

Letter to Her Husband

Eleanor Roosevelt, circa WWII

*Psst... I just heard this*

I have just heard that no meeting was ever held between colored leaders like Walter White, Mr. Hill and Mr. Randolph, with the secretary of War and Navy on the subject of how the colored people can participate in the services.

*The rumble is growing about this*

There is growing feeling amongst the colored people, and they are creating a feeling among many white people. They feel they should be allowed to participate in any training that is going on, in the aviation, army, navy, and have opportunities for service.

*Say this*

I would suggest that a conference be held with the attitude of the gentlemen: these are our difficulties, how do you suggest that we make a beginning to change the situation?

There is no use of going into a conference unless they have the intention of doing something. This is going to be very bad politically, besides being intrinsically wrong, and I think you should ask that a meeting be held and if you cannot be present yourself, you should ask them to give you a report and it might be well to have General Watson present.

*You can solve the problem with quick action—*

E. R.

Note: It's important to look out for others. This letter from Eleanor Roosevelt is a perfect example of a message that was written to do just that. Eleanor positions herself as her husband's "wingman," in a sense, calling him to take decisive action in a charged situation. In this classroom exercise, students are asked to use the foundational structure of Eleanor's letter—its focus on her recollection of something she heard, her description of how it made others feel, and her suggestions about how and why the situation should be addressed—to craft their own "Heads Up From Your Wingman" essays.