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AWAY TO FREEDOM: AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND THE  
WAR OF 1812

By

Omar Shareef Price

B.A., Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, 2005

M.Ed., Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, 2007

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Pan-African Studies  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2011



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A Thesis Approved on

April 20, 2011

By the following Thesis Committee:

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Thesis Director

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Hattie Mae Price and Howard Reginald Price. You both have provided me with twenty-eight years of unwavering moral and financial support.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge Dr. Alicestyne Turley. Your patience and support throughout this process has been invaluable. I would also like to acknowledge my other committee members, Dr. Blaine Hudson and Dr. Yvonne Jones for taking the time to assist me on this journey. I would like to acknowledge the entire faculty of the Pan-African Studies Department for making my two years at the University of Louisville memorable. I want thank faculty members from Alabama A&M University, Dr. Thomas Green, Dr. Edward Bond, Dr. Ronald Slaughter, Professor Douglas Turner, Dr. Ruby Jewel, Dr. William Gile, and Linda Skeete for preparing me to get to this point. I would like to thank Dr. Dennis Felder of Winston-Salem State University and Dr. Josephine Bradley of Clark Atlanta University-- you both have influenced me more than you could ever imagine. I would like to acknowledge my only cohort completing a thesis with me, Tiffany C. Evans—we did it. I would like to thank the faculty of Buena Vista High School in Saginaw, Michigan, especially Mrs. Johnson the best high school counselor a student could ask for. I would like to acknowledge David Anderson for helping me become the man I am today. I would like to give a special acknowledgement and thank you to Professor Jan Carew. Professor, just knowing you has truly been a honor and inspiration. I would like to acknowledge my former students at Mountain Gap Middle School, Lowe's Grove Middle School, and Wilcox Central High School. As I hoped to have inspired you, you all

have inspired me. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the late Ruthie Lee Tanner. Grandma, though you are no longer with us, your influence and love shall always be here.

## ABSTRACT

### AWAY TO FREEDOM: AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND THE WAR OF 1812

Omar Shareef Price

April 20, 2011

This research will address several key historical realities overlooked in reference to African Americans during the War of 1812. One, that African Americans played a significant role in the successes of United States military conflicts during the war. Two, an acknowledgement that African Americans used military service as a way to demonstrate their legitimacy as American citizens. Finally, military service proved to be a viable method of resistance to the institution of slavery during both the American Revolution and the War of 1812. I will pay particular attention to African Americans who escaped slavery to enlist in Six Companies of British Colonial Marines resettled in Trinidad upon conclusion of the war.



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## INTRODUCTION

African Americans have played a significant role in every military conflict in American History. However, pre-Civil War, the roles of African Americans in the military have remained a footnote, if discussed at all. With this approach, several key historical realities are overlooked. One, that African Americans played a significant role in the successes of United States military conflicts prior to the Civil War. Two, African Americans used military service as a way to demonstrate their legitimacy as Americans. Finally, military service proved to be a viable method of resistance to the institution of slavery during both the American Revolution and the War of 1812. This research will outline the involvement of African Americans in the War of 1812. It will pay particular interest to those African Americans who escaped slavery to enlist in Six Companies of British Colonial Marines resettled in Trinidad after the war. The Colonial Marines were a branch of the British Navy composed predominately of colored soldiers.<sup>1</sup> My conclusions will be derived from literature of the War of 1812 and slavery in the nineteenth century. Conclusions will also be drawn from a compiled database of available information regarding members of the Colonial Marines.

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<sup>1</sup> Weiss, John M. *The Merikens: Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad 1815-16*. London: McNish & Weiss, 2002.

African Americans participated in the War of 1812, and by doing so, proved once again how valuable Black soldiers were and that siding with the British could serve as a model for emancipation. African Americans played a vital role in the War of 1812— for both America and England. The purpose of this research is to illustrate how the omission and/or marginalization of the African American role in the War of 1812 does a grave disservice to understanding African American History—and ultimately American History.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ORIGINS OF WAR

The War of 1812 is a forgotten war in America's past, not on a scholarly level but by the general American public. It is a war of great interest in understanding the logic and mentality of a fledgling country trying to maneuver politically with two of the most powerful nations in the world, France and Great Britain. The war played a significant role for African Americans, which is the focus of this research, but before indulging the legacy of African American participation, I will first give a background on policies that led to war.

Historian Donald Hickey traces the origins of the war to post-George Washington American politics during the Presidency of John Adams. Adams accepted the presidency of a nation that was still trying to figure out its place in the world. Adams also had to contend with a nation lacking in unity and not afraid to express political differences. Adams, the only non-Virginian among America's first four presidents, brought a New England sensibility that even he thought would not get him elected.<sup>1</sup> Adams was a Federalist, and his federalist views led to a stable nation but created great opposition from his Republican counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Langguth, A.J. *Union-1812-*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Being a Federalist was a concern to many citizens. Federalist had a reputation for being an advocate of strong central government in a country that highly valued states' rights. Federalist policies allowed the Federal government to take great liberties in taxing the country, even though at the time taxes were considered mainly a state issue. Most of all, many citizens felt the Federalists were too pro-British in a heavily Anglophobic nation<sup>1</sup>

Adams was greatly opposed to the French Revolution. This opposition was seen as a problem to the Republicans who remembered the ally that France had been during the Revolutionary War.<sup>2</sup> Also, Adams' support of the Jay Treaty with Great Britain was cause for contempt among members of the Republican Party and many citizens due to the appearance that it made America look weak in the eyes of the British.<sup>34</sup> The Jay Treaty, officially titled "Treaty of Amity Commerce and Navigation, between His Britannic Majesty; and The United States of America," was negotiated by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Jay and signed between the United States and Great Britain on November 19, 1794. Tensions between the two countries had increased since the end of the Revolutionary War. The British had continued to maintain military posts in America's Northwestern Territory. The British were also believed to be supporting Native American uprisings in the northwest. However, the main

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<sup>1</sup> Perkins, Bradford. *Prologue to War: England and the United States 1805-1812*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1963.; *ibid.*; Langguth, A.J. *Union-1812-*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Langguth, A.J. *Union-1812-*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Langguth, A.J. *Union-1812-*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

source of contention was British interference with American commercial trade. Jay was only partially successful in getting Britain to meet America's demands, and American opposition to the treaty was intense.<sup>5</sup> Although President George Washington was disappointed with the treaty's provisions, he felt it was the best hope to avert war with Great Britain and submitted it to the Senate for approval. Jay's Treaty passed the Senate by a vote of 20 to 10, exactly the two-thirds required for approval.<sup>6</sup> The goal of the Jay Treaty was to normalize commercial activity with Great Britain during times of war. Instead it effectively destroyed America's rapport with France. And if these actions were not enough, Americans saw Adams and the Federalist as British sympathizers. Adams, being a Federalist, supported a style of government that the Republicans thought was a sign of the federal government over stepping its authority. Adams approved Federalist legislation that allowed for a national bank and buildup of the military.<sup>7</sup> Historians argued that Adams and the Federalist style of government was actually best for the nation.<sup>8</sup> The Federalists subscribed to the Roman doctrine proclaimed and popularized by George Washington, that the best way to preserve peace was to prepare for war.<sup>9</sup> The Federalist implemented a broad program of financial and military preparedness during the 1790s. In the

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<sup>5</sup> "Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America." Washington: Neale and Kammerer Publishing, 1775.

<sup>6</sup> Combs, Jerald A. *The Jay Treaty: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970.; Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> "Fifth Annual Message to Congress." Washington, DC, December 3, 1793.

Federalist preparedness plan, the federal government assumed responsibility for more than seventy-five million dollars of debt accumulated by Continental and state governments during the American Revolution. They also made provisions for the federal government to impose internal and external taxes. This led to the creation of the national bank. As a result of these actions, public credit was restored, millions of dollars in investment capital was created, and a stable and uniform currency was created.<sup>10</sup>

Not only did the Federalists work to secure America's economy but also to expand the country's defenses. They increased the army from 840 men to 5,400 men. They re-established the navy. A campaign to build fortifications along the eastern coastline was implemented to help coastal cities defend against attack by water.<sup>11</sup>

However, what hurt Federalists most was their pro-British foreign policy and their perceived elitist form of government.<sup>12</sup> What was perceived as the fatal flaw of the Federalist Party had much to do with America's policy of neutral rights as the bases of American Foreign policy. America did not wish to get involved in the political turmoil of Europe; it did want access to European trade. Therefore, it was imperative that, during a time of conflict, America would not be restricted in

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<sup>10</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*; Kohn, Richard H. *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the creation of the military establishment in America*. New York: Free Press, 1975.

<sup>12</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.; Coles, Harry L. *The War of 1812*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.; Langguth, A.J. *Union-1812-*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.



its trade with the European continent. It was ever-pressing at the time because the Anglo-French War was being waged in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

The Anglo-French War and how America would maneuver through British and French policies to maintain free trade with Europe directly leads to America going to war against the British.<sup>14</sup> However, at the same time war was being waged in Europe, Thomas Jefferson, a Republican, was elected President. He and a Republican congress systematically did away with the policies and achievements of the Federalists. They also became increasingly angered by British infringement on what they perceived as their right to neutrality.

America valued a stance of neutrality. America was becoming a commercial power and did not want conflicts in Europe to infringe upon its right to free and open trade. In 1801 France and Great Britain entered into the Peace of Amiens—which served as an armistice between Britain and France. The peace lasted until 1803, during which time it had an adverse affect on American trade. It eliminated neutral commercial opportunities upon which America had capitalized.<sup>15</sup> In the nearly two years of peace, America's international trade plummeted due to the freedom of Great Britain to gain access to the European

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<sup>13</sup> Benn, Carl. *The War of 1812*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.; Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.; Langguth, A.J. *Union-1812-*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Coles, Harry L. *The War of 1812*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.; Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.; Langguth, A.J. *Union-1812-*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

continent.<sup>16</sup> America had gained greatly from the military strife between Great Britain and France. However, the Peace of Amiens was short lived, and confrontation between Great Britain and France resumed.

Once both great European powers resumed warfare, American exports began to rise. James Monroe, then American Minister in London, wrote: "The truth is that our commerce never enjoyed in any war, as much freedom, and indeed favor from this [government] as it now does."<sup>17</sup> This good would be a passing sensation for Monroe because, just over a year later, he accused Great Britain of a plan "to subject our [America's] commerce at present and hereafter to every restraint in their power."<sup>18</sup> What changed for Monroe was the fact that Great Britain had begun to question America's commercial success and accused them of using fraudulent means to gain a trade advantage.<sup>19</sup>

American suspicion caused Great Britain to enforce the *Rule of 1756*, a British maritime doctrine. The rule principally declared that trade closed to a neutral nation in time of peace could not be opened in time of war. The rule was enacted because Britain had blockaded France's ability to send goods to its West Indian colonies. America worked as an intermediary to transport goods from France and to the French West Indies. To circumvent violating the neutral rights rules, American ships would not go directly to the West Indies from France but make a stop in America first. By doing this, America could contend that it was

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid: 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid: 9.

<sup>19</sup> Coles, Harry L. *The War of 1812*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.; Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

freely trading with France and not commercially gaining by helping France send goods to its colonies.<sup>20</sup>

It was not just spite that led Great Britain to increase restrictions on American trade with France, but an act of desperation. Great Britain was struggling greatly against France, and their only advantage was the sea. If America could help France bypass the British blockade it would damage Great Britain's best weapon. To accompany this challenge, Great Britain was losing royal sailors to American merchant ships. In retaliation, the British were forcibly enlisting seamen from American merchant ships. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British Navy practiced a policy of impressment. Conditions were generally poor on British Naval ships, and the risk of injury or death was high. Sailors were paid little if paid at all. Such conditions led British Naval men to desert the Royal Navy for American commercial ships, which paid more and presented much more tolerable living conditions. In response to this fact, the British routinely performed searches of American merchant vessels searching for deserters. Since there were no grand distinctions between American merchant sailors and British sailors, the British forced many American sailors into British naval service.<sup>21</sup> Impressment was a constant agitation to the American government. Impressment resulted in arbitrary deprivation of a citizen's liberty without a fair

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.; Langguth, A.J. *Union-1812-*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

trial, and such actions were seen as a violation of America's national sovereignty.<sup>22</sup>

Spite was a key component to Great Britain's actions. The British were struggling financially as they were locked out of trade on the European continent. America was viewed as a country capitalizing off British misfortune. Already not fully respecting America as a world power, this perspective did not bode well with the British people. None of these issues were new. The reason these infractions had not previously led to war was because of the Federalists' sympathy for Britain. The Federalists valued compromise over confrontation.<sup>23</sup> Though, with the Federalists losses in the early 1800s the Republicans came into Congress with Anglophobic views that would resist all compromise.

In the election of 1810-1811 nearly half the incumbents in Congress lost their seats. The radical change was that of the ideological stance of the new Congress' leadership. New congressional leadership came from the frontier, in Henry Clay. He had served two terms in the United States Senate before moving to the House of Representatives, where he was elected Speaker of the House in his first term. Clay revolutionized the Speaker position. He wielded a power that the office had never before. He turned the position into one of true party leadership.<sup>24</sup> Clay and other Republicans were cast as "war hawks" by their Federalist counterparts, and by most literature written about them. However, it is

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<sup>22</sup> Brown, Roger H. *The Republic in Peril: 1812*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.

<sup>23</sup> Perkins, Bradford. *Prologue to War: England and the United States 1805-1812*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1963.

<sup>24</sup> Coles, Harry L. *The War of 1812*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

argued that they were not as pro-war as they were often labeled. Historian Roger Brown argues that this is part partisan misunderstanding and part historical mythology. Whether or not Clay and his colleagues were the “war hawks” they had been labeled, they did play down the evils of war, and like President Jefferson before them, predicted a relatively easy war for America to win to strengthen the nation’s prestige.<sup>25</sup> It is argued that the term “war hawk” is overused and that for the most part has lost its meaning. In this case it refers to Republicans who took the lead in proposing new and stronger measures, against Great Britain, that ultimately led to war.<sup>26</sup> Clay was able to pack important congressional committees with either anti-British or pro-war Republicans. Clay gave no credence to the Federalists or even moderate Republicans. Through a series of legislative build ups Clay and President Madison began preparing the country for war.<sup>27</sup>

President Madison was not always an eager supporter of Clay and his pro-war congressmen; however fear of being seen as weak, incompetent president, and the strong possibility of losing a re-election bid, Madison became a more willing participant in passage of forceful federal legislation.

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<sup>25</sup> Brown, Roger H. *The Republic in Peril: 1812*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.

<sup>26</sup> Coles, Harry L. *The War of 1812*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.; Brown, Roger H. *The Republic in Peril: 1812*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.

<sup>27</sup> Coles, Harry L. *The War of 1812*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.; Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.; Perkins, Bradford. *Prologue to War: England and the United States 1805-1812*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1963.

Madison had long been criticized for his lack of competence in dealing with foreign affairs. The Republicans wanted to make a strong stance against Great Britain, therefore were easily manipulated by Napoleon. The British issued the Orders in Council—a series of decrees. The most significant Order was the regulation of neutral trade with the European continent. It placed a blockade on all British ports, which excluded British goods and required all neutral countries wishing to trade with those ports to stop in Britain and pay a transit fee first. In retaliation, the French issued the Milan Decree, which proclaimed that any neutral ships adhering to British trade regulations or allowing a British search of its ships were subject to seizure by the French.<sup>28</sup> Both acts made trade with the European continent nearly impossible. “If American ships complied with the French decrees, they were subject to seizure by the British; and if they submitted to the British decrees they could be seized by the French.”<sup>29</sup> Both countries acknowledged their policies went against international trade law, and both contended they were forced into taking extreme measures. In retaliation, America issued its own series of embargos. Though they became increasingly more lenient, they had devastating affects on the American domestic economy. They had such a terrible affect Republican critic, John Randolph, declared that the embargo was like an attempt “to cure corns by cutting off the toes.”<sup>30</sup> After failure of the embargos, in May of 1810, Congress passed Macon's Bill #2. The

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989: 18.

<sup>30</sup> Coles, Harry L. *The War of 1812*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

bill reopened trade with Britain and France with the clear position that it would reinstate the embargo with any nation that restricted their neutral rights.

Napoleon jumped at the opportunity to use the American decision to his advantage. He sent a letter to the United States promising French cooperation, and even releasing some American ships to prove his sincerity. France agreed to suspend its Continental Decrees if America caused Britain to respect their neutrality rights. France had no real intention of keeping its promise to America. France not only reneged on their promise, it increased enforcement of the Continental Decrees, even against American ships that were not in violation. The purpose of the offer allowed enough time to increase tension between the United States and Great Britain.<sup>31</sup> While the United States and Great Britain debated their issues, primarily over the Order of Council, Napoleon effectively deceived the Republicans and President Madison. This mistake by the United States only made negotiations with Great Britain even more unclear, and served as proof of why historians question the competence of President Madison.<sup>32</sup> To save his presidency Madison chose to support the war effort.<sup>33</sup>

## **AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDEIRS AND THE WAR OF 1812**

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<sup>31</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

<sup>32</sup> Benn, Carl. *The War of 1812*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.; Benn, Carl. *The War of 1812*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.

On June 18th 1812, the fledgling country of America once again declared war on Great Britain.<sup>34</sup> Two decades previously America had gained its independence, the country still felt as though it was subject to the tyranny of its former ruler.<sup>35</sup> For this reason, the War of 1812 is often considered America's second war for independence. Great Britain was known for naval control of the waterways. Prior to the war the British restricted and harassed American merchant vessels-- often under the guise of searching for British naval deserters. This was a popular method Great Britain used to collect sailors for their navy— with some alleged deserters not being deserters at all.<sup>36</sup>

Angered by infractions by the British, America declared war. As in previous years, African-Americans, free or enslaved, were barred from participating in the war effort as enlisted American soldiers. However, by 1814, America's need for more troops facilitated the introduction of African Americans as fighting men.<sup>37</sup> With racial restrictions lifted, free African Americans joined the United States armed services in large numbers. Most free Blacks served abroad America's army, navy, merchant ships, and as privateer. As state militias became more desperate for manpower they, too, began accepting free Black

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Foner, Jack D. *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective*. New York: Praeger Publisher, 1974.



fighters.<sup>38</sup> America was not the only country soliciting the services of black military help.

The War of 1812 would be the last time the United States and Great Britain would ever find themselves on opposing sides of a military conflict. Its implications are far reaching however the war confirmed once and for all American Independence. Results of the war allowed Great Britain to keep Canada, and were able to get enslaved African Americans to support them in their war effort.<sup>39</sup> As mentioned earlier free African Americans were used as soldiers for both the Americans and British. Some slaves were used with the permission of their masters, serving for the promise of freedom.<sup>40</sup>

For British, the offer of freedom to obtain Black military support in their war efforts against America is not new to the War of 1812. Apparently only the white population had forgotten Lord Dunmore's Proclamation. Nearly thirty-five years prior, Lord Dunmore's Proclamation offered the first large-scale emancipation of slave and servant labor in the history of colonial British America. It grew out of Dunmore's efforts to counter an impending attack on his capitol of Williamsburg by patriot militia in the spring of 1775, when he several times threatened to free and arm slaves to defend the interest of the royal government. By the time Dunmore retreated offshore, he gathered thousands of slaves seeking refuge. His November proclamation commanding Virginians to support the Crown or be

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<sup>38</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Foner, Jack D. *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective*. New York: Praeger Publisher, 1974

judged traitors formally offered freedom to all slaves and indentured servants belonging to rebels willing to bear arms for the Crown. Within weeks, several hundred slaves, many with their families, fled to British lines. Likewise during the War of 1812, with visions of "liberty and happiness" in the West Indies prominent in their minds, an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 slaves from Maryland and Virginia fled to the British.<sup>41</sup> In April 1814, British Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane issued his own proclamation welcoming aboard all slaves who wished to immigrate to Britain. All fugitives had the choice of either serving with British forces or being sent as free settlers to British possessions in North America and the West Indies.<sup>42</sup>

Feedback from naval officers during the War of 1812 on how African Americans had favorably received the British encouraged Colonial/War Secretary Earl Bathurst to issue new orders to the new commander-in-chief Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Inglis Forrester Cochrane. Cochrane was to go into the Chesapeake and encourage full African American family emigration.

Cochrane prepared a proclamation to implement his special instructions; he also informed his new second in command to establish a suitable place in the Chesapeake to serve as a campaign base-- a general gathering point for refugees. Cochrane's Proclamation reads as such:

By the Honorable Sir ALEXANDER COCHRANE,  
K.B.

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<sup>41</sup> Cassell, Frank A. "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area and the War of 1812." *The Journal of Negro History* (Association for the Study of African-American Life and History Incorporate), April 1972: 144-155.

<sup>42</sup> Foner, Jack D. *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective*. New York: Praeger Publisher, 1974

Vice Admiral of the Red, and Commander in Chief of  
His  
Majesty's Ships and Vessels, upon the North  
American  
Station, &c. &c. &c.

### A PROCLAMATION

*This is therefore to Give Notice,*

That all those who may be disposed to emigrate from the United States will, with their Families, be received on board of His Majesty's Ships or Vessels of War, or at the Military Posts that may be established, upon or near the Coast of the United States, when they will have their choice of either entering into His Majesty's Sea or Land Forces, or being sent as FREE Settlers to the British possessions in North America or the West Indies, where they will meet with all due encouragement.

GIVEN under my Hand at Bermuda, this 2nd day of April, 1814.

ALEXANDER COCHRANE.

By Command of the Vice Admiral,  
WILLIAM BALHETCHETT.  
GOD SAVE THE KING<sup>43</sup>

Cochrane improved upon Dunmore's Revolutionary proclamation by providing for anyone who wished to leave America, not just able-bodied fighting men. To process the thousands of emigrants, the British established a base camp on Tangier Island in Chesapeake Bay. Most of these runaway slaves

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<sup>43</sup> Grant, John N. "Black Immigrants into Nova Scotia, 1776-1815." *The Journal of Negro History* (Association for the Study of American Life and History Incorporated) 58, no. 3 (July 1973): 253-270.

served the British as spies, sailors, laborers, and guides.<sup>44</sup> Through the use of free and enslaved African Americans the British were effective in disrupting the social order in several American states by forcing America to not only deal with the British, but also contend with great losses of property, and loss of elements of social and domestic control.

The British navy recruited a number of Blacks from the United States to fight against the Americans. Historian Donald Hickey asserts the British did not offer freedom to American slaves for humanitarian reasons, but rather to deprive certain regions of a critical labor force, and to incur fear by inciting general slave revolts among American slave holders by promising freedom in return for joining British naval campaigns.<sup>45</sup> More than two hundred such Black men participated in marine battles at Bladensburg, Washington, and Baltimore.

To help encourage African American support, Cochrane used his Corps of Colonial Marines. This Corp had been recruited a few years prior on the islands of Marie Galante and Guadeloupe. Soldiers who had come in January became sergeants and corporals in the new Corp, and those that remained served as senior officers throughout the Corps existence. However, the increasing number of refugees created an unforeseen problem.

The droves of African Americans became a problem. Cochrane's proclamation worked extremely well, and many families flocked to British warships. The influx of women and children on ships during wartime was

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<sup>44</sup> Foner, Jack D. *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective*. New York: Praeger Publisher, 1974.

<sup>45</sup> Hickey, Donald R. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

problematic. Ships had to make concerted efforts to transport non-military refugees to either Bermuda or Nova Scotia. Some were held on the warships, others were taken to Tangier Island off the coast of Chesapeake Bay used, by the British as a post during the war.

Following the war some concessions had to be made and several African American refugees were returned to slavery in America. "Cockburn felt obliged to agree a certain group of refugees as being an exception, and gave instructions for them to be returned.... The musters show that the refugees handed back included around four of the newly enlisted Colonial Marines, with possibly others who had volunteered...but not enlisted."<sup>46</sup> These African Americans had to return to their slave masters with the stain of rebelling against their masters, and America. Weiss does not tell the fate of these returned slaves, but slaves that showed a glimpse of exercising free will were often liberally punished, so for slaves who took up arms against their masters and the country one could only image the type of horrors they faced when they were returned.

However, most of the Black marines were retained, and their number had swollen to account for six companies called 3rd Battalion Colonial Marines. These men were initially stationed in Bermuda to help build and maintain the Royal Naval Dockyards. There were also constant attempts to get the soldiers transferred to the British Army, but those requests were futile, until the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army offered to give the black soldiers their

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<sup>46</sup> Weiss, John M. *The Merikens: Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad 1815-16*. London: McNish & Weiss, 2002: 10.

own regiment. The soldiers preferred to hold Cochrane to his promise to establish a free settlement for them in a British colony.

On August 20, 1816, the soldiers were sent to Trinidad. Upon arrival they were organized in villages based upon their military company with local leadership derived from their military rank. In 1821, a party of Black emigrants from Nova Scotia joined them. To relieve some of the problems in tension in Canada, African-Americans were offered to relocate to Trinidad, but the party that came in 1821 was the only one that accepted the offer.

More Black Americans soldiers were also sent to Trinidad. These African Americans were recruited and fought for British officer Edward Nicolls who was stationed in the Gulf of Mexico. He was to lead an assault on western Georgia that was supposed to meet Cockburn's forces on Georgia's Atlantic coast. He was also to recruit Black and Native American future marines on the way. Nicolls never made it to the Atlantic coast. He was diverted in Pensacola and Mobile, West Florida (presently Florida and Alabama respectively) but he had still managed to accumulate approximately three hundred additional marines. Even after the Peace Treaty had been signed Nicolls and his marines remained stationed near Louisiana and Spanish Florida. However, eventually they did leave the region. In May and July of 1815, two groups from Nicolls' regiment were sent to Trinidad near Port of Spain. In November of the same year another group, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, was sent to Manahambre near Company Villages. Later this group would become part of the Islands Company Village towns.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

America also greatly benefitted from African American participation in the war effort. "In October [1814], the New York legislature authorized the enlistment of 2,000 Black troops, including slaves whose masters would receive their pay and bounty while the Blacks would receive their freedom."<sup>48</sup> What is also often overlooked is the fact that when America purchased Louisiana, it inherited an organized and disciplined Black militia-- composed of free Blacks. These soldiers served the French and Spanish valiantly during their occupation of the Louisiana territory. However, after the Haitian Revolution fear of possible collusion with angry slaves led to the Black militia being disbanded by the U.S. government. In 1807 there was an attempt to reactivate the militia, but this attempt failed. Upon witnessing a five hundred men slave force marching towards New Orleans, many members of the free black population joined them.<sup>49</sup>

Even with a reputation for quality and brave service, there was still reservation surrounding the use of Black troops in combat scenarios. Mainly the result of white paranoia that Black troops would be incited to turn against Americans by the British. Apparently this was not a large enough fear to keep General Andrew Jackson from recruiting the use of Black soldiers. Jackson was in Mobile, West Florida desperate for troops. Jackson promised Blacks the same pay, rations, clothing, bounty money, and 160 acres of land that white soldiers

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<sup>48</sup> Foner, Jack D. *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective*. New York: Praeger Publisher, 1974: 23.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

received.<sup>50</sup> This decree effectively dashed the hopes of the British, who sought widespread sympathy and support of free Blacks in Louisiana.

On January 8, 1815, at least 600 African American troops effectively aided Jackson in inflicting the worst defeat the British suffered that year. However, despite these efforts, Black soldiers did receive what Jackson promised them. He offered glowing praise of the soldiers' ability and bravery. In a letter to President James Monroe, Jackson demonstrated that interaction with African American soldiers had not altered his racial prejudice. Jackson's letter reported, "that the inclusion of free blacks had been a choice between having them 'in our ranks or... in the ranks of the enemy'".<sup>51</sup> So, it is apparent that like in the American Revolution the service of Black soldiers, though appreciated at the time, did little to alter the perception of African Americans within the eyes of their white countrymen.

The results of post War 1812 for African Americans, free and enslaved produced multiple results for the black soldiers who participated. Many African Americans who fought for the United States received what had been promised. Although, others were not given credit for their services and had trouble reaping any benefit. On the British side, African Americans who joined British ranks were treated in various ways.

Like the Americans, the British did a poor job of keeping promises. However, the British did follow through for some African Americans. The vast majority of slaves who fought with the British appear to have shared one of three

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid: 25.



similar fates. Some African American volunteers were sold back into slavery, or contracted out as apprentices, in the West Indies after the war. A significant number of black Americans and their families were relocated to Canada as free black citizens even though slavery would not be officially abolished in British territories until 1834. Nova Scotia in particular would become the new home for a large number of these freed African Americans. Nova Scotia had been used previously as a relocation site for African Americans who had fought or supported the British during the Revolutionary War. Although historians state that most Black refugees who were sent to the British West Indies were resold into slavery, military records show that not all African Americans who fought for the British were sent to the West Indies as slaves.

In 1815 and 1816 Trinidad welcomed over seven hundred Black American, refugees from the War of 1812. The majority found their new homes in the south of the island around the Mission of Savanna Grande, now known as Princess Town, in areas known as “Company Villages”. The soldiers that were the founders of the Company Villages were part of a great unparalleled, African American emigration, the most significant departure from slavery between the Haitian Revolution of the 1790s and British abolition of slavery in the 1830s. The “Merikens” (as the Africans American soldiers were called locally) in the Company Villages had been members of the Corps of Colonial Marines, who saw fighting service with the British in the War of 1812. Members of the Corp were garrisoned after the war on the island of Bermuda for fourteen months and disbanded in Trinidad in 1816 to form a new free Black yeomanry class in

Trinidad.<sup>52</sup> By the next decade thousands of African Americans were relocated to Trinidad by the British and by their own efforts.<sup>53</sup>

The governor of Trinidad had much to do with their arrival. As Governor of Trinidad in 1813, Sir Ralph Woodford petitioned the British government for the use of several of these ex-soldiers. He was appalled to find Trinidad still a wild, forested place and he wanted the soldiers to help in clearing the island.

Woodford thought black soldiers were ideal candidates for this work as the British had ended the slave trade to their American colonies in 1807. To appease Woodford's request, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies approved the sending of six Black companies and their families to Trinidad. Woodford decided the best place to settle them was in the thickly forested area near a former Spanish mission, the natives called La Misión de Savana Grande. The soldiers and their families numbered 574 members. They were disillusioned on their arrival to find that they were in a wilderness instead of fine homes as they had been promised. They forever held resentment toward Woodford for the deception but set out busily to establish homes for themselves.<sup>54</sup>

Though displeased with their conditions the companies began to transform the wilderness. The trees fell with the wood being used to build their homes. They planted crops, and while the gardens grew they depended on Amerindians of the former mission for food. They also set about the task of making roads.

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<sup>52</sup> Weiss, John M. *The Merikens: Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad 1815-16*. London: McNish & Weiss, 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Anthony, Michael. *Towns and Villages D-I*. April 4, 2011. [www2.nalis.gov.tt/Research/SubjectGuide/TownsandVillages/TownsandVillagesDI/tabid/274/Default.aspx?PageContentID=444](http://www2.nalis.gov.tt/Research/SubjectGuide/TownsandVillages/TownsandVillagesDI/tabid/274/Default.aspx?PageContentID=444) (accessed April 4, 2011).

Road making was the most crucial and difficult task of all. Being dirt roads, they were almost impossible to maintain without official help, and this help never came. These settlers were for decades ignored by the government. They had transformed the area into plantations of cocoa, coffee, and sugarcane the problem remained how to get their produce to market. Matters remained much the same over the succeeding decades and roads became of such critical importance that in 1888 a descendant of one of these ex-soldiers told a Royal Commission of Enquiry: "The people we would elect to help us would know how much we are suffering for roads..."<sup>55</sup> The African American settlers who were relocated to Trinidad were not the only ones who were set free yet still misled by the British as to the conditions of their relocated homes.

A common place of relocation for ex-slaves by the British was Nova Scotia, Canada. Nova Scotia was a place British were used to using to relocate African Americans—even to the dissatisfaction of white residents who already lived there. They had done it before with African Americans who supported the Crown during the American Revolution. Like their Trinidadian counterparts, these ex-slaves were promised something greater than what they received. They were freed, but conditions for them in Nova Scotia were far from ideal. "After the War, Nova Scotia suffered a serious recession; at the same time, European immigration increased. The result was intense competition for very few jobs."<sup>56</sup> The colonial government spent more time trying to figure out how to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Whitfield, Harvey Amani. *Blacks on the Border*. Burlington, Vermont: University of Vermont Press, 2006.

get rid of the new black population than figuring out long-term solutions to their economic crisis. The ex-slaves arrived in need of medical attention, food, and shelter. They had no place to settle, and their paltry government rations left them hungry. Lieutenant Governor Sir John Sherbrooke failed to institute the British policy for dealing with liberated slaves.<sup>57</sup> Though free life in Nova Scotia was far from ideal, and for all intent and purposes considerably worse than that of Trinidad settlers-- it was not slavery.

### **SLAVES AT SEA**

Life at sea was a difficult one. Sailors often complained of the slave like conditions they endured. White sailors complained of unchecked authority aboard ships. Many Whites felt as if they were slaves themselves. They were rarely given adequate provisions. They were beaten to enforce discipline. However, compared to life on a plantation slaves eagerly accepted a role on a ship.<sup>58</sup> By the late 1700s Blacks, free and enslaved, worked at sea in every colony that would become the United States. Outside of the general appeal of greater independence that a plantation would offer, but Blacks gravitated to egalitarian nature of the Navy.

Slaves were used throughout the "New World" as seamen. Life at sea for a slave resulted in independence and insight that was not permitted on a plantation. Slave participated in seafaring at every level, from cabin boy and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Curtin, Philip D. *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*. New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

cooks to pilots and captains.<sup>59</sup> Enslaved pilots and captains were acclaimed for their mastery of navigating a vessel. The enslaved regularly took charge of coastal vessels in the Chesapeake and lower South. Such ability aided efforts of resistance. During times of war slaves were willing to pilot enemy ships into their master's territory. A number of slaves not only escaped, but escaped with his master's ship.<sup>60</sup>

Being at sea offered slaves a type of liberty and autonomy that did not exist on plantations. Slaves on ships were far less supervised; therefore, had greater mobility. They were viewed in high esteem among the other slaves. Frederick Douglass would describe the difference. He described the plantation as being "secluded and out-of-the-way places...seldom visited by a single ray of healthy public sentiment."<sup>61</sup> Therefore, slaves who could experience life outside their immediate surroundings were held to a special esteem. Douglass would add in reference to his cousin, a cabin boy who worked on the ship of Douglass' former master Captain Thomas Auld, that "he was always a sort of hero amongst us..."<sup>62</sup> Like Douglass' cousin, these slaves brought back stories and information that placed them in the hierarchy of slave society.

Slaves holders understood the concern of allowing slaves that had experienced the sea to interact with the slaves that had not. Slaves at sea and on land working in maritime based industries as a necessity, therefore slave

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<sup>59</sup> Bolster, W. Jefferey. *Black Jaks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Douglass, Frederick. *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Boston: De Wolfe and Fiske Company, 1892: 37-38.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid: 37-38.

owner would attempt to strategically monitor and control maritime slave interaction with plantation slaves. This was not always an effective strategy. Slaves coming from sea did not just bring a larger worldview. Black sailors had more genuine knowledge of what civilized life was, and how that stemmed from liberty.<sup>63</sup>

The psuedo-liberty Black sailors experienced resulted in some harsh realities. Though many slaves worked at sea and occupied a wide range of positions, most of the positions were menial labor occupations with little opportunity for personal advancement. Slave that did find themselves in highly regarded positions such as captain or pilot often found that status on a ship did not translate to shore. Therefore, what became a common option was to runaway for a while to experiment with the pyschological challenges necessary for independent living, but not in a manner where he could not return. Black sailors often functioned inside a type of gray area between slavery and a type of psuedo-freedom through flight, voluntary return, and recapture.<sup>64</sup>

Like plantation slave who were sent to collect mail or worked in close proximity to whites, slave seamen acted as a line of information about the dealings and conditions of the world to the other slaves. They played a vital role in the resistance efforts. Many slaves found their freedom through the sea.<sup>65</sup>

## **COLONIAL MARINES WHO SETTLED IN TRINIDAD**

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<sup>63</sup> Bolster, W. Jefferey. *Black Jaks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Little research has been done in studying the African American involvement in the War of 1812, on the side of the British. Books that have included information concerning African American involvement lack true depth. Frank A. Cassell in "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area and the War of 1812" and John Weiss, *Merikens: Free black American settlers in Trinidad 1815-16* sum up the bulk of the research. Research that has been done on African American settlers in Trinidad has been almost exclusively done by John McNish Weiss.

As previously discussed, during the War of 1812 thousands of slaves seized the opportunity to emancipate themselves. Weiss proclaims that the War of 1812 provided the largest slave emancipation between the Haitian Revolution in 1791 and the ending of slavery in the British Empire in 1834. He asserts that initially slaves just ran off to British ships offering their help in return for freedom, and by 1814 the British actively recruited African Americans as Marines. The British sought the recruitment of African Americans, especially slaves on the assumption that following the Haitian Revolution there was a general belief slaves would rise up against their owners if given the opportunity.

As the British expected, the further they entered the Chesapeake Bay the more slaves left their holdings in search of freedom. As a relocation effort the British initially relocated these slaves to Bermuda. There were those that worked in dockyards, and others shipped to various British colonies. For many African Americans this newfound freedom was not as grand as they had hoped. Many

bBacks that worked in the dockyards found their treatment and workload not fitting a free person.

Those who were not seen as fit to work were issued another fate. The British used the same policy they used on confiscated slave ships. This policy called for the local Collector of Customs on a particular island to take responsibility for the ex-slaves and “apprentice” them out to local employers-- usually for a 14-year period. The British did not see this practice as necessarily returning these former slaves back to slavery. The justification was that these former slaves would be afforded the opportunity to learn skills they would need to be able to be productive citizens.

As in the Caribbean island, Nova Scotia, Canada also was, not an ideal site for ex-slaves to begin a new life. “On arrival in Nova Scotia they met an inclement climate and, as the numbers grew, an administrative incompetence that gave them poor ground and inadequate clothing and food for the harsh winter”<sup>66</sup>

Trinidad was unique in its need for labor, at a time when British abolitionists protested the further importation of slaves. The British government attempted to recruit Europeans and Chinese laborers to no avail. The War of 1812 offered the British a grand opportunity. They were able to send “acculturated and Europeanized African Americans” to Trinidad to perform necessary labor. According to Weiss, governors and ministers considered these American refugees the model settlers for several decades. The word of the

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<sup>66</sup> Weiss, John M. *The Merikens: Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad 1815-16*. London: McNish & Weiss, 2002: 5.



newly established Company Villages reached free blacks in America. Many came to join their fellow African Americans in Trinidad. A few thousand families migrated to Trinidad; the majority was from urban areas. Most had a problem coping in rural Trinidad, and returned to America. Others stayed established settlement at Gilmore Hill near the Company Villages.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

The recruitment of Colonial Marines was not a national effort. There is evidence of slaves leaving bondage for the British from a wide variety of locations, but what is known about the Colonial Marines is that they almost exclusively came from Southern Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay region, Southeastern Virginia, Southeastern Georgia.<sup>1</sup> The soldiers that enlisted varied greatly in age from seven to forty-nine.<sup>2</sup> The data also shows that the Companies were not randomly generated, but were often inclusive of slaves that ran away together, were from the same plantation, or same region. Companies Five and Six were almost entirely gathered from Georgia—and enlisted in 1815. This was opposed to members of Companies One through Three that all enlisted in 1814, and was from Maryland or Virginia. Company Four is the first company to receive soldiers from Georgia. Unlike in the Chesapeake Bay region, all Georgia enlistment occurred in 1815.<sup>3</sup> A conclusion that can be drawn is that the Colonial Marines were recruited along Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane's ordered Eastern invasions.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Dusinberre, William. *Strategies for Survival: Recollections of Bondage in Antebellum Virginia*. Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, John M. *The Merikens: Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad 1815-16*. London: McNish & Weiss, 2002.

Cochrane established a post on Tangier Island to act as a recruitment center for runaway slaves. Tangier a small island located in the Chesapeake Bay near Virginia. Its location was within a reasonable distance for slaves leaving plantations around the Chesapeake Bay near Virginia and Maryland. It was illustrated British ships were often in rowboat distance from the Maryland and Virginia shore.<sup>1</sup> There does not appear to be any correlating data between the distance a slave was from the Tangier Island to how soon he enlisted. Cochrane sailed from the Chesapeake Bay down America's east coast to southeastern Georgia—which was known as the "rice coast".<sup>2</sup> In Georgia, British Admiral George Cockburn was ordered to establish a similar post on Cumberland Island off the coast of Camden County Georgia. In 1815 British used the island the same way they used Tangier Island, as a recruitment center. Cumberland Island is located off the coast of Camden County, Georgia— southeast of Glynn County. Camden and Glynn Counties are where most of the Marines from Georgia originally came. The Marines from Georgia were from less diverse locations, and many escaped from the same owners. The locations of Cochrane and Cockburn's forces are directly related to the enlistment and recruitment of the Six Companies of Colonial Marines.

Through the literature of slavery in these regions of the United States at this time, it can be concluded that most of the Marines that enlisted were from

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<sup>1</sup> Cassell, Frank A. "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area and the War of 1812." *The Journal of Negro History* (Association for the Study of African-American Life and History Incorporate), April 1972: 144-155.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Julia Floyd. *Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia 1750-1860*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985: 16.

similar situations before they escaped slavery. According to literature on slavery in the early nineteenth century it is highly likely that the Marines from Virginia and Georgia escaped from plantations. In nineteenth century, tobacco and wheat plantations dominated southern and eastern Virginia. Tobacco had been a staple crop since Virginia's founding, and by the mid-1800s wheat plantation profits rivaled those of southern cotton plantations.<sup>3</sup> Given the geography of where most of the Marines came from in the state of Virginia it can be reasonably construed that most had experience on a wheat or tobacco plantation.

In Eastern Shore and southern Maryland slavery began as a replica of eastern Virginia. Tobacco and wheat were the region's chief cash crops. However, by the early nineteenth century soil depletion ruined enough land and coupled with abolitionist movements, Maryland scaled back its number of slaves. Though, for most slaves working on large plantations tobacco and wheat remained the dominant crop. The Chesapeake also has a well-documented seafaring slave population. Most slaves who were not on a plantation were in some capacity working either at sea or for the shipping industry.<sup>4</sup> Eastern Shore Maryland gave way to a thriving maritime economy.<sup>5</sup> Slaves assisted with oyster

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<sup>3</sup> Dusiaberre, William. *Strategies for Survival: Recollections of Bondage in Antebellum Virginia*. Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Bolster, W. Jeffrey. *Black Jaks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, Harold. "Slavery, Freedom, and the Chesapeake." *Maryland Marine Notes Online* 16, no. 2 (March-April 1998).

and crab fishing in the region. Most accounts of the former slaves that constituted the Six Companies of Colonial Marines are slaves from plantations.<sup>6</sup>

Georgia was predominately a plantation society. Most of the Marines that came from Georgia came from the southeastern counties of Glynn and Camden. These counties are located on the Rice Coast.<sup>7</sup> Rice cultivation required some of the highest numbers of slaves; therefore, Glynn and Camden Counties had some of the highest percentages of slaves in the state. Its rice plantations were also some of the largest in the state. By the mid 1800s slaves accounted for seventy-six percent of the total population of Camden County and seventy-three percent of Glynn County.<sup>8</sup> It is a fair assessment that the majority of Marines from Georgia came from large rice plantations.

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<sup>6</sup> Cassell, Frank A. "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area and the War of 1812." *The Journal of Negro History* (Association for the Study of African-American Life and History Incorporate), April 1972: 144-155.; Weiss, John M. *The Merikens: Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad 1815-16*. London: McNish & Weiss, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, Julia Floyd. *Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia 1750-1860*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Julia Floyd. *Slavery and Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia 1750-1860*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985.

## CONCLUSION

As can be determined by the literature review there is no dearth of written information on the War of 1812. It is also clear that there has been some interest into the role African Americans played in the War regardless of side. However, what is so glaring in the portion contributed by Weiss is that there has been little research done on who the African American Colonial Marines were that were settled in Trinidad. Even Weiss, who offers the most comprehensive detail on the subject of any author, hits many roadblocks in trying to draw connections. Even he is not sure of the overall numbers of slaves that emancipated themselves during the War of 1812. He also acknowledges that trying to match British records with slave claims is very hit and miss, and even perceived hits can possibly be inaccurate.

Research limitation of this subject also includes that almost every book that cites African American involvement in the War of 1812 in reference to the British cite Weiss as their source. Though Weiss offers much in terms of an in depth look at how the British treated African Americans, why they treated them that way, and what they did with them after the war, but he is the only one who has written the story of these African Americans. Cassell wrote the article, "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area and the War of 1812" to offer insight into how slavery played a part in the War of 1812, but it focused more on how the British were able to use slavery as a tool to gain allies among America's Black

population.<sup>1</sup> It does not offer an account of who these slaves were, how they were recruited, and what were their lives like post war. As a result, the only detailed conclusions that have been written are those of Weiss, and one person being the only authority on the subject means more research still needs to be done-- this even Weiss suggests.

It is clear that there were far more slaves that escaped slavery to the British, the recruitment of Colonial Marines followed a strict pattern. Research gives way to several broad conclusions. First, the Marines were recruited in very specific locations. Essentially slaves from the Chesapeake Bay region of both Maryland and Virginia made up the bulk of the 1814 enlistees. Georgia became the second Marine recruitment center in 1815. The Tangier and Cumberland Islands were close enough to the main land that it would not be difficult for runaway slaves to find a way to the islands or the British to ferry back and forth. The Chesapeake Bay was a hub for Black sailors; therefore securing a means of transportation was available to slaves coming from plantations. It is likely that most of the Marines came from plantations, especially in Georgia. In the Chesapeake Bay region, especially in Maryland the use of slave was far more diverse. More than likely there was a healthy mixture, but all accounts would point to the majority coming from either plantations or dock works. Many of the Marines came from the same owners—owners who were known to have large plantations. This may give way to the reason why the Marines were so equipped

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<sup>1</sup> Cassell, Frank A. "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area and the War of 1812." *The Journal of Negro History* (Association for the Study of African-American Life and History Incorporate), April 1972: 144-155.

to know how to cultivate the wilderness that they found themselves in, once they arrived in Trinidad. It is evident by some of the owners in which the Marines came from held some of the largest holdings of land.

As Marines these soldiers occupied several roles, and some gained rank. The wide age range of the enlisted men indicates a wide variety of usefulness among them. Rank was used to establish leadership in the villages once settled in Trinidad. Once the Colonial Marines arrived in Trinidad, the literature shows that the Marines were not stagnate, and that much movement occurred after settlement.

Many scholars have taken up the challenge to document the truth about African Americans in the United States; however there are glaring deficiencies in researching this topic. One deficiency is that of perspective. Nearly every source used, including myself, has fallen victim to viewing African American involvement through their use by the American government, slaveholders, British government, and British military officials, but not as independent actors. The closest literature that provides an alternative point of view is Jefferey W. Bolster in *Black Jaks*, but his book is more about the roles and life of Black sailors and not about how they exact agency in the War of 1812. There are very scarce accounts of the will of the Marines. Most accounts of the individual Marines were garnered from their former masters. Agency that Black people receive is by acknowledging the fact that most left on their own without non-Black people intervening—there is an account of a slave owner claiming his slave was taken



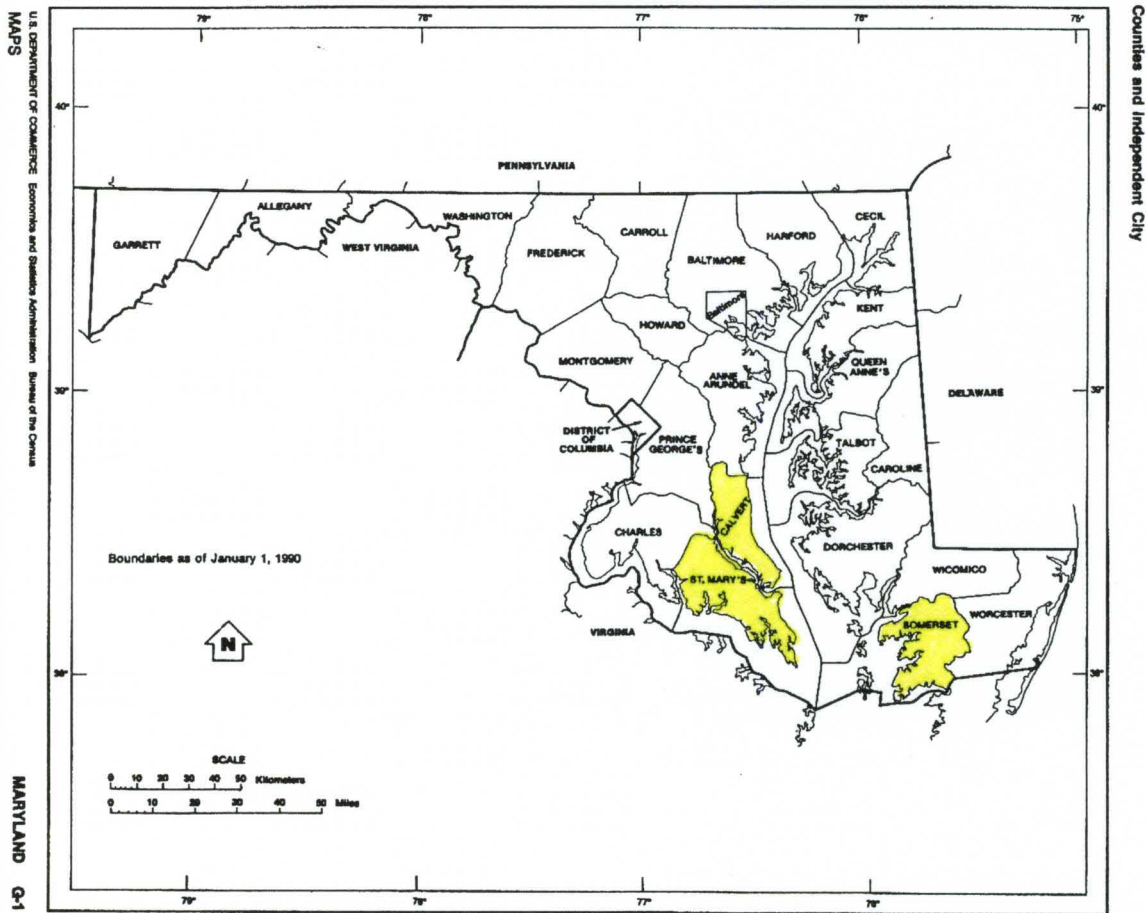
forcefully.<sup>2</sup> Some of the slaves had been runaways for a considerable amount of time before enlisting as Colonial Marine. Other than that, they are just seen as pawns that were shifted and used by both opposing governments, with the British seeming slightly more humane. But was that because it was not their slaves that were being set free? Another deficiency was pointed out in the last section. It appears that Weiss is the only authority of at least the Marines and refugees that were sent to Trinidad. Whitfield and Grant tell us about the refugees that went to Canada, but fortunately in that case they are by far not the only sources on those refugees. There is little account of what happened to the refugees that were resold into slavery, or as Weiss and others put it, contracted out as apprentices in the Caribbean. There is acknowledgment, though very limited, on the Company Villages. There is almost no mention at all in any book about the refugees settled elsewhere, such as the group near Port of Spain, or those that were left in Bermuda, or any that went to England. It is clear that there are many holes in the story of African Americans in the War of 1812 participants. Outside of what happened to African American sent to Nova Scotia, Canada, there is plenty of room for research. Some suggested research directions that need to be explored are a more in-depth look at slave owners that could give greater insight to what conditions did the slaves come from. By doing so it may be possible to gain greater insight into what were some of the common tasks performed by the Marines while they were still enslaved. It would be of interest to know the criteria

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<sup>2</sup> Weiss, John M. *The Merikens: Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad 1815-16*. London: McNish & Weiss, 2002.

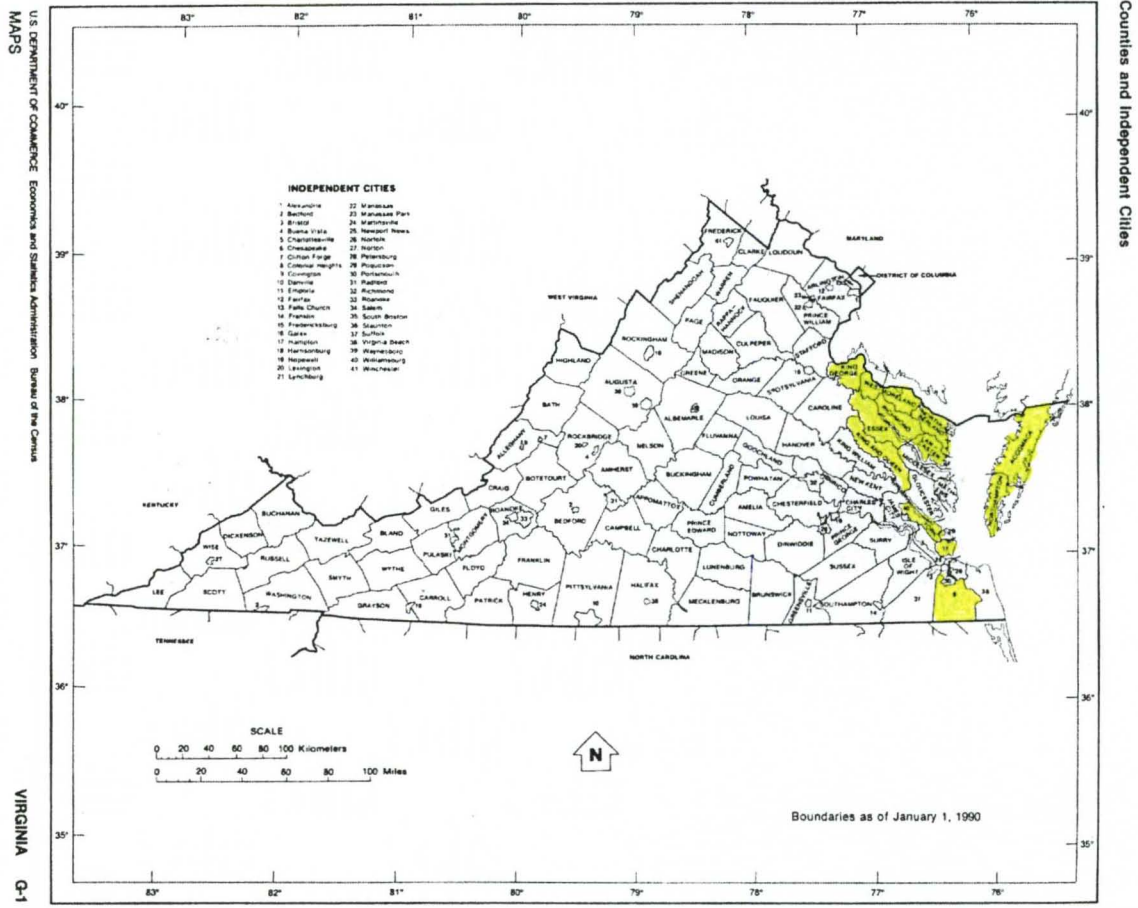
of what it took for some Marines to earn rank as opposed to others. Also, what was the method of dividing the slaves who came to the British, but did not enlist? Who decided who went where and what criteria did they use. Lastly, the conditions of the land in the part of Trinidad that they settled was known, and the fact that the Companies flourished in their circumstance, but how did they do it has yet to be answered.

# Maryland County Map



Maryland" [map]. County boundaries and names. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990. <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/states/maryland.gif>. (April 8, 2011).

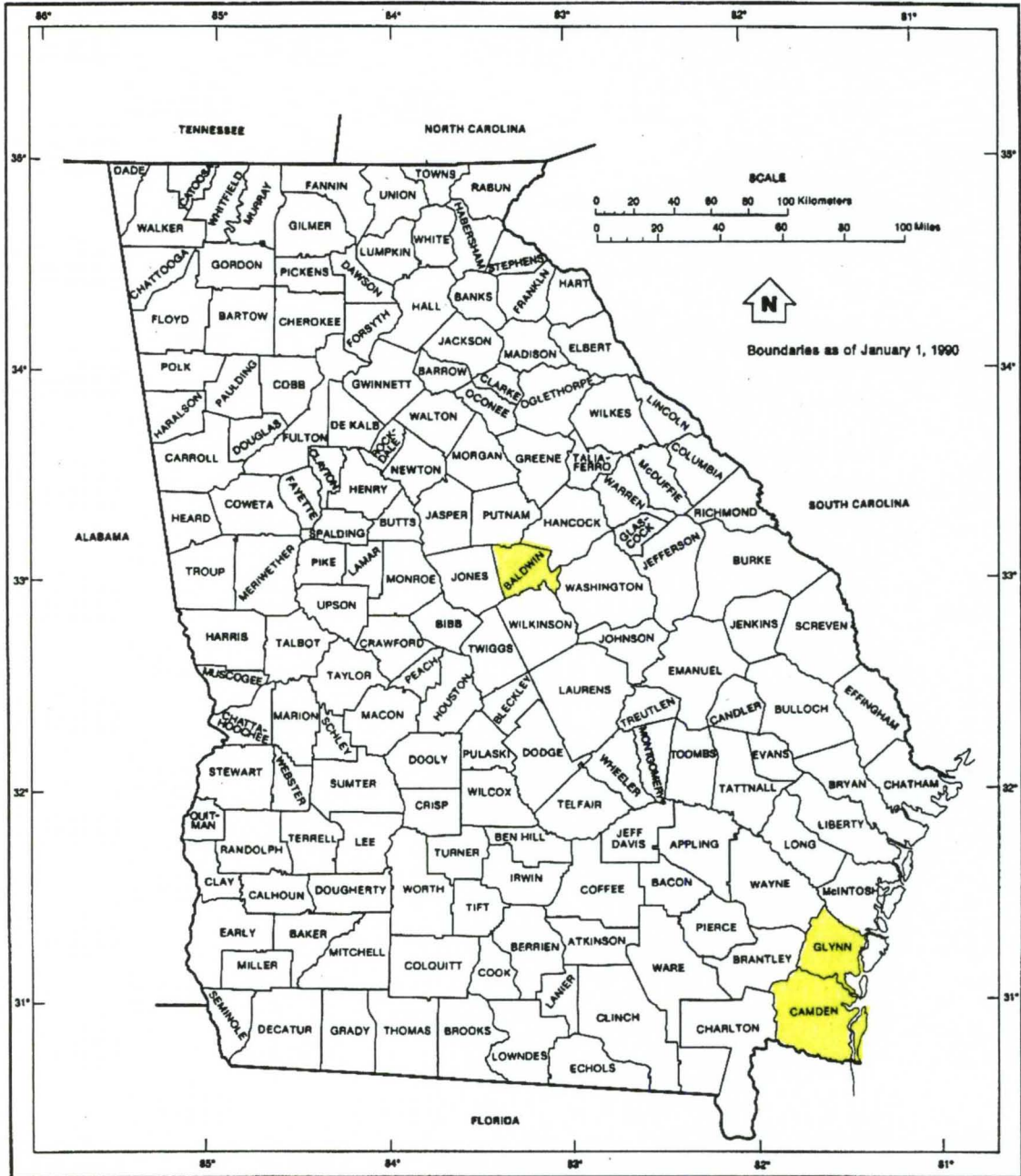
# Virginia County Map



“Virginia” [map]. County boundaries and names. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990. <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/states/virginia.gif>. (April 8, 2011).

# Georgia County Map

Counties



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE Economics and Statistics Administration Bureau of the Census  
MAPS

GEORGIA G-1

"Georgia" [map]. County boundaries and names. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990. <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/states/georgia.gif>. (April 8, 2011).

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AFRICAN AMERICAN, BRITISH COLONIAL MARINES: WAR OF 1812  
APPENDIX

Nutt	Hiram	1791	Virginia	Northumberland, \	6th	Gone	11/17/1814	Nutt, Walter	11/13/1814	
Parling	January	1778	Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th	Dead	02/20/1815	Parland, John	02/20/1815	
Seaton	Sambo		Georgia	Camden, GA	6th		03/01/1815		02/01/1815	Moved to Savanna Grande
Shaw	George		Florida	Apalachicola, FL	6th	5th Company	07/01/1815		1814/15	Murdered by Sunbury Coo
Smith	John		Georgia	Camden, GA	6th		03/01/1815		02/22/1815	
Teagle	John		Maryland/ Virginia	Chesapeake, MD/	6th	4th Company	10/15/1814		10/15/1814	
Toole	Pyramus		Virginia	Northumberland, \	6th		11/24/1814	Leland, B. M Potomac Riv	11/03/1814	
Wiley	Lucas/ Lucius	1792-93	Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/19/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/05/1815	
Wiley	Charles	1789-90	Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/19/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/05/1815	
Wiley	Cyrus	1789-90	Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/19/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/05/1815	
Wiley	January	1774-75	Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/19/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/05/1815	
Wiley	John	1793-94	Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/19/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/05/1815	
Wiley	Nero	1781-82	Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/15/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/05/1815	
Wiley	Richard	1795-96	Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/19/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/05/1815	
Wiley	Boatswain		Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/19/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/20/1815	
Wiley	James		Georgia	Glynn, GA	6th		02/20/1815	Wiley, Alexai St. Simon's	02/20/1815	
Williams	Tony		Florida	Apalachicola, FL	6th		07/01/1815		1814/15	
Williams	Tom		Georgia	Camden, GA	6th		03/01/1815		03/01/1815	
Wood	John		Florida	Apalachicola, FL	6th		07/01/1815		1814/15	

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Education

- 2009-2011 University of Louisville Louisville, KY  
Master of Arts (Expected 2011)  
Pan-African Studies
- 2006-2007 Alabama A&M University Normal, AL  
Masters of Education  
Secondary Education with a concentration in General Social  
Science
- 2002-2005 Alabama A&M University Normal, AL  
Bachelor of Arts  
Political Science with minor in History

### Research Interests

African American History  
American Politics  
African Politics  
US Foreign Policy  
Black Political Economy

### Experience

- 2010-2011 Graduate Assistant, Teaching Assistant, Lecturer Louisville, KY  
University of Louisville  
Taught Introduction to Pan-African Studies (PAS 200-02)  
Served as a Teaching Assistant in The Underground Railroad and American Memory (PAS 412) and Introduction to Pan-African Studies (PAS 200-04)
- 2009-2010 Graduate Assistant Louisville, KY  
University of Louisville  
Contributed to the scholarly works of Jan Carew
- 2008-2009 Certified Social Studies Teacher Camden, AL  
Wilcox Central High School

Taught US and World History in a rural, high poverty school district

- 2008 Certified Social Studies Teacher Durham, NC  
Lowe's Grove Middle School  
Taught World History and Geography in an urban, high poverty school
- 2007 Student Teacher Huntsville, AL  
Mountain Gap Middle School  
Taught World History and Geography in a suburban, affluent school
- 2002-2007 Tutor Normal, AL  
Support Alabama A&M University, Office of Retention and Academic  
Tutored individual and small groups of students in Math, Political Science, History, Geography, and Speech
- 2005 Intern, US House of Representative Washington, DC  
Congressman Robert "Bud" Cramer, Alabama 4<sup>th</sup> District

#### **Honors and Awards**

Graduate Assistantship University of Louisville  
Tuition Scholarship University of Louisville  
Employee of the Year ORAS  
Employee of the Semester (3x) ORAS  
Dean's List (02-05) Alabama A&M University  
Honor Roll (03-05) Alabama A&M University  
Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honors Society  
Alpha Kappa Mu Honors Society

#### **Community Involvement and Organizations**

Alpha Kappa Mu Honors Society,  
National Education Association,  
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated  
Pan-African Graduate Student Association  
Treasurer (09-10)  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People:  
Vice President (04-05), Organized the "Why Vote" Forum  
and Student Issues Debates.  
Election Campaign Volunteer:  
2004 Huntsville Mayoral, Presidential, and Madison County  
Commissioner Campaigns  
Alabama A&M Democrats  
Actively worked to increase student awareness and  
involvement with Local and national politics



**Study Abroad**

International Service Learning Program (Botswana)  
Study Abroad: Trinidad and Tobago