

STATIONED IN THE BORDERLANDS:
A STUDY OF BLACK WORLD WAR II SOLDIERS IN COMBAT ARMS

Sarah Ayako Barksdale

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of History.

Chapel Hill
2009

© 2009
Sarah Ayako Barksdale
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

SARAH BARKSDALE:

Stationed in the Borderlands: A Study of Black World War II Soldiers in Combat Arms
(Under the direction of Dr. Richard Kohn)

This paper examines the experiences of African American soldiers overseas in World War II. The Second World War has been described as a turning point in the black freedom struggle, and the soldiers who served in the military played a role in the pivotal changes taking place throughout the 1940s. Their time spent overseas and in the military was significant because it often provided soldiers with a new worldview or sense of consciousness. Using W.E.B. DuBois' idea of double consciousness, I analyze the changes these individuals experienced overseas, their encounters with new cultures, and generally new ways of looking at the world. In order to supplement this analysis and demonstrate that this sense of consciousness was prevalent at the time, I also use the work of contemporary black writers such as Gwendolyn Brooks and Melvin Tolson. Overall, I hope to reveal the changes these men underwent throughout the war.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I.	Introduction.....	1
II.	“I have a rendezvous with America”.....	8
III.	“Count us in”.....	16
IV.	“Fair flags of you above my indignation”.....	28
V.	“Those Negroes looked like men”.....	37
VI.	“There was mothers all over the world”.....	44
VII.	“Will V-Day be Me-Day?”.....	49
VIII.	“There are other journeys”.....	56
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	60

STATIONED IN THE BORDERLANDS

A Study of Black World War II Soldiers in Combat Arms

“Listen,” said Amzie Moore, one of the founders of the black freedom struggle in Mississippi, “for a long time I had the idea that a white man with white skin was superior, because it appeared to me that he had everything. And I figured if God uh, would justify the white man having everything, that God had put him in a position to be the best.”¹ The United States drafted Moore in 1942 and sent him to the China-Burma-India Theater in the Pacific, a zone notorious for taking African American combat units (93rd Infantry Division and 24th Infantry Regiment), and placing them in service roles. Military life rapidly disabused him of the idea that white people were superior. Not only did the paradox of fighting for democracy for a country which denied African Americans basic civil liberties strike him as incongruous, but experiencing different parts of the world changed Moore’s outlook. As he stood amidst the ruins of a Hindu temple in Calcutta, India, Moore surveyed the wreckage, thinking about the conditions he had witnessed in India. People were dying in the streets and others walked by them as though they did not exist, children were born and people wandered nude on those same streets. Moore worried that if America did not change she would suffer the same fate, “I think maybe if we will have to like each other whether we want to or not. We will have to

¹ Amzie Moore, interview by Prudence Arndt, 1979, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*, transcript, Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, <http://digital.wustl.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eop;cc=eop;rgn=main;view=text;idno=moo0015.0109.072>. Question 20.

get along with each other in this country, because that's the only way you can survive."² He returned home without an inferiority complex, saying that he realized in the Army, that all over the world, "people are just people"—everyone struggling to survive, good or bad, rich or poor, "they live and they die."³ With that realization, Corporal Moore stepped up and assumed an important role in the African American freedom struggle.

Sometimes described as the forgotten years of the black revolution, World War II marked a turning point in African Americans' relationship with their country. Although discrimination and hypocrisy in the military caused low morale, the war also intensified racial consciousness for many African Americans.⁴ One of the fundamental concepts in African American studies is W.E.B. DuBois' notion of double consciousness, or the difficulties in reconciling black and American identity. In looking at African American participation in World War II this concept is particularly valuable, because feelings of duality helped to sharpen racial consciousness and produce change.

The idea that African Americans experienced feelings of duality during World War II is not new. Many historians have discussed these reactions to the war effort. For the most part, historians focused on filling a gap in history, pointing out the contributions of a group of

² Ibid, Question 21, Moore talks about how his experiences overseas impacted his worldview. Also in Amzie Moore, interview by Mike Garvey, 29 March 1977, Mississippi Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi, transcript Mississippi Digital Library, <http://cdm.lib.usm.edu/u/?coh.5705>. 60. And Jay Driskell, "Amzie Moore: The Biographical Roots of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi," in *The Human Tradition in the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Susan M. Glisson (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 135.

³ Jay Driskell "Amzie Moore," 136.

⁴ Richard M. Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," in *The Negro in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution, 1930-1945*, ed. Bernard Sternsher (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 298-316. Dalfiume also cites James Baldwin for the idea of World War II as a turning point in the relationship between blacks and America. This notion of the war as a pivotal moment is used by many historians of the subject, for instance Neil Wynn in *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1975), 121.

people generally ignored. Before the war was over, historians and social scientists catalogued African American participation in, statistics and attitudes regarding military service.⁵ Ulysses Lee's *The Employment of Negro Troops* (1966) remains the standard military history of African American troops in World War II. Lee described the work as a study of Army policy and the military's use of human resources in military service, not in any sense a history of black troops.⁶ The book, however, provided a comprehensive picture of not only Army policy, but troop deployment and use throughout the war.

While the new military history, an approach that focused on "war and society," emerged in the 1960s, scholars of black World War II history did not engage it until somewhat later.⁷ One of the earliest to use this method was historian Neil Wynn in his 1975 book *The Afro-American and the Second World War*, where Wynn commented on the surprising lack of scholarship on the subject. In his discussion of the impact of war on African American society, Wynn claimed that the war did not just have political and economic impacts, but social and cultural as well, and at the same time provided a catalyst in

⁵ Ruth Wilson's 1944 book *Jim Crow Joins Up* is a good example of the earliest literature on the subject. At this point, researchers still probed questions regarding loyalty, capabilities, and efficiency of black soldiers, focused on a need to prove that African Americans were capable of making good soldiers. Samuel Stouffer, *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life*, vol. 1 *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949-1950), is also an important study which includes many critical statistics on African American troops.

⁶ Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1966), ix.

⁷ Wayne E. Lee, "Mind and Matter—Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field." *The Journal of American History* 93.4 (March 2007): 1116-1142. 1117. Lee describes the emergence of the new military history, focused on the humanistic aspects of war, and delving into questions about the people in the military and their experiences.

For the study of African Americans in the military, one of the first historians to use this approach was Richard Dalfiume in *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969). He focused specifically on the links between the military and society and emphasized the political pressure society put on policymakers to affect change. However, books that analyzed World War II from this perspective didn't emerge until the 1970s.

the struggle for equal rights.⁸ Other historians soon followed suit; Russell Buchanan and Lee Finkle both analyzed different aspects of the black perspective on World War II in the late 1970s. In 1987 Mary Penick Motley assembled an impressive body of work in *The Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldier, World War II*, in which she compiled a number of interviews with black soldiers from World War II. Motley, like many others, put together the book because history frequently ignored black participation and contributions to the war. It is only in the past decade that the number of works on African American participation in World War II increased. Professional and amateur historians still work to correct the paucity of literature on the subject.⁹

Most historians agree that World War II produced great changes socially, culturally, politically, and economically. Yet there is not a work that focuses on the African American soldiers' experience overseas in order to help explain these changes, focusing on their personal feelings. What happened to Amzie Moore and other black soldiers overseas that made them question the social structure? How did men acquire a new worldview overseas? Using W.E.B. DuBois' framework of double consciousness helps to explain the attitudes of soldiers and the emotional consequences of their experiences.

DuBois first advanced the theory of double consciousness in an 1897 essay entitled, "Strivings of the Negro People," an essay later revamped in his 1903 collection of essays entitled *The Souls of Black Folk*. He described the phenomenon as sensation which allowed African Americans no true self-consciousness, having instead a sense of seeing one's self

⁸ Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1975), 99.

⁹ Specific works focused on particular unit histories, such as Daniel Gibran's 2001 book *The 92nd Infantry Division and the Italian Campaign in World War II* and Hondon Hargrove's 2003 book *Buffalo Soldier in Italy: Black Americans in World War II*, as well as a number of works on the 761st Tank Battalion have become more frequent. Maggi Morehouse, in a fashion similar to that of Motley, wrote *Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: Black Men and Women Remember World War II* in 2000, including a bit more analysis of the sources.

through the eyes of other people, and measuring one's soul by the standards of white America. African Americans, wrote DuBois, were always aware of this "two-ness," a sense of duality or two "warring ideals in one dark body," an American and a Negro.¹⁰ For DuBois, African Americans ultimately aspired to disrupt this self/other dichotomy and merge the two identities, eventually attaining "self-conscious manhood" without losing either part in the process.

By the time DuBois published in 1897, the concept of double consciousness had existed for some time. He drew from both American Transcendentalism and emerging psychological studies involving split personalities. Within the transcendentalist movement the term appeared as early as 1843 in an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who used it to describe the difficulties of adopting a transcendentalist perspective for one's self and the world, and looked at the dichotomy between understanding and the soul.¹¹ The use of double consciousness by others suggested that it was a widespread concept, not limited to a racial interpretation. DuBois' application of the term to a marginalized group of people suggested a deep psychological scarring of the African American community, amplified by a history of strife and a "world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."¹²

¹⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 11.

DuBois pulled from both transcendentalism and psychology (studies in multiple personality) for the idea of double consciousness).

¹¹ Dickinson D. Bruce, Jr. "W.E.B. DuBois and the Idea of Double Consciousness" in *The Souls of Black Folk* ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 237-238. It has also been suggested that both Emerson and DuBois derived the concept of double consciousness in part from Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, *Faust*. DuBois' image of the "two souls warring in one dark body," referring to Faust's cry "Two souls, alas! Reside within my breast, /And each withdraws from, and repels, its brother." Bruce, "W.E.B. DuBois," 239.

¹² DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 11.

As writer Toni Morrison explained years later, American essentially meant white, both in literature and in life. People of African descent struggled endlessly to make the term apply to themselves, “with ethnicity and hyphen after hyphen after hyphen.”¹³ Another concept useful to understanding double-consciousness is that of a borderland, “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” and where the individual is in a “constant state of transition.”¹⁴ This concept connects to DuBois’ warring ideals, or the marginalized person caught between two cultures and attempting to retain elements of both in forming an American identity.

The struggle to reconcile American identity with black identity also appeared in black literature in the World War II and postwar period. Issues of citizenship and belonging fell closer to home and resonated with all African Americans. A variety of black writers such as Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Gwendolyn Brooks, Owen Dodson, and Chester Himes all explored themes of black consciousness with special relevance to the war. Topics ranged from invisibility to crossing borders and sometimes spoke explicitly to the war effort. On the home front, African Americans waged the “Double V” campaign for victory at home and victory abroad. They supported the war effort, but at the same time they pushed to extend that same idea to democracy at home.

While African Americans on the home front felt the same conflicting desires—attempting to participate in society while at the same time facing intense discrimination—this

¹³ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 47.

¹⁴ Johnella E. Butler, “African American Studies and the ‘Warring Ideals,’” in *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower*, ed. Manning Marable (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 141. Butler uses the idea of the borderland and quotes from Gloria Anzaldúa *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books 1999). Anzaldúa’s use of Borderlands shows its application to people on the margins of society, in her case Latinos, people who are trying to fit in and be “American.”

struggle held even more immediacy for black soldiers. Regardless of race, effective performance and high morale depend heavily on the soldier's belief in cause and country, and without support and recognition from the home front, faith in the cause and country wanes and morale often declines.¹⁵ Black soldiers, facing derision from the home front and extreme discrimination in the army, did not completely relate to the idea of cause and country. For them, the question "why we fight" was oftentimes a mystery. Rather than presenting a collective history of racism, using the framework of double consciousness and the inability to reconcile conflicting voices and desires allows for a deeper understanding of personal psychology. This understanding then illustrates the impact of these experiences on individuals and also demonstrates how they altered soldiers' worldviews. Historians often note that World War II profoundly impacted the African American struggle for civil rights, but neglect to expand upon this idea. The changes black soldiers underwent contributed to a larger shift in African American attitudes and the ability to cross imposed racial boundaries. Following the path of a soldier's life in the Army from initial enlistment to homecoming, the experiences of African American soldiers are revealed on a deeper and more personal level.

¹⁵ Peter S. Kindsvatter *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), xxi-xxiii.

“I have a rendezvous with America”

On September 16, 1940 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act, the first national peacetime conscription in American history. A month later, over sixteen million men were registered.¹⁶ For African Americans, the act possessed particular importance because it assured them that blacks would be included in the impending mobilization.¹⁷ Originally, the Selective Training and Service Act affirmed that in a free society, the privileges of military service and training should be shared in a fair and just system of military participation. Many found this clause too vague, however, and pushed for additional safeguards.¹⁸ The final, amended version of the act declared that within the limits of the determined quota, any person, regardless of race or color and between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six would have the opportunity to volunteer for military service. There would be no discrimination in selection and training. At the same time, another provision of the act asserted that no man should be inducted for training unless he

¹⁶ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 459.

¹⁷ Barnard C. Nalty and Morris J. MacGregor, *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1981), 105. Commentary by Nalty and MacGregor.

¹⁸ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 71-73. Lee explains that African Americans were skeptical because other laws about black military service failed to produce change. For instance, Public Law 18 of 1939 authorized the training of black pilots, but the Army was unable to work out the provision due to the social implications, as black pilots would have to be commissioned and then assigned to white units because no black units existed in the Air Corps (58).

was “acceptable to the land or naval forces,” leading one issue of the NAACP’s *Crisis* magazine to declare that the Army had provided for Jim Crow in the Selective Service Act.¹⁹

As expected, when the Selective Service Act passed, certain draft boards continued to accept only white men for training. Some used the excuse that the military camps lacked separate housing and facilities necessary for black soldiers, and were “not yet ready ‘for Negro units.’”²⁰ More than 3 million African Americans registered for service, yet draft boards rejected blacks at a rate of 18.2 percent, compared to an 8.5 percent rejection rate for whites.²¹ Another rationalization for the rejection of black applicants was the Army General Classification Test (AGCT). An aptitude test that ostensibly measured intelligence and other technical abilities, the AGCT placed applicants in a class of I through V, five being the lowest. A higher percentage of African American enlisted men fell into class V, particularly illiterate Southern blacks. Consequently, Northern African Americans made up nearly one third of all African Americans in the Armed Forces, despite the fact that they constituted less than one fourth of the total black registrants.²² These test scores pointed to a long history of discrimination, rather than any natural deficiencies on the part of the black soldier. Yet as

¹⁹ Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops*, 73. Quote taken from the Selective Service and Training Act. The quota mentioned stipulated black population within the military would be proportional to the black population of the country. “Along the NAACP Battlefront,” *The Crisis* 48, no. 1 (January 1941): 22.

²⁰ Crisis Editorials, “Discrimination in the Draft,” *The Crisis* 48, no. 1 (January 1941): 7. This is also noted in John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, eighth edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 477.

²¹ Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 481.

²² Samuel A. Stouffer, Edward A. Suchman, Leland C. DeVinney, Shirley A. Star, and Robin M. Williams, Jr., *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life, Volume I* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), 492-494. Bell I. Wiley also provided similar statistics in his study *The Training of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Field Forces, Historical Selection), 7. Wiley asserted that typical black units had 40 to 50 percent of their strength in Class V personnel. He also noted that these figures did not take into account the “educational handicap of the Negroes” and factors like shorter school terms, inferior teachers, and inadequate educational facilities.

the war dragged on, these AGCT classifications eventually led to the placement of larger numbers of African Americans into service units.²³

Quotas played an important part in acceptance rates and officer selection. Historian John Hope Franklin attempted to enlist in the Navy in 1941. While Franklin described himself as nonviolent, he wanted to use his talents and training to serve the country in some capacity. Eager to do his part, Franklin aggressively sold himself to the Navy recruiter, quickly reeling off his qualifications, including a PhD from Harvard University. The recruiter looked at Franklin incredulously and simply replied that Franklin lacked in one important qualification, and that was color. The Navy had strict limitations on black enlistment. Franklin mumbled “something to the effect that I thought there was a national emergency, but I was obviously mistaken,” and left with the “same feeling that black volunteers must have had when George Washington rejected them in the Continental Army in 1775 or when Abraham Lincoln sent them home when they tried to enlist in the Union Army in 1861.”²⁴

Numerous African American men encountered this problem when attempting to enlist. David Dinkins, mayor of New York City from 1990-1993, also tried to enlist in 1945 before the end of the war. Dinkins’ planned to enlist before turning 18, so that he could join the branch of his choice. In his mind, the Marine Corps was the place to be, because it had the reputation for the best trained fighters, and the way to survive was to be well trained. Dinkins admitted that it also helped that the Marine dress blues looked so smart.²⁵ First he

²³ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 137.

²⁴ John Hope Franklin, *Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), 105.

²⁵ David Dinkins interview, 2002-2008, National Visionary Leadership Project, Library of Congress American Folklife Center. <http://www.visionaryproject.com/dinkinsdavid/>

tried to enlist in Trenton, NJ and when he found that they had no recruiting offices, he went to a succession of places—Newark, Camden, Jersey City, Philadelphia, New York. At each stop, the board gave Dinkins one of two responses: either they had reached their quota of black Marines, or that he had to enlist in the state of his residence. Finally, in Philadelphia Dinkins found a draft board that let him fill out the paperwork, only to fail him for high blood pressure in the physical. Persevering, the young man went to a number of other doctor's offices to get other opinions, and then went back to the draft board in Philadelphia where it finally passed him for the physical and put him in the Marine Corps.²⁶

Not everyone possessed Dinkins' determination, however, and many expressed their grievances to the Secretary of War or even the President. In their letters, African Americans asked for the opportunity to serve. One journalist wrote to the White House to express his shock and dismay over the treatment of black soldiers in the Army. Although he still considered volunteering for the military, at the same time he feared joining an organization that mistreated African Americans. He also emphasized that "Negroes have always been loyal to the United States," and "all we want is an opportunity."²⁷ Another African American expecting to be drafted wrote, "I have an unholy fear, not of the enemy; but strangely enough of my own fellow Americans."²⁸ Ira F. Lewis of the *Pittsburgh Courier* wrote to the President that "black Americans love their country. They are as willing to die for it today as

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kenton Jackson to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 24 June 1941, Army-AG Decimal File, 1940-1945 (Box 1082), Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 407, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

²⁸ Lisha B. Pena, *Records of Military Agencies Relating to African Americans from Post-World War I Period to the Korean War* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2006), 78. Seton Eversley to President Roosevelt, April 4, 1943, Army-AG Decimal File, 1940-45, p.1 (Box 1070), Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 407, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

they have been in the past. . . . Black Americans hold nothing against any other Americans when the vital interests of this nation are involved.”²⁹ Stated one editorial in the *Crisis*: “The United States Army must cease being a white man’s army and become a citizens’ army.”³⁰

The influx of letters asking to join the military and the professions of patriotism simultaneously demonstrated African American desires and fears about service. Their requests to join the military exhibited the fear of being hurt and rejected, as with John Hope Franklin, and simultaneously the strong desire to claim America and to be American. They pushed at the boundaries of the color line, trying to disrupt DuBois’ self/other dichotomy and merge the two identities into one.

This attempt to claim an American identity appeared in black literature and poetry throughout the war. Poet Melvin B. Tolson depicted the merging of disparate cultures throughout American history in his 1944 volume, *Rendezvous with America*. His poems often described the variety of ethnic and racial groups in America, the ways they interacted, and how they contributed to the country’s growth. Tolson’s poem “The Unknown Soldier” portrayed the contributions of a black soldier in America, present from Concord Bridge to San Juan Hill. The narrator claimed that “These shrines of freedom are mine as well as yours.”³¹

²⁹ Ira F. Lewis to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 19 Aug 1941, Army-AG Decomal File, 1940-45 (Box 1080), Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, Record Group 407, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

³⁰ *Pittsburgh Courier*, “Whose Army Is It?” From the Press of the Nation, *The Crisis* 47, no. 6 (June 1940): 180.

³¹ Melvin B. Tolson, *Rendezvous with America* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1944), 34. This concept of tombs commemorating an unknown soldier arose in the period following World War I. For African Americans, this type of memorial gained special significance, because the anonymity of the soldier led to the possibility that the soldier might not be white. Mark Whalan, *The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), xviii.

Another African American poet, Owen Dodson, explored similar themes in his 1946 volume *Powerful Long Ladder*. In the poem “Black Mother Praying,” a mother prayed to God for all her boys out fighting for their country, who “Didn’t think bout it cept it were for freedom; Didn’t think cause they was black they wasn’t American.”³² At the same time, the mother prayed that her sons had something to come home to, an America without lynching and discrimination. Better, she said, that they die in a desert battling for freedom than to come back and see that they suffered in vain. While the poem displayed a deep cynicism, at the same time Dodson never shied away from claiming an American identity for the soldiers, even if the home front held no refuge.

Both Tolson and Dodson indicated that African Americans wanted to be recognized as proud American citizens, just like whites. A black high school student wrote in an essay that citizenship was the goal of black youth, and that African Americans simply wished to prove themselves fit and show their “worth to the nation and its cause” for the creation of a “greater and happier America.”³³ One soldier explained to a friend that he had to join the Army, because he needed to be able to say: “this is my country, I fought for it and you can’t deny me.”³⁴ John Johnson of Baltimore, Maryland recalled that his brother was drafted right after the war broke out and died on guard duty before shipping out. It was a difficult time for

³² Owen Dodson, *Powerful Long Ladder* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, Inc., 1946), 8.

³³ Helen Deloney, “First prize essay in the high school division,” *The Crisis* 48, no. 8 (August 1941): 254.

³⁴ Nelson Peery, *Black Fire: The Making of An American Revolutionary* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 128.

the family, and John was the only son left. He volunteered for the Army in 1943, because, as he told his father, “I want to be a soldier.”³⁵

Despite fear and anger, African Americans pushed the imposed borders and fought to be part of the country’s armed forces. In October 1940, as the draft came into law, the White House released the first statement to the press regarding race, stating that Negroes would be accepted into the Armed Forces on a fair and equitable basis.³⁶ The War Department made it clear, however, that it was still not its policy to mingle colored and white enlisted personnel. Part of what might be termed the “October Surprise,” in an effort to gain more of the black vote, Roosevelt also promoted Benjamin O. Davis Sr. to Brigadier General, appointed Campbell C. Johnson (reserve officer for the ROTC at Howard University) Special Aide to the Director of Selective Service, and named William Hastie as Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War.³⁷

Over the next year the military continued to expand as the U.S. moved toward becoming a belligerent.³⁸ Generally, before December 1941 the numbers of African Americans entering the Army had not reached intended quotas due in large part to conflicts with the draft boards. One soldier recalled that when Pearl Harbor was attacked he paid no attention, because in a segregated Army he assumed he would play a minor role.³⁹ Another

³⁵ John Johnson Collection, interview by Erica Sugar, VA Medical Center, Baltimore, MD (AFC/2001/001/10701), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. Not completely clear how his brother died.

³⁶ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 76.

³⁷ Truman K. Gibson, *Knocking Down Barriers: My Fight For Black America* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 79.

³⁸ Allan R. Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 396.

³⁹ Lewis Conn Collection, interview by William Joseph Bruckner, Atlanta History Center (AFC/2001/001/43716) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

wrote that it meant little to him, because at the time he knew nothing about Pearl Harbor or what it meant to the country.⁴⁰ John David Jackson of Ohio said that when he enlisted in early 1942, he just wanted to help. “I never knew where Pearl Harbor was; never even heard of the place before then. But that’s the reason I joined . . . to help.”⁴¹ As it turned out, Jackson and numerous other African American soldiers would soon play an integral part in the impending war.

⁴⁰ Emiel W. Owens, *Blood on German Snow: An African American Artilleryman in World War II and Beyond* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 22.

⁴¹ John David Jackson Collection, interview by Paul LaRue, Washington Court House Senior High School (AFC/2001/001/38452) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

“Count Us In”

Looking back, Aquilla Calhoun admitted that when he joined the Army he was “young and crazy,” a “little hothead.” Calhoun’s mother signed for him, allowing him to enlist at the age of sixteen, so in 1941 he packed his bags and left Macon, Georgia for basic training at Camp Davis, North Carolina. The Army selected the young man for the Anti-Aircraft Artillery training course, where he learned to operate radars. His first assignment sent him to the St. Lawrence Seaway, where his unit searched for planes and guarded locks. For Calhoun, learning radar was a novel experience, one that he truly enjoyed.⁴² Calhoun adapted quickly to the regimentation of Army life and was soon promoted. Sergeant Calhoun was not the only black soldier to benefit from parts of his military experience. Another Sergeant of the 9th Cavalry recalled that he did not exactly jump for joy when drafted. Yet in spite of his initial wariness, when he arrived at Fort Custer, Michigan and joined a special cavalry unit that still rode horses, he could honestly say that he had a ball.⁴³ Numerous soldiers seemed to feel that the Army was a useful experience. In a 1943 War Department survey of soldiers, a section on the “Attitudes of Negroes” found that 68 percent of black soldiers found what they did in the Army worthwhile.⁴⁴

⁴² Aquilla Calhoun Collection, interview by Linda Cross, Tyler Junior College(AFC/2001/001/35246) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

⁴³ Tibbs Interview in *The Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldier, World War II*, ed Mary Penick Motley (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 53.

⁴⁴ Samuel A. Stouffer, *Survey on the Attitudes of Negroes* March 1943, Research Branch Information and Education Division War Department, 18. Stouffer’s project (S-32) surveyed 7442 black soldiers. This is one of the surveys that informed his series *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II*.

Despite the widespread conviction of the importance of the task at hand, even the youthful enthusiasm of someone like Sergeant Calhoun waned at times. The same survey on the attitudes of black soldiers discovered that when asked, “What sort of a time do you have in the army?” about 49 percent responded that it was fifty-fifty—meaning that about fifty percent of the time Army life was pretty good, while the other fifty percent they had a “pretty rotten time.”⁴⁵ Black soldiers were particularly ambivalent about military service in wartime because of the constant contempt and disregard for their contributions.

The Army drafted the majority of men in the military. While each person’s experience with training or Officer Candidate School (OCS) differed, the underlying strand of racism inherent in segregation led to moments when soldiers questioned their purpose and felt the hostility of whites, particularly officers. Master Sergeant Floyd Jones felt no uncertainties when it came to serving. “My roots are here in this soil. In no way is this a denial of my African ancestry, rather an affirmation of the fact that I am an American. . . . I served because it was my job and I don’t dodge jobs I feel I must do whether I like them or not.” Jones felt that his time in the service was one of his greatest experiences, because otherwise he would never have seen so much of the world.⁴⁶ Others expressed anger and frustration at the idea of serving in the military. One soldier from the 614th Tank Battalion said, “Civilian life is one thing, but to be drafted to fight to save the world for democracy only to find that you have entered the most undemocratic and racist organization in the whole country is quite another thing.”⁴⁷ Despite these conflicting feelings about serving, as David

⁴⁵ Ibid, 17.

⁴⁶ Floyd Jones Interview, in *The Invisible Soldier*, 177.

⁴⁷ Claude Ramsey Interview in *The Invisible Soldier*, 172.

Dinkins noted the men still served. It was not like Vietnam, he recalled. Everyone was going to war, people you knew were fighting and dying, and there was no thought of draft dodging.⁴⁸ The voices of the soldiers still expressed a “two-ness,” one speaking of duty and the other, while still performing his duty, raged against injustice.

For many northern African Americans, the journey South for basic training brought them face to face with Jim Crow for the first time. While discrimination existed in the North, it did not compare to the level of segregation south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Dinkins began this journey late in the war—July 1945—and experienced segregated transportation for the first time when sent to the back of the bus on the way to Jacksonville, North Carolina. When he reached Montford Point, where black Marines trained, a Drill Instructor promptly grilled him for not having his orders and then hit him in the mouth.⁴⁹ Another soldier of Burlington, New Jersey was drafted in December 1944 and reported to Camden, New Jersey and then to Fort Dix. He began his journey south to Fort McClellan, Alabama with a number of white GI’s, all of them partying on the train. As soon as they passed D.C., however, the group was split up, much to the chagrin of both black and white.⁵⁰

Isham G. Benton received his draft notice in 1942 and entered the Army at Fort Harrison Indiana. From there, he traveled south to Camp Wheeler, Georgia for basic training. Upon his arrival, the white Colonel who addressed the new recruits announced that it did not matter where they were from—Pittsburgh, Chicago, or Detroit—they were in Georgia now. Benton remembered perceiving this statement as an explicit warning to

⁴⁸ David Dinkins interview, 2002-2008, National Visionary Leadership Project.

⁴⁹ David Dinkins interview, 2002-2008, National Visionary Leadership Project.

⁵⁰ George T. Ridout Collection, interview by Walter V. Valentine, VA Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA (AFC/2001/001/32824) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

African Americans from the North: while they were in the South, they had better conform to southern racial practices.⁵¹

In his thirteen weeks of training at Camp Wheeler, Benton scored quite well on the AGCT, making him eligible for Officer Candidate School.⁵² In 1942 the number of African Americans graduating from OCS increased dramatically.⁵³ Larger numbers of African Americans qualified on the AGCT, yet oftentimes numbers and quotas rather than leadership abilities dictated acceptance as candidates. One of the difficulties in assigning black officers arose from housing and social concerns; separate accommodations for black officers were generally not available.⁵⁴

When Benton prepared for OCS in Georgia, candidates appeared in front of a review board for an oral exam. Before his group went to the board, one of his captains—a “very fine gentleman” from Georgia Tech—pulled them aside and said, “I’m very proud of you fellows, you have accomplished something worthy of recognition.” The captain also left them with some important advice: when they appeared in front of the review board, it was absolutely imperative that they exhibit the proper deference to whites. The white officers had no interest in the candidates’ intellect or knowledge of history. Rather, they probed the candidates’ attitudes on social conditions. A question as innocuous as, “Who is the president of the United States,” had social implications. The appropriate response was, “Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt,” and the key was the Mister, because it was unseemly for a black man to

⁵¹ Isham Benton Collection, interview by Rosalynn West, National Council of Negro Woman and Richard Lugar/U.S. Senate (AFC/2001/001/28694) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 483.

⁵⁴ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 212-213.

express himself about a white man without the proper respect. Although Benton passed the board of review three times, the quota for black officers had been filled.⁵⁵

In order to have a chance at a promotion, Benton needed to conform to a standard set by white Americans. White people wanted him to behave in a certain way, so it became necessary to suppress his own voice and bend to a stereotype. As he mentioned, they took no interest in his intellect or his personality. Rather, they expected him to behave in a subservient manner, regardless of any potential leadership abilities. Within Benton there was a duality, and he was well aware that he behaved like two separate people. Intelligent enough to earn a respectable score on the AGCT, at the same time Benton understood how white Americans viewed him, what they expected, and how society in Georgia worked.

Experiences in the South often proved intense for black Northerners. David Dinkins recalled that his white gunnery sergeant used to say, “alright niggers, fall in!”⁵⁶ The Southern camps subjected many people to a level of discrimination they had not previously faced. A. William Perry spent his first week at Camp McClellan, Alabama sick in a hospital bed. He emerged from the hospital ready to rejoin the other black soldiers, and his superiors sent him to the mess hall first, to get some food. There were five other black soldiers in the hall, recalled Perry, and when he moved to get his meal, another man stopped him, and explained to him he had to wait until the white men finished eating. It was “like somebody slapped me in the face,” Perry exclaimed, “We’re here to save the world for democracy and we can’t eat ‘til the white guys eat!” Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, it was Perry’s first

⁵⁵ Benton Collection, oral history interview.

⁵⁶ David Dinkins interview, 2002-2008, National Visionary Leadership Project.

real experience with discrimination.⁵⁷

For African American poet Dudley Randall, service in the South Pacific during World War II was an experience that shaped his life. He conceived the poem “The Southern Road” on his way south for basic training from his home in Michigan and finally wrote it down in 1948. The poem described the boundary between North and South as “the boundary to hell.” Once crossed, the conductor would surely make the blacks and whites separate. For him, southern ground was stained red with black blood, but despite the imminent horror, Randall claimed the South as his own. On his journey, Randall wrote of the South, “I have to love you,” though “my griefs like troubled streams have flowed.”⁵⁸ The poem demonstrated Randall’s ambivalence about his country. On one hand, he feared to go south, because African American history was filled with strife and violence. At the same time, Randall said that African American blood drenched southern ground so deeply, that nobody could deny their claim to the land and country. Despite a troubled past, the poem demonstrated a love of country and place.

With all the trouble in the southern camps, both Judge William Hastie and Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis advised the War Department to take a firm stance on the use of offensive epithets in reference to black troops. Yet efforts too often fell short. Army leaders avowed that their job was not to interfere in social conventions, and tended to bristle at criticism.⁵⁹ As segregation and other civilian social practices shaped life in the military

⁵⁷ A. William Perry Collection, interview by Jerri Donohue, World War II-Korean War Roundtable, Akron, Ohio (AFC/2001/001/51117), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

⁵⁸ Dudley Randall, “The Southern Road.”

⁵⁹ Gibson, *Knocking Down Barriers*. Gibson talks often about how the Army resented criticism from black or white civilians on both sides of the segregation issue. He also mentions that the Army hated Eleanor Roosevelt, for interfering and demanding a fair deal for black soldiers, 101.

camps, the situation in the South deteriorated. Early in the war, the War Department attempted to ignore the problem but incidents became more violent throughout the South in camps such as Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi, and Camp Stewart, Georgia.⁶⁰ Finally, Judge Hastie warned in a report to Secretary of War Henry Stimson that the Army could no longer afford to ignore the situation.⁶¹

The standard War Department response that it was policy not to tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, creed, or color, while at the same time segregating black soldiers. One soldier at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana remembered that the Army quartered black soldiers on the back side of the grounds in a “swampland, the most undesirable area of the whole camp.” White soldiers, on the other hand, lived at the other end of the camp, on good ground, near a highway and bus stop.⁶² Another soldier in Florida wrote to his father about an incident where black soldiers were not allowed to salute the flag. The white soldiers saluted at 5:15, immediately before the flag was taken down and cased. Black soldiers waited until 5:30, and saluted a flag pole. In a subsequent investigation of the incident, the War Department found that the eight-hour training program for black soldiers conflicted with the lowering of the flag. At the time, however, officers provided them with no explanation.⁶³

⁶⁰ Wiley, *The Training of Negro Troops*, 49-50.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 97.

⁶² Eddie Donald Interview, *Invisible Soldier*, 162.

⁶³ Philip Weightman to Senator Scott Lucas, 14 July 1944, Army-AG Decimal File, 1940-1945 (Box 1065), Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 407, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

At other times soldiers described incidents with a great deal of emotion. One Private in the 459th Signal Battalion stationed at Morris Field, North Carolina wrote to President Roosevelt about the death of a black soldier. Apparently after the man died, nobody would explain to the African American troops how or why it happened. In this personal letter the soldier also described an incident in which their lieutenant hit a soldier. The private then explained to the President how upsetting this type of treatment was.⁶⁴ In another letter, a soldier from Camp McCain, Mississippi described the pervasive fears that black soldiers held. Soldiers from the North feared for their lives and were close to the point of desertion. “I have seen them sit down and cry like babies,” he told the President. “It is all right for a baby to cry but when a man cries, it’s bad.”⁶⁵ In a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, Billie Murphy of Detroit enclosed some correspondence from a close personal friend stationed in the South. Toward the end of the soldier’s letter, after describing treatment in both the camps and towns, he advised Mrs. Murphy not to come south, because “colored people are not wanted.” In closing, he admitted that he had to stop writing, because he felt like crying. Oftentimes, wrote the soldier, he had to laugh to keep from crying, because he believed he had lost his spirit.⁶⁶

In each of these cases the soldiers were reacting to racism. For black troops accustomed to it, issues seemingly unrelated to race became racial, even if the insult was

⁶⁴ Pvt. J.S. Baker, Co. A., 459th Signal Bn. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 30 Nov 1942. Army-AG Decimal File, 1940-45 (Box 1072), Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, Record Group 407, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁶⁵ Anonymous soldier, Camp McCain to Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army, 2 Nov 1942, Army-AG Decimal File, 1940-45 (Box 1072), Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, Record Group 407, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁶⁶ Mrs. Billie Murphy to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt 30 June 1941. Army-AG Decimal File, 1940-45; (Box 1082); Records of the Adjutant General’s Office; Record Group 407; National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

unintentional, accentuating the sense of two-ness or even schizophrenia.⁶⁷ African American soldiers constantly felt they were being treated as inferior, which inspired feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, and paranoia. While not every irritant intended discrimination, African Americans nonetheless held very real fears about their situation. Writer Chester Himes touched on this idea of fear in his 1945 novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go*. The protagonist Bob Jones seemed fascinated by his own marginalization and bothered more by the persecution and discrimination he intuited than his actual experience with either.⁶⁸ Each day Jones stepped outside, he felt the racial hatred that Pearl Harbor had unleashed, a “crazy feeling of race as thick in the street as gas fumes,” and feared that it would explode. Jones thought of the way that Japanese Americans were uprooted from their homes and sent to internment camps, and he dreaded that the same thing could happen to him. While nobody actually bothered him or said a word, Jones still felt the “race trouble, serious trouble never more than two feet off.” As a result, Jones carried his fear, readiness, and awareness on him, and the only place he felt safe was in bed asleep.⁶⁹

Most black soldiers did not desert and faithfully served out their time in service. Many, like Floyd Jones, felt it was their duty, or just a job that needed to be done. Lewis Conn of the 784th Tank Battalion also felt that it was a job, and while at times it seemed unbearable, he persevered.⁷⁰ Like the voice of poet Melvin Tolson, men exhibited a strong desire to be American. The sense of duty these soldiers exhibited demonstrated that they

⁶⁷ Samuel Stouffer, *The American Soldier*, 502. Stouffer points out that complaints common to soldiers of all races acquired special significance for African Americans. Soldiers of both races might complain of something like low pay, but African American soldiers often saw these issues as racial.

⁶⁸ Hinton Als, “In Black and White,” forward in *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, Chester Himes (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1945, 1986), xv.

⁶⁹ Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1945), 4.

⁷⁰ Lewis Conn Collection, oral history interview.

thought of themselves as citizens with an obligation to their country. Yet as Chester Himes expressed, on the other side of the veil from the black perspective there existed deep-seated fears and paranoia within this psychosis. This sense of schizophrenia—an American trying to perform a duty, but an African American being downtrodden at every turn—was enough to make a soldier cry.

Life in the camps brought men down in other ways. Many protested that prisoners of war received better treatment than black soldiers. The memory of his arrival to Fort Hood, Texas remained quite vivid in Lewis Conn's memory because, he said, "it destroyed my mind." Black soldiers could not go to a movie but the German POWs could go wherever white soldiers went, "and here we was goin' to fight them and train to fight them, but here they had more privilege than I did. It tore us up." Conn remembered that upon seeing this, a few men in his unit deserted, and then upon being caught were prosecuted.⁷¹

This phenomenon occurred even in the North. William Perry noted that at Camp Perry, Ohio the German prisoners "had more freedom and run of the camp than we had." From what he heard, this was fairly common throughout the country, and it seemed to him that "German prisoners in this country lived pretty good."⁷² Sergeant Eddie Donald of the 761st Tank Battalion described this freedom of movement allowed the German POWs as "one of the most repugnant things I can recall of the many things that happened to Negro servicemen."⁷³ Similarly, David Carson Jr. of the 365th Infantry Regiment passed through El Paso, Texas in his first furlough. He stopped to grab a bite to eat at a dingy little restaurant,

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² A. William Perry Collection, oral history interview.

⁷³ Eddie Donald Interview in *The Invisible Soldier*, 162.

filled with business from white civilians and German POWs. “There sat the so-called enemy comfortably seated, laughing, talking, making friends, with the waitresses at their beck and call. If I had tried to enter that dining room the ever-present MPs would have busted my skull, a citizen-soldier of the United States. My morale, if I had any left, dipped well below zero.” According to Carson, there was nothing that infuriated him as much as seeing the Germans receive Texas hospitality.⁷⁴

Receiving less respect than the enemy broached the questions of citizenship, loyalty, and cause, emphasizing the idea of split identity. Lewis Conn felt torn apart by it, and others expressed similar feelings of disgust and frustration. The notion that the U.S. privileged German POWs over black Americans had a devastating effect on morale.

Soon enough these soldiers deployed, many feeling at times that the war was not worth fighting. When asked on a questionnaire what he was fighting for, one black soldier in the European theater replied, “that I did not know. Reason: I am a colored American soldier and I am told by our chiefs that we are fighting for democracy!” These same chiefs, however, advocated discrimination against African Americans which the soldier equated to Nazism. “I can’t see any difference in either policy—do I know why I am fighting?”⁷⁵ In the same study of black troops in the European theater, only 35 percent were certain that they had a personal stake in the war.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ David Carson Interview in *The Invisible Soldier*, 266. An interview with Richard Carter of the 597th Field Artillery Battalion complained of another situation in Texas, where American MPs and “Hitler’s bully boys” were dining together, 326.

⁷⁵ Research Branch, G-1 Division *A Preliminary Report on Attitudes of Negro Soldiers in ETO* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Army Service Forces, 1944), 1. War Department Decimal File, 1942-1947 (Box 189), Security Classified General Correspondence, Record Group 165, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD. Unclassified by NARA.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

The lack of information provided to black soldiers left many without a clear motivation for fighting. Writer Ralph Ellison addressed the idea of darkness in his 1947 novel *Invisible Man*, telling the story of a nameless narrator hounded by the pressures of both black and white society. Unable to cope, the narrator eventually retired underground and lived in a basement. He described himself as an invisible man, because people could not see him with their “*inner eyes*.” While at times the narrator did not mind, he admitted that invisibility—constantly being bumped and at times wondering about your own existence—wore on the nerves. Ellison’s narrator also struggled against being kept in the dark, literally. The narrator’s basement, his hole, was “warm and full of light.” He wired the entire ceiling, stealing power from the Monopolated Light & Power Company, and within the hole had 1,369 lights. For the narrator, “Light confirms my reality, gives birth to my form.”⁷⁷

Ellison’s character craved light because it validated his existence. The letters that soldiers sent to the President also begged for clarity and validation as well. They wanted to know why they fought, basically asking to belong and be granted meaning in their struggles. Like the invisible man, black soldiers felt neglected, unrecognized, and rejected by society, although for them hiding from reality was not an option. These questions and inner conflicts continued as African American soldiers moved overseas. In combat, and through encounters with other cultures, they continued to search for a rationale and at times began to push harder against imposed racial boundaries. New experiences around the world showed many African Americans different possibilities.

⁷⁷ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage International, 1947), 6.

“Fair flags of you above my indignation”

Black units deployed overseas at a sluggish rate throughout 1942 and 1943. Theater commanders and foreign commanders had to be persuaded to use African American troops, and the slow rate of deployment affected the overall Army policy. The Army Air Corps contended that these limited numbers of black troops overseas justified reduced numbers of African Americans admitted to the Air Corps. This soon became a public issue, and there was considerable talk in the black press and among civil rights organizations that the military did not actually plan on letting black troops fight, and that politicians were just going through the motions for the sake of appearances.⁷⁸

Civil rights leaders and soldiers both criticized the rate of deployment. Not only were troops sent overseas at an alarmingly slow rate, but all too frequently combat units were converted into labor units. Lower AGCT scores were used to place even larger numbers of African Americans into service units.⁷⁹ New York Representative Hamilton Fish, who commanded black troops in World War I and member of the House Committee on Rules complained to Secretary of War Henry Stimson about the problem in 1944. Fish argued that far too many combat-ready outfits were performing service duties. The Army disbanded numerous African American tank destroyer units that had trained for several months at Camp Hood, Texas and then transferred the men to Quartermaster Truck Companies. The same thing happened to the 931st Field Artillery. Lieutenant Colonel Marcus H. Ray of the 931st

⁷⁸ Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops*, 441-449.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 137.

wrote to Truman K. Gibson that 484 enlisted men were being transferred to quartermaster, headquarters, and postal units. The battalion had performed well in training, and the commander noted that it was hopes of combat that sustained the morale of the men.⁸⁰ To say the least, wrote Fish, “The training of Negro personnel as combat units for months and the breaking up of those units and the transferring of that personnel to service units is demoralizing to Negro soldiers and a waste of taxpayers’ money.” Fish directed Stimson’s attention to the Selective Service Act of 1940—to which Fish actually made a significant contribution—because if black units were being denied their service as combat soldiers, “such discrimination appears to be a violation of my amendment.”⁸¹

Complaints about the use of black troops poured into the War Department. One soldier stationed in Texas wrote General George C. Marshall inquiring why the Army kept black soldiers at camps in the U.S. for years when they could go overseas and fight.⁸² “They didn’t want no black heroes,” said one soldier from the 93rd Infantry Division who found himself driving trucks in Manila.⁸³ Another in the 24th Infantry Regiment, a Regular Army unit, in the Pacific said that his command did as much work as the labor battalions, and he wondered that the Army did not designate them the 24th stevedores.⁸⁴ One soldier in the 43rd

⁸⁰ Gibson, *Knocking Down Barriers*, 129-130.

⁸¹ Hamilton Fish to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, 1 February 1944. Army-AG Decimal File, 1940-45 (Box 1065), Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, Record Group 407, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

Fish commanded a unit in the 369th Infantry Regiment, the “Harlem Hellfighters,” in World War I. After seeing their performance in France, Fish believed none of the claims that the black troops were unfit for combat. Noted in Truman K. Gibson, *Knocking Down Barriers*, 133.

⁸² Anonymous colored soldier to General Marshall, 7 March 1945. Army-AG Decimal File, 1940-45 (Box 1063), Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, Record Group 407, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁸³ George T. Ridout Collection, oral history interview.

⁸⁴ Stevens Interview, *The Invisible Soldier*, 76.

Signal Battalion complained to the Baltimore *Afro-American* newspaper, “the 2nd Cavalry Division went on the alert for P.O.C and probable shipment overseas. Our troops wasn’t included in the order. *We later learned that we were to form a battalion and the ninth and twenty-seventh were going to be used as dock stevedores, unloading ships.*”⁸⁵ Even Aquilla Calhoun, the eager young man in the 100th Coast Artillery, grumbled that stationed at Biak Island, all he did was unload ships, as Japanese planes rarely flew past the island.⁸⁶ A private first class at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana said that after months training and in school, “we land in labor battalions while our skills go to waste.”⁸⁷

Despite uncertainties about why they fought, black soldiers desired to be sent overseas. In her 1945 volume of poetry *A Street in Bronzeville*, Gwendolyn Brooks expressed that dilemma of looking for democracy. Her poem “Negro Hero: to suggest Dorie Miller,” depicted democracy as a fair and white-gowned lady who inspired love in men. For the “sake of the dear smiling mouth” and “stuttered promise,” men toyed with their lives. As Brooks suggested, African American soldiers too gave up their lives for the promise of an ideal, but one just out of reach. Within democracy’s “sweet-flowing sleeve,” she concealed a cold, straight knife.⁸⁸ In spite of the paradoxes involved in fighting, as W.E.B. DuBois wrote

⁸⁵ T/5 Samuel A. Connor Co. B 43rd Signal Const. Bn. to Editor the *Afro-American* Newspaper, 18 February 1944 in Phillip McGuire, *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1983), 75.

⁸⁶ Aquilla Calhoun Collection, oral history interview.

⁸⁷ Edgar B. Hold P.F.C. to Truman K. Gibson, 14 October 1943, in McGuire, *Taps for a Jim Crow Army*, 66.

⁸⁸ Gwendolyn Brooks, *A Street in Bronzeville* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1945), 31.

for African American Soldiers in World War I, they fought in the name of “America and her highest ideals.”⁸⁹ Although the promise of democracy held many dangers, Brooks explained:

naturally the important thing is, I helped to save them,
them and a part of their democracy.
Even if I had to kick their law into their teeth in order
to do that for them.
And I am feeling well and settled in myself because I
believe it was a good job.
Despite this possible horror: That they might prefer the
Preservation of their law in all its sick dignity and their knives
To the continuation of their creed
And their lives. (from Negro Hero)

In an article sent to Truman Gibson, a “Loyal Negro Soldier” wrote, “deep down inside I knew when I faced America’s enemies I will fight for the protection of my loved ones at home.”⁹⁰ The frantic desire to deploy and fight indicated another push at the color line, a yearning to merge black identity with an ideal American identity whatever the consequences and claim equal citizenship. Soon enough, African Americans got their chance.

When black combat units finally shipped overseas, they immediately encountered a problem of space on outgoing transports. Urgently needed supplies and white troops had priority on the available shipping.⁹¹ It was a long, arduous crossing because ships needed to zigzag in order to avoid German U-boats. Corporal Isham Benton shipped out to Europe with regiments from the 92nd Infantry Division in September 1944, arriving in Italy in late October.⁹² Benton’s convoy of about 300 ships swung down almost to the equator, up to Gibraltar, and then into the Mediterranean. The convoy first stopped in Naples; Benton

⁸⁹ W.E.B. DuBois, “Returning Soldiers,” *The Crisis* 18 (May 1919): 13-14.

⁹⁰ “A Loyal Negro Soldier” to Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War Truman K. Gibson, 5 November 1943 in McGuire, *Taps for a Jim Crow Army*, 87.

⁹¹ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 449.

⁹² Shelby Stanton, *The Order of Battle: U.S. Army, World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1984), 252-253.

recalled that he and the men in his unit wanted to get off the ship just as much as the white troops. Yet in order to disembark, the troops needed the permission of both the merchant marine captain and the military captain. The military commander, a white southerner, denied the black soldiers permission to leave, saying, “No, there’s no colored girls in Naples, they’re not getting off.” The black soldiers did not disembark until Viareggio, at a HQ for the 92nd Division. Less than a week later, Benton’s unit headed to the front lines.⁹³

The 92nd Infantry Division suffered from a number of problems. Activated in 1942, no single post could be found to house the division, so it was divided into four separate posts in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Indiana. While attempts were made to assemble the division near centers with a large black population, such as Fort Meade, Maryland, the infantry regiments did not train together, and the entire division could not be assembled until the 93rd left Fort Huachuca, Arizona.⁹⁴ As Sergeant William Perry of the 377th explained, white people did not want to allow that many armed black people to get together in one place, particularly near large white civilian populations. Fort Huachuca was the only acceptable place because it was so isolated.⁹⁵

A lack of trust in white commanders also plagued the 92nd.⁹⁶ One sergeant in the 365th Infantry Regiment at Fort Huachuca claimed that white officers who “goofed elsewhere” were sent to command black troops. These white officers “had no compunction

⁹³ Benton Collection, oral history interview.

⁹⁴ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 106.

⁹⁵ A. William Perry Collection, oral history interview.

⁹⁶ Daniel K. Gibran, *The 92nd Infantry Division and the Italian Campaign in World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 44.

about letting it be known that they were being punished when sent to Huachuca.”⁹⁷ Sergeant Perry also mentioned the lack of proficient leadership in the 92nd. It seemed to him that many higher ranking white officers came from the Virginia Military Institute, because of the belief that southerners knew how “to handle” blacks. It was not uncommon that a Major performed the duties that a Lieutenant Colonel would have in a white unit.⁹⁸

Commanding the division was Major General Edward Almond a Virginian. From the start, Almond expressed skepticism of African American soldiers’ abilities. He also echoed the sentiments of many senior officers that black soldiers were not aggressive in combat and lacked a fighting spirit. With a lack of trust between the commanders and the enlisted men, the 92nd suffered from low morale and a divided sense of purpose.⁹⁹ In 1943 General Davis commented on the situation at Huachuca, saying that while black and white officers in the 92nd held General Almond in high regard, Almond perhaps had overlooked the human element in the division’s training.¹⁰⁰ Sent there to calm black soldiers down because of significant social unrest, Davis’s words to the men of the 92nd were not well received. Recalled one soldier, “After his visit, the name of B.O. Davis, Sr. was synonymous with ‘yes-sirism’ and ‘Uncle Tomism.’”¹⁰¹ Once the 92nd reached Italy and entered combat, the poor relationship between officers and men would take a heavy toll.

African American troops arrived in Great Britain as early as 1942, and the situation caused considerable anxiety for the British government. As one British official noted, the

⁹⁷ Roger Walden Interview in *The Invisible Soldier*, 62.

⁹⁸ A. William Perry Collection, oral history interview.

⁹⁹ Gibran, *92nd Infantry Division*, 56-57.

¹⁰⁰ Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops*, 334.

¹⁰¹ Jefferson Jordan Interview, *The Invisible Soldier*, 280.

culture in America was different, and that American wealth, boastfulness, relationships with British women, and system of racial segregation would make it difficult for the British to adjust.¹⁰² Many black newspapers in America viewed Britain with suspicion because of the country's colonial legacy.¹⁰³ Yet the majority of black troops stationed there found the civilian population quite hospitable. The situation quickly became precarious, however, because while the British white population had no problem with black troops, American white troops often attempted to import American racial customs. "You wouldn't believe the lies they have told everybody about us," wrote one black soldier. "They try to keep us out of all the 'pubs' and when they can't they fight us."¹⁰⁴

American and British authorities both tread carefully, trying hard not to offend each other. A number of British citizens seemed uncomfortable with the racial system, however, and it appeared that many British women did not discriminate against black troops. One man in London wrote to the American forces, saying that while they appreciated the American allies, they found it extremely unpleasant when white American soldiers ordered black gentlemen or women to "GET OUT" of a public building. In England, colored people enjoyed the same civil rights, and he suggested that perhaps the Americans needed to be taught some discipline and respect.¹⁰⁵ Eventually, British police refused to enforce

¹⁰² Graham Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World War II Britain* (London, England: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1987), 42-43.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Roland Hayes to Eleanor Roosevelt, 8 November 1943. Army-AG Decimal File, 1944-1945 (Box 32), Records of the European Theater of Operations General Correspondence, Adjutant General's Section Administrative Branch, Record Group 498, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD. Roland Hayes was a musician giving concerts at different black bases in Europe. After his visit to England, he wrote Mrs. Roosevelt, and in his letter included excerpts from letters he had received from various black soldiers.

¹⁰⁵ Letter John Bryson to the New Wellington Club (Commanding Officers of all American Forces in England), 4 March 1943. Army-AG Decimal File, 1944-1945 (Box 32) Records of the European Theater of Operations

segregation. As the British Secretary of State put it, he “would be glad if you would be good enough to take steps to ensure that the police do not make any approach to the proprietors of public houses, restaurants, cinemas, or other places of entertainment with a view to discrimination against coloured troops.”¹⁰⁶

One report of morale among black troops in Britain examined all the mail from a regiment, extracting a number of comments typical of the soldiers. One in Ireland said that while there were no African Americans in Ireland, the Irish treated the soldiers as if they were one of them. The only problem was that white southern soldiers did not like them talking to the women. Other black soldiers mentioned that the Irish girls loved them. Black soldiers also noted that it was dangerous to go out after dark, because white soldiers made life miserable. “I sometimes wonder who we are fighting. Did the War Department sent [sic] us here to fight against our white soldiers or against the Nazis,” wrote one Sergeant.¹⁰⁷ The same report provided some of the comments from white American soldiers, including one who remarked that “I have seen nice looking white girls going with a coon. They think they are hot stuff. The girls are so dumb it’s pitiful.” In the 1st Armored Division, a lieutenant wrote that the Irish seemed to “think that the niggers are quite a novelty and

General Correspondence, Adjutant General’s Section Administrative Branch, Record Group 498, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD. Bryson wrote this letter saying that before he raised certain questions about the issue in Parliament, it was only fair that he inform the American commanders.

¹⁰⁶ Statement “American Colored Troops” Army-AG Decimal File, 1944-1945 (Box 32), Records of the European Theater of Operations General Correspondence, Adjutant General’s Section Administrative Branch, Record Group 498, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD. The statement was not dated or signed, but attached to a letter from Brigadier General John E. Dahlquist to Mr. F.A. Newsom, on 3 Sept. 1942. Explained Dahlquist, the Home Office proposed to issue a copy of a circular letter to chief constables concerning the non-discriminatory policy of Britain. Dahlquist also said to Newsom that the U.S. Army was in complete accord, and equivalent to the policy that had “always been followed by the United States Army.”

¹⁰⁷ Report Base Censor Office #1 to Commanding General, E.T.O.U.S.A., 16 September 1942. (Box 32), Records of the European Theater of Operations General Correspondence, Adjutant General’s Section Administrative Branch, Record Group 498, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD, 2.

wonder why we raise hell upon finding them in the same hotel or dance floor. In many cases it has been necessary to lay down the law both to the Irish and the coons.”¹⁰⁸

The situation in Britain proved an embarrassment to the U.S. government because it did not present a united front to the rest of the world. For black soldiers, acceptance by the British and rejection by American troops might have been, as DuBois said, a “peculiar sensation.” Officially recognized as Americans, yet not really treated like citizens, the encounters with other cultures emphasized the duality felt by African American soldiers. The anger about being misrepresented to British citizens demonstrated a desire to be accepted Americans, to fit in and belong, and not be represented as “others.”

The discord also showed that racism affected everyone, both black and white. One black soldier observed that he always wondered why they would not let blacks fight, but instead let the whites die instead. In his mind, this cost whites much more than blacks.¹⁰⁹ In a short essay on the absurdities of racism, DuBois wrote: “Walking, I met a wayfarer who immediately walked to the other side of the road where it was muddy. I asked his reasons. ‘Niggers’ is dirty,’ he said. So is mud, said I.”¹¹⁰ Only when the military was in dire need of troops, later in the war, did the War Department finally begin to throw African American troops to combat, in 1944.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ridout Collection, oral history interview.

¹¹⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, “On Being Crazy.” In *W.E.B. DuBois: Writings* (New York, NY: The Library of America, 1986), 1201.

“These Negroes looked like men”

On July 30, 1944, the 370th Combat Team landed in Naples, Italy. Considered one of the best trained and most prepared units in the 92nd Infantry Division, the regiment was met with a great deal of excitement.¹¹¹ Sergeant William Perry remembered that when they disembarked in Naples, there was a great deal of cheering, particularly by black service troops. The soldiers themselves were in high spirits as well. General Mark W. Clark welcomed them to the theater, and Perry remembered how Clark turned to his aide, a captain, took the bars off the man’s collar, and promoted one of the 370th officers on the spot. It seemed to them that things would be good in Italy.¹¹² Although the mood upon arrival was high, and the 370th seemed at first to adapt well in combat, the command soon managed to put any good feelings to rest. The plan was to have the 370th take Mount Caula and a series of heights guarding the way to Massa. The 370th attacked up the mountain several times, but eventually mortar and artillery fire drove them back down.¹¹³

The failure to capture the mountain set the precedent for future failures in the 92nd Infantry Division’s campaign. Studies indicated, however, that the failure lay with the command of the Division, and a serious lack of communication and trust between the men and the officers. Staff Sergeant Charles Brown of the 370th made the point that both their

¹¹¹ Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops*, 536. There was a great deal of reorganizing done once the 370th reached Italy, and more volunteer replacements were added to the combat team so it would be well prepared.

¹¹² A. William Perry Collection, oral history interview. Lee also mentions the incident in *Employment of Negro Troops*, 538. General Clark toured the 370th, anxious to welcome the 92nd because of General Marshall’s orders. According to Lee, few actions received more approval with the 92nd than this.

¹¹³ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 546-548.

battalion and company commander had been evacuated during the assault on Monte Cauala (Hill California). One lieutenant had also departed, although none of the officers had been in the vicinity of the fire protective line. The unit was left with two lieutenants and the NCO's. Overall, they made seven assaults in ten days before the 370th was pulled from Hill California.¹¹⁴

While the 370th might have received impossible objectives, the 366th Infantry Regiment had difficulties from the start. For six months prior to being assigned to combat, the 366th guarded air fields. One of their major activities was playing softball with foreign units.¹¹⁵ Throughout this period, the regiment was scattered over a large area, which made continued training difficult, and combat became a secondary mission. Finally in November 1944, the unit was attached to the Division. What was unique about the 366th was that it was an entirely black outfit, officers included. General Almond did not receive the news that the unit would be joining the 92nd well. Colonel Howard Queen commanded the 366th, and asked that the regiment be withdrawn from guard duty for weeks of intensive training. No action was taken. When it arrived in the Po Valley in November, Queen remembered Almond greeting the unit, saying, "I did not send for you. Your Negro newspapers, Negro politicians, and white friends have insisted on your seeing combat and I shall see that you get combat and your share of the casualties." When Queen requested thirty days of intensive training, staff command informed him that the 366th would occupy the line, "equipped or unequipped." Almond "most certainly kept his word," remembered Queen.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Charles Brown Interview, *Invisible Soldier*, 272-273.

¹¹⁵ Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops*, 558.

¹¹⁶ Howard Queen Interview in *Invisible Soldier*, 339.

Many factors contributed to the low morale in the 92nd. In February 1945 Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War Truman K. Gibson visited the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTOUSA). The 92nd's assault on the Gothic Line in Northern Italy had just failed. Conducting a tour of the black troops, Gibson reported directly to General Joseph McNarney's headquarters, noting that many of the reports shown to him placed the responsibility for the division's lackluster performance directly on the black officers and enlisted men, without looking at underlying causes. Rather than generalizing about black soldiers, concluded Gibson, it was more constructive to recognize correctable deficiencies. The Army scheduled a press conference for Gibson in Rome in March 1945, a day that he "would rue for many years."¹¹⁷ He tried to explain that the 92nd was affected by the inherent nature of segregation, which destroyed fighting spirit and morale, and that the fault lay with the Army. Gibson also stated that, "If the division proves anything, it does not prove that Negroes can't fight."¹¹⁸

Both the black and white press took the negative pieces out of his statement and printed them, saying that Gibson cited illiteracy of black troops as a huge handicap, and noted the tendency of the 92nd to "melt away" under pressure. The headline of the editorial page of the *Chicago Defender* pronounced, "Somebody's Gotta Go!"¹¹⁹ The black press was outraged and called for Gibson's resignation; the report reached the black soldiers of the 92nd just in time for their spring push, and many regarded him as a race traitor or an Uncle

¹¹⁷ Gibson, *Knocking Down Barriers*, 171.

¹¹⁸ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 577-578.

¹¹⁹ Gibson *Knocking Down Barriers*, 172.

Tom.¹²⁰ One black lieutenant recalled that Gibson's visit had a "terribly demoralizing effect on the troops when the army newspapers quoted him as using the term 'melting away' in reference to black soldiers."¹²¹ Negative reports helped to perpetuate white stereotypes about black fighting abilities, part of why so many African Americans felt outraged and why so many units suffered from low morale.

At times, combat leveled the playing field, because in extreme situations race tended to lose importance. Poet Sterling Brown wrote in his poem "Sam Yancy" about a black man in the Army who picked up some harsh lessons in combat, and then returned home to a segregated America.

"And a surprising fact had made
Belated impress on his mind:
That shrapnel bursts and poison gas
Were inexplicably color blind." (From "Sam Yancy")¹²²

For many men in the military during World War II, both black and white, this lesson would hit home hard in a variety of combat situations.

When General George Patton spoke to the 3rd Army's armored divisions prior to the drive across France, he told the black tankers that they were the first to fight in the American Army. When he asked for the best armored units available, and the Army responded that the best available were black, Patton responded, "Who the fuck asked for color, I asked for tankers!"¹²³ The 784th, a light tank battalion, followed Patton's 3rd Army across France after

¹²⁰ Lee *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 577-578. John Hope Franklin also noted that Truman K. Gibson was quoted out of context with his criticisms that the 92nd had not made a good showing, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 485.

¹²¹ Jefferson Jordan Interview, *The Invisible Soldier*, 291.

¹²² Sterling A. Brown, *The Last Ride of Wild Bill: And Eleven Narrative Poems* (Detroit, MI: Broadside Press, 1975), 21. This volume of poetry was finally collected and published in 1975, but the majority of Brown's poems were written during the 1940s.

¹²³ Isham Benton Collection, oral history interview.

D-Day. Lewis Conn explained that the job of the outfit was to penetrate enemy lines and draw fire, basically in support of the infantry. Conn recalled that in combat, “in our tank when the Germans let loose all those screaming mimi’s and all them eighty-eights. Woo! It wasn’t no segregated then. They looked for protection. So get up under the tank, in the tank. Hey! Some from Mississippi, some of them from Alabama.”¹²⁴

One war correspondent for the *Baltimore Afro-American* wrote an article called “Torpedoed at Sea” about the experience of a black soldier on a torpedoed troop transport in the Pacific. The soldier remembered seeing men he knew completely mangled by the destruction, then jumping into the water with his life jacket, deathly afraid. When he made it to the raft, a couple of men helped him up; one white man looked black because of all the oil and muck. He had not seen the white man before, because, he explained, they were segregated on the ship. “We sure did get chummy on that raft though,” remarked the soldier. As a staff sergeant, he and two white sergeants took charge of the men on the raft, trying to keep everyone calm.¹²⁵ It seemed that stranded in the middle of the ocean for days, surrounded by sharks, led to interracial cooperation.

Another soldier of the 370th recalled his experiences in Italy vividly, particularly the traumas such as identifying dead men and skirmishing with the enemy. At a time like that, the issue of race was far from his mind.¹²⁶ David Dinkins heard stories of the marines in ammo companies, who may have had problems with white marines, but “when they hit the

¹²⁴ Lewis Conn Collection, oral history interview.

¹²⁵ Vincent Tubbs, “Torpedoed at Sea,” in *This Is Our War: Selected stories of six War Correspondents* (Baltimore, MD: The AFRO-AMERICAN Company, 1945), 63

¹²⁶ Luther Hall Collection, interview by Douglas Clanin, Richard Lugar/U.S. Senate (AFC/2001/001/28690) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

beach carrying these bullets, this ammunition, and the guys were pinned down, then they loved them, they loved ‘em they loved those black boys.”¹²⁷ When it came to the actual fighting, fear took hold and suddenly, in a life or death situation, color became unimportant. In another one of her poems from *A Street in Bronzeville*, Gwendolyn Brooks wrote about how certain social norms lost value in combat. The poem, “the white troops had their orders but the Negroes looked like men,” described the ways that white soldiers regarded black troops: “their formula was fixed,” and they saw blacks through “a type of hooded gaze.” Yet “when the Negroes came they were perplexed. These Negroes looked like men.” In the end, when it came to combat, did these social traditions really matter? “Who really gave two figs?”¹²⁸ Combat created an atmosphere that exposed social divisions as trivial.

In December 1944 the Allied position in Europe reached a crucial point. The United States Army swept through France and into Germany, and German resistance thickened along the Siegfried line as Hitler mounted an offensive against the 1st U.S. Army in the Ardennes.¹²⁹ The Army faced a critical deficiency of riflemen in the theater. The U.S. Ground Force Replacement Command (GFRC) began to convert basic privates from other arms and services into infantry, and Lieutenant General John C.H. Lee proposed that they include black servicemen in this program, incorporating black platoons into white companies. Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis drafted the directive, requesting a quota of

¹²⁷ Dinkins Interview. This is also mentioned in Gerald Astor *The Greatest War: Americans in Combat 1941-1945* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, Inc., 1999), 662-663. Black marines doing their part to help the 1st Marine Division, not technically assigned to combat but participating nonetheless.

¹²⁸ Brooks, *A Street in Bronzeville*, 52.

¹²⁹ Allan R. Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 460.

2,000 black volunteers to go to the frontlines as replacements. Within two months, more than 4,500 black soldiers volunteered, many giving up rank in order to be accepted.¹³⁰

Training began in late January 1945, and the GFRC commanders described black trainees as approaching their work with a will; disciplinary problems were few and far between.¹³¹ The first platoons were ready, and distributed to units throughout the theater, at the beginning of March. Overall, the majority of the platoons were well received, and the divisions they were attached to rated them well. In a survey of seven infantry divisions with black platoons attached, 84 percent of the officers surveyed responded that the soldiers performed “very well,” and the remaining 16 percent responded “fairly well.” Even the enlisted men in the survey overwhelmingly responded that the black infantry performed just as well as white troops.¹³² The atmosphere created by both a semi-integration of troops (the troops were integrated at the company level, but platoons were still segregated) and a combat situation pushed at the boundaries of the color line. In addition, the fact that African Americans volunteered to go to the front lines so late in the war revealed their strong desire to be recognized as American. The integration of black platoons into white companies was a big step forward, and toward the eventual integration of the U.S. military in 1948. To some extent, leveling the playing field allowed other people to see African Americans in a new light.

¹³⁰ Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 688. The idea generated a great deal of controversy in the Army, and the War Department made it quite clear that this was not the type of policy they advocated. Most of these platoons would be integrated into companies in the 1st and 7th Armies.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 693.

¹³² Research Branch, *The Utilization of Negro Infantry Platoons in White Companies* June 1945 (Headquarters, European Theater of Operations: Research Branch Information and Education Division), 4-7. War Department Decimal File, 1942-1947, (Box 189), Security-Classified Correspondence, Record Group 165, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD.

“there was mothers all over the world”

In some instances, time spent overseas allowed soldiers to develop new worldviews. Corporal Isham Benton’s experiences in Italy and Germany changed him. On patrol with the 365th in January 1945, his unit had orders to locate the Germans and then report back to higher command. Benton remembered breaking into houses—the need to enter quickly and surprise whoever might be hiding inside—scaring Italians who had never seen black men, and then trying to calm the ensuing chaos, as both the civilians and the soldiers were scared. Finally, in a two-story farmhouse on a hill, the patrol encountered the enemy. The Germans fired down upon the American soldiers and artillery fire called in by the patrol set the house ablaze. Instead of falling back with the rest of the patrol, however, Benton stayed behind with a wounded man. For a tense moment, the Germans surrounded Benton before an Italian guide stepped forward and said to Benton, “well for you the war is over.”

As a German POW, Benton claimed that he received surprisingly good treatment from both Italians and Germans, much better treatment than Italians captured for being Allied sympathizers. The Germans moved him around a great deal, traveling though Italy and eventually up to Germany. One afternoon, while still in Italy, an Italian officer—or an Italian fascist as Benton referred to him—took Benton from a cellar jail and up to a mountain villa. The officer introduced Benton to his girlfriend, fed him bread and wine, and treated him with respect and courtesy as a guest in his home. Having spent some time in the United States as part of a diplomatic corps, the officer was eager to talk of his time there with an American. The officer also brought out a guitar; he and Benton sang American songs, and then took a

photograph together. Benton remembered it as a pleasant way to spend an afternoon, although afterwards it was back to the jail cell and he never saw the officer again.¹³³

Imprisoned from January 18 to April 29, 1945, Benton also spent time at Stalag VII in Moosburg, the largest POW camp in Germany. The camp housed approximately twenty other black soldiers, and while the Germans grouped the African Americans together for counts, the camp was not segregated. Benton bunked with white American soldiers and everyone ate together. For the first time, as a POW and in a camp in Nazi Germany, Benton felt treated with equality. “What I received was respect and dignity, something I had not received from American white people in the United States all my life, and that’s a heck of a thing to have to compare, you know?” He described the camp as the “UN of POW’s” and recalled that in the camp there were people from all over the world—Russians both male and female, Africans, Australians, New Zealanders, English, and Americans.¹³⁴ The experience changed Benton, because it exposed him to both the enemy and to other countries. Learning from books or newspapers did not compare, because “when you get over there, and you begin to see how people *are*, how the Germans *are* as individual people, German soldier’s a soldier, just a man you know, just like you and me,” in the end, “people are usually pretty much the same.”¹³⁵

In captivity, Benton gained perspective on the enemy. Relationships between black soldiers and Italians were often cordial—the Italians remembered the 92nd as a liberating force, while the black soldiers recollected that the Italians seemed colorblind. In Benton’s

¹³³ Benton Collection, oral history interview.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

outfit, when Italians came and begged for food, the black soldiers gave whatever they could. He observed white soldiers in Rome mistreating Italian women, but never saw a black soldier mistreat an Italian.¹³⁶ Others also recalled a friendly relationship between the black soldiers and the Italians. Sergeant Luther Hall described the Italians as very poor. His unit picked up an Italian boy who spoke English, Italian, and German as an interpreter in one of the towns. Asked if he wanted to be a soldier, the boy replied yes. With the permission of his mother, the soldiers dressed the boy in a uniform, gave him a rifle, and he stayed with them through the duration of the war. When it came time for Hall to go home, the boy even asked to go with him.¹³⁷ John Johnson of Baltimore, Maryland described the Italians as “great white people,” who would help the American troops. Two Italian freedom fighters actually joined their unit, and Johnson recalled making friends with one, Mario, who was constantly trying to learn English and wanted to go to America after the war.¹³⁸

Soldiers found new perspectives in other ways as well overseas. For Sergeant Emiel W. Owens, who served in the 31st Field Artillery, a scene that remained with him for years to come was an encounter with a German family having breakfast, which strangely enough reminded him of a scene at his own grandmother’s kitchen table. Owens considered his travels, crossing two oceans and the English Channel, as something that broadened his horizons and showed him a new way of looking at the world and its people. He met people

¹³⁶ Benton Collection, interview by Douglas Clanin, Richard Lugar/U.S. Senate (AFC2001/001/9170). Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. Mary Penick Motley also commented on the relationship between black soldiers and Italians in *The Invisible Soldier*, 259. Also in Motley, an interview with Lieutenant Wade McCree of the 365th Infantry Regiment noted that black GI’s and Italians tried to communicate with one another, while whites never bothered to try and learn Italian. He said black men related to Italians because both groups knew what it meant to suffer, 300.

¹³⁷ Luther Hall Collection, oral history interview.

¹³⁸ John Johnson Collection, oral history interview.

of different cultures, who spoke different languages, “but all with the same hopes, fears, aspirations, and desires to live and to work to make a living wage to support a family.”¹³⁹

Guarding German POWs in Altheim, Germany at the end of the war, Owens no longer thought of the men as his “bitter, faceless enemies,” as he had on the battlefield. Rather, they were just human, lacking basic necessities and desperate for food. Owens sometimes found himself trading K rations for trinkets and souvenirs he did not need nor want just so that the German soldiers could have something to eat. “For some reason, the fact that some of them had committed atrocities mattered little at that time.”¹⁴⁰

Sergeant John Johnson of Baltimore toured Rome when he was overseas, and trying to describe some of the statues he saw, said, “I just can’t explain it, it was an odd feeling, and it was a wonderful feeling to be able to just be there.”¹⁴¹ The realization that perhaps people were not so different, that Mississippi socialization was not natural, or even that white people were no better than black people—as Sterling Brown said, shrapnel did not play favorites—affected many soldiers. Dudley Randall once said, “you can raise anybody’s consciousness. If you raise his consciousness, he’ll probably change.”¹⁴² The statement epitomized what happened for so many in World War II. Experience overseas, the paradox of fighting for democracy, seeing firsthand the horrors of war, encountering new cultures, feeling invisible, feeling abandoned by country, all raised black consciousness. DuBois claimed that for African Americans, the peculiar disconnect between the black and the American was always

¹³⁹ Emiel Owens, *Blood on German Snow*, 131.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 93.

¹⁴¹ John Johnson Collection, oral history interview.

¹⁴² D.H. Melhem, “Dudley Randall: A Humanist View” in *Black American Literature Forum* 17, no. 4 (Winter, 1983), 160.

present. Soldiers suffered an amplified version of this duality, because they were put in life-threatening positions on behalf of an American identity they could not fully embrace.

In raising consciousness, however, the war also enabled black soldiers to glimpse life without the color-line, where the black and the American became one. Benton viewed himself for the first time without the double standard. Yet as the war drew to a close, and black soldiers arrived home, would they be able to return to the way things were? Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "the progress" expressed this ambivalence about the war and the new problems that African Americans faced. The poem viewed the world through two sets of eyes—the black narrator and the white socialite, whose viewpoints constantly fused and diffused.¹⁴³ The presence of the two voices and the way they have trouble merging represented a duality. At the same time, Brooks broached the question, "even if we come out standing up How shall we smile, congratulate: and how Settle in Chairs?" Combat may have had the ability to distort the social strata, and expanded horizons may have illustrated new possibilities for African Americans, but what happened when the war ended and the scrap of level ground was snatched away?

¹⁴³ R. Baxter Miller, "Review of Gwendolyn Brooks by Harry B. Shaw" in *Black American Literature Forum* 15 (1981): 116-118.

“Will V-Day be Me-Day?”

When Ollie Stewart, a War Correspondent for the *Baltimore Afro-American*, entered Paris in late 1944, he wrote, “The heart of France, in fact, was mad with joy because Americans had arrived.” He mentioned that walking down the boulevards, beautiful women “dashed into the streets to kiss dusty GI lads,” and that he had never been kissed so much in all his life. Women also brought their babies up to be kissed by the soldiers.¹⁴⁴ Despite the merriment in Paris, V-E day did not arrive for many months, and not every black soldier had such a good memories of its arrival. On April 27, 1945, as the Allies plowed through Germany, Patton’s 3rd Army liberated Stalag VII, ending Isham Benton’s stint as a POW. While Benton avowed that as a POW he was generally treated with a degree of civility, life in a German prison camp was not a walk in the park. Meals were scarce, and he suffered tremendous weight loss. For days after liberation they remained in the camp because the surrounding area remained unsecure.¹⁴⁵

For many soldiers, their time in Europe was far from done. The 351st Field Artillery Battalion ended up in Weissenburg, Germany as part of the occupation force. The reports on the conditions in Weissenburg provided a long and detailed list of the unit’s various misconducts. Between March 1 and June 6, 1946, thirty one incidents of disorder occurred

¹⁴⁴ Ollie Stewart, “Liberation of Paris,” in *This is Our War*, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Benton Collection, oral history interview.

according to one report.¹⁴⁶ The incidents ranged from running over sheep with military vehicles, to petty thievery, rape, and the shooting of German civilians. Interestingly enough, the military government identified the biggest problems as theft and African Americans attracting loose women to the region, thereby spreading VD at an alarming rate: “Needless to say, the generosity of the negro soldier where frauleins are concerned attracted a large-scale influx of notorious female characters to this city.” The military’s original expectations—that the problems would stem from racially insensitive Germans citizens—turned out to be unfounded.¹⁴⁷

For the soldiers who accumulated enough points, it was back to the U.S. Benton finally began his trek home after Stalag VII, across Europe to board a ship in England. As he piled into a troop convoy in France, a blonde man in a crowd shouted at him, calling him a nigger. Benton snapped, and yelled back that he fought in the war too, so unless the man wanted trouble he had better back off. He continued his journey to the U.S., leaving Europe in May and arriving in Camp Shanks. As Benton’s ship pulled up to the docks in New York City and the black soldiers disembarked, he remembered that there was nobody waiting for them to celebrate their return. White girls met the white soldiers, but the black troops arrived unnoticed, not treated at all like returning heroes. “In that particular trip I was hurt by it,” said Benton, “because there was nobody there to welcome us and embrace us. Another one

¹⁴⁶ Report Allen D. Raymond to Commanding General, Third U.S. Army, “Report of Investigation Regarding Alleged Conditions in Weissenburg, Germany,” 23 July 1946 (Box 151), Records of HQ 3rd U.S. Army 1942-, Adjutant General General Correspondence, Records of US Army Commands, Record Group 338, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD, 1.

¹⁴⁷ Report Woodburn C. Williams Office of Military Government to Director, Office of Military Government for Bavaria, “Situation in Weissenburg Regarding Relations between Female Civilians and Colored Occupational Troops,” 5 June 1946 (Box 151) Records of HQ 3rd U.S. Army 1942-, Adjutant General General Correspondence, Records of US Army Commands, Record Group 338, National Archives II at College Park, College Park, MD, 1.

of the heartbreaking things that you experienced in those days, but it was great to be home, I'll tell you that, the Statue of Liberty sure did look good.”¹⁴⁸

John Johnson from the 92nd Infantry Division remembered that at Fort Dix, New Jersey, they actually had the run of the camp, and that later, parts of the division marched down Fifth Avenue, showing people that black soldiers could do just as well as white.¹⁴⁹

Sergeant Luther Hall could not wait to arrive home either. Discharged for his high adjusted service rating, Hall arrived at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey after 28 days at sea. When he got off the boat, there were “no colored folks to meet us,” just “white, red cross” with bottles of milk, doughnuts, and a shaving kit. Hall stayed in New Jersey for about eight days, but never got the chance to walk down the streets of New York City as he had hoped when sailing home. While reluctant to leave his outfit behind in Europe, Hall still expressed enthusiasm about being home.¹⁵⁰ Another soldier from the 92nd, Samuel Jones, was also glad to be home: “It felt wonderful to be back in the United States, this is the greatest country in the world.”¹⁵¹

Not everyone echoed these sentiments about the United States being the greatest country in the world. Understandably, soldiers in combat arms seemed glad to be home and out of the war zone. On occasion, however, returning black soldiers encountered terrible situations, particularly in the South. Truman K. Gibson recalled thinking after the war that it was just more of the same. As Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, Gibson received many

¹⁴⁸ Benton Collection, oral history interview.

¹⁴⁹ Johnson Collection, oral history interview.

¹⁵⁰ Hall Collection, oral history interview.

¹⁵¹ Samuel L. Jones Collection, interview by Kathy Novotny, Norfolk Veterans Home (AFC/2001/001/21545) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

reports of violence against black soldiers. One of the most outrageous crimes, he remembered, was in April 1945 in Dumas, Arkansas. Private Adam Green, traveling with a group of soldiers from Louisiana to California, was shot by the Dumas city marshal, who later testified that Green had “clenched his fist.”¹⁵²

As Gwendolyn Brooks posed, what happened when the soldiers arrived home and society forced them back into the borderlands? Lewis Conn went home months after the war ended, and arrived back at Fort Stewart, New York. On the way back, one of the soldiers in his unit kicked a bus driver and went to jail. If he wanted to make it back home, realized Conn, he had to play it cool for a bit.¹⁵³ For James Rutledge, one of the most frustrating things upon his arrival back in the United States was his inability to find work. When he went for the G.I. Bill, the Army gave him numerous excuses, and Rutledge figured that he was wasting his time.¹⁵⁴ Another soldier who attempted to use the G.I. Bill, Sergeant John David Jackson, observed that a white soldier who applied at the same time received a loan, while Jackson was denied. Enraged, Jackson asserted that had the man who refused him the loan emerged from the office, Jackson would have killed him. What bothered Jackson so much was the lack of recognition upon arriving home. When he left, Jackson described himself as a happy-go-lucky fellow, but it was just the opposite when he returned. “The things that we went through before we left and have to go through the same thing after we

¹⁵² Gibson, *Knocking Down Barriers*, 200. Gibson cited memo from himself to Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy, 14 June, 1945.

¹⁵³ Lewis Conn Collection, oral history interview. This man was lucky, as many bus drivers carried guns, and there are a number of instances in which bus drivers in the south shot black soldiers.

¹⁵⁴ James Rutledge Collection interview by Judith J. Kent, Flagler Country Public Library (AFC/2001/001/30996) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

come back. It doesn't make you feel any better, even though you give up your time, money, and everything else to help, you don't get the credit you're due."¹⁵⁵

After some of the horrors Jackson saw while stationed in Okinawa—he remembered seeing mutilated baby corpses left behind by the Japanese—the trauma of the experience would have made readjustment to civilian life difficult in any case. The process on a basic human level, coupled with the racial discrimination he experienced on his return, explained his rage and frustration. Gwendolyn Brooks wrote about the traumatic experiences of soldiers in her series of “soldier sonnets” in *A Street in Bronzeville*. The sonnets, based on letters Brooks received from black soldiers, addressed a number of themes.¹⁵⁶ “Piano after war” dealt specifically with the difficulty of fitting back into a normal, peaceful life after everything a soldier experienced. Listening to a piano, the soldier remembers the dead men who would never get the chance to listen to music again. Another poem, “mentors,” fit with “piano after war” and expressed huge impact that war had on the soldier—that whenever he thought of his mentors, “those reproving ghosts,” he would stop his casual business and take a moment to remember.¹⁵⁷

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* also articulated some of the more extreme feelings. Walking in an alley one night, Ellison's narrator accidentally bumped into a man, who then called him an insulting name. Enraged, the narrator attacked the man, beating him until he bled profusely, insisting that the man apologize. Instead, the man continued to curse the narrator. In his anger, the narrator took out a knife and prepared to slit the man's throat,

¹⁵⁵ John David Jackson Collection oral history interview.

¹⁵⁶ D.H. Melhem, *Gwendolyn Brooks: Poetry and the Heroic Voice* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 41.

¹⁵⁷ Brooks *A Street in Bronzeville*, 50-51.

when it occurred to him that the man did not even see him before the insult.¹⁵⁸ Ellison's narrator was crazy—a paranoid schizophrenic with a highly erratic thought pattern. Not that black soldiers compared to him as a person, but the narrator represented a thought process, paranoia, feelings, and torn identity. Soldiers like Jackson often felt that they walked in the dark, invisible to much of society. Perceived injustice could spark extreme anger. Most of the time, however, Ellison's narrator was not overtly violent, and in his invisibility he chose to “walk softly so as not to awaken the sleeping ones. . . . there are few things in the world as dangerous as sleepwalkers.”¹⁵⁹ Soldiers like Conn also chose to tread carefully, even if they felt hurt or betrayed by their country.

Benton opted not to stay in the Army, because as a rifleman, it seemed likely that he would be sent back into combat, and all he wanted was his discharge. Many felt the same way. Although Sergeant Aquilla Calhoun enjoyed his time in the military, learning about radars and “Jap hunting” in the Pacific, the young man laid down his uniform without hesitation at the war's end. When he enlisted, Calhoun had intended to make the Army his career.¹⁶⁰ David Dinkins was still in basic training at Montford Point when the war ended. The drill instructor came in and barked, “get down on your knees and thank god the war is over. Then he said get up, nothing's changed. And nothing had changed,” Dinkins reminisced. Looking back to their time in the military, many echoed the sentiments of James Rutledge: “I just did the best I could at that time. It never bothered you 'cause you knew that's what you had to do.”¹⁶¹ While many soldiers felt bothered at times, they did

¹⁵⁸ Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Calhoun Collection, oral history interview.

¹⁶¹ Rutledge Collection, oral history interview.

their duty. As Lewis Conn said, “You just had to try hard and keep going. And there’s nothing else for you to do ‘cause you think anything different you ain’t gonna get anywhere with it anyway.”¹⁶²

¹⁶² Conn Collection, oral history interview.

“There are other journeys”

Even if black soldiers had to tread softly when they arrived home, something changed in them because of their experiences overseas. At certain moments, they managed to transcend the color-line, and in their encounters with other people and cultures they saw life without borders. This glimpse into a different set of possibilities may not have manifested immediately, but many men carried home a new worldview and understanding of humanity, and some used this to push the dichotomy between black and American identity.

In the book *Powerful Long Ladder*, poet Owen Dodson expressed new hopes and ideals. Written toward the end of the war, a number of poems described a longing for peace shared by all people, particularly the homesick soldiers. Dodson realized that their work was far from over. The poem, “The Decision,” addressed soldiers directly and said, “There are other journeys You must make after your journey home, Other journeys you must make alone Into the countries of the heart.” He indicated that men had some soul searching to do once the war ended, and decide what type of world they would create out of peace. Would it be a world in which men looked on each other as brothers? Or would they allow a world where people scorned fellowship?¹⁶³ As Amzie Moore realized during the war, people needed to come together to survive.

Dodson’s war poetry, although mourning what happened, still expressed hope. One poem, “Open Letter” suggested that people all look at the “regular strong beat of humanity” and asked they bury the hatred and “take our black hands in yours.” He wrote of a

¹⁶³ Dodson, *Powerful Long Ladder*, 96.

conviction that the end of the war brought new possibilities for America and the world. He felt that the “torn souls and broken bodies” could and would be restored, and the “doors to hope swung open.”¹⁶⁴

Poet Margaret Walker also demonstrated the belief that World War II provided African Americans with new possibilities in her 1942 book, *For My People*. Her poem “We Have Been Believers” told the story of African Americans surviving a difficult history. Through it all, African Americans held a belief of freedom and equality. None of the trials or violence could stamp the faith away, and Walker believed that a new era dawned, and “our fists bleed against the bars with a strange insistency.”¹⁶⁵

W.E.B. DuBois claimed that African Americans felt a sense of duality, seeing the world through two sets of eyes: two warring ideals within one body, an American but at the same time excluded from being an American. The greatest achievement would be the merging of these two ideals, the African and the American, to belong without losing one’s identity. Indeed, World War II did not destroy the color-line; it left African Americans still in the borderlands not quite reaching the American identity they sought. African American soldiers, however, experienced a heightened form of double consciousness when the American identity they could not have become something they might have to die for. Consequently, experiences overseas produced intense emotions and reactions, and there were people unable to deal with the joint trauma of a segregated military and war.

African American soldiers demonstrated the intensity of the psychosis in double consciousness. They were aware of the paradox of fighting for democracy, perceptions about

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 103.

¹⁶⁵ Margaret Walker, *For My People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942), 17.

themselves, and spent their time in the Army pushing against this. When African Americans pressed for the opportunity to join the military and fight, or when southern segregation attempted to subdue them they pushed at the boundaries of the color-line. Overseas, fighting against an unfair depiction of blacks to other cultures, during combat when many attempted to prove to themselves and others that black Americans were just as good, and in their return hope helping to create a foundation for African Americans to move forward, black soldiers struggled to claim an American identity for themselves. They brought home with them a new, heightened consciousness and a different outlook on the world. As Isham Benton put it, there was an attitude people have in other places that has the potential to enlarge you, it increases your understanding, and makes you more sensitive to others. This awareness and new attitudes in many black soldiers made them more insistent that things had to change.

World War II acted as a stimulus to the Civil Rights Movement. Within three years of the war's conclusion, President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981, officially integrating the U.S. military. It seemed extraordinary that an institution considered so conservative was the first to change and desegregate. Lewis Conn of the 784th Tank Battalion speculated that World War II really changed race relations in America, "and from that I think I maybe played a little part."¹⁶⁶ While Truman's motives are not completely clear, the experiences of African American soldiers did affect the decision to some extent, because they often demonstrated the inefficiencies and injustices of segregation. In turn, the integration of the United States military (actually taking place during and after the Korean War) had huge social implications, paving the way for more change in the 1950s. Leading up to that decision were the black soldiers of World War II. Their experiences, attitudes, and

¹⁶⁶ Conn Collection, oral history interview.

consciousness tell us a great deal about the nature of change, and laid the groundwork for future progress.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

“Along the NAACP Battlefront.” In *The Crisis* 48, no. 1 (January 1941), 22.

Benton, Isham Collection (AFC/2001/001/28694) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Benton, Isham Collection (AFC/2001/001/9170) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Brooks, Gwendolyn. *A Street in Bronzeville*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1945.

Brown, Sterling A. *The Last Ride of Wild Bill: And Eleven Narrative Poems*. Detroit, MI: Broadside Press, 1975.

Calhoun, Aquilla Collection (AFC/2001-001-35246) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Conn, Lewis Collection (AFC 2001-001-43716) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Crisis Editorials. “Discrimination in the Draft.” In *The Crisis* 48, no. 1 (January 1941), 7.

Deloney, Hellen. “First Prize Essay in the High School Division.” In *The Crisis* 48, no. 8 (August 1941): 254.

Dinkins, David. 2002-2008. Interviewed by the National Visionary Leadership Project, Library of Congress, American Folklife Center.
<<http://www.visionaryproject.com/dinkinsdavid/>>

Dodson, Owen. *Powerful Long Ladder*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, Inc., 1946.

DuBois, W.E.B. “On Being Crazy.” In *W.E.B. DuBois: Writings*. New York: The Library of America, 1986.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903. Edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr and Terri Hume Oliver. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Du Bois, W.E.B. “Returning Soldiers.” In *Crisis* 18 (1919): 13-14.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage International, 1947.

- Franklin, John Hope. *Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.
- General Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1940-1945. Records Maintained by the Communications Branch; Army AG Classified Decimal File 291.2; Record Group 407; Entry 363a; National Archives II.
- Gibson, Truman K. *Knocking Down Barriers: My Fight For Black America*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005.
- Hall, Luther Collection (AFC/2001/001/28690) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.
- Himes, Chester, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1945.
- Jackson, John David Collection (AFC2001/001/38452) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.
- Johnson, John. Collection (AFC/2001/001/10701) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.
- Jones, Samuel Collection (AFC2001/001/21545) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress
- McGuire, Phillip. *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1983.
- Moore, Amzie. 1979. Interviewed by Prudence Arndt. Transcript for Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Right Years (1954-1965), Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection. <<http://digital.wustl.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eop;cc=eop;rgn=main;view=text;idno=moo0015.0109.072>>
- Motley, Mary Penick. *The Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldier, World War II*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987.
- Owens, Emiel W. *Blood on German Snow: An African American Artilleryman in World War II and Beyond*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Univeristy Press, 2006.
- Peery, Nelson. *Black Fire: The Making of An American Revolutionary*. New York: The New Press, 1994.
- Perry, A. William. Collection (AFC/2001/001/51117) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.
- Pittsburgh Courier*. "Whose Army Is It?" From the Press of the Nation, *The Crisis* 47, no. 6 (June 1940): 180.

Records of U.S. Army Commands; Records of Headquarters 3rd U.S. Army, 1942-; Adjutant General General Correspondence; Record Group 338; Entry 290; National Archives II.

Records of the European Theater of Operations General Correspondence; Adjutant General's Section Administrative Branch, 1944-1945; Army-AG Decimal File 291.2; Record Group 498; Entry 290; National Archives II.

Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs; Records of the Office of the Chief of Staff; Security Classified General Correspondence, 1942-47; War Department Decimal File; Record Group 165; Entry 13; National Archives II.

Ridout, George T. Collection (AFC/2001/001/32824). Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Rutledge, James Collection (AFC2001/001/30996) Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Stouffer, Samuel A. *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life*, vol. 1 *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949-1950.

Stouffer, Samuel A. *Survey on the Attitudes of Negroes*. Research Branch Information and Education Division, War Department, 1943.

This Is Our War: Selected Storeis of Six War Correspondents. Baltimore, MD: The AFRO-AMERICAN Company, 1945.

Tolson, Melvin B. *Rendezvous with America*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1944.

Walker, Margaret. *For My People*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942.

Wiley, Bell. *The Training of Negro Troops*. Historical Section, Army Ground Forces, 1946.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Als, Hinton, "In Black and White," forward in *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, Chester Himes. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1986.

Astor, Gerald. *The Greatest War: Americans in Combat 1941-1945*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, Inc., 1999.

- Butler, Johnella E. "African American Studies and the 'Warring Ideals.'" In *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower*, ed. Manning Marable, 141-152. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Dalfiume, Richard. *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces, Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969.
- Dalfiume, Richard M. "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution." In *The Negro in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution*, edited by Bernard Sternsher, 298-316. Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1969.
- Driskell, Jay "Amzie Moore: The Biographical Roots of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi." In *The Human Tradition in the Civil Rights Movement*, edited by Susan M. Glisson, 129-157. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006.
- Fletcher, Marvin O. *America's First Black General: Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., 1880-1970*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1989.
- Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, eighth edition. New York: Alfred Knopf, 2003.
- Gibran, Daniel. *The 92nd Infantry Division and the Italian Campaign*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001.
- Kennedy, David M. *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Kindsvatter, Peter S. *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003.
- Lee, Wayne E. "Mind and Matter—Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field." *Journal of American History* 93.4 (March 2007): 1116-1142.
- Lee, Ulysses. *The Employment of Negro Troops*. Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1966.
- Melhem, D.H. "Dudley Randall: A Humanist View." *Black American Literature Forum* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1983), 157-167.
- Melhem, D.H. *Gwendolyn Brooks: Poetry and the Heroic Voice*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1987.
- Miller, R. Baxter. "Review of Gwendolyn Brooks by Harry B. Shaw." In *Black American Literature Forum* 15 (1981): 116-118.

- Millet, Allan R. and Peter Maslowski. *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Nalty, Bernard C. and Morris J. MacGregor. *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1981.
- Smith, Graham. *When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World War II Britain*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1987.
- Stanton, Shelby. *The Order of Battle, U.S. Army, World War II*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1984.
- Whalan, Mark. *The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008.
- Wilson, Ruth. *Jim Crow Joins Up: A Study of Negroes in the Armed Forces of the United States*. New York: Press of W.J. Clark, 1944.
- Wynn, Neil. *The Afro-American and the Second World War*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1975.