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'Ashby B. Carter, Postal Employee, Chief, Deserving Of A Tribute

How often do we as citizens in a great metropolis like Chicago realize that among the people with whom we rub shoulders daily can be found men of great stature. At public or private gatherings, in public conveyances, and in many other places these people are quite often present.

Yet because of their modest self-enacting disposition, we many times overlook some of our most profound and illustrious leaders. Among such persons is Ashby B. Carter, President of the National Alliance of Postal Employees.

For many years he has gone quietly about his work in improving the conditions under which many of our postal employees are daily employed. Yet while doing this most useful job in behalf of 40,000 Negro postal employees, he has been a very active worker for community betterment.

A few weeks ago while in Washington attending the Civil Rights Mobilization Program sponsored by the NAACP, I had an occasion to talk with Mr. Carter. Such an association was quite refreshing.

I learned much about the problems of postal employees. I learned that the great majority of postal employees (clerks, letter carriers, mail handlers, and supervisors) are under the supervision of the Bureau of Operations of the Post Office Department, and that out of the estimated 40,000 Negro postal employees a Negro has never been elevated to this Bureau.

While the accepted standards of advancement in the Post Office Department are based on seniority, merit, and ability, for some strange reason no Negro has been placed in this Bureau other than in the most menial jobs.

It was pointed out that "from 1947 until 1951 there was a non-career Negro that held the title of Confidential Assistant to the First Assistant Postmaster General." It is amusing to note that the duties of this expansively named position were so confidential that no one was able to ascertain just what this meant.

Last year the Confidential Assistant to the First Assistant Postmaster General resigned and to date this position has not been filled for the very convenient reason that no funds were available.

Knowing as most of us do how Negroes are usually given the run around on jobs such as this, it seems to me that in the highly

important office of the Chief Clerk and Director of Personnel of the Post Office Department Negroes should be represented.

Let's take for instance the loyalty program. It is common knowledge that if a Negro complains about race discrimination or if he has white friends visit with him in his home or if he is seen too frequently on the street with white people his loyalty is questioned. The thinking is that only Communists are guilty of these things.

The Chief and Director of Personal serves as Chairman of the Departmental Loyalty Board and serves as Fair Employment Officer for the Department. As a rule he knows very little about Negroes, and it is not reasonable to assume that he can evaluate and judge fairly the loyalty of Negro employees or whether they are victims of unfair employment practices without having the full benefit of the thinking, suggestions, experiences, and advice of a qualified Negro on his staff.

I have information that Negroes have been known to pass the examinations but they were victims of an "unwritten law" denying them appointments because of race. In a few cities—New York, Chicago, Detroit—Negro post office clerks have been detailed or loaned to do certain types of special work with and for bona fide inspectors BUT none are inspectors.

Ashby Carter has devoted a great deal of his time in trying to correct these maladies of injustice and it would seem to me that our Negro politicians in high office should lend an ear to the endeavors of this stalwart and courageous man.

This should also be implemented by the assistance of the Negro churches, our trade unions, and those who are interested in the full application of our great Constitution. I would suggest, however, that candidates for Congress and the United States Senate and those having to do with the affairs of our Government begin to ask questions. Why is it that these injustices appear in the Post Office Department and what are you going to do about it?

Let's not only salute Ashby B. Carter, but let's join with him in his great crusade for the betterment and the advancement of Negro postal employees.