

TEACHER'S GUIDE
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MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

Jim Crow at Camp Dix

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided many African American enrollees with valuable training and educational opportunities. While the legislation that established the CCC required that the corps accept young men regardless of race, the program was administered at the state level, resulting in instances of segregation. African-American corpsmen confronted racial prejudice and hostility both within the CCC camps and from nearby white communities. Luther C. Wandall, an African American from New York City, wrote the following account of his experiences in a segregated Civilian Conservation Corps camp for Crisis, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

During the two years of its previous existence I had heard many conflicting reports concerning the Civilian Conservation Corps, President Roosevelt's pet project. One boy told me that he almost froze to death one night out in Washington. Some said that the colored got all the leftovers. Others said that everything was all right. But my brother, who is a World War veteran, advised me emphatically: "I wouldn't be in anything connected with the Army." . . .

We reached Camp Dix about 7:30 that evening. As we rolled up in front of headquarters an officer came out to the bus and told us: "You will double-time as you leave this bus, remove your hat when you hit the door, and when you are asked questions, answer 'Yes, sir,' and 'No, sir.'"

And here it was that Mr. James Crow first definitely put in his appearance. When my record was taken at Pier I, a "C" was placed on it. When the busloads were made up at Whitehall street an officer reported as follows: "35, 8 colored." But until now there had been no distinction made.

But before we left the bus the officer shouted emphatically: "Colored boys fall out in the rear." The colored from several buses were herded together, and stood in line until after the white boys had been registered and taken to their tents. This seemed to be the established order of procedure at Camp Dix.

This separation of the colored from the whites was completely and rigidly maintained at this camp. One Puerto Rican, who was darker than I, and who preferred to be with the colored, was regarded as pitifully uninformed by the officers.

Source: Luther C. Wandall, "A Negro in the CCC," *Crisis* Vol. 42 (August, 1935): 244.
<http://newdeal.feri.org/aacc/aacc01.htm>

