

An Applied History of U.S. Military Racial Policy

The Biracial Children of Dutch Limburg and WW II Europe

In the Netherlands, a small group of biracial citizens has entered its eighth decade of lives that have been often puzzling and difficult, but which offer a unique insight into the history of race relations in America. Though their African American fathers had brought liberation from Nazi tyranny at the end of World War II, they had arrived in a segregated American military that derived from a racially divisive American society. Decades later, some of their children could finally know of a father's identity and the life he had led after the war. Just one would be able to find an embrace in his arms, and just one would arrive at her father's American grave after 73 years. But they could now understand their own Dutch lives in the context of their fathers' lives in America.



The children of American soldiers in World War II. Twenty-two thousand in England, perhaps 1,700 of African American fathers; as many as 100,000 to 150,000 in Germany and Austria, perhaps 6,000 biracial by the mid-1950s. The biracial children of the 1940s and 1950s would resurface in public consciousness in the first 20 years of the 21st century. Many of those still alive sought to know the identities and the lives of their fathers. And no less so in the smallest national number of them in Limburg, the Netherlands. That number of seventy could only be estimated in retrospect and by observation. There were no bureaucratic checkmarks to note at their births and many had been born ambiguously with various surmises about their appearance, if a difference was even noticeable at birth.



Mieke Kirkels in the Netherlands

–

Chris Dickon in the United States

Kirkels and Dickon not only show how segregation was shamefully maintained on American soil, but also how the complex racial relations regulated in this way entered another dimension when these soldiers were deployed overseas for the liberation of Western Europe. . . a history which in this book finally gets the attention it deserves. – Kees Ribbens, NIOD, Amsterdam.

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