



BRIEFLY

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SPECIAL EDITION: BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The Seventh Judicial District WorkForce Diversity Committee has put together some interesting articles about the history of African Americans in Times of War. Please enjoy these articles.

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) announced their 2018 theme of Black History: African Americans in Times of War.

In Times of War commemorates the centennial of the end of the First World War in 1918 and explores the complex meanings and implications of this global struggle. The First World War was termed initially by many as “The Great War,” “the war to end all wars,” and the war “to make the world safe for democracy,” those very concepts provide a broad, useful framework for focusing on African Americans during multiple wars from the Revolutionary War Era to that of the present War against Terrorism. Times of War must inevitably provide the framework for many stories related to African American soldiers, veterans, and civilians. This is a theme filled with paradoxes of valor and defeat, of civil rights opportunities and setbacks, of struggles abroad and at home, of artistic creativity and repression, and of catastrophic loss of life and the righteous hope for peace.



The theme suggests that contemporary conditions are cause for critical pause in considerations and studies. These issues include: opportunities for advancement and repression during wartime, the roles of civil rights and Black liberation organizations in the struggle abroad and at home; African American businesses, women, religious institutions, the Black press; the struggle to integrate the military; experiences in the military during segregation/apartheid and integration; health development; migration and urban development; educational opportunities; veterans experiences once they returned home; how Black soldiers and veterans are documented and memorialized within public and private spaces; the creation of African American Veteran of Foreign War posts, cultures and aesthetics of dissent; global/international discourse; impact and influence of the Pan African Congress, the Black Power movement and the Black Panther Party; and the topographies and spaces of Black soldiers’ rebellion. These diverse stories reveal war’s impact not only on men and women in uniform but on the larger African American community.



From HistoryNet.com:

African Americans In The Civil War

African-Americans served in the Civil War on both the Union and Confederate side. In the Union army, over 179,000 African American men served in over 160 units, as well as more serving in the Navy and in support positions. This number comprised of both northern free African Americans and runaway slaves from the South who enlisted to fight. In the Confederacy, African-Americans were still slaves and they served mostly in labor positions. By 1865, the South allowed slaves to enlist but very few actually did.

African-Americans In the Union Army

At the onset of the Civil War, free black men rushed to volunteer for service with the Union forces. Although African-Americans had served in the army and navy during the American Revolution and in the War of 1812 (few, if any served in the Mexican War), they were not permitted to enlist because of a 1792 law that barred them from bearing arms in the U.S. Army. President Abraham Lincoln also feared that accepting black men into the military would cause border states like Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri to secede. Free black men were finally permitted to enlist late in 1862, following the passage of the Second Confiscation and Militia Act, which freed slaves who had masters in the Confederate Army, and Lincoln's signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. By May 1863, the Bureau of Colored Troops was established to manage black enlistees. Recruitment was low until active efforts were made to enlist black volunteers—leaders like Frederick Douglass encouraged free black men to volunteer as a way to ensure eventual full citizenship.

The First Black Regiments

The first authorized black regiments—designated colored troops—consisted of recruits from Massachusetts, Tennessee, and South Carolina, the latter in areas under Union control, of course. In May 1863, the Corps d' Afrique was formed in Louisiana by Union major general Nathaniel Banks. He planned for it to consist of 18 regiments, infantry, artillery and cavalry, with engineers and mobile hospitals.

Confederacy—General Robert E. Lee wrote "The chief source of information to the enemy is through our negroes."



Black Union soldiers did not receive equal pay or equal treatment. They were paid \$10 a month, with \$3 deducted from that pay for clothing—white soldiers received \$13 a month with no clothing deduction—until June 1864, when Congress granted retroactive equal pay. Even in the North, racial discrimination was widespread and blacks were often not treated as equals by white soldiers. In addition, segregated units were formed with black enlisted men commanded by white officers and black non-commissioned officers. Some of the white officers had low opinions of their colored troops and failed to adequately train them.

Black units and soldiers that were captured by the Confederates faced harsher treatment than white prisoners of war. In 1863, the Confederate Congress threatened to punish captured Union officers of black troops and enslave black Union soldiers. In response, Lincoln issued General Order 233, threatening reprisal against Confederate POWs. At the Battle of Fort Pillow, Tennessee, on April 12, 1864, the disorganized Union garrison—almost 600 men, about half of whom were black—suffered nearly 575 casualties when they were attacked by Confederate cavalry under Nathan Bedford Forrest. The fight was promptly dubbed a massacre in the Northern press, and it was claimed that black soldiers who attempted to surrender were massacred. Other reports say the Union troops and their commanders refused to surrender. Exactly what happened at Fort Pillow remains controversial to this day, fueled by Forrest's pre-war trade as a slave dealer and his post-war association with the Ku Klux Klan.

Black troops played a major role at the Battle of the Crater during the siege of Petersburg, Virginia, and formed a significant part of the Union force during the Battle of Nashville. By the time the war ended, some 179,000 black men had served in the Union Army, representing 10 percent of its total. Nearly 20,000 more were in the navy. Nearly 40,000 died, three-fourths of them due to disease or infections.

Other Roles Of African-Americans In The Civil War

Blacks on both sides of the war served in relief roles, for example, working as nurses, cooks, and blacksmiths. The South refused to arm blacks but used them to build fortifications and perform camp duties; many Northern officers refused to believe black troops would fight, and so they were often assigned to non-combat duties or placed in the rear guarding railroads and bridges. Blacks also served as spies and scouts to the Union Army, providing valuable information about Confederate forces, plans, and familiar terrain. Information gathered from black sources were so numerous and valuable, they were put in a special category—the so-called Black Dispatches. Escaped slaves, many of whom fled to the Union lines, were referred to as contrabands in the early stages of the war since they were seen as technically being property of the Confederates states. They were carefully debriefed and some were recruited as spies, returning to slave territory with white agents posing as masters. Freed blacks, including Harriet Tubman, were also spies, scouts, and agents. Tubman even famously led a raid outside Beaufort, South Carolina, in 1863. The value of the Black Dispatches was recognized by all in the Union and even by the Confederacy—General Robert E. Lee wrote "The chief source of information to the enemy is through our negroes."

Black Slaves In The Confederate Army

Blacks also served in the Confederate Army, although most were impressed as a slave labor force. Others were brought along by their masters to tend to the master's needs in camp. In some cases, these servants were entrusted with a master's personal affects if he was killed, and returned them to his family. There are reports of a few servants who took their master's place on the firing line and were adopted by the regiment. Records also show men who served as color-bearers in militia units. Tens of thousands may have served, willingly or otherwise. At the midpoint of the war in 1863, when more Confederate soldiers were needed, state militias of freed black men were offered to the Confederate war office but refused. (At the beginning of the war, a Louisiana unit offered its services but was rejected; that state had a long history of militia units comprised of free men of color.) As the war continued, the issue became even more hotly debated in the Confederate Congress. On January 2, 1864, Confederate major general Patrick Cleburne proposed arming slaves. Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, ordered that the proposal be suppressed. Despite his reputation as "the Stonewall Jackson of the West," Cleburne never rose to higher command, and it is widely believed that was because of his unpopular proposal. On March 13, 1865, legislation was finally passed that would free black slaves if they enlisted in the Confederate Army, although they had to have consent from their masters. Only a handful of black soldiers, probably less than 50, enlisted because of this legislation and were still in training when the war ended.

African Americans in World War I and World War II

The Army continued to enforce its strict segregationist policies. During World War I, the vast majority of the 367,410 blacks drafted were assigned to service units or used as laborers. The few who saw action were in the all-black 92nd and 93rd divisions. The 92nd served under American command and was reported to have performed poorly. Meanwhile the 93rd's four regiments served separately under French commanders, who offered high praise for their contributions.

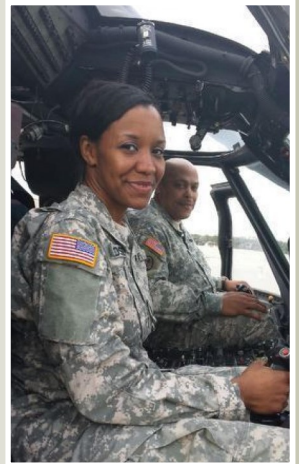
When the United States entered World War II, most Americans expected blacks to perform the same auxiliary roles. Of an estimated 922,965 blacks who donned olive drab, the majority toiled away in segregated service units where their work went largely unrecognized. These forgotten men built airfields, cleared mines, unloaded ships, maintained roads and rail lines, served as medics and drove the trucks that supplied the armies.

One of few accolades they received was for their work in providing the bulk of the drivers for the Red Ball Express, the famed military trucking line that was established in late August 1944 to rush critical material from supply bases in Normandy to the front. The only blacks in the Army Air Forces, serving in the 332nd Fighter Group, were escorting bombers of the Fifteenth Air Force on missions over southern and eastern Europe.

To read more about the history of black platoons in World War II, read *Blood for Dignity* by David P. Colley.

African Americans in the U.S. Army now

The history of Blacks serving in the United States Army is a long and proud one. In 1948, President Truman signed Executive Order #9981 that officially ended segregation in the military, and declared "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the Armed Services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin." Since that time, the percentage of Blacks serving in the United States Military Services has increased significantly. As of FY09, Black Soldiers comprised approximately 20% of the active-duty Army, 13% of the Army National Guard, and 22% of the Army Reserve. Although there are no recruitment goals for racial/ethnic groups, the Army has maintained a force representative of our Nation's diversity, reflecting a belief that all American citizens have equal obligation to provide for the national defense. It is also interesting to note that in the active-duty Army, there has been an increase in the



enlistment of Black females. This is largely due to the fact that the educational qualifications of Black females have exceeded that of Black males in the past few years. Black females have a greater retention rate in the enlisted ranks than any other racial/ethnic group. The percentage of Black commissioned officers has increased slowly, but steadily between FY85 and FY09 (from 10.2% to 12.6%), while the percentage of Black warrant officers has more than doubled during the same time frame.

"I will always place the mission first. I will never quit. I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life. I am an American Soldier." (Excepts from the U.S. Army Soldier's Creed)