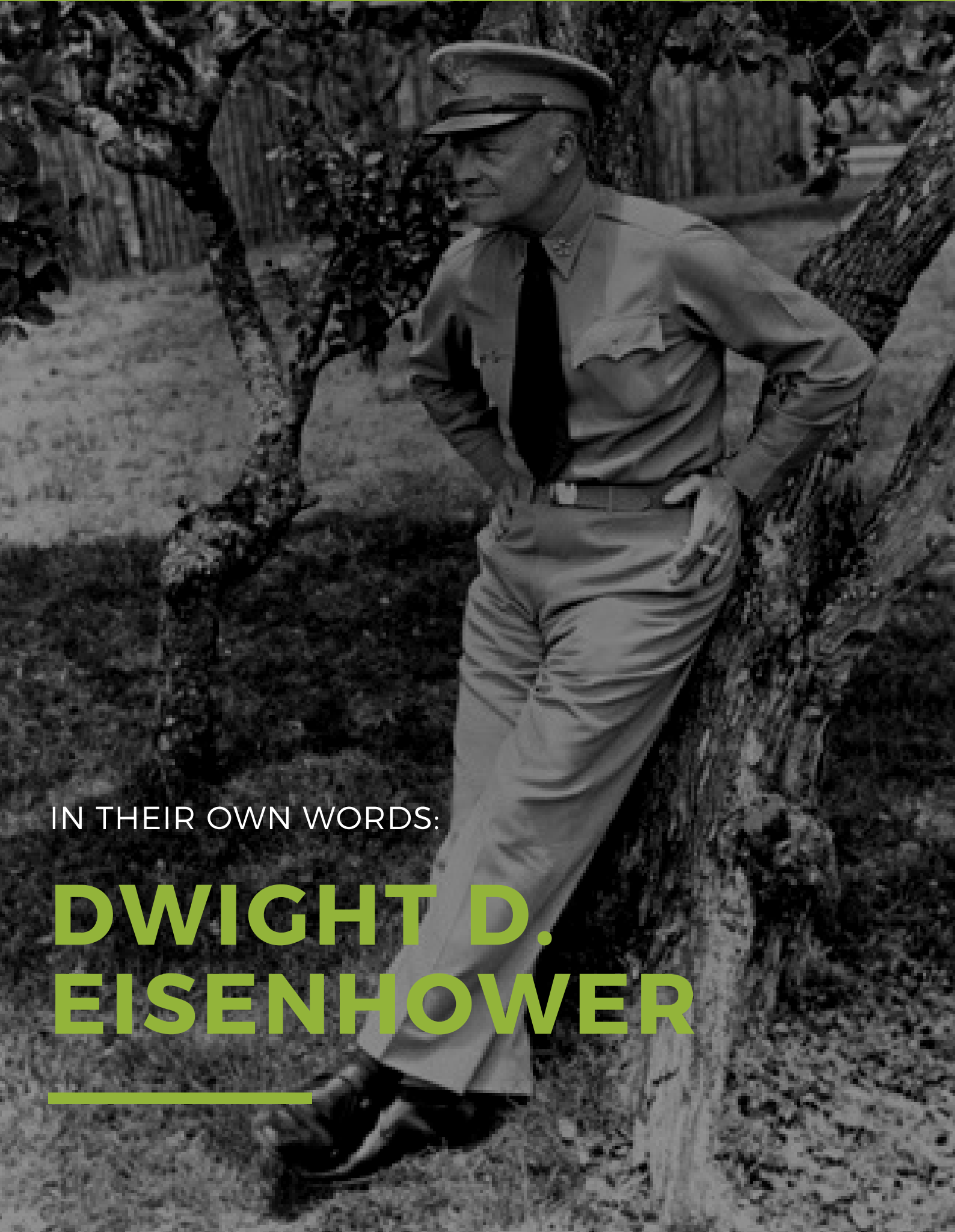


1948 - 1952

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

**DWIGHT D.  
EISENHOWER**

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## Testimony on Universal Military Training, Senate Committee on Armed Services, April 24

It [segregation in the army] has been the problem, of course, that has been with the Army ever since it has been with the country. We must never forget that in a very definite way the Army is merely one of the mirrors that holds up to our faces the United States of America. It has never been easy to solve because you have certain incontrovertible facts that you must walk right up to.

“One of them is that there is race prejudice in this country, and when you put in the same organization and make live together under the most intimate circumstances men of different races. We sometimes have trouble. Therefore, there has been a sort of a compromise made with this problem, right down through the years with the Army. When I first joined the Army, there were two regiments of infantry that were Negro, two regiments of cavalry. We began to organize smaller units, and I believe at the present regulations allow us to build down to company strength, the company being the smallest administrative unit. It allows them to live together, mess together, sleep together, and so on.

“In war, when we became so desperate for infantry replacements in the fall of 1944, we did not make the best use of our Negro manpower. We had some 600,000 in Europe. We told the Negroes we would take volunteers for service in the line, in the front lines; 2,400 volunteered. Those 2,400 were organized as platoons, the real reason being this. There was not time to train them in larger units, and because we found that they fought better when distributed in small units, with the white troops. They do not seem to gain a self-confidence among themselves when used in larger units, and the platoon worked out very well.

“There was no opposition to it. In fact, Gen. George Patton thought that it was the finest way in the world to use them.

“I personally have always stood since that time for organizing the Negro down to include units no larger than platoons. It does create certain social problems on a post, because you always have men that do not like to mingle freely between the races, and therefore if you have a dance for your soldiers, you have a problem. But I believe those things can be handled. They are not too difficult, particularly since we are going to have large posts, the social problem can be met without difficulty. I personally see no reason why he should not be amalgamated to that extent.

“Now, if you are going to go further, here is the problem you run into, Senator. In general, the Negro is less well educated than his brother citizen who is white, and if you make a complete amalgamation, what you are going to have is in every company the Negro is going to be relegated to the minor jobs, and he is never going to get his promotion to such grades as technical sergeant, master sergeant, and so on, because the competition is too tough.

“If on the other hand, he is in smaller units of his own, he can go up to that rate, and I believe he is entitled to the chance to show his own wares.

“I do not mean to say that I have any final answer to the problem, and I believe that the human race may finally grow up to the point where it will not be a problem. It will disappear through education, through mutual respect, and so on. But I do believe that if we attempt merely by passing a lot of laws to force someone to like someone else, we are just going to get into trouble.

# 1948



“On the other hand, I do not by any means hold out for the extreme segregation as I said when I first joined the Army 38 years ago.”

Eisenhower, 4/2/48, Hearings, 995-996.

President Eisenhower accompanied by General Omar Bradley (left), and Lt. General George S. Patton, inspect stolen art treasures hidden in the Merkers salt mine. April 12, 1945. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park. Photograph. Accession 111-SC-204516. <https://collections.ushmm.org>.

## “The Future of the Negro”

“There is a movement and a trend abroad in the land today, that if there is a difficult job to perform, we say “Let the government do it. What is Washington going to do about it? And in the measure that that spirit and that habit grows, we are forsaking all the principles – the methods that have made this country great.

“These people who would have us forsake the ancient principles, who would have us forego [sic] some of our liberties and our freedom in return for what they call security from the Federal Government, are aided and abetted by a type of person called the agitator. He hopes through the unrest that he can engender through class warfare – racial differences to create a division that will allow him to get into a position of power where he and his group like him can tell us what to do.

“One of the groups that the agitator is always attacking is the Negro section of the population. To my mind one of the great glories of the American Negro today is tyhat this agitator has had no slightest measure of success. In my mind, not so great a success as he has had in other groups. It has been my great privilege more than once to appear before congressional committees and elsewhere and testify to the loyalty and the value to us of that great ten percent of our population that is Negro in race.

“They, like their white brothers, have their representatives lying under the crosses of Tunisia, of Normandy and the Rhine. They have never hesitated to spill their blood for this great country. They have a record that is not merely to be found in that line of generalization. They have their own great individual people to whom they may point as evidences of what they can do, what they are certain to do as we come in in this country more and more to exercise the true principles of democracy.

“For my own part, in seeking some definition for the word ‘democracy,’ I believe that one satisfies me the more than the other. ‘Democracy is the political expression of a deeply felt religion.’ If, therefore, we are going to exercise the principles of democracy, we are going to remember the great tenets of whatever particular religious philosophy to which we adhere – and they are all wise and good in that they condemn injustice, unfairness, and they do not allow complacency to recall unfairness or inequality of opportunity.

“It is not for any man to say today that any of us have erased from our hearts the last vestiges of prejudice. That is not true. We are fallible people and although we may have been created in the image of our Maker, we certainly have not at this time of world development, attained to that spiritual perfection that we can claim the virtue that we know that Creator possesses. But we can strive toward it, and what I am trying to say, is the virtue is in the striving.

“That is the reason that I think Negroes should be so proud of Booker T. Washington; George Washington Carver; Ralph Bunche, today one of the greatest statesmen this country has produced. And I admire Jackie Robinson right along with them. But more than that – more than in those mere special cases, I should like to point one thing out which I fervently believe – there is no race in the history man – none – going back to the Pharoahs and the Ark – that has, in eighty-five years, come so far on the road to understanding useful citizenship, satisfaction in its own culture and its own advancement as the American Negro race. Only eighty-five years ago I suppose, although I have not looked up records, but I suppose it would have been an exaggeration to say that one Negro out of a thousand could read and write – at least with any facility. And yet look at them today – everywhere – educated along with all the rest of American citizens.



“Now, if Negroes have come all that way in eighty-five years in terms of history, think of what great moment that is. How many people can quickly tell how many years there were, for example, between the Peloponnesian War and the Phoenician War in Rome? Well, a couple of hundred years. What I am trying to point out, when you look at it in terms of history, two hundred years is nothing. But in eighty-five years Negroes have come far. What will they be saying about the Negro race in the year 2000? We will just say Americans because that is what we are.”

Eisenhower, *The Future of the Negro*,” *Negro Digest* 8 (February 1950): 3-4.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower talks with Lt. Gen. Lucius B. Clay at Gatow Airport in Berlin, Germany during the Potsdam Conference. July 20, 1957. Credit: United States National Archives and Records Administration. Photograph. Accession 198840. <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

## **American Legion National Convention, Abilene, Kan, Post 39, August 25**

“All of us who salute the flag, whatever our color or creed, or job or place of birth, are Americans entitled to the full rights and the full privileges of our citizenship. In a time when America needs all the skills, all the spiritual strength and dedicated services of its 150 million people, discrimination is criminally stupid. ”

New York Times, 8/26/52, 12 (emphasis theirs).

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## **Cleveland, Ohio, September 8**

We should eliminate every vestige of segregation in the District of Columbia. ”

Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, 1/9/53, 57.



## Wheeling, W. Va. , September 24

“... we seek in America a true equality of opportunity for all men. I have no patience with the idea of second-class citizenship. For many years the Administration party has been pointing to a promised land where no American would be subject to the indignity of discrimination. But their promised land has always proved to be a political mirage.

“It is time that leadership was put in the hands of those willing and able to advance the cause of equality of opportunity. To advance this cause there are many things that we can and must do.

“Vigorous action, including legislation at local levels can accomplish much. The Federal Government must help in a variety of ways. It can establish machinery to determine the facts of discrimination and hold these facts up for all the people to see.

“Segregation in the nation’s capital must be abolished. Likewise there must be an end to such segregation as still remains in the armed forces. In no operation of the Federal government is there a place for discrimination of any kind. We must work for the abolition of restrictions remaining anywhere on the basic American right to vote.

“In this sensitive area of human relations, we must always remember that an ounce of leadership is worth a pound of law.”

## Civil Rights Speech in Harlem, New York, October 25

“Now I bring you another question obviously of great interest to you people. We know that America has not achieved under its great Constitution that full perfection of operation that it should with respect to equal opportunity for all citizens. There is discrimination. This crusade is pledged to use every single item of leadership and influence it has to eliminate it. It intends to enforce the full Constitution, not part of it.

“Specifically, something has been said about my past efforts to eliminate segregation in the services. I want before I leave that subject to say this: I mentioned the 2,600 Negro troops that volunteered for front-line service in the most critical part of our campaign in Europe. Most of those served in the Army of a great and exacting soldier, a man who knew a brave man when he saw him. That was George Patton.[i] His personal report to me was these men serving in these squads and platoons in these divisions upheld their part. They performed real fighting service.

“It was on that evidence and on that kind of knowledge that I worked for this business of reducing and working toward elimination of segregation. That has gone on. It is well under way and I pledge you that it is going to be done promptly and without any further alibis or excuses.

“Next, my friends, in the nation’s capital we have had the poorest possible example given to those of other lands of what this country is and what it means to each of us. So far as there is power placed in me as an individual or officially, I shall never cease to work with all the power I can to get rid of that kind of thing in the District of Columbia.

“Let me extend that. Wherever the Federal Government has responsibility; wherever it collects taxes from you to spend money, whether it be in a contract for recreational facilities or anything else that it does for a citizen of the United States, there will be no discrimination as long as I can help it in private or public life based on any such thing as color or creed or religion—never. Wherever funds are used, where Federal authority extends, there will be fairness.

“Now, ladies and gentlemen, in concluding this short statement, I want to say this: I do not come before you to engage in any competition of political promises. The party in power in the last seven years has used up every possible political promise there is, and some of them have gotten pretty shopworn. For example, there is no easier way to duck an issue than to say this, ‘I promise you a law,’ knowing they cannot deliver it. There is no easier way to get out of a situation. What I promise you is work, never-ending work, to make certain that justice is done.

“So I cannot come before you with the competition of promises, but I do come before you with a pledge, and this is the pledge. If you want to put this crusade at the helm of your Government; if you want to substitute for these . 22 caliber men who are trying to hold . 45 caliber jobs the finest men and women that we can draw from all sections of this country and from every walk of life—and let me say plainly, based upon merit and without respect to color or creed: if you want to have a government of that kind, then you belong in this crusade.

“The pledge will be that that group of men and women responsible for directing the political destinies of the country will be fair and just. They will be fair and just, as God gives them the power to see justice and the right. Moreover, they will be friendly. They will be people right out of this crowd that will be occupying positions where they will be your representatives to see that this Government is serving you, not trying to rule over you. It will not be guilty of what a St. Louis judge, a judge appointed by a Democratic administration said about certain highly appointed people. He said ‘He sold his birthright for a dirty mess of pottage.’

“You will have your own representatives down here and they can assure you that this new government will not only open up all these dark closets, drag out these skeletons, expose them to view; but they will keep these closets open so you and I and the rest of the people can look in them every day of our lives and know that we have an honest government, a government behind which we can follow with pride, and for which we will not be apologizing for our national leadership.

“Ladies and gentlemen, if that is what you believe, if that is what you want, get aboard. ”

## Address in Chicago Denouncing Fair Deal Misrule, October 31

“Our crusade will fight unceasingly for all those things that have made our American system what it is. We will strive to make equality of opportunity a living fact for every American. I have said this in every part of our country – Newark, N. J, and Tampa, Fla. , in Boston, Mass. , and Columbia, S. C. Second-class citizenship reflects second-class Americanism. We will put an end to the exploitation of remaining discrimination for political advantage. Our crusade offers real progress based on positive leadership. ”



John H. Sengstacke, publisher of the Chicago Defender, presents DDE with the Robert Abbott Award. May 5, 1955. Credit: National Park Service. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home. Photograph. Accession 72-1348-1. <https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov>.