. Although the military had discharged gays and lesbians for their sexual orientation since the 1700s, the policy was not codified until the 20th century. The Articles of War of the United States was modified in 1920 to state that military personnel who committed sodomy would be subject to court-martial, and in 1949, the Department of Defense decreed that "homosexual personnel, irrespective of sex, should not be permitted to serve in any branch of the Armed Forces in any capacity and prompt separation of known homosexuals from the Armed Forces is mandatory."¹ In 1993, President Bill Clinton offered what he termed as a "compromise": the military policy now known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," or DADT. This policy barred homosexual or bisexual military persons from disclosing their sexual orientation while also prohibiting discrimination and harassment of LGBTQ military persons.² It was not until 2011, when President Obama's 2010 repeal of DADT went into effect, that LGBTQ military personnel were granted equal rights. For students and researchers interested in learning more about this history, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, ProQuest LGBT Magazine Archive, and ProQuest History Vault allow researchers to find primary sources tracing the history of the U.S. military and LGBTQ women in the U.S. military during the second half of the 20th Century. This use case highlights several stories pertaining to LGBTQ women in the U.S. military in order to give researchers ideas of the types of documents they can find in ProQuest databases.

During World War Two, the U.S. military kept surveillance records on female military personnel who were suspected to be lesbians. These reports, written up as "violations of codes of conduct," were part of a broader effort of policing women's behavior for perceived failures of hetero-cis-sexist norms. For instance, in the December of 1942 document "Briefs of Current Delinquency Cases," one woman's report says, "Seventh Service Command Investigation indicates venereal disease [sic], has a home record as common prostitute."³ Another report reads, "Reported suffering from social disease; to be of base moral character; to have engaged in the activities of a common prostitute."⁴ Other issues documented in the reports include "considered wild," "has several paramours," and "money crazy."⁵ The language in these reports is often vague — what does it mean to be "considered wild"? Are the "activities of a common prostitute" meant to literally imply sex work, or, using the language of a different report, simply having "several paramours"? Rather than listing evidence of specific activities that might compromise a WAC's service, the report leaps ahead to judgments: it is the *judgment* that one has been "wild" that is reported, not the specific activities that are *considered* to be "wild."

The same report lists six WACs accused of being gay currently "under observation."⁶ Throughout the document, there are phrases of "reported as homosexual," "suspected homosexual," "evidence of being homosexual," and "appears to be homosexual based on Confidential Report."⁷ This document indicates a high level of concern by the Women's Army Corps with rooting out lesbians

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF BOARD OF OFFICERS

WAC Branch No. 6,
Army Administration School,
Richmond, Kentucky.

Proceedings of a Board of Officers which convened at Richmond, Kentucky, pursuant to Special Order No. 176, Headquarters, Fifth Service Command, Fort Hayes, Columbus 18, Ohio, dated 22 July 1943, a copy of which is attached as Exhibit A.

The board met pursuant to the foregoing order at Building, Eastern Kentucky State Teachers College, Richmond, 1000 on 27 August 1943.

The following members were present, being all of board:

First Officer Laura L. Asbury, WAAC,
First Officer Marion G. Lichky, WAAC,
First Officer Anne E. Sweeney, WAAC,
First Officer Donna M. Werbeck, WAAC, Reserve
Second Officer Mary-Louise Connor, WAAC, De

The members of the board were not sworn.

PURPOSE: To determine whether or not Technician Fourth grade Helen L. Farquet should be discharged from the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps on 27 August 1943.

Technician Fourth Grade Helen L. Farquet appears Second Officer Mary-Louise Connor as Defense Counsel.

The order appointing the board and the substance under which it was convened were read aloud by the Fourth Grade Helen L. Farquet was asked if she desired the board for cause, and she replied in the negative.

Written advance notification to Technician Fourth grade, dated 23 August 1943, was received and read in hereto as Exhibit B. Verbal consent of the respondent had been obtained to change the time of the meeting.

Technician Fourth Grade Helen L. Farquet was present.

BRIEFS ON CURRENT DELINQUENCY CASES

Name	Organization	Remarks
1. Ritchey-Helen	3d Rgt. 17th Co.	Being checked coming Monday. The CO by the to check on a Post Intelligence the 3d Auxiliary
2. Meredith, Mary	3d Rgt. 2d Co.	Suspected house at Chamberlain. Gross report of how under close no confidential
3. Smith, V.R.	14 Co., 2d Rgt.	Homosexual. Pre Record of her full duty under
4. Gibson, Patricia	11th Co., 2d Rgt.	Confidential P. attached. How full duty.
5. Stall, Ada	11 Co., 3d Rgt.	Board proceedings final action. Will an auxiliary was recommended attached. Det
6. Kelly, Helen	10 Co., 12, 3d Rgt.	How under close homosexual base herewith. Does appears to be Confidential Re full duty under
7. Fink, Mae B.	Co. 2, 2d Rgt.	Red Cross report eight aliases. Just received this report. Recently AR22 posing as strip-tease in local theater. Unfavorable publicity due to published in local paper today.
8. Brooks, Doris	15 Co., 3d Rgt. (Alias: Gregory, K.)	
9. Fruns, Catherine	8th Co., 2d Rgt.	Seventh Service Command Investigation indicates venereal disease, has a home

WAR DEPARTMENT
FIRST WOMEN'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS TRAINING CENTER
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDANT
FORT DES MOINES, IOWA

December 15, 1942

SUBJECT: Summary of Pending Disciplinary Cases, 1
Fort Des Moines, Iowa

TO: The Director, WAC, War Department, Pent

1. Submitted herewith report indicating correct brief summaries, and present status of disciplinary Training Center:

Re: FINK, MAE BELLE ✓
A-500,272

Ref: SPY 301 P3 (11-21-42)
WD 308
Subj: Has
Date: 11-4
Summary: I in appears balanced; homosexual Present St vation by ditional e basic com performing

DECLASSIFIED
Authority: EMD 71055
By: 44-11144 Date: 7/2/84

Re: BARTON, ALICE VIRGINIA ✓
A-500,795

Ref: SPY 301 P3 (11-4-42)
WD 308
Subj: Extra
Date: 12-4
Summary: C different nite infor several of Present SE vation by ther aside full duty.

DEC 19 42

RECEIVED
WAC

341 (11-12-42)

COOT

Reasons why former 1st Rgt. Helen G. Pagett AS0885 and Woma L. Oshetner A700119 should be reinstated in rank or eligible for re-enlistment in the WAC.

Discharged October 15, 1948 under Section VIII A. R. 615-860 per Par. 1.

According to Par. 61 A. R. 615-860, a Section VIII Board hearing will not be given until every effort has been made to rehabilitate the soldier. A Section VIII may be given if it is considered impossible to rehabilitate the soldier after repeated attempts have been made. The above was quoted from Company Administration written by Col. Virtue. Also, the procedure outlined will not be resorted to until every effort has been made to develop the soldier as an individual. Neither will it be resorted to until after consideration has been given the desirability of transferring the man, without expense to the government, to another organization of the Regiment or Post at which he may be serving in order that he may be given opportunity to prove his worth and thus avoid the expense involved in furnishing a replacement.

In spite of their repeated requests for transfer on the Post no consideration or opportunity was given for transfer away from environment that was contributing and major factor for such accusations and allegations that were made. Pagett and Oshetner were stationed at Daytona Beach, Fla. for eleven months during which time they were subjected to and observed the prevailing atmosphere of Coquina R. as a barracks for the WAC. In their opinion it has undermined and endangered the morale and reputation of many WAC as to bring scandal, disgrace and disaster to the Second WAC Training Center as a whole. Most derogatory remarks, regarding the WAC, within and outside the Corps have had as their incentive the environment and conditions existing in Coquina. Because of the inactivity and lack of normal social contact of the enlisted personnel stationed there malicious gossip has run rampant and many innocent persons have become involved. Many officers and non-coms are without twinees of their own and have no specific full duty to perform, consequently having no constructive outlet for this idleness they resort to listening to gossip and prying into the personal affairs of other persons as to what they do when off duty.

At the invitation and insistence of Lt. Georgia L. Joyce to meet her on an equal social plane, and having overcome their reluctance as to the association between officer and non-com, they become friends with her. One day the Lt. jokingly and crestfallen asked them if they would help her substantiate some rumors and gossip concerning officers and non-coms stationed at Coquina in regards to drinking and possibly any homosexual activities for her own personal information and to satisfy her own curiosity. They were rather embarrassed and surprised in her asking them about these rumors as they were not concerned or involved in any such associations, however they assumed that the Lt. asked them about these things because of their being acquainted with the past and the present personnel. So they thought nothing about it. At one time Pagett asked the Lt. some things if she

within the WAC through policing among the women's colleagues and superiors. The overall writing of the cases and investigations convey an environment that attaches lesbianism to "unfitness" and "immoral behavior." These women suspected of lesbianism were either recommended for dismissal because of resulting actions from being reported as a lesbian or were recommended to be allowed to continue their assignments but "under observation." In addition, these anti-LGBTQ policies encouraged or caused some WAC women to police and report on one another. Some of these reports led to WAC members being dishonorably discharged.

Some of the women listed in the "Briefs of Current Delinquency Cases" are further discussed under a separate report summarizing pending disciplinary cases. Mae Belle Fink, for example, is described as "very masculine in appearance and action, sexually unbalanced, [and] considered by informants to be homosexual."⁸ But what does it mean to be "very masculine in appearance and action"? The report relies on the hetero-cis-sexist legibility of women's appearance and sexual identities to create the logical leap that she is "considered by informants to be homosexual" because she is "very masculine in appearance and action."

In 1945, the military produced a pamphlet titled "Sex Hygiene Course: Women's Army Corps" to distribute to personnel. The pamphlet covers anatomy and physiology of the reproductive system and menstruation, prevention and control of venereal disease, sexual relationships, and homosexuality. The pamphlet frames homosexuality as issue of "hygiene" — that is, an issue of both moral and physical cleanliness. The pamphlet informs its reader that "Homosexuality is of interest to you as WAC officers, only so far as its manifestations undermine the efficiency of the individuals concerned and the stability of the group."⁹ The pamphlet identifies homosexuality as both a threat to the group, as well as to them as individuals: "the possible effects of homosexual indulgence; that it is, first of all, something unnatural, and as such may cause psychological development contrary to nature's intention."¹⁰ In contrast to earlier reports on suspected homosexual women in the military, the pamphlet makes clear that "outward appearance and mannerisms do not necessarily indicate a tendency to homosexuality."¹¹ The pamphlet continues by suggesting ways to prevent or remedy women who might be curious or susceptible to homosexual relationships; the pamphlet recommends dismissing "active homosexuals" as quickly as possible.

The idea that gay and lesbian military personnel were "less efficient" and morally suspect is one that continued for several decades, and frequently comes up in the

Army Discharges Homosexual WACs

BOSTON (UPI) — Two women soldiers have been dismissed from the U.S. Army because they are admitted homosexuals.

Administrative hearings were held at Ft. Devens for Pfc. Barbara Randolph and Pvt. Debbie Watson. Miss Randolph, 22, of Jefferson, Ind., was given a general discharge for unfitness, and Miss Watson, 21, of San Antonio, Tex., received a similar discharge, with one hearing officer voting for an honorable discharge.

Their attorney, Jerry Cohen, said the legal fight would be taken into federal court once appeals are made to the commanding officer at Ft. Devens and the Army Board for Correction of Military Records.

Such a discharge makes them ineligible for all veterans' benefits.

The hearing was conducted by one female and two male officers, who recommended the two women be separated from the Army Security Agency.

Randolph was accused at the hearing by the Army prosecutor of being a "good student, but a rotten influence." He said she was "given every opportunity to straighten her personal life out, but that wasn't enough."

The Army claimed she admitted being a homosexual to avoid taking an assignment in Korea and being separated from her lover.

"Her only offense was honesty," said Cohen.

WACs will fight homosexual ban

BOSTON (AP) — Two WACs who confessed their homosexuality because they were "tired of leading a double life" say they will fight an effort by the Army to discharge them.

An Army spokesman at Fort

National Organization for Women, and Gay Media Action, a homosexual rights group.

Both said at a news conference that they were concerned about a possible dishonorable discharge and what it would do



Spec. 4 Marie Sode (left) and her husband, Kristian L. von Hoffburg, a former WAC who is psychologically a male transsexual but is still a biological female, listen while an Army board at Fort Rucker, Ala., recommends that the specialist be discharged.

Army seeks to discharge WAC wed to former WAC

Fort Rucker, Ala. (AP)—An Army board yesterday recommended that Spec. 4 Marie Sode be expelled for "homosexual tendencies," a finding based on her marriage to a former WAC who claims to be a transsexual male.

The board of two men and two women unanimously ruled that although the couple think of themselves, and relate, as man and wife, Specialist Sode, 22, is unsuitable to remain in the service because she and Kristian von Hoffburg, 29, live together as "biological females."

The Army's attorney said the case was "truly unusual" and may result in a servicewide policy on transsexuality. None exists now.

As used in these proceedings, the word transsexual means a person with the physical attributes of one sex but the feelings of the other.

The board said the discharge should be "honorable," but Specialist Sode, who has fought any dismissal, said she "most likely" will seek a federal court order to block it.

The board's action is subject to military review and it will be at least a week

before the brigade commander, Col. George Powers, will decide if the recommendation should be followed.

Specialist Sode held hands with Mr. von Hoffburg as Lt. Col. Gerald Green read the decision of the administrative panel. She appeared only slightly shaken and later calmly told reporters she was somewhat relieved that the ordeal was over.

She added that she had "no regrets" about her three years in the Army, except for the way they appear to be ending.

She said there was "no biological proof" of any female-to-female relationship in her marriage. Mr. von Hoffburg added that the ruling places the sexual conduct of many people in a new light and jeopardizes their future.

The board deliberated about two hours before ruling:

- That Specialist Sode relates to Mr. von Hoffburg as her male husband.

- That Mr. von Hoffburg is a psychological female-to-male transsexual, but at the same time is "a biological female."

- That because of a husband-wife relationship between "biological females" the soldier is "unsuitable for retention."

reporting on court-martial cases. In 1952, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported on a court-martial case in which a private, Ann Kierce, was assaulted by six sergeants. During the trial, the defense argued that the "court martial should have been allowed to question Miss Kierce about alleged homosexuality in an effort to discredit her testimony."¹² The article reports that "Judge Paul W. Brosman of the United States military court of appeals today raised the question of whether all homosexuals are liars."¹³

In February of 1973, after having married two weeks prior, Private Valerie J. Randolph and Private Gail J. Bates spoke with the *Sun Reporter*. "Over 90% of the women who join the WACS leave the WACS married, to each other," one of the women explained.¹⁴ The reporting on this particular case is important because Bates' experience in the military was also specifically as a black lesbian. The news article illustrates the way in which race shaped how they were treated:

Gail told members of the press that she and Valerie were given a warning against fraternizing by a white lesbian sergeant. (Fraternizing in the WACS has been described as being overly friendly with each other). The two women explained that they could not understand the warning or the sergeant's behavior. "Most of the officers are white and lesbians. "Mixed couples, like me and Gail are frowned upon," Valerie said. "Gail presented a threat by being black and the male figure in our relationship." "The Sergeant who gave us the warning really wanted me to be hers," Valerie said.¹⁵

Randolph and Bates explained that they were speaking up to the press to "denounce the racist tactics of the Women's Army Corps and the sexual oppressive and exploitative trips of commanding officers who use their rank to try and

gain sexual favors."¹⁶ At the time, both women were being threatened by the military with long term imprisonment, court-martial, and a dishonorable discharge. By March of the same year, the newspaper *Afro-American* had reported Randolph had been discharged from the Army since the marriage. An information specialist had informed the paper that "Pvt. Randolph confessed openly to homosexuality before an Army board and that admission warranted her release. Pvt. Randolph was given an honorable discharged from the military, but the release carries a notation that she was separated because of her homosexual perversion."¹⁷ The review for Bates was scheduled to happen the week after the publication of the article.

In 1975, the *Boston Globe* reported on a court-martial case held at Fort Devens. Private First Class Barbara Randolph and Private Debbie Watson had disclosed their relationship to the military because "other women were being threatened with dishonorable discharges for homosexuality."¹⁸ Although Randolph and Watson were stationed at a different Fort than Randolph and Bates, it is possible that they believed that the prevalence of homosexual relationships in the military would save them from dishonorable discharge, despite being against military regulations. A dishonorable discharge came with a hefty consequence socially as well as financially that would follow them for the rest of their lives. They believed if they disclosed, they would "be allowed to stay in the Army," but instead they were court-martialed for their personal life actions outside of the WAC.¹⁹ The Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts represented their interest and argued that the "Army's action against the women [were] unconstitutional and it [was] an invasion of their privacy." Randolph and Watson, along with their legal representation, fought for their right to privacy directly challenging

Army leader approves recommendation expelling clerk for homosexual tendencies

FT. RUCKER, Ala. (AP)—An Army commander yesterday approved the recommendation of a military board that Army clerk Marie Sode be expelled from the service for "homosexual tendencies" based on her marriage to a transsexual man.

Col. George F. Powers, commander of the 1st Aviation Brigade, agreed with the board that Spec. 4 Sode and her husband, a former WAC who now goes by the name Kristian von Hoffburg, live

together as "biological females."

It routinely takes from one to three days for Army personnel to be processed out of the service.

A suit to block the Army's action has been filed on behalf of Spec. 4 Sode, according to Morris Dees, chief trial attorney for the Southern Poverty Law Centre in Montgomery. He said yesterday that the suit, filed in federal court in Montgomery on Tuesday, charged that the Army wrongfully and arbitrarily classified Spec. 4 Sode as having "homosexual tendencies."

Col. Powers upheld the June finding of the board of two

men and two women that

— Von Hoffburg, known to the Army as Linda Bowers, had psychologically switched from female to male but had not yet done so biologically or surgically.

— Army regulations do not provide for marriages between persons of the same sex.

The order is for an "honorable" discharge. Spec. 4 Sode has fought any kind of discharge.

A 22-year-old from San Diego, Calif., Spec. 4 Sode has maintained that she is not a lesbian and that von Hoffburg lives as a man even though no final sex-change operation has been done.

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2 Wacs to fight probable homosexual discharges

Osgood, Viola *Boston Globe* (1960-1989); Boston, Mass. [Boston, Mass]04 June 1975; 3. Browse this issue

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Abstract/Details

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"Army regulation 635-200 [which] states: 'Personnel who voluntarily engage in homosexual acts, irrespective of sex, will not be permitted to serve in the Armed Forces in any capacity, and their prompt separation is mandatory.'"²⁰

Despite their arguments, the Army still decided to give them "a general discharge for unfitness."²¹ The discharge, although not dishonorable, still made them ineligible for all veteran's benefits. During the court-martial, Randolph was accused of only "admitt[ing] being a homosexual to avoid taking an assignment in Korea and being separated from her lover."²² In every step of their fight for equality, the Army used the lesbianism of Watson and Randolph to characterize them as "unfit" for military service. This characterization, however, was contrary to the Privates' own military records; *The Austin American Statesman* reported that "Ms. Randolph had received an accelerated promotion and had been named WAC of the month and soldier of the month at Ft. Devens in Ayer."²³

In 1977, *The Atlanta Constitution* reported on the court-martial of Marie Sode and former WAC Kristian von Hoffburg for their marriage. They were officially married in Alabama near Ft. Rucker by a probate judge "who said he did not realize both were women."²⁴ Sode was "expelled for [her] homosexual tendencies," which was "based on her marriage to a former WAC who claim[ed] to be a transsexual male."²⁵ Sode's legal team argued that their marriage was a heterosexual one as Hoffburg was "psychologically a male transsexual."²⁶ It was the first court-martial case dealing with a transgender individual and the board defined Hoffburg as "biologically female," rejecting his identity as a transgender man.²⁷ Sode's defense appealed within the court-martial system but her dismissal was swiftly upheld by army leadership. The Southern Poverty Law Centre of Montgomery informed the media that "a suit to block the Army's action [had] been filed on behalf" of Sode following her expulsion but either the media lost interest or no such filing occurred as there is no follow-up.²⁸

The court-martial system and military regulations had long defined homosexuality as an immoral behavior that indicates a lack of fitness for military service. Sode's case differs as she was openly described as a good soldier during her court-martial hearing.²⁹ The commander of her unit told the panel that Sode was "an above average soldier who had not indicated any homosexual leanings on base."³⁰

In 1993, while President Bill Clinton was in office, Congress passed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue," now known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," or DADT. This policy prohibited the practice of investigating and discriminating against military personnel for suspected homosexuality, while simultaneously barring *openly* gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons from military service. *The*

Woman Married to Ex-WAC Described as Good Soldier

FT. RUCKER, Ala. (AP) — A young Army woman, threatened with discharge for marrying an ex-WAC, was described at a hearing Tuesday as a good soldier — but one the Army would prefer to do without.

Spec. 4 Marie Sode, a wispy 22-year-old with long blonde hair and light blue eyes, sat quietly at the hearing with her husband of seven months, Kristian von Hoffburg, 29, formerly known as Linda Bowers.

Spec. 4 Sode is accused of "homosexual tendencies," a trait which the Army says "seriously impairs the discipline, good order, morale and security of a military unit."

A three-year veteran of the Army, Spec. 4 Sode denied she has any homosexual tendencies. She said Kristian's sexuality is masculine.

Von Hoffburg is a self-avowed transsexual — a person who is born one sex but

feels he or she is really a member of the opposite sex.

Both said they would not take the stand during the hearing, an administrative procedure which, at worst for the woman soldier, could result in a general discharge.

The commander of her unit, Capt. Charles D. Goldman, told the hearing panel of two men and two women that he considered Spec. 4 Sode an above average soldier who had not indicated any homosexual leanings on base.

Goldman said disclosure of the marriage created a negative attitude among some in the unit and tended to disrupt it.

Sode and von Hoffburg were married at nearby Elba last Nov. 11. Both were wearing military fatigues during the ceremony and the judge said he did not know there was anything unusual about the sex of the bridegroom.

Advocate reported: "President Clinton emphasiz[ed] that the government should not 'appear to be endorsing a gay lifestyle.' The President offered support for the approach of 'don't ask, don't tell' — the label given to a range of plans — that would allow lesbians and gays to serve in the military but would impose limits on how open they could be about their sexuality."³¹ Although Clinton had campaigned on a promise to allow all citizens to serve in the military regardless of sexual orientation, many people in the LGBTQ community were disappointed and angered by the compromise of DADT:

*Four decades of fighting for gay rights has brought us to where the hallmark of our oppression, the closet, is offered as the precondition of our progress. We are asked to stay in the closet (don't tell) in exchange for non-discrimination (don't ask). They would allow us to be gay off-base but not allow us to be open participants in the service. And they would leave the current policy intact.*³²

Barney Frank, himself a gay Democratic Congressman, had proposed the compromise, stating that "it became increasingly clear to him that gay and lesbian groups were losing ground in the debate to right-wing political groups and antigay military officials who dominated the Senate hearings on the ban," and feared that they might propose an even stricter policy.³³ In 2010, under the Obama administration, DADT was repealed.³⁴

The WAC collection on History Vault, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, and ProQuest LGBT Magazine Archive tell a story of not only homophobic policies but of invasive investigations of servicewomen's lives attempting to impart the organization's more way of life. These archival collections contain military reports, policies, and pamphlets, as well as news coverage that represent how the LGBTQ community responded to their treatment in the military.

Notes

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DATABASES COVERED

- Ethnic Newswatch
- LGBT Magazine Archive
- ProQuest Central
- ProQuest Historical Newspapers
 - *The Atlanta Constitution*
 - *The Austin American Statesman*
 - *The Baltimore Afro-American*
 - *The Baltimore Sun*
 - *The Boston Globe*
 - *Chicago Tribune*
 - *The Globe and Mail*
 - *The New York Times*
- ProQuest History Vault: Women at Work during World War II: Rosie the Riveter and the Women's Army Corps

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