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“DEEDS, NOT WORDS:”

AFRICAN AMERICAN OFFICERS OF WORLD WAR I IN THE BATTLE FOR RACIAL
EQUALITY

A Dissertation
Presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy
in the Department of History
The University of Mississippi

By

ADAM PATRICK WILSON

April 2012

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the relatively untold story of the black officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment, the first class of African Americans to receive officer training. In particular, this research examines the creation of the segregated Army officer training camp, these men's training and wartime experiences during World War I, and their post-war contributions fighting discrimination and injustice. These officers returned to America disillusioned with the nation's progress towards civil rights. Their leadership roles in the military translated into leadership roles in the post-war civil rights movement. Through their efforts, foundations for the modern Civil Rights movement were created.

Through analysis of these men's lives, the dissertation details how these men returned from war and impacted change in America. They attacked the legality of segregation through both local and national civil rights' cases, embraced leadership roles in the "New Negro" movement, highlighted the value of educating black youth, and fought to integrate the military. These men served as the vanguard of civil rights fighting first as soldiers for democracy in Europe and returning as leaders determined to defeat segregation and injustice.

DEDICATION

To my family, thank you for all your support and encouragement over the years. Without your love, guidance, patience, and prayers, this dream would have been impossible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The inspiration to write about the officers of Fort Des Moines came from a fascination I had for the subject while doing a research paper on the role of African Americans in World War I for the University of Tennessee at Martin's annual Civil Rights Conference. After reading several monographs on the topic, I continually found a sentence or two that referenced the officer training camp at Fort Des Moines as the first facility created to train black officers. Although my paper covered the much broader topic of African Americans in World War I, I'll be forever grateful for the opportunity to present that research paper at the conference. Thank you Dr. David Coffey and Dr. Alice Catherine Carls for that opportunity and for your encouragement throughout the years.

When I began graduate school, my interest in the officers of Fort Des Moines continued and seemingly the topic sought me out instead of vice versa. In fact, during my first seminar class, I was assigned to read *Groundwork*, Genna Rae McNeil's biography of Charles Hamilton Houston, the attorney responsible for the legal strategy employed in the landmark case. Amidst the pages of the book I read about Houston's experiences during officer training at Fort Des Moines and during World War I. McNeil discovered a quote during her research where Houston claimed that the bigotry and discrimination he faced while serving in the Army caused him to return home following the war and pursue a career in law to fight for his civil rights. I secretly pondered whether or not Houston's story was an isolated case and began my search for the roles other officers from Des Moines held in fighting for civil rights following World War I.

This search led me to an article by Dr. Hal S. Chase that explained how the segregated training camp came to be created during World War I. Moreover, while reading through the article, I noticed that Dr. Chase had conducted interviews with several officers. This peaked my interest further and upon the advice of one of my professors I contacted Dr. Chase to learn more about the interviews. From this contact sparked a devotion to seeking out the lives of the men who earned their commissions at the camp. Dr. Chase fanned the spark into flames through his excitement, encouragement, and his generosity. He invited me to visit him and his lovely wife Avril in Des Moines and continue my research there. Thank you Dr. Chase for all your support.

Additionally, I would like to thank the staffs of the institutions utilized during my research. These include the helpful individuals and archivists at the Fort Des Moines Museum and Educational Center, the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Oberlin College, and Morehouse College.

With deep gratitude I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Susan R. Grayzel, Dr. Charles K. Ross, and Dr. Lori A. Wolff. I would especially like to thank Dr. John R. Neff, my dissertation director, for his encouragement, his guidance, and his painstaking efforts and numerous hours spent assisting me in the completion of this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to thank my family; I dedicate this work to you. To my wife, Jennings, thank you for your encouragement and spending multiple vacations going to archives around the nation instead of somewhere more glamorous. To my brother, Eric, thank you for your support and for the humor we shared that lightened my heart and enabled me to continue working when wearied. Lastly, to my parents and grandparents, thank you for instilling in me a

passion for history at a young age. Thank you for all the trips to museums, battlefields, and historical landmarks. Additionally thank you for motivating me and assisting me in achieving this goal. My deepest gratitude goes to all my family, but I would especially like to thank my father for the hours he spent editing draft after draft of this work. Dad, thank you so much for your willingness to help me.

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INTRODUCTION

When Martin Luther King, Jr. preached his sermon on being a good neighbor, following the example of the Good Samaritan, he stated, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenges and controversy.”¹ World War I marked an era in which the measure of African American men was gauged not only by their actions in the international crisis occurring in Europe, the Middle East, and the Balkans, but also through their actions on the home front in fighting segregation, Jim Crow, and inequality.

In May of 1917, 1,250 black men—1,000 college graduates, faculty, and men of the black professional class, and 250 noncommissioned officers from the four established black Army units of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry—volunteered for officer training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. These men embarked boldly on the difficult journey of Army training to become the nation’s first class of African American officer candidates to earn their commissions. On October 15, 639 of these men graduated and shortly thereafter many of them joined the Ninety-Second Division boarding ships destined for France.²

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 35.

² Emmett J. Scott, *Scott’s Official History of The American Negro in the World War* (Emmett J. Scott, 1919), 90.

Historians have often overlooked the significance of these men earning their commissions when conducting broader studies that examined the military experiences of African Americans in World War I or analyzed black soldiers throughout American history.³ These studies not only neglect the magnitude of the U.S. Government's break with its practice of refusing black men commissions by its creation of the first black officer training regiment, but they also diminish the importance of this defining moment for the 639 men who, through individual sacrifice and collective effort, graduated and were commissioned into the United States Army—landing a blow against the bigotry and inequality of Jim Crow in the military and throughout America.

In honoring the historical achievement of the first African American officer candidate class of 1917, the Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center claims, “After completing training, they . . . went on to lead the 92nd Division against Imperial Germany on the bloody battlefields of France in 1918. Many of those who survived combat returned to America to become leaders in the battle for racial equality.”⁴ The center fails to comment, however, on the specifics of these contributions. How did they become “leaders in the battle for racial equality”? What specific events in their lives entitle them to this designation? This dissertation seeks to

³ Numerous works mention the establishment of Fort Des Moines as the first officer training facility for African Americans. Scott, *Scott's Official History* (1919) and Gerald W. Patton, *War and Race: The Black Officer in the American Military, 1915-1941* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981) discuss the founding of the camp. Florette Henri, *Bitter Victory: A History of Black Soldiers in World War I* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), and Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: African-American Troops in World War I* (1974; rpt. ed., New York: De Capo Press, 1996) provide a few, brief accounts from the camp. W. Allison Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War: His Splendid Record in Battle Zones of Europe* (1919; rpt. ed., New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970) lists in an appendix the names and ranks of those commissioned. Rayford W. Logan, *Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967* (1968; rpt. ed. New York: New York University Press, 2004) provides a good breakdown of the officer class. John L. Thompson, *History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp for 1917 at Fort Des Moines, Iowa* (Des Moines, Iowa: The Bystander, 1917) contains brief biographical sketches of 500 of the officer candidates.

⁴ Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center, “The History,” Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center, <http://www.fortdesmoines.org/history.shtml> (accessed July 22, 2008).

analyze the role of these African American World War I veterans in post-war civil rights' activism.

It is important to place these efforts in context. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century America remained deeply rooted in racial segregation and discrimination. The institution of Jim Crow had effectively replaced the institution of slavery as a means of suppressing blacks, entrenching itself securely in the core culture of white America and in the mindset of the nation. Scientific racism was a popular conception that only added to the bigotry and injustice, and the United States military reflected and reinforced this narrow-minded tendentiousness through its discriminatory enlistment policies, its absence of equal training for blacks, and its failure to promote African American soldiers.⁵

Jim Crow and segregation denied African Americans the equality and freedoms they envisioned occurring from slavery's end and hoped governmental Reconstruction would ensure. Black Americans continued to face discriminatory treatment. Additionally, inadequate support from government leaders and American society discouraged their attempts to gain equal education, health care, housing, employment, and voting rights. Nonetheless, instead of becoming despondent at the shortcomings of the Federal government to help them obtain equality, many blacks continued to resist white supremacists on their own terms and to maintain their demand that their citizenship rights be acknowledged.

In 1889, a young African American student at Fisk University argued in an editorial that a new generation of blacks had emerged in America—one composed of a blacks willing to fight for equality and “not the Negro from whom the chains of slavery fell a quarter of a century

⁵ Henri, *Bitter Victory*; Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History*; Barbeau and Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers*.

ago.”⁶ These roots of resistance grew stronger during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and produced the plants that brought forth fruits in Ida B. Wells’ 1892 published pamphlet *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* that documented the horrors of lynching, the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, the establishment of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914, and many small-scale, local victories. Historian Paul Ortiz documents this legacy of resistance in the decades preceding World War I in his book, *Emancipation Betrayed*. Through analyses of community organization, armed self-defense, and political mobilization, Ortiz demonstrates that by World War I black Floridians “had established a tradition of defying Jim Crow in myriad ways.”⁷

World War I provided a unique opportunity for African Americans to capitalize on this growing spirit of resistance. Coupled with the Great Migration, the “New Negro” movement, and Harlem Renaissance, returning black officers from World War I fought against inequality and discrimination to redefine democracy in America. While shared experiences with racism and war served as the catalysts to bind the officers together, they also held their own separate backgrounds, individual opinions, and separate identities. This, in turn, produced a diverse set of personal experiences and responses to the discrimination.

Despite Jim Crow’s invasion into all areas of American society, and a particular hostility toward the idea of black men serving in the military, African Americans continually pressured the government to endorse and legitimize their right to serve in defense of the nation as loyal citizens. They adhered to the belief that loyalty and sacrifice would reap the reward of full

⁶ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 422.

⁷ Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 127.

citizenship—equality. For this reason, long before the onset of World War I, and even before emancipation, African Americans had proved themselves repeatedly in combat in America’s wars. However, their sacrifices—their spilt blood—failed to secure the “inalienable rights” they sought.

The idea of African Americans’ fighting to earn their full citizenship rights was not a novelty at the time of World War I. Unfortunately, the use of racial stereotypes to devalue their service in combat was not a novelty either. From the Revolutionary War, debate had ensued over the utilization of blacks in the military, and racial discrimination had always protested their inclusion. In spite of this, when African Americans were needed to defend their country, they answered the call.

World War I served as a catalyst encouraging African Americans to reflect on how the democracy, freedom, and equality promised in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments had not become realized. The inherent inequality in segregation conflicted with President Woodrow Wilson’s war to make the world “safe for democracy.”⁸ Historian Mark Ellis states: “The war years were a turning point in this violent tradition—a bloody catharsis at home, as well as abroad—out of which African Americans gained a new generation of leadership and organizations, and the confidence, experiences, and voices with which to confront, if not defeat, racial discrimination.”⁹

For many African Americans, black soldiers served as the vanguard of equality, protecting citizenship through their service and exemplifying the opportunities of post-slavery America. This sentiment was especially true for black officers, men who would rebut

⁸ Woodrow Wilson, *War Messages*, 65th Cong., 1st Sess. Senate Doc. No. 5, Serial No. 7264, Washington, D. C., 1917; 3-8.

⁹ Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government during World War I* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), xiii.

stereotypes of inferiority by demonstrating through their courage, intelligence, and determination that they could successfully lead men into combat. Likewise, white Americans also realized the potential for black soldiers and officers to lead their race in the struggle for civil rights and justice. Unfortunately, many whites viewed the possibility of integration as perilous, and African American soldiers threatened white supremacy and the prevailing social hierarchy.

The black officers of Fort Des Moines understood the controversial role they might hold in American society—heroes to the black community and social agitators to white supremacists. The opportunity for African American men to rise up the ranks of the military would illustrate an essential shift towards equality from the government. Commenting on the opportunity of the young officers to be commissioned at Fort Des Moines, Harvard Professor T. M. Gregory stated: “It is a test of the new generation of the Negro race in America. Booker T. Washington is dead. Others of his generation are growing old. It is from the men who are at this camp that the future leaders of the Negro race must come.”¹⁰

The successful service of black commissioned officers in combat would obliterate arguments that African Americans lacked the courage and intelligence necessary to lead men in battle. Furthermore, the possibility of a black officer commanding white subordinates represented a worst-case scenario for white supremacists. In fact, a Vicksburg, Mississippi, newspaper argued: “Every white man in Mississippi realizes the seriousness of permitting Negroes to roam about in the South in the uniform of United States Army officers.”¹¹

Through their wartime experiences of training, earning commissions, and fighting in Europe, the African American officers of Fort Des Moines faced pressures placed on them by both the black and white Americans. After earning their commissions, these men traveled into

¹⁰ “Solving the Problem of How to Organize, Train and Use Negroes Drafted for the Army,” *The Muskogee Cimeter*, September 8, 1917: 2.

¹¹ “What Fools Some Mortals Be,” *Appeal* (Minneapolis, Minnesota), December 8, 1917: 2.

combat overseas in France. Here they faced not only the perils of battle but also conflicting views of democracy and equality—the American Army segregated them and discriminated against them while French soldiers and citizens welcomed them as equals.

The discrimination and bitter treatment of African American soldiers during World War I left them disillusioned with their place in American society. The intolerance, bigotry, Jim Crow laws, and institutional racism of American society manifested in narrow-minded enlistment procedures, segregation, and prejudice treatment by the United States Army. In response to blatant discrimination, the African American officers of Fort Des Moines heeded the call of W. E. B. Du Bois in his editorial, “Returning Soldiers,” where he announced, “*We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting.*”¹² The officers of Fort Des Moines returned, primed and ready for an assault against racism, Jim Crow, and discrimination.

The men who traveled to Fort Des Moines in the Summer of 1917 to earn their commissions understood the dual purposes of their calling: to lead black men on the battlefield, but perhaps more importantly, to lead America towards equality. They hoped that this goal would be accomplished through their military service—their sacrifices for their nation as its citizens. Instead, upon their return home from Europe’s battlefields, they were met with an unchanged America and its continuing practices of segregation and discrimination. Disillusioned and frustrated, they continued fighting, accepting their role as the vanguard of equality, serving both as defenders of African Americans’ rights and aggressors assaulting injustice in the name of civil rights, democracy, and equality.

Many historians have examined the military service of African Americans and their contribution to America’s wars. Following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and in the middle of an American war in Vietnam, historians began to expand their investigation to include

¹² W. E. B. Du Bois, “Returning Soldiers,” *The Crisis* XVIII (May 1919): 13-14.

the role of African American soldiers as part of the larger fights for social and legal equality. Almost all of these scholars examined the whole of African American military service throughout American history. The scope of these investigations are much too broad to provide any detail of the lives of African American troops and officers of World War I, and any examination of the Fort Des Moines Training Camp and the first commissioned black officers is relegated to a paragraph if mentioned at all. These accounts focus on the fact that African Americans faced racism continually throughout their military experience and that the post-integration military has benefited greatly from the incorporation of black combatants from a tactical standpoint.¹³ Aside from these comprehensive examinations of the black military experience in American history, several studies have focused on African Americans in World

¹³ Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History*; Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Gary Donaldson, *The History of African-Americans in the Military: Double V* (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger Publishing Corporation, 1991); Gerald Astor, *A Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Novato, Ca.: Presidio, 1998); Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolutions to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001); and Robert B. Edgerton, *Hidden Heroism: Black Soldiers in America's Wars* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 2001) examine the role of African Americans throughout America's wars and establish the service of black troops in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War. Additionally, there is a vast historiography on black service specific to certain wars. Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961) and Sylvia R. Frey, *Water From The Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) detail the use of slaves in the military on both the British and American sides during the American Revolution. James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); John David Smith, *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862-1865* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998) focus on African American soldiers in the Civil War. Phillip McGuire, *He, Too, Spoke For Democracy: Judge Hastie, World War II, and the Black Soldier* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), Lawrence P. Scott, *Double V: The Civil Rights Struggle of the Tuskegee Airmen* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), Christopher Paul Moore, *Fighting For America: Black Soldiers, The Unsung Heroes of World War II* (New York: One World, 2005); and Bryan D. Booker, *African Americans in the United States Army in World War II* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland, 2008) examine African American service in World War II. Charles M. Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon: Courage & Racism in the Korean War* (Washington: Brassey's, 1991); Lyle Rishell, *With a Black Platoon in Combat: A Year in Korea* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1993); and Curtis James Morrow, *What's a Commie ever done to Black People?: Korean War Memoir of Fighting in the U.S. Army's Last All Negro Unit* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland & Company, 1997) analyze the experiences of African American troops in the Korean War. Stanley Goff, *Brothers, Black Soldiers in the Nam* (Novato, Ca.: Presidio Press, 1982); Samuel W. Black, *Soul Soldiers: African Americans and the Vietnam Era* (Pittsburgh: Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center, 2006) and James E. Westheider, *The African American Experience in Vietnam: Brothers in Arms* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008) study African American troops in Vietnam.

War I. Most of these analyses are strictly military histories. The authors briefly delve into personal accounts of combat and rarely contextualize prewar or postwar America. Furthermore, several works limit their scope to unit histories.¹⁴ Incorporating the officers of Fort Des Moines into this historiography enables the historian to expand the story of African Americans in World War I to include how the war affected black Americans' post-war perceptions of themselves as citizens, their rights, and their actions to fight for equality and justice.

The most comprehensive accounts of African American experience in World War I come from Florette Henri's *Bitter Victory: A History of Black Soldiers in World War I* (1970) and Henri's and Arthur E. Barbeau's *Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I* (1974). They recount the struggle of World War I black soldiers who fought discrimination and bigotry to gallantly serve the nation only to be forgotten. Henri and Barbeau allocate a chapter to discussing the creation of the segregated training facility at Fort Des Moines and the training program of black officers. They briefly highlight the involvement of students from Howard University in requesting Congress to create the segregated camp, the basic schedule of life for officer candidates, and the discrimination that occurred after these officers were stationed at other camps. However, a chapter cannot fully develop the roles these men played in black society and their significance in America's battle for civil rights. The examination lacks the depth of personal narratives and is too concise to adequately address this subject, but Henri and Barbeau do provide a starting point for analyzing Fort Des Moines and the first commissioned black officers.

¹⁴ Bill Harris, *The Hellfighters of Harlem: African-American Soldiers Who Fought for the Right to Fight for Their Country* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishing, 2002) and Stephen L. Harris, *Harlem's Hell Fighters* (Washington, D. C.: Brassey's Inc., 2003) present a unit history of the 369th Infantry. Chester D. Heywood, *Negro Combat Troops in the World War: The Story of the 371st Infantry* (Worcester, Mass.: Commonwealth Press, 1928) chronicles Captain Heywood's military experiences in the 371st Infantry. Frank E. Roberts, *The American Foreign Legion: Black Soldiers of the 93rd in World War I* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2004) details the service of the Ninety-Third Division in France during World War I.

More recently Adriane Lentz-Smith, author of *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (2009), and Chad L. Williams, author of *Torchbearers of Democracy: African-American Soldiers in the World War I Era* (2010), represent a shifting of the historiography towards examining what motivated African Americans to serve in the military, how they internalized their struggles with discrimination during their service, and how World War I became a transformative moment in these men's lives. Analyzing the lives of individual soldiers and their efforts in post-war civil rights activism, Lentz-Smith and Williams demonstrate how the groundwork for the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was laid during the 1920s by returning African Americans.

This study seeks to investigate the post-war contributions of the officers of Fort Des Moines toward gaining equality, ending segregation, and combating discrimination. The examination provides insight into the disillusionment veteran officers felt upon returning to an unchanged America and demonstrates the resolve they possessed to continue the fight against inequality. It details the impact the returning officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment had on post-war America.

The Fort Des Moines officer training camp provided the African American graduates the opportunity to gain a sense of pride and accomplishment by earning their commissions. The commissioning as officers was a momentous occasion in the battle for civil rights in the military and in their individual lives. As the first class of African Americans to be trained collectively as officers, the men gained the honor and distinction of being pioneers for the race. They fondly remembered their accomplishments at Fort Des Moines and used them as motivation in their struggle against discrimination and injustice in America. These men led by example as the vanguard of their race fighting for civil rights and defending against the exploits of segregation.

Archibald Tuck, a commissioned second lieutenant from Fort Des Moines, exemplified these sentiments in an interview taken in April 1979. Although the interview was supposed to examine the role of Oberlin College in the African American community, Tuck began speaking of his time at Fort Des Moines, and how it had shaped his life. He was proud of his service as a lieutenant and his part in the groundbreaking work done at Des Moines toward gaining African Americans equality in the military. Des Moines stood as a central point in his life that changed his view of himself and his role in the battle for civil rights.¹⁵

Some officers returned from their experiences with the Army and immediately took action against segregation, discrimination, and racism. Some officers became the leaders, locally and nationally, of civil rights' organizations. Others took on smaller roles fighting for democracy in their pre-war occupations. Of course, not every veteran officer returned from war to fight actively against discrimination and Jim Crow. Still, the number of the officers reflected within this study permit some conclusions to be drawn about their wartime experiences and post-war efforts. A comprehensive narrative of their wartime experiences and their post-war activism illuminates their significance in battling for racial equality in America.

The returned officers of the Ninety-Second Division looked to the their motto of “Deeds, not Words,” for inspiration. The veterans responded to injustice with action. Through legal battles, political and civic organizations, the black press, churches, schools, and in the military, the officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment combated prejudice and discrimination.

¹⁵ Archibald Tuck, interview by Peter Way, transcript, April 21, 1979, Oberlin Oral History Project, Oberlin Heritage Center, Oberlin, Ohio.

The examination is organized chronologically and topically. Chapter 1 presents an overview of white America's debate on whether or not to allow black participation in America's wars. It highlights how prejudice dominated military policies in the use of black troops and also examines the debate on whether or not to allow black men to earn commissions as officers. Chapter 2 details the rebuttal from African Americans demanding their right to fight for their nation. It demonstrates how black men overcame stereotypes and their efforts to persuade the War Department to create a camp for the training and commissioning of black men as officers in the Army. The third chapter provides a glimpse at how several newspapers across the nation responded to the creation of a segregated officer training camp and portrays life at Fort Des Moines, emphasizing the organization of the camp; detailing the training regimen; and probing interactions between the cadets, their commanding officer, and the local community. Chapter 4 examines the wartime experiences of the officers of the Ninety-Second Division.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 provide accounts of the officers' post-war activism combating prejudice and injustice. Chapter 5 discusses the officers who returned to serve as attorneys fighting for legal change. Chapter 6 highlights the role of officers who chose to voice their disillusionment as authors after their homecoming from combat. The seventh chapter analyzes the contributions of officers that served as educators after World War I seeking to provide African American equal opportunities in education. Chapter 8 examines the role that the officers of Fort Des Moines had in desegregating the military, progressing from their part in the first officer training camp to their efforts toward integration in the Second World War.

Overall, the work emphasizes the relationship between the officers' experiences with a prejudicial Army during World War I and their civil rights activism after the war. Disillusioned by the hypocrisy of early twentieth century American democracy, many returned from combat determined to challenge the *status quo* and fight for justice. They utilized the leadership skills they cultivated in officer training to boldly spearhead the battle for civil rights.

CHAPTER 1: WHITE DEBATE OVER THE USE OF

AFRICAN AMERICANS AS COMBAT TROOPS

Before the United States government provided the opportunity for African Americans to serve as officers in the army, the nation had to decide whether it would allow black men to serve as regular troops. Despite the valiant service record of thousands of black men from the Revolutionary War to the Spanish American War, the debate over their role within the military and their use as combat troops resurfaced to threaten their opportunity to serve their nation as citizens.

The critical issue that surrounded the debate during the Civil War was whether African American military service would result in equality. Although many white northerners believed that slavery was a moral evil, some abolitionists remained unwilling to advocate that African Americans were physically and intellectually equivalent to their white counterparts. These stereotypes of blacks' inferiority begged a question: How could white society be required to socially, politically, and economically elevate black men and women to their own level in the social hierarchy when the race was inferior?

In response to this problem facing northern emancipators, several citizens wrote outspoken newspaper articles expressing their sentiments. They explained their fear that using black slaves and freeman as soldiers would obligate white America to recognize African

Americans as equals, as full-class citizens deserving the same rights as white men and women. A union gentleman wrote to the *New York Times* in 1862: “I am quite sure there is not one man in ten but would feel himself degraded as a volunteer if negro equality is to be the order in the field of battle.”¹⁶ Another article, this one written in a Pennsylvania newspaper, the *Columbia Democrat and Bloomsburg General Advertiser*, argued:

Enlisting the slaves of the South, and all negroes, free or slave, to drill, to march, to sleep, to eat, to fight side by side with the white citizens of Pennsylvania . . . would put the negro on a level, at least, with the white man, everywhere and under all circumstances politically and socially.¹⁷

The author concluded that only a “crazed brain” or “lunatic” would endorse such a plan. He despised the idea that abolition would bring forth “negro soldiers and negro equality generally.”¹⁸ In a separate editorial in the *Columbia Democrat and Bloomsburg General Advertiser*, another Pennsylvanian addressed the ideas of emancipating the slaves and enlisting African American troops. Although this author realized that freeing slaves might prove as a valuable strategy to weaken the Confederacy, he still refused to embrace the idea of black soldiers.

Chief among his reasons to deny African American enlistment into the army was that it would grant them equality. He stated, “In common with the whole army I am opposed to their being classed as soldiers for numerous reasons. One is, it would place them on an equality with ourselves, which is more than we allow the free negroes of the North.”¹⁹ Despite claiming he had “numerous” other reasons to deny African Americans become soldiers, no other points are

¹⁶ *New York Tribune*, August 16, 1862.

¹⁷ “Wilmot a Candidate before the People,” *Columbia Democrat and Bloomsburg General Advertiser* (Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania), August 2, 1862: 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ “Our Army Correspondence,” *Columbia Democrat and Bloomsburg General Advertiser* (Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania), August 2, 1862: 2.

added to the argument in this editorial. The implication, for this author, was that denying African Americans' equality was reason enough to refuse them as soldiers.

Aside from matters of equality, some white critics clung to stereotypes and claimed that black men as a race were too timorous and too passive to be good soldiers. General George Washington, commander-in-chief of American revolutionary forces, once claimed in his protest of the use of black troops that they were "cowardly, servile and distinctly inferior by nature."²⁰ White sentiments had not changed by the onset of the Civil War as both North and South reasoned, in the words of W. E. B. Du Bois, that "Negroes on the whole were considered cowards and inferior beings whose very presence in America was unfortunate."²¹

Union officers commenting about requests to arm African Americans utilized this argument at times. Instead of addressing the question at hand, one officer told reporters that black men could best be used to: "Relieve our soldiers employing negroes to build fortifications. . . . The negro can labor and be of great service with the spade."²² The implication in the response was that African Americans did not possess the abilities necessary to be good soldiers and "the negro's adaptation to the musket may not yet be discovered by those whose business it is to get soldiers and fight our battles."²³ Even President Abraham Lincoln hinted that he might agree with the assumptions that African Americans were unfit and inept in combat, "But I am not so sure we could do much with the blacks. If we were to arm them, I fear that in a few weeks the arms would be in the hands of the rebels."²⁴

²⁰ Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History*, 7.

²¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (1935; rpt. ed., New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 56.

²² "The Practical Test," *The Smoky Hill and Republican Union* (Junction City, Kansas), August 2, 1862: 1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Abraham Lincoln, speech titled "Reply to Chicago Emancipation Memorial," Washington D. C. (September 13, 1862) in Abraham Lincoln, *Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1859-1865* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1989), 365.

Closely associated with the argument that African Americans lacked the mental capacity and physical capability to be good soldiers was the assertion that their combat ineptitude coupled with southern racism would have disastrous results for black troops. The *Chicago Times* argued that arming a black man would sentence him to a miserable end when the Confederates, “not recognizing him as a legitimate antagonist, will massacre the negro when or where found in arms, or transport him to the cotton fields of the extreme South; they will not regard him as a prisoner of war, but subject him to all the penalties used in the case of the most uncivilized foe.”²⁵ Unfortunately for the African American men who did serve in the Civil War, this warning would become reality in several battles throughout the war, perhaps the worst of which being at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, in 1864.

Another argument against arming African Americans as soldiers was, that by arming black men, the Union would be enabling a racial revolution. Proponents of this logic claimed that black men would riot against white society, destroy their cities and towns, and ravage their white women. Any attempt to equalize black men with whites would “create negro insurrection, and result in the indiscriminate slaughter of the white race, of every age and sex, in every section of the South.”²⁶ A *Chicago Times*’ correspondent in Washington, D. C., invoked this exact argument when Congress appeared to be on the brink of approving a bill that would enlist black men as soldiers. In May of 1862, he wrote that any such approval was:

An invitation to a carnival of barbarities—a solicitation that negroes [should] apply the torch to the homes and dip their knives in the heart’s blood of white men—a bugle call rousing the baser passions of the black race to surfeit themselves in the ravishment of the white mothers and daughters of the South.²⁷

²⁵ “That’s So,” *Memphis Daily Appeal*, August 19, 1862: 2.

²⁶ *New York Herald*, May 20, 1862.

²⁷ *Chicago Times*, May 22, 1862.

Of course not all whites agreed that utilizing African Americans as soldiers was a bad idea. The *Daily National Republican* led the argument with an issue in January of 1862 that declared, “As soon as this war comes to be waged in earnest, the negroes will certainly be used as soldiers on one side or the other.” To be sure, the author of this article was not necessary advocating the use of black troops, but he does not dismiss the idea either.²⁸

Adding to the controversy, Union Major General David Hunter disobeyed orders and began enlisting black men as troops after the Battle of Pulaski in April of 1862. He argued, as early as 1861, that slaves should be offered freedom in return for service to the Union as soldiers. Although reprimanded by the War Department and President Abraham Lincoln, Hunter continued his campaign to utilize African American men to fight claiming, “that negroes make good soldiers and faithful citizens.”²⁹

Runaway slaves, known as the “contrabands of war,” also contributed to rebuttal against arguments that African Americans were too cowardly or too ignorant to serve as troops. Former slaves risked their lives to provide information, including topography and details about Confederate forces, to the Union Army. One runaway slave in Missouri warned Federal troops of an impending ambush allowing them to escape certain death. In another case, a South Carolina runaway detailed Confederate forces’ strength and location. By drawing a map in the sand, this black man enabled the Union forces to perfectly strategize their attack. In response to criticisms that the Federals could not and should not trust runaways, Sam Wilkeson, correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, utilized the aforementioned stories to chastise naysayers. He recognized the inherent value that southern African Americans held in their

²⁸ “Using Negroes,” *Daily National Republican* (Washington, D. C.), January 24, 1862: 2.

²⁹ “Washington Correspondence,” *Memphis Daily Appeal*, May 30, 1862: 1.

knowledge of the region and claimed that runaway slaves possessed the military “intelligence upon which our columns could safely march.”³⁰

In July 1862, *The Smoky Hill and Republican Union*, an abolitionist paper in Kansas, published their own story touting a runaway slave as a “hero.” The paper argued that within the “brain of that contraband” dwelt so much military strategy that he single-handedly won General Ambrose E. Burnside a victory at Roanoke, Virginia. Utilizing his knowledge of the bay, the black informant had “the whole country mapped out as an engineer could not have done it in a month, in the memory of that man.” According to the article, Burnside rewarded the runaway by appointing him as an aide and putting him in a Union uniform.³¹

Despite these efforts by fugitive slaves to assist those who they saw as their liberators, the process of the United States’ government deciding to utilize black men as combatants was a tedious one. It began with Union Major General Benjamin F. Butler who in late May 1861 when he refused to return three slaves to a Confederate general who had been employing the men in the construction of defensive works for his army. Butler, a lawyer by profession, legally based his refusal to return the slaves on two factors: first, that the Fugitive Slave Act did not apply to foreign nations, which the Confederacy was claiming to be, and second, that through being employed in a military effort against the Union, the slaves became fair for confiscation and became “contraband.” Other Union generals were quick to follow Butler’s lead, and, soon, in August 1861, Congress backed these actions with their passing on the Confiscation Act that allowed any property used by the Confederate military, including slaves, to be confiscated by Union forces.³²

³⁰ Brayton Harris, *Gray in Black & White: Newspapers in the Civil War* (Washington, D. C.: Brassey's, 1999), 196.

³¹ “Another Hero,” *The Smoky Hill and Republican Union* (Junction City, Kansas), July 19, 1862: 1.

³² Trudeau, *Like Men of War*, 10-11.

In July 1862 Congress continued its support to the idea of confiscating Confederate slaves and utilizing them towards the war effort when they passed the Second Confiscation Act and the Militia Act. This legislation could have enabled “contraband” to participate in the war as both laborers and soldiers had President Abraham Lincoln desired to justify their use with it, but Lincoln continued his resistance to arming blacks at this time. Lincoln made it clear, the Army was free to enlist, outfit, and pay black men as laborers but arming and training them as combatants was not acceptable. Despite the President’s hesitancy, in three separate cases, Senator James H. Lane in Kansas, Captain John H. Phelps in Louisiana, and Major General David Hunter in the Sea Islands attempted to raise their own black regiments citing the Militia Act. However, despite these efforts, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton crushed these men’s plans stating that only President Lincoln had the authority to raise black regiments—a decision the President did not make until September 22, 1862, when following the Battle of Antietam, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, a document that both freed slaves in the rebelling states and provided a stipulation to utilize black men throughout the armed service of the United States. Lincoln’s proclamation effectively ended the restrictions previously placed on recruiting black soldiers, and in late 1862 black enlistment began in earnest.³³

Once President Abraham Lincoln decided to utilize African Americans as soldiers in September 1862, the *Daily National Republican* continued its support for black troops. In November 1862, the newspaper argued that the use of black troops was necessary to “conquer and subjugate” the Confederacy.³⁴ Subsequent editions of the paper praised African American soldiers in Louisiana for their “courage” and “admirable service,” and argued “the negroes fought capitally, standing up to [enemy fire] like men.” The newspaper’s correspondent in

³³ Ibid, 12-19; Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company: 1966), 56-68.

³⁴ “Louisiana,” *Daily National Republican* (Washington, D. C.), November 21, 1862: 2.

Louisiana was so impressed by the black soldiers' actions in combat that he and several of his colleagues had discussed these African Americans' service at length and had determined to "accept" the soldiers' recent actions "as conclusive proof of freedom-worthy manhood in the negroes."³⁵ These articles countered critics' claims that black men were incapable of valiant service, but the naysayers of African Americans' abilities as soldiers would not be silenced.

Captain Phelps had convinced Major General Butler to muster the first two regiments of African Americans in the U. S. Army in late September 1862 after Lincoln's proclamation. Although these men had already been battle tested, in January 1863 Congress formally approved the Emancipation Proclamation and brought forth legislation that would formally authorize employing black men as soldiers, the Negro Soldier Bill. Despite much debate, the bill finally passed on February 2, 1863, but not without many concessions from Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, the Radical Republican who sponsored the legislation. Stevens envisioned the bill providing equality for black soldiers; he argued equality was especially necessary if the Union expected black prisoners of war to be privy to the same protections white prisoners received. Furthermore, Stevens advocated for black soldiers to be led by black officers and even contended that these officers be able to rise through the ranks to the commission of general if their merit so determined.³⁶

Congress ruled on the side of inequality; they determined that they would not allow black men to become officers. Advocates for equality opened the discussion by questioning that if African American troops were not given equal standing in the army, how could the War

³⁵ "Negroes Under Fire," *Daily National Republican* (Washington, D. C.), November 19, 1862: 2; "The Operations in Louisiana," *Daily National Republican* (Washington, D. C.), November 22, 1862: 2.

³⁶ "House of Representatives," *New York Times*, January 29, 1863; "House of Representatives," *New York Times*, February 1, 1863; "Passage of the Negro Soldier Bill," *New York Times*, February 3, 1863; "The Negro Soldier Bill," *American Volunteer* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania), February 5, 1863; "Thursday's Session," *Sunbury American*, February 7, 1863: 2.

Department expect them to be treated equally by the Confederacy if captured. These attacks sparked rebuttals to justify the inequality of the bill and returned to the original attacks on black men as soldiers. Congressman Charles Wickliffe of Kentucky argued that one attempt to form and train a regiment of black men at Hilton Head, South Carolina, had disastrous results due to the “fright” of the black troops. He claimed that almost immediately after enlistment, two hundred of the men deserted. Furthermore, Wickliffe stated that when the remaining black soldiers first underwent rifle training at Hilton Head they cowered in fear after firing their rifles. He concluded that for these reasons, the government had been forced to disband the unit. Congressmen John J. Crittenden echoed his fellow Kentuckian’s sentiments claiming that black men, free or slave, were “not worthy” to fight for the Union and “not necessary to put down the rebellion.” Proponents of the bill cited the valiant service of General Butler’s black regiments in Louisiana that were led by black officers, but in spite of these rebuttals, Congress decided to pass the bill with an amendment—black men would not be allowed to seek commissions.³⁷

The schism in Congress was representative of the split of the Union over the utilization of black soldiers even after their enlistment began. Some northerners believed President Lincoln had greatly erred in his decision to emancipate slaves and arm African American soldiers. These critics believed that these policies’ implementation “radically divided” the North and unified the South, “as only a people can be united who defend their rights of property, the integrity of their hearthstones, and the purity of their women.”³⁸ Despite the heroics of black regiments, like the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts, “rebel sympathizers, copperheads of the north,” opposed black troops because, “it would be terrible to have a rebel soldier killed by a negro.”³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Without Hope,” *Edgefield Advertiser* (Edgefield, South Carolina), September 9, 1863: 2.

³⁹ “The Colored or Negro Soldiers,” *Sunbury American* (Sunbury, Pennsylvania), August 8, 1863: 2.

The debate over the use of black soldiers continued throughout the end of the war.⁴⁰ To some critics, it mattered not whether black soldiers served valiantly or produced positive results on the battlefield. These individuals were irrational; they saw reports praising black soldiers as the Lincoln administration's abolitionist propaganda. One copperhead orator proclaimed: "Now this business of negro soldiers is one of the most contemptible and foolish. . . . Where have they done any good? Where have they ever stood under fire?" He concluded his venomous address stating that, in fact, African Americans were "useless."⁴¹

Within the debate to utilization African Americans as soldiers was quite another debate over whether or not black men should be allowed to become commissioned officers. In general, policymakers did not want black men to earn their commission for fear of how white soldiers, officers and enlisted men, and white citizens might respond to these promotions. Most Americans were not yet ready for African Americans to outrank white enlistees and the possibility of a white soldier taking orders from a black superior. However, black regiments were allowed to have noncommissioned officers for organization, training purposes, and in-field combat leadership, but white men served as the commissioned officers of these regiments.⁴²

Still, some did advocate for commissioning black men to lead the black regiments that were being raised. These policymakers and generals in favor of extending the opportunity of officer training were able to create a few, albeit short-lived, exceptions allowing the experiment of African Americans becoming officers to begin. Union Major General Butler, commander of occupational forces in New Orleans in 1862, commissioned seventy-five black men to serve in

⁴⁰ "Kentucky," *Burlington Free Press* (Burlington, Vermont), August 21, 1863: 2; "From Vicksburg," *Western Reserve Chronicle* (Warren, Ohio), July 1, 1863: 1; "Views from a Foreigner," *The Soldiers' Journal* (Rendezvous of Destination, Virginia), August 3, 1864; "Desperate Fight!" *The Jeffersonian* (Jeffersonton, Kentucky), April 21, 1864: 2.

⁴¹ "Extracts from the Copperhead's Speeches," *The Big Blue Union* (Marysville, Kansas), October 1, 1864: 1.

⁴² Richard M. Reid, *Freedom for Themselves: North Carolina's Black Soldiers in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 17.

the Louisiana regiments.⁴³ Unfortunately for these African American men, their commissions did not last long. General Butler faced much criticism for his policies of enlisting former slaves, the “contraband” of war, and especially for elevating some of them to officer status. In December 1862, Major General Nathaniel Banks replaced Butler and dismissed the black officers from service.⁴⁴ Opposition could be violent. In 1862, a black doctor named Alex Augusta wrote President Lincoln requesting a commission as an officer to serve as surgeon for black troops. Lincoln granted Augusta his request commissioning him as a major, the highest rank received by an African American at that time. Upon passing through Baltimore, Maryland, in May 1863, Augusta was attacked by a mob of “several hundred persons” merely for wearing his uniform and displaying his rank in public. The mob severely beat the doctor and attempted to lynch him before federal troops stopped the assault. Although Augusta survived and kept his commission, the incident demonstrated the disdain some white citizens held toward the idea of black officers.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the idea of black officers, commissioned or non-commissioned, faced attacks similar to the ones offered against enlisting African Americans as soldiers in general. Critics stated that black men lacked the intelligence to serve as leaders in battle. Others held to the belief that allowing black men into leadership roles would surely doom America to a racial revolution that would result in the destruction of white society. One Confederate newspaper from Memphis, Tennessee, reported a story of a black non-commissioned officer in Maine pulling his pistol on a white officer. Citing articles from a Portland, Maine, newspaper, the *Eastern Argus*, and Massachusetts’ paper, the *Newburyport Herald*, *The Memphis Daily Appeal* reported the non-commissioned officer led several other black men in insubordination, and,

⁴³ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 113.

⁴⁴ Patton, *War and Race*, 4.

⁴⁵ “The Baltimore Mob,” *New York Daily Tribune*, May 6, 1863: 4-5.

together, they were found drunk the next morning. The article further claimed that this black officer illustrated the lack of self-control the race possessed and that given the opportunity “the others may go the same way.” Of course, the author’s intent was to demonstrate that if armed and given leadership over their regiments, black men could not be trusted because they supposedly did not possess the mental or moral capacity to police themselves.⁴⁶

Following the Civil War, Congress decided to reduce the size of the army and, of course, these cuts affected the number of African Americans, as this decision did with all demographic groups serving in the Army. In 1866, Congress and the War Department limited the United States Army to 54,302 officers and enlisted men. During the next decade, a series of cuts further reduced the army down to 27,000 officers and enlisted men by 1874.⁴⁷ As part of this reorganization, Congress authorized the establishment of six African American regiments in 1866: the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Thirty-eighth, Thirty-ninth, Fortieth, and Forty-first Infantry to be stationed in the American West for fighting Native Americans. In 1869, the Army consolidated the infantry regiments into the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry.⁴⁸

Black regiments serving in the Indian wars were known as “Buffalo Soldiers.” Almost half the men enlisted were veterans from the Civil War and a majority were former slaves. From 1866 to 1891, they guarded the western frontier, building forts and roads, discouraging illegal traders, policing cattle rustlers, and escorting stagecoaches. During that time they served

⁴⁶ “Troubles Between White and Negro Soldiers,” *Memphis Daily Appeal*, February 27, 1863: 2.

⁴⁷ Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 12-15.

⁴⁸ Rick Swain, *The Legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers* (Fort Leavenworth: Buffalo Soldier Educational and Historical Committee, 2008)

valiantly, earning twenty-three Congressional Medals of Honor while serving in over two hundred battles.⁴⁹

Additionally, the African American troops of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry were model soldiers, rarely guilty of drunkenness, with high reenlistment and low desertion rates. In fact, from 1880 to 1886 the Twenty-fourth Infantry had the lowest desertion rate for the entire Army, and in 1888 the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry tied for that honor. As a result, these men earned the respect of their white superior officers.⁵⁰

As the 1860s, 70s, and 80s was the time of achievement for African American regular troops in the Army, this era also brought about a realization of the aspirations for several black men seeking to become officer cadets. Since West Point cadets had to be nominated by members of Congress, no black men had been recommended to enlist prior to emancipation. With emancipation, citizenship, and suffrage granted through the Reconstruction amendments, African American men obtained an opportunity to participate in America's government. As a result, for the first time black men were elected to political offices and, from 1870 to 1887, African American congressmen nominated twenty-seven black men to West Point.⁵¹

Boldly these men entered into the Army's military academy knowing that they would face the challenges that trailblazers often incur when attempting a revolutionary task. James W. Smith became the first black applicant to the United States Military Academy in 1870, but he failed to graduate due to the stress his fellow white cadets placed on him. Henry O. Flipper earned the honor of being the first African American to graduate the academy when he earned

⁴⁹ Lisa Arnold, "Finding a Soldier in the Family: How much can a family historian learn about her great-uncle, a buffalo soldier, when all she has is a name and a photograph?" *Ancestry Magazine* (November-December 2009): 53; "The Buffalo Soldiers," <http://www.discoverseaz.com/History/BufSold.html> (accessed March 11, 2011).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Leroy Vaughn, *Black People and Their Place in World History* (Dr. Leroy Vaughn, 2002), 152.

his commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Tenth Cavalry in June of 1877. John H. Alexander and Charles Young also earned the honor of being commissioned as officers in the late 1880s.⁵² Although these black men were able to enter West Point, their enrollments were not without difficulties. The officer candidates faced resentment. *The Columbia Phoenix* attacked former General Benjamin Butler, now a Massachusetts Congressman, in an 1870 article when it was announced that he would nominate a black man to become a West Point cadet. The article spewed with anger: “What but a spirit of depraved malignity can prompt these men to be constantly pushing aside their own race and thrusting forward an inferior one into places of emolument and honor?”⁵³ Another paper, *The Louisiana Democrat*, cast doubt on Butler’s moral scruples by suggesting he was bribed for the appointment.⁵⁴

Upon the arrival of another black cadet, Charles Howard from Mississippi, *The New York Sun* reported that West Point was “paralyzed.” According to their columnist, white cadets immediately voiced their concerns in varying degrees. Some spoke of resigning from the academy, others wanted to kill cadet Howard, and some were left speechless. However, the paper tried to calm these fears asserting that Howard would only be there four weeks when “he will fail the mental examination, and go back to Mississippi.”⁵⁵ Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York spoke to *The New York Sun* about James W. Smith and Charles Howard. Conkling followed suit with paper’s previous criticisms that black men were not intelligent enough to earn an officer’s commission. He stated: “The whole thing is a farce, and a greater calamity to West Point, sir. They will only fail in examination.” In the same piece, Admiral David D. Porter,

⁵² Walter L. Hawkins, *Black American Military Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007), 161 & 534.

⁵³ “Correspondence Columbia Phoenix,” *The Daily Phoenix*, March 12, 1870: 2; “Correspondence Columbia,” *The Bryan Times* (Bryan, Ohio), March 17, 1870: 2.

⁵⁴ *The Louisiana Democrat* (Alexandria, Louisiana), March 16, 1870: 2.

⁵⁵ “The West Point Negro Cadet: correspondence of the N.Y. Sun,” *The Lincoln County Herald* (Troy, Missouri), June 2, 1870: 2.

superintendent of the Naval Academy, inserted his opinion that there was “no place for” black men at the Naval Academy either. In an extremely discriminatory statement Admiral Porter claimed: “Why, darkys are good enough in their places—very good—very good, sir—very good people. I like darkys. I wish I had one now to—*clean my boots!*” For Admiral Porter, black men were good enough to serve as laborers and perhaps even sailors but lacked the mental abilities to become commissioned officers.⁵⁶

Other derogatory articles continued blasting African American cadets as inferior and incapable of the physical strength, intellectual capacity, and moral fiber necessary to succeed at West Point. *The Daily Phoenix*, *The Charleston Daily News*, and *The Anderson Intelligencer* all reported when two prospective African American cadets to West Point were rejected for “physical and intellectual inefficiency.”⁵⁷ Speaking of the opportunity for black men to become commissioned officers, the *Nashville Union and American* argued, “The race, as a whole, is incapable of rising much above the intellectual average.”⁵⁸ *The Washington Critic* claimed that placing blacks and whites in any positions of equality was “not good for either race.” In the article, the author interviewed Senator William E. Chandler of New Hampshire who claimed that he did not favor the promotion of black men to West Point or Annapolis because it placed them in “a position in which justice is not and cannot be done” by “the negro himself.”⁵⁹ *The Ouachita Telegraph*’s article entitled “The Military Nigger” and the *Omaha Daily Bee*’s “Down on Negro Soldiers” questioned the morals of black officers and the government officials who

⁵⁶ “The Chinaman in Massachusetts—The Colored Boys at West Point,” *The Daily Phoenix*, June 23, 1870: 2.

⁵⁷ “Domestic News,” *The Daily Phoenix*, June 14, 1870: 3; “Washington,” *The Charleston Daily News*, June 14, 1870: 1; *The Anderson Intelligencer* (Anderson Court House, South Carolina), June 16, 1870: 2.

⁵⁸ “The Negro in Congress,” *Nashville Union and American*, July 4, 1874: 1.

⁵⁹ “Because She is Black,” *The Washington Critic*, February 9, 1890: 1. This article is about the appointment of a black woman to the Bureau of Engraving. However, during the reporter’s interviews with Senator William E. Chandler the discussion spilt over to Congressman Butler and the nomination of black cadets to West Point and Annapolis.

allowed them to enter West Point.⁶⁰ One newspaper claimed the promotion of a black man to West Point was a “great crime against nature and a monstrous perversion.”⁶¹ While another article protested, “Another dose of the ‘disturbing element’ is to be administered to West Point” when congressmen continued to nominate black men to the military academy.⁶²

In 1880, *The Salt Lake Herald* published an article stating: “It was a severe blow to the aristocratic pride of West Point Military Academy when a colored cadet was admitted.” The piece continued by claiming how “humiliating” it must have been for “future captains and generals” to be trained alongside an “inferior” student. Furthermore, *The Salt Lake Herald* asserted that if black officers were necessary to lead black troops, then they should be trained in a separate, segregated facility. The article argued that it would be “nonsense” to force white and black cadets to be integrated. The author made this point very clear—if West Point is forced to accept more black cadets, the result will be an all-black academy. According to the author, young white men would rather leave West Point and “enter those spheres of life where they can exercise at will their natural repugnance towards the black race” rather than enroll in an integrated military academy.⁶³

Unfortunately, after the 1880s, African Americans began to be disfranchised by Jim Crow laws. With fewer black politicians in Congress to nominate them, West Point was again closed to African Americans. The track record of black cadets at West Point was less than exemplary; only three officers had been commissioned out of the twenty-seven African American men sent there. Obviously, these numbers only served to bolster stereotypes and arguments that African Americans lacked the intelligence necessary to become officers in the

⁶⁰ “The Military Nigger,” *The Ouachita Telegraph*, February 11, 1871: 4.

⁶¹ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, February 18, 1871: 2; “Down on Negro Soldiers,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, February 13, 1888: 1.

⁶² “Another Dose,” *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 23, 1871: 2.

⁶³ *The Salt Lake Herald*, May 2, 1880: 2.

army. The veil of black men lacking the intelligence to become commissioned officers closed over the United States Army once again.

After demonstrating their devotion to their nation and their proficiency in combat during the Indian Wars, the four African American regular army regiments continued their exemplary service into America's next conflict, the Spanish American War. The American offensive took place in Cuba against Spanish forces from April 25 to August 12, 1898, after the United States battleship *Maine* mysteriously sank in Havana harbor. Congress responded to the attack by forcing President William McKinley to retaliate. The ten-week conflict ended with America seizing control of Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.⁶⁴

During the war, the Twenty-fifth Infantry captured the Spanish flag at Hell Caney and the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry heroically charged San Juan Hill along side Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Upon returning home, Roosevelt, as well as white troops, praised them for their service. Rough Rider Frank Knox recalled his service beside black cavalymen on San Juan Hill stating, "for a time [I] fought with them shoulder to shoulder and in justice to the colored race I must say that I never saw braver men anywhere. Some of those who rushed up the hill will live in my memory forever."⁶⁵ Newspapers across the nation honored the courage and heroism of the black units, and President William McKinley paid tribute to black soldiers in a speech given in Springfield, Illinois in 1898.⁶⁶

However, the nation's praise for the valiant service of its four African American units was short-lived. White officers determined to keep the *status quo* argued against the promotion of African Americans as commissioned officers. In 1904, the Surgeon General, Brigadier

⁶⁴ Russell Alexander Alger, *The Spanish-American War* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1899), 362.

⁶⁵ William Loren Katz, *The Black West* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973), 275-276.

⁶⁶ William McKinley, *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley, from March 1, 1897 to May 20, 1900* (New York: Doubleday & McClure Co., 1900), 126-128.

General Robert M. O'Reilly, expressed these sentiments in a memorandum to President Theodore Roosevelt. Though this memorandum dealt specifically with commissioning black surgeons in the Army Medical Corps, his argument revealed his racially motivated beliefs that blacks were generally unfit for leadership as officers. Among his points, O'Reilly claimed that it "was not true that the 'colored population would prefer one of their own color.' On the contrary, they would probably prefer and have greater confidence in the ability of a white [surgeon]." Furthermore, he argued, "The 'superiority' of white officers over black officers for black troops was 'well known' and recognized by Congress in the organization of the black regiments."⁶⁷ Thus, he contended that both African Americans and whites understood and agreed that black men should not become commissioned officers.

A Sumter, South Carolina, newspaper, *The Watchman and Southron*, boasted in 1903: "The 'open door' to the negro does not open into West Point or Annapolis. The President has not dared to incur the resentment of the Republicans of the army and the navy by appointing negroes to the schools which prepare our army and naval officers."⁶⁸ Finally, in 1907, the army transferred seventy-six cavalymen of the Ninth Cavalry from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to the academy at West Point. Unfortunately for African American men seeking their commissions, this transfer was not for their enrollment in the academy. Instead, the War Department sent these black soldiers to West Point to care for the horses being used by cadets when the white cavalymen stationed there began complaining about the extra duties. The War Department hoped that black men would accept the assignment without complaint while the other men of the

⁶⁷ Memorandum "Undesirability of Colored Contract Soldiers" from Surgeon General Robert M. O'Reilly to President Theodore Roosevelt, December 24, 1904. Profiles of 1898 black contract surgeons, 1907-1917; Record Group 112, Entry 242, Box 468, no. 5; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁸ "A Keen Thrust," *The Watchman and Southron* (Sumter, South Carolina), April 1, 1903:7.

Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry were transferred and stationed in the Philippines.⁶⁹

Despite the fact that the army was keeping the *status quo* in terms of black commissioned officers, an alarm was sent out among the white population. Newspapers referred to this transfer of black cavalrymen to West Point as the War Department's "great experiment." Apparently the fact that these soldiers were headed to West Point to take over a job that white cavalrymen had refused did not matter. Whites feared a group of black men being stationed at the academy and reacted negatively to the news.⁷⁰ Following the transfer of the black cavalrymen to West Point, the citizens near the academy began calling the men "Brownsville Cadets," a reference to the racial violence that had taken place the summer before between black soldiers of the Twenty-fifth Infantry and white citizens in Brownsville, Texas. Furthermore, whites near West Point complained that black troops roamed the streets at night intoxicated; thus, they claimed, making it impossible for white women to leave their homes alone for fear of the black men attacking them. These accusations against the black troops of the Ninth Cavalry's poor behavior became so prevalent that Secretary of War William Howard Taft was forced to announce an investigation into their conduct. The investigation found that these claims lacked the evidence necessary to court martial any of the African American troops, but the fact that Taft was overwhelmed by reports demonstrates how unwelcoming white neighbors were to the black cavalrymen.⁷¹

Aside from the black cavalrymen stationed at West Point, whites opposing African American military service still had another prominent fear in their minds in the early twentieth century. Despite their victory to keep West Point and Annapolis closed to African American

⁶⁹ "Negroes Transferred," *The Columbus Journal*, March 27, 1907: 6; "Negro Troops at West Point," *The Watchman and Southron* (Sumter, South Carolina), March 27, 1907: 3; *Seattle Republican*, April 12, 1907: 4; "Ninth Cavalry Acts as Servants," *Sedalia Weekly Conservator*, April 22, 1907: 2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ "Negro Troopers at West Point Cause Trouble," *Washington Times*, June 10, 1907: 3.

cadets, Charles Young, a captain and the only remaining West Point graduate in the Army in 1903, had served valiantly leading black soldiers in the Spanish-American War. It would only be a matter of time before Young would be promoted to major and then colonel, and both these commands would provide him the opportunity to command white officers.⁷²

The fear of black officers commanding white troops dwelt heavy on the minds of some white opponents of commissioning African Americans in the army. In 1903, *The Baltimore Herald* published an article explaining the situation and the inevitable promotion of Captain Young. It claimed that upon his appointment to colonel, Young would “be entitled to command a regiment” and “there is no way the department could arrange matters so that Colonel Young would not be in charge of white officers, provided he is continued as a field officer.”⁷³ The alarm had been sounded, and other papers like the *Times Dispatch* from Richmond, Virginia, and *The Minneapolis Journal* took up the call to alert local whites. “When Young becomes a colonel . . . there may be a lot of white captains and lieutenants, and even privates who will have constitutional objections to taking orders from a black man.”⁷⁴

White newspapers followed Captain Young’s career with increasing anxiety. They feared after his successful term as a military attaché in Haiti that Young “would soon reach his majority” and “complications may arise when white officers are asked to serve under him.”⁷⁵ Despite his exemplary service record, there was “no escaping the fact that with his increasing rank,” Captain Young would “become more and more of a ‘problem’ in the military service.”⁷⁶ Many whites became concerned that Young would some day command whites and pressured policymakers and the army to alleviate the situation. The army responded to these fears and

⁷² *Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Virginia), August 1, 1903: 4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ “The Colored Cadet,” *The Minneapolis Journal*, July 30, 1903: 5.

⁷⁵ *Daily Public Ledger* (Maysville, Kentucky), April 29, 1907: 3.

⁷⁶ *Seattle Republican*, May 10, 1907: 3.

dealt with the “problem” by keeping Young out of the regular army duty. The War Department ordered Captain Young to Liberia on a special assignment, and while there he received his promotion to major in 1912.⁷⁷

While the army was trying to calm fears about Captain Young, another issue was brewing in 1910 that sounded the alarm for whites attempting to deny African Americans the opportunity to become commissioned officers. This time Ollie R. Smith, a young African American from Cheyenne, Wyoming, had been named the alternate for Wyoming’s next appointment to West Point. Multiple newspapers alerted whites that, “for the first time in more than a quarter century West Point is confronted with the possibility of having soon to admit a negro as a cadet.”⁷⁸ They claimed that, “the entrance of a negro cadet into the corps has always caused trouble.”⁷⁹ Furthermore, columnists argued that the “race problem” faced now by the army could have dire effects to the nation. They argued that reopening West Point to black men would be an “embarrassing situation” for both the army and African Americans because he would surely be ostracized by the other white cadets and was not intelligent enough to successfully graduate.⁸⁰

Some officers interviewed for their opinion on the prospect of a new black cadet blamed Senator Clarence Don Clark since he had nominated Smith. One of these officers argued that:

The corps as it is today is a vastly different body from what is was in the seventies. Then the civil war was still a fresh memory, and we were able to understand how some Senator or Congressman whose wounds had not yet healed could now and then think it his duty to recognize the negro race.

⁷⁷ *Evening Standard* (Ogden City, Utah), September 13, 1912: 5.

⁷⁸ “Negro May Enter West Point Academy,” *Ogden Standard*, January 24, 1910: 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ “Negro for West Point,” *Bisbee Daily Review*, January 13, 1910: 1; “Denver, Col.,” *Seattle Star*, January 13, 1910: 7; “Negro to West Point,” *University Missourian*, January 14, 1910: 1; “Negro for West Point,” *Los Angeles Herald*, January 25, 1910: 16; “A Negro to West Point,” *Norfolk Weekly-News Journal*, January 28, 1910: 1.

He continued by stating that, in 1910, the corps was now filled with loyal southerners. Together, these white northern and southern cadets would band together to socially discriminate against a black cadet, and that interaction between the two races would only occur under direct military orders. He denied that hazing would ever occur, but several other black cadets' previous experiences at West Point had proven this not to be the case. They were unmercifully ridiculed and both physically and verbally assaulted by their fellow cadets.⁸¹

Unfortunately for Smith, he would never get the opportunity to enroll at West Point. In February of 1910, he traveled Fort Logan, Colorado, to take the academy entrance exam and failed. His failure became a celebration for whites determined to keep African Americans from becoming commissioned officers. Newspapers jubilantly proclaimed Smith's denial from the academy with headlines stating: "Negro Boy Barred," and "Negro Boy Won't Get There."⁸²

This was the atmosphere of discrimination that African Americans had been fighting since the Civil War to prove they were worthy soldiers and could be valued officers. Jim Crow and scientific racism maintained their stranglehold on society and the American military by claiming that black men lacked the intelligence to lead their brothers into combat. However, the African American community did not yield to this racism, and soon a new opportunity would provide itself, a Great War in which black Americans would continue their assault against racism and discrimination—a war that would reopen the debate of the role of black men in the military.

At Congress's endorsement of President Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war on April 6, 1917, the War Department determined the Army's enlistment numbers to be inadequate. The manpower necessary to wage a successful campaign would require several hundred thousand more men in excess of the 126,000 enlisted at the time. A little over a month after the

⁸¹ "West Point May Get a Colored Cadet," *The New York Times*, January 24, 1910.

⁸² "Negro Boy Barred," *The Washington Herald*, February 3, 1910: 4; "Negro Boy Won't Get There," *Sun* (New York, New York), February 3, 1910: 1.

declaration of war was passed, Congress decided the standard volunteer system had insufficiently filled manpower needs. On May 18, 1917, the Legislature passed the Selective Service Act requiring American men age 21 to 31 to register for a draft. While a lack of white volunteers forced Congress into conscripting soldiers, African American volunteerism was overwhelming. Only one week passed before the War Department had to halt their acceptance of black volunteers due to the quotas for African Americans being filled so quickly.⁸³ When Congress passed the Selective Service Act an additional 400,000 African Americans were drafted into the Army.⁸⁴

With thousands of black men preparing to fight for their nation, the issue of training and commissioning black officers resurfaced. As early as 1915, the black press called for the reopening of West Point to black officer candidates. Unfortunately for African Americans seeking to become commissioned officers, the policymakers and the War Department originally failed to heed this call for integration.

President Wilson, a southern Democrat, alongside senators and congressmen, many of whom had been elected by a constituency of white southerners who believed in segregation, held power in America. Originally, these policymakers had no intention of integrating African Americans into a camp where they could be trained as commissioned officers. To this end, they successfully excluded African Americans from the four-week training camps for reserve officers established in the summer of 1916 by the National Defense Act. Senator James K. Vardaman, a Democrat from Mississippi, stated, “Universal military service means that millions of Negroes

⁸³ Jami Bryan, “Fighting for Respect: African American Soldiers in WWI,” *On Point: The Journal of Army History* (Winter 2002-2003) 8, No. 4: 11.

⁸⁴ Henri, *Bitter Victory*, 30.

who will come under this measure will be armed. I know of no greater menace to the South than this.”⁸⁵

Fortunately for African Americans seeking officer commissions, not all white men agreed with Senator Vardaman. Lieutenant Colonel Joel Spingarn, co-founder and chairman of the executive committee for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), led the fight for a segregated officers’ camp in 1917. He had attended the summer white officer training camp in Plattsburg, New York, in 1915 and 1916. While there Spingarn determined that African Americans should have the opportunity to attend these camps. He personally believed that entering World War I was imminent for the United States and that if America was going to war African Americans should have the opportunity to lead fellow black men into combat during the conflict.⁸⁶

Beginning in December 1916, Spingarn asked President Wilson and the War Department to reconsider the possibility of training African American men as officers. Spingarn quickly realized any means that might suggest equality between blacks and whites would be completely rejected. Therefore, he laid aside his integrationist ideology and decided to fight for the creation of a segregated camp. Now, the question was with both the government and the black community. Would the War Department create a segregated camp for black men to become officers? If a camp were to be created, would African Americans be willing to participate in such an endeavor? Would they view its establishment as a victory or another reinforcement of their second-class citizenship?⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Hal S. Chase, “Struggle for Equality: Fort Des Moines Training Camp for Colored Officers, 1917,” *Phylon* 39, No. 4 (4th Quarter, 1978): 298.

⁸⁶ Charles Hamilton Houston, “Saving the World for Democracy,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 20, 1940: 13.

⁸⁷ Chase, “Struggle for Equality,” 299.

Clearly for the fifty year period spanning from the Civil War until the United States declared war on the Central Powers in 1917, white America engaged in a persistent debate over the fate of African Americans as both soldiers and officers. Opposition against enlisting black men clung to racial stereotypes of inferiority, cowardliness, and ignorance to support their arguments. When necessary, these opponents incited fear claiming that arming blacks would only lead to the destruction of America through riots where black men would plunder their cities and rape their white women.

In response to these claims, white advocates of black soldiers rebutted that African Americans had a history of loyal service to the country. They argued that given the opportunity African Americans would fight valiantly and pointed to specific examples when black men had proved their worth. Nonetheless, the debate raged on into the twentieth century as to what the role of African Americans in the military would be. However, there is still another side of the debate to examine to understand how the struggle for black men to become combat soldiers and commissioned officers occurred. How did African Americans take action to declare their rights to stand shoulder to shoulder with white Americans in defense of their nation?

CHAPTER 2: AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

OF BLACK COMBAT TROOPS & THE CREATION OF

A SEGREGATED OFFICERS' TRAINING CAMP AT

FORT DES MOINES

Whenever white citizens or policymakers criticized African Americans' abilities as soldiers, black leaders quickly refuted the rationale, or lack thereof, behind these claims. They quickly invoked the history of African Americans military service to the nation to demonstrate their bravery, loyalty, and fighting ability.

Frederick Douglass, one of the most persistent advocates of arming African Americans as soldiers, spearheaded the debate against white attacks. His eloquently penned articles and compelling orations emboldened free blacks to demand their use as fighting troops during the Civil War. Douglass reasoned that once black men proved their loyalty, patriotism, and courage on the battlefield, the nation would have to recognize them as first-class citizens. He declared: "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States."⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Frederick Douglass, *Douglass' Monthly* (August 1863), 852.

In September 1861, Douglass chastised the government in an editorial titled “Fighting Rebels with Only One Hand.” In the article he questioned, “Why does the government reject the negro? Is he not a man? Can he not wield a sword, fire a gun, march and countermarch?” Douglass figuratively argued for the Union to fight with both its hands, “this is no time to fight only with your white hand, and allow your black hand to remain tied.” He believed that there was no reason for the government to wait to enlist black men questioning why a nation in need of men would “refuse to receive the very class of men which have a deeper interest in the defeat and humiliation of the rebels, than all others.”⁸⁹

He contested claims that black men were too cowardly and not intelligent enough to serve as adequate soldiers. Recalling the valiant service of African Americans with Andrew Jackson at the battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812 and the role Rhode Island and Connecticut black men in the Revolutionary War, Douglass reasoned that given the opportunity and training black men would perform as well as any other newly formed regiment.⁹⁰

In a speech he delivered to the Emancipation League in Boston, Massachusetts, Douglass mocked:

Colored men were good enough to fight under Washington. They are not good enough to fight under McClellan. . . . They were good enough to help win American independence but they are not good enough to help preserve that independence against treason and rebellion.⁹¹

He led the charge for African Americans to serve their nation and fulfill their duties as citizens.

Douglass hoped that through these efforts the war would evolve from an effort to reunify the rebelling states to a crusade of emancipation to end slavery.

⁸⁹ Frederick Douglass, “Fighting Rebels with Only One Hand,” *Douglass’ Monthly* (September 1861): 516.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Frederick Douglass, *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2000), 474-476.

Douglass was not the only African American leader to contend that African American soldiers should be utilized in the war effort. In May 1862, poet J. Madison Bell penned his composition, “What Shall We do with the Contrabands.” The ballad urged the government to arm black men with “a rifle, a musket, a cutlass or sword,” so they could fight valiantly and remove “the stigma and scorn now attending the slave.” He pleaded that if this war was “one for freedom” then African Americans must have some role fighting for their emancipation.⁹² Martin Delany, a black journalist and physician, also advocated arming African Americans as soldiers. Upon his return from Africa in 1861, Delany held a series of lectures where he bolstered support for arming black men.⁹³

Eventually, the proponents for enlisting black soldiers won their argument and recruitment of black men began. However, even before the formal recruitment of black army regiments by the U. S. Army, African American men were forming their own units to combat the stereotype that African Americans did not have the mental or physical abilities necessary to be good soldiers. Some northern freemen formed their own military companies, armed themselves, and began drilling together. Though their loyalty had been refused by the War Department, they stood poised and ready for the call to arms they believed was only a matter of time. Each week more and more volunteers from New York and New England entered into the ranks of these organizations, these self-determined national guards who hoped that soon they would be allowed to fight for their country and freedom for their brothers and sisters in bondage.⁹⁴ President Abraham Lincoln, Congress, and the War Department began establishing black combat regiments in September 1862. Both Douglass and Delany were appointed by Lincoln to recruit

⁹² J. Madison Bell, “What Shall We do with the Contrabands,” *Pacific Appeal* (San Francisco, California), May 24, 1862.

⁹³ Robert S. Levine, *Frederick Douglass and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 219.

⁹⁴ “The War in American,” *London News*, May 29, 1861.

African Americans for the all-black army regiments. In fact, Lincoln even commissioned Delany as a major for this cause, as both Douglass and Delany were responsible for assisting in the early recruiting efforts for the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts in 1863.⁹⁵

Major Delany served as the highest-ranking black commissioned officer during the Civil War. However his own personal commission was not what he was seeking, he wanted all African Americans to have an opportunity to lead black men in combat. In February 1865, Delany met with President Lincoln with a request. He proposed for the commander and chief to create an army of black men led solely by African American officers to march into the Confederacy and fulfill the emancipation of slaves still in bondage. Delany reasoned that this army would only increase in size as it carried out these duties because many new freemen would desire to join the ranks. Through the expansion of the force, he argued that this all-black army could protect and sustain these newly given freedoms while not endangering or diverting any other white divisions or regiments of the Union Army. Therefore, this army would accomplish three goals: it would liberate slaves, provide employment for new freemen, and demonstrate the president's confidence in African Americans by allowing them to earn officer commissions and lead themselves.⁹⁶

Unfortunately for Delany and black men seeking commissions, although Lincoln approved his request to establish an all-black army complete with commissioned officers, the war ended before its creation and organization could take place. Though Delany himself received the opportunity to serve as a commissioned captain, no other African American would earn a commission. Additionally, Delany's commission was not for the purpose of leading black soldiers in the field or in training. Instead, he was assigned to assist in the recruiting of freemen

⁹⁵ Levine, *Frederick Douglass and the Politics of Representative Identity*, 219.

⁹⁶ Frank A. Rollin, *Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1883), 166-169.

in South Carolina. He served in this capacity during and after the war until he was transferred to the Freedman's Bureau in June 1865.⁹⁷

It was during Reconstruction that black men received their next opportunity to earn officer commissions. With the election of African Americans to political offices, black Congressmen could nominate young African American men to West Point. Though debate still existed between white advocates and opponents of allowing black men into the academy, there was no such division in the African American community. *The Washington Bee* published several articles defending the opportunity of black men to enroll in the military academy at West Point and seek their officer commissions. The paper alerted African American voters to candidates who were opposed to black men at West Point.⁹⁸ Additionally, *The Washington Bee* encouraged the young men who enrolled at West Point. The paper touted their personal successes while always reminding the young men of their role as leaders of the race. One piece pleaded with the only black West Point cadet at the time to take his time studying for his final examination for "his success" was a personal one but "his failure" would be "a race failure."⁹⁹

Unfortunately for African Americans, only three black cadets graduated from West Point during the time span of 1870 to 1887. After 1887, Jim Crow laws, legal segregation, and disfranchisement through poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, and the white primary succeeded in an almost complete banishment of African Americans from the political process in the South. One effect of disfranchisement was the closing of West Point to African Americans, although the black community did not accept this discrimination lying down.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 188, 223.

⁹⁸ "Our Weekly Review," *Washington Bee*, September 27, 1887: 1; "Our Weekly Review," *Washington Bee*, October 1, 1887: 2; "Our Weekly Review," *Washington Bee*, October 22, 1887: 2.

⁹⁹ *Washington Bee*, June 15, 1889: 2.

During the Spanish-American War, President McKinley called for volunteers from the states, and African Americans willingly answered the call. However, several prominent black newspapers questioned why their men should fight for democracy abroad when they were denied it at home. The *Washington Bee* argued: “The Negro has no reason to fight for Cuba’s independence. He is opposed at home. He is as much in need of independence as Cuba is.”¹⁰⁰ Another issue compared the plight of Cubans’ treatment by the Spanish as similar to the discrimination blacks faced from white southerners.¹⁰¹ The *Richmond Planet* echoed these sentiments: “Why is it that some white Americans have so much love, zeal and sympathy for the oppressed and cruelly treated Cubans, and none such for oppressed and cruelly treated colored Americans?”¹⁰² Additionally, John Mitchell, Jr., the *Richmond Planet*’s editor, argued that black men should only volunteer to serve under one condition—black officers should lead them into combat. Mitchell coined the slogan, “No officers, no fight!” in one of his April 1898 editions of the paper. His campaign argued that, “Separate colored brigades mean separate colored officers.”¹⁰³ In support, *The American Citizen*, an African American paper from Kansas City, Kansas, claimed: “It is an insult to tell us that we are incapable of holding the rank of an officer—no officers, no soldiers, is our motto.”¹⁰⁴

Mitchell relentlessly gathered more and more advocates until finally some black soldiers were promoted to commissioned officers over all-black volunteer regiments. These commissions were given conditionally: African Americans could only be promoted as lieutenants, and when

¹⁰⁰ “They Say,” *Washington Bee*, March 5, 1898: 2.

¹⁰¹ “Senator Mason Speaks,” *Washington Bee*, March 26, 1898: 5.

¹⁰² “The Rambler,” *Richmond Planet*, April 23, 1898: 1.

¹⁰³ “Our Solider Boys—The War,” *Richmond Planet*, April 30, 1898: 3.

¹⁰⁴ *American Citizen* (Topeka, Kansas), June 17, 1898

the war was over they had to resign the commissions before returning to their regular army regiments.¹⁰⁵

Once the fighting in Cuba had ended, African Americans troops received some well-deserved praise. Several members of the Tenth Cavalry were allowed in a Philadelphia Peace Jubilee parade and were welcomed with loud applause. Other African Americans were honored with special luncheons and the presentations of medals or flags. These accolades did not last long. Theodore Roosevelt revised his compliments of black troops' bravery at San Juan Hill to state that African Americans were, in fact, much more cowardly than white soldiers and only successful during the engagement due to the leadership of their white officers.¹⁰⁶

Roosevelt's charges of cowardice did not go unchallenged, and, following the Spanish-American War, black leaders called for a reopening of West Point to African Americans. One of the first items on the Negro Democratic League's agenda at their convention in New York City in 1898 was to declare their disappointment in the War Department for discriminating against African Americans becoming cadets at West Point and Annapolis. The organization passed a resolution citing the valiant service of black men in America's most recent conflict and its previous battles. They boldly claimed: "We are proud of the valor and heroism displayed by the negro troops at the battle of Santiago. It is but a repetition of what the negro soldiers has done in every war from that of the Revolution to the present time." The organization argued these historical examples of African American loyalty and capability were just causes for the War Department to afford the opportunity for black men to become commissioned officers. Furthermore, the Negro Democratic League pleaded that the War Department open up both West Point and the Naval Academy to candidates that would be "judged upon the basis of merit and

¹⁰⁵ Foner, *Blacks and the American Military in American History*, 84-85.

¹⁰⁶ Marvin Fletcher, *The Black Soldier and Officer in the United States Army, 1891-1917* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), 46.

not color.”¹⁰⁷ Likewise, the local conference of the Negro Baptist Ministers in Boston, Massachusetts, adopted similar resolutions in December 1901. Their resolution also included a plan to hold a national convention in Washington, D. C., the following February. They hoped that through a joint effort with black Baptist ministers in Washington they could convince President Roosevelt to open the doors of West Point, Annapolis, and other state agricultural colleges to black men.¹⁰⁸

Henry O. Flipper, the first black man to graduate from West Point, argued that the failures of past black cadets to graduate were not due to mental inability for the race as a whole. Instead, Flipper declared that a lack of “sufficient education” at the time these cadets entered into West Point had doomed them to failure. He challenged the youth of the race, their parents, and educators to ensure that black students were receiving the best education possible.¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, Flipper noted that for any cadet, regardless of race, West Point’s entrance exam was far below standards of the testing, both mental and physical, that a cadet faced while at the academy. He claimed that the discrepancy between the entrance exam and the actual requirements to graduate from the institution were too great for ill-educated cadets. He believed that far too many young men who were unprepared for success at West Point were allowed to enter the academy only to have “fallen by the way for deficiency.”¹¹⁰

Still, Flipper found an overwhelming value by having cadets at both West Point and Annapolis. He argued it was an injustice for African Americans to not have at least one young man in both institutions’ entering classes each year. He urged congressmen to seek out deserving and motivated youths, then properly prepare them with a fine education, nominate

¹⁰⁷ “A Demand for Recognition,” *Times* (Washington D. C.), August 12, 1898: 2.

¹⁰⁸ “Want Places at West Point and Annapolis,” *Akron Daily Democrat*, December 31, 1901: 2.

¹⁰⁹ Henry O. Flipper, “A Military Education,” *Colored American* (Washington, D. C.), August 18, 1900: 1.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

them to the military academies, and support them throughout the four years of schooling until they had successfully earned their commissions.¹¹¹

After printing Flipper's comments, *The Colored American* kept the pressure on the government. In a January 1903 issue, the paper declared that African Americans were still waiting to see black cadets in both West Point and Annapolis and the promotion of black non-commissioned officers in the army to commissioned ranks.¹¹² Two weeks later, *The Colored American* published an article entitled, "Let Us Appeal to Roosevelt." The piece detailed new efforts to convince President Roosevelt and his administration to reopen West Point and Annapolis to African Americans.¹¹³

Another article in a Richmond, Virginia, newspaper blasted President Roosevelt for not appointing a single black man to West Point during his administration despite his statement that "every citizen stood upon the same footing, without discrimination or distinction."¹¹⁴ Leading up to World War I, the refusal of the War Department to appoint black cadets to West Point or provide any opportunity for the commissioning of African American men as officers remained as a chief complaint of black citizens.

However, the events in the small town of Brownsville, Texas, in 1906 forced African Americans to question their desire toward serving the nation as soldiers. During the summer of 1906, the army sent 170 African American troops of the Twenty-fifth Infantry's 1st Battalion to Fort Brown outside Brownsville, Texas. When the orders had been released in May 1906, Brownsville's white citizens were outraged by the thought of armed black men in their town and threatened to have an armed posse waiting for the arrival of the train to prevent them from

¹¹¹ Ibid, 13.

¹¹² "The Colored American Would Like to See," *Colored American* (Washington, D. C.), January 3, 1903.

¹¹³ "Let Us Appeal to Roosevelt," *Colored American* (Washington, D. C.), January 17, 1903: 8.

¹¹⁴ "Good In All Things," *Times* (Richmond, Virginia), January 10, 1903: 4.

disembarking. Others called for a delegation to travel to Washington to request a change of orders. One businessman wrote Texas Senator C. A. Culberson a letter stating his outrage at the prospect of stationing black soldiers at Fort Brown. Despite Culberson forwarding this letter and a warning to Secretary of War William Howard Taft, the Army held its position that African American troops could handle the animosity and sent them into the racial hotbed.¹¹⁵

Upon their arrival, the black troops of the Twenty-fifth Infantry faced blatant racism from Brownsville citizens and discrimination from businesses that posted signs barring black entrance. On the night of August 16, shots rang out outside Fort Brown. Fearing an attack from the white citizenry, the bugler awoke the camp and the soldiers armed themselves with their rifles. That morning, a dead white civilian and several wounded were found. Twenty-two self-proclaimed eyewitnesses told their stories. Despite contradictory evidence, President Theodore Roosevelt believed eight white men who claimed black soldiers were responsible for the murder, and on November 9, 1906, he dishonorably discharged all 167 black soldiers present at Fort Brown during the raid.¹¹⁶

African Americans viewed the court martial proceedings and president's response to discharge the men of the Twenty-fifth Infantry as a continuation of discrimination by the government and the War Department. Booker T. Washington penned a letter to Secretary of War Taft describing how the race was "hurt and disappointed."¹¹⁷ Reverend William Decker Johnson fumed that Roosevelt "would never have reached the Presidential chair, had it not been for the bravery of these disgraced soldiers."¹¹⁸ The *New York Age* urged other black troops to

¹¹⁵ John Downing Weaver, *The Brownsville Raid* (1970; rpt. ed., College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1992), 22.

¹¹⁶ Gail Buckley, *American Patriots*, 160.

¹¹⁷ Booker T. Washington, *The Booker T. Washington Papers: 1906-8* (Champaign Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 141.

¹¹⁸ *Independent* (Selma, Alabama), January 12, 1907.

refuse to re-enlist when their terms expired due to the certainty that they would not receive equal treatment during their service.¹¹⁹

White anxiety about a racially motivated attack by African Americans increased in the aftermath of Brownsville. These apprehensions led congressmen to draft bills each year from December 1906 to 1916 that, if passed, would have removed all African Americans from the Army and prevented their future enlistment. When these bills failed, the legislators responsible for sponsoring them proposed new bills that would have removed the rank of all black noncommissioned officers and formally prohibited black men from seeking commissions at West Point and Annapolis indefinitely. Fortunately for African Americans, the War Department expressed their overwhelming opposition to these bills citing black soldiers' and sailors' valiant service to the nation throughout America's wars.¹²⁰ Although all these bills failed to pass, the wake of Brownsville resonated into World War I as the War Department forced the four African American regular Army regiments, the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry, to sit out the war by stationing them in Hawaii.

When Congress approved President Woodrow Wilson's request for a Declaration of War against the Central Powers on April 6, 1917, it rekindled the same debates over African American military participation that had been argued in earlier conflicts. Whites clung to their claims that black inferiority made them incapable of military service while the black community was torn between national duty and the unfulfilled promises of equality from their previous loyalty to the nation in combat. Black men faced a complex question raised by the paradoxical circumstances surrounding that war in particular. President Wilson declared, "The world must

¹¹⁹ Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History*, 99.

¹²⁰ Michael Lee Lanning, *The African-American Soldier: From Crispus Attucks to Colin Powell* (Secaucus, N. J.: Carol Publishing Group, 1997), 115.

be made safe for democracy”¹²¹ when asking Congress to approve his declaration of war.

African Americans, however, questioned why they should fight to ensure democracy for the Allies against the Central Powers when they did not receive the benefits and equality of that very premise in America.

While white and black leaders argued about the role black men should have in the war before the conscription act was passed, that same debate also dominated the black community. African American laity and intellectuals disagreed among themselves as to whether or not African Americans should serve in the European war. James Weldon Johnson, editor of the *New York Age* at that time, reported overhearing a black man in Harlem say, “The Germans ain’t done nothin’ to me, and if they have, I forgive ‘em,” as his rationale for not joining the New York National Guard.¹²² In response to this lack of enthusiasm for military service, Captain Napoleon Marshall of the 15th National Guard took to the streets of Harlem in uniform. Amidst verbal harassment from black men and women who mocked Marshall for what they saw as foolhardy service for an ungrateful nation, Marshall proudly rebutted, “Any man who was not willing to fight for his country was not worthy to be one of its citizens.”¹²³

Similarly, Leonard W. Lewis, the recruiting officer for the all-black 8th Infantry of the Illinois National Guard, scolded both white and black men who failed to volunteer to serve their nation in combat. He stated that the 8th Illinois seemingly would be the only unit “in the whole United States to enter service with a full quota of men.” Furthermore, Lewis attacked “politicians and demagogues” chastising them for forgetting about the loyalty of African Americans in past battles. Finally, he reassured that the black men of fighting age would not

¹²¹ Woodrow Wilson, *War Messages*, 65th Cong., 1st Sess. Senate Doc. No. 5, Serial No. 7264, Washington, D. C., 1917; 3-8.

¹²² James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (1930; rpt. ed., Boston: Da Capo Press, 1991), 232-233.

¹²³ Napoleon Marshall, *The Providential Armistice: A Volunteer’s Story* (Washington, D. C.: Liberty League, 1930), 12.

continue in their weariness for enlistment but rather would offer their all “still keeping step to the music of the republic” despite the “discouragements” of inequality—thus proclaiming their duty as “The Loyal Negro Soldier.”¹²⁴

The majority of African American leaders agreed with Captain Marshall and Lewis. Robert Russa Moton, author and educator who had just succeeded Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute, pledged to President Wilson “that you and the nation can count absolutely on the loyalty of the mass of Negroes to our country and its people.”¹²⁵ Roscoe Conkling Simmons, orator and columnist for the *Chicago Defender*, contended:

Grievances I have against this people, against this Government.
Injustice to me there is, bad laws there are upon the statute books,
but in this hour of peril I forget---and you must forget---all
thoughts of self or race or creed or politics or color. That, boys, is
loyalty.¹²⁶

Additionally, Howard University Dean Kelly Miller; Emmett J. Scott, a former secretary of Booker T. Washington; Judge Robert H. Terrell; National Urban League executive George Hayes; politician Charles W. Anderson; attorney W. H. Lewis; and Fred R. Moore, editor of the *New York Age*, all announced their support for the war and their belief that African Americans should answer the call and loyally serve their nation in battle.¹²⁷

Another advocate for the war and for African Americans loyally serving as soldiers was W. E. B. Du Bois, founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and editor of its publication, *The Crisis*. Even before the United States entered into World War I, Du Bois argued black Americans should support the Allies because he believed Germany was motivated by its desire for imperialism. He thought that one of Germany’s

¹²⁴ Leonard W. Lewis, “The Loyal Negro Soldier,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1917: 6.

¹²⁵ “The Horizon,” *The Crisis* (May 1917): 37.

¹²⁶ Quoted from the *Louisville Courier Journal* in “Loyalty,” *The Crisis* (May 1917): 23.

¹²⁷ Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), 99.

primary reasons for fighting was to seize control of the raw materials and markets in Africa that France and Great Britain controlled. Although Du Bois saw all three of these European powers as oppressive, he rationalized that France and Britain were more favorable in race relations than Germany. He argued, “but as compared with Germany England is an angel of light.”¹²⁸

The issue of training and commissioning black officers did not escape the scope of these wartime debates. As early as 1915, the black press called for the reopening of West Point to black officer candidates. The *Washington Bee* printed an editorial requesting that Congress terminate the biased system of appointing West Point cadets through Congressional nomination. Characterizing the nomination process as “obsolete and honeycombed with favoritism and discrimination,” the editorial pleaded for “a square deal” for “ambitious colored youths.”¹²⁹ In July 1916, R. R. Wright, Sr., president of Georgia State Normal and Industrial College in Savannah, wrote a letter asking President Woodrow Wilson to establish a camp where young African American men could receive officer training.¹³⁰

Once Congress passed President Wilson’s declaration of war on April 6, 1917, Du Bois continued his support. In that very same month, he published an article supporting Dr. Spingarn in his attempts to establish a segregated officer training camp. Although Du Bois understood that choosing between segregation and complete denial was “The Perpetual Dilemma” for African Americans, he believed in this case choosing segregation was necessary. Du Bois criticized his colleagues at other black newspapers for not recognizing that conscription would force African Americans to fight in the war one way or another, “This is the mistake made by the *Baltimore Afro-American*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *New York News*, and the *Cleveland Gazette*. They assume a choice between volunteering and not volunteering. The choice will be

¹²⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, “World War and the Color Line,” *The Crisis* (November 1914): ii.

¹²⁹ “A Square Deal,” *Washington Bee*, December 4, 1915: 4.

¹³⁰ Chase, “Struggle for Equality,” 298.

between conscription and rebellion.” He argued that if African Americans must fight, then they needed the opportunity to serve under black commissioned officers.¹³¹

In another editorial Du Bois declared, “GIVE US Negro officers for Negro troops.” The piece rebutted both white and black arguments against the creation of the camp and demanded it be established. In regard to the objection that black men lacked the intelligence necessary to serve as capable officers, Du Bois called for the “liars” to examine the history, and they would find many examples of black men as successful military leaders. As for African American objections to the “Jim Crow camp,” Du Bois argued that it was necessary evil when the War Department had refused “justice and right” by denying African Americans “to the civilian camps on the same terms as white men.”¹³²

In several other editorials from September 1917 to September 1918, Du Bois continued his call to both the War Department and African Americans to join together in “fighting for democracy.” He scolded white America recalling that African Americans had loyally fought for the nation in six wars demonstrating their role in the creation of this nation. Additionally, Du Bois encouraged black men to “close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our fellow white citizens” and to remember, “that the *first* duty of an American is to win the war.”¹³³

These powerful essays reveal Du Bois’s belief that World War I was a war for democracy, not only abroad but also at home. He believed and argued that blacks should willingly serve the nation in World War I—“if this is OUR country, then this is OUR war”—and claimed, for their

¹³¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Perpetual Dilemma,” *The Crisis* (April 1917): 270-271.

¹³² W. E. B. Du Bois, “Officers,” *The Crisis* (June 1917): 60.

¹³³ W. E. B. Du Bois, “Awake, America” *The Crisis* (September 1917): 36; W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Black Soldier,” *The Crisis* (June 1918): 60; W. E. B. Du Bois, “Close Ranks,” *The Crisis* (July 1918): 111; W. E. B. Du Bois, “A Philosophy in Time of War,” *The Crisis* (August 1918): 164-165; W. E. B. Du Bois, “Our Special Grievances” *The Crisis* (September 1918): 217.

loyalty, blacks would emerge “with the right to vote and the right to work and the right to live without insult” from an allied victory in the conflict.¹³⁴

Other leaders within the black community did not share Du Bois’s enthusiasm for the war or for African Americans fighting in it. Asa Philip Randolph, and Chandler Owen were the most outspoken opponents of Du Bois. In their socialist newspaper, *The Messenger*, Randolph and Owen denounced the war as tool for capitalists to profit from rather than an attempt to restore social justice and democracy to the world.¹³⁵

Furthermore, Randolph and Owen staunchly opposed the idea of black Americans risking their lives abroad for the same liberties they were being denied at home. In one editorial, the two men challenged President Wilson:

Lynching, Jim Crow, segregation, discrimination in the armed forces and out, disfranchisement of millions of black souls in the South—all these things make your cry of making the world safe for democracy a sham, a mockery, a rape on decency and a travesty on common justice.¹³⁶

Additionally, Owen argued that African Americans had fought valiantly in the Spanish-American War only to see “prejudice and race hate [had] grown in this country since 1898.”¹³⁷ While Randolph claimed that instead of volunteering to fight in a European War to make the world safe for democracy he would rather fight to make Georgia safe for African Americans.¹³⁸

Hubert Harrison, editor of *The Voice*, used this opportunity to denounce the war and to personally attack Du Bois also. He questioned Du Bois as being a true leader of the race. Harrison believed that in the editorial “Close Ranks,” Du Bois had surrendered this loyalty to

¹³⁴ Du Bois, “A Philosophy in Time of War,”

¹³⁵ Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 97.

¹³⁶ “Editorial,” *The Messenger* (January 1918): 20.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 4.

African Americans when he asked them to “forget [their] special grievances” against the nation. In Harrison’s opinion, Du Bois abandoned his race in favor of the War Department—a “palpable sin.” Harrison sided with Randolph and Owen; he argued that “lynching, segregation and disfranchisement” were too great to overlook. For these men, African Americans could not return injustice with loyalty. The contradiction of fighting and dying for democracy abroad when it was not afforded them at home was impossible.¹³⁹

These same sentiments also played a crucial role in the debate over establishing a segregated officer training camp. Black intellectuals and the black press were by no means united ideologically in supporting a segregated camp. In March of 1917, Dr. Spingarn spoke in front of Howard University students arguing that the establishment of a segregated camp was better than no camp at all. He likened the situation to choice of parents trying to save their children from a burning building: “I would not advise you to throw your children out of a window on the fourth floor; but if the house was on fire, and all other means of getting children from the burning building were closed, I would advise you, as a last desperate resort to throw your children out of the window in order to save their lives.”¹⁴⁰

In response to Spingarn’s comments, the *Washington Bee* argued, “Colored people should never accept any separation or distinction based on race alone.” Furthermore, the article questioned the legitimacy of a camp creating equality among the races. It pointed out that for such an idea to be successful the prospective officers must be trained and equipped equally to white officer training facilities—a stipulation that the newspaper believed would never be carried out by the Army. Though far from an outright rejection of Spingarn’s plan, the paper refused to

¹³⁹ Hubert H. Harrison, “The Descent of Du Bois,” *The Voice* (Harlem, New York), July 25, 1918.

¹⁴⁰ “A Summer Camp: Dr. Spingarn Explains his Summer Training Camp,” *Washington Bee*, March 24, 1917: 1.

endorse a segregated camp and asked its readers to carefully contemplate the effects that accepting segregation might have upon future civil rights endeavors.¹⁴¹

The *Chicago Defender* did not mince words in its response to Spingarn's proposal of a segregated camp. Its editor exclaimed: "'Jim Crow' Training Camps—No!" The article argued that African Americans' acceptance of a segregated camp allowed injustice and discrimination to persist. Furthermore, it claimed that surrendering to segregation demonstrated cowardice in African Americans willing to accept second-class citizenship in hopes of being rewarded later for not disturbing the peace now.¹⁴²

Nonetheless, Spingarn continued fighting for a segregated camp because he believed it was the only opportunity to have African Americans trained as officers. He gained the support of General Leonard Wood, commander of the Eastern division of the Army, in January 1917. He then proceeded to enlist the help of W. E. B. Du Bois, editor of *The Crisis*, and Colonel Charles Young, the highest-ranking black man in the U. S. Army. Spingarn spoke out nationally against critics of a segregated camp and argued:

The army officers want the camp to fail. The last thing they want is to help colored men become commissioned officers. The camp is intended to fight segregation, not to encourage it. Colored men in a camp by themselves would all get a fair chance for promotion. Opposition on the part of Negroes is helping the South, which does not want the Negroes to have any kind of military training. If there is a war, there will doubtless be conscription of all able-bodied men. The choice will be no longer between volunteering and not volunteering, but between conscription and rebellion. If conscription comes, will the leaders of the race help their Southern enemies by preaching treason and rebellion, or will they face facts right now and prepare themselves to go as leaders and not as privates?¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ "The Summer Military Camp," *Washington Bee*, March 24, 1917: 4.

¹⁴² "'Jim Crow' Training Camps—No!" *Chicago Defender*, April 7, 1917: 10.

¹⁴³ Quoted in Charles H. Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers* (Boston: B.J. Brimmer Company, 1923), 37-38.

Once war was declared in April 1917, the *Washington Bee* had a change of heart toward a segregated officers' training camp. A week after publishing its cautionary editorial in regard to a segregated camp, the paper made an about-face with its leading article on the front page. Lieutenant P. L. Carmouche, a non-commissioned officer from the Spanish-American War, wrote a response piece endorsing Spingarn's plan. The letter compelled young black men that if a segregated camp was created that they should be willing to enlist in the training program and "Qualify as officers for services in order to lead the unsurpassed sons of [Ethiopia]." He urged them that "A failure to do so when such an opportunity presents itself, will rest as a stigma upon us. For the sake of our future history, GO."¹⁴⁴ Alongside Carmouche's endorsement, the newspaper abandoned its previously attentive stance and now pledged support for Spingarn, a segregated camp, the war effort, and President Wilson.¹⁴⁵

Spingarn's movement for a segregated camp gained more support from the black community when, in late April, Congress approved the opening of fourteen new white officers' training camps without any provision for training and commissioning black men.¹⁴⁶ On May 1, 1917, Howard University's president, deans, and students met together to organize other colleges for the cause of a separate black officers' camp. Out of this meeting came the Central Committee of Negro College Men (CCNCM). Frank Coleman, Merrill H. Curtis, Thomas M. Gregory, Charles Hamilton Houston, Louis H. Russell, and Clarence B. Curley, all future graduates of the officer training camp at Fort Des Moines, signed a request sent to Congress outlining the need for a facility to train black officers. The CCNCM claimed that African Americans were "anxious" to serve their nation in the war but believed they should do so under the leadership of black officers. They argued since black cadets were not going to be allowed in

¹⁴⁴ "Mr. Spingarn Endorsed," *Washington Bee*, March 31, 1917: 1.

¹⁴⁵ "Rally to the Flag," *Washington Bee*, March 31, 1917: 4.

¹⁴⁶ Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 82-85.

the fourteen camps recently created by the War Department for officer training, a separate camp should be established for African American officer candidates. Furthermore, the CCNCM pledged over a thousand black college students and graduates volunteers who had already promised to enter a segregated officer training camp once it was established.¹⁴⁷ On May 3, 1917, *The Washington Times* published an article written by Howard University professor Montgomery Gregory. The article boldly called for the government to “provide at once a separate camp for the training of negro officers.” Additionally, Gregory stated that despite discrimination, young black men were willing and “enthusiastic” to serve their nation if only the War Department would allow them to do so under the leadership of black officers.¹⁴⁸

Following the CCNCM’s petition of Congress, fellow educator William Pickens echoed their sentiments in a speech he gave on May 16 in Washington, D. C. Pickens, dean of Morgan College in Baltimore, Maryland, proclaimed the loyalty of African Americans to the war cause. In his speech, “The Attitude of the American Negro,” Pickens stated, “there is no question to the Negro’s patriotism and loyalty.” On the other hand, “The Negro is certainly not loyal to disfranchisement, ‘jimcrowism’ and lynch law, but follows the star of America in spite of those evils and with the deliberate intention and fond hope of overthrowing them.” He continued, “in this same spirit he would accept a separate military training camp that some of his college trained [men] might get commissions in the army and serve their country more effectively than as mere ‘cannon fodder.’”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Central Committee of Negro College Men, “Training Camp for Negro Officers,” Qtd. in Scott, *Scott’s Official History*, 85.

¹⁴⁸ Montgomery Gregory, “Reader Urges Colored Officers for Colored Regiments,” *Washington Times*, May 3, 1917: 6.

¹⁴⁹ “Attitude of the American Negro: Professor Pickens Declares Race is Loyal,” *Iowa Bystander*, June 8, 1917: 3.

Apparently the pressure of the black community and Dr. Spingarn had worked. On May 19, 1917, Adjutant General H. P. McCain sent out a special dispatch to the Army's chiefs of staff announcing Fort Des Moines would be the site for a training camp for African American officers. McCain notified the chiefs that the camp's enrollment would be 1,250 cadets with 250 coming from non-commissioned officers of regular Army units and additional 1,000 citizens being enlisted. Training was planned to take place for three months with Fort Des Moines: "ready to receive non-commissioned officers, regular army, June 5, and all others June 15. Course begins June 18."¹⁵⁰ Subsequently, on May 21, 1917, Secretary of the War Department Newton D. Baker publicly announced the newly formed "Fort Des Moines Training Camp for Colored Officers."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 39.

¹⁵¹Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 85-89.

CHAPTER 3: AMERICA’S RESPONSE TO THE
SEGREGATED OFFICER TRAINING CAMP &
THE CADETS’ DAILY LIFE AND TRAINING
AT FORT DES MOINES

Immediately, newspapers from around the nation reported on the War Department’s creation of a segregated officer training facility for blacks. Some African American papers praised the victory of Spingarn, Du Bois, and the CCNCM; others continued their doubting as to whether a segregated camp was a victory or not.

One opponent of the camp, the *Chicago Defender*, satirized the opening of officer training to African Americans in a June 1917 article. Characterizing the segregated camp as a “quandary,” the paper questioned whether it was advantageous or not in the struggle for equality. Additionally, the article noted that the announcement cards sent out by the CCNCM to notify college graduates of the camp ironically were stamped with a government postage cancellation stating: “Twenty-seventh Reunion United States Confederate Veterans, Washington, D. C., June 4-8, 1917.”¹⁵²

¹⁵² “The Irony of Fate,” *Chicago Defender*, June 2, 1917: 5.

The paradox of a reminder for Confederate veterans to reunite in the nation's capital provided an opportunity for the article's author to restate his concerns about a segregated camp. He commented how a "confederate spirit" lived on in America through Confederate veterans and their descendants: "The black man in his forward stride has not reached the goal, his progress being retarded in a great measure by this same confederate spirit." Hinting at a victory by "the south" in keeping blacks "ignorant of affairs military" with a segregated officer training camp, the author concluded his article restating his criticisms for the establishment of the Fort Des Moines camp.¹⁵³

An editorial to the *Atlanta Independent* from the CCNCM noted the impact of camp as a triumph: "Stop but a moment, brother, and realize what this means. At present, we have only three officers of the line in the army; in less than four months we shall have 1,250 officers. Our due recognition at last."¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, this editorial challenged dissenters who argued a Jim Crow camp was not a victory but a defeat:

Some few people have opposed the camp as a Jim Crow camp, they say we are sacrificing principles for policy. Let them talk. This camp is no more Jim Crow than our other institutions, our newspapers, our churches, our schools. In fact, it is less Jim Crow than any other institution, for here the government has assured us of exactly the same recognition, treatment, instruction and pay as men in any other camp get.¹⁵⁵

The *Savannah Tribune*, another African American newspaper, agreed with the CCNCM. It published an article that exclaimed: "The outlook for the Negro in the new army of the United States is exceedingly bright." Moreover, the article praised Indiana Senator Henry S. New for

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Letter to the editor, "Officers' Training Camps," *Atlanta Independent*, May 24, 1917.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

his work to establish the training camp, effectively “knocking out of the scheme to leave the colored man out of the military scheme of the present war.”¹⁵⁶

White newspapers embraced or ignored the creation of an officer training camp for African Americans in varying degrees. For example, *The Daily Missourian* merely printed a notice of where and when black applicants could apply as officers.¹⁵⁷ Likewise, *The Atlanta Constitution*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Hartford Courant* originally only published a brief press release from Washington in their papers.¹⁵⁸ The *Chicago Daily Tribune* placed its announcement inside a negatively written article about the House of Representatives passing a tax bill of \$1,870,000,000 for the war effort implying that one of the things Congress was wasting money on was this newly ordered segregated camp.¹⁵⁹

On the other hand, some white newspapers seemed more in favor with allowing African Americans to earn commissions. A journalist at the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* took the time to write out a brief description with specifications of the camp and announced its creation on its front page.¹⁶⁰ *The Sun*, a Baltimore newspaper, printed a more significant notification on its second page.¹⁶¹ Other papers like the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *El Paso Herald*, and *The Atlanta Constitution* published columns recognizing local men who would be heading to Fort Des Moines for training.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ “News from the Nation’s Capital,” *Savannah Tribune*, June 23, 1917.

¹⁵⁷ “To Train Negro Officers,” *Daily Missourian*, June 3, 1917.

¹⁵⁸ “Camp for Training of Negro Officers,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 20, 1917: 8; “Here for Colored Officers,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 1917: 4; “How Negroes Can Train For Officers,” *Hartford Courant*, May 25, 1917: 10.

¹⁵⁹ “House Passes Tax Bill for \$1,870,000,000,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 24, 1917: 1.

¹⁶⁰ “Training Camp for Negro Officers at Fort Des Moines,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, May 20, 1917: 1.

¹⁶¹ “For Negro Officers,” *Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), May 21, 1917: 2.

¹⁶² “Coast Negroes Will Join Training Camp,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 24, 1917: 6; “Two Young El Pasoans in Training, Fort Des Moines,” *El Paso Herald*, July 16, 1917: 3; “77 Georgia Negroes for Officers’ Camp,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 29, 1917: 5.

Somewhat surprisingly, southern papers, who had generally opposed any proposal to train and arm blacks, endorsed the War Department's plan. Of course, these endorsements may have come from the War Department's decision to continue military segregation of black and white troops and to locate the training camp in Des Moines instead of a southern army base. This support also was made conditionally with the strict stipulation that black officers would not be allowed to earn too high a promotion and that they would never command white subordinates. The *Charleston Post* ran an article with its approval of the camp: "Officers as high as majors may be turned out, but will positively be used to command only Negroes."¹⁶³

Southern whites' anxiety that a black man might command white troops went so far that southern congressmen, senators, and even President Wilson sent requests to the War Department concerning the matter. The chief concern among these policymakers was that Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young would end up commanding whites. Young, the third African American to graduate from West Point, served with Ninth Cavalry for a year after his graduation before being transferred Wilberforce University where he served as an instructor. During the Spanish American War, the U. S. Army transferred him into service with the Ninth Ohio Volunteers in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina instead of with the Ninth Cavalry in Cuba, in order to make certain that a black officer would not command black soldiers in combat.¹⁶⁴ Once the War Department established the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment, letters of concern about the possibility of the wartime promotion of Lieutenant Colonel Young to brigadier general poured into the Secretary of War Newton D. Baker's office.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 40.

¹⁶⁴ Buckley, *American Patriots*, 132, 142.

¹⁶⁵ Letter, President Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, 25 June 1917, (Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.) from Bernard C. Nalty edited *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1981), 77.

Perhaps the most interesting of these letters came from President Woodrow Wilson. His letter mentioned a conversation between the president and Mississippi Senator John Sharp Williams about Young's commanding a white southern first lieutenant named Albert B. Dockery.¹⁶⁶ The Army had established the precedent of not allowing black men to command white troops, and Young's appointment as commander of the Tenth Cavalry created a quandry. Though the regular troops and the non-commissioned officers of the Tenth Cavalry were all African Americans, the commissioned officers were white. Therefore, once Young took over as commander he held a leadership position over white officers and having a black man as a superior officer was a situation a southern man like Lieutenant Dockery would not accept.

According to the Wilson letter, Dockery was serving under Young in the Tenth Cavalry at Fort Huachuca and found "it not only distasteful but practically impossible to serve under a colored commander."¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, President Wilson recommended transferring Lieutenant Dockery to prevent "serious and perhaps even tragical [sic] insubordination."¹⁶⁸ However, a simple transfer of a southern lieutenant out from under Young's command would not appease southern fears of a black officer leading white troops. Lieutenant Colonel Young had only five other colonels ahead of him on the promotion list in 1917. Despite the fact that Young would most likely become an assistant divisional commander for an all black division, the risk of a black man with such high rank was too great for some. Nevertheless, Young's selection board advocated for his promotion, and on May 23, 1917, he traveled to San Francisco for a mandatory physical exam. The doctors in San Francisco diagnosed him with high blood pressure, and the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

War Department immediately forced Young's retirement due to health concerns. The Army had managed to solve its quandary.¹⁶⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Young protested his early retirement and rode on horseback from his home in Chillicothe, Ohio, to Washington, D. C. Still, the War Department refused to reinstate Young and classified him as inactive on July 30, 1917.¹⁷⁰ Succumbing to the political pressure from senators and congressmen and backed by President Wilson's approval, Secretary of War Baker calmed the fears of many prejudiced whites—a black man would not command white troops in Europe during World War I.

It would not be until after combat was complete that Young would be reinstated. During the war he served as a professor of Military Science at Wilberforce University. In November 1918, Young again rode on horseback to demonstrate his good health, this time from Wilberforce, Ohio, to Washington, D. C. As a result of this ride, Secretary of War Baker reinstated Young. Unfortunately for Young and the African American community, by this time the war was virtually over, and Colonel Young had no opportunity to demonstrate his abilities as a leader in combat.¹⁷¹

Despite the crucial loss of Young's command and influence, the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment had a more difficult issue to deal with than criticism from white newspapers and policymakers' letters of concern or even the forced retirement of the highest African American army officer. They had convinced the War Department to create the camp, now they had to fill its ranks. Prior to the creation of the Fort Des Moines Training Facility for Colored Officers, the CCNCM had obtained the names of 1,500 black men whom they deemed worthy to present to the War Department with their request for a segregated camp. Originally, these names

¹⁶⁹ Barbeau & Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 67.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ "Col. Young Reinstated," *Kansas City Sun*, November 16, 1918: 1.

had been collected from college campuses by the CCNCM, and, as a result, most of the men were between the ages of 18 to 25. Unfortunately, the War Department approved the creation of a segregated training camp with the request that black officer candidates be between the ages of 25 to 40.¹⁷²

These standards imposed by the War Department created a major problem for the CCNCM. Now, they needed to recruit new volunteers to replace the men disqualified by the War Department. Instead of becoming discouraged, the CCNCM met this obstacle in stride and started a new drive to find candidates of the proper age. They called for “doctors, lawyers, teachers, business men, and all men who have graduated from high school” to sign up to represent the race.¹⁷³ Iowa attorney George H. Woodson, a former member of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, praised: “With less than 30 days’ notice the superb youth, the very best brain, vigor, manhood of the Race gave up comfort, position, future promise and outlook, in their various civil locations and from the North, South, East and West, started on their voluntary march to Fort Des Moines in answer to the call.” They joined with veterans from the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry for the purpose of “granting of equal rights for every race and people beneath the sun and the spirit of justice and fair play for all.”¹⁷⁴

The CCNCM utilized newspapers and personal friendships and networked through college alumni and students to announce the need for college educated black professionals to fill the ranks of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment.¹⁷⁵ Candidates were required to present their credentials along with recommendations to local selection boards located at college

¹⁷² Barbeau & Henri, *Unknown Soldiers*, 67.

¹⁷³ Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 88-89.

¹⁷⁴ Thompson, *History and Views of the Colored Officers' Training Camp*, 7-9

¹⁷⁵ “The Irony of Fate,” *Chicago Defender*, June 2, 1917: 5.

campuses, army bases, and black YMCA buildings.¹⁷⁶ Promises of equality and an end to discrimination and segregation motivated many candidates to submit their application for the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment. Candidate James W. Mitchell, who eventually graduated as a 2nd Lieutenant from Fort Des Moines, recalled the role of the black media and black college in calling the community's attention to the need for African American college men to volunteer for officer training. He noted that he decided to enlist after hearing Major General Leonard Wood's inspiring words at Five Points in Atlanta, Georgia. Mitchell remembered a statement Wood made: "We are going across the water and we're going to lick the Hun and when we come back, there won't be any white Americans, there won't be any black Americans, there won't be any brown or red Americans, [we] will all be just simple Americans."¹⁷⁷ According to Mitchell, this statement had such an impact on him and his friend Walter White that they immediately went to the state capitol building and volunteered to become officer candidates.¹⁷⁸ After presenting their credentials to the Atlanta enlistment board run by Reverend Henry H. Proctor, they were accepted to the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment beginning their journey towards becoming officers and hoping to facilitate equality in America.¹⁷⁹

Through the efforts of the CCNCM and black press, the army received more than the thousand applications necessary to fill the ranks of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment. Roughly 200 of these men were educated at Howard University with the other 800 applying from fifty other institutions.¹⁸⁰ A commanding officer of the camp noted upon the

¹⁷⁶Chase, "Struggle for Equality," 306.

¹⁷⁷James W. Mitchell, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, November 4, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Lester Joseph Rodney, "Henry Hugh Proctor: The Atlanta Years, 1894-1920," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Clark Atlanta University, 1992), 152.

¹⁸⁰ Logan, *Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967*, 181.

men's arrival on June 15, 1917, that they were "remarkably strong, earnest and well-educated."¹⁸¹

The black community had produced enough men to fill the roles of segregated officer camp that the War Department had created. These men now planned to leave the day-to-day lives they were used to for three months of training in Iowa. But why had the government chosen Iowa? Why did the War Department believe that Fort Des Moines provided the best locale to train African Americans as officers?

The selection of Des Moines seemed a logical choice due to its previous history with housing black troops. The Fort where the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment was stationed was the third Fort Des Moines. The U.S. Army commissioned the building of this fort on 400 acres on the south side of Des Moines in 1901. They designed the facility to house cavalry, so the townspeople of Des Moines were quite surprised when the Twenty-fifth Infantry arrived in 1903 instead of white cavalrymen.¹⁸² Nonetheless, the white citizens of Des Moines embraced having black infantrymen stationed at the fort. For the year the Twenty-fifth Infantry was stationed in Des Moines during 1903, no race relations' crises were reported.

John L. Thompson, editor of Des Moines's black newspaper, the *Iowa Bystander*, argued that the city presented a prime location for the establishment of a black officer training facility not only because of the state's progressive race relations but also because of the city's booming black professional class that could support these young black men. The black population of Des Moines reached 5,762 in 1917.¹⁸³ The city boasted Iowa's oldest black newspaper, the *Iowa Bystander*, established in 1894 by influential blacks within the city and was taken to statewide

¹⁸¹ *Iowa Bystander*, June 29, 1917: 2.

¹⁸² The Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

¹⁸³ Thompson, *History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp*, 111.

prominence by Thompson in 1898.¹⁸⁴ Thompson owned one of Des Moines's four black law practices; the others belonged to S. Joe Brown, J. B. Rush, and H. R. Wright. Two black physicians, Dr. A. J. Booker and Dr. J. Alvin Jefferson, and two black dentists, E. A. Lee and W. H. Lowry, provided health care for Des Moines's black community. Additional services afforded to the city's black population came from: "an undertaking firm, Jones & Samuel . . . 1 massage doctor, J. W. Dulin; 1 hotel, The Thompson; 1 lodge building known as North Star Masonic Temple Association Building . . . two grocery stores: 10 barber shops; one drug, Wade II. McGee; four restaurants, several lunch room and shoe shining parlors, one soap factory, seven churches and three missions, four pool halls and one auctioneer."¹⁸⁵ Of these black professionals, three enlisted to become officers in the war effort: S. Joe Brown and Vivian L. Jones entered the Des Moines training camp while Dr. A. J. Booker joined the Medical Corps as a commissioned lieutenant.¹⁸⁶

Along with the support of the African American community in Des Moines, the black officer cadets seemingly also had the support of the state governor, W. L. Harding, who stated, "Iowa is proud that her State Capital was designated as the place for the First Training Camp for Colored Officers." Furthermore, he noted that the training of African Americans as officers marked "a day of better understanding of the race question in this country."¹⁸⁷

Aside from its location, another important aspect for the success of the African American officer training experiment was the War Department's choice for its commanding officer. The CCNCM hoped Lieutenant Colonel Young would be chosen to lead the cadets and recommended him to the War Department. After Young's deactivation, the CCNCM knew their proposal

¹⁸⁴ Robert V. Morris, "The Iowa Bystander," Iowa Pathways, http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000289 (accessed November 12, 2008).

¹⁸⁵ Thompson, *History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp*, 111.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

would not be accepted. The War Department selected Colonel Charles C. Ballou, white commanding officer of the Twenty-fourth Infantry, to serve as the camp's commander.¹⁸⁸

As one editorial written to the *Iowa Bystander* stated, "The colored citizens of Des Moines, along with the white citizens, welcome them to our city." The excitement of this grand experiment was contagious; the *Iowa Bystander* pledged to keep the black community aware of the happenings with weekly reports.¹⁸⁹ Support for the camp flourished from the belief that its success would bring about an egalitarian and truly democratic America. The focus of seemingly the whole African American community centered on Fort Des Moines in hopes of what it might represent. Their hopes and dreams of the race now lay upon the shoulders of these young men striving to become the first commissioned graduates of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment.

On June 15, 1917, Fort Des Moines opened its doors to begin training African American men to become commissioned officers in the Army. On that date the first one hundred and forty-nine of the two hundred fifty non-commissioned officers arrived at Fort Des Moines and were assigned to quarters. The remainder of the officer candidates, non-commissioned officers and civilians, reported over the next two days.¹⁹⁰ The men had arrived from their various home states by train. That the government had arranged for the candidates to have their own separate Pullman car for the trip reveals the reality of segregation at the time. For some of these men, it was their first time to travel via America's railways.¹⁹¹ In interview recordings done some sixty years after the fact, one can still hear the excitement these officer candidates exhibited and the

¹⁸⁸ Chase, "Struggle for Equality," 306.

¹⁸⁹ "Colored Officers' Military Camp," *Iowa Bystander*, June 15, 1917: 1.

¹⁹⁰ "Form Regiments at Fort Des Moines," *Iowa Bystander*, June 15, 1917: 1; Charles Hamilton Houston, "Saving the World for Democracy (Second Installment)," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 27, 1940; 13.

¹⁹¹ All the men interviewed by Hal Chase recalled their transport to the fort via train. Interviews by Hal S. Chase. Audio recordings. November 1974 to December 1975. Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center; Houston, "Saving the World for Democracy," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 20, 1940; 13.

anticipation they felt as they traveled to join the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment. Some recollected fond memories of setting out on the journey to Des Moines accompanied by close friends and of resolving to support each other throughout the vigorous training and to earn their commissions together.¹⁹²

On Sunday, June 17, 1917, Colonel Charles Ballou issued the oath of enlistment to the 1,000 civilian candidates selected to participate in officer training. In addressing the enlistees, he explained the severity of the task they were about to undertake and the implications that success and failure had for all African Americans: “Success, if achieved, must result from your own zeal, your own intelligence, your own industry, your own behavior and character.”¹⁹³ Moreover, Ballou described the establishment of the camp as “an epochal and unprecedented event in the history of the colored race.” He challenged the cadets to muster their strength, resolve, and intelligence, to obtain success, and earn their commissions. The commander emphasized that the consequences from failure would not just fall upon the men in their personal lives: “Your race will be on trial, with you as its representatives.” With Ballou’s speech underscoring the responsibilities and duties that the officer candidates were accepting by enlisting in the camp, the cadets believed they had entered into a covenant with the Army, their race, and the American public. They reasoned that their success would bring about equality for all African Americans and feared the repercussions that would result from their failure.¹⁹⁴

All accounts indicate that conditions at Fort Des Moines were satisfactory for the new cadets.¹⁹⁵ Each company resided together in a two-story barrack. The first floor served as a

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ “Take Oath of Enlistment,” *Iowa Bystander*, June 29, 1917: 3.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Interviews by Hal S. Chase. Audio recordings. November 1974 to December 1975. Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center. All interviewees corroborate that conditions at the fort were very good and better than they expected before entering camp.

mess hall and classroom for instruction while the second floor functioned as quarters for the officer candidates. Additionally, the barracks had basements with showers for bathing and washtubs for doing laundry. Company commanders lived together in a separate barrack away from the trainees.¹⁹⁶ The schedule followed closely those maintained at the white officer training camps. The day began with the bugler's blowing reveille at 5:30 a.m. and ended with taps at 9:45 p.m. From 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. the cadets participated in infantry drill; afterwards they continued with 30 minutes of physical training from 8:30 to 9:00. The next hour, from 9:15 to 10:15, consisted of more infantry drill. Then from 10:45 to 11:45 the officer candidates hiked for an hour. Once they returned from their hike, the cadets had a break for lunch until 1:30 p.m. From 1:30 to 2:30, they trained in basic combat and learned other basic soldiering skills during "musketry arms," today known as infantry school. Then the men practiced semaphore signaling from 2:30 to 3:00. From 3:00 to 4:30 the cadets received training about how to care for equipment in seminars instructed by their company commander. From 4:30 to 7:00 a break was given for dinner and rest before returning at 7:00 for an hour of study on how to organize a regiment. Once this instruction was completed the officer candidates had a couple of hours of free time until lights out at 9:45.¹⁹⁷

Although lights were required to be out by 9:45 p.m., the day did not always end then for many candidates. Officer candidate Louis Rothchild Mehlinger recalled late nights spent studying the drill manual and preparing for examination by the company commander. Mehlinger admitted in a 1974 interview that before he entered the camp he, like many of the civilian candidates, had no previous military training. Despite this fact, Mehlinger did have an advantage

¹⁹⁶Louis H. Russell, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, November 22, 1975, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

¹⁹⁷Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 41-42.

that cadets from the other companies did not—his company was full of young men who had received military training during their high school educations.¹⁹⁸

Mehlinger lived in Washington, D. C., before joining the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment and, therefore, was placed in the “Washington Company,” Company 5. Many of the young African American men in Company 5 attended Washington high schools and benefited from military training in the school system’s cadet corps. Charles Hamilton Houston, future lawyer and innovator of the legal strategy used in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, to end legal segregation in education, was among these men in Company 5. Mehlinger recalled countless nights he and others would stay up late studying with Houston and others. They gathered in the stairway where one light stayed on all night to provide visibility to go up and down the stairs. Using the illumination of this one light, Houston willingly tutored his comrades in the drill book and reviewed studies from that day.¹⁹⁹

While the cadets at Fort Des Moines diligently studied their drill book in preparation for leading black men into battle, the War Department received continual pressure from policymakers questioning how the War Department planned to utilize black officers and troops. From July to October of 1917, letters from congressmen and senators flooded Secretary Baker’s office making clear two main points: first, policymakers and their constituents did not want African Americans trained in arms until they reached Europe, and, second, no matter how the Army trained them, they did not want them trained in their states.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸Louis Rothchild Mehlinger, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, October 25, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid; Houston, “Saving the World for Democracy (Second Installment)”

²⁰⁰ Letter from Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, to Ezekiel S. Candler, House of Representatives, Mississippi, July 18, 1917; Memorandum from Brigadier General Joseph E. Kuhn to the Chief of Staff, July 31, 1917; Letter from Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff, to William M. Calder, Senate, New York, October 10, 1917; Letter from Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, to Richard I. Manning, Governor, South Carolina, October 13, 1917; Memorandum from Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff, to staff, October 16, 1917. Office of the Chief of Staff

Originally, the War Department had planned for the training of black officer candidates at Fort Des Moines to consist of the same curriculum and be on the same schedule as the fourteen white officer training camps. In fact, after the General Staff of the War Department had decided to create a segregated camp, it had no issue with providing equalized training to black officer candidates. One memorandum ordered that African American officers, “shall not be deprived of equal opportunities.” The order continued by stating that the War Department intended for these officers and their subordinates to be utilized in combat and provided the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in active field service. The War Department had determined that the utilization of black officers to command black troops would be part of the solution to its race question instead of inhibition.²⁰¹

Aside from training the black officers, the War Department also had the issue of how it would train the African American regular soldiers that would be led in combat. The General Staff planned to solve this portion of its race problem by two additional means: first, it would segregate the soldiers in training and in combat, and, second, it would only allow African Americans as combat troops in limited numbers. The War Department determined that “No colored unit larger than a regiment should be attached to any one division.”²⁰²

In a follow up memorandum titled “Utilization of colored men drafted for the National Army,” the War College Division approved of these recommendations. The document stated that African American draftees would be best utilized by organizing an additional all-black regiment, composed of black officers and troops, to each of the sixteen divisions of the Army.

Correspondence, 1907-1917; Record Group 165, Entry 5, Document File # 13568; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

²⁰¹ Memorandum from Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff, to the Adjunct General’s Office, August 14, 1917. Office of the Chief of Staff Correspondence, 1907-1917; Record Group 165, Entry 5, Document File # 13568; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

²⁰² Ibid.

Furthermore, the War College recommended for “the best interests of the country demand that there be no racial discrimination in the National Army.” The Army now had its plan for training black officers and troops—it would provide training but would limit it with segregation and small numbers.²⁰³

Unfortunately for the War Department and for African American officers and troops, criticism came quickly against these intentions. Mississippi congressmen Ezekiel S. Chandler cloaked his disparaging attack of the plan to utilize African Americans as combatants in the form of a request for the War Department to clarify their intent. He urged them to reconsider their decision and stated that he believed there was no reason to train and arm African Americans. Senator John Sharp Williams from Mississippi refuted the idea that segregation at the regiment level was enough. He recommended that a segregated division be established instead of integrating black units into otherwise all-white divisions. Senator William M. Calder of New York, South Carolina’s Governor Richard I. Manning, Mayor W. P. Thomas of Junction City, Kansas, and Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas all penned letters demanding that black officers and soldiers not be stationed in their states’ military camps.²⁰⁴

In response to policymakers’ concerns, the War Department created a committee to re-examine and reconsider its original plan for utilizing African American officers and soldiers. The group of generals and members of the general staff detailed five alternative plans. The extent to which the War Department ensured that the arming and training of African Americans

²⁰³ Memorandum from War College Division to the Chief of Staff, July 31, 1917. Office of the Chief of Staff Correspondence, 1907-1917; Record Group 165, Entry 5, Document File # 13568; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

²⁰⁴ Letter from Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, to Ezekiel S. Candler, House of Representatives, Mississippi, July 18, 1917; Memorandum from Brigadier General Joseph E. Kuhn to the Chief of Staff, July 31, 1917; Letter from Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff, to William M. Calder, Senate, New York, October 10, 1917; Letter from Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, to Richard I. Manning, Governor, South Carolina, October 13, 1917; Memorandum from Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff, to staff, October 16, 1917. Office of the Chief of Staff Correspondence, 1907-1917; Record Group 165, Entry 5, Document File # 13568; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

did not offend white citizens and policymakers would be comical if not for the severity of the racial divide in the nation that it illustrated.²⁰⁵

Some aspects of these plans bordered on the ridiculous in terms of how much cost the Army would incur to additionally segregate its white and black soldiers. One plan called for placing black camps a mile away from already established ones so the Quartermaster Corps could supply both while ensuring strict segregation. Another proposed delaying the drafting of black men until after white draftees had already been trained to secure the white manpower necessary to prevent an uprising. Additionally, this plan suggested limiting the training given to African American draftees by “organizing and giving preliminary instruction in the localities where raised; and shipping them abroad as rapidly as possible” with “minimum training under arms.” Either of these plans would have essentially doubled the Army’s expenses for training.

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Although the committee recommended the minimum training plan, the War Department combined aspects from several plans in their final decision. The result was a plan creating one all-black division, the Ninety-Second Division, to contain all the African American combat units. This division would be filled to maximum strength and all subsequent draftees would be utilized in non-combatant service units or to replace losses in the Ninety-Second. For the purposes of training, the division would be split up and spread across multiple camps guaranteeing that a too large number of armed African Americans would not be concentrated in one place. Furthermore,

²⁰⁵ Memorandum from Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff, to Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, August 24, 1917. Office of the Chief of Staff Correspondence, 1907-1917; Record Group 165, Entry 5, Document File # 13568; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

black draftees would not be stationed at camps in the South and would receive minimum training in arms to ease the concerns of white citizens living within proximity of the camps.²⁰⁷

Unbeknownst to the War Department at the time, its four month reassessment of how to utilize African American draftees had dire consequences for the morale of the men training at Fort Des Moines. The original plan called for integrating one black unit into each of the sixteen divisions. As a result, African American troops would only serve as infantrymen and, therefore, need only infantry training.²⁰⁸ Unfortunately, this meant that the officer candidates at Fort Des Moines would need only to be trained to command infantrymen instead of receiving instruction to command artillery, engineer, and machine gun units. Therefore, they would not receive the same training as white cadets at the other fourteen officer training schools as they had been promised.

The change to the training regimen surprised the cadets at Fort Des Moines and caused them to call into question the War Department's sincerity that it wanted to train black officers effectively. The non-commissioned officers that had come from the four African Americans regular army units first realized a change in policy had occurred when instructors began to exclude training in artillery, the area many of the men hoped to be appointed to upon earning their commissions. George S. Schuyler, one of the eighty non-commissioned officers of the Twenty-fifth Infantry that trained at Fort Des Moines, became frustrated when the Army failed to provide any training courses aside from infantry drill. In his biography, Schuyler recalled:

²⁰⁷ Memorandum "Utilization of Colored Units of the National Guard and the Colored Draft," November 13, 1917. Office of the Chief of Staff Correspondence, 1907-1917; Record Group 165, Entry 5, Document File # 13568; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

²⁰⁸ Memorandum from War College Division to the Chief of Staff, July 31, 1917. Office of the Chief of Staff Correspondence, 1907-1917; Record Group 165, Entry 5, Document File # 13568; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

The noncoms became suspicious when none of the rest of the prescribed courses of study given other (white) camps were given to the colored candidates at Fort Des Moines. Nor were they ever given. This had every appearance of sabotage. . . . I personally lost interest after the first month when I saw the trend, and so did many of the other noncoms drawn from the four colored regiments.²⁰⁹

Another cadet, Charles Houston, agreed with Schuyler's assessment: "We knew instruction in the other arms of the service was being withheld from us solely because we were Negroes."

However, Houston and his comrades wanted to make the best of a bad situation and believed, it was "better to go to war as infantry officers than to be drafted as privates into labor battalions."²¹⁰

Nonetheless, the War Department's change of plans on utilizing African American draftees had struck the first blow of doubt into the cadets' minds. Although many men remained devoted to the training program, others, like cadet Schuyler, were not enthusiastic about the full-time studying of infantry drill instead of a broader education in military science and the specialized arms training they had been promised. The men now feared the worst from the War Department; they suspected that the training camp and the plan for them to lead black draftees into combat might be some ploy to discredit African Americans. It was in these conditions that Colonel Ballou had to fight the hardest to keep his men's morale high in camp.

The enlistees were allowed free time after dinner and many men utilized this time to head into Des Moines and to visit its local clubs and bars. Colonel Ballou strictly enforced a midnight curfew for the fort and locked its gates to prevent violators. Several members of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment recalled some officer candidates who had lost track of time being found the next morning waiting outside the fort. Some of these men were dismissed for breaking

²⁰⁹ George S. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1966), 86-87.

²¹⁰ Houston, "Saving the World for Democracy (Second Installment)"

curfew too often.²¹¹ Colonel Ballou placed high importance on maintaining discipline in his cadets. Rule violators faced the risk of acquiring “black marks” on their record. To receive these marks, the infractor had to go in front of the committee on dismissals and be found guilty of the rule infringement in question. The acquisition of three “black marks” usually meant dismissal for the cadet.²¹² From all accounts the committee on dismissals dealt out punishments justly and those officer candidates who completed the training program felt that dismissed cadets had deserved their termination from camp.²¹³

Despite the strict regulation of their weekly schedules, Colonel Ballou allowed the cadets to have some free time each week. The officer candidates were generally given Saturday afternoon and Sunday for free time though guard duty sometimes interfered with this schedule.²¹⁴ When they had free time and did not have to serve on guard duty, the cadets usually relaxed in either the nearby city of Des Moines or at the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). Louis Mehlinger said that he remembered almost always going into Des Moines with a group of friends including Charles Houston, Charles Lane, Campbell Johnston, and Peter Robinson. All of these men were part of the “Washington Company,” so, fraternizing together mainly with fellow members of a cadet’s company during free hours made sense to Mehlinger. These were the men that trained together all day, every day. They came from the same region, similar backgrounds, and, thus, bonded to become friends.²¹⁵

²¹¹ Louis Rothchild Mehlinger, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, October 25, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

²¹² Chase, “Struggle for Equality,” 307.

²¹³ Interviews by Hal S. Chase. Audio recordings. November 1974 to December 1975. Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center. All interviewees agreed that the rules were plainly stated and that dismissed cadets knew their actions would warrant dismissal if caught. They believed that the committee on dismissals discriminated against no one.

²¹⁴ James W. Mitchell and James B. Morris, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, November 4, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

²¹⁵ Louis Rothchild Mehlinger, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording October 25, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

Perhaps the most noteworthy social institution for cadets was the Fort Des Moines YMCA. Certainly, the backbone of the organization was Dr. George W. Cabaniss, a physician from Washington, D. C. After working with Dr. Joel Spingarn and the CCNCM to get a segregated officer training camp established, Cabaniss temporarily closed his private practice to travel to Des Moines and to assist the cadets in earning commissions. He founded the Fort Des Moines chapter of the YMCA to serve not only as a social organization but also as a support network for the officer candidates.²¹⁶

The national office of the YMCA sent Robert B. De Frantz from Kansas City, Missouri, to serve as the secretary of the Fort Des Moines branch. The YMCA selected De Frantz for his performance in Kansas City where he transformed a struggling association into a model one. In its role of supporting the cadets through officer training, the YMCA held weekly services on Sunday.²¹⁷ Additionally, the YMCA requested influential African Americans to journey to Fort Des Moines and offer words of encouragement to motivate the officer candidates. Some of the speakers brought in to the fort included Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young, William P. Carter, professor and principal of the Topeka Industrial and Educational Institute known as the “Tuskegee of the northwest,” Dr. Jesse Edward Moorland, senior secretary of the YMCA, Major R. R. Morton, principal of the Tuskegee Institute, Major J. W. Washington, professor from Hampton Industrial and Normal Institute, Reverend R. R. Wright from Savannah, Georgia, and Professor Kelly Miller of Howard University.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Chase, “Struggle for Equality,” 307.

²¹⁷ “Director of Y. M. C. A.,” *Iowa Bystander*, June 22, 1917: 1.

²¹⁸ Names gathered from the following articles: “Three Distinguished Visitors in our City this Week,” *Iowa Bystander*, July 20, 1917: 1; “Distinguished Visitors Here,” *Iowa Bystander*, August 24, 1917: 2; and “Distinguished Visitors Here,” *Iowa Bystander*, August 31, 1917: 2.

The YMCA furnished films and other social engagements mainly on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and nights for the enjoyment of the officer candidates.²¹⁹ Perhaps the largest social gathering organized by the YMCA for the troops occurred in late August of 1917. At this meeting Miss Beatrice Lee of Kansas City, Missouri, sang a solo followed by a performance of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Montgomery Gregory spoke in memory of great the African American leader Frederick Douglas and even Colonel Ballou participated in the festivities.²²⁰ Overall, the YMCA at Fort Des Moines provided an admirable service to the men stationed there, allowing them opportunity to rest and relax from the strenuous work and intense regimen training for their commissions.

The cadets themselves also founded their own organizations based on common interests or utilized their pre-camp ties to fraternal organizations to promote personal relationships among the men. A group of lawyers including Charles P. Howard and James B. Morris founded the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment's Lawyers' Association to discuss recent litigation and encourage other cadets interested in the legal profession.²²¹ Another group of cadets founded a Fort Des Moines chapter of the NAACP to support and stay informed on the national organization's undertakings.²²²

Many of the cadets belonged to fraternities that they had joined in college. In fact, several of the men in camp had founded prominent African American fraternities while in school.²²³ Early after the camp's opening, several brothers of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity

²¹⁹ Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 42.

²²⁰ "Douglass Meeting," *Iowa Bystander*, August 31, 1917: 2.

²²¹ Thompson, *History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp*, 108.

²²² Charter for the Fort Des Moines branch of the NAACP on display at The Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

²²³ "Alumni Profile: Elder Watson Diggs," Indiana University Alumni Association. <http://alumni.indiana.edu/profiles/alumni/ediggs.shtml> (accessed November 21, 2008) details how Elder Watson Diggs and nine other students founded Kappa Alpha Nu, known today as Kappa Alpha Psi at Indiana University on January 5, 1911. Diggs went on to serve as the organization's president for the next six years until he entered officer

realized they had enough membership within the cadet ranks to begin a War Chapter. Frank Coleman, Edgar A. Love, Campbell C. Johnson, Linwood G. Koger, John W. Love, Walter H. Mazyck, and John H. Purnell petitioned for permission to organize such a chapter. Quickly, the Grand Basileus granted their request to afford these men the opportunity to enjoy meeting together, encouraging one another, and to enlist new members into the fraternity.²²⁴ Likewise, other black fraternity members quickly realized their bonds and began socializing together while at camp.²²⁵

Weekend leave from camp, the YMCA, and the camp's fraternal organizations all provided outlets for the cadets to relieve the stresses of training and facilitate camaraderie between one another. Unfortunately, despite these efforts some men still quarreled with one another during their tenure in Des Moines. They understood a competition was taking place with one another for superior commissions and earning a captain's bars served not only as motivation to work harder but also as means of dissension. Most of the animosity came between the non-commissioned officers or "old-timers" and college-educated candidates. The hostility of the "old-timers" originated from fear that the younger, college-educated men would earn the captain commissions the army was offering because of their education. The non-commissioned officers loathed the thought that they might lose a commission to men with less military experience. Louis H. Russell, one of the college-educated recruits, remembered tiptoeing around the older non-commissioned men. He stated that he knew to not get in their way or try to upstage them.

training at Fort Des Moines. Lawrence C. Ross, Jr., *The Divine Nine: The History of African American Fraternities and Sororities* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2000) highlights the roles of Frank James Coleman and Edgar A. Love, two other Fort Des Moines cadets, in founding Omega Psi Phi on the campus of Howard University, on November 17, 1911. Additionally, Love served as the fraternity's first president. Scott, *Scott's Official History of The American Negro in the World War*, notes the influential activism of Coleman through his participation in the CCNCM and its petitioning of congress for the creation of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment.

²²⁴ Herman Dreer, *The History of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity: A Brotherhood of Negro College Men, 1911 to 1939* (Washington, D. C.: The Fraternity, 1940), 30-31.

²²⁵ Thompson, *History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp*

Most of the men followed this strategy and managed to avoid confrontation with their elder cadets.²²⁶

To further encourage camaraderie and discourage competition, company commanders utilized a unique system of training and testing the cadets. Originally, the company commanders led the men in drills on the parade ground while teaching them from Moss's Drill Manual. Only later in camp, after some men had been dismissed for "black marks" and a sense of brotherhood had developed between men within the companies, did cadets take leadership on the drill field. This method ensured that the older non-commissioned officers did not feel threatened because a commander selected a younger, less experienced, college-educated cadet over them to lead drills early in camp.²²⁷

The company commanders' method of testing officer candidates also deterred rivalry. Though written evaluations were given to the company, men did not receive these exams back. In this way, no one really knew where he stood in comparison to the other men. This system was designed to encourage the men to help one another and work hard throughout the camp instead of harboring mistrust and feelings of opposition towards each other. Colonel Ballou sought to instill a mentality of teamwork that he knew would be essential if his cadets were going to be good leaders in combat.²²⁸

In addition to preventing hostility between his men in camp, Ballou hoped to keep conflicts between his cadets and white community of Des Moines at a minimum. Ballou understood the historic implications of this first class of black officers to be commissioned and told his men, "Your race will be on trial with you as its representatives during the existence of

²²⁶Louis H. Russell, interview by Hal S. Chase audio recording, November 22, 1975, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

this training camp.”²²⁹ He promised to defend his officer candidates’ rights against discrimination from the community in Des Moines while he cautioned that they must “not ram social equality down the throats of the white population, but must win it by their modesty, patience, forbearance and character.”²³⁰

Ballou held to his promise and backed his men. In an interview with *The Literary Digest* in July 1917, he praised his men as good soldiers and good officers. He told the journal his men were “far more obedient and much less difficult to handle than a similar body of white men would. . . . They learn readily, and I believe that we have the making of a large number of good officers here.”²³¹ Less than a week later, *The Daily Missourian* published a separate article where Ballou again praised his cadets and clarified his aspirations for the camp: “The work here is more than an effort to train the negro officers. It is a wonderful experiment in determining whether or not the negro possesses qualities which fit him to lead his own race in upward progress.”²³²

The commendations of their commanding officer meant a lot for the cadets training at Fort Des Moines. They understood that the Colonel’s praise came not only from their efforts in training but also by a confidence Ballou held that these men would succeed. For this faith in his men’s abilities, Ballou earned the trust and endearment of his subordinates. A mutual loyalty developed between the two and this encouraged the officer candidates to strive for their commissions.

Despite having the backing of a strong black community and a supportive commanding officer, the officer candidates of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment still faced some

²²⁹ *Iowa Bystander*, June 29, 1917; 2.

²³⁰ The Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center. Information gathered during a research trip to the facility in December 2009.

²³¹ *The Literary Digest* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls) July 21, 1917.

²³² “Sayings of the Week,” *Daily Missourian*, July 30, 1917; 2.

racism and discrimination from the white citizens of Des Moines. A few businesses in Des Moines shunned the black officers candidates and this created several racial incidents. Though John L. Thompson, editor of the *Iowa Bystander*, described Des Moines as a progressive town with an active African American community and the prime location for a segregated training camp, at the time of the officer training camp the African American community was quite small and still limited by segregation.

Census data collected by the Iowa State Historical Society demonstrates that the African American population of Des Moines never surpassed five percent of the city's overall population. The 1900 census recorded about 1,100 African Americans living in the city. World War I, the creation of the Colored Officers' Training Camp at Fort Des Moines, and the stationing of many southern blacks at nearby Camp Dodge generated an immigration of African Americans into Des Moines. By 1920 the black population had risen to 5,800. However, this number was still quite small considering the city's white population.²³³

Furthermore, this small African American population was still largely restricted by segregation. African Americans were forced to settle in one section of Des Moines, the Center Street neighborhood. Isolated from white Des Moines, the black community grew into a separate, complex community.²³⁴ Officer candidate James B. Morris, a native of Des Moines before joining the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment, expressed his opinion that white and black interaction gained some "friction" with the creation of the officer training camp at the fort.

²³³ "Patten's Neighborhood Memories of the Center Street Community," (Iowa State Historical Society, 1996).

²³⁴ Ibid.

He also believed that the town originally had issues with the large number of black men being stationed near this largely white populated city.²³⁵

Morris recalled his part in one of the most notable cases of racial “friction” in Des Moines involving the officer candidates. It occurred when several of the men decided to head down to the Empress Theater one Saturday. They believed that Des Moines, being a northern town, would be more liberal in its thinking about race relations. So, when they bought tickets to enter the theater, they decided to sit on the main floor fairly close to the front of the theater. Soon, an usher came and told them that those seats “are not for colored people.” Morris replied that he had not asked for a colored seat and “that he was happy with his seat and ready to see the show.” The usher then went to get the manager to force Morris to surrender his seat or leave. After some discussion between Morris and the Empress’s manager, the manager threatened to throw Morris out, but Morris responded by reminding the man of an order by Colonel Ballou for citizens not to discriminate against his men. Morris told the manager if he were forced to leave there would be trouble for the city. Fearing the cadet might incite Ballou to action against the theater, he begrudgingly allowed him to stay in the seat until the show finished.²³⁶

Another case of discrimination by Des Moines’s merchants occurred when a number of the officer candidates went to eat dinner in the city one night. The men entered into a Chinese restaurant, hoping to order a meal. Upon their entrance into the establishment, the owner came running towards them, waving his arms, and shouting that he could not serve them or he would lose business. The men decided to willingly leave rather than press the issue. Soon, other proprietors began a similar practice of turning away the officer candidates. Upon witnessing the practice, Colonel George W. Ball, commander of the 1st Iowa Infantry, the local National Guard

²³⁵James B. Morris, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, November 4, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

²³⁶Ibid.

regiment, refused to stand by idly and accept the proprietors discriminating against his fellow soldiers. He ordered that all troops, regardless of race, would be served and stated, “This is Government business and there can be no refusal to serve these men.” The threat of military repercussions coming about to businessmen who denied service to the men of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment was effective enough to ensure some basic equality.²³⁷

Apparently, the black officer cadets had won their battle with racism in Des Moines. However, soon racial incidents elsewhere convinced Colonel Ballou to compromise his promise to his officer candidates to ensure their civil rights. Colonel Ballou had given an order at the camp’s commencement that stated that if his officer candidates received discriminatory treatment from the Des Moines’s citizens that he would impose martial law throughout the city. Unfortunately, the race riots in East St. Louis, Illinois, and the Texas race riots at Camp MacArthur and Camp Logan in the summer of 1917 stressed to Colonel Ballou the importance of keeping his men and the citizens at peace, even to the detriment of civil rights and equality.²³⁸

The Houston riots forced new pressures on the cadets at Fort Des Moines and created a tension between the black officer candidates, their commander, and the Army. For the black men training at Fort Des Moines, Houston represented a failure on the part of the War Department to protect black soldiers from the evils of racism and injustice. Cadet Charles Houston recalled, “Sentiment in the barracks was chiefly against the War Department for sending Negro soldiers into a nest of prejudice and then not standing by to see that they and the uniform were respected.” In fact, the officer candidates believed the War Department’s yielding

²³⁷ Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 44.

²³⁸ Robert V. Morris, *Tradition and Valor A Family Journey: From WWI's First Black Officer Corps to Alone at the Front in a Segregated WWII* (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1999), 28.

to the pressure from white citizens in Houston and disarming the battalion's black military police had practically enabled racist white citizens with the ability to mistreat them.²³⁹

The Army feared that more racial incidents would occur in the wake of the Houston riots. For this reason, the War Department sent the Inspector General of the Army to Fort Des Moines soon after the Houston incidents to assess the spirits of the cadets and the community's attitude toward them. He reminded the men of their duty to become officers, not fight for equality and made it clear that "The United States was concerned with one objective only, winning the war with Germany."²⁴⁰

Colonel Ballou recognized in the wake of the Camp MacArthur and Camp Logan riots that the success of Fort Des Moines was all the more important to re-establish the country's faith in training and utilizing African American troops. For this reason, Ballou retreated from his previous position that he would impose martial law in response to discrimination from the white citizens of Des Moines. Upon the inspector's departure from the camp, Ballou determined, "Had the training camp at Fort Des Moines been a failure the Houston riots would have caused the president to lose all confidence in the negroes."²⁴¹

Regrettably, the cadets did not understand the rationale behind Colonel Ballou changing his stance toward discrimination by the white citizens of Des Moines. Officer candidate James B. Morris recalled years later that he and other cadets believed "a night of wining and dining" by the city's white leaders in the Des Moines Club caused Ballou to fold his support for his troops' rights. Supposedly after succumbing to the corrupt bargain, Ballou returned to camp and notified the officer candidates of what he would do to them if they continued to force integration and

²³⁹ Houston, "Saving the World for Democracy (Second Installment)"

²⁴⁰ Ibid; "U. S. General Gives New Hope to Colored People," *Tulsa Star*, December 22, 1917: 1.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

equality on Des Moines's businesses. Accordingly, the discriminatory treatment towards the officer candidates of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment only got worse.²⁴²

However, it is unlikely that a military man whose career was tied to the success of the black cadets would risk losing their respect and loyalty by selling them out for some fine food and drink. Instead, Ballou's actions demonstrate his conviction that ensuring the success of the training camp demanded compromise between the city's white citizens and black officer candidates. He believed the more farsighted goals of the camp outweighed the immediate one of black men becoming officers.

Ballou wanted his men to become the leaders of their race upon their return from combat and become the negotiators of racial harmony. He stated this hope many times in speeches he gave addressing the creation of the camp but understood that for this dream to become reality, white America had to accept his black officers. In his mind, the first step to gaining this acceptance was to achieve racial harmony in Des Moines—a step that required his men to yield to bigoted white citizens in the short-term.

Furthermore, this approach was not a complete about face in Ballou's logic even prior to the Houston riot. Following the race riot at Camp MacArthur in Waco, Texas, in July of 1917, Ballou organized a goodwill gesture to calm the white citizens' fears. The community gathered at Drake University where Ballou paraded out his cadets to perform drills and then sing spirituals.²⁴³ The commanding officer planned a grand finale show he called the "White Sparrow Patriotic Ceremony." On July 22, 1917, all 1,250 candidates marched into White Sparrows, Drake University's Stadium, for an audience of 10,000.²⁴⁴ Here the men sang numerous

²⁴²James B. Morris, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, November 4, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

²⁴³Ibid, 45.

²⁴⁴Morris, *Tradition and Valor A Family Journey*, 28.

spirituals, “the old plantation melodies with the sweetness and plaintiveness possible only to the Negro, and arias and recitatives from the great oratorios as well.”²⁴⁵ The ceremony succeeded in soothing the bigoted citizenry through song and returning them to the comfort of their paternalistic *status quo*.

Even if the some cadets believed Ballou had betrayed them with his threat to discipline them for forcing integration in Des Moines, others understood they had to perform flawlessly and without complaint to gain respect and equality. Prior to the race riots of 1917 and Ballou’s policy change, an apple farmer near the fort filed a report that some of the cadets had stolen apples from his orchard. Upon hearing of the complaint and before Colonel Ballou could question them, the men came forward and offered to pay for the damages. The soon-to-be officers understood that a misunderstanding could hamper their goals of egalitarianism and soil their image.²⁴⁶

Colonel Ballou’s policy of compromise continued even after his departure from Fort Des Moines. At Camp Funston, Kansas, in March of 1918, another general order to the black soldiers stationed there to refrain from asserting their civil rights when it might offend white patrons or cause racial friction. The order came about after a theater manager in Manhattan, Kansas, refused to admit a sergeant in the Ninety-Second Division to the show due to concerns from white patrons. Again, Ballou decided that rather than adamantly support his black subordinate he should compel his troops to yield to discrimination instead of forcing integration. In response to the theater incident, Ballou issued Bulletin No. 35 which “requested” his black soldiers to abandon their rights to share public spaces with whites when their presence might cause any racial disorder. Furthermore, Ballou requested the trial against the manager of the

²⁴⁵ Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 45.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 44; Houston, “Saving the World for Democracy (Second Installment)”

Wareham Theater be continued twice in hopes that he would not be convicted for discrimination. Though he received resentment from the black press, Ballou continued his retreat from his previous stance to protect African American troops' civil rights through martial law.²⁴⁷ This withdrawal lends insight into the harsh reality of bigotry and discrimination that the officer candidates of Fort Des Moines faced.

Despite the summer race riots forcing Ballou to renege on his promise to uphold equality for his cadets, the men still trusted their commanding officer and supported him. In fact after officer training was completed, the Iowa State Negro Bar Association sent a resolution they passed to the War Department requesting the promotion of Ballou from brigadier general, a promotion he received from colonel during the camp, to major general and asking for the commander to be appointed to lead one of the two African American divisions, the Ninety-Second or the Ninety-Third. Evident from the fact that many of the association's members were cadets about to receive their commissions was the implication that they would be thrilled to have Ballou continue commanding them in the Ninety-Second Division.²⁴⁸ Though it is unknown the effect this resolution had on the subsequent promotion and selection of Major General Ballou to command the Ninety-Second Division throughout training and World War I, it is apparent that Ballou had gained the trust and affection of his men while at Fort Des Moines.

Moreover, Major General Ballou was so beloved for his allegiance to African Americans that one author named him one of the three living white men "who would be forever loved by their race." Nelson C. Crews, editor of the *Kansas City Sun*, made this assessment of Ballou, General John Pershing, and President Teddy Roosevelt in a speech he made to fellow African Americans in Kansas City in December of 1917. According to accounts of the speech, the

²⁴⁷ Scott, *Scott's Official History of The American Negro in the World War*, 97-101.

²⁴⁸ "Would have Ballou Head Negro Troops," *Washington Times*, October 15, 1917: 1.

pronouncement was so popular that the audience cheered vehemently for the three men.²⁴⁹

Ballou had earned the distinction through his leadership, loyalty, and kindness while leading black troops throughout his military career: first in the Twenty-fourth Infantry, next at Fort Des Moines, and later as commander of the Ninety-Second Division.

Aside from the support of their commanding officer, the proud, young African American men who enlisted in the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment expected bigotry to attempt to hinder their success. They realized the struggle they would undergo in training—against both physical and mental exhaustion and racism. As Iowa attorney George H. Woodson, a former member of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, stated it: “the very best brain, vigor, manhood of the Race gave up comfort position, future promise and outlook. . . . on their voluntary march to Fort Des Moines.”²⁵⁰ None of the men ever doubted that racism and bigotry would attempt to impede their path toward earning a commission and achieving the opportunity to prove they could lead fellow African Americans in combat; however, they might not have expected support from some friendly individuals in the Des Moines community.

The officer candidates received assistance from the Des Moines black community and some more liberal white citizens. The men were often invited to churches and homes.²⁵¹ Cadets Robert B. Morris and James W. Mitchell recalled some “good people” or friendly whites inviting them into their homes for lunches and dinners. They fondly remember these white families “treating them as they’d want their sons to be treated if they were away.”²⁵² With this encouragement and their dedication, the officer candidates of the Seventeenth Provisional

²⁴⁹ “For Pershing, T.R. and Ballou,” *Tulsa Star*, December 22, 1917: 1.

²⁵⁰ Morris, *Tradition and Valor A Family Journey*, 27.

²⁵¹ Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 43.

²⁵² James W. Mitchell and James B. Morris, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, November 4, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

Training Regiment set out to successfully complete the grueling schedule of training at Fort Des Moines.

With encouragement from each other and the African American community as a whole, the officer candidates of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment continued their strenuous training through June, July, and into September of 1917. As the scheduled end of the camp approached, the men excitedly awaited their commissions from the War Department. The *Iowa Bystander* reported on the farewell banquets held by each company in anticipation of their graduation from camp.²⁵³

In anticipation of the commissioning, J. Cliff Williams, an African American from Des Moines, penned a tribute poem to the soon-to-be officers. The ode honored the cadets and elevated them to heroic status. He noted the cadets' valor and courage placing them alongside Crispus Attucks and the black troops who stormed up San Juan hill. But perhaps most importantly, Williams demonstrated the hopes the African American community had in the future officers of Fort Des Moines. The poem urged the cadets to overcome discrimination, "Let venomous tongues and prejudice, assail thee as they will," and emerge as battle-tested, proven patriots for the betterment of the race.²⁵⁴

Unfortunately and unbeknownst to Williams and the cadets, the officer candidates had one more obstacle to overcome before they left Des Moines. The War Department decided to extend the officer training one extra month. The deferment notice postponing the end of camp came only four days before the scheduled end of training. This postponement occurred so close to the planned graduation date that it sent shockwaves of doubt through the officer candidates.

²⁵³ Several articles titled "Farewell Banquet" cover each company's farewell parties the week before they planned on graduating. *Iowa Bystander*, September 14, 1917: 3-4.

²⁵⁴ "To Our Negro Soldiers," *Iowa Bystander*, September 14, 1917: 1.

Many men thought the army had pre-arranged for the delay to discredit the abilities of African Americans as leaders.²⁵⁵

The reality of the situation was that at the time the cadets from Fort Des Moines were about to complete officer training, the War Department was still “racked by indecision” about what it was going to do with black draftees.²⁵⁶ As earlier stated, the inquiries and complaints of policymakers had bombarded the Secretary of War Newton Baker’s office in the summer of 1917 in response to the War Department’s plans to utilize black draftees as combat troops. The reevaluation process conducted by the War College and a committee created to make formal recommendations for the “Utilization of colored men drafted for the National Army” had not finalized a plan by September when officer commissioning was supposed to take place. The Army did not need 800 African American officers commissioned before knowing if they would establish combat units for them to command.²⁵⁷

Colonel Ballou’s reports to the War Department opened a door to buy time until a decision could be made about utilizing black draftees. He had recommended as early as July extra training due to his assessment that “the total number of candidates that will develop into officers of more than mediocre efficiency will be relatively small, due to lack of mental potential and the higher qualities of character essential to command and leadership.” Additionally, resistance from the Chief of Engineers and the Quartermaster General to embrace black officers in their corps reduced the number of graduates needed to fill ranks. Therefore, in accordance to Ballou’s earlier request for additional training and in order to provide the War Department the

²⁵⁵ Chase, “Struggle for Equality,” 308.

²⁵⁶ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 87.

²⁵⁷ Memorandum from Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff, to Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, August 24, 1917; Memorandum “Utilization of Colored Units of the National Guard and the Colored Draft,” November 13, 1917. Office of the Chief of Staff Correspondence, 1907-1917; Record Group 165, Entry 5, Document File # 13568; National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

necessary time to determine what to do with the black officers and draftees, camp commissioning was postponed from mid-September to mid-October.²⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the cadets believed that blatant racism of the Army had played a part in the rescheduling of the troops' commissioning. A few days after announcing the delay, the War Department sent a general to Fort Des Moines to address the troops. He discouraged the officer candidates, questioned their abilities, and even proposed that the Army might never commission black officers. Following the visit, an announcement was made that any candidates who wanted to leave the camp would be allowed. Though some demoralized men resigned in disgust, abandoning their ambitions of becoming a commissioned officer, a majority of the men stayed at Fort Des Moines to complete training.²⁵⁹

Again, Ballou played a key role in encouraging the cadets to finish their pursuits, complete training, and be commissioned. Prior to the camp's postponement, Ballou had given a diplomatic speech to the public in August of 1917. The address excused men who had mustered out of camp before commencement and noted that discharge was not a disgrace but rather the realization that these men did not possess the disposition for military command.²⁶⁰ After postponement, in a more private address to his men, Ballou encouraged those who had made it this far to stick it out the additional month and successfully become commissioned officers. Additionally, W. E. B. Du Bois and James W. Johnson, a prominent African American writer and early leader of the NAACP, sent telegrams to Fort Des Moines encouraging the men to

²⁵⁸ Chase, "Struggle for Equality," 308.

²⁵⁹ Charles Hamilton Houston, "Saving the World for Democracy (Third Installment)," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1940, 13; Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 46.

²⁶⁰ "Colonel Ballou Makes Statement on Rejections," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 11, 1917; 1.

endure.²⁶¹ As a result, most of the men never even seriously entertained the thought of leaving.²⁶²

On October 15, 1917, the Army commissioned 639 men from Fort Des Moines as officers. Colonel W. T. Johnson awarded the commissions to 204 2nd Lieutenants, 329 1st Lieutenants, and 106 Captains. Some of the men were commissioned to the U.S. Army while others were sent to Officer Reserve Corps.²⁶³ Louis Mehlinger recalled that some of the men still at the camp but not commissioned were asked to stay on in the Army to help train regular black troops. This was the case for Mehlinger's brother who did not receive a commission though Louis received commission as a Captain.²⁶⁴

Officer training had ended. The men received a few weeks of vacation leave before they were required to report to their respective camps for drilling and training the new black draftees of the Ninety-Second Division. Their diligence and determination enabled them to reach their goal of earning a commission. Now, they would have to rely on their training, intelligence, and leadership abilities to persevere the dual battle over seas: surviving a war while enduring racism and discrimination.

²⁶¹ "Telegrams," *Iowa Bystander*, September 21, 1917; 1.

²⁶² Chase, "Struggle for Equality," 309.

²⁶³ "Special Order 110," *Iowa Bystander*, October 26, 1917: 1.

²⁶⁴ Louis Rothchild Mehlinger, interview by Hal S. Chase, audio recording, October 25, 1974, Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center.

CHAPTER 4: DEMOCRACY BETRAYED

For the African Americans officers of Fort Des Moines, and black soldiers in general, the war represented an opportunity to escape the racial stereotypes, discrimination, and segregation of the America's Jim Crow system. These men believed that their service would bring about equality and full-citizenship. This belief led them to envision the battlefields of France as a place where they could forge new identities for themselves. Their hope was that France would prove true to its revolutionary slogan, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." They socialized with white French soldiers and citizens, including French women. Unfortunately for these men, Jim Crow transplanted itself across the ocean as well and discrimination would not be defeated merely through their loyalty to America's war effort.

After earning their commissions at Fort Des Moines, the new officers received a brief period of leave in which many of them returned home to visit their families before training resumed. Two weeks later they reported to their respective posts for basic training with the regular troops. A breakdown of their stationing follows: 100 officers to Camp Funston, Fort Riley, Kansas; 100 officers to Camp Grant, Rockford, Illinois; 100 officers to Camp Dodge, Des Moines, Iowa; 50 officers, Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio; 100 officers to Camp Dix, Wrightstown, New Jersey; 100 officers to Camp Upton, Long Island, New York; 100 to Camp

Meade, Annapolis Junction, Maryland.²⁶⁵ All the officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment became part of Ninety-Second Division under the command of newly promoted Major General Ballou.

Though usually a division would have trained together at a single location, the Army spread the Ninety-Second Division, along with the other black divisions, across several camps because white policymakers feared a racial incident if too many black troops were at one site. They forced the War Department to take precautions to prevent such an event from happening. The War Department's answered their fears by enforcing a strict policy of segregation and limiting the number of black troops located at any one camp.

Segregation caused many problems in the camps. As historian Florette Henri stated, "‘Separate’ has never been ‘equal’ in any field of life. Certainly it was not in the Army." The Army built separate facilities and separate living areas for blacks and whites. Policymakers feared that equal numbers of blacks and whites at any given camp would be dangerous. Therefore, as a further means of preventing a racial incident, a general order stated that black troops stationed at any camp could number only one-tenth or less of the number of posted white troops. Thus, the Army created a ratio of one black soldier to every ten whites at most camps. This policy was demonstrated at Camp Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina, where the Ninety-Third Division had 2,500 blacks troops to 25,000 whites soldiers of the 81st Division. Camp Lee, Virginia, violated the order by hosted 7,000 blacks compared to 50,000 whites but the spirit of "safe ratio" was still implemented.²⁶⁶

In addition to segregated facilities, African American troops had to face discriminatory treatment from white drill sergeants, officers, and even white draftees. At many camps, these

²⁶⁵ Patton, *War and Race*, 183-185.

²⁶⁶ Henri, *Bitter Victory*, 37.

offenses occurred to African American troops who ranged from those holding a commission as an officer to the lower ranking privates. Despite their higher ranking, the officer graduates from Fort Des Moines were not free from Jim Crow and discrimination. At certain camps some white officers refused to salute black officers. Other white officers often reprimanded black officers in the presence of black troops. Furthermore, white privates refused even to salute their black superior officers. The combination of these indignities severely diminished morale throughout the African American ranks.²⁶⁷

Life in camp was even worse for the troops. When shortages occurred, the African American troops were the ones left without blankets or uniforms. In one camp black troops were humiliated when the Quartermaster issued them old navy Civil War uniforms to wear. During the winter of 1917 in Camp Hill, Virginia, Service of Supply (SOS) men nearly died from starvation and cold. They were given no blankets or warm clothing, had no mess hall, and their food froze before it could be eaten. Their sick herded together in dirt floor tents trying to keep warm as white sick lay warm in hospital beds. At camps training the non-combat units, southern white drill sergeants would curse, insult, and even strike men, trying to get the most labor out of them. These conditions were inexcusable, but the Army refused to rectify the situation or reprimand the commanding officers.²⁶⁸

Similarly, Colonel Ballou decided to act in favor of the *status quo* rather than fight against it. Upon his promotion to Major General and commander of the Ninety-Second Division, Ballou issued a bulletin ordering his black officers and troops to confront discrimination with accommodation.

²⁶⁷ Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War*, 79.

²⁶⁸ Henri, *Bitter Victory*, 41.

1. It should be well known to all colored officers and men that no useful purpose is served by such acts as will cause the 'color question' to be raised. It is not a question of legal rights, but a question of policy, resulting animosities, is prejudicial to the military interest of the 92d Division, and therefore prejudicial to an important interest of the colored race.

2. To avoid such conflicts the Division Commander has repeatedly urged that all colored members of his command, and especially the officer non-commissioned officers, should refrain from going where their presence will be resented. In spite of this injunction, one of the sergeants of the Medical Department has recently precipitated the precise trouble that should be avoided, and then called on the Division Commander to take sides in a row that should never have occurred had the sergeant placed the general good above his personal pleasure and convenience. This sergeant entered a theater, as he undoubtedly had a legal right to do, and precipitated trouble by making it possible to allege race discrimination in the seat he was given. He is strictly within his legal rights in this manner, and the theater manager is legally wrong. Nevertheless the sergeant is guilty of the GREATER wrong in doing ANYTHING, NO MATTER HOW LEGALLY CORRECT, that will provoke race animosity.

3. The Division Commander repeats that the success of the Division with all that success implies, is dependent upon the good will of the public. That public is nine-tenths white. White men made the Division, and they can break it just as easily if it becomes a trouble maker.

4. All concerned are again enjoined to place the general interest of the Division above the personal pride and gratification. Avoid every situation that can give rise to racial ill-will. Attend quietly and faithfully to your duties, and don't go where your presence is not desired.

5. This will be read to all organizations of the 92nd Division.

Major-General Ballou:

(Signed) Allen J. Greer,
Lieutenant Colonel, General Staff
Chief of Staff.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ Copy of Bulletin No. 35 on display at the Fort Des Moines Museum & Education Center Archives

Despite harsh criticisms from African Americans across the nation and the black press, Ballou deemed his action as a necessary measure to maintain popular support for the use of the black combat troops of the Ninety-Second Division. Furthermore, he rebutted that it was not a direct order but rather more of a suggestion to deter racial conflict. Emmett J. Scott, Special Assistant to Secretary of War Newton Baker, supported this interpretation of the bulletin when he commented that, “the character of Bulletin No. 35 was that of advice.” Ballou’s chief responsibility as commander was to prepare these men for combat. He understood their success or failure militarily would be their legacy as far as the War Department and the Army were concerned. Perhaps it was impossible for him as a white man to fully understand their dual struggle for democracy abroad and at home, but from his point of view there was only one goal—to provide the Allies a well-trained, well-organized division that would assist in defeating the Central Powers.²⁷⁰

Nonetheless, to black soldiers and the black community, the “advice” of Ballou demonstrated that the Army strove to avoid anything related to the “Negro question” or to the promotion of civil equality. To his subordinates, the bulletin patronized their struggle for civil rights as an egotistical and selfish effort. Additionally, his comment that white men had made the division and could also break it clearly threatened his troops that the Army would not accept revolutionary actors or radical-minded thinking.

Many African Americans now believed Ballou had, in essence, ordered his troops to be submissive and gratefully take whatever white men gave them. Bulletin No. 35 lost Ballou the respect of his black officers and troops. Emmett Scott commented,

At various public gatherings of colored people General Ballou’s resignation was demanded, and at no time during his incumbency as the head of the Division was General Ballou able to regain the

²⁷⁰ Scott, *Scott’s Official History of The American Negro in the World War*, 96-101.

confidence of the black masses, with whom he had been immensely popular prior to this episode, in recognition of his valued and sympathetic services as supervisor of the Officers' Training Camp at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.²⁷¹

Perhaps worse than Ballou's comments was the timing when he issued the bulletin, a mere two months prior to the Ninety-Second Division's deployment to France. His black subordinates lost any confidence they had in their general as a friendly liberator of Jim Crow. Instead, their respect now transformed into questions of his trustworthiness and fears of his ability to lead them into battle successfully.

The trip across the ocean and onto the battlefields of Europe signaled no end to the discrimination African Americans faced in America. No transformation took place in the hearts and minds of fellow white soldiers sparked by the knowledge that black Americans stood nearby posed to fight alongside them for democracy. No grand enlightenment occurred causing white soldiers to embrace African American troops through battlefield fraternity or the shared duties of citizenship. Equality did not come from donning the doughboy uniform; bigotry was not eradicated by black men's dedication to their duty to serve the nation.

In fact, one might claim that just the opposite took place for black troops stationed in France during World War I. Instead of gaining respect and equality from their loyalty to America and their willingness to fight, African American soldiers faced disrespect, bias, discrimination, and mistreatment. General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.), perceived the use of blacks as combat troops to be more of a nuisance than a benefit despite his personal experience commanding the Tenth Cavalry during its valiant charge up San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Despite leading seasoned black troops into battle while commanding the Tenth Cavalry, General Pershing may have held a grudge against African American troops for the stigma his command of Tenth Cavalry

While African American combat troops were receiving their training at their respective camps, General Pershing spent the first two months of 1918 contemplating how to deploy these units when they arrived in France. Through a series of telegrams, Pershing and General John Biddle of the General Staff debated what roles the Ninety-Second and Ninety-Third Divisions would have in the war. These communications took place from February to June 1918 and demonstrate the Army's sentiment toward its "Negro Problem." The cables express the overtly racist nature behind the Army's plan to diminish the role of black troops in combat and negate their claims for equality.

For example, in a wire sent to General Pershing on February 2, 1918, the General Staff advised Pershing to use the Ninety-Third Division as "line-of-communication and not combatant troops." Furthermore, this cable continued on to note that "There are no more Negro regiments here except the Ninety-second Division and it is not desired to organize more." This communication came in response to Pershing's notification to Washington that he intended to assign the black combat divisions of the Ninety-Second and Ninety-Third to labor details upon their arrival in France.²⁷³

Fortunately for black soldiers in the Ninety-Second and Ninety-Third who were expecting to serve as combatants, by the time Pershing received the response from Washington, he had already changed his mind about how to deploy the African American combat troops. Anticipating that the War Department might not agree with his plan to resign trained soldiers into service troops, Pershing determined another way to rid himself of his "Negro Question."

carried. Frank E. Vandier, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing- Volume I* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1977) notes that Pershing's nickname of "Nigger Jack" or "Black Jack" was not a term of endearment but rather a derogatory title ordained by his cadets while Pershing was teaching at West Point due to his stern and rigid nature.

²⁷³ Cable Section, General Staff, *Cable History of the Subject of Colored Soldiers*, Military Archives Division, National Archives, Washington D. C. published in Bernard C. Nalty and Morris J. MacGregor, *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1981), 81.

The French Army had been continually asking for Pershing to allow some American regiments be attached to their units for support. He had found an answer—he offered the four regiments of the Ninety-Third Division to serve with the French.²⁷⁴

The French, in dire need of infantrymen, had begun conscripting colonial troops from Senegal even before fighting broke out in 1914. At that time, the French had 14,000 *Tirailleurs Senegalais*, “Senegalese Riflemen,” in West Africa and another 15,000 stationed in Morocco. When France mobilized for war they brought six battalions of these Senegalese troops to France. These troops fought and suffered heavy casualties within the first few weeks of war at the Yser River. In 1915 the French added 30,000 new conscripts from Senegal and an additional 51,000 in 1916. By the battle at Somme in 1917, the French had seventeen battalions of *Tirailleurs Senegalais* numbering over 120,000 Africans serving in the French Army.²⁷⁵ Despite France’s willingness to utilize black soldiers at the time that General Pershing offered them the Ninety-Third Division, French acceptance, by both the French military and French civilians, had not always been the case.

Prejudice against black troops being capable of serving adeptly within the stresses of modern warfare was more than simply an American sentiment during the World War I era. Both Britain and France initially demonstrated no interest in utilizing colonial African soldiers despite their willingness to conscript troops from their other colonial holdings.²⁷⁶ British Colonial Secretary Arthur Bonar Law argued that the use of African men as troops would be a substantial

²⁷⁴ The American Battle Monuments Commission, *93D Division: Summary of Operations in World War I* (United States Government Printing Officer, 1994), 7.

²⁷⁵ Leonard G. Shurtleff, “France at War: Tirailleurs Senegalais,” <http://www.worldwar1.com/france/tseng.htm> (accessed June 25, 2010).

²⁷⁶ Several historians have noted the reluctance of Britain and France to use African soldiers in World War I due to racist perceptions of blacks’ inability in combat. William Alt and Betty Alt address both France and Britain’s racist stereotypes of colonial African troops in *Black Soldiers, White Wars: Black Warriors from Antiquity to the Present* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2002). Joe Lunn addresses the original reluctance of the French to use Senegalese troops in *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999).

mistake for the empire. He and the British War Office believed that under the intensity of combat, black troops would panic and chaotically retreat while European men, “naturally” superior in discipline, aptitude, and resolve, would better deal with the stresses of battle.²⁷⁷

Social scientist Lothrop Stoddard characterized white European sentiment towards the utilization of colonial troops: “In the darkest hours of the Boer War, English public opinion had refused to sanction the use of either black African or brown Indian troops against the white foe, while French plans for raising black armies of African savages for use in Europe were almost universally reprobated.”²⁷⁸

Additionally, the British, the French, and the American militaries doubted the ability of African or African American officers to lead men into combat. The misconception that blacks were not intelligent enough to handle the logistical and strategic mental demands of modern warfare appears and reappears numerous times in the military correspondence and publications of the period. Even British colonial officers familiar with the proven abilities of African troops in battle had their rationale infected by racial stereotypes. British Major Darnley Stuart-Stephens had commanded a battalion of Africans from Lagos in 1882.²⁷⁹ This experience so convinced the major of the capability of Africans as soldiers that during World War I he wrote an article entitled, “Our Million Black Army” in which he proposed that Britain call on its “almost unlimited reservoir” of man-power from its African colonies and stated that if permitted, he could raise an Army of 20,000 from West Africa in two months.²⁸⁰ Nevertheless, despite his experiences with colonial black soldiers and his approach to solving Britain’s man-power

²⁷⁷ Alt and Alt, *Black Soldiers, White Wars*, 70.

²⁷⁸ Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), 208.

²⁷⁹ Deborah Ann Schmitt, *The Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 21.

²⁸⁰ Darnley Stuart-Stephens, “Our Million Black Army,” *English Review* 22, October 4, 1916: 356-358.

problem, Major Stuart-Stephens still maintained an overtly racist philosophy to the mental abilities of black troops and their capability as leaders in combat. Within “Our Million Black Army” he stated:

The more I have associated with the African negro the stronger has become my impression that he is no more suited to stand alone than a white child would be. . . . The negro in mass will not improve beyond a certain point. . . . He mentally remains a child. . . . Can we help concluding that the negro’s destiny, whether as agriculturalist or trained soldier, is to be held to labour by wiser men than himself?²⁸¹

This rhetoric demonstrates the difficulties black soldiers faced in proving their courage, loyalty, and proficiency both mentally and physically for combat. Further proof of these prejudices come from the facts that the British Colonial Office and War Cabinet at first refused to enlist black combatants on the European front and only reluctantly allowed their enlistment only sparingly on the African front when manpower shortages necessitated their usage.²⁸²

Similarly, the French initially refused to employ black troops in combat at the beginning of World War I. However, French military officers contemplated the idea of arming colonials more openly than the British. France had already employed black combat troops in its colonial conflicts. As early as 1857, Louis Faidherbe, the governor general of French West Africa, had armed Senegalese men to serve in conflicts during the European partition of Africa. Leading up to World War I the French had most recently employed the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* alongside the French in conquest of Morocco from 1907 to 1912.²⁸³

In addition to colonial French officers’ familiarity with the fighting abilities of colonial troops, they also had other reasons to employ African soldiers in World War I. French officers often saw black combatants as a terrorist force that would strike fear in hearts of their German

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Schmitt, *The Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners*, 22.

²⁸³ Shurtleff, “France at War: Tirailleurs Senegalais”

foes due to their racially inherited ferocity for combat but adapt well to French society and be gentle and child-like when interacting with French civilians.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, many historians have argued that French officers determined to utilize black soldiers differently from white French soldiers. These analyses claim that French officers merely used colonial troops as frontline, shock troops and *chair à canon*, “cannon-fodder.”²⁸⁵

In 1910 French General Charles Mangin assessed the value of these Senegalese troops in combat in his *La Force Noire*, in which he argued for utilizing Africans as French soldiers. He noted that the French colonies in Africa could provide a limitless supply of manpower for the military. Although suggesting their inclusion in the military in large numbers, Mangin bestowed no honor on the Senegalese since he based his argument on black Africans being prime candidates for soldiers on negative stereotypes. He claimed that Africans were less evolved than white Europeans. As part of his description of their underdeveloped humanity, Mangin argued that Africans had a less sensitive nervous system and therefore were less susceptible to pain. Mangin also claimed that Africans had the capacity to live in harsher climates while maintaining the ability to do backbreaking labor. Furthermore he asserted that for centuries Africa had been a “vast battlefield” naturally suiting African men to serve as excellent soldiers and French West Africans could be easily coerced into volunteering for military service.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Myron Echenberg, “La Force Noire: In Defence of France,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines* 18, No. 1 (1984): 221; Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, 158.

²⁸⁵ Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom* claims that Senegalese troops were used as cannon-fodder. Comparing statistics of slaves during the eighteenth-century trans-Atlantic slave trade and Senegalese soldiers during conscription, Lunn argues that more men were taken from Senegal to be soldiers and that their mortality rates were higher than those of slaves. Contradicting this interpretation is Marc Michel, *L'appel à l'Afrique: Contributions et réactions à l'effort de guerre en A.O.F. (1914-1919)* (Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982) who claims that casualty rates for both white French and black colonial soldiers were in the 20 % range during the war.

²⁸⁶ Charles Mangin, *La Force Noire* (Paris: Hachette et cie, 1911); Joe Lunn, “‘Les Races Guerrières’: Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, No. 4 (October 1999): 521.

Although the French government initially disapproved of the importation of Africans to fight within France, the dominance of German manpower in the prewar years necessitated the enlistment of African colonials. Before the outbreak of World War I, the French amassed 14,000 *Tirailleurs Senegalais* in West Africa and stationed another 15,000 in Morocco. Still skeptical that racial tensions might evolve from bringing Africans to the mother country, the French government reluctantly mobilized six battalions of Senegalese troops at the outbreak of war.²⁸⁷

World War I forced the French to examine the relationships between white French citizens and individuals in their imperial holdings. Did utilizing colonial troops give those soldiers some claim to French citizenship because they were defending the republic? Could France maintain its position as a world power following the war if they had been forced to utilize black troops to defend their “white civilization?” The French chose to embrace utilizing colonial soldiers but not assimilating them into French society. French military officers emphasized distinctions between white French soldiers and colonial troops but went further to emphasize distinctions among colonial troops, notably between *races guerrières* and the *races non-guerrières*, warlike and non-warlike races.²⁸⁸

Conscripting black colonists from Africa resulted in dire consequences in the mother country. Racial violence erupted in France during 1917 and 1918, and race became the basis of the hierarchy of wartime French society. Historian Tyler Stovall states, “The French distinguished between white and nonwhite foreign workers, so that race determined, rather than reflected, wartime class identity.”²⁸⁹ Stereotypes propagated through imperialism and colonization fueled French civilians’ prewar misconceptions of Africans. Bigoted reports

²⁸⁷ Shurtleff, “France at War: Tirailleurs Senegalais”

²⁸⁸ Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

²⁸⁹ Tyler Stovall, “The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War,” *American Historical Review* 103, No. 3, June 1998: 740.

portrayed Africans as “savage,” “uncivilized,” and biologically inferior to Europeans. African practices of polygamy spurred rumors of a sexually degenerate and morally corrupt lifestyle. Further apprehensions arose from false idea that Africans were naturally inclined to brutal, war-like society where their “ferocity” led to extremes such as cannibalism.²⁹⁰

To change these characterizations and reinforce interracial harmony, the French government promoted positive images of African colonial troops among French civilians. Through official policy, propaganda, and publications, the French highlighted the Senegalese soldiers’ bravery and devotion to the French cause. Articles embellished the French-African colonial relationship to demonstrate a sequential progress of Africans becoming civilized after meeting French colonizers. Additionally, writers encouraged paternalism from French civilians emphasizing the childlike passivity and gentle primitivity of Africans.²⁹¹

At the same time, the French government strove to limit personal interaction between Africans and French civilians. The French strictly segregated colonial forces from national forces. They isolated camps for African troops to deter French civilians and Africans from forming relationships behind battle lines. To promote linguistic barriers between the populace and African troops, the French army taught the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* only enough French to ensure they understood military commands. To establish sexual boundaries between French women and African troops, the government denied Africans access to French brothels, expelled French nurses from Senegalese hospitals, and increased their efforts to prevent the Africans’ drunkenness. Despite these attempts, French-African interracial relations were not always peaceful. The majority of France’s racial violence spurred from the presence of half a million foreign workers that the government brought in to fill working class jobs left vacant by

²⁹⁰ Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, 158.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 159-161.

conscripted French men. The spring of 1917 marked the genesis of wartime French racial violence. Ranging from individual quarrels to melees including hundreds of people, these race riots lasted from spring 1917 to 1918 with a brief halts in the winter months. To relieve the situation, the French government sent home all foreign workers as quickly as possible after the war had subsided.²⁹²

Despite the issues between black colonial workers and white French citizens, the French military had experienced the merit of black Senegalese troops in combat and gratefully accepted Pershing's offer to attach the Ninety-Third Division alongside French infantrymen. So, as the different regiments of the Ninety-Third Division arrived in France during the summer of 1918, they were each attached to a different French Division. The 369th Infantry originally joined the French 16th Division in March 1918. The 370th Infantry attached to French 73rd Division upon its arrival to France in April 1918. While the 371st Infantry was designated to the French 157th Division, and the 372nd Infantry became part of the French XIII Corps upon their arrival to continental Europe. Throughout the war, each of these infantry units shifted under the command of other French units in need of reinforcement but every regiment of the American Ninety-Third Division served alongside French Divisions for the duration of the war.²⁹³

The Ninety-Third Division began arriving in December 1917. The composition of the Ninety-Third mainly came from several African American National Guard regiments that had been originally formed during the Spanish-American War. Several of these units became the first military detachments composed completely of both black troops and officers. These black regiments included the 8th Illinois Infantry, 15th New York Infantry, Ninth Ohio Infantry, 1st Separate Battalion of the District of Columbia, and several companies from Tennessee,

²⁹² Stovall, "The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War," 740-769.

²⁹³ The American Battle Monuments Commission, *93D Division*, 4-6.

Massachusetts, Maryland, and Connecticut. When recruited up to war strength these units' enlistment reached between 12,000 and 14,000 soldiers.²⁹⁴ Following federalization, the 8th Illinois became the 370th Infantry, the 15th New York became the 369th Infantry, and the Ninth Ohio along with companies from Tennessee, Connecticut, Maryland, and Massachusetts became the 372nd Infantry.²⁹⁵ These three regiments then joined together with the 371st Infantry to form the Ninety-Third Infantry Division.²⁹⁶

The French military welcomed the addition of much needed reinforcements to their ranks, and immediately began employing troops of the Ninety-Third Division in combat as early as April 1918.²⁹⁷ However, General Pershing feared the French Army would praise African American soldiers too much for their military service. He believed this praise might foster feelings of equality and undermine the foundations of American segregation. On August 7, 1918, Pershing issued a message to the French Military Mission for circulation among its military and civilian leadership. The communication, marked "Secret Information Concerning Black American Troops," instructed Frenchmen to take care in their interactions with African Americans and not promote egalitarianism or any feelings of equality:

Although a citizen of the United States, the black man is regarded by the white American as an inferior being with whom relations of business or service only are possible. . . . We must prevent the rise of any pronounced degree of intimacy between French and black officers. We may be courteous and amiable with these last, but we cannot deal with them on the same plane as with the white American officers without deeply wounding the latter. We must not eat with them, must not shake hands or seek to talk to them outside the requirements of military service. We must not commend too highly the black American troops, particularly in the presence of (white) Americans. It is all right to recognize their

²⁹⁴ Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War*, 75.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ "Catalog of Negro Army Units" www.ritesofpassage.org/mil_catalog.htm (accessed November 3, 2009).

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 5.

good qualities and their services, but only in moderate terms, strictly in keeping with the truth.²⁹⁸

Despite the Army's attempts to undermine camaraderie between the French and African Americans, black soldiers endeared themselves as best they could to many French soldiers and civilians through their military service and in social settings. Music played a crucial role in tearing down the walls of segregation as black musicians like James Reese Europe introduced Jazz and the Blues to the French. Performing with their army bands, these instrumentalists established an integrated social setting where African American troops could interact with French civilians and soldiers as equals.²⁹⁹

Although some French citizens held many of the same racial prejudices as white Americans, as proven by their attitudes toward their own colonial African soldiers and workers, other French civilians and African American soldiers developed a strong affection for one another during World War I. The warmth, acceptance, and egalitarian attitudes of some French citizens and soldiers towards African American troops so starkly contrasted race relations in America that France became an inspiration and a rallying cry for how life could eventually be back home. French Parliamentarians denounced the "Secret Information Concerning Black American Troops" memo that the American Army had sent them requesting French troops to deny equality to black American soldiers, passed a resolution reasserting their dedication to equality of all, and ordered all U. S. Army pamphlets advocating discrimination of black troops be destroyed. African American troops responded by showing their support and endearment toward the French. Letters home boasted of the hospitality and warmth of the French. African American troops so cared for the French that they even donated 300,000 francs in philanthropy

²⁹⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, "A French Directive," *The Crisis* (May, 1919), 16-18.

²⁹⁹ Henri & Barbeau, *Unknown Soldiers*, 109.

for French orphans.³⁰⁰ James B. Morris, graduate of Fort Des Moines and commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, recalled, “Many of the black officers were actually planning to stay in France and marry French women after the war rather than return to a racist country.”³⁰¹ In spite of the Army’s efforts, some French men and women reached out to the African American doughboys with respect and gratitude. In return, these troops fell in love with France and the equality they experienced from her people. First Lieutenant Osceola E. McKaine wrote about his and the 367th regiment’s experiences with the French during the war. More than merely promoting political and social equality, he expressed the personal transformation that occurred in the hearts and minds of African Americans due to their wartime relationships with both French soldiers and civilians. “I have never before experienced what it meant to be really free—to taste real liberty—in a phrase to be a man. I love the French.”³⁰²

Regrettably, equality and admiration were not the only expressions African Americans encountered overseas. White American officers and regular troops entrenched segregation and toed the color line determined to maintain America’s *status quo*. Discrimination against black soldiers ran rampant within the U. S. Army and appears to have been rewarded rather than discouraged.

The Army’s organization of the Ninety-Second Infantry Division occurred in October 1917 at Camp Funston, Kansas, under the command of recently promoted Major General Charles C. Ballou. Upon their arrival in France, the black combat troops of the Ninety-Second and Ninety-Third Divisions encountered fellow members of their race who had already been serving there for several months. These men had served as the Army’s labor force unloading supplies

³⁰⁰ Stovall, *Paris Noir*, 18-22.

³⁰¹ Morris, *Tradition and Valor*, 45.

³⁰² Osceola McKaine, “‘We’ve Got Bouche on Run’ Writes McKaine,” *New York Age*, October 12, 1918: 136.

from ships, rebuilding railroads for transportation of troops and goods, and even burying the dead.³⁰³

A March 1918 issue of the Army's newspaper, *The Stars and Stripes*, noted the use of black regiments for labor with a headline highlighting "Bulk of Stevedore Work Is Now Handled by Negro Troops and War Prisoners."³⁰⁴ The article states that a major reason for the turnaround from French ports being behind in unloading supplies to a much smoother, uncongested operation was due to black stevedores who were used to complete backbreaking work like unloading ships. This commentary fell perfectly in line with some white Americans' and social Darwinists' mentality that African Americans were better suited to perform manual labor while white men served better in combat roles.

As late as June 1918, Brigadier General Lytle Brown, an assistant chief of staff for the War Plans Division, sent out a memorandum explaining the War Department's policy to utilize only a small number of the black draftees as combat troops while assigning the rest to labor units:

It is the policy to select those colored men of the best physical stamina, highest education and mental development for the combatant troops and there is every reason to believe that these specially selected men, the cream of the colored draft, will make first-class fighting troops. After this cream has been skimmed off, there remains a large percentage of colored men of the ignorant, illiterate, day-laborer class. These men have not, in a large percentage of cases, the physical stamina to withstand the

³⁰³ The Ninety-Second Division was comprised of: the 183rd Infantry Brigade, the 365th Infantry Regiment, the 366th Infantry Regiment, the 350th Machine-Gun Battalion, the 184th Infantry Brigade, the 367th Infantry Regiment, the 368th Infantry Regiment, the 351st Machine-Gun Battalion, the 167th Field Artillery Brigade, the 349th Field Artillery Regiment, the 350th Field Artillery Regiment, the 351st Field Artillery Regiment, the 317th Trench-Mortar battery, the 348th Machine-Gun Battalion, the 317th Engineer Regiment, and the 325th Field Signal Battalion. When maximized to full operational strength the division maintained 991 officers and 27,114 men. The American Battle Monuments Commission, *92D Division: Summary of Operations in World War I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1994), 1-4.

³⁰⁴ "Base Ports Bid Ships to Hustle, New Docks and Tracks put an End to Terminal Congestion, Big Change in Six Months, Bulk of Stevedore Work is Now Handled by Negro Troops and War Prisoners," *The Stars and Stripes*, March 1, 1918: 3.

hardships and exposure of hard field service, especially the damp, cold winters of France. The poorer class of backwoods Negro has not the mental stamina or sturdiness to put him in [the] line against German troops who consist of thoroughly trained men of high average education. It is feared that the enemy will concentrate on parts of the line held by inferior troops, break through and get in the rear of high class troops who will be at a terrible disadvantage.³⁰⁵

Brown's memo demonstrated two key points of the American military's policy toward African American draftees. First, the stated policy, black men held a natural mental inferiority to white men and were much better suited to labor. Second, perhaps an unstated policy, that white American officers did not want black combatants to have the opportunity to prove themselves in combat against white Germans and kill white men.

For more analysis of the unstated policy—that white Americans did not want black Americans killing white men in combat—consider the French and their decision to conscript colonial troops. Remember, part of the original debate for the French was how could they allow inferior African colonials to defend a superior white nation. With the United States' entrance into World War I, white Americans faced a similar questions: How does a world power, an imperial society, require the loyalty and service of an inferior segment of American society, and, if they do require African Americans to defeat white Germans, what does that mean in regard to social Darwinism, racial stereotypes, and segregation?

Perhaps for these reasons, the Army even went as far as assigning African American combat units to the SOS. In December 1917, the 369th Infantry of the Ninety-Third Division landed at Brest, France, to begin its service in the war. However, General Pershing immediately

³⁰⁵ Memorandum, Brig. Gen. Lytle Brown, assistant chief of staff, director, War Plans Division, for the chief of staff, 12 June 1918, subject: Disposal of colored draft, Military Archives Division, National Archives, Washington, D. C. published in Bernard C. Nalty and Morris J. MacGregor, *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1981), 80.

ordered these African American combat troops to Camp Coëtquidan for duty as SOS. The 369th Infantry remained at Coëtquidan for three months serving as a labor unit until Pershing allowed the attachment of the African American units of the Ninety-Third Division to French units in March of 1918.³⁰⁶

Black SOS units faced almost unimaginable discrimination and mistreatment both during training in America and after their shipment abroad to France. During training in America, they worked as laborers on chain gangs facing *de facto* slavery with white officers serving as overseers. Whenever the commanding officers felt the black stevedores fell behind in the labors, they beat, yelled, and spit on them, demanding they work harder. Perhaps the most alarming misuse of black troops came when white commanding officer Captain Charlie Boyd hired out his SOS troops to civilians in Richmond, Virginia, to cut wood and dig potatoes, labors that Boyd used for his own financial gain. Black troops in the SOS were inadequately fed and housed; they were clothed in fatigues considered unfit for combat troops. Furthermore, stevedores rarely received leaves passes from camp when the day's work was done. Instead, some camps' standing orders forced black SOS men to confinement at their base camp.³⁰⁷

The labor the SOS provided was some of the harshest backbreaking work of the war. They loaded and unloaded all the supplies of the American Expeditionary Force, helped pack and unpack combat troops' gear, built railways, buried the dead, and served as porters, cooks, and variety of other service jobs. They endured the worst conditions the war had to offer—albeit unknown to most Americans when they returned home.

³⁰⁶ The American Battle Monuments Commission, *93D Division: Summary of Operations in World War I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1994), 5.

³⁰⁷ Barbeau and Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers* provides the most detailed and vivid account of the plight of African American SOS troops in their chapter, "Laborers in Uniform."

Whenever subjugating black troops to labor battalions and restricting leave was not possible, some white officers did their best to disgrace African Americans and to prevent social interaction with the French. Rumors arose quickly that black officers and troops were guilty of raping French women.³⁰⁸ These allegations of African American men's possessing an unbridled lust that translated into desecration of white women was not a new rallying cry for bigoted, white supremacists. Since the days of American slavery, white men had been positioning themselves as the guardians of white womanhood and as sentries securing the color line. Some white American officers and troops easily transitioned into this same role in France. These officers ordered their men to inform French women that conversing with African Americans was dangerous. They claimed that even an escort could not guarantee their safety while walking through a black encampment and hoped these bogus reports would discourage French women from fraternizing with black soldiers, thereby instilling a sense of equality in them.³⁰⁹ However, the underlying motivation for the lies spread by these white troops and officers was the very real fear of consensual sexual relations between black men and white women, an issue that the French had been forced to deal with when they first brought conscripted African troops to the mother country.

The Ninety-Second Division and its black officers from Fort Des Moines became the targets of discrimination and persecution as the Army attempted to prevent inter-racial relationships between black soldiers and white women. The division came under such scrutiny that on August 21, 1918, the commander issued this order to Ninety-Second "to prevent the presence of colored troops from being a menace to women":

³⁰⁸ Felix James, "Robert Russa Morton and The Whispering Gallery After World War I," *The Journal of Negro History* (July 1977) 62, No. 3: 235.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

On account of the increasing frequency of the crime of rape, or attempted rape, in this Division, drastic preventive measures have become necessary. . . . Until further notice, there will be a check of all troops of the 92nd Division every hour daily between reveille and 11:00 p.m., with a written record showing how each check was made, by whom, and the result. . . . The one-mile limit regulation will be strictly enforced at all times, and no passes will be issued except to men of known reliability.³¹⁰

The following day the A.E.F. sent a message to the Ninety-Second Division threatening that General Pershing would “send the 92nd Division back to the United States or break it up into labor battalions as unfit to bear arms in France, if efforts to prevent rape were not taken more seriously.”³¹¹

Efforts to discredit African American troops of the Ninety-Second Division by labeling them rapists went so far that one white officer unofficially wrote to President Woodrow Wilson. He testified that “recently” the Ninety-Second Division was responsible for at least thirty cases of rape.³¹² Although Dr. Robert Russa Moton exonerated these charges in a fact-finding mission requested by President Wilson and Secretary of War Newton Baker, the damage had already been done.³¹³ The Ninety-Second Division and all black doughboys had been branded as rapists.

Although black soldiers may not have been specifically challenging segregation and prejudice by having consensual sex with French white women, they understood that inter-racial relations did symbolically attack America’s system of inequality. By crossing the color line and violating one of America’s most volatile racial taboos, African Americans troops openly protested principles of segregation. Their actions attacked segregation’s foundations in the purity and submissiveness of white womanhood.

³¹⁰ Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 74.

³¹¹ *Ibid.* 74-75.

³¹² James, “Robert Russa Morton and The Whispering Gallery After World War I,” 235.

³¹³ Major A. E. Patterson, Judge Advocate of Ninety-Second Division, reported to Dr. Moton that only ten soldiers were tried for rape. Of these ten, only three were found to be guilty of the crime, and only one of those was a man from the Ninety-Second Division. Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 76.

Furthermore, black doughboys understood that being overseas enabled them to contest segregation's ideology without the same risks involved as in America. Second Lieutenant James B. Morris related in his memoirs how initially incongruous relations with white women were. He stated, "It seemed ironic that white women whom we would be lynched for looking at back home were throwing themselves at us over there." He continued explaining how bizarre he found the circumstances when a French woman asked him to marry her and take her back to America. Morris "smiled at the dangers associated with her request, for if, by any chance, I would survive being jailed or lynched for having a white woman."³¹⁴ Nonetheless, France provided the opportunity for relationships black men and white women.

In a situation where miscegenation was occurring and white men were losing their control over the situation, perhaps it is not surprising that many white officers and soldiers desperately grasp for any means to regain their authority. When whispers of black rapists did not deter French women from associating with the troops, white officers increased their discrimination against African Americans. They limited black soldiers' leave time, criticized their combat performance, and abused their authority over them.

However, not every story involving black officers and troops in France ended with an African American being frustrated with bigotry and discrimination. Many times black officers utilized their intelligence and determination to fight back. One, almost comical, example of a black officer challenging racism and turning the tables on discriminatory white officers comes from the diary of Captain M. Virgil Boutte. Captain Boutte, a graduate of Fort Des Moines originally from Nashville, Tennessee, had been assigned as the translator for the Ninety-Second Division and upon his arrival to France as translator for a group of white officers of the Headquarters Company. At Brest, the Army made arrangements for these white officers to stay

³¹⁴ Morris, *Tradition and Valor*, 45.

at a local hotel while African American officers were ordered to sleep in the nearby barracks that were unfinished and lacked beds. However, these white officers refused to allow their black translator to accompany them to the hotel. When they arrived to the place of their accommodations and were unable to communicate, they were turned away. Captain Boutte then took the company's black officers to the hotel and attained the rooms intended for the white officers—perhaps not the most overwhelming victory over discrimination but a befitting and ironic one nonetheless.³¹⁵

First Lieutenant Edgar A. Love also represented a young leader of the black community successful in helping fellow black troops. Prior to the war, Love had already demonstrated his desire to serve as a leader when he, Frank Coleman, Oscar J. Cooper, and their faculty advisor, Ernest Just, created the original chapter of Omega Psi Phi on the campus of Howard University on November 17, 1911. These men believed it was time for a black fraternity to be founded on an African American campus and aspired for their members to be dynamic leaders.³¹⁶ Perhaps for that reason two of the four founders, Love and Coleman, enlisted to lead black men into battle during World War I.

First Lieutenant Love continued his leadership overseas in World War I. The Army commissioned Love a first lieutenant and stationed him at Camp Meade, Maryland with the 368th Infantry.³¹⁷ Due to his Theology degree and career as a Methodist Bishop, the Army assigned Love as chaplain of the 368th. In addition to his duties in combat as an officer and spiritually as chaplain, he organized an army school for illiterates in the 809th Pioneer Infantry. This instruction developed into a regular school system with a curriculum including reading,

³¹⁵ Barbeau and Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers*, 139.

³¹⁶ Ross, Jr., *The Divine Nine*, 74.

³¹⁷ Scott, *Scott's Official History of The American Negro in the World War*, 477.

writing, philosophy, and mechanics. Fourteen teachers offered their services to guide and educate willing black men.³¹⁸

Another account of African American troops overcoming discrimination stands out because of the praise they received from the Army's newspaper, *The Stars and Stripes*. The article detailed how the Army issued inadequate weapons to black doughboys upon their arrival to France. Despite complaints that better weapons were needed, the Army refused to furnish any. Motivated not to be inhibited by their weaponry, the black troops utilized what was available to them. They sharpened their bayonets until they were razor-edged. Then they took the blades on their "nightly expeditions through no man's land, where they" served as the proficient tools for war's deadly work.³¹⁹

These stories relate the self-reliance of African Americans and their dedication to performing well in their duties as American citizens. Unfortunately, these tales were not the ones retold to white troops to endear them to their black comrades. Other stories, ones that presented African Americans in a more stereotypical manner, were the ones that frequently appeared in the pages of the United States Armed Forces newspaper. *The Stars and Stripes* often published articles depicting African American doughboys as ignorant Sambos. One article described the capture of a German officer by an African American soldier. It noted the highly commended German marching with medals on his chest escorted by a "great, husky American negro prancing along, showing every tooth in his head. 'Ill-yi, boss,' he called out jubilantly, 'Ah don' know what Ah's got, but Ah's bringin' it along!'"³²⁰ Another piece commenting on the A.E.F.'s creation of a garden service to supplement rations with fresh produce joked, "Negro

³¹⁸ "Edgar A. Love," Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Pi Kappa Kappa Chapter. http://www.pikappakappaques.org/edgar_love.htm (accessed November 22, 2008).

³¹⁹ "From the Minute Men of '76 to the Minute Men of 1918 in France," *The Stars and Stripes*, November 15, 1918: 3.

³²⁰ "War as They're Waging It Somewhere South of Soissons," *The Stars and Stripes*, August 2, 1918: 1.

stevedore regiments will, however, be kept as far removed as possible from the watermelon patches.”³²¹ Other stories portray black officers as fools or continually quote all blacks in a slack-jawed southern vernacular, implying their ineptitude for higher reasoning and real valor.³²²

The African American officers and subordinates in the Ninety-Second Division received much more criticism than they did praise for their combat efforts. The men of 368th Infantry first saw combat for the Ninety-Second Division during an American push on Argonne beginning on September 25, 1918. During this offensive, the regiment served as the liaison between French and American forces. It was forced to march in unfamiliar territory with almost no briefing, and when they attacked, the men were poorly supplied. The Army deemed the 368th a failure for its lack of success in the Argonne push.³²³ However, this failure should not have fallen on the shoulders of black officers and troops.

In combat the Ninety-Third Division performed much better than the Ninety-Second Division. The most renowned combat regiment of the Ninety-Third Division was the 369th Infantry, also known as the “Harlem Hellfighters.” The 369th got its first taste of battle during the German offensive in March 1918. During this offensive, the black doughboys helped stop a German assault toward Paris. By stopping this advance, these units helped turn the war in the Allies favor. Though all four regiments of the Ninety-Third fought against the German offensive, the men of the 369th proved themselves and gained notoriety for their courage and bravery.

From April to July 1918 the 369th Infantry held more than a mile of the front line. Withstanding constant shelling, the African American regiment defied critics who said black troops could not stand the strain of constant bombardment. Later, during the Maison-en-

³²¹ “Taters and Suchlike to be Grown by A.E.F.,” *The Stars and Stripes*, March 8, 1918: 1.

³²² The Library of Congress has a collection of all the issues of *The Stars and Stripes* during World War I. Other issues containing examples of negative stereotypical depictions of African Americans include: *The Stars and Stripes*, June 14, 1918, and *The Stars and Stripes*, October 18, 1918.

³²³ Barbeau and Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers*, 150-160.

Champagne operation, the troops earned French praise and were awarded a regimental Croix de Guerre and 171 individual citations for the Croix de Guerre and Legion of Honor.³²⁴

White officers intent on discrediting black officers argued that the disparity between the successfulness of the Ninety-Second and Ninety-Third Divisions came from the fact that African American troops fought better under white command. Superficially, this argument might seem a satisfactory explanation because it is true that the commissioned officers of the Ninety-Third Division were white while the Ninety-Second Division contained the black officers from Fort Des Moines. However, closer investigation reveals that other factors provide a less prejudiced and more rational answer as to why the Ninety-Third performed more admirably in battle.

First, to deter the myth that black men fought better under white leadership, one need only look to the make up of both the Ninety-Second and Ninety-Third Divisions. The senior officers in both divisions were mainly white while the non-commissioned officers were African American. Of course, the Ninety-Second Division did contain the commissioned junior officers of Fort Des Moines as Lieutenants and Captains, but the senior officers were all whites.

The only regiment that defied this statement was the 370th Infantry whose organization basically transferred directly over from the 8th Illinois National Guard. This transfer included African American officers ranking from Colonel to Corporal. The performance of the 370th Infantry shatters any myth of black men serving worse under black leadership. Serving in the more complimented Ninety-Third Division, the 370th executed its orders skillfully. As a testament to their fighting abilities, the Germans fighting against the men of the 370th during 1918 nicknamed them “Black Devils” for their ferocity in combat. Moreover, their service

³²⁴ Harris, *The Hellfighters of Harlem*, 37.

earned them twenty-one American Distinguished Service Crosses, sixty-eight Croix de Guerre, and one Distinguished Service Medal.³²⁵

The more practical answer becomes very evident when one examines the organization and the training of black troops in America and in France. The Ninety-Second Division contained all the black draftees selected for combat training while the Ninety-Third Division came from African American National Guard units. Though these National Guard units did not necessarily have more combat experience than draftees, they certainly understood how a regiment was coordinated more than the fresh, young draftees. Additionally, serving side by side in the National Guard benefited the men because they had developed a rapport and teamwork before Congress ever declared war.

As previously mentioned, white policymakers concerned with the amassing of large numbers of black combat troops had forced the War Department to prohibit the Ninety-Second Division from training together as a combat unit before deploying them to France. Instead, the men of the Ninety-Second Division trained at seven separate camps in the United States. This decision hindered the preparedness of the Ninety-Second Division for combat. Although the Ninety-Third Division also was not allowed to assemble as a unit before landing overseas, the units of the Ninety-Third Division's previous experiences as national guardsmen better equipped these men for battle.

Another prime example of discrimination in training or more precisely in non-training comes from the stories of black artillery officers in World War I. The Army assigned the first group of artillery officers from Fort Des Moines as soon as the men received their commissions. No examinations were given to determine which officers might perform better in auxiliary arms. Instead, the Army randomly selected men and sent them to their artillery regiment. These men

³²⁵ Scott, *Scott's Official History of The American Negro in the World War*, 214.

received no training in auxiliary arms and were expected to match up to white officers who completed training at artillery schools or had been certified competent. The Army forced these black officers to do on-the-job training in France, and, predictably, they failed because they had no experience with the guns or the troops they were supposed to lead. Due to poor performance, the War Department suggested all black artillery be replaced, going so far as to suggest replacing all black officers in general.³²⁶

After the debacles with the black artillery officers in France, the Army finally decided to instruct some black officers in artillery. They chose 96 men from Camp Meade, Maryland. They transferred them to Camp Taylor, Kentucky, where blatant discrimination occurred. The camp's commander, who told the men he did not want blacks at his post, changed their barracks six times. Each time he allowed the men just enough time to clean up an area before turning it over to white troops. Furthermore, these black officers received enlisted men's uniforms and were informed that they were still officer candidates and as such must salute all white officers, including those they outranked. Upon graduation, the camp commander recommended the 44 black graduates for battery service, the most deadly duty in artillery while white artillery officers at the camp received recommendations as performance dictated. This might seem reasonable given the lack of training these officers had received at Fort Des Moines, but a closer investigation reveals that of the ten men honored from the twenty-five hundred in the camp, six were black. Prejudice provides the only answer as to why these men were not rewarded for similar performance as white officers.³²⁷

Aside from the fact that the Ninety-Second Division received inadequate training compared to that of white officers and troops, the criticisms of the Ninety-Second Division as a

³²⁶ Barbeau and Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers*, 62.

³²⁷ *Ibid.* 63, 65.

poor combat unit are unfair when examined more scrupulously. Most criticism of the Ninety-Second for its poor combat performance initiates from the 368th Regiment's failure to repress German assaults in the Argonne forest in September of 1918. However, these critics disregard the similarly poor performance of white American regiments nearby in that battle. They also neglect the fact that the three other infantry regiments of the Ninety-Second Division did not take part in the conflict, and, therefore, it does not truly represent their abilities in combat.³²⁸

Nonetheless the Ninety-Second ignored the criticism and kept fighting. During the last two days of battle, the 367th and 366th advanced nearly a kilometer in a day, and the 365th had pushed nearly 3 kilometers, "Significant gains in a war measured in which success was measured in inches."³²⁹ However, the military ignored these achievements of the Ninety-Second and continued criticizing the division and its black officers following the war.

The officers of Fort Des Moines performed admirably under the difficult conditions. Racism overshadowed the abilities shown by these soldiers in combat. Major General Robert L. Bullard, Commander of the American Second Army in France, criticized his own men saying they would not fight or listen to orders.³³⁰ He believed this harsh criticism might save his career in the aftermath of the 368th's performance in Argonne campaign. Despite their courageous action in combat, black troops Bullard pictured his black soldiers as ignorant, cowardly, and undisciplined. General Bullard reported to the War Department that he could not make his black troops fight and that they were "hopelessly inferior." He suggested the military abstain from using blacks in combat in the future and permanently assign them as laborers.³³¹ Despite Bullard's well known prejudice towards black troops, his sentiments along with Colonel Allen J.

³²⁸ Stovall, *Paris Noir*, 12-13.

³²⁹ Barbeau and Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers*, 150-160.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Donaldson, *The History of African-Americans in the Military*, 101-102.

Greer's, the chief of staff the Ninety-Second Division, stirred discussion in Congress of disbanding the four black regular Army units: the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry.³³²

In his investigation into the service record of African Americans in World War I, Dr. Robert Russa Moton questioned French officers and civilians to determine the truth as to the abilities and actions of America's black doughboys. In one detailed interview with a French general, Moton questioned him as to why he sent fifteen black officers home reporting they were "inefficient." The General responded:

We sent back through Blois to America in six months, an average of one thousand white officers a month, who failed in one way or another in this awful struggle. I hope, Dr. Moton . . . that you won't lose faith in my race because of that, and certainly I am not going to lose faith in your race because . . . of a few colored officers who failed.³³³

If only the rationale of this French general could have translated to the minds of white Americans evaluating African Americans' contributions in World War I. Instead, the hopes of equality the officers had dreamt of when they enlisted at Fort Des Moines would not be realized at the conclusion of World War I. Inequality and discrimination could not be exterminated by the loyalty and valiant service to the nation.

Unfortunately for the African American officers and regular troops who fought in France, they failed to receive the fruits of their labor overseas or when they returned to the United States. Instead, some members of the Army and white civilians launched counterattacks to discredit and

³³² Oswald Garrison Villard, "The Negro in the Regular Army," *Atlantic Monthly* 91 (1903): 721-729 details Major Bullard's assessment of black troops during the Spanish-American War. Villard's article, being overtly racist in nature, cites Bullard as claiming "the differences between negro and white soldiers. They are so great, he says, as to require the military commander to treat the negro as a different species." Jonathan Sutherland, *African Americans at War: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 534-535 mentions Congress's consideration of disbanding the four black regular units.

³³³ James, "Robert Russa Morton and The Whispering Gallery After World War I," 238.

to discourage black servicemen. The administrators of segregation strengthened their resolve to deter equality, intimidate revolutionaries, and dishearten the visionaries seeking democracy.

The U. S. Army refused to allow African American soldiers to march in a victory parade in Paris on Bastille Day, 1919, even when black French and British soldiers were permitted to join. Furthermore, the Army continued its policy of discouraging interaction between white French women and black troops. Commanders issued one black regiment an order stating, “Enlisted men of this organization will not talk to or be in company with any white women, regardless of whether the women solicit their company or not.” Several reports indicated black men being shot by military police for their relations with Frenchwomen. African American troops were even hassled by commanders on their return trip home. For example, captain of the *U.S.S. Virginia* removed African American doughboys of the 367th Regiment whom he was supposed to transport home citing no blacks had ever traveled on an American battleship.³³⁴

The *New York Age* reported in November 1918 the story of an African American officer who returned to visit his family in Mississippi after the war. Several white Mississippians took exception to the officer wearing his military uniform stating, “they would allow ‘no nigger’ to wear a uniform that a white man was bound to honor.” The mob’s threats became so intense that the officer eventually fled town in disguise fearing for his life.³³⁵

An outraged W. E. B. Du Bois unleashed his fury toward Army reports of black troops’ cowardice and the continuance of racism and discrimination when he wrote, “By the God of heaven we are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell

³³⁴ Stovall, *Paris Noir*, 15-22.

³³⁵ Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History*, 118.

in our own land.”³³⁶ He chastised America for its ignorance, its discrimination, and its wicked actions against African Americans. Du Bois spoke out against the lynching, disfranchisement, and economic impoverishment used to deny equality. He concluded his remarks with a call to the soldiers and officers returning home from war in Europe:

We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.³³⁷

The first commissioned black officers in the United States Army, the proud young men from Fort Des Moines, heeded the call Du Bois made to return fighting for equality. Their war experiences with discrimination in the Army and with some semblance of equality by many French citizens and soldiers motivated them to revolutionize America when they returned. The African American officers of Fort Des Moines came home resolved to continue their work of bringing equality to their race. They served as the vanguard of civil rights upholding the Ninety-Second Division’s motto of “Deeds, not Words”—to fulfill the American dream of democracy through their actions, physically combating segregation.

³³⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, "Returning Soldier," *The Crisis*, XVIII (May, 1919), 13.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 5: FIGHTING FOR LEGAL CHANGE

Segregation, or “separate but equal”, empowered separate and unequal, by supplying the legal authority to nullify the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments and to deny African Americans civil equality and the promised rights of citizenship. In effect, Jim Crow laws legalized disfranchisement while Supreme Court decisions, such as the *Slaughter House Cases* (1873) and *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), struck down African Americans’ right to equality. Combined, these legal entrenchments of segregation ensured African Americans would never gain social, economic, or political equality.

Whenever African Americans tried to overcome discrimination, the legality of segregation blocked their efforts. Whites benefited from a system legitimized by state and federal statutes. Throughout the Deep South, white businesses, employers, banks, and landlords organized into White Citizens Councils to impose retaliation against African Americans who resisted inequality. Using evictions, firings, boycotts, and foreclosures as weapons, White Citizen Councils harassed blacks into compliance. When threats and economic retribution failed to sabotage black resistance, bigoted whites resorted to violence for control. Again, the legality of segregation served as a protectorate for the beating and lynching of African Americans.

The officers of Fort Des Moines understood that, as long as the law safeguarded institutional segregation, discrimination would not end. In an effort to assist their race and combat the inequality of segregation, some of these men earned their legal educations and served

as attorneys prior to their enlistment in the Seventeenth Provision Training Regiment. Others returned home resolved to gain a law school degree and to fight for civil rights. They aspired to support fellow African Americans in need of legal defense against a biased justice system and to crush the legal status of segregation.

By the late nineteenth century, Jim Crow laws became essentially universal in the South as a method to circumvent and prevent African Americans from obtaining their equal rights as citizens. These laws established a legal precedent for the disfranchisement of black voters and gave white southerners the ability to ignore the previous legislation and amendments that had intended to ensure African Americans' rights and establish democracy. As a result, the races were separated in all facets of public life: in education, in restaurants, in restrooms, and on transportation. In 1896, the Supreme Court placed the ultimate seal of approval on segregation when it created a constitutional basis for separating the races in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

Homer Plessy, a very white looking man who by Louisiana law was classified as African American, challenged the constitutionality of segregated railroad coaches. His attorneys argued that segregation in railroad transportation violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Unfortunately for Plessy and African Americans both the lower courts and the U. S. Supreme Court upheld the legality of segregation noting that Plessy's Fourteenth Amendment rights had not been violated since the separate cars provided equal services. Thus, the high court handed down a doctrine of "separate but equal" that became the legal protection of segregation for the next fifty years. Justice John Marshall Harlan, one of the dissenters on the Court, predicted that this decision would become as baneful as the infamous Dred Scott decision of 1857—unfortunately for African Americans seeking equality, he was right!³³⁸

³³⁸ *Plessy v. Ferguson* 163 US 537 (1896)

Although African Americans had attempted to legally combat discrimination and injustice before the twentieth century, it was not until the founding of the NAACP in 1909 that black Americans had a national organization that they could call upon to be their legal advocate. From its beginnings the NAACP focused on the courts as a primary area to expose discrimination and injustice, enforce African Americans' constitutional rights and liberties, and gain national support for the organization. After all, the NAACP's first president was Moorfield Storey, a constitutional lawyer and former president of the American Bar Association, who sought to accomplish the organization's goals of ending racial segregation, disfranchisement, and lynching through legal means.³³⁹

Quickly, the NAACP gained notoriety for its success in both attacking segregation and legally defending African Americans who had been discriminated against. In 1910 the organization undertook its first major legal case as defense counsel for South Carolinian Pink Franklin, a black sharecropper charged with murder. Though Franklin had already been convicted and sentenced to death, the NAACP legal team stepped in and argued that suspicious circumstances and the careless approach of arresting officers had led to a gunfight, and officer's death, during his original arrest. As a result, Franklin's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and he was eventually paroled in 1919 due to the NAACP's further efforts.³⁴⁰

Later in 1910, NAACP litigation attacked the constitutionality of grandfather clause exemptions to literacy tests in Frank Guinn's suit against the state of Oklahoma. In 1907 Oklahoma passed an amendment implementing grandfather clauses, but the 1910 election was the first opportunity to test the legality of this amendment. During that election, election officials in the state allowed illiterate white citizens to vote while illiterate black citizens were

³³⁹ Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: the NAACP and the making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 10-11, 33.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 18.

refused. The NAACP filed suit arguing that the amendment violated black citizens' Fifteenth Amendment rights because grandfather clauses effectively only disfranchised black voters. Appeals to the lower courts' decisions made their way to the U. S. Supreme Court in 1913. In 1915 the Court ruled in *Guinn v. United States* that grandfather clauses in both Oklahoma and Maryland were unconstitutional. This decision also struck down grandfather clauses' legitimacy in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Virginia and established the NAACP's leading role in legally combating discrimination and segregation.³⁴¹

After their stint as officers in the Ninety-Second Division, several of these men returned to America and became an integral part of the NAACP's litigation team and the organization in general. The most famous of these men was Charles Hamilton Houston, the NAACP litigation director and innovator of legal strategy used to defeat the doctrine of "separate but equal" in the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Alongside Houston, former officers Loring B. Moore, George L. Vaughan, Charles P. Howard, Sr., and Carter Walker Wesley played crucial roles in civil rights cases as NAACP counsel, and former officers Edward S. Gaillard, Oscar C. Brown, Harrison J. Pinkett, James B. Morris, and Clayborne George served as local and national leaders for the organization at various times. Through these men's efforts the NAACP was able to obtain many legal victories over segregation and the blatantly racist and discriminatory legislation that legitimized the system.

Brown v. Board of Education had the most profound effect of any of these civil rights cases. Furthermore, the innovator of the legal strategy utilized in the case to defeat segregation in education was a graduate of Fort Des Moines and officer of the Ninety-Second Division during World War I. Charles Hamilton Houston's journey to become an attorney clearly demonstrates how his observations of discrimination as an officer in the U. S. Army instilled a

³⁴¹ *Guinn v. United States* 238 US 347 (1915)

resolve to fight harder for equality once he returned home. His experiences with the Army's legal system motivated him to gain a legal education after returning from combat. Although Houston entered war as an experienced combatant in the battle for civil rights, the Army's discrimination against fellow African American soldiers and him personally motivated him to challenge segregation more strongly.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Houston's middle class background and home in Washington had already afforded him more educational opportunities than other young black men across the country. He graduated from M Street High School in 1911 and from Amherst College in 1915. After his college graduation he went on to teach as an English professor at Howard University for the 1915-1916 academic year—a job his father's contacts enabled him to receive.³⁴² Undoubtedly, the Houston family's black middle class status, their location in Washington, and their love and encouragement provided numerous opportunities for Charles to become the black leader he was well on his way to becoming in 1916.

Fortunately for millions of black Americans, World War I also played a crucial role in the development of young Houston. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Houston, still teaching at Howard, joined the student and instructor training battalion in their efforts to convince the War Department to create a training camp for black officers. He also served as a member of the CCNCM, the organization that prompted Congress to create the black officer training camp. On June 18, 1917, Houston joined 1,249 other black officer candidates at Fort Des Moines and four months later graduated as a commissioned first lieutenant. The Army then assigned Houston to Company G of the 368th Infantry stationed at Camp Meade, Maryland. While at Camp Meade, he faced much discrimination, and his superior officers refused his

³⁴² Genna Rae McNeil, *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 15-27.

persistent requests to transfer to an artillery officer assignment. The injustice that pushed Houston too far occurred when the Army appointed him the position of judge advocate for two black soldiers. The white court found his defendant guilty despite not having any proof. Though Houston could only sit silently while the court sentenced a fine sergeant to a year of hard labor, loss of rank, and forfeiture of pay, the moment defined his life and career. He later wrote, “I made up my mind that I would never get caught again without knowing something about my rights; that if luck was with me, and I got through this war, I would study law and use my time fighting for men who could not strike back.”³⁴³

Houston returned home to enroll in Harvard Law School where he became editor of the 35th edition of the *Harvard Law Review* and was graduated *cum laude* with his Bachelor of Laws degree in 1922. He went on to earn his Doctorate of Judicial Science and to join his father’s law practice in 1924. Later, Houston became Dean of the Howard University Law School in 1929 and NAACP Litigation Director in 1935.³⁴⁴

As director of litigation for the organization, Houston worked directly on nearly every civil rights case that went before the U. S. Supreme Court from 1930 until 1954. At the same time, he established a distinguished legal team for the NAACP as he mentored future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, one of his brightest students at Howard, and William Henry Hastie, Houston’s cousin and future first African American territorial governor. Together, these three men played a vital role in the dismantling of segregation.³⁴⁵

Even before joining together officially for the NAACP’s litigation team, Houston, Hastie, and Marshall were focusing on how to attack the legality of segregation established in *Plessy V.*

³⁴³ Ibid. 28-42.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. 64, 89.

³⁴⁵ Gilbert Ware, *William Henry Hastie: Grace Under Pressure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 45.

Ferguson. They believed that the best course of action to erode the doctrine of “separate but equal” was combating it through education because many southern graduate schools offered no separate programs for black students.³⁴⁶

In March 1933 Houston’s first opportunity to strike a blow at the legality of segregation in education developed when his team found a plaintiff in Durham, North Carolina. Thomas Hocutt, 24-year-old student who wanted to attend the University of North Carolina (UNC) and attend the pharmacy school became the plaintiff in Houston’s first attempt to dismantle segregation.³⁴⁷

The case was a perfect opportunity for Houston and his team to launch their legal attack on “separate but equal.” UNC offered the only pharmacy school in the state, and it excluded African Americans. Hocutt filed a desegregation suit against the university, and Houston requested the NAACP step in to assist the client. The NAACP obliged Houston’s recommendation and even allowed William Hastie to take leadership of Hocutt’s case.³⁴⁸

Unfortunately for Houston and his team despite their best efforts, the president of UNC was able to shield himself by withholding Hocutt’s transcript. The university claimed that their refusal of Hocutt as a student was based on not receiving his transcripts. Hastie argued against this defense claiming that the transcript was received by the school and regardless, received or not, his client would have been denied because of his race due to North Carolina state law. The North Carolina court completely overlooked the issue of the state not providing separate opportunities for African American students and upheld the university’s decision not to enroll

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 46.

³⁴⁷ *Hocutt v. Wilson* (N.C. Super. Ct. 1933)

³⁴⁸ Ware, *William Henry Hastie*, 53.

Hocutt. Although Houston and his team ultimately lost, it was a first step toward eliminating the legal defense of segregation.³⁴⁹

Two years after *Hocutt v. Wilson* Houston attempted another attack on segregation in education. By this time Houston had accepted his position as director of litigation for the NAACP, and it was his first suit to file in that role. In 1935 Thurgood Marshall came to Houston with a plaintiff who had been denied acceptance into the University of Maryland Law School. Similar to the situation with Hocutt in North Carolina, Donald G. Murray, a graduate from Amherst, was being denied his opportunity to higher education solely on the basis of race because the state lacked of separate facilities.³⁵⁰

Houston and Marshall led the assault for Murray and immediately for a *Writ of Mandamus* to order the university to accept his application. Houston successfully argued to the courts that the university's decision defied the legal precedent of "separate but equal." The university immediately appealed the decision but the case was not overturned. In 1936, Judge Carroll T. Bonds ordered the University of Maryland to accommodate Murray by admitting him to the law school; however, in order to fully comply with *Plessy v. Ferguson*, he had to remain segregated from the other white students.³⁵¹

Houston had won but still failed to defeat "separate but equal." He hoped that the cost of providing separate graduate schools would be too much for state governments to accept. He reasoned that if the courts would force graduate schools to accept and integrate African American students in their classrooms that this would give him a legal foothold to continue attacking segregation in education in future legal battles. Unfortunately, the Murray case served

³⁴⁹ Gilbert Ware, "Hocutt: Genesis of Brown," *The Journal of Negro Education* Volume 52 Number 3 (Summer 1983): 230.

³⁵⁰ *University v. Murray* 169 Md. 478 (1936)

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

as only a partial victory, Judge Bonds not only ordered Murray's acceptance into the law school but also ordered his segregation.

Undeterred, Houston continued his campaign in 1938 when he and his NAACP litigation team argued *Missouri ex. rel. Gaines v. Canada* in front of the U. S. Supreme Court. The case began in 1935 when plaintiff Lloyd Gaines, a graduate from Lincoln University, an African American university in Missouri, applied for admission to the University of Missouri Law School. Similar to the circumstances in *University v. Murray*, Missouri had only one law school and it forbid African American students. However, unlike the Murray case, the state of Missouri did have a statute detailing that African American students were able to receive their "separate but equal" education through Lincoln University. The statute also provided an option for Lincoln to enroll a student in a border state's university and pay their tuition for courses not taught at Lincoln. Therefore, this statute went into effect when Gaines applied to the University of Missouri Law School, and the state offered him the option of building a law school at Lincoln or paying for his legal education at an out-of-state school.³⁵²

Gaines' suit attacked both these positions as unacceptable violations to his Fourteenth Amendment rights and the state's burden to provide "separate but equal" opportunities. Houston claimed that the first option in the statute was moot because a law school at Lincoln had "not yet ripened into an actual establishment." As to the second option, he argued:

The question here is not of a duty of the State to supply legal training, or of the quality of the training which it does supply, but of its duty when it provides such training to furnish it to the residents of the State upon the basis of an equality of right. By the operation of the laws of Missouri a privilege has been created for white law students which is denied to negroes by reason of their race. The white resident is afforded legal education within the State; the negro resident having the same qualifications is refused

³⁵² *Missouri ex. rel. Gaines v. Canada* 305 US 337 (1938)

it there and must go outside the State to obtain it. That is a denial of the equality of legal right to the enjoyment of the privilege.

Houston's point was one well taken by the court. It did not matter whether or not Missouri or surrounding states had equivalent, better, or worse law schools. By offering to white students a legal education and refusing one to black students, the state was denying privileges to African Americans solely on the basis of race. In December 1938 the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Gaines. They decided that states that chose to provide in-state education for white students must provide those same educational opportunities to African Americans as well, and that states could satisfy this requirement by integrating black students into the same school with whites or by creating a second school.³⁵³

After achieving victory in the Gaines case, Houston left his position as director of litigation for the NAACP and returned to his private practice. His resignation coincided with his decision to remarry in 1937. Despite this devotion to his new bride, Houston continued in his battle against segregation and discrimination.³⁵⁴ In 1944 Houston argued two separate cases in front of the U. S. Supreme Court that succeeded in forcing railroad unions into fair-representation practices of black firemen.³⁵⁵ In 1948 Houston represented two African American clients in opposition to residential segregation and in their U. S. Supreme Court cases of *Hurd v. Hodge* and *Shelley v. Kraemer* won victories making the racially restrictive covenants placed in contracts and deeds unconstitutional.³⁵⁶

Aside from trying these civil rights cases directly, Houston also continued his work attacking segregation in education as an advisor to the NAACP's new director of litigation, his

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ McNeil, *Groundwork*, 146.

³⁵⁵ *Steele v. Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company* 323 US 192 (1944); *Tunstall v. Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Ocean Lodge No. 76* 323 US 210 (1944)

³⁵⁶ *Hurd v. Hodge* 334 US 24 (1948); *Shelley v. Kraemer* 334 US 1 (1948)

protégé Thurgood Marshall. Houston assisted Marshall and the NAACP legal team in the 1948 case *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma*. Marshall utilized the same strategy employed in *Missouri ex. rel. Gaines v. Canada* to force the state of Oklahoma to open its law school to African Americans.³⁵⁷

By May 1947 Houston decided to alter his attack plan a launch “a direct, open, all-out fight against segregation itself.” He had always known that “segregation itself imports inequality,” but he believed the time that now the timing was right to prove it legally.³⁵⁸ Building on the legal precedent laid in the Gaines and Sipuel cases, the NAACP had opened two suits against segregation in law schools in Oklahoma and Texas, *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* and *Sweatt v. Painter* respectively. This time, in both cases, Houston and the NAACP would argue that it was not enough to provide separate institutions for black students because the enforcement of segregation prevented them from receiving the same educational and professional opportunities as white law students.³⁵⁹

Though Houston worked alongside Thurgood Marshall and Robert L. Carter in preparing the strategy briefs, he had been experiencing chest pains and knew he lacked the strength to see the cases through to trial. In a letter to Carter, Houston wrote, “You and Thurgood can proceed without any fear of crossing any plans that I may have.”³⁶⁰ The NAACP litigation continued on without Houston. In 1949 they appealed unfavorable decisions in both the *McLaurin* and *Sweatt*

³⁵⁷ *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma* 332 US 631 (1948)

³⁵⁸ Charles H. Houston, “NAACP Changes Course—Now in All Suits Attacks Segregation as Illegal—Dixie Spending Itself Broke,” *Richmond Afro American*, March 22, 1947: 13.

³⁵⁹ *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* 339 US 637 (1950); *Sweatt v. Painter* 339 US 629 (1950)

³⁶⁰ Quoted in Douglas O. Linder, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, “Famous Trials,” “Before Brown: Charles H. Houston and the Gaines Case,” <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/conlaw/houstonessay.html> (accessed January 30, 2012).

cases to the state level, and after those courts refused to overturn the decisions, the attorneys successfully appealed to the Supreme Court in 1950.³⁶¹

Unfortunately, Houston did not live long enough to see segregation in education fully dismantled. After suffering chest pains in October 1949, the following April Houston suffered another, more serious heart attack Houston passed away.³⁶² However, his legacy lived on in the legal precedents he had fought to achieve and in the legal strategy used to combat segregation.

On April 4, 1950 U. S. Supreme Court reversed the Texas court's decision in *Sweatt v. Painter*. Utilizing case law from Houston's previous victories, *Shelley v. Kraemer* and *Missouri ex. rel. Gaines v. Canada*, the court ruled that forcing Hernan M. Sweatt to attend a separate, segregated law school violated his Fourteenth Amendment rights. The court reasoned that Sweatt, "claim his full constitutional right: legal education equivalent to that offered by the State to students of other races. Such education is not available to him in a separate law school as offered by the State." Houston's strategy had worked; the court agreed that segregation equated into a lack of equality.³⁶³

On the very day the Sweatt decision was released, NAACP litigation was back in the U. S. Supreme Court arguing *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*. In June 1950 the court returned another favorable decision stating that, "the Fourteenth Amendment precludes differences in treatment by the state based upon race." Now Marshall and his litigation team had the legal precedents necessary for a frontal assault on public education and the *Plessy v. Ferguson* doctrine of "separate but equal."³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* 339 US 637 (1950); *Sweatt v. Painter* 339 US 629 (1950)

³⁶² Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 382.

³⁶³ *Sweatt v. Painter* 339 US 629 (1950)

³⁶⁴ *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* 339 US 637 (1950)

In 1951 Marshall and his team filed a class action suit against the Board of Education of the City of Topeka, Kansas based on the school district's policy of segregation. By 1953 the case had made its way through appeals to the U. S. Supreme Court. There, Marshall argued to the Supreme Court that segregation at its core was inevitably unequal.³⁶⁵

Utilizing psychological studies that investigated the effects of segregated education on black children, the NAACP's litigation team presented evidence that separation of the races fostered a "a sense of inferiority" that "affects the motivation of a child to learn" in black children. The court agreed with Houston's premise and the NAACP's argument. On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren issued the court's decision stating:

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does...We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.³⁶⁶

By implementing Houston's strategy the NAACP litigation team had done it; they had struck down the legality of segregation and reversed the "separate but equal" precedent of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

Houston and the NAACP succeeded in dismantling Jim Crow in education. Surely the decisions he personally won and those that utilized his precedents and strategy prove Houston succeeded in his plan to "never get caught again without knowing something about my

³⁶⁵ *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 347 US 483 (1954)

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

rights,” and use his “time fighting for men who could not strike back.”³⁶⁷ He epitomized the fulfillment of the Ninety-Second Division’s motto “Deeds, Not Words” and encouraged his fellow officers to do the same in their legal battles with the NAACP.

Alongside Houston, Loring B. Moore and George L. Vaughan fought for civil rights through litigation. Moore, a second lieutenant from Fort Des Moines, and Vaughan, first lieutenant from the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment, played critical roles in gaining equal access to housing.

The NAACP and its legal team began attacking segregated housing when the case of *Buchanan v. Worley* went to trial in front of the U. S. Supreme Court in April 1917. In the case Moorfield Storey represented the NAACP and argued that a city ordinance that allowed residential segregation in Louisville, Kentucky, violated African Americans’ Fourteenth Amendment rights. Though the Kentucky Court of Appeals upheld the ordinance’s constitutionality, the U. S. Supreme Court overruled that decision and struck down the legality of city ordinances segregating housing.³⁶⁸

The NAACP had won the battle but the war was not yet over. Attorneys and real estate agents circumvented the court’s ruling by placing restrictive covenants within property contracts and deeds. These covenants prevented the sale, rental, or use of the deeded land by specific groups, usually African Americans or Jews. It is at this point that Loring B. Moore, former officer and Assistant Attorney General for Illinois at the time of the trial, entered into the conflict to defeat segregated housing. He and a team of Chicago attorneys took on the constitutionality

³⁶⁷ Ibid, 28-42.

³⁶⁸ *Buchanan v. Warley*, 245 U.S. 60 (1917)

of restrictive covenants because they believed these contractual stipulations violated the equal protection rights of individuals granted by the Fourteenth Amendment.³⁶⁹

Unfortunately for Moore, the NAACP, and African Americans opposed to segregation in housing, the legality of racially restrictive covenants had already been tested in the Illinois Supreme Court case of *Burke v. Kleiman*. In that case the court ruled that if 95% of a community's homeowners had signed a contract including a restrictive covenant the covenant was valid for the remaining 5% of homes sold.³⁷⁰ Moore had to overcome this decision and its legal precedent if he hoped to have a chance of defeating racial covenants.

Overcoming *Burke v. Kleiman* proved to be quite a challenge. The Woodlawn Property Owners' Association, the organization Moore sued in his case, apparently knew of the legal precedent, and, therefore, they took action to have 95% of owners sign contracts with the racial covenant barring blacks. Carl A. Hansberry, former treasurer of the Chicago branch of the NAACP, decided to challenge the legality of restrictive covenants anyway. He purchased a home at 6140 Rhodes Avenue and occupied the residence. Immediately, the owners' association sued Hansberry to have him removed from the property. The lower courts ruled to remove him from the property and to return ownership to the previous owner with no compensation. Moore and his legal team appealed the decision until the case reached the United States Supreme Court.³⁷¹

Predictably the defense cited *Burke v. Kleiman* to argue the legality of the lower courts' decisions stating that a legal precedent to uphold the racial covenant existed. Moore argued against the covenants and the *Burke v. Kleiman* decision claiming that Hansberry's Fourteenth Amendment rights were being violated. The court ruled in favor of Hansberry but failed to strike

³⁶⁹ "Iron Ring in Housing," *The Crisis* (July 1940): 205.

³⁷⁰ *Burke v. Kleiman* 277 Ill. App. 519 (1934)

³⁷¹ *Hansberry v. Lee* 311 US 32 (1940)

down restrictive covenants. Instead, the court found that treating the Hansberry contract as a class action, as had been done in *Burke v. Kleiman*, violated the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.³⁷²

Therefore, even though Moore and his legal team failed to defeat racial covenants, they did strike a major blow against their legality by destroying the precedent of *Burke v. Kleiman*. Later, George L. Vaughan and Charles Hamilton Houston successfully struck down the legality of racial covenants in the Supreme Court case of *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948.

Vaughan, first lieutenant and attorney in St. Louis, Missouri, and Houston represented J. D. Shelley in the U. S. Supreme Court case that permanently defeated restrictive covenants. In 1945, Shelley purchased a home in St. Louis and moved his family to the residence. The white homeowners association, infuriated by a black family moving into their neighborhood, served an eviction notice to Shelley citing a restrictive covenant in neighborhood contracts. Shelley sued to maintain his family's residence.³⁷³

When the lower courts enforced the restrictive covenant, Vaughan took the case to the Missouri Supreme Court where the lower court's decision was upheld. Finally, Vaughan and Houston appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court where he vigorously argued that restrictive covenants were "the Achilles heel" of American democracy. The court agreed with his argument and found that though placing a restrictive covenant within a contract was not illegal, the enforcement of restrictive covenants by the state violated an individual's Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection that guaranteed "the right of a citizen to purchase and dispose of property."³⁷⁴ Vaughan's success represented a landmark victory in civil rights establishing a

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ *Shelley v. Kraemer* 334 US 1 (1948)

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

precedent effectively making all restrictive covenants unenforceable. Together Moore, Vaughan, Houston, and the NAACP were able to destroy the legality of segregated housing.

Another officer from Fort Des Moines, First Lieutenant Edward S. Gaillard, fought the legality of segregation as a plaintiff in a civil rights case. The case originated in Indianapolis, Indiana, when a black physician refused to fulfill a real estate contract he had signed for the purchase of a property in a primarily white section of town. When Dr. Guy L. Grant failed to satisfy the terms of the contract, Gaillard sued him. The case was staged deliberately to contest a discriminatory Indianapolis city ordinance for the NAACP quickly came to Dr. Guy's defense. They argued that Dr. Grant legally had to refuse to purchase the property because a zoning ordinance prevented him from occupying it. On November 26, 1926, Judge Harry O. Chamberlain ruled on the case of *Edward S. Gaillard v. Dr. Guy L. Grant* and struck down the racist ordinance. He held that the city's ordinance deprived citizens of their Fourteenth Amendment rights, was unconstitutional, illegal, and Grant had no reason not to fulfill his contract to purchase the property. Thus Gaillard and Grant also played a crucial role in gaining equal access to housing for African Americans.³⁷⁵

Not all civil rights cases received such national recognition as the ones previous mentioned, but, nonetheless, the NAACP and the former officers of the Ninety-Second Division realized that even seemingly small cases chipped away segregation and its legal justifications. One attorney and Iowan who critically affected civil rights throughout his many endeavors was Charles P. Howard, Sr., columnist for the *Iowa Bystander* and co-founder of the Negro Bar Association. Born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1890, Howard lived in the city and received a good education. In 1917 he enlisted and became one of the officer candidates at Fort Des Moines.

³⁷⁵ Emma Lou Thornbrough, "Segregation in Indiana during the Klan Era of the 1920's" *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47, No. 4 (March 1961), 600-601; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana Black in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 53.

The Army commissioned Howard as a first lieutenant and transferred him to Fort Dodge.³⁷⁶ He served with 366th Infantry in France. Upon his return from the war, Howard attended Drake University and earned his law degree in 1920.³⁷⁷

Howard possessed many talents and utilized all of them for the fight for equality. As an attorney, he never lost a capital case. Additionally, he served the local NAACP as a civil rights litigator on the Legal Redress Committee. He and Henry T. McKnight served as legal counsel for the organization in one of Iowa's most significant battles against discrimination.³⁷⁸

On July 7, 1948, Edna Griffin entered Katz Drug Store in downtown Des Moines with her daughter and two friends. The group sat down at the lunch counter and proceeded to order ice cream. The Katz employee informed them it was company policy not to serve blacks and refused to take their order. The disgruntled Mrs. Griffin decided to take a stand and organized a campaign to end the store's discrimination.³⁷⁹ Every Saturday of August and September of 1948 Griffin and other local blacks picketed in front of the drug store and arranged for sit-ins. Although the district attorney had lost previous cases in 1943 and 1944 attempting to convict Katz managers of breaking the 1884 Iowa civil rights law by refusing to serve African Americans, on July 10, 1948, he filed a criminal suit against Maurice Katz, the store's owner.³⁸⁰

The criminal case resulted in Katz being found guilty of violating the 1884 statute and fined \$50. Katz motioned for a new trial in November but was denied. He appealed to the Iowa Supreme Court who upheld the lower court's decision in *State v. Katz* in December 1949.

Howard entered into the case with Griffin's civil suit, which was decided in her favor on October

³⁷⁶ Scott, *Scott's Official History of The American Negro in the World War*, 475.

³⁷⁷ Morris, "Ten most influential black Iowans."

³⁷⁸ Obituary of Edna Griffin, *The Des Moines Register*, February 9, 2000.

³⁷⁹ MulderDSM, "Famous Des Moines Citizens: Edna Griffin," Living Downtown Des Moines. <http://www.livingdowntowndesmoines.com/2008/11/famous-des-moines-citizens-edna-griffin/> (accessed November 14, 2008).

³⁸⁰ "Civil Rights Victory Celebrated! 50th Anniversary: July 7, 1948 – July 7, 1998," *Iowa Civil Rights Commission Communicator* 16, No. 2 (June 1998).

14, 1949. In this civil case an all-white jury found Katz guilty and sentenced him to pay \$1 damages.³⁸¹

Katz continued his discriminatory practices even after being found guilty in both cases. In November of 1949, Griffin and six others returned to Katz Drug Store, requesting to be served. Katz again denied service to these African American, and later that month all seven filed civil suits against him. Howard took on these cases for the NAACP and arranged settlements with Katz. On December 2, 1949, Katz agreed to settle the lawsuits for \$1,000 and promised to end his discriminatory business practices.³⁸²

Howard, Griffin, and the NAACP had succeeded. Through their efforts they forced Katz to stop discriminating and serve African American patrons. Howard successfully defended Iowa's civil rights law and had the courts enforce it where other attorneys had failed. Though this victory may not be seen on the same level as *Brown v. Board* or *Sweatt v. Painter*, it, nonetheless, had the same results—African Americans knew the rights they were guaranteed and were not afraid to stand up and ask the government to protect their rights. With every victory, African Americans crept closer and closer to ending injustice and segregation.

Two officers who understood this approach and acted to represent a number of African Americans in both criminal and civil cases in Georgia were Captain Austin T. Walden and First Lieutenant Thomas J. Henry. Walden and Henry left their law practices and enlisted in the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment hoping to enact change through their loyalty and service to their nation. They returned from war poised to combat segregation legally. Walden

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

owned his private practice in Macon,³⁸³ and Henry practiced in Atlanta. After the war, they both returned home and decided to practice law together in Atlanta.³⁸⁴

Fortunately for these men, both had completed their legal educations before World War I because in Georgia Jim Crow laws prevented African Americans from becoming lawyers after 1920. The enactment of these Jim Crow laws meant that Walden and Henry were the only two African American attorneys in Georgia from the 1920s to the late 1940s. Since Henry suffered severe hearing loss in World War I, he was unable to perform most courtroom duties. Therefore, Walden basically acted as Georgia's sole black trial attorney for two decades.³⁸⁵

Walden embraced the role and willingly served as guardian of civil rights for Georgia's African American community. The first civil rights case that gained Walden recognition occurred in 1927, involving a white streetcar driver ordering Dr. C. A. Spence, a black dentist, and his wife off the car. The incident happened after another African American passenger had been arguing with the driver over a transfer. In retaliation, the conductor forced all African Americans off the streetcar. When Spence and his wife refused to leave, the conductor and other whites at the scene began to beat them. After the mob removed Dr. Spence from the streetcar, the police arrested him and charged him with disorderly conduct.³⁸⁶

Walden accepted Dr. Spence's request to represent him legally. When the case came to trial in April 1927, Walden stood in front of an all white jury and a white judge to proclaim Spence's innocence. He demonstrated his judicial aptitude twice during the trial. First, he requested that all the plaintiff's witnesses be removed from the courtroom while a fellow witness

³⁸³ Arthur Bunyan Caldwell, ed., *History of the American Negro and his Institutions: Georgia Editions* (Atlanta: A.B. Caldwell Publishing Company, 1917) 326.

³⁸⁴ David Kenneth Pye, "Complex Relations: An African-American Attorney Navigates Jim Crow Atlanta," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 91 (Winter 2007): 453.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

was testifying. This tactic proved to help the jury determine which witnesses could be trusted in their testimony and which could not. Second, Walden brought to light the fact that several conductors were present on the streetcar and had planned to have a drinking party after the passengers had left. Several of these conductors began drinking before the route was over, and these drunken conductors were the ones who first attacked and beat Dr. Spence. Thus, Walden avoided any racial tension that might have been brought into the trial if he had argued that a white mob had beaten a black man. Instead, he proved Dr. Spence had been attacked by a mob of drunks. The strategy worked; on April 22, 1927, the white jury acquitted Spence of the disorderly conduct charge.³⁸⁷

Another civil rights case where Walden served as the defense attorney took place in the 1930s. Law enforcement in Macon, Georgia, hastily indicted, tried, and convicted John Downer of rape; then a mob stormed the jail intent on lynching Downer. However, before the mob could lynch him, the Georgia National Guard stepped in and rescued him. Walden fought and won Downer a new trial. He convinced the Fifth Circuit Court that the mob had robbed Downer of his right to an unbiased trial. Though a jury convicted Downer again in the second trial, the fact that Walden convinced a southern circuit court to reverse the previous decision and award him a new trial was impressive.³⁸⁸

In the 1940s Walden served as counsel in several significant civil rights victories. First, he successfully led African American schoolteachers in Georgia in a six-year court battle to gain salary equity. He also sued county registrars to enable blacks to register to vote in Democratic

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ The University of Michigan Law School, "Student Profile: Austin Thomas Walden" <http://www.law.umich.edu/historyandtraditions/students/Pages/ProfilePage.aspx?SID=8923&Year=1911> (accessed March 15, 2010).

primaries. Later in the decade, Walden led a legal team in an attempt to gain admission of Horace Ward as the first black student at the University of Georgia Law School.³⁸⁹

Walden's civil and political contributions in Georgia led him to an important role with the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. He served King as an adviser and a confidant in his political efforts in the 1950s. In 1961, Walden acted as the chief negotiator in mediation that led to a peaceful desegregation of Atlanta lunch counters. He also continued his legal assault on racism in the 1960s, suing for desegregation of Atlanta's city buses and public schools and prosecuting cases against Blackshirts and Ku Klux Klansmen.³⁹⁰

In 1964 the University of Michigan Law School honored Walden with an outstanding achievement award. The awarder stated of Walden, "As he built a successful practice, he also involved himself deeply with the drive of his race for equal rights under the law. . . . became the beloved elder statesman of the Negro Community in Atlanta and . . . won the confidence of the city as a whole." In this same year, the city of Atlanta appointed Walden as a municipal judge, the first African American judge in Georgia since Reconstruction.³⁹¹

Many other former officers played key roles in lesser known, but still significant civil rights litigation. Leroy H. Godman, a commissioned captain from Cleveland, Ohio, returned from war to serve as counsel for Harry C. Smith, a candidate for Ohio's Secretary of State in the 1920 election. When the current secretary of state ruled Smith's name would not be allowed on the primary ballot because it was too similar to his name, Harvey C. Smith, and would confuse voters, Godman sued. He argued that the real reason behind the exclusion of Harry C. Smith

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

from the ballot was racially motivated. Godman won the case and Smith's name was included on the primary ballot, thus, striking a blow for political equality.³⁹²

Another, more nationally significant civil rights case, *Grove v. Townsend*, that helped outlaw Texas's all-white democratic primaries was argued by another first lieutenant from Fort Des Moines, Carter Walker Wesley. After returning from service in France, Wesley obtained his law degree from Northwestern University Law School in 1922. A native of Houston, Texas, Wesley returned to the Midwest and opened his own private practice in Muskogee, where he served as a pioneer attorney on the Oklahoma frontier. Immediately, he began fighting for black Oklahomans' rights.³⁹³

Wesley spent most of his time for the first few years of his practice defending freedmen who had formerly been slaves of Indians. These former slaves were entitled at their birth to 160 acres of land in Oklahoma. However, many of these freedmen never benefited from their land grant. White lawyers took the freedmen to court to gain control over their lands. The white attorneys "proved" the blacks were incompetent and in need of white guardianship. These white guardians exploited the freedmen and economically benefited from the land. Wesley knew his fellow black Oklahomans were not incompetent but rather being taken advantage of by a discriminatory judicial system. He filed appeals for thirteen of these cases with the Oklahoma Supreme Court and won eleven times to get black freedmen their land back.³⁹⁴

Wesley continued to fight for civil rights through litigation throughout his career. In 1935, Wesley represented Dr. A. L. Nixon and R. R. Grove, the plaintiffs, in *Grove v. Townsend*, the third in a series of four Supreme Court cases attempting to eliminate the all-white

³⁹² William Griffin, "Black Insurgency in the Republican Party of Ohio, 1920-1932" *Ohio History: The Scholarly Journal of the Ohio Historical Society* 82 (Winter Spring 1973): 27.

³⁹³ "Carter Wesley Walker," *African-American New & Issues*, March 17, 2004.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Democratic Party primary in Texas.³⁹⁵ Though the NAACP and their plaintiff, Dr. Nixon, successfully argued in *Nixon v. Herndon* that Texas's all-white primary violated Nixon's Fourteenth Amendment and Fifteenth Amendment rights, Texas politicians continued to change the state's laws to keep the *status quo*.³⁹⁶

Since the early twentieth century Texas had been a one party state politically, and eliminating African Americans from the Democratic primary served as *de facto* disfranchisement. Nixon contested the system by attempting to vote in the 1924 primary in El Paso, Texas. When the election commission prevented him from doing so, he sued arguing that the statute stating, "in no event shall a negro be eligible to participate in a Democratic Party primary election held in the State of Texas," was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court sided with Nixon and struck down in the law in 1927.³⁹⁷ However, Texas bypassed the decision by repealing the old statute and making a new law that allowed political parties to decide on their own who could and could not vote in their primaries. Predictably, the Democratic Party promptly adopted a resolution allowing only white democrats to vote in their primary.³⁹⁸

Nixon and the NAACP filed another suit against the new law. In *Nixon v. Condon* the court overruled the new law claiming that by giving the Democratic Party the right to choose its membership, Texas effectively granted the party state power. Thus, the Democratic Party acted as state officials and must provide equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. This decision reasserted the ruling of *Nixon v. Herndon* that African Americans be allowed to participate in the primary elections.³⁹⁹ The Texas Democratic Party responded by refusing

³⁹⁵ *Grovey v. Townsend* 295 US 45 (1935)

³⁹⁶ *Nixon v. Herndon* 273 US 536 (1927)

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Nixon v. Condon* 286 US 73 (1932)

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

blacks the right to participate in the party's nominating convention, effectively barring them from the candidate selection process again.

To circumvent a retrying of *Nixon v. Condon*, Wesley did not attack the legality of denying a black man participation in the nomination process in *Grovey v. Townsend*. Instead, Wesley presented a convincing case that the Democratic Party had denied Grovey his Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment rights when they refused to allow him to vote in the 1934 primary election. Additionally, he emphasized that the Democratic Party was knowingly and willingly violating the Supreme Court's ruling in *Nixon v. Condon*. Despite the strength of Wesley's argument, Justice Owen Roberts sided with the party claiming that the state of Texas had not authorized or endorsed the party's decision to deny blacks.⁴⁰⁰ Wesley refused to quit; he continued his fight against the discriminatory white primary system. It would take another nine years and the Supreme Court case of *Smith v. Allwright* to overturn Roberts's decision and gain blacks the right to vote in the Democratic Party primary. At last, race-based disfranchisement ended in Texas.⁴⁰¹

Alongside Wesley, First Lieutenant Chesley E. Corbett played a prominent role battling inequality before, during, and after World War I as a frontier lawyer in Oklahoma. Being an attorney on the Oklahoma frontier presented a unique situation due to the territory's residents and its pioneer society. The "rugged individualism" of pioneers necessitated social interdependence for survival, and many settlers came to Oklahoma with no family or friends. Furthermore, the territory's frontier status meant few governmental institutions were available to provide assistance. In this setting, the community was forced to exist together.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ *Grovey v. Townsend* 295 US 45 (1935)

⁴⁰¹ *Smith v. Allwright* 321 US 649 (1944)

⁴⁰² R. O. Joe Cassity, Jr., "African-American Attorneys on the Oklahoma Frontier," *Oklahoma City University Law Review* (Spring 2002).

The biographical evidence of Oklahoma's black attorneys proves this point. All belonged to community service organizations such as the Black Masons, Prince Hall Masons, Knights of Pythias, and Woodmen of the Union. African American communities on the frontier looked to attorneys as civil servants, and, in turn, black attorneys embraced this role. For example, Oklahoma's black attorneys believed the war "drafted" them into public service, and the Oklahoma Bar Association volunteered the services of every African American attorney in the state to assist local draft boards.⁴⁰³

African American attorneys heeded the call when the Ku Klux Klan invaded Oklahoma in the early 1920s. They fought for voting rights, anti-lynching laws, and served in legal protection groups. Through their efforts and the black community's organization, the Klan was stomped out by 1928. Though the Klan made attempts to resurface in the 1930s, it never again gained a toehold in Oklahoma.

Corbett led the way forward as an early president of the Oklahoma Bar Association prior to World War I. He embodied the frontier attorney bond to his community as a public servant. Corbett served as a member of the Knights of Pythias and as secretary of the Board of Control for the Black Masons.⁴⁰⁴ His passion for the community was so great that during his military service in Europe, Corbett regularly reported news from the front with letters home to Oklahoma. Additionally, these letters contained reflections on how to extend the rights of African Americans in Oklahoma by enacting institutional changes and ensuring democracy. So, while fighting in the 317th Ammunition train, Corbett continued to express his concern for fellow black Oklahomans and their civil rights rather than for himself.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Thompson, *History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp*, 44.

⁴⁰⁵ Cassity, Jr., "African-American Attorneys on the Oklahoma Frontier."

Two more officers turned pioneer lawyers that should be noted are Townsend S. Grasty and H. Leonard Richardson of California. These men faced the same hardships as Corbett had faced in Oklahoma. Each had to fight both segregation in the legal profession and the difficulties of settling a new territory. According to all accounts, they served both the community and their clients well. In fact, Richardson was proclaimed to be “the most successful lawyer in northern California during the 1930s.”⁴⁰⁶

Some officers turned attorneys preferred to combat discrimination through activism instead of case law. Though they may have differed in their tactics from their fellow comrades of war, these men still hoped to defeat segregation and discrimination using their division’s motto of “Deeds, not Words.” When these officers returned from war, the same organization that called to their brothers to legally end discrimination, the NAACP, also called them for leadership.

Oscar C. Brown was one of these men, and he refused to stand by idly while segregation entrenched itself. Brown grew up as the son of sharecroppers in segregated Mississippi. Recalling his childhood, Brown stated, “I was from Edwards, Mississippi. In Mississippi they wouldn’t let you do anything. It was a white situation and the blacks had no rights whatsoever. . . . As we grew up, we had to get out of there.”⁴⁰⁷

The Army provided Brown with the opportunity to “get out” when he became an officer in World War I. Brown graduated from Fort Des Moines training facility as a first lieutenant. He then transferred to Camp Upton before serving with the 351st Machine Gun Regiment in

⁴⁰⁶ The Charles Hamilton Houston Bar Association, “Before the Law Club: Early Black Lawyers in Northern California,” *2005 Newsletter: Golden Anniversary Issue* (2005): 12-13.

⁴⁰⁷ J. S. Fuerst, *When Public Housing was Paradise: Building Community in Chicago* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 10.

France.⁴⁰⁸ His military experience provided Brown the opportunity to interact with other black professionals and to become aware of the value of an education. Upon returning from combat, the impact and prestige of his status as a commissioned officer was impressed upon him by fellow African Americans in Vicksburg, Mississippi. He recalled three black strangers, “expressed pride in [his] being a commissioned officer . . . [and showed concern] about [his] safety throughout the balance of the night.” Brown realized after meeting these individuals just how much he could influence and encourage fellow members of his race by being a successful black professional. He entered Howard University where he actively participated in the NAACP chapter and served as president of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.⁴⁰⁹

Graduating with degrees in economics and law, Brown began his legal career in Chicago in the 1925. Discouraged by the lack of progress towards integration, he began contemplating the value of separatism in the 1930s.⁴¹⁰ Many African Americans had been drawn toward Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association’s Back-to-Africa movement and the idea Pan-Africanism, inspiring economic and political empowerment through redemption of mother Africa from its colonial oppressors.⁴¹¹ Although the movement floundered with Garvey’s arrest and imprisonment for fraud in 1920s, several officers from Des Moines, ones to be covered in the next chapter, along with a segment of the African American community still valued the idea of completely withdrawing from white America.

⁴⁰⁸ Scott, *Scott’s Official History of the American Negro in World War*, 472.

⁴⁰⁹ Christopher Robert Reed, *The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership, 1910-1966* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 114-115.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover: The Majority Press, 1986), 197.

Convinced that separatism provided the only answer for America's racial woes, Brown led Chicago's black professionals in a National Movement for the Establishment of a 49th State. They argued,

Establishment of a new state . . . wherein, at least, a portion of the Negroes in the United States can have an opportunity to work out their own economic, political, and social destiny unhampered and unrestrained by ruthless artificial barriers, wherein they can have a chance to raise the lot of their poor masses from exploitation, insecurity and wretchedness.

However, Brown became disillusioned with the movement when it failed to develop beyond the theoretical stage. This frustration led him to become more involved with an organization that he believed was gaining tangible results, the NAACP.⁴¹²

Brown became president of the Chicago branch of the NAACP in 1942. Under his leadership, the organization expanded its Legal Redress Committee to litigate more civil rights cases, increased fundraising activities, and launched a yearbook to record the vital facts of its history, membership roles, and yearly operations. By 1945, the branch had increased its membership to 20,000. Brown's leadership proved to be so valuable that the national office praised his efforts and the branch.⁴¹³

Although Brown was highly successful in all these areas, the emphasis of his presidency was to protest segregated housing and to improve poor urban communities, areas in which, as previously mentioned, other former officers were working alongside the NAACP to end legally. In 1941, Brown became manager of the Ida B. Wells Homes public housing in Chicago. He encouraged African American tenants to clean up their community, plant flowers, and clean their windows. Brown mentored the children of single mothers in the community, going as far as to

⁴¹² Reed, *The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership*, 114-115.

⁴¹³ Berky Nelson, "Before the Revolution: Crisis within the Philadelphia and Chicago NAACP, 1940-1960" *Negro History Bulletin* 61 (January-March 1998): 21.

have them call him papa. His door was always open to anyone in the community needing help or advice. Brown and his selection board accepted the poorest of the poor who applied for housing. They believed it was best to help those who needed it most. With Brown in control, the public housing effort succeeded beyond expectation. The 1,600 tenants never missed a single payment in the first year, and the development received publicity to the point that United States Vice President Henry Wallace came to see its progress.⁴¹⁴

Brown performed so well as manager of the Ida B. Wells Homes that in 1944 he was asked to take over the Altgeld Gardens public housing community when it opened. Brown's life demonstrates his passion for helping African Americans overcome economic exploitation and political segregation. He combined his compassion and drive to serve his race and to assist black Chicagoans through activism, community organizations, and public housing.⁴¹⁵

Another officer who worked at the grassroots level with the NAACP to expose injustice on a national level was First Lieutenant Harrison J. Pinkett. Pinkett was a frontier attorney and served as Nebraska's first university-trained African American lawyer.⁴¹⁶ He helped found the Omaha branch of the NAACP and, in his leadership role with the organization, fought against the *Omaha Bee* and their publishers who sought to incite racial tension by printing sensationalized stories on Negro crime. Pinkett organized a protest rally to prompt a police watchdog committee to investigate the newspaper's claims. The committee found that crime stories were unfounded, thus, uncovering the *Omaha Bee*'s race baiting scheme. Pinkett reported

⁴¹⁴ Fuerst, *When Public Housing was Paradise*, 11-12.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ "Yesterday in Negro History," *Jet*, July 22, 1965: 11.

the exposure to the national NAACP who issued press releases on the charade, urging a congressional investigation.⁴¹⁷

Pinkett understood how to bring about change and continued his fight for equality throughout his life. He encouraged fellow African Americans to speak out for their rights and held meetings to promote integration.⁴¹⁸ In 1937, Pinkett penned his thoughts on the progress of African Americans in Omaha:

There have been some gains in the matter of employment in the city government and the county government, but none in the school system, very little in the Utilities District which manages gas, water and ice plants, and there have been no appointments of Negroes in any of the permanent places in the new governmental agencies of Omaha. . . . The white political leaders of the present era in Omaha are not liberal toward the Negro in these respects. . . . They remedy for this condition will be found when the Negroes themselves organize fully and exert their influence for racial betterment. . . . Omaha Negroes have many men and women who possess the capacity and ability and courage and freedom requisite for such a leadership and such a task. . . . They have made progress; their education has been enhanced in all ways; their economic condition has been improved; they have become politically free and will ere long be well and capably led; they have met their general and special problems with courage and patience; and they seek now the opportunity to lay their wonderful fruits and gifts upon the common community altar and to receive from their community those rewards which are the rightful due of all.⁴¹⁹

Pinkett clearly outlined the path African Americans of Omaha had taken to gain equality.

Furthermore, he mapped out his plan to continue those gains and to bring the full benefits of citizenship to black Nebraskans.

Aside from participation in the NAACP, some officers chose to get involved in politics to lead the charge against injustice and discrimination. Judge Francis E. Rivers was one officer of

⁴¹⁷ Mark Robert Schneider, *We Return Fighting: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 33-34.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Jack D. Angus, *Black and Catholic in Omaha: A Case of Double Jeopardy, The First Fifty Years of St. Benedict the Moor Parish* (Lincoln, Neb.: iUniverse, 2004), 42.

Fort Des Moines who used his law degree to launch a political career in New York. After returning from his service in World War I as a first lieutenant, Rivers moved to New York City. There he became involved in the Republican Party. Under the endorsement of Oscar De Priest, a black representative from Chicago, Rivers ran and won an election to become Assemblyman for Harlem in 1929.⁴²⁰ He continued his political career by serving on a number of local committees. In 1936, Rivers became the Director of Negro voters unit of the Republican National Convention.⁴²¹ Next, Rivers was named as an Assistant District Attorney, a position in which he served until being appointed as a Civil Court Judge in 1943 after the death of Justice James C. Madigan. Later that year, Rivers ran to maintain the judgeship. He won the election handily and became the first African American to be elected judge in New York.⁴²²

During this political career, Rivers continued to support young African Americans and to share his wisdom with them. Judge Rivers wrote an article entitled “Black Nationalism on the Campus” for the April 1968 edition of *The Crisis*. In the piece, he challenged young African American students to graduate college before becoming involved in the Black Nationalism movement. He claimed that though he saw the value in the movement, becoming too involved would isolate African American students during their college years and prevented them from experiencing the breadth of the collegiate experience. Rivers argued that rather than retreat into Black Nationalism that they should progress toward integration and finish their degrees. Although controversial at the time, his thoughts demonstrated his passion for young African Americans and their self-improvement through education, self-expression, and cultural exchange

⁴²⁰ “Grenthal Defeated in Assembly Race; Loses to F. E. Rivers in Contest in Harlem for Republican Nomination. Broderick is leading W. W. Wemple Jr. Beats W. M. Nicol in Schenectady—Dry. Loses in Rochester,” *New York Times*, September 18, 1929.

⁴²¹ “Negroes get Posts for Landon Drive; Francis E. Rivers Named Head of Campaign Group for the Entire East. Wibbecan States Leader Eaton Charges that an Attempt is being made to ‘Use the Pulpit as Spokesman for New Deal,’” *New York Times*, August 7, 1936.

⁴²² “Rivers Returned to Post as Justice; Defeates Higgins by 22,641 in City Court Contest—ALP Calls Vote ‘Vindication,’” *New York Times*, November 3, 1943.

between black and white students sharing in each other's culture.⁴²³ Over his fifty-year career as an attorney, judge, and politician, Rivers provided a wealth of service to cause of justice and civil rights.

Another attorney who fought discrimination through politics rather than in the courtroom was First Lieutenant Clayborne George. George attained his law degree in 1920 after returning from combat. He began practicing law in Cleveland, Ohio, and quickly became active in local politics and the NAACP. George soon found he had an aptitude for politics. Though George successfully ran for city council in 1927, 1929, and 1931, his real talent was as a political strategist. He established the East End Political Club as his support base in 1925. The organization promoted independent politics for the black community. Furthermore, as a city councilman, George organized a "Black Triumvirate" to consolidate the power of African American council members. Utilizing the strength of their combined vote, George used political disunities among white councilmen to negotiate gains for the black community. Aside from politics, he served the community by founding the John M. Harlan Law Club and acting as the first chairman for Cleveland's Negro College Fund.⁴²⁴

The commissioned officers of Fort Des Moines who returned to America and were employed as lawyers accepted their role as defenders of their race. They exemplified the leadership, diligence, and courage that enabled them to successfully graduate as commissioned officers from Fort Des Moines training camp. They exhibited the same bravery that they had shown in combat in their relentless attacks against segregation and discrimination.

⁴²³ Francis E. Rivers, "Black Nationalism on the Campus," *The Crisis* (April 1968): 122-125.

⁴²⁴ The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, "George, Clayborne" <http://ech.cwru.edu/ech-article.pl?id=GC5> (accessed March 10, 2010).

Through their joining alongside the NAACP in courtrooms and their activism in their communities, these men dismantled Jim Crow and fought for equality after World War I. They proved true to the Ninety-Second Division's motto of "Deeds, not Words." They served alongside other NAACP litigators as the vanguard of African Americans' civil rights, defending them relentlessly in case after case. Through their efforts the legality of segregation was continually attacked until finally America legally practiced the democracy and justice it preached. Legal discrimination, separate and unequal, could no longer stand because segregation's sustaining mantra of "separate but equal" had been proven a lie. These men forced America to recognize it could no longer legally deny African Americans the democracy and justice they rightfully deserved.

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGE, THE OFFICERS OF FORT DES MOINES, THE BLACK PRESS, AND THE “NEW NEGRO” MOVEMENT

Though the lawyers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment knew fighting segregation in the courtroom had merit, they also realized that racism, discrimination, and segregation had to be combated in society for any fundamental change to occur. For these reasons, Charles Hamilton Houston, James B. Morris, Charles P. Howard, Carter Walker Wesley, and other veteran attorneys valued the black press for its ability to publicize injustice and discrimination. Moreover, the black press and political organizations provided a medium through which the veteran officers of Fort Des Moines could express their frustration and discontentment with the unchanged America they found upon their return from combat.

The African American press served the black community as a political voice announcing their concerns about a variety of topics focusing on governmental action or inaction in providing democracy and protecting the rights promised by citizenship. African American authors across the nation utilized the power of the written word to heighten political and race consciousness. Before Fort Des Moines became the first officer training camp for African Americans, members of the black press had actively debated the prospect of a segregated officer training facility, and, eventually, most papers advocated the cause and pressured the War

Department to create such a camp. In the post-war era, the black press spoke out against discrimination and vocalized African American leadership's responsive ideologies of black unity, pan-Africanism, separatism, and, in some cases, militancy.

In the years following World War I, several officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment turned to national publications like *The Crisis*, *The Messenger*, *The Chicago Defender*, and *The Crusader* as well as local papers like the *Iowa Bystander*, the *Iowa Observer*, and the *Houston Informer* to voice their wartime experiences and to insist that America provide them the democracy that they had fought for in France. Infuriated by the racial violence that erupted in Chicago, Illinois; Washington, D. C.; Omaha, Nebraska; and Elaine, Arkansas in 1919, veterans solicited the black press to issue their warning, a veiled ultimatum, for the government to protect members of their race or their loyalty might waiver. An anonymous veteran wrote a letter during the Washington Race Riot in July 1919 published in the *Washington Bee* arguing that African Americans had been loyal without question up until that point, but now the race's loyalty was for sale at the price of justice.⁴²⁵

These officers demonstrate a trend within black journalism—a post-war emergence of a radical, militant movement demanding their civil rights be recognized in society and protected by the American government. Though the “New Negro” movement was a multi-faceted movement embodying racial pride in black culture through arts and literature, triumphing Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism, and developing new racial, social, and political consciousness, there was also an aspect of the movement founded in a new political and social defiance as African Americans had become disillusioned by their experiences in supporting their country in World War I, a war that President Wilson had proposed was “to make the world safe for democracy.” This new political consciousness and development of a collective racial identity

⁴²⁵ “The Bee Commended,” *Washington Bee*, August 16, 1919.

illustrated itself through black migration, growth of a radical African American press, and militant political organizations.

For African American journalists, writers, and poets, the “New Negro” movement presented an opportunity to express the diversity of their experiences. While most of their literary and artistic works centered on a new sense of racial pride and accomplishment, authors differed in their approach in a broad spectrum ranging from separatists forsaking white America, its politics, economics, and society, to a progressive faith that through “the efficacy of collective effort, race co-operation” America’s political system could ultimately work for African Americans.⁴²⁶

No one articulated the aspirations of the “New Negro” more than Howard University professor Alain Locke. In 1925, he published a compilation of literature, music, and art from the era in his anthology, *The New Negro*. According to Locke, his purpose was “to document the New Negro culturally and socially – to register the transformations of the inner and outer life of the Negro in America.” Furthermore, Locke argued that there was no contention between being “American” and being “Negro.” He asserted, “Fundamentally for the present the Negro is radical on race matters, conservative on others, in other words, a ‘forced radical,’ a social protestant rather than a genuine radical.”⁴²⁷

Claude McKay, a respected poet and novelist from the “New Negro” era, demonstrated Locke’s point in his book of poetry, *Harlem Shadows*. McKay’s book, published in 1922, was one of the first during the “New Negro” movement and captured the intensity of African American disillusionment following World War I. In particular, McKay’s poem “America” illustrates the duality of being both proud to be an American while angered by the country’s

⁴²⁶ Alain Locke ed., *The New Negro* (1925; rpt. ed., New York: Atheneum, 1970), 11.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.* xv & 11.

hatred and racism. In the prose, McKay expresses his simultaneous love and hate for his mother country that both feeds him “the bread of bitterness,” and also inspires him. He proclaims “love” for the “cultured hell” that tests him and admits it is she that invigorates him to have “strength” to stand “erect against her hate.”⁴²⁸

It is this same sentiment, this “double consciousness,” that the officers of Fort Des Moines returned home from fighting in France. They had aspired to change America by asserting their manhood and proving their loyalty to their nation, and, by responding to their duty to defend her as citizens, expected the full rights and privileges that citizenship entailed. Instead, they returned to an unchanged nation, one that challenged their expectations of democracy. The denial of their goals frustrated the officers of Fort Des Moines and established a real foundation for their feelings of betrayal. It was these sentiments that caused these former officers to become activists and authors, joining with the “New Negro” movement, they added their voices to the chorus of black activists in the post-war era who proclaimed that America needed change and that the nation must provide full, equal citizenship to African Americans.

One of the first expressions of the frustration returning African American veterans felt in the aftermath of World War I came in March 1919. First Lieutenant James H. N. Waring commented on how returning home to an unchanged America angered and disheartened him. He stated, “I regret to say that I have come home from France with a feeling of intense bitterness towards white men.” Furthermore Waring noted that in his dealing with white officers in France he thought they were the “scum of the earth.”⁴²⁹

⁴²⁸ William J. Maxwell, ed. *Complete Poems: Claude McKay* (Champaign Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 153.

⁴²⁹ “Lieuts. Tell of Raw Deals from Superiors,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, March 14, 1919.

In August 1919 an anonymous veteran wrote the *Washington Bee* following a July race riot that had occurred in the nation's capital. In his letter, the veteran highlighted the sacrifice every black man had made to "put every grievance behind him and dedicate himself wholeheartedly to the common task." He claimed that in response to this loyalty, America and its government had abandoned African Americans through injustice, discrimination, and racism. However, the veteran argued a new time was arising, one in which black Americans would repeal their loyalty to the nation and not return it until the full fruits of democracy had been received. In his words were stated that "new thought," an idea that "Henceforth our Loyalty is for sale—and the price thereof is Justice—no compromise—but Justice absolute and complete, without reservation and without restriction."⁴³⁰

The "new thought" the veteran commented on was that of the "New Negro." His commentary marked the transition that was taking place in black Americans' minds following World War I, and these same thoughts came racing through the minds of the returning officers of the Ninety-Second Division. Soon, these men would be voicing their "New Negro" sentiments, and, somewhat ironically, still cling to the division's motto of "Deeds, not Words," through words.

Although the officers examined in this chapter expressed their frustrations through the written word, their previous service during the war as combatants and their activism following the war as leaders of the "New Negro" movement also classifies them as "doers" in addition to users of rhetoric. Their willingness to serve in war, their deeds, validated the words they would now use to illuminate injustice. Their story of successfully completing training, earning a commission, and fighting valiantly in combat abroad enabled them to motivate their fellow

⁴³⁰ "The Bee Commended," *Washington Bee*, August 16, 1919.

African Americans, to transition from leaders on the field of battle in France to leaders on the civil rights battlefield in America.

The Messenger played a crucial role in transitioning veteran African American officers from military trailblazers to outspoken, political leaders. Disillusioned by unfulfilled promises and the lack of progress America had made toward ending segregation and ensuring equal rights for African Americans following the war, the veteran officers utilized their wartime experience to rally other African Americans to action. As editor Asa Philip Randolph stated, these veterans saw “that the war came, that the Negro fought, bled and died; that the war has ended, and he is not yet free.” *The Messenger* captured the spirit of the “New Negro” movement. Randolph identified himself and his paper with the militant radicalism of the era, “The New Crowd is uncompromising. Its tactics are not defensive but offensive.”⁴³¹

First Lieutenant Victor Daly became the first war veteran to join *The Messenger* when he became the business manager for the publication in 1919. Returning from combat where he had served with the 367th Infantry, Daly was discharged in April 1919. Daly had a passion and a talent for writing and journalism. In high school, he had won first place in a summer camp essay contest, first place in a *New York Evening Globe* writing contest, and third place in a *New York Times* writing contest. His talent for writing was so impressive that during his senior year Daly had written a weekly column for the *New York Evening Globe*.⁴³²

Though employed at *The Messenger* as a business manager, Daly revived his high school fervor for writing. In a letter to W. E. B. Du Bois, who had requested use of Daly’s materials from World War I, Daly clearly stated his intent to utilize his knowledge and experiences of the

⁴³¹ Asa Philip Randolph, “A New Crowd—A New Negro,” *The Messenger* (May-June 1919): 26-27.

⁴³² Correspondence letters between Victor R. Daly & James Payne, February to March 1984. “Biographical Information: Articles about Daly—James Payne,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

war to educate American citizens of African Americans' role in the conflict through *The Messenger*: "Whatever materials I have and whatever knowledge I have on the subject I have pledged to the sole use of The Messenger, by which organ I hope to see it spread broadcast to the enlightenment of not only the twelve million Negroes but to the ninety million other American citizens."⁴³³

Daly began his work of "enlightenment" in an October 1919 issue of *The Messenger* where he responded to a letter written by a disgruntled individual who criticized the writers and editors of the magazine as "the worst enemies of the Negro race" for advocating communist ideals, racial hatred, and social demonstration to invoke change. Daly quickly fired back, claiming his honored military service to the nation demonstrated his patriotism. Citing his Army commission as a first lieutenant and his having been awarded the French Croix de Guerre, Daly claimed *The Messenger* proposed that racial cooperation among working class Americans could peacefully end segregation and discrimination. Moreover, Daly clarified his and the magazine's stance that if more passive methods did not persuade change to occur, *The Messenger* did "advocate armed resistance."⁴³⁴

Daly's rationale in addressing this critic demonstrates exactly how Professor Locke characterized the "New Negro." Daly was a loyal American, former soldier honored by the French for his service, willing to cooperate with white America but forced to radical means by his desire for a just, democratic America. To shockingly illustrate this point, Daly invited the critic to "classify me, too, a former United States Army Officer, as a Bolshevik."⁴³⁵ This intense comment reveals Daly's disgust with the unfulfilled promises of citizenship he had hoped his

⁴³³ Letter from Victor R. Daly to W. E. B. Du Bois, August 8, 1919. Special Collections and University Archives: W. E. B. Du Bois Library: University of Massachusetts Amherst.

⁴³⁴ "Open Forum," *The Messenger* (October 1919): 29-31.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

voluntary loyalty and service would nurture to reality. Moreover, it illustrates the resolve that had developed within Daly from his experiences with the discriminatory, unchanged America to which he returned following combat.⁴³⁶

Though Daly exemplified Alain Locke's description of the "New Negro" mentality, it was not due to the influence of Locke's writing or any other black authors according to Daly. In fact, remembering back to high school, Daly claimed that no black authors motivated him to have a passion for the literary arts, and, in fact, attending an all white high school, he had only heard of Alain Locke and James Weldon Johnson, two of the Harlem Renaissance's most influential writers, during his senior year in 1913 or 1914. Furthermore, Daly did not believe that these men began to influence his thinking or writing until after his return from World War I when he lived in adjoining apartments in Harlem with Mr. Weldon and later in the early 1920s when he moved to Washington, D. C., and met Mr. Locke.⁴³⁷

Despite personally meeting with both men, Daly believed his writing was chiefly influenced by two factors: his disillusionment he felt upon returning from war due to the lack of change in American race relations and a small "writer's club" he helped establish upon moving to Washington, D. C., in the early 1920s.⁴³⁸ Following World War I, Daly's frustration grew so great that, at the beginning of his employment with *The Messenger*, Daly was ready to guarantee America would be transformed into the egalitarian nation it claimed to be. However, *The Messenger* only provided Daly a rare opportunity as an outlet for his grievances against

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Correspondence letters between Victor R. Daly & James Payne, February to March 1984. "Biographical Information: Articles about Daly—James Payne," Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

America's injustices. In 1920 he left the magazine amidst a wage dispute and truly began his literary career.⁴³⁹

Later in 1920, Du Bois published an article Daly wrote on the housing crisis African Americans experienced in New York City. The article stated that blacks in New York had been crowded into twenty-four blocks in Harlem. Although he realized that both blacks and whites were facing a shortage of housing in 1920, Daly argued that while the press, welfare organizations, housing authorities, and other agencies were addressing whites' housing problems, African Americans' housing issues were being neglected. He called for government and organizational invention to create 100,000 new apartments to relieve overcrowding and high rental rates. It was his first attempt to provoke fellow African Americans to action, and Daly hoped drawing attention to the segregated state of housing would promote change.⁴⁴⁰

Though similar nonfiction pieces would become the focus of Daly later in his life, he drew his early fame from fictional writing. Fiction, mainly about World War I soldiers, became the backbone of Daly's writing. Utilizing memories and stories from his wartime experiences in Europe, Daly portrayed his and his fellow black soldiers' aspirations for post-war America. The narratives present a voice to black veterans and provide insight into the "New Negro" and their disillusionment toward returning to an unaltered America.

The first piece Daly published about the experiences of black soldiers in World War I was his 1932 novel, *Not Only War: A Story of Two Great Conflicts*. As his title foreshadows, within the book Daly conveyed the dual fight of African American soldiers in the World War I trenches. Immediately the book was heralded as the first post-war attempt to examine World War I as a racial conflict amidst an international war. Alain Locke praised the novel stating, "It

⁴³⁹ Theodore Kornweibel, *No Crystal Stair: Black Life and the Messenger, 1917-1928* (Westport, Connecticut : Greenwood Press, 1975), 65.

⁴⁴⁰ Victor R. Daly, "The Housing Crisis in New York City," *The Crisis* 21 (December 1920): 61-62.

is certainly to be marveled . . . that with all the fiction of the war, the paradoxical story of the American Negro fighting a spiritual battle within a physical battle has just now been attempted.”⁴⁴¹

In previous fictional accounts of African Americans’ war experience, authors focused on the fact that black soldiers had served valiantly as both combat troops and in stevedore units doing manual labor. Written in the early 1920s, at the heart of the “New Negro” movement, these writers emphasized the disillusionment that both returning soldiers and African Americans in general felt after sacrificing for a nation that failed to fulfill their hopes for justice and equality in the immediate post-war years. Examples of this literature come from Willa Cather’s 1923 Pulitzer-prize-winning novel, *One of Ours*, and Addie W. Hunton’s and Katheryn M. Johnson’s 1923 work, *Two Colored Women With the American Expeditionary Forces*.

Cather demonstrated the disillusionment of the “New Negro” throughout her novel but especially in the last chapter. The main character, Claude Wheeler, who had been searching for meaning in his life found fulfillment on the battlefields of France where he relishes in his newfound freedom. Unfortunately Claude is killed despite his personal heroics during a German offensive. However, in an ironic twist of fate, Claude’s grieving mother finds solace in the fact her son’s death saved him from the disappointment of returning from France and his newfound democracy to an unchanged America:

He died believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be. . . . Perhaps it was well to see that vision, and then to see no more. She would have dreaded the awakening—she sometimes even doubts whether he could have borne at all that last, desolating disappointment. . . . She feels as if God saved him from some horrible suffering, some horrible end. For as she reads, she thinks those slayers of themselves were all so like him; they were the ones who had hoped extravagantly,—who in order to do what they did had to hope extravagantly, and to

⁴⁴¹ Alain Locke, *Opportunity* 10 (October 1932): 43.

believe passionately. And they found they had hoped and believed too much. But one she knew, who could ill bear disillusion. . . . safe, safe.⁴⁴²

Similar to Cather's novel, *Two Colored Women With the American Expeditionary Forces* addressed the sacrifice of both black soldiers and African American women who supported the war effort and their disillusionment with post-war America. Utilizing poems, pictures, letters, newspaper articles, and official memoranda, Hunton and Johnson created a memoir of pseudo history. Their aim was "to record [their] impressions and facts in a simple way," with "no desire to attain authentic history." They developed a book emphasizing the patriotism and heroics of both black men and women in World War I and these African Americans' goal of democracy. To this end, the authors asserted, "We were crusaders on a quest for Democracy!" and hoped that as Americans found their way to pay homage to "American shrines in France," they would realize the sacrifices of African Americans and decide to blot out "hate and its train of social and civil injustices."⁴⁴³

While Daly also lamented over the forgotten alternatives for racial reconciliation that were denied by white America following the war, he goes further by addressing the entrenchment of racial prejudice that transcended both the Atlantic Ocean and the horrors of war. Dedicated to "the Army of the Disillusioned," Daly drew from his own personal experiences with the 367th Infantry recalling how black soldiers had fought a dual war, one against the enemy and another against discrimination, while white troops only feared the ferocity of the battlefield. Daly wrote, "The Hell Sherman knew was a physical one-of rapine, destruction and

⁴⁴² William Cather, *One of Ours* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 458-459.

⁴⁴³ Addie W. Hunton and Katheryn M. Johnson, *Two Colored Women With the American Expeditionary Forces* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Eagle Press, 1922), iii, 10-11, 239.

death. This other, is a purgatory for the mind, for the spirit, for the soul of men. Not only War is Hell.”⁴⁴⁴

The storyline focuses around three individuals: Montgomery Jason, a young black college student; Miriam Pickney, a young black woman schoolteacher; and Bob Casper, a young white man and the descendant plantation owners. When the United States entered World War I, both Casper and Jason end up enlisting and traveling to France to fight. The novel revolves around the three characters’ experiences with bigotry and racism during the war. All three are unable to escape the internalized thoughts and attitudes of segregated society.

Jason received a promotion to sergeant only to be assigned to billet with a French family who immediately protested, “non, non, officer . . . un noir . . . un Americain,” and led him to think, “the world over, a nigger first—an American afterwards.” Later, after staying with the family a few weeks, a friendship with a beautiful, white young French woman blossoms. At this point, Lieutenant Casper catches Jason and the girl fraternizing and reacts by momentarily feeling “like striking the insolent nigger.” Casper restrains himself but is successful in having Jason court-martialed. The irony of his reaction is that secretly Casper is in love with the young black schoolteacher, Miriam Pickney. Despite his own personal feelings of affection toward Pickney and his desire to rebel against the social taboo of miscegenation, Casper is unable to control his racist anger when he sees Jason and a white woman together.⁴⁴⁵

Throughout the novel, Daly demonstrated that a microcosm of America lay behind the American lines in France. Segregation in their units, stevedore units with white officers beating black laborers, and bigoted southern white officers discriminating against black troops and instigating arbitrary court-martials were all features of the African American experience that

⁴⁴⁴ Victor R. Daly, *Not Only War: A Story of Two Great Conflicts* (1932, rpt. ed., College Park: McGrath Publishing Company, 1969), 7.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 76-92.

translated across the Atlantic unchanged. Early in the novel, Daly exhibited the disillusionment commonly demonstrated by returning veterans of the “New Negro” movement. At one point, Jason is primed to enlist when his college friends begin harassing him about fighting in “a white man’s war. [The white man] started it. Let him finish it. There’s nothing in it for us.” Furthermore, Jason’s friends tell him, “No amount of sacrifice on your part or my part will ever soften the hearts of these crackers toward us.” Nonetheless, Jason decided to enlist anyway in hopes to bring about change.⁴⁴⁶

After Casper proceeds to have Jason court-martialed, Jason concludes his friends had been right, that “It would take more than war, and bullets, and death to wipe out race prejudice.” However, Daly foreshadowed the possibility of racial harmony might still exist in the closing scene of the book. In the final battle scene, the two men’s units end up merging in the confusion of combat. Jason finds Casper mortally wounded in a trench. At first, seeing his counterpart in agony satisfied his vengeful spirit, but his anger soon turns to pity. Jason lifts up his comrade attempting to rush him back to a medic to save his life. In the process Jason gets shot, “They found them the next morning, face downward, their arms about each other, side by side.”⁴⁴⁷

The men had reconciled but only in death. The image of the men dead side by side emphasized how both men endured multiple hells, but for white men one hell was of their own creation. Casper’s dying words, “war isn’t the only hell that I’ve been through lately,” demonstrate his desire to abolish the racial hatred within himself but the inability to exercise the demon from him. Perhaps most interesting is the fact that Daly based the last battle off his personal experiences with the 367th attempting to rescue a two white units, one American and

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid. 20; Correspondence letters between Victor R. Daly & James Payne, February to March 1984. “Biographical Information: Articles about Daly—James Payne,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴⁴⁷ Daly, *Not Only War*, 93-106.

one French, whose attack had failed. For this action, the French awarded the 367th the Croix de Guerre, and the Americans rewarded them with a return to discrimination. Daly detailed how hollow the promises of war had become, “to make the world safe for democracy—war to end war—self determination for oppressed people. But they didn’t mean black people.”⁴⁴⁸

In addition to his novel, Daly published a series of short stories based on his personal experiences in France. The first was about a young black private named Jerry Walker from Arkansas. Daly portrayed the fictional private as an uneducated southern farmhand, drafted against his will and indifferent to both the military and the war. The antagonist of the story was a large, black stevedore first sergeant from Memphis named William Dade and known as “Memphis Bill.” The first sergeant wanted his fellow doughboys to idealize him, and he sought to return home a hero. He singled out Walker for his apathy in his service and his disinterest in fighting. However, in a twist of fate, Walker saves Memphis Bill’s life during a patrol, and Bill’s demeanor towards Private Walker changes from one of belittlement to one of praise.⁴⁴⁹

Daly’s fictional account Private Walker and Memphis Bill demonstrated a very real dichotomy he lived while serving in France. Daly’s contrasting depictions of the First Sergeant William Dade and Private Jerry Walker provide insight into his military service. According to Daly, Walker represented a composite of the black soldiers he led into battle while Memphis Bill illustrated the attitudes of many of the officers. While most black officers volunteered for military service with aspirations of heroism, most soldiers were poor, uneducated southern African Americans forced into service without understanding or enthusiasm for the war. The officers hoped to return home from combat to a nation that recognized the valorous African

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. 106 & 92; Correspondence letters between Victor R. Daly & James Payne, February to March 1984. “Biographical Information: Articles about Daly—James Payne,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴⁴⁹ Victor R. Daly, “Private Walker Goes Patrolling,” *The Crisis* 37 (June 1930): 199-201 & 213.

American troops while the black draftees just wanted to return home. In the piece, Daly cryptically detailed the motivations of the “New Negro” and illustrated how these officers’ frustrations evolved from ridiculing their men to ridiculing America when they finally realized that the nation discredited and undervalued their service in order to uphold the *status quo* of Jim Crow.⁴⁵⁰

Daly two other short stories about war, “Goats, Wildcats, and Buffalo,” and “Still Five More,” explore equality. In these stories, Daly demonstrated that in one area of war all things were equal in regard to African American soldiers—the enemy always viewed them the same as any other combatant and was more than willing to take their lives. In “Goat, Wildcats, and Buffalo,” Daly presented a fictional account of his real life experience in France. When the 367th replaced an all white unit on the front line late in the war, the Germans refused to keep the “unwritten law of silence,” the unspoken agreement that fighting had ceased shortly before the armistice was to be signed. The 367th learned a valuable lesson to never assume anything in regard to the enemy.⁴⁵¹

In his final short story, “Still Five More,” Daly recalled his version of a true story recounted to him by an elderly African American man who as a child had lived on a plantation near Appomattox, Virginia. The story highlights a time when African American soldiers were valued as equal to white men, again demonstrating Daly’s frustration with the unfulfilled promises of democracy to World War I era African Americans. The story centers on a patrol of five African American union troops captured by Confederate cavalry. Instead of taking them prisoners, the commanding officer of the Confederates decides to kill them because “This heah’s

⁴⁵⁰ Correspondence letters between Victor R. Daly & James Payne, February to March 1984. “Biographical Information: Articles about Daly—James Payne,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

a white man's war, ah reckon." The Confederates choose to hang the black troops in order to not alert other Union soldiers with the sound of firing weapons. However, having only one rope, the Rebels have to hang them one at a time. In the middle of completing the gruesome work, white Union troops surround the Confederates and force them to the same end they had planned for the African American soldiers. "One by one the five white men in gray were laid beside the three black men in blue."⁴⁵²

Daly's fictional accounts of war illustrated the futility of the war from African Americans' perspective. This war "to make the world safe for democracy," failed to bring about the fulfillment of that very concept in the United States. Daly skillfully depicted the frustrations of the "New Negro" with American injustice and expounded on those depictions to demonstrate the psychological effects segregation, racism, and discrimination had on not only African American war veterans but also all Americans. Now, after addressing these grievances, Daly moved forward striving to end discrimination and injustice in the future.

In 1934, Daly accepted a deputy director position with the Department of Labor in Washington, D. C. From this position, he became the nation's foremost expert on the government's efforts to integrate vocations and served many times as the catalyst urging the Department of Labor to advocate new integration efforts. During his thirty-two year tenure with Labor, Daly advocated for African Americans to enter many positions, including sales and clerical positions in Washington, D. C. retail stores and bus and streetcar drivers for the old Capitol Transit Company. He assisted black laborers and helped them achieve the opportunity to

⁴⁵² Victor R. Daly, "Still Five More," *The Crisis* 41 (February 1934): 44-45.

join unions and receive apprentice opportunities for skilled positions even before legislation was enacted to forbid discrimination by unions on the basis of race.⁴⁵³

In 1956 the Labor Department conferred upon Daly its highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award, for his direct impact in battling Jim Crow in the work place. The citation praised Daly for “his outstanding contribution to the elimination of discrimination in hiring practices,” and for “his devotion to and his willingness to contribute long hours . . . in the interest of eliminating racial segregation in employment.”⁴⁵⁴

Aside from creating job opportunities for African Americans in previously segregated occupations, Daly also combated social segregation in a unique way. In 1932 Daly and thirty-one other charter members founded the American Bridge Association (A. B. A.), an organization originally created to foster the game of bridge among African Americans because they were not allowed membership in similar white organizations. However, during his tenure with the organization, Daly and the other members developed an idea that the game could be used to integrate America socially and transformed their organization from one focused on leisurely pursuits to civil rights advocacy, one that would bring about equality through friendly competition and also support other civil rights organizations. For, as Daly stated it in an editorial, “When four people sit down to play bridge, they are social equals.”⁴⁵⁵

Daly believed that social equality was most important because “social equality is the last stronghold of the prejudiced mind.” He argued, “Many persons will say that they are ready and willing to cede educational, political and economic equality to all citizens, but they will draw the

⁴⁵³ “Ex-U. S. Official Victor Daly Dies; Aided Job Integration,” *Washington Post*, May 9, 1986: 8. “Biographical Information,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴⁵⁴ Award for Distinguished Service, Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴⁵⁵ “The Social Significance of the A. B. A.,” editorial by Victor R. Daly for A. B. A. publication. “Addresses and Messages—Victor Daly, 1958 – 1978,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 2; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

line on so-called social equality.” For Daly, integrating the playing of bridge would tear down social barriers to prejudice. To achieve this goal, he worked tirelessly to end segregation within bridge. From 1949 to 1964, Daly served as the national president of the A. B. A., wrote numerous editorials and letters, and gave several lectures detailing how bridge could be used to deal a significant blow to segregation. Additionally, Daly utilized his leadership position to influence members of the A. B. A. to take part in other civil rights organizations’ protests and marches and donated A. B. A. funds to support these same organizations.⁴⁵⁶

During Daly’s tenure as president, the A. B. A. contributed to many national civil rights organizations responsible for fighting for change in the 1950s and 1960s. Daly and the A. B. A. supported the NAACP, National Urban League, United Negro College Fund, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Congress of Racial Equality among others. For example, from examining Daly’s presidential editorials, the NAACP received from the A. B. A. five thousand dollars from 1952 to 1956, fifteen hundred dollars in 1957, and another thousand in 1963. In addition, Daly advised his members to personally donate to civil rights organizations and even created the A. B. A.’s “benefit fund” to collect and distribute finances for grassroots civil rights activists. This fund was used to support African Americans participating in sit-ins, protests, and marches.⁴⁵⁷

Alongside pledging their financial support, Daly wanted his members to take an active role fighting against segregation and discrimination. In 1963 he wrote a powerful editorial for the A. B. A. publication pleading for his members to “join the march to Washington” in support

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Victor Daly, “Statement to the NAACP Convention,” June 25, 1957; Victor Daly, “American Bridge Association Distributes \$3500,” 1963; Victor Daly, “Sit Down for Bridge so that They may Sit Down to Eat,” editorials by Victor R. Daly for A. B. A. publications. “Addresses and Messages—Victor Daly, 1958 – 1978,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 2; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Other editorials praised the actions of A. B. A. members who sacrificed “their personal freedom” to fight for civil rights in Montgomery, Alabama; Atlanta, Georgia; and Jackson, Mississippi; and encouraged others to take similar action.⁴⁵⁸

Although Daly and the A. B. A. participated in other civil rights activities, they also did not lose sight of their goal of integrating bridge. The national bridge association that administered the national championships, the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), banned African Americans from their organization and from participating in the national tournaments. Daly attacked the ACBL’s policy of segregation head on. He personally requested membership in the organization, sent letters outlining the inherent discrimination in the policy of segregation to both the national and local ACBL’s offices, and even published an article in the *Washington Post* detailing the paradox that in a nation that was sending soldiers, missionaries, teachers, and tax dollars worldwide to declare democracy’s supremacy, that black Americans were being denied the opportunity to play bridge in “the so-called national championship” solely on the basis of the color of their skin.⁴⁵⁹

Finally, in 1961, the all-white Washington Bridge League, the local chapter of the ACBL, rewarded Daly’s persistence by bestowing upon him and five other African Americans to membership in their organization. The long awaited integration would have occurred at least five years prior, in 1956, when Daly’s request would have been accepted if not for the interference of the national ACBL Board. In 1954, the national board voted to withdraw its

⁴⁵⁸ Victor Daly, “An Appeal to Reason;” Victor Daly, “Join the March to Washington—You’ll Love It!” 1963, editorials by Victor R. Daly for A. B. A. publications. “Addresses and Messages—Victor Daly, 1958 – 1978,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 2; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴⁵⁹ “Victor Daly, 1895 - 1986,” *The Washington Bridge League Bulletin* (May – June 1986). “Biographical Information,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York. Letter to Robert H. Estabrook, July 24, 1951. “Addresses and Messages—Victor Daly, 1958 – 1978,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 2; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

national championships from Washington, D. C. if African Americans were allowed to play, fearing similar repercussions in 1956, local Washingtonians narrowly voted to deny Daly's membership request.⁴⁶⁰

Ironically, the ACBL had voted and passed an amendment in 1952 allowing local chapters to accept African American members and allow them to participate in tournaments. However, in practice, the national board continually voted to block African American participation and circumvent the amendment. Daly continued to pressure for complete integration even after his acceptance locally in 1961. Over the next six years, he prodded the ACBL for real equality. In 1967, he won and the organization passed a new, national bylaw eliminating discrimination on the basis of race or religion.⁴⁶¹

While Daly pushed the ACBL for integration in bridge, he never stopped assaulting the underlying racism that brought about discrimination and segregation. Daly continued his literary career by publishing a multitude of articles that both attacked segregation and Jim Crow while also encouraging black Americans to stand up for justice and equality. The pieces varied from attacks on segregation and Jim Crow to reports on the department of labor's efforts to end segregation in the workplace and to articles that chastised African Americans for allowing segregation and discrimination to survive through that lack of action.⁴⁶²

In his articles, Daly continually demonstrated radicalism in matters of race and conservatism in matters of society. Daly's radicalism led him to believe that segregation and

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Victor Daly, "Green Pastures and Black Washington," *The Crisis* (May 1933); Victor R. Daly, "Washington's Minority Problem," *The Crisis* (June 1939); Victor R. Daly, "New Jobs Opened for Minority Workers," *Employment Security Review* (August 1956); Victor R. Daly, "Trends and Developments: A Decade of Progress in Race Relations in the Nation's Capital," *The Journal of Intergroup Relations* (Summer 1961); Victor R. Daly, "MDTA Moves to the 'Front of the House,'" *Employment Service Review* (October 1966); Victor R. Daly, "War-Acquired Skills to Aid Negro," *Sunday Star*, September 23, 1945; Victor R. Daly, "District's Race Relations," *Sunday Star*, April 22, 1951. "Writings," Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

discrimination would not be defeated as long as some African Americans remained complacent and were unwilling to fight for change. He reasoned that once the government was convinced that black Americans would not be satisfied with anything less than full citizenship and equality, that “America’s race problem could be settled overnight by the enactment of legislation to prohibit racial segregation and discrimination.” Therefore, it was the duty of African Americans to fight injustice and discrimination and support one another in this battle.⁴⁶³

Throughout Daly’s writings of the 1930s to the 1960s, this theme appears time and time again. He continually called black Americans to action. In the articles published as deputy director of the Department of Labor and in his editorials as president of the A. B. A., Daly pleaded for African Americans to get involved. His burden fell hardest on the black citizens of Washington, D. C. for as Daly stated, “Since Washington is the Nation’s Capital and the seat of the Government, rightly or wrongly, race relations here represent a standard by which all America is judged.”⁴⁶⁴

A 1939 article from Daly for *The Crisis* demonstrates this point. The article, entitled “Washington’s Minority Problem,” attacked the wide-range segregation occurring in the nation’s capital during the late 1930s. Unconventionally, Daly blamed both white and black Washingtonians for the severity of the city’s segregation. He argued that Washington’s African Americans had grown complacent with their successes, making them become lethargic in their struggle toward equality.⁴⁶⁵

According to Daly, Washington’s African American community fared better economically, socially, and culturally than most other black citizens in the nation. Citing the number of black professionals the city boasted, the number of African American owned

⁴⁶³ Ibid. Daly, “District’s Race Relations.”

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Daly, “Washington’s Minority Problem,” 170-171.

businesses, and the number of civic organizations available for black Washingtonians, Daly detailed his point. Despite this quality of life, Washington, Daly claimed, was one of the nation's most segregated cities. It had a dual education system and segregated transportation. Even public spaces such as Rock Creek Park, the beach, and the golf course were segregated. Daly argued that because this segregation was accomplished covertly through requiring permits for African Americans to gather in public spaces, running express buses with diverted routes around the black parts of town, and *de facto* segregation in public buildings and private businesses, black Washingtonians did not protest the discrimination. They were amenable to inequality as long as they prospered financially and their standard of living was better than most African Americans living throughout the country.⁴⁶⁶

Daly rebuked Washington's African American population for being satisfied with the segregation and the discrimination of the status quo. He argued that their complacency had allowed civil rights not to be "abolished by statute, but by tradition." He summoned them to utilize their intelligence and position to return to their leadership role for the African American community, to inspire change throughout the rest of the country by enacting it in the nation's capital. Daly claimed, "When Washingtonians are granted suffrage the Negro will get his civil rights the next day." His article refocused black Washingtonians on the goal of gaining equality and encouraged them to regain their responsibility as nation leaders.⁴⁶⁷

Daly's trend of addressing Washington citizens continued over the next twenty years as he published multiple articles dealing with the integration of job fields in the nation's capital, new local and national legislation that dismantled Jim Crow and segregation, the education and training of lower class African Americans, and efforts by civil rights organizations to achieve

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

equality and justice. Several times Daly reevaluated the state of Washington, D. C. in regard to its race relations. In 1951, he published an article entitled “District’s Race Relations” which identified the nation’s capital as only America’s focus but also the world’s to judge democracy. In 1961, Daly published “Trends and Developments: A Decade of Progress in Race Relations in the Nation’s Capital,” an essay that highlighted the advancement of social relations between white and black Americans in Washington due to integration in the workplace.⁴⁶⁸

Though Daly had an early passion for writing, it was his experiences as an officer in World War I that launched this prolific author’s career. Daly’s youth in New York’s black middle class and college years at Cornell University provided little reason to be frustrated with the state of race relations before his entering of Fort Des Moines. It was only after his war experiences and his return to an unchanged postwar America that a disillusioned Daly turned to radicalism to promote an end to segregation and discrimination. Fortunately for Daly his “New Negro” sentiments had an outlet through *The Messenger* in 1919. That opportunity sparked Daly to a career of encouraging political, economic, and social change for African Americans.⁴⁶⁹

Perhaps the most outspoken author emerging from the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment after World War I was Second Lieutenant William N. Colson. The disillusioned young lieutenant returned from combat on March 15, 1919, was discharged, and promptly

⁴⁶⁸ Victor Daly, “Green Pastures and Black Washington,” *The Crisis* (May 1933); Victor R. Daly, “Washington’s Minority Problem,” *The Crisis* (June 1939); Victor R. Daly, “New Jobs Opened for Minority Workers,” *Employment Security Review* (August 1956); Victor R. Daly, “Trends and Developments: A Decade of Progress in Race Relations in the Nation’s Capital,” *The Journal of Intergroup Relations* (Summer 1961); Victor R. Daly, “MDTA Moves to the ‘Front of the House,’” *Employment Service Review* (October 1966); Victor R. Daly, “War-Acquired Skills to Aid Negro,” *Sunday Star*, September 23, 1945; Victor R. Daly, “District’s Race Relations,” *Sunday Star*, April 22, 1951. “Writings,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴⁶⁹ Correspondence letters between Victor R. Daly & James Payne, February to March 1984. “Biographical Information: Articles about Daly—James Payne,” Victor R. Daly Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 428, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

enrolled in Columbia University Law School.⁴⁷⁰ Similar to Daly, Colson received his first opportunity to express his “New Negro” radicalism by writing for *The Messenger* as a contributing editor. Highlighting his wartime experiences and the detailing the discrimination he encountered in the military, Colson published a series of articles from July 1919 to December 1919.

In his first article, entitled “Propaganda and the American Negro Soldier,” Colson attacked the United States Army in France as an extension of the nation’s segregation, Jim Crow, and discrimination abroad. His frustration and anger spewed forth from his pen like the toxic venom of a rattlesnake. He argued that the African Americans who served in World War I “were fighting for France and for their race rather than for a flag which had no meaning.” He continued, “No intelligent American Negro is willing to lay down his life for the U.S. as it now exists.” Colson’s rage and disappointment over the unfulfilled promises of democracy, the military’s racism, and the unchanged America to which he returned was revealed in every sentence.⁴⁷¹

Colson followed “Propaganda and the American Negro Soldier” with an article defending the loyalty of African Americans to their country during World War I while examining their betrayal by the American government and armed forces. In addressing African American patriotism, he claimed, “It was not necessary to coerce them (the Negroes) into buying bonds or stamps,” because they believed “some great good would come out of the war for them.” However, Colson contended that black service was a result of being “harangued” by the nation’s white and black leadership with conscription forcing the issue.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ Robert A. Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 481.

⁴⁷¹ William N. Colson, “Propaganda and the Negro Soldier,” *The Messenger* (July 1919): 24-25.

⁴⁷² William N. Colson, “An Analysis of Negro Patriotism,” *The Messenger* (August 1919): 23-24.

The remainder of the essay justified the poor performance of the Ninety-Second Division by claiming disillusionment and discrimination had diminished patriotism and had resulted in African Americans' loss of faith in both their white and black officers and in themselves.

Here we are principally concerned with the disillusioned, the new negro and his patriotism. The negro soon found that the treachery of the white American was infinitely more damaging to him than that of the Hun. He was refused a square deal in the Army and Navy, and discrimination became more grueling in the South. There was more exploitation of labor, more personal insult, more segregation, more degradation of women, more racial limitation and restriction than ever before. Now, this state of affairs multiplies racial antagonism.

Moreover, he believed that African American doughboys realized the paradox of their situation, namely, that they were fighting a war to make the world safe for democracy while they were denied that very premise in America and in the military. He concluded, "Any lack of patriotism on the part of the negro was and is the natural and logical consequence of unjust practices perpetrated against him."⁴⁷³

According to Colson, in this setting the French provided the only relief from bigotry and discrimination. In "The Social Experience of the Negro Soldier Abroad," he described how black troops enjoyed the egalitarian French society, sharing the public sphere with French women while becoming comrades with French soldiers. Colson estimated that as many as one to two thousand African American soldiers married French women.⁴⁷⁴ Therefore, he claimed that African Americans responded to French liberalism, equality, and wider social experience with devotion and mutual respect. Furthermore, he argued that after experiencing more freedom and a more democratic society in France that African Americans knew their task upon returning home would be to fight for democracy in America. In his conclusion, he hinted his belief that the time

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ William N. Colson, "The Social Experience of the Negro Soldier Abroad," *The Messenger* (October 1919): 26-27.

for that battle was now.⁴⁷⁵ In “The Failure of the Ninety-Second Division,” Colson and Ambrose B. Nutt, a commissioned second lieutenant from Fort Des Moines, blamed the military for the Ninety-Second Division’s shortcomings. They claimed that the white instructors at Fort Des Moines had rewarded officer candidates on the basis of obeying orders rather than ability or merit: “They went to those regulars who had given satisfaction as privates and ‘noncoms.’” Furthermore, both former officers agreed, “The unalloyed truth is that commissions were often awarded to those who were more likely to fail than succeed. [One candidate] won a commission by singing plantation songs.” In France, the Ninety-Second Division underwent inadequate training, were confined to camp and denied leave, had their white and black officers constantly changed, and received insufficient supplies.⁴⁷⁶

The series ended with an impassioned article detailing the role returning African American veterans should take in post-war America to end discrimination and to ensure democracy. He believed that black veterans possessed the necessary skills to spearhead the fight against inequality and lead the resistance movement.

The returned soldier, by reason of his military training, can do more to stop lynch-law and discrimination in the United States than many Americans want to see. He is accomplishing it by a resolute demonstration of self-defense and growing desire to lose his life in a good cause.

Colson called for veterans to actively oppose racism and Jim Crow, “each black soldier, as he travels on jim-crow cars, if he has the desire, can act his disapproval.” He hoped the threat of brute force would enact change, but when ultimatums failed, Colson advocated violence to impact a radical, working-class revolution. He concluded that the effect of black soldiers’ wartime experiences was an enlightenment of the mind in terms of justice and democracy. He

⁴⁷⁵ Colson, “An Analysis of Negro Patriotism,” 23-24.

⁴⁷⁶ William N. Colson and A. B. Nutt, “The Failure of the Ninety Second Division,” *The Messenger* (September 1919): 22-25.

believed it was their responsibility to educate the rest of the race and transform the nation, “The function of the Negro soldier, who is mentally free, is to act as an imperishable leaven on the mass of those who are still in mental bondage,” whether that be by peaceful coercion or radical, militant action.⁴⁷⁷

Colson’s rhetoric was so defiant in nature that southern policymakers began targeting him and branded him as a militant insurrectionist. After the violent race riots during the “Red Summer” of 1919, South Carolina congressman James F. Byrnes accused Colson, W. E. B. Du Bois, and other black leaders of scheming up and implementing the riots. In August 1919, in a *New York Times* article, Byrnes claimed men like Colson and Du Bois had “deliberately planned” the violence and specifically sighted Colson’s articles in *The Messenger* and Du Bois’s editorials in *The Crisis* as proof of their coercive behavior.⁴⁷⁸ However, Colson was undeterred in his methods to inspire fellow African Americans to enact change. Even after Byrnes and other policymakers labeled him a militant, he continued writing—proclaiming his message of a truly democratic America. In 1922, he passed away unexpectedly leaving a legacy of inspirational writings impassioned calling black veterans to resist segregation and discrimination and bring about a better future—the embodiment of what the “New Negro” movement represented to returned African American veterans from World War I.

In 1923, another former officer of Fort Des Moines, First Lieutenant George S. Schuyler, became associated with *The Messenger* as the magazine’s office manager. Before his tenure with the publication, Schuyler had joined the Army in 1912 and had been assigned to the Twenty-fifth Infantry. After serving five years, several of those being as a noncommissioned

⁴⁷⁷ William N. Colson, “The Immediate Function of the Negro Veteran,” *The Messenger* (December 1919): 19-20.

⁴⁷⁸ Adriane Danette Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 281.

officer, he jumped at the opportunity to become a commissioned officer in 1917. Traveling to Des Moines, Schuyler successfully completed training with the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment, earning his commission. The Army stationed First Lieutenant Schuyler at Fort Dix, New Jersey, commanding conscripted southern blacks.⁴⁷⁹

Schuyler and his men had little in common; he lived his youth in Syracuse, New York, where he had been provided an education and the lifestyle of the black middle class. Among the group of poor, uneducated, southern draftees, Schuyler felt out of place and his lonesomeness grew. Despite this culture shock he felt, Schuyler loyally served in the position and even attempted to better his subordinates by teaching them to read and write. However, despite his efforts to make the best of what he viewed as a bad situation, his disillusionment increased as bigotry and discrimination continued in America.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ George S. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1966), 37-40, 91.

⁴⁸⁰ Some accounts of Schuyler's wartime experience argue that he spent nine months in prison due to being court-martialed for deserting his post. These historians argue that a culture-shocked Schuyler was overwhelmed when a Greek immigrant shoeshine man in a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, train station refused to serve him. Supposedly, the man called him "a nigger," despite Schuyler's Army uniform and its silver bar classifying his rank as first lieutenant. This offense by a newly arrived immigrant frustrated Schuyler who stated aloud, "I'm a son-of-a-bitch if I'll serve this goddamn country any longer!" Instead of taking the train to return to his post, Schuyler boarded a train to Chicago. Another officer reported Schuyler as going AWOL and in Chicago the police were waiting for him. Schuyler then supposedly talked his way out of arrest in Chicago only to travel to San Diego, California, where he turned himself in after three months. The military court then sentenced him to five years imprisonment, but released him after nine months. This account originated in Kathryn Talalay, *Composition in Black and White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 67-68; and is perpetuated in Jeffrey B. Ferguson, *The Sage of Sugar Hill: George S. Schuyler and the Harlem Renaissance* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2005), 40-41; Oscar R. Williams, *George S. Schuyler: Portrait of a Black Conservative* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 18-26; and Chad Lewis Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American soldiers in the World War I Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 285. However, Talalay was the only author to do any primary resource research of the account. Although Talalay admits that George Schuyler never admitted going AWOL or his imprisonment in his autobiography or a 1960 oral interview with Columbia University, her source, George Schuyler's wife, Josephine's diaries and scrapbooks, detail him confiding the story to her. Unfortunately, this account from Josephine could not be located in my examination of her personal diaries in the Schomburg Center's archives. Furthermore, the other diaries examined contained more fictional story ideas from Josephine, an aspiring novelist, than historical accounts from her life. These facts force one to question whether or not George Schuyler really did go AWOL and serve nine months in prison, especially given the inaccessibility of court-martial records for his case. Further substantiation is necessary before determining the validity of Josephine Schuyler's account.

Following the war, Schuyler bounced from job to job until 1923 when *The Messenger* hired him for his organizational skills to run the day-to-day operations of the magazine. Later, in his autobiography, Schuyler would declare his time at the magazine demonstrated only his aspirations for writing rather than any socialist sentiment. Nonetheless, Schuyler did agree that he, Chandler, and Owen all shared a passion for the plight of African Americans even if they did not share political ideologies. The three men agreed that America's racial prejudice had multiple causes but chief among them was for the exploitation of blacks' labor. Furthermore, they agreed that through meticulous, systematic attacks racism and segregation would be exposed as intellectually fraudulent, morally disreputable, and socially duplicitous institutions. Therefore, for Chandler, Owen, and Schuyler socialism at least provided an alternative to bring about justice and equality that capitalism could not due to its foundation for exploiting African Americans economically.⁴⁸¹ These sentiments addressed in Schuyler's autobiography are very much in line with Alain Locke's characterization of the "New Negro," as a "forced radical." Schuyler viewed World War I not as a "war to save democracy" but as a war of failed promises in America. He entered the Army hoping to earn some respect in society and believed that earning his commission at Fort Des Moines would fulfill those aspirations, but, instead, he found America determined to maintain the *status quo*.

Infuriated with the perpetuation of segregation, discrimination, and bigotry, Schuyler began his own monthly column for *The Messenger*, "Darts and Shafts: A Page of Calumny and Satire," in September 1923.⁴⁸² The column ran from September 1923 to *The Messenger's* closing in 1928. Schuyler satirically jabbed at issues concerning American culture, politics, religion, and race. Schuyler and his co-writer Theophilus Lewis attacked a wide-range of targets

⁴⁸¹ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 136.

⁴⁸² *The Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler: Oral History Research, Columbia University, 1962*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 81.

from the Ku Klux Klan to African American leaders Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois. It was through these articles that Schuyler practiced the satirical barbs that he would later perfect in his novels.⁴⁸³

In addition to “Darts and Shafts,” Schuyler joined the staff of the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1924 and began writing his column, “Views and Reviews,” which would continue until 1964. As a correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Schuyler traveled frequently to the South where he encountered numerous tales of racial prejudice he would later use in his satirical columns and novels. This wealth of stories provided Schuyler a deep well from which to draw for both his articles in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and his other publications. Drawing both from these collected accounts, Schuyler became the most prolific author of the officers of the Ninety-Second Division. He contributed to the *Nation*, the *New York Evening Post*, *The American Mercury*, *Birth Control Review*, *Opportunity*, *The Crisis*, *The American Spectator*, the *Globe*, *Plain Talk*, *The Freeman*, and the *America*. Additionally, Schuyler published two novels, *Slaves Today* and *Black No More*. Throughout these works, Schuyler promoted himself as an “expert on race” and publicized his essays on racism and African American culture. Furthermore, throughout his literary career Schuyler continually sought his goal of exposing injustice and exploitation.⁴⁸⁴

Though the bulk of Schuyler’s journalism certainly can be attributed to his personal research trips to the American South, Haiti, Liberia, Brazil, Barbados, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and other Caribbean islands, he also incorporated his own personal experiences into his writing.⁴⁸⁵ For example, in 1929 Schuyler published *Racial Inter-Marriage in the United States: One of the Most Interesting Phenomena in Our National Life*, in

⁴⁸³ Williams, *George S. Schuyler*, 30 & 41.

⁴⁸⁴ “George Schuyler—Biographical Material,” Schuyler Family Papers, Box 1; Sc MG 63, Box 1, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

which he argued miscegenation could solve America's race problems.⁴⁸⁶ Blatantly contradicting prominent statisticians and sociologists who claimed that racially mixed marriage produced negative consequences, Schuyler relied on his own personal experience of being married to a white woman to argue that miscegenation would diminish individuals' prejudices and racial stereotypes. In fact, he used own experience, along with several other cases he found throughout the country, where white communities were willing to accept mixed couples living amidst an all white community but would not accept integrating a black couple.⁴⁸⁷

Writing about his own personal experience was not new for Schuyler. During his service with the Twenty-fifth Infantry, he wrote for *The Service*, a magazine for soldiers. Following the war, Schuyler continued writing from his own wartime experiences and the disappointment and disillusionment he and his fellow veterans felt returning to an unchanged America. Schuyler later admitted in a 1962 interview that it was in part these personal experiences that led him and the other writers at *The Messenger* to so harshly criticize W. E. B. Du Bois and his postwar call to action from black veterans. Schuyler argued that Du Bois was "too conservative" and "reactionary" in his dealings with prejudice and the federal government. Schuyler claimed that had Du Bois really understood discrimination in the military, he would have denounced the War Department's treatment of black troops long before 1919 because, according to Schuyler, the discrimination of black soldiers was not a new phenomenon. Furthermore, in this interview, Schuyler expressed his postwar sentiment that only militant radicalism would enact change and end segregation and discrimination.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ George S. Schuyler, *Racial Inter-Marriage in the United States: One of the Most Interesting Phenomena in Our National Life* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1929)

⁴⁸⁷ *The Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler*, 201-202.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 34, 79-80.

Schuyler believed that World War I presented a unique opportunity for African Americans to gain justice and equality through military service, an opportunity that he felt had not existed since the American Civil War. He argued that when “the Army” went to “unnecessary lengths” to segregate and discriminate against black soldiers, African Americans were denied their opportunity for change. Schuyler claimed that true democracy in America and equal treatment of black troops in the Army was the only objective African Americans sought in the war, but the Army, War Department, and the Wilson Administration ensured equality would not happen. Utilizing the example of Ninety-Third Division, Schuyler declared that from the very beginning of the Army’s goals were segregation and discrimination illustrated by the attachment of the black division to French regiments because white American officers wanted no part in serving side-by-side their black brothers-in-arms. It was for these reasons only that Schuyler believed the militant radicalism of spawned during the post-war period. Disillusionment sprouted from the missed opportunity, the forgotten alternative of World War I.⁴⁸⁹

To go along with this idea, Schuyler published articles in *The Messenger* in 1927 and in the *American Mercury* in 1930. The first article in *The Messenger* detailed the sentiments of the “New Negro” from Schuyler’s own personal perspective and from the perspectives of black veterans and the black community who had seen their sons, brothers, fathers, and husbands sent off to France in vain. Looking back on the lost opportunity of the Great War, the 1930 article claimed that no “great progress” in race relations would take place until another war provided a new opportunity. Even after his own disillusionment from World War I, Schuyler still believed that the fate of American race relations rested squarely of the shoulders of black soldiers.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, 236-239.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid, 236, 255-256, 352.

To this end, Schuyler, through the *Pittsburgh Courier*, initiated a campaign in the 1930s to end the restriction of black troops to only four branches of the Army: the infantry, cavalry, medical corps, and quartermaster's department. This was an issue very near to Schuyler's heart even from his days at Fort Des Moines. Remember, he was one of the non-commissioned officers training at the fort that was outraged when the training regimen was altered to exclude artillery and machine-gun training. So, Schuyler along with congressman Hamilton Fish III, a captain with Harlem Hellfighters, the 369th Infantry, during World War I, campaigned to equalize African Americans' opportunities in the Army. Through Fish's introduction of a bill in Congress and Schuyler's journalism, the men advocated for the Army to open the artillery corps, the signal corps, the engineers, and other branches of the army to African Americans. Also, they argued that more black officers should be commissioned because the Army had limited the number of African American officers after World War I. Thus, what Schuyler and Fish truly wanted was a separate black army containing African American troops and officers at every position whites held in the U. S. Army. Obviously, similar to Houston's attacks of segregated graduate education, the hope was that the efforts needed to create this "separate but equal" army would be too great to make it feasible and integration would be forced. Unfortunately, Fish's bill was never enacted and it would not be until 1948 that the Army was integrated. However, Schuyler's and Fish's campaign was not in vain because it did get the nation thinking about the integration of the armed forces. Schuyler made sure of that by pointing out in a series of articles the recent integrations of the Peruvian, Brazilian, Uruguayan, Columbian, Venezuelan, Cuban, Dominican, and Panamanian armies.⁴⁹¹

Furthermore, Schuyler continued to believe that the world's next great war would bring about the best opportunity for African Americans to gain equality. Therefore, in 1942, after

⁴⁹¹ Ibid, 355-361; Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 86-87.

America had entered World War II, Schuyler and the *Pittsburgh Courier* began their “Double V” campaign after receiving the famous prompting editorial letter sent by black cafeteria worker James Thompson. The idea behind this campaign was that war should bring about two victories: one over the Axis Powers and one over racial prejudice in America. Even prior to Thompson’s letter, Schuyler had written a piece criticizing African Americans supporting the war without first receiving tangible gains toward economic, political, and social equality. After the “Double V” campaign began, Schuyler reiterated that “real changes” were needed first before blacks swallowed “hook, line, and sinker the same bush-wah at which their fathers snapped World War I.” He argued that though war was the best opportunity for African Americans to gain equality and end segregation that they must keep white America’s “feet to the fire at all times,” to ensure change occurred in return for their sacrifices. This reluctant cynicism surely spouted from Schuyler’s personal military experiences and his postwar disillusionment. He would not allow the next generation to forget America’s betrayal and the “New Negro” generation that betrayal created.⁴⁹²

Charles Hamilton Houston echoed Schuyler’s sentiments in a series of pieces he wrote during World War II outlining the nation’s refusal to reward African American loyalty in combat with equality. Houston was another veteran officer turned prolific author. Aside from his work inside the courtroom, Hamilton wrote many pieces on influential cases that would help end segregation adding his request for a call-to-action of local African Americans to get involved.⁴⁹³ The articles he published during World War II highlighted the continual sacrifice of black soldiers for their nation. One series in the *Pittsburgh Courier* memorialized the Seventeenth

⁴⁹² Ibid. 375-380; George S. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 12, 1940; George S. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 10, 1942.

⁴⁹³ “Charles Hamilton Houston Cases and Publications,” *150th Anniversary of Dred Scot v. Sandford: Race, Citizenship, & Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice, 2007), 52.

Provisional Training Regiment's groundbreaking struggle to become the first group of commissioned black officers and lamented America's postwar entrenchment into segregation, discrimination, and injustice.⁴⁹⁴

Another piece, "Critical Summary: The Negro in the U. S. Armed Forces in World War I and World War II," confronted the shared plight of black soldiers in both World War I and World War II—that America emphasized combat performance while undermining the value of service and labor. Houston called on his own experience to emphasize how he and his fellow black officers receiving no training other than infantry drill and, then, were criticized whenever they performed inadequately after being transferred to artillery units in France. Houston pleaded for the War Department to train the African American men serving in World War II "in the use of the latest weapons," and to stop repeating the mistakes of World War I by continuing "restrictive, segregated inferior training." Furthermore, he pleaded that "without integrating the Negro into the armed forces to a degree far beyond all present declarations of policy," the United States and its allies would not be victorious in a total war against the Axis Powers.⁴⁹⁵

Both Houston and Schuyler were of the same mindset—war provided a great opportunity for African Americans to make major gains in terms of integration, equality, and justice. America needed the support of its African American community to be victorious in a war, but black America should bestow their loyalty only after real change. Such change in the military, equal training and an end to discriminatory practices, would enable black troops to perform better and fight harder than white Americans believed they could.

⁴⁹⁴ Charles Hamilton Houston, "Saving the World for Democracy," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 20, 27, August 2, 17, 24, 31, September 7, 14, 21, 28, & October 5, 12, 1940.

⁴⁹⁵ Charles Hamilton Houston, "Critical Summary: The Negro in the U. S. Armed Forces in World War I and World War II," *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 364-366.

Alongside his journalist articles, Schuyler published his first novel, *Black No More: Being an Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free*, in 1931. The satire followed the accounts of a fictional scientist who created an invention, “Black-No-More,” that could turn black people Caucasian. At that point, Schuyler began his satire. “Black-No-More” worked so well that it turns African Americans whiter than white. “Black-No-More” made black people so white that Caucasians could no longer be distinguished by the term “white.” In fact, the white characters become convinced that extreme whiteness indicated “Negro blood.” As a result, racial boundaries are reversed; now darker complexion represented “purer blood.” “Redrawing of racial boundaries ensues, made complete and authoritative with the help of churches, courts, schools, labor unions, newspapers and magazines, social and biological sciences, political and cultural organs, and all the other ideological state apparatuses integral in the erection and maintenance of a really effective oppressive system.”⁴⁹⁶

Schuyler parodied American race relations, but he also critiqued capitalism. He viewed racial stereotypes and “markers” as the instruments of class distinction. Therefore, for Schuyler, both white and black intellectuals, leaders, and policymakers who argued issues of race were really only squabbling rhetorically. He believed economic requirements manipulated race, culture, and individual identity as the market necessitated.⁴⁹⁷

Schuyler continued this mindset in his publications for the rest of his life. His autobiography attempted to explain his own anti-communist and anti-capitalist perspective. Schuyler believed issues of racism, bigotry, and discrimination were the major problems of the twentieth century; however, he thought that African Americans’ preoccupation of struggling with race would never materialize into full equality and citizenship. Of course, his military

⁴⁹⁶ Jane Keunz, “American Racial Discourse, 1900-1930: Schuyler’s ‘Black No More,’” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 30, no.2 (Winter 1997): 170-171.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

experiences with the color line and inequality governed this thought process. Schuyler had attempted to attack racism through the system by gaining prominence as an officer and sacrificing for his country. In turn, he found continued bigotry as the system changed the rules to maintain his identity as “the other.” Disillusioned, Schuyler sought his only solace—to expose the system and its injustices, whether those be capitalism, communism, imperialism, or other.⁴⁹⁸

While Schuyler satirized Marcus Garvey, his followers, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), other African American veterans turned to Garvey as an inspirational leader. Garvey embodied America’s Pan-Africanist spirit; he sought to gain equality through uniting all peoples of African descent in social, economic, and political freedom. Garvey believed that a return to Africa, the removal of imperial powers, and separatism from the white Western world would enable Africans to redeem themselves. He argued that through their self-determination, Africans would triumph in the racial conflict of the post-war years:

My appeal is to every member of the race in every part of the world. The Universal Negro Improvement Association realizes that the war of 1914-1918 is over, but all Negroes must prepare for the next world war. There is bound to more wars because human nature has not changed. Stronger nations and races are still robbing and exploiting the weaker ones. So long as the Negro is oppressed all over the world there can be no abiding peace. Four hundred million Negroes are now suffering from the injustices of the white man, and for that reason we cannot entertain any idea of peace that does not mean equality for all peoples. Negroes must combine with China, India, Egypt, Ireland and Russia, to free themselves in the future.

Our Fatherland, Africa, is bleeding, and she is now stretching forth her hands to her children in America, the West Indies and Central America and Canada to help her. We must help her, therefore I hereby ask every Negro in the world to ready for the next war, twenty, thirty or forty years hence.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁸ *The Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler*, 78-80.

⁴⁹⁹ Marcus Garvey, “All Negroes Should Get Ready to Protect Themselves in the Future,” *Negro World*, July 19, 1919 in Robert A. Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers: Volume I 1826-August 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 460-461.

“New Negro” black veterans identified themselves with Garvey and the UNIA. Their willingness to turn to militant radicalism to gain justice and equality was congruent with Garvey’s characterization that black men should be physically strong, aggressive leaders willing to use violence to resist bigotry, racism, and discrimination. As Garvey stated it in an editorial to the *Negro World*, “The new Negro is no coward. He is a man, and if he can die in France or Flanders for white men, he can die anywhere else, even behind prison bars, fighting for the cause of the race that needs assistance.”⁵⁰⁰

Garvey envisioned another world war but not one of nations but of races. He believed that the next war would be “between the white and the yellow peoples.” Garvey called for his race to mobilize and prepare for combat believing they would be the ones to tip the scale in favor of one side or the other in this next great war. The African American veterans, especially officers, from World War I fit perfectly into Garvey’s mobilization plan because they embodied the black strength, masculinity, intelligence, and leadership. These characteristics contradicted social Darwinists’ arguments that blacks were inferior. Garvey explained this point in a 1921 speech, “Do you still believe in the Darwin theory that man is a monkey or the missing link between the ape and man? If you think it is, that theory has been exploded in the world war. It was you, the supermen, that brought back victory at the Marne!” For these reasons, Garvey attracted several officers of Fort Des Moines to his organization.⁵⁰¹

First Lieutenant Clarence B. Curley became familiar with Marcus Garvey and the UNIA through work for the Black Star Line, Garvey’s transatlantic shipping business. Prior to his enlistment in the Army, Curley graduated from Howard University in 1911 and earned a law

⁵⁰⁰ Garvey, “Editorial Letter by Marcus Garvey,” *Negro World*, June 10, 1919 in Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, 415-416.

⁵⁰¹ Garvey emphasized his belief in an upcoming race war repeatedly in his writings and speeches in Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, 282, 319, 333, 360, & 445.

degree from Howard in 1914. He served as a lieutenant for the 368th Infantry during the war before he returned home. After earning his Masters of Business at New York University, Curley served as a general accountant and secretary for the Black Star Line. He quickly demonstrated his worth as a leader and a money manager, and Garvey promoted him to the board of directors of the Black Star Line.⁵⁰²

Curley played an important role in the shipping company. He was one of the few individuals who had knowledge of the line's shipping and accounting practices. Curley should have risen quickly to a leadership role and been given decision-making power within the organization. Unfortunately for Garvey and the Black Star Line, Curley was appointed to the board of directors but kept out of leadership decisions. The authoritarian nature of the men in control of the board resulted in their making poor decisions without all the facts. This practice resulted in the ultimate failure of the Black Star Line as funds quickly depleted and public confidence collapsed under the flawed leadership design.⁵⁰³

Other fellow servicemen also believed in Garvey's approach and enlisted in the UNIA to support their leader. Many of these veterans enlisted in the Universal African Legion, the paramilitary branch of the UNIA. Since the organization structure of the African Legion based itself from the United States Army, it provided a familiar environment for African American doughboys returning from combat. Second Lieutenant Wilfred Bazil became interested in the African Legion after he returned to New York City following the war. Adopting Garvey's ideology, Bazil joined the African Legion and took command of the Brooklyn chapter of the

⁵⁰² Ibid, 465-466.

⁵⁰³ Ramla M. Bandele, *Black Star: African American Activism in the International Political Economy* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 138.

organization. From his command post, Bazil encouraged black men to be powerful, militant “New Negroes.”⁵⁰⁴

While some veterans joined ranks with Garvey in the African Legion, others preferred to unite with fellow doughboys under their own leadership. While still in France a group of African American officers from the Ninety-Second Division united to discuss plans for a post-war organization to fight against bigotry and discrimination. After returning home, at a meeting in Harlem in March 1919, the men announced their organization as the League for Democracy (LFD). As “an organization of soldiers, for soldiers, by soldiers,” most of the LFD membership came from veterans of the 369th and 367th Infantry.⁵⁰⁵

First Lieutenant Osceola McKaine, a former infantryman in the Twenty-fourth Infantry, who had enlisted at Fort Des Moines as one of the two hundred-fifty non-commissioned officers, served as a vocal leader for the LFD. He headed the organization’s official newspaper, the *New York Commoner*, and served as its editor. Through the newspaper, McKaine and the LFD gained national prominence. McKaine proclaimed the message that the LFD was a vanguard organization for black veterans to combat racial injustice, and they responded by swiftly increasing the group’s numbers. The LFD grew so rapidly that it gained the attention of the military intelligence, who considered the organization more of a threat to national security than the UNIA. The quick rise of the LFD to the national scene jump-started McKaine as a notable civil rights activist.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Chad L. Williams, “Vanguards of the New Negro: African American Veterans and Post-World War I Racial Militancy,” *Journal of African American History* volume 92 number 3 (Summer 2007): 364-365.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, 358.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 359.

In response to a December 1918 letter written by Colonel Allen Greer, the Ninety-Second Division's Chief of Staff, bashing African American troops for cowardice and claiming their lack of ability to be successful soldiers, McKaine and the LFD launched a campaign to have Greer court-martialed. Though the crusade proved unsuccessful, McKaine did manage to obtain meetings with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and Congress to present his case.⁵⁰⁷

While Baker and the Wilson administration stalled hoping to avoid having to take action against Greer, McKaine planned an LFD meeting in Washington, D. C. to prompt black veterans and African Americans in general into collective action against Jim Crow and injustice. McKaine's keynote address incited the "New Negro" radicalism of postwar black veterans. Encouraging violence over inaction, he argued, "No Negroes any where in the United States should ever let white mobs take a black man to lynch him without using all the force possible to prevent it."⁵⁰⁸

Unfortunately, McKaine and the LFD could not motivate the War Department, President Wilson, or Congress to take disciplinary action against Greer. This failure caused a deterioration of the LFD membership roles; the disillusioned black veterans had witnessed government dismissal of their rights before and believed there was not a use for the LFD if it could not achieve government response.⁵⁰⁹ Prior to McKaine's stance against Greer the LFD had been criticized for being too broad in its attempts to end discrimination. In May 1919 the *New York Age* commented, "The League of Democracy [sic] is too comprehensive." The paper recommended McKaine and his organization "concentrate all its strength . . . upon those

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Letter from Walter Loving to Director of Military Intelligence, June 17, 1919, Record Group 165, File 10218, Box 337, National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁰⁹ Miles E. Richards, "Osceola E. McKaine and the Struggle for Black Civil Rights: 1917-1946," (PhD. Dissertation, 1994, University of South Carolina), 64-72.

particular objects . . . it is best fitted to accomplish.⁵¹⁰ Ironically, it was heeding this advise that doomed the organization of black veterans. By 1922 the LFD had disbanded. Frustrated by the lack of progress toward equality for African Americans and the apathy he perceived from black veterans who, as he saw it, had allowed the LFD to fail, McKaine boycotted the United States. He traveled back across the Atlantic and began operating a nightclub in Ghent, Belgium.⁵¹¹

By the late 1930s McKaine returned to his home state of South Carolina and took over a leadership role in the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).⁵¹² Moreover, McKaine served with the Southern Conference for Human Welfare and led a march of African American veterans on Birmingham, Alabama, demanding an end to the disenfranchisement of black voters in Alabama. In South Carolina he fought against racial discrimination in teachers' salaries and, in 1944, won equal pay for African American educators.⁵¹³

McKaine also played a major role in the struggle for African Americans' voting rights in 1944. After the Supreme Court ruled against the Democratic Party's all-white primary system as discrimination in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), African American voter registration increased in southern states in anticipation of regaining their political power. However, the Democratic Party and state governments refused to relinquish the political control. When South Carolina's Democratic Party resisted the court's decision and the state government chose to idly stand by and allow them to continue disenfranchising black voters, McKaine took action. He along with

⁵¹⁰ "Soldiers' Organizations," *New York Age*, May 24, 1919.

⁵¹¹ Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 180.

⁵¹² The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Coalition Movement-Hawaii, "World War II" <http://www.mlk-hawaii.com/civilrightmovement.htm> (accessed January 19, 2011).

⁵¹³ Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, 227.

John H. McCray, a black newspaper editor, established the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP).⁵¹⁴

McKaine and McCray organized the party to contest South Carolina's Democratic Party's all-white delegation. Quickly, the PDP attracted 45,000 members and PDP candidates entered into the state's elections. In fact, McKaine ran as a United States Senate candidate in 1944 as the PDP candidate. When the Democratic Party's national nominating convention met in Chicago, Illinois, McKaine and seventeen other PDP delegates traveled to the Windy City to contest the South Carolina Democratic Party's all-white delegation.⁵¹⁵

Though the PDP failed in convincing the national Democratic Party to seat their delegation instead of the all-white group, McKaine and McCray had successfully empowered South Carolina's African American constituency. Registered black voters in South Carolina jumped from 3,500 in 1940 to 50,000 by the end of the decade.⁵¹⁶ In light of these results, McKaine's accomplishments must be evaluated as being similar to those of Medgar Evers and Charles Evers in Mississippi. McKaine helped ignite a fire in the black electorate of South Carolina.

Carter Walker Wesley, one of the Fort Des Moines' officers turned attorney, also played a critical role in fighting for civil rights using the media. Wesley helped form a corporation to fund the black newspaper the *Houston Informer* in 1927. Through the years from 1929 to 1935 Wesley served at times as auditor, vice president, general manager, treasurer, and publisher of the *Informer*. He also owned the *Dallas Express*, another African American newspaper. Wesley saw the black press as an instrument through which to voice the African American community's

⁵¹⁴ Patricia Sullivan, "Henry Wallace's Campaign Foreshadowed the Movement as Well as the Rainbow," *Southern Changes* 10, no. 5 (1988): 16.

⁵¹⁵ Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, 227-228.

⁵¹⁶ Sullivan, "Henry Wallace's Campaign Foreshadowed the Movement as Well as the Rainbow," 16.

discontentment with segregation and discrimination. He utilized his influence with the black press in Texas and his legal practice to serve as a crusader for equality in Texas from the 1920s through the 1960s.⁵¹⁷

James B. Morris, Sr., valued the importance of the black press as well. He entered the officer training camp at Fort Des Moines as a black professional and a member of the black middle class. Morris, a 1912 graduate of the Hampton Institute in Virginia and a 1915 graduate of Howard University's law school, visited George H. Woodson who was stationed at Fort Des Moines as a member of the Twenty-fifth Infantry and ended up enlisting to become a commissioned officer.⁵¹⁸ He received his commission as a second lieutenant with the other graduates in October 1917, and the army assigned him to Fort Dodge, Iowa.⁵¹⁹ He served as a scout and sniper with the 366th Infantry during the war. On November 11, 1918, while Morris defended against the German offensive of Metz, he was wounded in his leg. After spending several months hospitalized in both Europe and America, he returned home to his wife, Georgine, and baby son, James B. Morris, Jr., in 1919.⁵²⁰

Upon his return to Des Moines in 1919, Morris opened his own law practice, which still survives today as Morris & Morris III under his grandson's supervision.⁵²¹ In 1922, he purchased the *Iowa Bystander*, Iowa's oldest black newspaper and "The Oldest Black Publication West of the Mississippi," from John L. Thompson. Prior to Morris's acquisition of the paper, the *Iowa Bystander* had established a reputation as a warrior fighting against discrimination. The publication began in 1894 on the premise of printing the positive

⁵¹⁷ Texas State Historical Association, "Wesley, Carter Walker"
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fwe28> (accessed November 10, 2010).

⁵¹⁸ Robert V. Morris, "Ten most influential black Iowans," *The Des Moines Register*, February 13, 2000.

⁵¹⁹ Scott, *Scott's Official History of The American Negro in the World War*, 477.

⁵²⁰ Bill Silag, ed. *Outside In: African-American history in Iowa, 1838-2000* (Des Moines: State Historical Society of Iowa, 2001), 115.

⁵²¹ "Des Moines Attorneys & Lawyers," [DesMoinesLawyersAttorneys.com](http://www.desmoineslawyersattorneys.com).
<http://www.desmoineslawyersattorneys.com/> (accessed November 11, 2008).

contributions of blacks to the community that were left out of the discriminatory white papers. Furthermore, Thompson used the *Iowa Bystander* to publicize a black economic boycott of white businesses that chose not to support the newspaper or to advertise in it.⁵²² Morris continued this tradition for the next fifty years as he served as editor and publisher from 1922 to 1971.⁵²³

Shortly after purchasing the paper, Morris hired Charles P. Howard, Sr., a young attorney, Fort Des Moines enlistee, and World War I veteran lieutenant, as his featured columnist. After returning from war, Howard gained nationwide prominence in journalism with a column he wrote entitled "Observer." In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) believed the *Iowa Bystander* to be so threatening to their message of white supremacy that they showed up as uninvited guests on Morris's back porch and demanded to buy the newspaper. Prior to the Klansmen's visit, Morris had used his publication to promote a federal anti-lynching legislation campaign and to criticize Klan activities within Iowa. When he declined the Klan's offer, they, in turn, threatened the Morris family. James and his brother Clyde retaliated with a volley of shotgun fire that forced a retreat of the klansmen.⁵²⁴

In August of 1925, Morris co-founded the Negro Bar Association, presently known as the National Bar Association, with fellow enlistees of Fort Des Moines, Charles P. Howard, Sr. and S. Joe Brown. As an attorney, Morris pioneered many legal battles for racial integration and civil rights in Iowa. His wife, Georgine, founded the NAACP state conference for Iowa in 1939. In that same year, Morris joined as a charter member and, later, served as president for the organization.⁵²⁵

⁵²² Robert V. Morris, "The Iowa Bystander," Iowa Pathways. http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000289 (accessed November 12, 2008).

⁵²³ Morris, "Ten most influential black Iowans."

⁵²⁴ Morris, "The Iowa Bystander."

⁵²⁵ "National Bar Association's Roots are in Iowa," Iowa National Bar Association: An Affiliate of the National Bar Association. <http://www.ianationalbar.com/founders/founders.htm> (accessed November 12, 2008).

Morris continued after World War I to influence civil rights through law and journalism, but he never forgot his time spent serving his nation in World War I and the sacrifices of fellow men of his race during the conflict. The *Iowa Bystander* published an article in 1937 to commemorate the nineteenth anniversary of Armistice Day. The piece interviewed Iowa veterans who reminisced about their location on November 11, 1918. Of those interviewed, Vivian Jones and William T. Johnson were colleagues of Morris at Fort Des Moines and had also earned commissions as lieutenants.⁵²⁶

The African American officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment returned to America disillusioned by the continued discrimination, segregation, and bigotry of the nation. Their wartime experiences left these men more willing to embrace radical methods including violence to enact change in America. They shared a new mentality toward political and social activism and chose to become vocal leaders mobilizing both black veterans and downtrodden members of their race to resist Jim Crow and inequality. These former officers joined with other influential men like Chandler Owens, W.E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey to expose the paradox of American democracy and to reveal the exploitation of segregation. These men unified the black community by sharing their ideologies in journalism and activism. Serving their race as the vanguard of a movement that would continue throughout the interwar period and into the 1950s and 1960s, these veterans pursued their inalienable civil rights and equality fighting against desegregation and bigotry. These former officers of Fort Des Monies built a strong foundation through their literature and their activism in the “New Negro” movement for future generations to build upon in the battle for justice and democracy.

⁵²⁶ Silag, *Outside In*, 115.

CHAPTER 7: RETURNING OFFICERS AND THEIR DEDICATION TO EDUCATING & MENTORING

While some officers from the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment fought against segregation by organizing legal resistance and publically exposing the racial oppression of America in print, another group of officers fought inequality in a different manner. They understood that African Americans would never defeat bigotry and social injustice until they received equal economic opportunities and earned respect as individuals, and they recognized that the key to achieving these goals was having the opportunity to receive an education.

Utilizing education to resist slavery and the inequality inherent therein dates back to the origins of the institution itself in America. Originally some masters attempted to teach their slaves to read for religious purposes; however, they denied them the opportunity to learn how to write because of the social and economic status equated with that skill, as well as the potential for subversive activities that writing might enable. Following the Stono Rebellion in 1739, South Carolina made it illegal to teach slaves to write. Other states followed; masters feared that if slaves learned to write abolitionism would spread and information about insurrections would easily be communicated. After the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831, states like Mississippi,

Alabama, and North Carolina passed legislation preventing the education of slaves, including teaching them to read.⁵²⁷

If fear of an educated slave population propelled masters and state governments to enact legal punishment for those who were teaching and for slaves who were seeking to learn, then desire for a better life motivated their slaves more strongly to acquire the skills of reading and writing. Frederick Douglass noted in his autobiography his appetite to learn to read and his master's apprehension that if slaves became educated they would become unsatisfied with their lives.⁵²⁸ So, Douglass secretly taught himself to read and write. He valued education and believed it was the key for African Americans to improve their lives. Likewise, W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Booker T. Washington all touted education as an important means to gain equality. Most importantly, the roots of movement to establish a separate officer training facility were founded in education. Remember, black college and university students and professors were the ones who originally backed Joel Spingarn in his attempts to establish officer training for African Americans. The Central Committee of Negro College Men (CCNCM) were influential in petitioning Congress for the segregated officer training camp, recruiting volunteers to become the cadets, and gaining support from the black media and the black community. The one thousand civilians enlisted into officer training at Fort Des Moines were college educated. They certainly understood the value of education and the opportunities it could provide in the fight for equality. Additionally, a number of these men who earned their commissions were educators. They returned from war to invest their lives in the future generations of their race.

⁵²⁷ E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 241-272.

⁵²⁸ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History* (1881 rpt. ed. New York: Dover Publications, 2005), 50.

One of these educators, Second Lieutenant Gurney E. Nelson, stood up and spoke against inequality in education in South Carolina. Nelson wrote and published a letter in 1938 denouncing the University of South Carolina's refusal to admit an African American into its law school. Despite the fact that the University maintained its stance and did not admit a black student until 1963, Nelson was undeterred in his fight to gain equality for African Americans in education.⁵²⁹

In the 1940s, Nelson fought to acquire equity in pay for black teachers in South Carolina. He wrote an article, entitled "Improving the Status of the Negro Teacher," attacking South Carolina's attempts to continue racial discrimination against black educators. The piece exposed South Carolina's persistence to racially differentiate between white and black teachers respective to pay. When African American resistance forced South Carolina to change these blatantly racist policies, the state attempted to hide its racism and discrimination in the shroud of testing. It required all teachers in the state to take the National Teacher's Examination for certification. After all educators, black and white, had taken the exam, South Carolina then chose to use the test scores as a system of merit for a pay scale. While a few African Americans, those with access to better educations, scored high enough to receive the higher pay range, most black educators did not. However, all white educators scored into the higher pay range. Thus, South Carolina had a new and legal system to continue discrimination against black educators. Nelson publicized the resurgence of Jim Crow and bigotry in the pay system of South Carolina. His exposé demonstrated that no longer would African Americans stand by idly while racist whites invented new means to continue centuries old discrimination.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 137.

⁵³⁰ Gurney E. Nelson, "Improving the Status of the Negro Teacher," *Journal of Education* (April 1946)

After his military experience, First Lieutenant Thomas M. Gregory pioneered education in the dramatic arts for African Americans. Prior to enlisting in officer training, Gregory graduated from Harvard University where he had been president of the varsity debate team. In 1916, he organized Howard University's Department of Dramatic Art and Public Speaking and served as the department's first director. He returned to the position after World War I and founded the college theater troupe, The Howard Players, in 1919. In 1924 Gregory took over as the supervisor of Negro Schools for Atlantic City, New Jersey. In this capacity he continued to promote drama in education. In 1929 Gregory traveled to eight summer schools in the South to promote the use of drama in education. He lectured on the value of the black community's embracing the new African American playwrights who were offering an alternative to the racist minstrel shows written by white authors of the day.⁵³¹

Gregory served as one of the first leaders of African American drama. As a colleague of T. S. Eliot, Walter Lippmann, and John Reed, Gregory could have ascended to the upper echelons of the arts. Instead, he aspired to bring the arts to the masses and to future generations of African American youth. Gregory was an educator, an advocate of the National Negro Theater Movement, and a former officer of the Ninety-Second Division.⁵³²

Perhaps of all the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment's officers, First Lieutenant Edgar A. Love best embodied this desire to educate the masses. Love, a Methodist Bishop by profession, established a night school at the training camp to help teach illiterate black draftees to read and to write. He was astonished by the number of illiterate African Americans at Camp Meade, Pennsylvania, and believed it was his calling from God to help them. After returning from combat, Love continued his ministry of educating. In 1919 he accepted a position at

⁵³¹ African American Registry, "Thomas M. Gregory," <http://www.aaregistry.com/detail.php?id=2045> (accessed March 11, 2010).

⁵³² Ibid.

Morgan College as a professor of history and the Bible. The school recognized Love's abilities and, a year later, appointed him as principal of the Academy of Morgan College. After two years of serving as principal, Love decided to return to his pastoral career.⁵³³

Love served as pastor of three churches from 1921 to 1931: Grace Methodist Church in Fairmount Heights, Maryland, for fifteen months; John Wesley Methodist Church in Washington, Pennsylvania, for four years; and Asbury Methodist Church in Annapolis, Maryland, for five years. During this time, Love's reputation as an activist grew to the point that Maryland Governor Albert C. Ritchie requested Love join the Maryland Interracial Commission, and the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D. C., offered him their open pastoral position. Love accepted both positions and continued his work of fighting for equality.⁵³⁴

After assuming pastoral leadership over the John Wesley M.E. Church, Love's first attack against discrimination came against the Methodist Church and its denominational policy of racial subjugation. Love inspired support from his congregation and other pastors for the Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, a policy that would allow African Americans to gain power within the denomination by separating the control of white congregations under white bishops and the control of black congregations under black bishops. When Central Jurisdiction passed at the 1936 General Conference, Love spoke out against the procedure of the white delegates' electing the black bishop who would head all the black conferences. His contestation forced a motion for the African American delegates to elect their own bishop. Though it was defeated 195 to 126, Love did succeed in getting the white-favored

⁵³³ J. Samuel Cook, "Of Vision and Power: The Life of Bishop Edgar Amos Love," (Master's Thesis, University of Toledo, 2009), 48-50.

⁵³⁴ Ibid, 50-52.

Dr. Willis J. King removed from the ballot and the seemingly more acceptable candidate of Dr. Alexander P. Shaw elected.⁵³⁵

Love's outspokenness at the conference emboldened the African American delegation and positioned him as the spokesman for its previously disillusioned African American membership. He believed that ministers were the most important people in the black community because the church was "the heart of the Negro's life." Therefore, for Love this calling to lead spiritually included the duty to guide the community socially. In 1952 his responsibilities expanded when he accepted a position as bishop of the Central Jurisdiction.⁵³⁶

Love regretted his earlier support for the Central Jurisdiction when he realized the passing of the motion had established a segregated Methodist Church. At the Methodist Federation for Social Action he proclaimed, "The church at 11 o'clock on any given Sunday is the most segregated institutional organization in the country."⁵³⁷ His new position as bishop enabled him to attack the denomination's segregation head on. In December 1952 Love met with President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower to discuss the president's plans to combat segregation. Eisenhower promised Love to create a commission to study the effects of segregation on minorities, a promise he fulfilled.⁵³⁸ Less than a month after their meeting, in his inaugural address, President Eisenhower stated, "We reject any insinuation that one race or another, one people or another, is in any sense inferior or expendable." Around the same time, at an Emancipation Day celebration in Baltimore, Love declared, "The time is coming when a white man can look at a black man and a black man can look at a white man and each one only

⁵³⁵ Ibid, 55-57.

⁵³⁶ Ibid, 59-62.

⁵³⁷ "Words of the Week," *Jet* May 8, 1952: 18.

⁵³⁸ Cook, "Of Vision and Power: The Life of Bishop Edgar Amos Love," 67.

see men.”⁵³⁹ The similarity in statements demonstrates the like-mindedness of the two men’s aspirations for American race relations. Moreover, these statements prefigured those of Martin Luther King in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

Love maintained his contact with Eisenhower throughout his two terms of office. He wrote letters discussing alleged Biblical support for segregation, religious organizations’ views of civil disobedience, *Brown v. Board the Education* (1954), and the Civil Rights Act of 1960.⁵⁴⁰ He continued his efforts of the 1950s to integrate the United Methodist Church and to end the Central Jurisdiction until, finally, the denomination abolished the segregation of the Central Jurisdiction in 1968.⁵⁴¹ Love also continued his involvement in African American education when the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) elected him president of the organization in 1961.

The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, the same organization in which former First Lieutenant Osceola McKaine had served in a leadership role in late 1930s, established the SCEF as its educational arm in 1946. In 1947, the SCEF became its own separate organization and began a monthly publication, the *Southern Patriot*.⁵⁴² Love utilized his role in the organization to focus the membership on non-violent demonstrations in the South. He petitioned President Eisenhower for the release of SCEF organizer Carl Braden who had been arrested on trumped-up charges in Kentucky in 1959. In 1964, Love retired from both the organization and his position as bishop of the Central Jurisdiction. However, Love continued his fight for education and equality until his death in 1974, serving on the board of trustees for several

⁵³⁹ “Words of the Week,” *Jet* February 5, 1953: 37.

⁵⁴⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, National Archives and Records Administration, Abilene, Kansas, 124-A-1 Segregation [and Desegregation] 1955 & 124-A-1 Segregation [and Desegregation] 1960.

⁵⁴¹ Pamela Crosby, “Chronology of the Central Jurisdiction,” *UMNS Report* (September 2, 2004).

⁵⁴² Boston University, “The Southern Patriot,” <http://www.bu.edu/dbin/mlkjr/collection/detail.php?id=76889&height=400&width=600> (accessed January 22, 2011).

schools, including Morgan College, and involving himself in numerous civil rights organizations.⁵⁴³

Second Lieutenant John B. Cade was another officer who devoted himself to education following World War I. Like Reverend Love, Cade worked to teach illiterate African American draftees to read and write. At Camp Dodge, Iowa, Cade and First Lieutenant Harrison J. Pinkett, previously mentioned as an attorney in Oklahoma, took it upon themselves to get permission from their white superior officers to teach the Alabama draftees. Alerting the white commanding officer to the fact that over one-quarter of the draftees could not write their own names, Cade and Pinkett convinced the commander to mandate the illiterate men to participate in English classes. As a result, 2,300 African American doughboys enrolled and began learning to read and write. Pinkett described the program's early success:

We have night schools running after the day's work of military instruction is over, teaching the illiterate men to read and write. And the boys are learning rapidly...On the first payroll more than fifty per cent of the men signed their names with their mark, although we had been working with them for a month, trying to teach them to sign their names. This month, however, in many cases, we cut the number down to something like ten percent... This does not mean they can read and write, but it does mean that they will learn.⁵⁴⁴

Pinkett and Cade led these same young men in the 366th Infantry overseas during the war. After returning from combat, Cade returned to Atlanta University and completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1921. In 1928 he earned his Master's degree in History from the University of Chicago. In 1929, Cade accomplished two goals in his life that he had sought to complete since his return from France: he published his memoirs of his experiences in the military during World

⁵⁴³ Cook, "Of Vision and Power: The Life of Bishop Edgar Amos Love," 83-87.

⁵⁴⁴ Quoted in Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), 91.

War I, and he began his first job as an educator at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia.⁵⁴⁵ The memoirs, entitled *Twenty-Two Months with "Uncle Sam": Being the Experiences and Observations of a Negro Student Who Volunteered for Military Service Against the Central Powers from June, 1917 to April, 1919*, chronicled Cade's military experiences and defended the service record of the all-black Ninety-Second and Ninety-Third Divisions. He hoped the work would ignite a "larger and nobler effect in the historical study" of the divisions. He also highlighted "the gross ignorance of the drafted men" calling attention to the need to educate African Americans.⁵⁴⁶

His teaching career as a professor at Paine College was short-lived; Cade stayed less than a year before he moved to become principal of the Southern University Laboratory School in Louisiana in 1929. From 1931 to 1939, he served as Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Prairie View College in Texas. In 1939 he returned to Southern University where he became the University's Dean until 1961, when he retired. During his retirement, Cade founded the Archives of Black Louisiana History at Southern University. In honor of his accomplishments as an educator, Southern University named their library after Cade and dedicated it to him in 1987.⁵⁴⁷

Several other officers gained renown with their passion for educating black youth. Abram L. Simpson was noted for being the youngest African American to earn a commission as captain at the age of 23. Simpson also had taught as a chemistry professor at Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Georgia, before enlisting for training at Fort Des Moines. He served as the

⁵⁴⁵ "John Brother Cade," John B. Cade Library, Southern University and A & M College <http://www.lib.subr.edu/data/cade.htm> (accessed March 1, 2010).

⁵⁴⁶ John B. Cade, *Twenty-two Months with "Uncle Sam": Being the Experiences and Observations of a Negro Student Who Volunteered for Military Service Against the Central Powers from June, 1917 to April, 1919* (Atlanta: Robinson-Cofer Co., 1929), 7, 26-27.

⁵⁴⁷ "John Brother Cade," John B. Cade Library, Southern University and A & M College <http://www.lib.subr.edu/data/cade.htm> (accessed March 1, 2010).

president of Allen University in South Carolina from 1932 to 1937 and president of Bethune-Cookman College from 1937 to 1939.⁵⁴⁸ First Lieutenant Oscar G. Lawless returned from his military experience to a lifetime career as a math professor at Huston-Tillotson College in Texas.⁵⁴⁹

Wilfred W. Lawson, a commissioned first lieutenant of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment, returned from overseas to Nashville, Tennessee, where he became a Registrar of Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College, presently known as Tennessee State University. Lawson strove to provide equal education opportunities for African Americans. In honor of his efforts, the school named the agricultural building Lawson Hall in his memory.⁵⁵⁰

Another segment of American society that benefited from the officers of Fort Des Moines and their fight for equality was sports. The significance of sports in America is derived from the athletes' ability to influence culture and society. Sports serve as a unifier and a divider, implanting passion in fans across the nation. Additionally, sports command nation media attention, providing an outlet for athletes to voice their political and social opinions. In the case of the officers of the Ninety-Second Division, sports provided the opportunity to lead social reformation as the forerunners of African American sports and later of their integration.

Cleve Abbott, first lieutenant with the 366th Infantry in World War I, pioneered African American's coaching in college athletics during the early twentieth century. First, he became one of the first African Americans to coach football on the collegiate level. Later, he launched the women's track and field program at Tuskegee. During his tenure there from 1923 to his death in 1955, Abbott successfully coached football, basketball, tennis, and women's track and

⁵⁴⁸ Notable Kentucky African Americans Database "Simpson, Abram Lyon," University of Kentucky Libraries http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/nkaa/record.php?note_id=445 (accessed February 27, 2010).

⁵⁴⁹ "Lawless, Retired Math Teacher, Dies of Heart Attack," *Jet* June 26, 1969: 22.

⁵⁵⁰ Jessie Carney Smith, *Notable Black American Women: Volume 2* (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1996), 398-399.

field. He touched the lives of thousands of young African Americans and inspired them for over three decades while he served as their coach and mentor.

Prior to his commission as a first lieutenant, Abbott received an education at South Dakota State University. He competed in many collegiate sports while at the university and earned fourteen varsity athletic awards from South Dakota State. According to reports from the administration of South Dakota State University, he was most accomplished in football. Immediately following the war, Abbott returned to the United States and remained a commissioned officer in the Army Reserve until 1923 when he was approached by Tuskegee Institute about a university job. Tuskegee hired Abbott as an agricultural chemist and as Director of the Department of Physical Education and Athletics. As part of his duties as director, he became head football coach for Tuskegee.⁵⁵¹

Abbott impressed fans and colleagues with his coaching ability in his first six years at Tuskegee. Over this time he led the Golden Tigers to six undefeated seasons, including a forty-six game win streak. He continued his success in the 1930s when he coached his team to five Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Championships and a Black College National Title in 1930. However, the impact of Abbott's life far exceeds his impressive record of winning football games.⁵⁵²

In 1927, Abbott established the Tuskegee Relays to bring track and field competitions to Tuskegee. He founded the Women's Sports Carnival two years later to support the participation of women in collegiate athletics. Continuing to empower women in sports in 1937, he instituted

⁵⁵¹ "Abbott, Cleveland Leigh (1892-1955)," *Online Encyclopedia of Significant People and Places in African American History*, BlackPast.Org, <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/abbott-cleveland-leigh-1892-1955> (accessed November 2, 2010).

⁵⁵² American Football Coaches' Association, "Former Tuskegee Coach Cleve Abbott Selected as 2005 AFCA Trailblazer Award Winner," http://www.afca.com/SportSelect.dbml?SPSID=69281&SPID=7856&DB_OEM_ID=9300&ATCLID=289205 (accessed November 2, 2010).

the women's track and field program for Tuskegee. As head coach of the Tuskegee Tigerettes, Abbott led the female track and field stars to fourteen Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) National Titles. Furthermore, he mentored many stars of women's track and field, including six Olympic athletes and two gold medal winners, Alice Coachman and Mildred McDaniel. Coachman became the first African American woman to receive an Olympic gold medal when she won the high-jump event in the 1948 London Olympics. Eight years later, McDaniel earned gold by setting a world-record for high-jump in the 1956 Melbourne games. Another Olympic athlete Abbott coached was Nell Jackson. She competed in the 1948 Olympics, and, after her days as an athlete ended, followed Abbott's example by becoming a track and field coach. Jackson became the first African American female to coach an Olympic team by leading the 1956 and 1972 teams.

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Cleve Abbott spearheaded the integration of sports through his career as an administrator and a coach. He boldly pushed both racial and gender incorporation in collegiate athletics. Abbott's farsightedness and his service as a mentor did not go unnoticed. He was inducted posthumously into the South Dakota State University Hall of Fame in 1968, the Tuskegee University Hall of Fame in 1975, the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Hall of Fame in 1992, the Alabama Sport Hall of Fame in 1995, the USA Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1996, and the United States Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches' Association Hall of Fame in 2010. Additionally, Tuskegee honored Abbott by renaming their football stadium for him in 1996.⁵⁵⁴ All of these honors recognize the skill of Abbott as a coach, but they also commend his impact on sports and American culture. In 2005, the American Football Coaches'

⁵⁵³ United States Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches' Association, "USTFCCCA's Hall of Fame Class of 2010 Represents Leadership, Success," <http://www.ustfcca.org/featured/ustfcca-hall-of-fame-class-of-2010-represents-leadership-success> (accessed November 2, 2010).

⁵⁵⁴ "Abbott, Cleveland Leigh (1892-1955)"

Association named him the second annual Trailblazer Award winner. This award highlighted the legacy of Abbott as a minority coach and his contributions that gained prominence for African American athletes through their success and media attention.⁵⁵⁵

Cleve Abbott's life as a coach and mentor exhibited his passion for promoting his race and for reaching for racial equality. He served as a role model for his athletes, demanding their best athletically and academically. Abbott encouraged them to challenge themselves and to challenge society. The result of his impassioned attitude was a national awareness of minority athletes. He contributed to the nation's acceptance of minority coaches, female track and field athletics, and African American Olympians. Through the success of Cleve Abbott and his athletes, America became less segregated and more unified.

Another officer who influenced the national emergence of African Americans as world-class athletes was Captain Anderson F. Pitts. He stayed in the Army following World War I and commanded the all black 184th Field Artillery as a colonel in World War II.⁵⁵⁶ During his military career, Pitts commanded a young man named Ralph Metcalfe who had enlisted in 1926 at the age of sixteen. As the Regimental Athletics Director, Pitts was responsible for getting Metcalfe and the rest of the 8th Regiment to try different sporting events for exercise. Metcalfe performed well in many of these athletic activities, but he excelled in running. With Pitts's encouragement, Metcalfe began running competitively. He was so good that in 1932 he became an Olympic athlete, and in the 1932 games, Metcalfe won Silver in the 100 meter dash and

⁵⁵⁵ American Football Coaches' Association, "Former Tuskegee Coach Cleve Abbott Selected as 2005 AFCA Trailblazer Award Winner"

⁵⁵⁶ "The United States Army," *Crisis* (February 1942): 67.

Bronze in the 200 meter. In 1936 Jesse Owens and he took Gold and Silver, respectively, and won the team Gold in the 4x100 meter relay.⁵⁵⁷

After his racing career, Metcalfe returned to the Army. Following in the footsteps of his mentor, Colonel Pitts, Metcalfe earned his commission as a first lieutenant. He then became the Director of Athletics for Camp Plauche, Louisiana. After World War II, he continued leading the race as an elected Congressman of Illinois in 1970. Thanks to Pitts's encouragement, African Americans gained a champion, a hero, and a leader in the person of Ralph Metcalfe.⁵⁵⁸

The officers of Fort Des Moines who returned to serve as educators and coaches served as mentors to future generations of African Americans. They fought for the right for African Americans to earn an education and then implemented programs to educate the brothers and sisters of their race. They encouraged their pupils to reach for their dreams, and, in the case of Abbott and Pitts, their protégés accomplished goals previously undreamed. Again, the officers of Fort Des Moines had answered the call—leading their fellow African Americans toward social and economic equality, breaking down the walls of segregation, leading the way to integration.

⁵⁵⁷ “Ralph H. Metcalfe,” Illinois National Guard <http://www.il.ngb.army.mil/History/famous/metcalf.aspx> (accessed March 31, 2010).

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER 8: THE CONTINUED FIGHT TO

INTEGRATE THE MILITARY

One of the most obvious, but least discussed, influences the officers of Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment had on post-war America was to desegregate the United States military. Though the men chose to participate in a segregated training camp, African Americans had originally sought to reopen West Point to integration in 1915. Moreover, they maintained this objective in their strategy of creating a segregated officers' camp. The African American commissioned officers of World War I endeavored to prove their worth in combat, to demonstrate the equal merit of black and white soldiers, and to work toward recognition, respect, equality, and integration. Furthermore, when racist white military officials and policymakers circumvented their efforts by failing to provide adequate supplies, by neglecting appropriate support, by changing commanding officers, by fracturing their training, and by belittling their service, the officers persisted in their fight for against discrimination and prejudice demanding the recognition of their equality throughout and after the war.

Henry O. Atwood, captain of the 368th Infantry in France during World War I, significantly altered the military experience for thousands of young African American men wanting to serve in the military. Atwood joined the United States Army during the Spanish-American war and served alongside Colonel Charles Young during his appointment as military

attaché in Liberia. In 1925, the Army Reserve commissioned Atwood, and he became an instructor of military science and tactics in the Cadet Corps. This position allowed him the opportunity to influence the future of African Americans in the military. In 1925, Atwood began his career as a cadet instructor at Armstrong High School. He served Armstrong for eight years before being transferred to Dunbar High School in 1933. In 1934, his exemplary service to corps justified his promotion to the rank of lieutenant colonel, and, in 1939, the Army Reserve appointed him as head of the Cadet Corps for all the black high schools in of Washington, D. C. Dunbar alumni who drilled in Atwood's Cadet Corps remembered him as an encouraging, passionate, and pleasant man. Atwood's service with Colonel Young had inspired him, and he always kept an eye open for a talented black youth to serve as Young's successor. Atwood envisioned a young man who could thrive at West Point or break Annapolis's color barrier—a man that could follow in Young's legacy and serve as a symbol of African American pride.⁵⁵⁹

Wesley Brown, a young man at Dunbar High School, also had an admiration for Colonel Young and the ambition he embodied. Brown's godfather had been a Buffalo soldier in the Tenth Cavalry and fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. He instilled his respect and awe for Colonel Young in his godson: "There was one person that he admired more than anyone in the whole world and that was Colonel Charles Young."⁵⁶⁰ Brown joined the student cadets at Dunbar High School and demonstrated a desire to attend West Point due to his godfather's influence.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁹ Robert J. Schneller, Jr., *Breaking the Color Barrier: The U.S. Naval Academy's First Black Midshipmen* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 79, 173.

⁵⁶⁰ Wesley Brown, interview by Renee Poussaint, National Visionary Leadership Project Oral History, March 3, 2007.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Atwood looked for young black men from Washington, D. C., who had the intelligence, determination, leadership, and discipline to become the future military leaders of America. In the 1940s, he met Wesley Brown in Dunbar's Cadet Corps. As a student cadet, Brown demonstrated much potential. Colonel Atwood appointed him head of the Dunbar battalion his senior year and encouraged him to consider applying to West Point. Though Brown entertained the idea, he was too young to enter West Point upon his high school graduation. Instead, he qualified for a special training program in the Army Reserve at Howard University. He planned to apply for West Point during his freshman year of college, but circumstances created the opportunity for Brown to become the first African American admitted to the Naval Academy. Atwood and another former officer of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment, First Lieutenant Victor J. Tulane, advised Brown to accept the appointment. Following the encouragement of Atwood and Tulane, who knew Brown as his Sunday school superintendent, Brown accepted the appointment and in June 1945 entered Annapolis.⁵⁶²

Brown endured discrimination from white midshipmen, resistance from instructors, and even a plot to force his dismissal by giving him excessive demerits in his efforts of breaking through the Naval Academy's color barrier. All along the way, Colonel Atwood offered words of wisdom and encouragement. Assisted by Atwood, policymakers, and military leaders, Brown successfully completed his naval education and graduated from the Naval Academy on June 3, 1949.⁵⁶³

Not only did Atwood affect the lives of many young black men in the Washington, D. C., area, he also fought to change the system for all African Americans by lobbying for total desegregation of the military. In 1948, when President Harry Truman issued Executive Order

⁵⁶² Schneller, Jr., *Breaking the Color Barrier*, 168, 173.

⁵⁶³ Wesley Brown interview, National Visionary Leadership Project Oral History.

19981, effectively desegregating America's Armed Forces, the black media and columnists like A. Phillip Randolph had won a victory by pressuring Truman with articles protesting segregation and organizations like the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service.⁵⁶⁴ However, Lieutenant Colonel Atwood and other long time advocates for military desegregation had played a vital role as well.

A major part of President Truman's order in 1948 was his establishment of a committee to investigate discrimination in the Armed Forces and to make recommendations to better implement its integration. Almost immediately after the committee released its report, Atwood penned an article praising its efforts and calling for continual oversight to ensure integration and equality were achieved in the military. Atwood had witnessed "misinterpretation or pigeonholing" of policies promising equality, thereby crippling them to "little or no effect" during World War II. He believed a civilian investigative committee could prevent a continuance of this blatant disregard of orders and urged Truman to form such a council. Atwood also highlighted that at the time of his article's publication the military continued to categorically stamp "RACE" on personal documents despite direct orders against the practice.⁵⁶⁵

Atwood relentlessly fought for equality for African Americans within the military. He believed that with integration of the military, inspirational leaders of the black community would develop within the military. His personal experience with Colonel Charles Young motivated him to seek young African American men with the characteristics to integrate the armed forces and society. Atwood utilized his position as a Lieutenant Colonel of the Army Reserve to enact change and to encourage others to do as well. His service directly led to the integration of Annapolis and collectively to Truman's desegregation of the Armed Forces in 1948.

⁵⁶⁴ "President Truman Wipes Out Segregation in Armed Forces," *Chicago Defender* July 31, 1948: 1.

⁵⁶⁵ Henry O. Atwood, "Freedom to Serve. Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces," *The Journal of Negro History* 35, No. 4 (October 1950): 461-463.

Similarly, officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment also stepped in to fight for equality in the Air Force. A key force behind the integration of the Air Force came from First Lieutenant William J. Powell. As an engineering student at Illinois University and while in France, Powell became fascinated by flight and the possibility of becoming a pilot. After a gas attack severely wounded Lieutenant Powell, he returned to Chicago, Illinois, to finish his degree and to fulfill his dreams of flight. Denied entrance into the Army Air Corps and local flight schools around Chicago because of race, Powell persisted until the Los Angeles School of Flight accepted him in 1928. Los Angeles, California, had become an important center for African Americans who sought training in aviation. It provided a safe haven for black aviators to promote aviation without the same restrictions found in the bigoted North and in the Jim Crow South.⁵⁶⁶

Before the late 1920s, blacks had been forced to travel to France for instruction. The most noteworthy African American aviator to achieve a flying education in France was Bessie Coleman. Coleman had moved to Chicago in 1915. When she heard veterans return with stories of planes flying overhead during war, she instantly became addicted to the idea of becoming a pilot. Coleman took classes in Chicago to learn French and then traveled to Paris in 1920. In 1922, she became the first African American to obtain an international pilot's license.⁵⁶⁷

Coleman, with her "New Negro" ideals, inspired Lieutenant Powell to strive for his dream—to soar in the sky. He wrote in his 1934 published autobiography, *Black Wings*, "Because of Bessie Coleman, we have overcome that which was much worse than racial barrier. We have overcome the barriers within ourselves and dared to dream." Furthermore, Powell

⁵⁶⁶ Black Past, "Powell, William J., and The Bessie Coleman Aero (1897-1942)," Black Past Online Encyclopedia <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/william-j-powell-and-bessie-coleman-aero-1897-1942> (accessed March 31, 2010).

⁵⁶⁷ Doris L. Rich, *Queen Bess: Daredevil Aviator* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1993), 37.

respected Coleman so much that he named the aviation club and flying school he founded after her. The Bessie Coleman Aero Club spread awareness in the black community about the possibilities of African Americans in flight. Powell argued, “There is a better job and a better future in aviation for Negroes than in any other industry, and the reason is this: aviation is just beginning its period of growth, and if we get into now, while it is still uncrowded, we can grow as aviation grows.” Powell and the Bessie Coleman Aero Club sponsored the first all-black air show held in American on Labor Day of 1931.⁵⁶⁸

As one author put it, “Powell meant to fly around Jim Crow.”⁵⁶⁹ He realized that through aviation African Americans might find a means to economic independence. By 1932, Powell had earned licenses as a pilot, a navigator, and an aeronautical engineer. Despite the Great Depression, Powell’s tireless labor made the Bessie Coleman Flying School in Los Angeles a success. He offered scholarships to African American youth and enticed black celebrities like Joe Louis and Duke Ellington to promote the school financially and with their celebrity. To further promote African American aviation, Powell created a film about a young African American man who wanted to become a pilot and published the *Craftsmen Aero-News*, a monthly journal spotlighting successes in black aviation. He vocally stood up for equality, writing in *Black Wings*, “I do not ally myself with the Negro who begs a White man for a job. I ally myself with that . . . young progressive Negro who believes he has the brain, the ability, to carve out his own destiny.”⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ Von Hardesty and William J. Powell, *Black Aviator: The Story of William J. Powell: A New Edition of William J. Powell’s Black Wings* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

⁵⁶⁹ African American Registry, “William J. Powell,” African American Registry: A Non-Profit Organization <http://www.aaregistry.com/detail.php?id=2899> (accessed March 31, 2010).

⁵⁷⁰ Hardesty and Powell, *Black Aviator*

Powell served as a pioneer in black aviation; he called for equality and full participation for African Americans as pilots, mechanics, and businessmen. He spearheaded African American flight. In 1940, a group of several other officers from World War I joined with Powell to help secure equality in the Air Corps and other branches of service. Charles Hamilton Houston, Major C. Campbell Johnson, Ralph Mizelle, James E. Scott, Robert W. Fearing, and Harry Wilson, all former officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment joined a coalition fighting to gain the admission of African Americans into the Air Corps.⁵⁷¹

The committee on which these officers served fought for two amendments to the War Department Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941. After Congress passed the bill in April 1940, Robert Vann, editor and publisher of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, organized the committee to lobby for a mandate that African Americans be allowed in all branches of the military. The first amendment proposed an instilled quota system that would require all military branches to maintain a ten percent minimum of African American enlistments. The second amendment required that ten percent of the funding appropriations for training Air Corps cadets be allocated for African Americans seeking to become pilots and mechanics in the corps. Unfortunately, despite obtaining an opportunity to testify before Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, Vann's committee failed. The Senate passed the War Department Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941 without the amendments.⁵⁷²

However, the committee of veteran officers refused to retreat from their position that African Americans should be allowed in all the armed forces. They continued to pressure President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the War Department. Members of the committee wrote letters to politicians and the black press. Former officers Charles Hamilton Houston and George

⁵⁷¹ Lawrence P. Scott and William M. Womack, *Double V: The Civil Rights Struggle of the Tuskegee Airmen* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, 1998), 112.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 112-116.

S. Schuyler wrote their influential articles to rally the support of the black community and publicize the bigotry of the War Department.⁵⁷³ Finally they achieved victory when the Air Corps began training black pilots and mechanics at Tuskegee following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

As a result of the efforts of these men, President Roosevelt created a conference to discuss racial integration of the Armed Forces during World War II. One of the men summoned by the president to participate in this discussion was a highly respected physician from Chicago, Illinois, and a former officer candidate of Fort Des Moines, First Lieutenant Clarence H. Payne. Payne had left his life as a doctor in Chicago to join the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment in June 1917. He served in the war as a highly respected officer and was twice elected as Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of Illinois upon returning from combat.⁵⁷⁴ Most notably, Payne served as a leader of black physicians at the first meeting of African American health care professionals and War Department officials in October of 1940. The meeting called attention to the military's history of racial discrimination and highlighted these men's personal experiences during World War I and afterward as veterans.⁵⁷⁵ At the Roosevelt conference Payne attempted to convince the president to integrate the military.⁵⁷⁶ Although it would take President Harry Truman to ultimately desegregate America's Armed Forces, Payne's participation in this cause should not be overlooked. The efforts of black professionals and former African American officers convinced Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 8802, outlawing racial discrimination in the defense industry.⁵⁷⁷ Without the foresight and commitment of

⁵⁷³ See below, 294-197.

⁵⁷⁴ "This Week in Black History," *Jet* January 22, 1977: 10.

⁵⁷⁵ Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Professionals and Race Consciousness: Origins of the Civil Rights Movement, 1890-1950," *The Journal of American History* 89, No. 4 (March 2003): 1283.

⁵⁷⁶ "This Week in Black History," *Jet* January 22, 1977:10.

⁵⁷⁷ Hine, "Black Professionals and Race Consciousness," 1287.

William J. Powell, Clarence H. Payne, and the officers in Robert Vann's committee, African Americans would not have advanced toward equality in the military before World War II. Most certainly, without these men's efforts, the Tuskegee airmen would not have been established.

Some officers from the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment continued their military careers and fought for civil rights and equality in smaller roles. These men fought against Jim Crow at the grass roots level, influencing policy changes from the bottom-up. They loyally served the country while never backing down from the fight against bigotry and discrimination. First Lieutenant Walter H. Mazyck began his military career at Fort Des Moines as a lawyer. He graduated the officer training camp, earned his commission, and served valiantly in World War I. After returning from combat, Mazyck continued his army career as a captain in the United States Reserve Corps. Additionally, Mazyck practiced law during this time for the firm of Love, Johnson, and Mazyck. However, this Reserve Corps commission and legal career was short-lived as Mazyck gave up his commission and legal practice to join the Navy.⁵⁷⁸

In the Navy Mazyck continued his fight for equality and civil rights. Using official documents that only a government official could examine, Mazyck began writing histories of famous presidents and their sentiments and dealings with African Americans. The first book Mazyck published, *George Washington and the Negro*, highlighted President George Washington and his attitudes toward African Americans. At the time of his death, Mazyck was working on a similar book detailing President Abraham Lincoln and his role in African American history. Additionally, before his death, editor Benjamin Brawley had solicited Mazyck to write a biography of Colonel Charles Young in a series of prominent African Americans, *Negro Builders and Heroes*. Fortunately, Mazyck had completed his research and most of his writing on his subject before his passing; so, his work was included in the series.

⁵⁷⁸ "Notes," *The Journal of Negro History* 18, No. 4 (October 1933): 488-489.

Moreover, his historical writings led the way for other historians to record the history of African Americans and to delve into America's legacy of struggle for equality.⁵⁷⁹

Captain Howard D. Queen served as a career member of the army. Prior to World War I, Queen served with the Tenth Cavalry.⁵⁸⁰ In June 1917, he traveled to Des Moines, where he earned his commission as captain. From there, Queen was stationed with the 366th Infantry Regiment. He trained at Camp Dodge, Iowa, before being deployed to France in 1918. After World War I, Queen stayed in the military and the 366th Infantry. By World War II, Queen achieved the rank of colonel. Colonel Queen led the 366th Infantry as commanding officer when they disembarked in Europe in March of 1944.⁵⁸¹ Queen's honorable service to the nation for over thirty years not only proved his loyalty to his country but also helped develop reliable, courageous African American soldiers for both World War I and World War II.

Captain Moody Staten of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment also decided to stay in the Army after World War I. Stationed in California after the war, Moody rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and commanded his own segregated unit. California Governor Culbert L. Olson, who preferred having black Californians separated from white servicemen in his state, attempted to hide his prejudice in his support for Moody during World War II when California faced integration issues after enlisting and dismissing five African American men from the Pittsburgh State Guard. However, Lieutenant Colonel Staten joined the National Military Officers Association and the California Citizens Military Affairs Committee (CCMAC) to denounce segregation in the armed forces and forced Governor Olson to honor California's state law prohibiting racial discrimination. Staten and other Californians continued the fight

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ "Buffalo Soldiers in the Punitive Expedition into Mexico, 1916-1917," <http://www.portraitsinblack.com/buffalosoldierpunitive.htm> (accessed April 10, 2010).

⁵⁸¹ Shelby L. Stanton, *Order of Battle, U.S. Army, World War II* (Novato, California: California Presidio Press, 1984), 252.

until President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948, desegregating the military.⁵⁸²

Another officer who stayed in the military to continue the fight for equality in the Armed Services was Lieutenant Colonel Edward Dugger. He founded the 372nd Infantry, one of nation's all African American National Guard units, in Boston, Massachusetts.⁵⁸³ Climbing from first lieutenant to captain by the end of World War I, Dugger quickly moved up to lieutenant colonel by 1922.⁵⁸⁴ His position in the military allowed him to fight for desegregation until his untimely death in 1939 at the age of 44.⁵⁸⁵

As mentioned in the opening chapters, this legacy of fighting for equality within the military had existed as long as America had been fighting wars. Some officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment had fought previously and proved their allegiance, bravery, and valor. Others had a family legacy of service in the military or began their own tradition with their service.

One officer who fought prior to World War I to prove the equal value of African Americans' military service was Lewis Broadus. He began his military career in 1891 and had served twenty-six consecutive years before requesting a transfer to Fort Des Moines to become a commissioned officer. During that time, Broadus fought in Cuba and was stationed in Hawaii and the Philippines.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸² Charles Johnson, Jr., "Postwar Reconstruction and Realignment," *African American Soldiers in the National Guard: Recruitment and Deployment During Peacetime and War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992).

⁵⁸³ Kristina Ceruzzi, "A Tribute to the Life of: Madeleine Dugger Andrews, 1922-1986," paper including oral history of relatives of Lieutenant Colonel Edward Dugger (May 2005).

⁵⁸⁴ National Guard Bureau, *Official National Guard Register for 1922* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1992), 130.

⁵⁸⁵ Ceruzzi, "A Tribute to the Life of: Madeleine Dugger Andrews, 1922-1986"

⁵⁸⁶ "An Army Sergeant," *The Crisis* (June 1917): 84.

Broadus served courageously and proved both his valor and commitment to his nation time and time again. However, one particular incident during the Spanish-American War demonstrated the bravery of this man and helped quiet racist dissent about the quality of African Americans as soldiers. On July 3, 1906, Broadus saved the lives of four men during combat. Risking his own life, Broadus recovered the horses of several dismounted officers and rescued the men from harm.⁵⁸⁷ For this valorous deed, President Theodore Roosevelt awarded Broadus a certificate of merit in 1906 for “coolness, presence of mind, and bravery” in saving the life of Sergeant J. M. Thompson of Fort Niobrara, Nebraska. Later, Congress awarded Broadus the Distinguished Service Cross for the action in March 1931.⁵⁸⁸

Even after the Spanish-American War, Broadus desired to continue his military career, to serve his nation loyally, and to prove the valor of black troops. For these reasons, he entered the training camp at Fort Des Moines in 1917. There he demonstrated his military experience and became one of the few men to earn a commission as captain. Captain Broadus then traveled to France and fought valiantly with the Ninety-Second Division, proving the worth of African Americans in combat.

First Lieutenant Johnson C. Whittaker fulfilled his father’s dream by receiving an officer’s commission from Fort Des Moines. Whittaker’s father, Johnson Chestnut Whittaker, became one of the first African Americans to enroll at West Point during the late 1870s. The elder Johnson persevered through the final years slavery in Camden, South Carolina, after his birth in 1858. In 1880, his fourth year at West Point, several of his fellow cadets brutally attacked Whittaker in his room. The only black cadet attending the U.S. Military Academy at that time, Whittaker received the full brunt of the racist assault. The assailants mercilessly

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Military Times, “Lewis Broadus,” Military Times Halls of Valor, <http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=15788> (accessed December 8, 2010).

slashed Whittaker's face, hands, and ears with a razor while reportedly taunting, "like we do hogs down South." Additionally, they knocked him unconscious by smashing a mirror over his head.⁵⁸⁹

Adding insult to injury, the Army physician ruled that Whittaker's injuries were self-inflicted. The officials at West Point charged Whittaker with faking the attack to discredit the military. They expelled and court-martialed the young cadet. Two years later, West Point President Chester A. Arthur overturned the court-martial, but Whittaker never received the commission he deserved.⁵⁹⁰ First Lieutenant Johnson C. Whittaker, known as John to his family, fulfilled his father's dream by graduating from Des Moines in 1917. Later, his brother Miller also became a commissioned officer, and John Whittaker's son, Peter Whittaker, continued the family legacy by serving as a Tuskegee Airmen in World War II.⁵⁹¹ Johnson began his family's legacy of fighting discrimination by enrolling in West Point despite openly being scorned by fellow white cadets. John learned from his father's example and fulfilled his aspirations by graduating from Fort Des Moines. John passed his family tradition of confronting segregation through service to the nation down to his son Miller, thus, demonstrating the overwhelming, compelling influence that the officers of Fort Des Moines had in inspiring future generations of African Americans.

Several other officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment instilled the family tradition of fighting for equality through military service into their sons. Second Lieutenant James B. Morris, Sr., who returned home to Iowa to establish a successful law practice and to own the influential *Iowa Bystander* black newspaper, inspired his son to continue

⁵⁸⁹ "Black Cadet Forced Out in Racist Attack gets Posthumous West Point Commission," *Jet* August 7, 1995.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ "Seeking Fair Deal for a Black Cadet," *New York Times* January 31, 1994: A-6.

the family tradition of military service. James B. Morris, Jr., followed in his father's footsteps by aspiring to become one the first African Americans to enter into the Air Corps, but when his admission was rejected in 1938, he entered Army basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Successfully completing his training, Morris, Jr., earned his sergeant stripes and was assigned to Camp Brisbane, Australia. There, Sergeant Morris trained to become an intelligence officer. He graduated officer training first in his class of 700 and was rewarded with a commission as a first lieutenant.⁵⁹²

The Army stationed First Lieutenant Morris with General Walt Krueger's Sixth Army, First Corps "Alamo Force." During this assignment, Morris fought valiantly in fierce combat in New Guinea and the Philippines. For his meritorious service, Morris earned a promotion to captain and received an honor appropriate and a bit ironic for the son of a Fort Des Moines graduate. He became the first African American officer to command white troops in combat. Leading his commandos behind Japanese lines, Morris headed operations gathering reconnaissance and capturing enemy officers for interrogation. Under his leadership the specialized unit served brilliantly and earned him an the opportunity to service stateside as an undercover agent infiltrating the Japanese "Black Dragon Society." Morris's distinguished service disproved any stereotypical misconceptions about an African American's ability to lead white troops in combat.⁵⁹³

Another example of an officer of the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment beginning a family tradition of military service comes from Captain Vance H. Marchbanks. He served in Wyoming as part of the Tenth Cavalry before heading to Fort Des Moines to earn his commission as a captain. Vance H. Marchbanks, Jr., was born in 1905 at Fort Washikie,

⁵⁹² Silag, ed. *Outside In*, 116.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid*, 116-117.

Wyoming, where his father had been stationed. His father's commissioning and career must have had quite an effect on young Vance. Marchbanks, Jr., received an excellent education and eventually earned his Medical Degree. However, serving as a doctor did not fulfill his desire to follow his father's footsteps. In 1941 Marchbanks enlisted in the Tuskegee Airmen. He served as a flight surgeon in World War II and the Korean War. Most notably, in 1960 the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) appointed him as flight surgeon for the Mercury Project. Marchbanks oversaw the vital signs of John Glenn on his famous February 1962 orbit.

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Many of the officers of the Seventeenth Provisional Training imparted to their children a desire to fight for equality. Some of the children, like Percy H. Steele, Jr., champion of civil rights as leader of the Bay Area Urban League, benefited more from their fathers' examples of resistance.⁵⁹⁵ Meanwhile others like Joseph Howard, son of First Lieutenant Charles P. Howard who rose to the rank of captain during World War II and commanded an integrated military police battalion, directly benefited from their fathers' breaking the military officer barrier.⁵⁹⁶

These former officers and those who stayed connected to the military being on active duty continued the fight for equality and integration in the armed forces long after their combat days. They demonstrated their leadership abilities as the vanguard battling for the promises of democracy within America's Armed Forces. They laid the foundation for Wesley Brown and the Tuskegee Airmen. They were the inspirational leaders of their race that Lieutenant Colonel Atwood envisioned following the model of Colonel Charles Young, and these officers

⁵⁹⁴ Betty Kaplan Gubert, Miriam Sawyer and Caroline M. Fannin, *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science* (Westport, Conn.: The Oryx Press, 2002), 204-206.

⁵⁹⁵ Elizabeth Bell, "Percy H. Steele Jr., Urban League Leader," *Chronicle* 30 (March 2002).

⁵⁹⁶ Silag, ed. *Outside In*, 117.

empowered the young men and women of their race to become the future role models in a legacy of resistance against prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. suggested the measure of a man be gauged by how he stood in periods of trial and tribulation. He presents the Good Samaritan from the Bible and President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation as examples of men who cared more for others than themselves. King also includes the black professional in his argument: "The Negro professional does not ask, 'What will happen to my secure position, my middle-class status, or my personal safety, if I participate in the movement to end the system of segregation?' but 'What will happen to the cause of justice and the masses of Negro people . . . if I do not participate actively and courageously in the movement?'"⁵⁹⁷

This thought conveyed by Dr. King in his sermon illustrates the mindset of the men who volunteered for officer training at Fort Des Moines. This was especially true of the 1,000 college-educated cadets who willingly left their lives as middle class, black professionals to serve as the leaders of their race in the Army. Furthermore, all 1,250 African Americans who enlisted in the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment sought to overcome prejudice by proving themselves as adept officers and demonstrating that black men could command soldiers in combat just as well as any white man.

The motto of the Ninety-Second Division, "Deeds, not Words," further portrays the attitude of these men who, without reluctance, sacrificed to fight for democracy abroad in hopes

⁵⁹⁷ King, Jr., *Strength to Love*, 34-35.

of democracy at home. They served their nation during World War I despite facing prejudice and discrimination from the segments of the Army and segments of the nation as a whole. They endured these indignities resigned to the belief that they and the brothers and sisters of their race would be rewarded for loyalty with equality.

Unfortunately, these officers returned from war disillusioned with the lack of progress towards ending segregation and discrimination. Though frustrated by what they viewed as a betrayal of their service and of the democracy they had fought to defend, some officers took on the mentality of the “New Negro.” They accepted the ideas of a new militant radicalism and determined that violence might be necessary to achieve their goals of equality and justice. These officers embraced leadership roles and willingly served as the voices communicating the demands of the black community.

Alongside them were former officers who decided to combat segregation and discrimination through legal means. These men attacked the ordinances, laws, and legal precedents that secured the inequality of segregation. Through their efforts, the legality of segregation was defeated; first in housing, then in politics, and the ultimate defeat of “separate but equal” through education. Additionally these men defended their fellow African Americans from prejudiced policemen, trumped up charges, and baseless civil cases. They assisted organizations like the NAACP who sought to end racial segregation, disfranchisement, and lynching through legal means. In courtrooms and in communities, their activism dismantled Jim Crow and brought justice and democracy to postwar America.

Other former officers invested their lives in the battle of providing African Americans with a quality education. These educators and coaches served as mentors to future generations. They encouraged the youth of the black community to strive for their dreams, even if they had

been previously unattainable. Fighting for equal programs in education and sports, they succeeded in providing young black men and women with new opportunities, and, in turn, the successes of their pupils tore down stereotypes of race inferiority and brought America steps closer to true social integration.

In addition to the activism already mentioned, the officers of Fort Des Moines stayed true to their original goal—to integrate the military. Throughout their civilian battles, they never lost sight of the segregation and subsequent discrimination that was taking place in the military following World War I. During the interwar period they campaigned to open all branches of service to African Americans, and when America was approaching involvement in World War II, they seized the opportunity to fight for integration. Realizing that the United States needed the loyalty of black America, they sought to ensure that it would come at a cost—equality. Through their efforts African Americans were able to continue earning their commissions as officers and, finally, integrate America’s armed forces.

Certainly the black officers who enlisted in the Seventeenth Provisional Training Regiment and served in the Ninety-Second Division proved their motto true in their actions. They returned from war determined to continue their fight to change America. They served their race as leaders and motivators, aspiring to be the “Talented Tenth” of whom W. E. B. Du Bois spoke and uplifting their race while “raising themselves up.” Through legal means, journalism, outspokenness, education, the establishment of organizations, and their military service these men dismantled Jim Crow and fought for equality during and after World War I.

Their experiences with a prejudiced and discrimination during their service in the Army served as the catalyst that provoked them to action. The black doughboys had encountered the potential benefits of equality in their relationships with the French but were disgruntled by the

discrimination they faced from some white officers and soldiers while in France. The continual denial of democracy in America after the war reinforced the officers' conviction that Jim Crow, segregation, and discrimination would not voluntarily disappear—leaders were needed to force change.

The officers of Fort Des Moines were determined to return to post-war America as the vanguard fighting for civil rights. Their service in the Army had honed their leadership skills. As good leaders they kept the masses focused on the goal and led by example. After analyzing these men and their service to the nation and to their race throughout their lives, one can only imagine that Dr. King would have evaluated the black officers of World War I as men of great worth. They demonstrated a continual attitude of sacrifice for the good of their brothers and sisters. Their actions helped pave the way for an end to segregation and injustice.

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- “Fighting for America and Civil Rights: African American Soldiers of World War I,” Civil Rights Conference. University of Tennessee at Martin, February, 2004.
- “William Henry Hastie,” Civil Rights Conference. University of Tennessee at Martin, February, 2003.

PUBLICATIONS

Encyclopedia Entries:

- “Military Mission of the Space Shuttle Atlantis” for *The Encyclopedia of Modern Middle East Wars: A Social, Political, and Military History* (Santana Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio publishers). Edited by Paul Pierpaoli & Spencer C. Tucker, 2010.
- “Night Vision Imaging Systems” for *The Encyclopedia of Modern Middle East Wars: A Social, Political, and Military History* (Santana Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio publishers). Edited by Paul Pierpaoli & Spencer C. Tucker, 2010.
- “Stealth Technology” for *The Encyclopedia of Modern Middle East Wars: A Social, Political, and Military History* (Santana Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio publishers). Edited by Paul Pierpaoli & Spencer C. Tucker, 2010.
- “Charlie Pride” for *The Mississippi Encyclopedia* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi). Edited by Ted Ownby & Charles Reagan Wilson, forthcoming.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

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- Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, 2004- Present
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PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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- 2005 Student Government Association Election Commissioner, University of Tennessee at Martin
- 2004 Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society Student Vice President, Martin Chapter 117, University of Tennessee at Martin
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